

A SINISTER RESONANCE

Aidan Erasmus

University of the Western Cape

Sound is a present absence; silence is an absent present. Or perhaps the reverse is better: sound is an absent presence; silence is a present absence? In this sense, sound is a sinister resonance—an association with irrationality and inexplicability, that which we both desire and dread. Listening, then, is a specimen of mediumship, a question of discerning and engaging with what lies beyond the world of forms. When sound, silence and other modalities of auditory phenomena are represented through “silent” media, this association of mediumship becomes more acute. Dwelling in every written text there are voices; within images there is some suggestion of acoustic space. Sound surrounds, yet our relation to its enveloping, intrusive, fleeting nature is fragile (a game of Chinese whispers) rather than decisive. (Toop vii-viii)

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INTRODUCTION

This article begins with three events concerned with the presence of absence, and what will be termed a sinister resonance. In 1978, during an inquest into the death of Lungile Tabalaza—a young student activist who “fell” from the fifth-floor window of the Sanlam Building in Port Elizabeth while being held in custody by the South African Security Police for robbery and arson—co-accused Mabulu Jali was at the centre of a debate around whether his testimony could be corroborated by the affidavit of the doctor who examined him, after he had been allegedly assaulted by the authorities. A session of cross-questioning began, and while Jali struggled to respond in Afrikaans (his lack of fluency in the language was later used to render his testimony inadmissible to the court), the discussion shifted to the difference between a criminal trial and an inquest. The attorney representing the Tabalaza family asked the court whether “there was such a thing as cross-examination in an inquest” and,

citing the case of Ahmed Timol, who had met a similar death, he noted that “at an inquest there is no accused person and even if there is a suspected person, he may be absent and not represented and he should not be prejudiced as may be the case in a criminal trial by his silence” (*Inquest into the Death of Lungile Tabalaza* 243).

586 In 1979, folk musician Roger Lucey released *The Road Is Much Longer*, an album containing a number of songs that questioned the apartheid state. One particular song on the album, “Lungile Tabalaza,” reckoned with the event of Tabalaza’s death and its relation to the political landscape of South Africa. The lyrics make deliberate accusations against the police and against apartheid policies such as the much-hated Bantu Education system, which had been the driving force behind the Soweto Uprising of 1976. The death of Tabalaza was also memorialized in an artwork by Andy Mason included in the album sleeve, which in four frames retold the events leading to Tabalaza’s demise. Because “Lungile Tabalaza” and other songs directly accused the government of abduction and murder, *The Road Is Much Longer* attracted the attention of the Security Police. Lucey and producer David Marks, after much legal opinion, decided that it was best to edit some of the tracks and to leave a minute of silence for “Lungile Tabalaza” (Lucey 136). “We needn’t have bothered [editing and removing certain tracks] [...] the album caused a shitstorm anyway” (161), Lucey remarks in his 2012 biography, recounting his career as a “South African troubadour who lost his voice and then set out on an unbelievable journey to find it” (161).¹ The album was banned by the state soon after its release in February 1979, being deemed “dangerous to the safety of the State” by the Directorate of Publications. “Lungile Tabalaza” was not the only song to incite security police interest in Lucey’s activities. Others, such as “You Need Say Nothing At All,” with lyrics such as “and there’s teargas at the funeral of a boy gunned down by cops / they say that there are too many mourners and this is where it stops / and the moral of the episode / is to do what you are told” carried a similar critique of the apartheid state (Korpe 226). Lucey subsequently became the victim of the Security Police’s attempt to sabotage his musical career. Paul Erasmus, the security branch officer who was asked to investigate Lucey’s activities, was instructed by his superiors (after hearing “Lungile Tabalaza”) to “stop this filth,” and “Lungile Tabalaza” was “seen as not only a direct attack on the state but also on the security branch” (Erasmus, “Stopping the Music”).² By stopping performances, tear-gassing venues, and other forms of intimidation, the security police succeeded in grinding to a halt what looked like a promising musical and political career for Roger Lucey (Lucey 140).³

In October 2016, a group of South African scholars, along with both Canadian and international scholars, travelled to the Woodland Cultural Centre in Brantford, Ontario. While the purpose was to partake in discussions about the relationship between the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission held between 1996 and 1998 and the more recent Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, which submitted its final report in 2015, the room in which many of the discussions took place was a few metres away from the Mohawk Institute, which had operated as

an Indian residential school from the 1830s to 1970. Soon after our arrival, we took a tour of the school, including a visit to the basement. At the end of the stairwell that led to the depths of the school was a room in which, our guide informed us, students were held in solitary confinement. An eerie silence haunted the space, alongside the ambience that was made audible by the echo of footsteps as guides and visitors navigated the building. One member of the group couldn't help but be moved to tears by the space.

Such events are ideal to begin a discussion on the relationship between sound, silence, truth commissions, and how one might constitute a present that reckons with history. In the case of Lungile Tabalaza, it is of course not the difference between a criminal trial and an inquest that is at stake, nor is it the fact that cross-examination had been the factor that was such an affront to the legal proceedings of the time. Rather, it was the fact that Tabalaza—whose death was the subject of investigation and sole reason for the inquest in the first place—was present as the presence of absence; as silent and spectral. This is made particularly lucid in the case of Roger Lucey, in which the very invocation of silence is *seen*, in Mason's artwork, and *heard*, in the track with silence as its only sound, as an affront to power. Similarly, in the case of the basement of the Woodland Cultural Centre, it is not so much the testimonies of former survivors, or the much longer and deliberate conversations about the complex history that call us to action (whether emotionally or politically), that constitute the Truth Commission, but rather the absence of presence; the silence that haunts. Such an encounter in these events can be construed as what Amos Key termed in discussions at the Woodland Cultural Centre "an epiphany of conscience," and all constitute what this article is calling a sinister resonance.

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This article poses two attendant questions. The first asks how we might think silence as a modality of en-voicing, particularly in the work of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. I use the term *en-voicing* here because it offers a resonant mode of reading both image and sound, but also accounts for those sounds that we regard as absences, or non-sounds. En-voicing, as invoked by Ana Maria Ochoa Gautier, accounts for the ways in which vocality might be thought of as a mode of intelligibility marked by aurality rather than orality, in the sonic rather than solely within the linguistic parameters that the phonic might connote. It can therefore be suggested that through a concept of en-voicing, the visualism in linguistic theory, De Saussure's sound-image, might be displaced. En-voicing is a way of thinking about the voice as vocalizations; as that which can be "conceived as a multiplicity rather than embodying a sound that represents an entity" (Gautier 64), and that the voice "is not so much a mechanism that permits the mediation [...] between the signifier and the signified [...] but instead it permits the manifestation through en-voicing (in-vocation) of relational multiplicities—a capacity to manifest "bundles of affect" of the type [...] that imply different things for the different entities that produce or hear them" (Gautier 64).

A second question this article asks is what it is about silence that textures the Truth

Commission as an institution. By briefly turning to analyses by Adam Sitze, this article also asks how silence as invoked in the South African context would translate in other spaces in which the modality of the truth commission has been instituted, such as Canada. It therefore seeks to latch onto the impossibility of sound as a direction from which to audit the event that is the death of Lungile Tabalaza and its reverberations, but also to audit the relationship between the TRCs in South Africa and Canada. The term *audit* here is instructive, and is invoked in the sense in which John Mowitt has employed it: that it may be “something analogous to visualism’s gaze” (17), or “the methodological effect that enables a text to sound along the unraveling seam where sound and sense traverse one another” (17). More precisely, if the gaze designates that which can be seen, in the sense of what constitutes the limits of seeing and what organizes what is visible, the audit operates by asking what it is we hear and how we listen. Put simply, this article is concerned with what it means to encounter a sinister resonance, in terms of both the sonic and the political.

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DISCIPLINING SILENCE AND HEARING GHOSTS

Before turning to the specificities of silence, it is helpful to ask how the institution of the truth commission *disciplines* silence, marking it as a presence of absence rather than merely an absence. This might help us to consider the reworking of the institutional apparatus of the “hearing” as what we can call a “mishearing.” In *The Impossible Machine: A Genealogy of South Africa’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission*, Adam Sitze tracks the ways in which commissions of inquiry and truth commissions have a common juridical and conceptual ancestor in coloniality and how this produces a grid of intelligibility through which truth commissions—specifically the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission—act upon their mandates and how they are acted upon. Additionally, and in a much more illuminating argument that has much to bear on the stakes of what is presented in this article, Sitze also marks out the contradictory liminality that textures the relationship between transitional justice as an academic pursuit and the TRC as (at the time) a new modality of juridical practice in the field of human rights law. It is here, Sitze argues, that transitional justice and the TRC are both compatible and incompatible. Sitze uses the metaphor employed in the title of his book to articulate this more carefully. Sitze suggests that

[to] understand the TRC outside the horizon of transitional justice—or, in what amounts to the same thing, from the standpoint of the genealogy that is internally excluded within its horizon—does not, to be clear, entail a despairing interpretation of the TRC. Quite the opposite: the melancholic consensus today that the TRC was an impossible *machine* (a frustrating machine, a machine that didn’t work) is the deflated double, and dialectical counterpart, of the inflated expectation, produced in no small measure by transitional justice, that the TRC would be an *impossible machine* (a machine that made miracles). (251)

Sitze argues that transitional justice as a discipline cannot account for the genealogy of the TRC as it searches for it elsewhere, in categories such as “victims,” “perpetrators,” “voices,” and “testimonies,” or it merely seeks to subsume the TRC and what it may offer in terms of an understanding of juridical forms in transitional societies. While this is attributed to the fact that the South African TRC was seen as unprecedented, novel, and particularly reinvigorating to transitional justice as a site of scholarly inquiry in South Africa, Sitze offers a different reading, suggesting that “the language of transitional justice not only functions to stifle the emancipatory politics that the TRC was designed to serve; worse; it’s also a new name for the old colonial theory and the practice of ‘trusteeship,’ of western humanitarian experts presuming to speak for and thus save otherwise helpless, powerless and voiceless non-western victims” (2).

The disciplining of the TRC, whether in an academic sense or in the ways in which the TRC has emerged as a specifically important model of transitional justice, has bearing on the cases under discussion in this article. The question of discipline as that which orders who speaks and what is spoken, as illustrated in the anecdote about Tabalaza that opens this article, draws together both elements of Sitze’s argument and the ways in which modes of speaking travel between institutions, and how those very modes of speaking are governed and marked by institutions. We can argue that this is exemplified by how the figure of Lungile Tabalaza is imagined. This is apparent, albeit obvious, in the specific narration of the details of his death by the police, as well as in the inconclusive verdict of the inquest. Tabalaza was arrested and detained on July 10, 1978 on suspicion of arson and robbery, and later that day at around 2:40 PM, he “fell” from the fifth floor of the Sanlam Building in Port Elizabeth, where he was being held in custody by the Security Police. The police’s official response about the cause of Tabalaza’s death was that he had committed suicide by jumping out an unbarred window, and an inquest held in September and October 1978 was inconclusive, finding nobody responsible for his death, despite photographs and other evidence suggesting that he was tortured, assaulted, and suspended by his feet from the window from which he fell prior to his death (“Magistrate L.A. Coetzee Rules that No One Is to Blame”).⁴

The question of discipline can also be observed in another, and arguably more revealing, instance in which Tabalaza is narrated: the music of Roger Lucey. Lucey and Marks attempted to counter censorship efforts through two particular moves. The first is an artwork/graphic inscription by artist Andy Mason that was included in the album sleeve, which, in four frames, narrates the events leading up to the death of Lungile Tabalaza. Secondly, included alongside the artwork was a note, explaining the fact that some tracks were edited, and more specifically, that “Lungile Tabalaza” had been removed and replaced with one minute’s silence:

WE APOLOGIZE

For the inconvenience caused in censoring Track 4, Side One
and editing out of one verse on Track 7, Side Two.

After much deliberation and authoritative legal opinion, it
was decided, due to recent legislation passed by this Government,
not to take the "Affected" numbers out but to edit.

The song for "Lungile Tabalaza" has one minute's silence.

The spectral makes itself felt in Andy Mason's artwork as much as in the honorary minute of silence granted to the deceased by David Marks and Roger Lucey. It is the sinister resonance of the minute and the artwork that is both haunting and welcoming, made more poignant by the fact that we need not listen to the actual track to feel its sympathetic vibration. I therefore want to read the absent song alongside the sounds that lurk in the court records of the official inquest into Tabalaza's death so as to ask what it is about this that sounds out or vocalizes silences present in the court proceedings. Secondly, I want to en-voice the silence that is present both in the minute on the album and in the Human Rights violation hearing at the South African TRC in 1996.

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Ana Maria Ochoa Gautier offers us a way to think about silence, suggesting that

[on] the one hand, silence invokes a type of plenitude most commonly associated with contemplative techniques of quietness as a means to bring about a transformation of the self [...] on the other hand, silence is often associated with a "sinister resonance" [...] that invokes a haunting; the dangers and fear of the unknown; the insecurities produced by the ungraspable and by the profound irreversibility of death. (183)

To reiterate, it is the "sinister resonance" that we might locate in the "missing" song, but also in the proceedings of the inquest in 1978, where we find the notion of reflection Gautier describes, which is strikingly similar to truth commissions.⁵ If the Andy Mason graphic can be thought of as writing, then we can en-voice the silence in both the image and the absent track as a letter from the dead, as what Fred Moten might call the process whereby "sound comes back but only by way of graphic overwriting, underwriting" (271). There is one specific aspect of the inquest that I would like to consider briefly: the testimony of Mabulu Jali that was mentioned at the beginning of this article. It is a small but significant set of discursive moments in the inquest proceedings, producing mechanisms that are at once sonic and expressly political, in the sense that it drives the inquest towards the inconclusive verdict expressed in the final judgement. In some sense, it is caught up in the act of inscription that cannot produce voice, but only the presence of absence: silence, spectre, spectrality.

This is an aspect that is heard not from any cross-questioning of a witness, but rather the rendering of a witness as mute through the calling into question of testimony. Throughout the inquest, co-accused Mabulu Jali, who had been arrested alongside Tabalaza after they had robbed and set a delivery van alight, is constantly questioned and the validity of his testimony dismissed. This takes a variety of forms, from the attorney representing the Tabalaza family sparking a debate about whether

or not the affidavit of a doctor who had examined Jali after the latter had complained about being assaulted by the police while being interrogated should be admissible, to a protracted discussion of Jali's proficiency in Afrikaans, which is used to dismiss his ability to accurately recall what had happened to him. Jali notes that he had told a police officer "of the wire that the police had, of the tears in the deceased's eyes and of the gripping of the collar," and Magistrate Coetzee expresses that it is "unthinkable that a high officer of Colonel Van Der Merwe's stature would have hid something like that" (*Inquest into the Death of Lungile Tabalaza* 610). In this moment, it is not so much the silencing of Jali's testimony but rather the presence of Jali as mute that is crucial. In some sense, the discursive erasure of Jali might be thought along the lines of what Idelber Avelar conceives as erasure, as "an operation that at the same time hides and shows that it is hiding" (qtd. in Gautier 118), thus constituting what Gautier has expressed as a spectral presence. Jali, therefore, like Tabalaza, becomes spectral, a sinister resonance, despite his discursive erasure.

There are parallels here with the South African TRC that should be noted, such as the fact that Jali becomes a voice for Tabalaza. This is a practice that is juridical but seeps into the TRC out of sheer necessity; some of the victims of apartheid violence did not survive and as such must be "spoken for" by friends and family. More importantly, though, the discursive mode of the inquest allows the indemnification of the perpetrators, heard in Coetzee's praise of Colonel Van Der Merwe. It is in the argument around "amnesty" and "indemnity" that the crucial move Sitze identifies in truth commissions and their form is made, and it is in the context of this move that we not only understand the TRC as an apparatus with a much longer genealogy wound up in specific jurisprudential and political discursive moments, but also encounter the form and the content of the hearing with a more careful ear. It is in the colonial articulation of indemnity as articulated by Alfred Venn Dicey that Sitze locates the kernel that gives rise to the notion of indemnity in South Africa in the twentieth century. Dicey's indemnity, according to Sitze, was constitutive of a notion of sovereignty that cultivated the legality of a colonial violence and exertion of power as central to the maintenance of the state. Such provision offered by the indemnification of officials in acts of war against colonial rebellions and any other challenges to the power of the state and its sovereignty is fundamental to understanding states of emergency in South Africa and in other colonial centres. It is a form of indemnity that, as Sitze points out at length, gave rise to the notion of amnesty functional in the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission, but it is also a form of indemnification that is expressly colonial; it was only used in the colonies, and embodied what Nasser Hussain has called a "jurisprudence of emergency." This might help us understand how and why the truth commissions in South Africa and Canada are resonant with one another. In a discussion of H.L.A. Hart's *The Concept of Law*, Nasser Hussain asks what it is about law as constituted by modernity that finds its limit in the practice of colonialism. Hussain suggests that it is the work of a certain duality: "we have both the notion that the essence of law cannot be grasped

absent an understanding of its social aspect *and* the notion that law itself cannot exist without an establishment of officials and institutions” (Hussain 36). It is this duality that reminds us that modern positivist jurisprudence has at its core a command, one that John Austin describes as “essentially a command for compliance backed by a threat of harm” (Hussain 37). If this is the case, then “law as a complex structure of legitimate authority would be forced to identify with its horrifying double—the example of a simple bank robbery, as in the case of the gunman who says to the bank clerk, ‘Hand over the money or I will shoot’” (Hussain 35-37).

THE TRAGIC AND ITS REACH

592 What Sitze draws from the contradictions surrounding Diceyan jurisprudence, indemnity/amnesty, and the disciplining function of transitional justice is a modality of the tragic that dominates and figures both in how we talk about truth commissions and the ways in which they themselves speak. Put differently, truth commissions must invoke the tragic in order for amnesty, or indemnity as in a colonial context, to take hold both as a juridical form and a societal good. Tragedy, as it were, becomes a poetics of indemnity with a much longer genealogy intimately connected to colonial discourses of power.

The South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission, in some sense, took up the work of the inquest in 1978. By this I mean it aimed to provide closure, to shed light on what exactly transpired on that particular day that led to the death of Lungile, and equally tasked itself with a future beyond a past unspeakable. This is much the same as the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, whose ninety-four calls to action embody a reckoning with the past as much as they do a closure with a view to a future. In much the same way, we could rephrase the question posed during the inquest, and ask whether there is a mode of cross-questioning in truth commissions and what that would mean for how we think of voice, silence, and a juridical claim to truth. In the testimony Tabalaza’s mother gave to the South African TRC in 1996, for example, there are moments of silence that resonate with Lucey’s silent track, with the sounds of the inquest proceedings, and with a much larger argument about sinister resonance and the liminal nature of sound. The most obvious connection we can hear is Mrs. Tabalaza’s recounting Tabalaza’s uncle’s response upon being requested to identify Lungile’s body:

Yes [the police] did come at home. I was taking my mother to the hospital for her checkup and the boers came in, they asked for Lungile’s I.D. [identity document]. My mother asked who they are and the white men said they wanted Lungile’s I.D. At that moment the mother asked where the I.D. was and we called our brother and again my mother asked what was happening, and he said he doesn’t know. The boers were outside, they took my brother. They went up Mount Road. At a distance my brother felt that there is something that happened about Lungile. When they went to Mount Road, they found a

lot of corpses who had just been left on the ground and the cement. Lungile was amongst them and blood issued through his nose and ears. They asked my brother to identify, but he was unable to answer. It took him 18 seconds. He became mute and they took him outside and back home. He was shocked and said, “My mother, we must not mourn for Lungile because he was deliberately murdered,” and he went out. (“Human Rights Violation Hearing”)

If we are to think of this excerpt in relation to the Mason artwork included in *The Road Is Much Longer*, one can very easily replace the first frame, depicting the police knocking at the door of Tabalaza’s home, with Mrs. Tabalaza’s account of the police coming to the home. We do not need to hear the “bang bang” as expressed visually in the artwork, as we hear it in silence when reading Mrs. Tabalaza’s testimony. It is here that we witness the en-voicing of silence, the graphic “sounding out,” and the presence of an absence coming to bear upon us as spectral. There is a materiality that is invoked through the image at this moment, which is then corroborated by the testimony above, especially when the narrative shifts to the road, the ground, and the cement (frame four in the artwork). Curiously, the very aspect of bodily harm and assault, to which the above excerpt attests, as well as the debate that ensues around Jali’s testimony, is one that is silenced through the inquest proceedings. Just as it was silenced in the inquest, it registers here too as silence. What differs, however, is that the silence here is voiced, albeit through the fact that Lungile’s uncle became mute and was unable to answer for a duration of eighteen seconds. It is striking that what connects Mason’s artwork for Lucey’s album, the minute of silence, and the mutism in the TRC testimony is precisely the inability to produce a sound other than silence upon encountering the image, whether sonic or visual, of Lungile.

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This inability to produce any other sound but silence should not only be read as an effect of the tragic, or as a rendering of the relationship between victim and perpetrator as one of speaker and listener. Rather, it is important to hold onto the articulation of hearing as mishearing. It may be easier to explain this in relation to Paula Carabell’s reflections on image and sound. Carabell suggests that what marks the difference between the visual and the aural, amongst other factors, is the question of time. Alongside this is a careful discussion around what it means to constitute the subject at the level of the visual, and similarly what the subject might look like when articulated through the sonic. She suggests that while both the phonic and the photic “share a privileged relationship to the referent, that is, of equivalence” (Carabell 176), it is important to note that what is at stake in sound is temporality. The image is static, it freezes, and the sonic is always in flux. As she reminds us, in the words of Slavoj Žižek, “the gaze mortifies” while “the voice vivifies” (94). Through Lacan, Carabell tracks the Object as it ‘appears’ in the image, and how it offers an alternative grid of desire when routed through the voice. The Other is constituted through the voice, but it is also where difference is to be located, where the Object becomes “the embodiment of desire” (Carabell 185). This is where “for the subject, mending the schism between self and Other becomes the ultimate goal” (Carabell 186), and where the

sonic “functions as the primary vehicle for recovery of the lost object, the Other that is now fully recognised as independent entity” (Carabell 186). Carabell further notes of the work of the sonic at length:

Ultimately, the visual and the auditory are separated yet linked by their unique relationship to the Other that is brought about by the conditions of transparency and essentialist considerations. But while the photograph makes static a once-lived moment, and produces an object composed of past and present moments with which the viewing subject can identify, *the auditory trace can provide no such article of comfort and contemplation*. Rather, the transient voice of the Other attacks the integrity of the listener by virtue of its radical difference and thus makes its existence as fetishized object an impossibility. Despite the existence of recorded material, sound does not lend itself to the idolatry offered by the existence of the photograph; when heard, *its temporally fleeting nature denies the right to possession*. As it passes through the subject, the voice disallows the possibility that the Other can ever be regained. It is, however, the mutability of sound that fully establishes it as the embodiment of loss. The ephemeral nature of the spoken word makes clear that, despite its ability to invoke the Other, the object of desire will remain unattainable. It is a presence that will always exist as absence. (186-87; emphasis mine)

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What is especially productive about Carabell’s essay “Photography, Phonography, and the Lost Object” is precisely the question of spectrality and of memory. Attached to these is the ever-present question of silence, made most prominent in the notion that there is an absence which persists as the condition of an impossibility of possession, an absence that persists precisely because it is temporal, ephemeral, and in flux. This is precisely what is meant by the re-articulation of hearing as mishearing; it is the fact that silence offers us a disavowal of ownership that constitutes a space for reimagining and refiguring what it is we mean by reconciliation outside of the tragic. In fact, if we are to call the inquest and its proceedings a “hearing,” which is what we name the parts of the truth commission in which “voices” can be heard, it might better be to name these “mishearings.” This is not to suggest that the inquest failed its purpose, or failed to produce the “final say” on what exactly happened that led to Tabalaza’s death, or that the TRC failed to come to terms with the residential school system in Canada. It is instead to emphasize silence not necessarily as a lack, but rather as a sound that is not necessarily intelligible as sound. It is an attempt to trace what it is that comes to constitute itself as unspeakable, and to ask what it is about the speakable and unspeakable that makes them come to stand as the two pillars of intelligibility of truth commissions.⁶ What I mean to say by this is that what the hearing—the juridical apparatus of truth commissions—produces is a texturing of voice that might be better understood as the vocalisation of silence as opposed to the silent vocalization or the cathartic tragic testimony. That shrill, piercing, undoubtedly vociferous presence that makes itself known in its absence is what sutures the very grain of the texts and testimonies of the truth commission. At such an intersection, the resonances and dissonances between the Canadian Truth and Reconciliation Commission and its South African counterpart can be laid bare as that something much more than their core apparatuses.

CONCLUSION

If, as David Toop suggests, a sinister resonance invokes a sense of that which “we both desire and dread” (viii), then what this article has sought to make available is the ways in which truth commissions—their genealogies and what futures they promise—produce sinister resonance. The three events that opened this article form a framework from which to think this, and a way of reckoning with silence as present absence. The TRCs in both South Africa and Canada both embody that unsettling yet comforting affective response that the basement at the Woodland Cultural Centre holds—silence as the productive effect that the apparatus of the hearing produces. Following the threads of the death of Lungile Tabalaza, and reflecting upon the functioning of truth commissions and their constitutive concepts, this article has sought to set silence to work in thinking about the apparatus of the hearing. Crucially, what it has attempted to do was to cast silence not as a lack or as merely the absence of sound, but to provide a texture for it as a presence, as a sinister resonance. Thinking the work of the TRC in South Africa and of the TRC in Canada asks us not only to attend to the content of what those hearings produce, whether recordings of testimonies, institutions, such as the Mohawk Institute as a site for healing, or disciplines, but also the forms that they permit.

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NOTES

1. Ironically, Lucey also recalls meeting Clem Tholet, a folk musician famous for his songs that “rallied white Rhodesians around campfires during what they called their ‘war against the terrorists’” (161), and notes Tholet’s reacting to their meeting, commenting to Lucey that “that song of yours, Lungile Tabalaza, it’s the most powerful fucking thing I’ve ever heard” (161).
2. The interaction between Paul Erasmus, who directed the efforts to end Roger Lucey’s musical career and silence what they deemed a threat to the state, and Roger Lucey, is well known, and is the subject of books by both Lucey and Erasmus and the aforementioned documentary on state censorship.
3. In a chapter that uses the final verse of “Lungile Tabalaza” as its epigraph, Lucey recalls how at “one of [his] appearances at Mangles [a venue in Johannesburg], the place suddenly filled up with tear gas [...] it poured into the tiny basement through the air conditioner, and [everyone] spilled into the street, coughing and wiping [their] eyes” (140).
4. The official inquest headed by Magistrate L.A. Coetzee came to the verdict “that no one was to blame for his death, though the government pathologist acknowledged that several bruises and lacerations could have happened before the fall” (“Magistrate L.A. Coetzee Rules that No One Is to Blame”).
5. An integral part of the TRC was the Missing Persons Task Team, which spent a great deal of time searching for the remains of those tortured and killed by the apartheid regime.
6. Rinaldo Walcott has asked how we render the unspeakable that is, to an extent, produced by the discourse of reconciliation, and it is in this line of thinking that I pose this similar question.

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