

“IT DON’T MEAN A THING IF IT AIN’T GOT THAT SWING”: JAZZ, PARA-AUDIBLE CADENCE, AND DEEP LISTENING IN AND AROUND CORTÁZAR’S *RAYUELA*

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Rhythm, which is image and sense, man’s spontaneous attitude toward life, is not outside us: it is we ourselves, expressing ourselves. It is concrete temporality, unrepeatable human life. (Paz 49)

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Julio Cortázar’s affinity for music is well known. Many of the dialogues and meditations of *Rayuela* (translated into English as *Hopscotch*, 1966) revolve around listening to jazz and blues records, and the author himself is often pictured playing a trumpet; but has its deeper influence on his writing been heard? Focusing on the conception of rhythm that emerges in his 1980 lecture on literary musicality, this article thinks sonically about the influence of jazz on Cortázar’s writing. Beyond referential representations and imitations of music, Cortázar pursues para-audible, incantatory cadences shaped to reach the reader’s “internal ear,” beneath manifest meaning, in an effort to build bridges between people, between heterogeneous media, and between the present, deep ancestral rhythms, and possible emancipated futures. The influence of jazz occurs primarily at the level of deep rhythms that hold sway over prose structure, inspire improvisation, and hail the reader as playful collaborator and active listener. Cortázar’s writing unsettles commonplace notions of literary musicality, challenging us to develop a practice of reading as deep listening. How, then, does this inner listening contour the active reception of the text? Is Cortázar’s own transduction of jazz a faithful translation or a traducement, a betrayal of its othered source? How are such transduced cadences translatable across languages? What conditions of audibility are in play?

Like many novels influenced by the ludic realism of Laurence Sterne’s *Tristram Shandy*, *Rayuela* is a very diverse narrative construction, playfully incorporating many voices, styles, perspectives, and discourses—and in Cortázar’s case, jazz references, jazz lyrics, and free-flowing jazzology. We can think of this plurivocality in a

Bakhtinian way: the novel is an assemblage of heterogeneous voices, a polyglossia of discourses and levels of social speech, including many intertextual references, quoted song lyrics, found texts, and entire pages of borrowed writing, all brought into play in an open-work dialogue without any finalizing authorial closure. But listening closely to the jazz-inspired riffage of Cortázar's prose rhythms suggests a different dimension of heterogeneity, a rigorous musicality that is not discursive but rhythmic, which we can begin to understand through the resources of contemporary sound studies; that is, by thinking sonically: transmedially, transductively, and rhythmanalytically. Listening for the sound of jazz in *Rayuela* is complicated by the novel's non-linear, open structure, in which textual rhythms and musical hauntings combine to form unforeseeable aleatory polyrhythms in the time of the reader. Literary rhythm thus becomes a complex sonorous event unfolding across different milieus and temporalities: a para-auditory, plurivocal, multitemporal, polyrhythmic becoming-other. These theoretical improvisations approach reading-as-listening with Cortázar's spirit of playfulness, since, as the Duke Ellington standard says, "It don't mean a thing if it ain't got that swing."

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In short, by reading some key passages of *Rayuela* and related writings from a sonic perspective, it becomes possible to hear Cortázar's transmedial transduction of jazz through para-audible literary cadences as an aesthetic and political line of flight, one that challenges readers to practice a deep and active listening that resonates in a polyrhythmic event whose reverberations are still being felt. In what follows, I attempt to trace the relationships between several layered moments of listening and performance, paying special attention to what happens *between*, in the passage from one medium or moment to another. Writing through cadence involves active listening to a para-audible inner rhythm, which then guides its own transduction into writing, where it may or may not be heard again. This inner rhythm is influenced by actively listening to and transducing jazz, which itself is already heard as transducing something deeper, an opening to alternative temporalities and ways of being. Reading as active listeners, we are entrained by layered polyrhythms, collaboratively performing them for our own inner audition and perhaps allowing them to ripple and resonate outward into other material-semiotic practices.

In *Rayuela*, Cortázar provokes in his readers the freedom to playfully engage with the text in various ways: he writes for a "lector cómplice" (*Rayuela* 424), a "reader-accomplice" willing to engage in the ludic labour of jumping around in the text following non-linear, semi-aleatory sequences. His writing also engages the agency of the reader as active listener, recalling Roland Barthes's conception of reading as a kind of playing that is both ludic and musical:

"Playing" must be understood in all its polysemy: the text itself *plays* (like a door, like a machine with "play") and the reader plays twice over, playing the text as one plays a game, looking for a practice that reproduces it, but, in order that that practice not be reduced to a passive inner *mimesis* (the Text is precisely that which resists such a reduction), also playing the Text in the musical sense of the term. (Barthes 162)

This is not a matter of straightforward imitation of music; as active readers, Barthes suggests, we become practical collaborators and co-authors of the "musical score" of the text (163). To do this effectively, however, we need a reading strategy that catches the beat of the many heterogeneous rhythms interlacing in the text and its context(s): reading as transductive process and embodied polyrhythmia. How do we attune our inner hearing to the layers of transduced rhythms conditioning writing and reading? And what is the role of improvisation in this playing?

"I SWING; THEREFORE I AM": PARA-AUDIBLE CADENCE FOR THE INTERNAL EAR

In a 1980 lecture, Cortázar explains his conception of musicality in literature: "We read with our eyes," he says, "yet when it's prose that we can characterize as musical, the internal ear captures it the same way we repeat melodies or whole pieces of music in our memory within the deepest silence" (*Literature Class* 126). Musical prose, as Cortázar conceives it, is "both auditory and internal at the same time": it involves writing under the sway of deep rhythms that can be "heard," consciously or otherwise, with the "internal ear" (*Literature Class* 126). It is not only transmedially thematic or imitative; that is, it is not just a matter of representing or describing music, as Cortázar often does, nor of imitating musical sounds with words: "I'm not talking about music as a literary topic," he says, "but rather about the fusion one finds in some literary works between writing and music, a certain musical line in the prose" (*Literature Class* 125). This is not a matter of mimicking musical sound, or trying to "obtain a musical effect by playing with the repetition of vowels, alliterations, or internal rhymes" (*Literature Class* 126). Rather, this musicality is "fundamentally rhythm more than melody or harmony" (*Literature Class* 128).

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What is this rhythmic "musical line" that can be "heard" with the "internal ear"? Essentially non-thematic, non-imitative, and beyond manifest meaning, this rhythmic musicality can be heard in "a certain structure, a certain syntactic architecture, a certain articulation of words, a rhythm in the use of punctuation or separation into sections, a cadence that the reader's internal ear can recognize more or less clearly as a musical element" (*Literature Class* 126-27). He describes this kind of prose cadence as "*encantatoria*"—carrying the latent senses of chant, incantation, and enchantment (*Literature Class* 127)—and he distinguishes it from the explicit semantic content of the writing:

in addition to transmitting the message, the prose also conveys a series of atmospheres, auras, content that has nothing to do with the message itself but that enriches it, amplifies it, and often deepens it. (*Literature Class* 127)

Cadence, or *encantatoria*, is thus a somewhat paradoxical sonic phenomenon: a scarcely audible rhythm, an affective pulse that the writer seems to hear (where does

it come from?) and attempts to carry over (transpose, translate, transduce?) into articulate prose, where it may almost be audible. We can hear this as an instance of what Seth Kim Cohen calls “non-cochlear sonic art.” After Duchamp, art takes a conceptual turn, no longer limiting itself to aesthetic regard for the sensible properties of the artwork:

If a non-retinal visual art is liberated to ask questions that the eye alone cannot answer, then a non-cochlear sonic art appeals to exigencies out of earshot. But the eye and the ear are not denied or discarded. A conceptual sonic art would necessarily engage both the non-cochlear and the cochlear, and the constituting trace of each in the other. (Cohen xxi)

106 To read literature as conceptual sonic art presents an interpretive challenge: can we find textual traces of rhythms transduced from a source below the threshold of audibility, originally acousmatic (not linked to a locatable source) but now embodied in the prose forms that transmit them, perhaps catching them in the act of shifting from transcendence to immanence? It is to this strange acoustic-textual space, this medium or milieu of para-audible cadence, that we must attend if we wish to “hear” the influence of jazz on Cortázar’s writing. To be clear, we first have to distinguish three moments: the inner hearing and transductive writing of cadence, the transmedial influence of jazz on this process, and the role of readers in actively listening to and performing this hybrid rhythm.

What, then, is the relationship between jazz and the para-auditory cadence of writing, and how does listening to music influence the rhythm of prose? Can we be more precise about the relationship between listening to music and a writing that already involves a kind of inner listening? Can we detect (in)audible traces of jazz in the improvisatory rhythms of Cortázar’s prose? This seems both too easy, and next to impossible. If cadence is transduced from a virtual, non-hearable state into prose, and then further translated from Spanish into English, among other languages, it would seem tricky in the least to adduce definitive textual evidence of its existence. Before sounding out this problem through theories of transmediality, transduction, and rhythmanalysis, we can amplify our sense of cadence by reading a fictive passage that both describes and enacts this rhythmic process of creation. Chapter 82 of *Rayuela* consists of a note by the character Morelli, an experimental writer, who voices here what sounds like the author’s own thought. Is there a cadence here to be heard, audibly or otherwise?

¿Por qué escribo esto? No tengo ideas claras, ni siquiera tengo ideas. Hay jirones, impulsos bloques, y todo busca una forma, entonces entra en juego el ritmo y yo escribo dentro de ese ritmo, escribo por él, movido por él y no por eso que llaman el pensamiento y que hace la prosa, literaria u otra. Hay primero una situación confusa, quo sólo puede definirse en la palabra; de ese penumbra parto, y si lo que quiero decir (si lo que quiere decirse) tiene suficiente fuerza, inmediatamente se inicia el *swing*, un balanceo rítmico que me saca a la superficie, lo ilumina todo, conjuga esa materia confusa y el que la padece en un tercera instancia clara y como fatal: la frase, el párrafo, la página, el capítulo, el

libro. Ese balanceo, ese *swing* en el que se va informando la materia confusa, es para mí la única certidumbre de su necesidad, porque apenas cesa comprendo que no tengo ya nada que decir. Y también es la única recompensa de mi trabajo: sentir que lo que he escrito es como un lomo de gato bajo la caricia, con chispas y un arquearse cadencioso. Así por la escritura bajo al volcán, me acerco a las Madres, me conecto con el Centro—sea lo que sea. Escribir es dibujar mi mándala y a la vez recorrerlo, inventar la purificación purificándose; tarea de pobre shamán blanco con calzoncillos de nylon. (*Rayuela* 428)

Why am I writing this? I have no clear ideas, I do not even have ideas. There are tugs, impulses, blocks, and everything is looking for a form, then rhythm comes into play and I write within that rhythm, I write by it, moved by it and not by that thing they call thought and which turns out prose, literature, or what have you. First there is a confused situation, which can only be defined by words; I start out from this half-shadow and if what I mean (if what is *meant*) has sufficient strength, the *swing* begins at once, a rhythmic swaying that draws me to the surface, lights everything up, conjugates this confused material and the one who suffers it into a clear third somehow fateful level: sentence, paragraph, page, chapter, book. This swaying, this *swing* in which confused material goes about taking shape, is for me the only certainty of its necessity, because no sooner does it stop than I understand that I no longer have anything to say. And it is also the only reward for my work: to feel that what I have written is like the back of a cat as it is being petted, with sparks and an arching in cadence. In that way by writing I go down into the volcano, I approach the Mothers, I connect with the Center—whatever it may be. Writing is sketching my mandala and at the same time going through it, inventing purification by purifying one's self; the task of a poor white shaman in nylon socks. (*Hopscotch* 402)

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This passage deepens the concept of cadence and begins to reveal its entanglement with jazz. Cadence is a “rhythmic swaying,” a “*swing*.” Italicized and in English in the original, the word *swing* clearly links Morelli’s ruminations to jazz; and as the Duke Ellington standard quoted in Chapter 16 suggests, *It don’t mean a thing if it ain’t got that swing*. This swinging cadence is evidently a central feature of Cortázar’s creative process. He speaks in his literature class of his “adherence to a kind of pulse, a beat I feel as I write and that makes the sentences comes to me as if in a swinging motion, in an absolutely implacable motion against which I am powerless” (*Literature Class* 128). Cadence is a form-giving impulse that is causally, temporally, and logically prior to whatever meanings can be made to emerge; it is the affective current bearing language on its surface. Cadence is a passion, a transpersonal flow that catches up the writer in its tumble: the writer is its instrument; the “I” is not the true origin or guarantor of meaning—note that Morelli stresses “lo que quiere *decirse*” (what is *meant*) over “lo que quiero *decir*” (what I *mean*). And as Horacio says to himself, “*Swing, ergo soy*” (*Rayuela* 78). *I swing; therefore I am*: movement precedes identity, process precedes substance. Morelli’s note performs the very swinging movement that it describes: there is a rhythmic interplay of phrasing, imagery, and ideas that proceeds through small repetitions and shifting tempos, in an insistent yet spontaneously swerving way, toward its conclusion. All of the key technical elements of cadence are in play in this short take: structure, syntactic architecture, use of punctuation, the form of a section, like a jazz solo, where elusive rhythm is the underlying

matrix of improvisation.

TRANSMEDIAL TAKES: IMPROVISATION AND ITS DISCONTENTS

Tuning into Cortázar's jazzified rhythms is partly a matter of intermedial interpretation, which may be enhanced by actually listening to the music in question; yet, Cortázar does not try to directly mimic the sounds of music. Rather than imitation, his relationship with jazz is more like what Deleuze and Guattari call a *becoming*, a relational encounter: becoming-animal, becoming-woman, becoming-imperceptible... Becomings may sometimes employ outward mimicry as a means, but this is not essential. "Becoming is never imitating," they write, but rather the process of entering into "a deeper zone of proximity or indiscernibility" (Deleuze and Guattari 305).

108 So, although we should not necessarily expect Cortázar's prose to sound somehow audibly "jazzy," all the better if it does.

How, then, does this "becoming-jazz" function for Cortázar? He speaks readily of the influence of music on his writing; "in reality I was born to be a musician," he says (*Literature Class* 130). When he began writing as a child, he was "looking for rhythms derived directly from music" (*Literature Class* 131), but as he matured he shifted toward another mode of musicality. His early influences included opera, symphonic music, chamber music, popular music, folk music, and the inevitable tango, but it was his discovery of jazz that had a decisive effect on his writing:

Jazz had an enormous influence on me because I felt it contained an element that doesn't exist in music that is played from a score, from written music: it has the incredible freedom of constant improvisation [...] The permanently creative aspect of jazz—that flow of such beautiful and endless invention—was a kind of lesson and example about literature for me: to give writing that freedom, too, that inventiveness, to not be stuck in what is stereotyped or just repeat the same scores and let them influence me, but to seek out new things at the risk of making mistakes. (*Literature Class* 132)

Jazz is here conceived as a set of transmedial aesthetic ideas and values, an underlying aesthetic attitude of improvisation, risk, freedom, invention, endless creativity: a refusal of repetition and an orientation toward novelty that is linked to an ethical project of bridging divides within humanity.

The tensions between emancipatory improvisation and nostalgic closure are central to Cortázar's jazz aesthetic. Cortázar published several essays on jazz, including reviews of concerts by Louis Armstrong and Thelonius Monk, and an elegy for Clifford Brown: "When I want to know what the shaman feels in the highest tree on the path, I listen once more to Clifford Brown, a wing-beat that rends the continuum, that invents an island of the absolute within disorder" (*Around the Day* 45). He also elaborates his conception of jazz improvisation through the idea of "the take," the practice of choosing a definitive version from successive studio recordings of singu-

lar improvised expression. The literary implications are suggestive:

The best literature is always a take; there is an implicit risk in its execution, a margin of danger that is the pleasure of the flight, of the love, carrying with it a tangible loss but also a total engagement that, on another level, lends the theatre its unparalleled imperfection faced with the perfection of film.

I don't want to write anything but takes. (*Around the Day* 136)

Each chapter of *Rayuela* is, in effect, a take: a brilliant but imperfect flight forward, an attempt to connect through cadences.

Critical approaches to the relations between writing and jazz tend to emphasize the tensions between (dynamic) improvisation and (static) forms of inscription such as musical score, recording, and literature itself: the event of live performance versus its freezing in reproducible and hence commodifiable form; the openness of music versus the closure of language. As John Corbett puts it, "Improvising is not about going back to a lost land, but looking for lands yet undiscovered" (232). Cortázar's quasi-shamanic search for origins seems to contain a contradiction: is he attempting to take flight by returning to the beginning? Nicholas Roberts argues that Cortázar's emancipatory conception of jazz is ultimately self-defeating, since improvisation is fated to reinscription in the dualistic structures of language and logic which divide humankind. He claims that "Cortázar's own texts undermine the ultimate claims made in them for jazz" (Roberts 738), which "are shown to be inextricably linked not just to the impossibility of escaping iterability and representation, but also to a determined move back towards linguistic processes and structures" (742). To my ears, this is a false solution of a tension that Cortázar never resolves. Roberts's pessimistic conclusion remains at the level of conventional literary mimesis, missing how affective musicality transmits an impulse of creative liberation. Corbett gets us closer to a viable theory of reading-as-listening when he notes that "Improvisation is music to be played [...] it requires a different kind of listening in which the listener is active, a participant observer of sorts, much like the writerly reader, the "writing aloud" reader that Barthes idealizes" (233). It is perhaps the involvement of the improvising reader that ultimately liberates the text from any premature apophenic closure.

Cortázar has an idiosyncratic approach, but he is not alone in his efforts to musicalize literature through rhythm. Recent works by theorists of transmediality have shown that the musicalization of literature is a recurring tendency in modern literature. In an informative study of the role of music in the writing of Virginia Woolf, Elicia Clements emphasizes Woolf's claim that she wrote "to a rhythm and not to a plot" (Clements 190). For Clements, Woolf's musicality is an instance of what Walter Pater called the *anders-streben*, or other-striving, of art: the tendency of arts to press against their boundaries; quoting Pater, "*all art constantly aspires toward the condition of music*" (Clements 106). More recently, Werner Wolf has argued that the musicalization of literature may be thematic, imitative, or both at once. As Clements expands the idea, "Within *intermedial reference*, interart links are typically made either *thematically* (through representations of music, for example) and/or *mimeti-*

cally (through analogous imitations of musical properties” (Clements 191). In her analysis of *The Waves*, Clements finds that Woolf integrated thematization, imitation of musical sound in language (word music), and an overarching “structural analogy” with Beethoven’s *String Quartet in B-flat Major, Opus 130* (191). This schema of intermedial reference helps to contextualize *Rayuela*, yet it only partly describes what Cortázar is up to. His conception of cadence goes beyond reference toward resonance, exploring a different kind of musicality that is native to writing but influenced by an aesthetic attitude/rhythm strategy transposed from jazz. Taking inspiration from jazz is very different from modelling a novel on a symphony. For Woolf, the rigorous structure of a Beethoven opus functions as a kind of scaffolding: measured, intentional, intellectual, Apollonian, and formal. Jazz, however, is perhaps the least formalist kind of music—its distinguishing feature is the paradoxical attempt to take flight from the enabling formal constraints of conventional song structure—and Cortázar’s use of it is improvisatory, intuitive, non-rational, Dionysian, and affective.

- 110** Cortázar’s method is closer to that of the Canadian poet Dennis Lee, who describes his poetic process in strikingly similar terms: “Most of my time as a poet is spent listening into a luminous tumble, a sort of taut cascade. I call it ‘cadence,’” he writes; “I speak of hearing cadence, but the sensation isn’t auditory” (3). The practice of transcribing para-audible rhythms is an underappreciated literary phenomenon, and this initial thought sets the stage for the question of how actual music, lived rhythms, can influence writing at a deep level, and how it can be heard.

TRANSDUCTIVE ENCANTATIONS: PLAYING, LISTENING, WRITING, READING

To follow Cortázar in understanding how writing can be musical in a way that is not only referential but unfolds at the level of deep rhythm, I propose to introduce the concept of *transduction*. Thinking about literary musicalization transductively recognizes that there may be several phases of sound production and reception folded into a text that already possesses its own emergent musicality, which, I speculate along with Cortázar, has itself been transduced from a rhythmic substrate just beyond (inner) earshot. It is a way of thinking the interplay of materiality and meaning that seems crucial for understanding the apparent transfer of sound between different media, and the manifold sonorous hyper-object that results. In its primary sound-engineering sense, “[t]ransduction names how sound changes as it traverses media, as it undergoes changes in its energetic substrate” (Helmreich 222), and the concept of transduction makes it possible “to theorize what it means to encounter sound as an unfolding event” (Helmreich 222-23). With Jonathan Sterne, the concept of transduction shifts its focus from sound production to reception, highlighting the role of active listening in the process of intermedial transmission. Transducers are “cultural artifacts” (Sterne 22) that actively shape what they transmit, blending

meaning and materiality. Transduction in its technological guise summons a sense of "unmediated auditory presence," but it is crucial to recognize that this impression of seamless transmission is a product of processes that can and should be analyzed (Helmreich 226).

Paradoxically, musical transduction seems to erase the trace of its constitutive process, a paradox that inheres in literary transduction as well. In his short text "For Listening Through Headphones," Cortázar describes the series of "movements, bridges, stages" (15) folded into the experience of listening to recorded music:

It begins with a Hungarian musician who invents, transmutes and communicates a sonic structure in the form of a string quartet. By means of sensory and esthetic mechanisms, and by the technique of its intelligible transcription, that structure is encoded on a piece of sheet music which one day will be read and selected by four instrumentalists; operating through the inverse process of creation, these musicians will transmute the signs of the score into sound. From that return to the original source, the path is projected forward; multiple physical phenomena born of violins and cellos will convert those musical signs into acoustic elements which will be captured by a microphone and transformed into electrical impulses; these in turn will be converted into mechanical vibrations which will be impressed on a phonographic plate from which will emerge the record that is now asleep on its shelf. For its part the record has been the object of a mechanical decoding, provoking vibrations from a diamond in its groove (which is the most prodigious moment on the material plane, the most inconceivable in nonscientific terms), and now an electronic system of translation of those impulses comes into play, its return to the field of sound by way of loudspeakers or headphones beyond which ears are waiting in their microphonic condition to communicate in turn the sonic signals to a central laboratory of which deep down we don't have the slightest useful idea, but which half an hour ago gave me the Béla Bartók quartet at the other vertiginous extreme of that trip which it occurs to hardly anyone to imagine while they listen to records as if it were the simplest thing in the world. (*Save Twilight* 15-17)

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This transductive process covers its tracks, however, with music seeming to emerge from inside rather than outside: "the music doesn't come from the headphones, it's as if it surged out of my self, I'm my own listener/pure space where the rhythm runs" (*Save Twilight* 21). Similarly, "poetry is a word heard through invisible headphones as soon as the poem begins to work its spell [*encantamiento*]" (*Save Twilight* 21). Any trace of transduction is elided in the moment of poetic perception:

Its [the poem's] reason for coming into existence and for being turns it into the interiorization of an interiority, exactly like headphones, which eliminate the bridge from outside to inside and vice versa in order to create a state exclusively internal, the presence and experience of music which seems to come from the depths of the black cavern. (*Save Twilight* 23)

Channelling Rilke—"Orpheus sings! O towering tree in the ear!"—Cortázar concludes his analogy: "If material headphones let music arrive from within, the poem itself is a verbal headphone; its impulses pass from the printed words to the eyes and from there raise a mighty tree in the inward ear" (*Save Twilight* 23). Another constitutive tension: how does this seeming immediacy coexist with the critical analysis of

the transductive mediation? Can active listening attend simultaneously to process and product? How can listening entertain an ethical relation with otherness when it appropriates music to the self?

We can listen for this transductive process in Cortázar's fiction as well, expanding it to bridge the moment of listening and the moment of writing. In listening to the jazzified encantations of *Rayuela*, we are hearing an unfolding sonic event that has already traversed several material, energetic, and semiotic substrates. The transduction of audible musical sounds begins when Louis Armstrong, for example, blows air through a trumpet into a microphone, which is recorded to magnetic tape, transformed into linear vibrations etched into the grooves of a master record, and eventually pressed into a run of vinyl discs, one of which no doubt finds its way to Cortázar's apartment in Paris, where he spins the *Yellow Dog Blues* and imagines a group of characters philosophically riffing on it... and this then makes its way through several drafts and aleatory textual arrangements into print... and will eventually form an assemblage with concepts transduced from sound studies, here, in theory, where it may or may not be heard clearly....

Transduction is also a way of grasping the transmission of affects and thoughts, creative impulses and problems, between different media, situations, or levels of reality; bridging between sensation and concept, for instance: "to think transductively is to mediate between different orders, to place heterogeneous realities in contact, and to become something different" (Mackenzie 18). Unlike the heterogeneity of discourses dialogized within the novel, which clamor and interact upon the same plane, the transduction of music into writing creates passages between irreducibly different dimensions. Brian Massumi's "transductive approach" (xiv) to aesthetics takes the process a step further, making a path for thought to traverse disparate modes of expression:

The problems that are creatively geared into by the artistic practice, and condition its process [...] are transduced into philosophic problems entering into the constitution of a new philosophic expression [...] one process inventively takes on the problematic curves of another's incipient gestures. Through this transductive relation, philosophic writing becomes a kind of ventriloquism, in which it is not always certain which one is speaking. (Massumi xii)

This movement is at stake here, as well; thinking with Cortázar, the concept of cadence begins to resonate within an assemblage that is not entirely foreseeable.

BRIDGING DIVIDES: RHYTHM AND RESISTANCE

If the transductive process works, it may entrain both writer and readers to some kind of rhythmic memory, but whose memory? Is it individual or collective? The polyrhythmic quality of literary experience does not automatically synchronize differences: otherness persists, insists. Not all music is equally amenable to transduc-

tion: some sounds *resist*. We need to think transduction along with resistance in both material-semiotic and political senses.

For Cortázar, one of the main functions of cadence is to connect with readers in a liminal, almost subconscious way. Such rhythms, he says, "establish a special connection that the reader might not perceive but is awakening in him that same, perhaps, ancestral thing, that same sense of rhythm we all have, which makes us accept certain movements, certain forces, and certain beats" (*Literature Class* 129). Exploring the idea of ancestral rhythms would require a dive into the deep-time perspective of ethnomusicology and evolutionary musicology, which, unfortunately, we will not be able to pursue here. But the confidence that these rhythms can be communicated or be the medium of communication is crucial; cadence can be a bridge. We can theorize the process of bridging via transduced rhythm as a kind of non-synchronous *entrainment*, "the process by which independent rhythmical systems interact with each other" (Clayton 49), or *beat induction*, when one rhythmic body dominates another. The literary text would thus become the locus of an assemblage of resonating bodies entrained to one another across time and space.

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To think this through, we can turn to Henri Lefebvre's conception of *rhythm-analysis*, which brings to literary experience a renewed appreciation of complex embodiment. The rhythm-analyst listens to the world, to its noises, murmurs, and silences: "He listens—and first to his body; he learns rhythm from it, in order consequently to appreciate external rhythms" (Lefebvre 29). Rhythms may be logogenic or pathogenic (68), Apollonian or Dionysian (71), dominating or dominated (27), but they always return to bodies and to relations of eurhythmia, arrhythmia, and polyrhythmia. The scope is expansive: "The crowd is a body, the body is a crowd" (51). But the body has historically been suppressed in Western music, and only in recent times has it begun to assert its rhythmic authority once more, with jazz in the avant garde: "The body and its rhythms remain no less a resource for music: the site towards which creation returns through strange detours (jazz, etc.)" (75). A manifold text like *Hopscotch* produces a polyrhythm, and as Lefebvre emphasizes, "Polyrhythmia analyses itself" (25). Reading as deep listening therefore implies a mode of analysis that brings into play a multitude of rhythms and a tracing of their transductive processes. From this perspective, the text itself is a resonant, vibratory body, open to improvised play. Similarly, for Jacques Attali, improvisation is "related to the rediscovery and blossoming of the body [...] it plugs music into the noises of life and the body, whose movement it fuels. It is thus laden with risk, disquieting, an unstable challenging, and anarchic and ominous festival, like a Carnival with an unpredictable outcome" (142).

Rhythmic attunement is a deep principle for Cortázar. Unexpectedly, Lefebvre gives Cortázar a prominent place in his previsionary portrait of the rhythm-analyst. "Amongst the myriads of texts and quotations on rhythm, one stands out as highly singular" (34), he writes, and proceeds to quote from Cortázar's first published novel:

“When we look at a constellation,” said Persio, “we can see something like an assurance that the harmony and the rhythm uniting its stars (a rhythm which we impose, of course, but which we impose because something also happens there which determines this harmony) is more profound, more substantial than the isolated existence of any one of its stars.” (*The Winners* 39)¹

Lefebvre comments that “Cortázar’s text, extreme in its (intentional) naivety, describes an order there where there are only abysses, fabulous distortions and perhaps colossal forces in conflict” (34). There is a cosmic dimension to Cortázar’s conception of rhythm; rhythmanalysis quickly takes us into deep metaphysical waters, and as Octavio Paz writes, in a text that Cortázar may have known, “Speech is a cluster of living beings, moved by rhythms like the rhythms that rule the stars and the planets” (40).

114 Ultimately, Cortázar’s transmedial transduction of jazz into his own cadences makes the text into a para-audible resonant structure. Listening for enchantatory cadences in *Rayuela* is further complicated by the novel’s non-linear, open structure, a selection of parts that can be assembled in many ways by different readers, or by the same readers in different times and places. Local rhythms at the sentence and chapter level combine to form unforeseeable aleatory polyrhythms. The virtual event of the text can then be conceived as a para-auditory, plurivocal, multitemporal, polyrhythmic becoming-other—a supremely unhearable multiplicity. *Rayuela*’s cadences oscillate between the time of listening, the time of writing, and the time of reading, giving rise to a virtual sonorous event. This resonating assemblage is not rooted to a particular place: like jazz, it is permanently migrant and interstitial, an unfolding experience, intensely ephemeral. Yet to listen deeply is to relink this rootless manifold sounding to its place or places of origin, or in other words to historicize its multilayered production.

Given that it seems possible to hear Cortázar’s novel as a multilayered, resonant event, we need to ask after the conditions of audibility in the present, and to consider the disquieting possibility that this project might fail to be heard. Beyond the difficult transduction of para-audible cadence, the resonance of the text is further complicated by conditions of postcoloniality, race, exile, and translation across languages and temporalities. This calls for a kind of deep listening, within which we might ask whether or how Cortázar’s transduction of jazz is faithful to its origins—the creative unfolding of the encounter with jazz—or indeed whether such translation is really possible without becoming a traducement, a betrayal of its source. Listening to Cortázar listen to jazz, can we truly hear what is there to be heard, or is our listening limited by conditions that might obstruct the faithful transduction of eurhythmic sound and deliver us instead into an arrhythmia? In the essay quoted earlier, Dennis Lee also suggests that the audibility of poetic cadences for the poets themselves may be obstructed, distorted by the conditions of coloniality, which can sever us from native cadences, or complicate our acceptance of rhythms that are not truly our own.

All translation is haunted by the spectre of traducement, and this is further com-

plicated by the challenge of translating rhythms that flow below literal meaning. Supposing that hybridized ancestral cadences can indeed be transduced into writing, how can we be sure that they will be heard? For Cortázar, this is not only possible, but the very condition of possibility for his style of writing. Yet he is aware that cadence is not universally hearable or translatable. A translation may be very accurate at the level of semantic content, but if the translator fails to hear the rhythm the result will "[lack] that aura, that light, that deep sound, which isn't auditory but rather interior, and comes from a certain way of writing prose in Spanish" (*Literature Class* 130). Cadence may be difficult to translate; if we are able to "hear" it, it is reaching us across a relay of risky, lossy transformations. Cadence may be lost in translation, and if we miss it, it is because we are sensitive to "profound intuitions, irrational things" (*Literature Class* 129), and our sense of rhythm goes very deep:

The great pulsations of blood, of the flesh, of nature move outside the realm of the intellect, and there is no way to control them through logic. When the translator isn't receptive to that, has not been able to put in another language the equivalent to that pulse, that music, I have the impression that the story falls flat. (*Literature Class* 129-30)

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Thus one of the immediate practical implications of listening for para-audible cadence is in the art of translation, and in the reading of translations: we need to tune our inner hearing not only to our own bodies and milieux but to unfamiliar rhythms.

Cortázar increasingly came to see literature as a way of bridging divides between people alienated from each other and from some forgotten common origin, and his conception of jazz plays a key role in this ethico-politico-aesthetic project. Cortázar's jazzification of prose is shaped by how he hears jazz, and if we listen in on a scene of listening, we find that he hears something that is not necessarily universally audible, but is instead shaped by his own specific mode of listening. His long story *El Perseguidor* (*The Pursuer*, 1963), completed immediately before *Rayuela*, follows a jazz musician called Johnny Carter, a fictionalization of Charlie Parker, who is searching for something beyond the limits of conformist life. This story is sometimes referred to as "*Rayuelita*," or "*little Hopscotch*," because of the similarities of theme and character it shares with its more ambitious sequel; Johnny Carter is a bridge toward Horacio Oliveira, the searching protagonist of *Rayuela*. In another meta-literary note, Morelli imagines literature as "a living bridge from man to man" (*Hopscotch* 396). Cortázar echoes Morelli's phrasing when he reflects later on *El Perseguidor* as a decisive turning point in his literary itinerary: "Living in that enormous solitude in Paris, it was as if I suddenly started to discover my fellow man in the figure of Johnny Carter: a black musician pursued by misfortune [...] That first encounter with my fellow man [...] that first bridge built directly from one man to another" (*Literature Class* 7). Cortázar's ethical itinerary, his discovery of otherness, is thus explicitly linked to jazz, and his aesthetic line of flight is truly a becoming-other with, perhaps, universal emancipatory potential.

For Cortázar, jazz is the "only really universal music of the century [...] something

that brought people closer together” (*Hopscotch* 69). Fittingly for an exile, Cortázar’s jazz is music in flight: “jazz is like a bird who migrates or emigrates or immigrates or transmigrates, roadblock jumper, smuggler, something that runs and mixes in” (*Hopscotch* 70). He goes on to imagine the ubiquity of Louis Armstrong at the height of his international fame, playing all the cities of the world, and becoming like

una nube sin fronteras, un espía del aire y del agua, una forma arquetípica, algo de antes, de abajo, que reconcilia mexicanos con noruegos y rusos y españoles, los reincorpora al oscuro fuego central olvidado, torpe y mal y precariamente los devuelve a un origen traicionado, les señala que quizá había otros caminos y que el que tomaron no era el único y no era el mejor. (*Rayuela* 86)

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a cloud without frontiers, a spy of air and water, an archetypal form, something from before, from below, that brings Mexicans together with Norwegians and Russians and Spaniards, brings them back into that obscure and forgotten central flame, clumsily and badly and precariously he delivers them back to a betrayed origin, he shows them that perhaps there have been other paths and that the path they took was maybe not the only one or the best one. (*Hopscotch* 70)

Is this there in the music for anyone to hear, or is it a case of active listening in the strong sense? The return to an obscured common origin and the opening up of alternative paths suggest the emancipatory potential of a listening otherwise, a way of accessing alternate temporalities and possibilities that could subvert the mendacious necessity of a single monolithic history. Cortázar’s listening appears as a double fidelity, both to the music and to the alternate temporalities that it makes thinkable. Yet this fidelity is complicated by the insistence on jazz’s transhistorical character, its seemingly placeless universality. Is something essential lost when we listen in this way?

Cultural difference is a critical condition of audibility. It must be acknowledged that jazz is essentially a product of Black American culture, which is inextricably entangled with resistance to racism, slavery, and colonialism, and the ongoing struggle for emancipation. Despite Cortázar’s sincere and deep engagement with jazz, there is not much evidence that he has heard this history. If taken at face value, the feeling of universality he finds in Louis Armstrong or Duke Ellington and the sense of alternative temporal possibilities he hears in their music risk muting the embodied history that has shaped black music and culture. Nathaniel Mackey has shown that “white appropriation and commercialization of swing resulted in a music that was less improvisatory, less dependent upon the inventiveness of soloists” (60). If we hear Cortázar’s cadences, and follow him in thinking of jazz and love as “agents of potency” and “lines of flight” (*Hopscotch* 72), we should also heed Mackey’s call for attention to the “counter-tradition of marronage, divergence, flight, fugitive tilt” present in the Black literary tradition (68).

These improvisations around Cortázar’s writing are sometimes portable: ideas travel, traverse fields far from their place of origin; and indeed, the possibility of such

metamorphic mobility is a key stake of this article. One such idea is that encantatory cadence manifests a kind of musicality that is not only transmedially transduced but emergent, native to literature, and that by listening carefully we may be able to hear something profound about human existence. To conclude, I suggest we cultivate a decolonial and antiracist deep listening that attends, inner ears open, to the crosscurrents of cadence and meaning at play in a text like *Rayuela*. In the ambiguity of active listening, we should listen carefully and attend to what our own conceptions and investments amplify or silence. Reading Cortázar sonically—transmedially, transductively, and rhythmanalytically—demonstrates that a novel can enact a complex sonorous event, which unfolds across different milieus, linking up polyrhythmically with unforeseeable beats of other times and places. The unfinalizable nature of the novel, and the inherently unpredictable quality brought into play by possible responses to its field of musical resonance, means that it remains open to re-audition.

NOTE

1. Ironically, the quotation as presented has been mangled in the process of relay translation from Cortázar's Spanish into French, and from French into English. Here I quote the familiar English translation of Elaine Kerrigan.

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