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**Mapping Affective Infra-structures:
Engaging Pre-Colonial Histories of Grief through Performance**

Kathyayini Dash

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Supervised by Sara Matchett and Ari Sitas

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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to

Shree S.A. Parmar Saheb

and

Nilima Sheikh

who taught me, in their own ways, that songs and images are living things

and

Buti Bongo

who among many magical things taught me to *“listen to the story”*

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NOTE ON TRANSLATION AND TRANSLITERATION

Gujarati, Hindi, and Kachchhi words have been transliterated into the Roman/ English alphabet according to their pronunciation. All translations are mine unless otherwise indicated.

ABSTRACT

This thesis explores the relationship between sound, body and history. It proposes the concept of affective infra-structures that emerges out of an engagement with the idea of embodied histories and explores musical entrances into historiography. I draw from my pilot fieldwork for the RAA Project¹ and use the Wayee, a musical system built on the lament, practiced by a semi-nomadic community of buffalo herders from Bhagaadiya, Kachchh, Gujarat, India, as a nodal point that connects to all the propositions emerging throughout the course of my thesis. I suggest that the Wayee enables and operates within a sonic infra-structure of grief that works as a modality through which events are remembered and shared. In this way, materials like the Wayee can be perceived as historical-musical codes, that become a means of mapping transnational and transcontinental memories and possibly even deriving old musical linkages and histories of migration. These histories lie in the *way* they are told; in the *way* they are sung and it is these infra-structures that make such histories apparent.

This Practice-as Research (PaR) thesis comprises of two inter-connected components—a written thesis and a performance event+exhibition. The written thesis seeks to arrive at methods and frameworks through which historiographical methods and research can be interwoven with performance practice. The first chapter discusses pre-colonial pasts and embodied histories and considers how certain forms of performance like the Wayee, become a modality of remembering where the sonic medium holds a unique capacity of installing the past in the present. The second chapter discusses the dispersible body as a site and a framework in which pasts are kept alive through a performative medium like the sonic (the lament being an aspect). The third chapter provides a sonic vocabulary to be used as an academic hearing-aid, making musical perception and sonic materiality available to the unversed, not just the musically adept. Chapter Four discusses the relationship between music and affect while deriving the idea of affective infra-structures of grief through an explication of the sonic materiality of the musical lament and performance practice as a modality through which

¹ Re-centering Afro Asia Project (Musical and Human Migrations 700-1500A.D) The RAA Project is a supra-institutional project, started by Prof. Ari Sitas (2016-2022), comprising partnerships between the College of Music at the University of Cape Town, the Centre for Humanities Research at the University of the Western Cape, the Wits School of Arts at the University of the Witwatersrand, the University of Dar es Salaam (Tanzania), the Yared School of Music at Addis Ababa University, Ethiopia, and the School of Culture and Creative Expressions of the Ambedkar University, Delhi.

histories that appear to be ‘lost’ show themselves. The penultimate chapter includes a reflective exposition of the thesis performance/event and the final chapter summarizes the written thesis.

The aim of the performance/event was to explore the shape of grief, through a transcontinental musical collaborative exploration of the *mahaul* (musical atmosphere by probing the subject of meetings and departures. The exhibition component of the performance/event included artworks produced during the doctoral process and aural/visual citations, that have both shaped and been shaped by the insights collected in the written thesis. I have sought to re-center feeling, and focus on how affective infra-structures of grief are spread across Afro-Eur-Asian lives in ways that enable us to recognize the lament not just as a moving expression of deep sorrow, but as an empowering and powerful modality through which transnational and transcontinental solidarities were forged, are remembered, and can be rebuilt today.

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INTRODUCTION

'People are trapped in history, and history is trapped in them'

James Baldwin

The thesis explores the relationship between sound, body and history. It proposes the concept of affective infra-structures that emerges out of an engagement with the idea of embodied histories and explores musical entrances into historiography when faced with the challenges of histories that are termed “lost” or “irretrievable”. I draw from my pilot fieldwork for the Re-centering Afro Asia Project (Human and Musical Migrations 700 AD - 15 C BCE) and use the Wayee, a musical system built on the lament, practiced by a semi-nomadic community of buffalo herders from Bhagadiya, Kachchh, Gujarat, India, as a nodal point that connects to all the propositions emerging throughout the course of my thesis.

I suggest perceiving the Wayee as operating within and enabling a sonic infra-structure of grief that becomes a modality by which events are remembered and shared. In this way, materials like the Wayee can be perceived as historical-musical codes, that become a means of mapping trans-continental memories and possibly even deriving old musical linkages and histories of migration, if taken further. These histories lie in the way they are told; in the way they are sung and it is these infra-structures that make such histories apparent.

Alongside, the idea of the dismantle-able body has remained a central trope in my work and has informed the way I install myself within the field of artistic practice and research. I have been interested in immersive ways of working with affective intensities of various mediums of expression and in this I have worked across fields such as the visual arts, performance, and music. My practice has grown to encompass diverse visual and aural mediums, finding place at the edges of installation and performance. A particular focus has been to draw on multi-disciplinary forms of imagining the archival of the present. This has allowed my artworks to be in constant interaction with the social and the political to develop affective forms of engaging people's histories.

In my graduate dissertation entitled *Installing the Body: Study of the Artist, Site and Spectatorship* (Dash, 2017), I looked at the amalgamated and deployable figure of the artist-fieldworker derived theoretically and practically out of a range of art projects. Building upon trajectories that I have been pursuing so far as a visual artist and as a practitioner of Hindustani classical music, especially drawing from the music and poetry of lament of the fifteenth century

socio-mystic saint Kabir Das, I have produced a range of pluri-medial works that grapple with articulating the body in its porous relationship to the world as sensorium. This has led to my interest in the idea of the body-world, built interactively through the processes of materialization, reproduction, and assimilation.

Given this background, my doctoral work derives out of a historiographical research project—the RAA project. My thesis project aims to trace a transcontinental lament embedded in devotional music sung by a particular nomadic lower caste¹ community in Kachchh, Gujarat, India. My work as a Research Associate in the RAA project has allowed me to probe more deeply into my artistic and research practices. Even though this project is a historiographical one, it has opened out possibilities of housing disciplines of performance, visual arts, sociology, and ethno-musicology within its archival imaginary. It has served as a platform to further my enquiries around these subjects as well as to delve deeper into the musical components of my installations and performances. It has germinated the idea of tracing a pre-colonial history where there is not much existing scholarship from a non-Eurocentric perspective. By working through my archive, that begins from my pilot fieldwork that contains oral narratives, recordings of songs, interviews, soundscapes and landscapes of the field site and field notes and leads me through a series of art works and performances produced in my doctoral research, I have sought to develop historiographical methodologies and performance practices that draw from the ideas of the disperse-able nomadic body and the embodied musical note.

This dissertation stems from a historiographical pursuit but it intends to significantly move away from the drive to accuracy and the ambitions of retrieval. Instead, the project is interested in the processes involved in this historiographical pursuit. The pre-colonial time-frame of the project pushes me to work with ‘irretrievable histories’; such histories pose great challenges to historiography. My involvement as an artist researcher in the RAA project has led me to ask in what ways artistic practice can contribute to the methodologies of history. The introduction to the Practice-as-Research (PaR) methodology as instituted at the Centre for Theatre, Dance & Performance Studies (CTDPS) at the University of Cape Town (UCT) has

¹The caste system in India is a system of social hierarchy built into the religion of Hinduism. Communities are divided on the basis of *varna* and *jati* (See *Annihilation of Caste* by B.R. Ambedkar). An individual belonging to the Hindu religion is born into one of four broad categories of castes- Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas and Shudras- depending on their surname which is a marker of caste in India. Each of these categories are further divided into sub castes. Out of all the four basic castes, the Shudras are identified as the lower castes. The lower castes have been historically been at the receiving end of inhumane and violently discriminatory practices, that continue even today. The caste question is a complex and fraught territory, especially when read in intersection with class, race and religion, that has been rigorously studied both in India and globally and key scholarship readily available. See Gopal Guru and Sundar Sarukkai’s *The Cracked Mirror: An Indian Debate on Experience and Theory* (2012) and B.R. Ambedkar’s *Annihilation of Caste* (1936).

enabled me to engage with two significant questions: In what ways can artistic practice-as-research contribute to the methodological engagement with such histories? What modes of practice are available for the artist-researcher?

Research Questions, Aims and Objectives

This thesis is primarily a methodological project that explores the idea of embodied histories and the significance of feelings and emotions in the forms and sites within which historical materials and processes of remembering circulate. I would like to set up the concept of affective infra-structures that emerges out of an engagement with different modalities of doing history in and through performance. The thesis moves with a focus on musical entrances into historiography that seeks to trace the lament trans-continentially through a mapping of the Afro-Eur-Asian region. Using the Wayee, a nomadic musical lament form with resonances across this region, as a nodal point, prompts the explication of a sonic affective infra-structure of grief that emerges through my engagement with the Practice-as-Research methodology.

My key research questions are as follows:

- How can embodied historical narratives be located and understood? When one moves away from the archival impulse, in what forms and shapes does embodied history present itself?
- How does one think through the intricate layers of history that are encoded in oral/aural narratives and forms of music?
- In what ways would inter/multi-disciplinarity, drawing from the visual arts/performance practices and frameworks within artistic research, contribute to the processes of historicization that is driven and embodied by affect?
- How can I draw from and expand upon PaR as a methodology and a framework to understand/explicate the procedures of embodiment, affective infra-structures, and the materiality of history in and through my own practice?

In order to engage with a different kind of history of migration and trans-continental connectivity, I will be focussing on multi-disciplinary approaches in performance that can be developed within the PaR methodology that seems to be emerging out of an investigation into the relationship between historiography and embodied material. With this in mind, this thesis aims to engage questions arising out of a study of the Wayee while working through the implications for constituting performative archives and developing historiographical

methods. Following this, the thesis focusses on the form of the lament across an Afro-Eur-Asian sonic landscape that is connected by bodies carrying resonating musical systems, voices, soundscapes, folktales, spiritual traditions, images, metaphors and poetry which nudges a broader yet simultaneous motivation to find ways of explicating pre-colonial embodied histories of grief through modalities of performance practice, using the Wayee as my central example.

To this avail, the thesis aims to study and develop the concepts of “embodiment” and “affective infra-structure” so as to enable the study of affective forms like musical forms such as the Wayee and the emergent trans-continental sonic landscape in ways that will help establish the body as a site of historicization where pasts are installed through the modality of performance where they acquire particular shapes and forms with an integral relationship to practice. The objective behind working out a PaR project informed by the trope of grief as well as the concepts of “embodiment” and “affective infra-structures” would not only enable an explication of a different kind of historiography and approach to doing history, it would also help expand the function and approaches within artistic research and position artistic practices as integral to the movement, shape and form that historical processes take. Finally, the thesis also aims to develop and expand upon the scope and functions of my own artistic practice in performance that lies at the intersection of music, visual arts, performance and cultural studies.

Theoretical Framework

This research project has drawn from a range of theoretical sources to understand grief as a “trope” as well as a structuring device; to understand frameworks of reading the nomadic body in a way that may provide lenses to make “visible” pre-colonial, marginalised and border histories. It is an attempt to arrive at a productive ground formed at the intersections of historiography and performance. I have presented my theoretical framework in four sections reflecting on the interconnected nature of this study. The theoretical areas that I have drawn on include the following:

Section I

Theories of Affect

Given that Affect Studies is a largely creolised field, it offers a variety of vantage points including perspectives from cultural studies, performance studies and the performing arts among others, to understand the structure of feelings and processes of affectivity (See Sharma

& Tygstrup 2015) and to examine the movement of affect across body and space (See Ahmed 2004a, 2004b).

Taking the Wayee's musical system as an example, I derive from the perspectives offered by the field of Affect Studies and Affectivity Studies particularly, to understand grief as a register as well as a structuring device. I use the musical system of the Wayee as a reference point in and through which I explore my methodological and historiographical enquiries. Theories of affect have assisted me in understanding and unpacking the emotional registers of grief and the laments that compose the structure of this musical system.

Theories of Affect have also simultaneously directed my own processes and constructions of pluri-medial performances at both micro and molar levels (See Research Methodology and Research Methods sections for an elaboration). Understanding how the concept of affective intensities has come to be theorised has allowed me to contextualise performance discourse and my own artistic practice. Further, it has helped me to understand the interwoven relationship between affective artistic forms of expression and affective intensities. Developing an understanding of the theorisation of affect and its politics also refined my understanding of the politics of immersion. Lastly, an engagement with this field of study opened out the potential of immersive performance as a historiographical method.

Section II

Theories of Performance

Theories of performance provide fertile ground for the many questions arising out of the historiography of pre-colonial nomadic histories of migration. I house my historiographical enquiries within the pluri-medial field of performance by working with a PaR methodological framework. Perspectives from the theories of performance helped me understand the larger phenomenological grounding of PaR more deeply and led me to explore the ways in which performance can be used as a methodology for generating knowledge (See Fleishman, 2012 and Cull, 2012) in the context of my own artistic research as well as the artistic cultural practice of the Wayee while enabling an understanding of how to work out performative installations while being alive to questions of materiality, site, space and spectatorship.

Sonic, Voice, and Music Theories

The role of voice, vibration, frequencies, ways of learning to produce particular sounds that come to be known as (musical) notes, is crucial to the musical system and the cultural tradition of the Wayee. The practice of the Wayee is deeply interlaced with the cultural tradition and

community memory of the Bhagadiya Jaths. Sonic and voice theories help understand the role of the voice in the preservation of community memory. Understanding how sound (as in fields such as sound studies, ethno-musicology and media studies) and the voice (in fields such as voice studies and performing arts) have been theorised, allowed me to gain perspectives and tools to work with histories that are potentially encoded in sound and voice (See Thomaidis, 2015 and MacKendrick, 2016). Considering the Wayee forms the foundation on which I pose the questions of affect and embodied histories, music becomes one of the major entry points in my research process.

I have also worked with the concept of musicophilia as a framework to understand the formation of the musical subject (Niranjana, 2020) and the way a musical world order can be constituted (See Niranjana 2020 and Sacks 2007). Additionally, I draw on sonic, voice and body theories emerging from Indian medieval theological treatises (See Beck 1995, Holdrege 2015) that present very useful non-euro-centric lenses to understand the body, voice and sound in the context of the Wayee, my own experience and practice of music, and the musical practice in the global South.

An engagement with these theories enabled the investigation into larger methodological questions of aural/oral historiography and material/formal questions of aural/oral history. The contextual reading of the Wayee's musical system with perspectives from sonic, music and voice theories also intersects with a renewed engagement with my own practice of voice that has been one of the central components of my performance installations, leading to a more nuanced understanding of the relationship between voice and memory.

Section III

Theories of Embodiment

The Jath community is one of many across the world that have an embodied relationship with the past. Their nomadic pasts are embodied in their cultural practices. The Wayee is one of their most defining cultural practices. The Wayee mainly involves processes of embodying notes and the creation of an atmosphere of grief through the course of the performance as they sing of community stories and events that have merged with folklore over centuries. The performance of the Wayee is an embodied experience not only for the performer, but also for the listener. My training in the Hindustani classical form of music has enabled me to understand the relationship between the notes and the body, and the processes involved in the embodiment of the note. The musical system of the Wayee and the way it is sung by the Jath community is significantly different from the canonical forms of Indian classical music. Theories of

embodiment have helped me understand the processes of embodied musical systems such as the Wayee. Theories of Embodied Cognition have enriched my discussion of embodied histories through an engagement with processes of knowing (See Merleau-Ponty 2002, Gallagher 2017) and have enabled me to develop frameworks to read processes of embodiment from the vantage point of the nomadic body and helped me devise ways of engaging with these nomadic pasts (See Butler, 2011, Bourdieu, 2001, Pink, 2015).

Decolonial Theory

A non-Eurocentric drive sits at the foundation of this research project. Theories of Decolonial Discourse have given me insights into the nuanced relationship between Decolonial theory and Pre-colonial history, helping me to engage the historiography of pre-colonial aural/oral memory. The Decolonial vantage point (See Mignolo, 2000, Mbembe, 2011, Erasmus, 2017) forges a new relationship with the colonial “moment” that is a significant historical marker in my research project. This dissertation is driven by a decolonial impulse because it engages with unrecorded non-Eurocentric histories. These are histories that are encoded in other ways and that resist the written word. The nomadic Jath community is one among many marginalised communities that has its pasts encoded in cultural musical traditions that have either become myth or folktale in the colonial imaginary. These histories move beyond legitimisations of colonial modernity and demand other methodological ways of doing history and thus find their place in Decolonial discourse. Moreover, the Cultural Studies orientation of Decolonial theory involves reading the Wayee as a cultural text; this helps open out the manner in which categories of class, caste, gender, nation, and religion are constructed in and through this cultural text while also tracking the way power and ideology are implicated in the work of culture (See Chatterjee, 2004, Hall, 1997, Gilroy, 1993).

In this context, subaltern historiography has developed new ways of reading a text. Subaltern Studies lends important perspectives into the conceptualization of the body, voice and speech (See Spivak 2013, Guha 1983, Chatterjee 2004). I draw on Subaltern Studies to understand the ethical implications of inter-subjectivity involved in my field of research practice, specifically to better understand the politics and ethics of working through my own subjectivity and unpacking the socio-political implications of the artist-researcher who works with subaltern subjects and histories.

Research Methodology

This dissertation is located at the interstices of sociology, philosophy and performance, brought together under the umbrella of Affect Studies. My intention is to work with Artistic Research, with Practice as Research (PaR) as the over-arching methodological paradigm, as well as Multi-Sensory Anthropology to configure a set of methodological vantage points to find my way through the research landscape.

Practice as Research and Practice based Research

Practice as Research (PaR) is one of the methodologies that fall under the umbrella of Artistic Research. PaR is a methodological process that is located within phenomenology. It uses artistic processes for research such that the hegemony of the text in academic research is challenged by acts of ‘doing’ (Fleishman, 2012). PaR methodologies argue that the “work” of art should be considered as a product of research, where the product of research lies in the methodology and processes. The ‘final outcome’ can be considered as a punctuation mark. Melissa Trimmingham describes the final outcome in PaR methodology as a pause, a temporary exit out of the hermeneutic-interpretive spiral (Trimingham, 2002:56). It could also be understood as a marking of a nodal point in the Deleuzian rhizome (Deleuze and Guattari 2017).

Practice-based Research in the Creative Arts (PbR) indicates that an original investigation is undertaken in order to gain new knowledge partly by the means of practice and the outcomes of that practice (Candy, 2006). A signifying marker of PbR lies in its relationship to the written component in the context of a doctoral thesis project. The written component conventionally would be treated as a contextualisation of the practice-based enquiry and outcome that is put up for evaluation; additionally, the written component is treated as a reflection on these enquiries and outcomes. When the written component is treated as a reflection of the practice, or as a contextualisation/analysis that inevitably acts as a “support” to the practice, it shrinks the possibilities that arise when PaR is used as a generative methodology in the context of a transdisciplinary doctoral project. In lieu of this, there are other ways in which this relationship can be productively worked out. In the context of my research process and outcome, I use the term sub-methodology, because the relationship between the written and practical component will shape each other in terms of the process of enquiry and outcome and will produce different yet intersecting knowledge.

This research project seeks to engage writing as material—wherein writing, whether inductive or deductive, becomes a component that operates in conjunction with practice. This

will allow the project to be more aligned with the PaR methodology that works towards achieving a praxis of thought. Therefore, I have chosen to use PaR as an over-arching methodological paradigm within which PbR is used as a sub-methodology.

PaR begins with an intuitive hunch, or impulse that is followed through and charts its own course guided by unexpected accidents: “channelled durationally, through repetition, in variable and indeterminable directions” (Fleishman, 2012:34). In the same mode, the RAA Project, despite being a historiographical project, has invited all kinds of entry points. It moves beyond the archival imaginary and impulse and seeks to re-think the entry points and methodologies of probing the past, and in the process, is forging new relationships with history and forms of knowledge. The boundaries of the project are rendered fluid, and thus resonate with what Fleishman describes as an “external membrane that is perceptible in retrospect in such a way that it establishes a territory but is always porous and elastic” (2012:34). The RAA project has evolved across multiple elements and entry-points that have emerged along the way through almost a decade-long process of ‘creative and critical evolution’ (Fleishman, 2012: 34). The elements include: the musical ensemble (The Insurrections Ensemble), music albums and visual art works (produced out of the Insurrections performances), the RAA repository of manuscripts, recordings, documents and fieldwork (collected as part of the fieldwork and research conducted by students and researchers on the project), performance productions (theatre productions emerging out of research from the RAA Project; for example, *Dark Things*).² These elements have affected the way the “territory” of the project is marked and have actively determined the shifting of its boundaries.

By locating PaR within the time-space of transversal becoming, Fleishman (2012) offers a comprehensive way to understand the kind of research process involved in the context of artistic research. Within this structural and conceptual background, he offers repetition as an apparatus that can chart the course for a “creative evolution charged by accidental explosions” (2012:34). The effects of such an apparatus, is a “slowing down or thickening of time” (2012: 35) that is perceived as an instance or iteration. I have drawn on this idea of repetition as an apparatus while also keeping in mind that this can be one of many potential apparatuses that

² *Dark Things* (2018) is based on a script by Ari Sitas titled “Notes on an Oratorio for Small Things that Fall”. This collaborative musical performance was conducted partly as an elective course offered at the Performance Studies Department, School of Culture and Creative Expressions (SCCE), Ambedkar University Delhi and partly as one of the outcomes of the RAA Project, UCT. It was directed by Deepan Sivaraman and Anuradha Kapur and was created collaboratively with the students and invited alumnis (which included me) of SCCE, Ambedkar University Delhi through a series of workshops. Reza Khota from South Africa and Chandran Veyattumal and Sumangala Damodaran from India were invited to collaborate and simultaneously workshop the sound and music for the play. Trailer available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U36OoaFns7M>

emerge from not only the practice of such a methodology, but also from the mixed needs and pushes that come from the specific contexts of this study. The idea of repetition contributes to the shifting of territories of my PaR project and puts in place a deterritorialization, an open system (Fleishman, 2012), in order to grapple with the complex processes of affect transaction and to develop the framework of the disperse-able nomadic body. It both marks nodal points of difference and to be in the middle of what Tim Ingold terms, “somewhere” (2011b:227). Being in the middle of ‘somewhere’ does not mean that the territories are without limit, rather it suggests that limits are constantly shifting because of movements within the project.

Ingold’s ideas of “wayfinding” and “mapping” have been significant to my articulation of PaR (2011b:231-243). Ingold argues that wayfinding as a method is located across two perspectives and processes of knowing in artistic research (2011a:172-188). The first is the building perspective (2011a:178) that draws from the idea of building a house before entering and living in it. In other words, one will have a picture before entering the landscape. Ingold takes the example of villagers and their settlements, “in the case of villagers, the environment is already built” (2011a:181). The second is the dwelling perspective (2011a:185) that draws from the idea of making a home around oneself, implying living in the home, suggesting that the picture emerges through an engagement with the landscape. For this Ingold gives the example of nomadic pastoralists (like the Bhagadiya Jath community) and hunter gatherers: he says “in the case of nomadic pastoralists, it would seem, the environment, though thought, is never more than partially built. As for the hunter-gatherers, it appears that the building hardly gets started at all...the situation where the environment is thought but never built” (2011a: 181). These perspectives are integral to the ‘knowing of and relationship to the landscape’ which is equivalent to saying that the research process (including its vantage) is integral and determinant of the kind of knowledge that is produced. While the first uses the “map-using” approach, the latter uses the “wayfinding” approach.

Mapping is an open-ended on-going process that always leads to the next map. Wayfinding, in contrast, is not a movement from one spatial location to the next, but a movement in time that is more analogous to music or storytelling (Ingold 2011b:232). Ingold (2011b) writes:

In ordinary wayfinding, by contrast, every place holds within it memories of arrivals and departures, as well as expectations of how one may reach it, or reach other places from it. Thus do places enfold the passage of time: they are neither of the past, present or future but all three rolled into one. (2011b:238)

The notion of mapping and wayfinding are crucial to my research project. They are significant within the context of thematising precolonial histories of nomadic migratory movements across the Afro-Asiatic map in the attempt to trace a transcontinental lament on one hand and with the PaR methodology in performance on the other.

Multi-sensory Anthropology and Phenomenological/Sensory Anthropology

The methodologies of multi-sensory anthropology and phenomenological anthropology that centre the experiencing body of the fieldworker would also be significant to my research processes. Though contradictory at some levels, I believe they can be made to speak with each other in the context of the nomadic disperse-able body when brought under the overarching ambit of PaR discussed above. They can act as a connecting path between the historiographical pursuit and the performative pursuit of the project.

The RAA fieldwork was an integral part of my research process. In this context, I propose working methodologically with the notion of the artist-fieldworker. The notion of wayfinding resonates with my invocation of the figure of the artist-fieldworker. Unpacking the figure of the artist-fieldworker in the context of embodied practices, I have argued that it is useful to look at artwork, artist, and the field as a symbiotic socio-ecosystem, where the field is imagined as a present dispersed into the past and gathered back into the present (Dash, 2020). I suggest that theoretical figurations as embodied vantage points could become one of the ways of identifying affective infra-structures within the body of the artist-fieldworker/ practitioner. Therefore, while speaking of the artist-fieldworker, it seems useful to think of the figure as a mode of functioning: “It is through our socio-bodily interaction in the ongoing present that historical systems like that of caste, gender or race get reproduced, materialising into our bodies, taking visual and tangible and sensual form” (K. Dash, 2020:123).

Anthropology has seen many turns and paradigmatic shifts within its methodological relationship to the senses. The characterization of the field as sensorium has led to a development of different strands within the field of anthropology, which include anthropology of the senses, phenomenological anthropology or sensory anthropology, and multisensory anthropology. David Howes is one of the most significant thinkers in the newly emerging field of Multi-sensory Anthropology (2019). Ingold notes that “Howes, McLuhan, Carpenter and Ong...effectively laid the foundations for a currently vibrant field of enquiry that has come to be known as the anthropology of the senses” (Ingold in Pink, 2015:7) Both McLuhan and Howes are concerned with the cultural categories of sensory experience—vision, sound, smell, taste—and with how we experience the self and the social through these categories.

Anthropology of the Senses was founded on the basis of a representational theory where senses are viewed as bodily registers that enable the piecing together of information in the mind of the perceiver. Ingold, on the other hand, drawing from the work of Merleau-Ponty, Hans Jonas and James Gibson, argues that one must work against a focus on culture and representation where the senses are not merely transmitters. Instead, he argues, they must rather be understood as aspects of action or ways of going forth into the world (Pink, 2015). Howes (2019) argues that, for Ingold “sight is an experience of light, hearing an experience of sound” (2019: 20) where the senses are not acknowledged as being bound by cultural hierarchy.

Imagining culture to take the form of various sensory mediums, W. G. T. Mitchell begins from the premise that there is no exclusive (visual) media, but that “all media is mixed media” (Mitchell, 2005:399). He argues that the notion of medium or mediation already implies a mixture of sensory, perceptual and semiotic elements. “There are no purely auditory, tactile or olfactory media either” (2005:399). He weaves the senses together to say that there is no pure sensory media just as there is no such thing as a pure sensory perception, but claims that the specificity of the media is a question of specific sensory ratios that are embedded in practice, experience, tradition, and technical inventions. Therefore “media are not just extensions of the senses or calibrations of sense ratios, but are symbolic or semiotic operators, complexes of sign-functions” (Mitchell, 2005:400). Therefore, the experience of media, Mitchell claims, must be understood as an almost seamless braiding of sensory channels and semiotic functions, where signs and senses move on parallel tracks but are kept rigorously apart (Mitchell, 2005: 401). These braids, Mitchell says, can be subjectively unravelled in order to be analysed as an object.

Despite the legitimacy of Mitchell’s argument about the impurity of sensory experience and the braiding of sense categories, Sara Pink (2015 and 2010) argues that it poses a problem for analysis. Pink (2015) proposes that Phenomenological Anthropology or Sensory Anthropology invites us to consider moving beyond cultural categories, to find alternative ways to understand the complexities of sense perception. This is not to argue against the use of cultural categories in academic research but to “deconstruct the analytical categories of culturalist approaches to media to attend to the experiential rather than the textual/semiotic qualities of media and remind us of the importance of non-media centric analysis” (Pink, 2015:11). She suggests a “re-visioning” of the very discipline of Anthropology informed by sense perception rather than becoming a sub-discipline (Pink and Howes, 2010). In her critique of David Howes’s Anthropology of the Senses she suggests that Multi-sensory Anthropology can be subsumed within Sensory Anthropology. Pink suggests that a crucial differentiating

factor is in the approach to interdisciplinarity. While Sensory Anthropology engages directly with other disciplines for its foundational ideas, the Anthropology of the Senses is located in a more specialised engagement with various fields that use the senses as an object of study. Howes has responded to this critique by claiming that Anthropology of the Senses was never a sub-discipline but a discipline in itself, that draws together contributions from multiple disciplines, tethered by the senses as objects of study and as a means of enquiry (Pink and Howes 2010).

Howes in his article ‘Multi-Sensory Anthropology’ (2019), having moved on since the 1980s to acknowledge that the senses are not simply information seekers and are studied together, maintains that they are cultural bearers, that senses and sensations are always already entrenched (for example, gendered, racialized, structured by social caste categories.) Multi-sensory Anthropology “insists on the senses being made, not given” (Howes, 2019:20). It critiques phenomenology in its failure to recognise “the social life of the senses” (Howes, 2019: 20).

Howes (2019) asks us to move beyond the façade of a pure “direct perception” by offering alternative approaches that have evolved within the field of Sensory Studies, of which multi-sensory anthropology is a part. Sensory Studies emerged as an autonomous, interdisciplinary and multi-modal field of inquiry which regroups visual culture, auditory culture, smell culture, taste culture and culture of touch and “sixth sense” in all the multiplicity that forms the sensorium, according to Howes (2019: 20). Multi-Sensory Anthropology focuses on the articulation of these sub-divisions, or “intersensoriality” almost as an unbraiding of Mitchell’s argument of sense perception and media. These approaches would feed into the possibility and procedures of devising immersive performative installations as a part of my micro and molar projects.

My intention is not to set up a simple narrative of contest between PaR and traditional textual scholarship or between phenomenological approaches and cultural studies approaches to anthropology. Nor is it my intent to come to any kind of resolution. The moves in PaR, that use performance as methodology, can potentially give important and significant insights into phenomenological inductive modes of enquiry. In this thesis project, using PaR can help access and tap into different forms and encodings of history that are only made apparent via doing. Additionally, insights from the emerging field of multi-sensory anthropology along with the slightly different field of sensory anthropology, in productive friction, can offer ways in which to interweave historiographical methods and research with artistic practice.

The research process in this work involves a cluster of methods and approaches to reading and practice of performance that I have assembled through the course of my research by deriving out of my visual art, musical and performance-based practices. These in turn have led the development of the diverse, sometimes interrelated theoretical frameworks proposed in the written thesis (See chapters 2, 3, 4) that have emerged out of these PaR enquiries. Further, the structure of the written thesis itself draws from this PaR research process where listening, reading, seeing, and watching become part of the process of imagining and understanding the written document as well as contributing to the development of the theoretical frameworks offered in the thesis. This is done to emphasise the performative and porous materiality of the written word and the intervention of the practice-based research processes into the written document. In a way, the argument of this thesis not only lies within the thesis, it permeates into both the methodology as well as the very form the thesis takes. Therefore, the realm of practice in this thesis is further extended to occupy even the process of writing and the space of the written document.

Research Methods

The PaR methodology as instituted in the CTDPS's Theatre & Performance Masters Programme at UCT is central to the structure of my research methods.³ The CTDPS approach is broadly divided into (1) Preliminary or Minor Project, which refines questions that the artist researcher has and that leads to the understanding of the research terrain; (2) Middle of the process or Medium Project which consolidates the research terrain; (3) Demonstration or Thesis Project which demonstrates something arrived at. There are three possible scales with which to chart the process of artistic research: (1) Small/Micro or microscopic work; moments that pave the way for research, (2) Molar/Macro or one-piece work that is a culmination of the research process and (3) Corpus or a series of works produced over time. Artistic Research often works with a combination of these scales and they are significant in determining the methodological process. Based on the process undertaken and the feedback that I received for my Minor Performance Project, I observed that my research methodology demands an inductive process in practice.⁴ Therefore, drawing from this, the research methods for this

³ I audited the M.A. Theatre Postgraduate Studios Course at the Center for Theatre, Dance & Performance Studies, UCT, between February 2020 and March 2020 until the first submission of the Minor Project. This was to get a hands-on sense of the PaR methodology as instituted at the CTDPS in order to build my own methodology.

⁴ As a part of my Minor Project presentation, I created a 7 minute piece developed through the workshops and studio exercises/lectures conducted by Mark Fleishman and Jay Pather. The piece was titled "The Note will Carry Us". Briefly, it drew on my archival recordings that I wove into a soundscape and during the course of the

thesis project have been broadly divided into Studio (inductive process) and Deskwork (deductive process). These, in effect, intersect with each other.

Studio (Inductive)

- Learning particular musical systems and voice training techniques and using self-reflexive journaling as a method to make observations in terms of voice and body relationships
- Making micro performance installations and molar performance installations across two years (2020-22).⁵
- Employing self-reflexive journaling as a method, by maintaining sketch-book(s) that trace the journey of these works.
- Fieldwork in Kachchh, Gujarat, India: I have conducted interviews and community discussions, video and audio recordings of the place, community and cultural traditions drawing conceptually from multi-sensory anthropology and Ingold's notion of wayfinding.
- I have organised musical collaborations, jam sessions with artists in South Africa and Turkey and used performance making and sound editing as methods and outcomes within the PaR methodology.
- Creative output towards the end of the thesis period: I drew upon the series of performance sketches (minor/molar projects) to develop modes of practice in conjunction with the written component. This work took a form at the interstices of a performance, a showing, an installation, a lecture demonstration and a concert that I described as a performance/event. A large part of the last chapter in the written thesis is dedicated to a reflection on this performance/event which was titled *Shape of Grief*.

performance, layered my own voice over it. The performance also consisted of painted maps/landscapes torn and crumpled into regions. The performance entailed me tied to these "regions" making my way with them. In the feedback session given by Dr. Sara Matchett and Prof. Mark Fleishman, we arrived at the idea that at a methodological level, I had to decide either to take the work as derived out of a deductive process that presents it as demonstrative and analysable, or to frame it as emerging out of an inductive process that presents the work as evolving research material. I understood this proposed research project to be the latter.

⁵ Minor/micro performance installations include: *Transgressions* (Insurrections Ensemble) (2019), *The Note Will Carry Us* (Minor Performance, 2020), *The Note Will Carry Us* (Sculptural installation, 2021), *Maps for A Sea-drift of Songs* (Paintings, 2021), *Sculptures for Gabriel's Odyssey* (2022), *Othello Workshops I and II* (2022), *Sonic Movements for Shape of Grief* (2022), *Workshop sessions for Shape of Grief* (2023), *RAA Conference performance* (2022). Molar/Macro Performance installations include: *A Sea-drift of Songs* (Collaboration with Afro-Asian Ensemble, 2021), *Gabriel's Odyssey* (Collaboration with Kukutana Ensemble, 2022), *Pehram Des Visaal: Roving the Lands of Union* (Performance and Installation for Mardin Biennial, 2022), *Sharing Notes* (Musical collaboration with Turkish and Kurdish musicians Petra Nachtmanova, Çağrı Koç, Erkan Çanakçı for the Mardin Biennial, 2022), *Shape of Grief* (Thesis performance collaboration with Lulamile Bongo Nkoni aka Buti Bongo, Kamil Adam Hassan, Nomakrestu Xagathugaga, Lungiswa Plaatjies, 2023).

Deskwork (Deductive)

- Laying out a creative playing field that houses analyses of critical texts to form conceptual and critical grounding in (1) explicating the idea of affective infra-structures (2) constructing frameworks for reading the nomadic dispersable body drawn from artistic practices.
- Maintaining journals, sketchbooks, and other forms of documentations (video, audio and still photography) as an aspect of reflexive journaling and theory building.
- A written thesis: I have articulated the basis and significance of the doctoral proposition, conceptual and theoretical derivations that support the doctoral proposition, artistic research methods and frameworks developed under the Practice as Research Methodology derived out of my own artistic practices to argue for the doctoral proposition. Throughout the doctoral process, I have presented papers at conferences in South Africa, India and Turkey that have heavily enriched and enabled the development of the concepts and theorisations made in my thesis.
- Mapping out of the artistic processes (these involve music, soundscapes, sketches, drawings, notes, diagrams and paintings among others) involved in constructing the argument around affective infra-structures and musical entrances into historiography. It provides an overview of the methods emerging from the PaR methodology that are particular to this project. This is the format for the last chapter which also serves as the conclusion of this thesis.

Scope

A PaR based methodological framework demands both a focus on processes and a reflection on the outcome. Therefore, for the purpose of providing a practical and summative overview of this practice-based PhD project, I have divided the outcome of my research project into two components: written and practice-based. The written component and practical component are proportionately equal and carry the same weight. While the written component is focused on a theoretical engagement, the practice-based component comprises of a performative excavation of the idea of affective infra-structure.

I have envisioned the coming together of these two prongs at the conclusion of my thesis project through both a written thesis and through a collation of practice-based explorations and pieces that have been created intermittently through the course of the research process.

Chapters

The thesis seeks to provide frameworks with which to “listen” to histories that lie outside the frameworks of written matter. This thesis centers the materiality of the sonic medium, as a way in which certain subaltern pasts are carried across long durations of time. Housed within this project of tracing a transcontinental lament, following the footsteps of a nomadic community, is the overlapping project of elaborating the idea of affective infra-structures.

The first chapter opens out the question of pre-colonial pasts and embodied histories and how certain forms of performance becomes a modality of remembering and carrying memory. It suggests how sonic mediums (of songs and tunes) in particular could hold a unique way in which the past is installed in the present during a performance. It introduces Kachchh, Gujarat, a region with moving roots built over time by pastoralists, pilgrims, traders, and sultans (Sheikh, 2010; Ibrahim, 2008; Marvada, 2022) through an engagement with the idea of nomadic regions and the archipelagic perspective (Noudelmann 2018, Deleuze and Guattari, 2017). I expand upon the problem nomadic histories pose to conventional notions of static place and chronological time by focusing on nomadic pasts, and the questions of place, identity, belonging, collective memory and historical time. This leads into a discussion focussed on the Jaths of Gujarat and the Wayee with an emphasis on its position within the frame of the RAA project.

In the second chapter I puzzle together various frameworks of reading the body-world dynamic, to make a case for the world-encompassing body, that opens out the body as a site in which pasts are kept alive through a performative medium like the sonic (the lament being an aspect). This chapter digs into and underlines the process and aspect of embodiment and ways in which it can be read. All these discussions are put together to form the dispersible body framework which is crucial to the doctoral proposition.

The third chapter discusses the spatial and embodied aspects of the sonic medium and introduces the concept of infra-structure. Since the thesis is asking for a perspectival shift, where historical information is perceived through the act of listening, there is a need to derive a vocabulary out of the sonic medium that is accessible to all, to be used as an academic “hearing-aid”, especially since it is my intention to make musical perception available to everyone, not just musicians or the musically adept. Here I discuss sonic infra-structures to provide a conceptual ground upon which the term affective infra-structures and its relationship with embodied histories can be worked out. To this end, sonic vocabularies are discussed across Chapters Three and Four. While this chapter introduces the conceptual groundwork derived

out of Ocean Studies, Geography and Sound and Musical Practices, the next chapter includes concepts derived out of musical and ecstatic practices.

In the fourth chapter I engage with two primary texts (among others) Sara Ahmad's *Cultural Politics of Emotions* and her notion of affective economies and Karmen Mackendrick's *The Matter of Voice* and her ideas around the "fleshy" materiality of the sonic to explicate my proposition of affective infra-structures that I suggest are embodied structures upon which emotions and feelings move and upon which histories that appear to be lost, show themselves. I describe terms drawn from the Wayee tradition and pull together colloquial and popular phrases used in a variety of musical contexts by a range of musicophiliacs (Niranjana 2020) used to speak about musical atmospheres and point at these structures of feeling. I further elaborate on this using grief as my focus of discussion as it circulated in the Afro-Eur-Asian scapes through the musical atmosphere of the lament.

The penultimate chapter is a reflective chapter based on my thesis performance *Shape of Grief*. The aim of the thesis performance-installation was to explore the shape of grief, and broached the subject of synchronicities and departures in a trans-continental musical collaboration. The installation aspect of the thesis performance included a collection of drawings, paintings and sculptures produced as a part of the doctoral process, books and notebooks used, mind maps and musical instruments used during the course of the doctoral process, that have led to the insights collected in the pages of this written thesis. The format of this chapter is experimental, as in it contains a range of descriptive material arranged in a manner that narrates the doctoral argument through a description of the process of making involved in the *Shape of Grief* performance installation. It uses a variety of materials like music, sounds, poetry, sketches, drawings, notes, diagrams, paintings and maps that are accessed through hyperlinks. The hyperlinks can be viewed as portals through which the reader keeps taking multiple routes away from the document and keeps returning to the line of argument. This structurally describes the nature of the research process involved in the PaR project and allows one to break open the edges of the document without doing away with it completely.

The final chapter summarizes the written thesis and collates the arguments and propositions made in previous chapters and at the same time This chapter can be viewed as a nodal conclusion as well as a way of mapping out of the methods, data, outcomes and documentation material supporting the doctoral proposition.

By bringing the creative and written outputs together, I arrive at methods and frameworks through which historiographical methods and research can be interwoven with performance practice. Through this work, I hope to point towards a new equation between

performance and history that works away from notions of a history of performance and pulls towards the notion of performance in history through the multi-disciplinary explication of affective infra-structures.

Conclusion

The project, tracing a transcontinental lament following the historical footsteps of the nomadic Bhagadiya Jath community of Kachchh, centres the musical system of the Wayee. The Wayee, in representing both migration and lament, is structural to the theoretical propositions made in this thesis. My research questions have emerged from and are based around thinking through this cultural tradition.

On one hand, the study investigates the historiographical process of tracing histories of migration across Afro-Asiatic regions by offering a methodology to study and analyse these transcontinental, nomadic, migratory movements. On the other, it explores possible affective ways of ‘performing’ history through the multi-disciplinary explication of affective ‘infra-structures.’ It attempts to do so by setting up a new equation between performance and history that works away from notions of a history of performance and pulls towards the notion of performance in history. This study seeks to arrive at methods and frameworks through which historiographical methods and research can be interwoven with performance practice.

I wish to re-center feeling, and focus on how affective infra-structures of grief are spread across Afro-Eur-Asian lives, and show how these histories may lie in many forms like the lament among others. This enables us to recognize the lament not just as a moving expression of deep sorrow, but as an empowering and powerful modality through which trans-continental solidarities were forged, are remembered, and rebuild-able today.

This thesis seeks to locate the presence of violent colonial histories that have marked all bodies by their will to power, and the continued hegemony of some histories over othered pasts. It aims to unsettle hegemonic and colonial narratives of bodies, regions, and pasts through the conceptual and ethical impulse of the PaR methodology and the procedural implications that drive this research project. This places the research work significantly within the decolonial project that has been emerging in different and important ways across the Global South.

CHAPTER 1

PRE-COLONIAL PASTS, EMBODIED HISTORIES

Play as you read:

Music of the Pearl Divers

<https://youtu.be/fwKml7qIoUQ?si=b0FkG-gxmAhye6pu>

Nomadic pasts meet metonymically at the ocean, criss-crossing and merging in watery depths. How do we plough the ocean? Plough instead the ocean of sound, and there you shall find us, screaming our stories, bow down, bring your humility as offering, bear witness.

The word nomadic pasts, indicate pasts that are not bound to place or people. It points to pasts on the move. Pasts that wander, linger, lurk in and out of our tense presents (Menon 2018). How does one engage these kinds of pasts? An enquiry into how to engage pre-colonial pasts lead us down a path of problems that question deeply held colonial, hegemonic, and fundamentalist preconceptions of place, time, the legitimacy and legibility of memory and the materiality of history. This chapter focuses on nomadic pasts. These are the kinds of pasts that are characteristically on the move, thus, making the site of history itself, nomadic. It focusses on the ways in which the sonic medium offers itself to the service of memory in musical laments found in many traditional musical systems across an Afro-Eur-Asiatic land/seascape. It explores how the body becomes a vessel for history. Further, it investigates the historiographical loopholes and potentialities that are brought to light by these lamenting traditions.

This chapter opens with the question of pre-colonial pasts and embodied histories before moving to how certain forms of performance become a modality of remembering and carrying memory. It suggests that sonic mediums (of songs and tunes) in particular could, perhaps, hold a unique way in which the past is installed in the present during a performance. I begin by expanding upon the problem nomadic histories pose to conventional notions of static place and chronological time by focusing on nomadic pasts through an examination of the history of Kachchh, Gujarat, a region with moving roots built over time by pastoralists, pilgrims, traders, Rajputs, and sultans. I draw on Dipesh Chakrabarty's (1998) characterization of subaltern pasts to help understand the challenges and possibilities offered by nomadic pasts. Through an engagement with the idea of nomadic regions and the archipelagic perspective, I

move to a discussion focussed on the Jaths of Gujarat and the musical form, the Wayee. Following Francois Noudelmann's writings on the archipelagic perspective (2018), I argue that it offers a useful lens with which to examine musical forms that have circulated across wide swathes of trans-continental spaces over long durée. I lay emphasis on its value within the frame of the Re-Centering Afro-Asia Project, and the questions of place, identity, belonging, collective memory, and historical time.

Section I

Subaltern Pasts and the Knottiness of Time

Dipesh Chakrabarty's (1998) discussion on minority histories and subaltern pasts show how nomadic pasts such as that of the Bhagadiya Jaths pose structural questions to the methods involved in preserving memory within a nomadic imaginary and the ways in which nomadic pasts, like subaltern pasts, cull at the firm acceptable ground of what is considered "good history". In this section, I show how this culling helps us see other sites of historicity and develop other impulses that drive the doing of history. Next, I highlight how a change in the impulse of doing historiography leads to the appearance of new historical sites and materials which further prompt us to see new methodological directions such as performance practice, that enable us to notice how embodied material such as music and sound prepare the body as a site for installing the past by puncturing the present.

I will begin by sharing an event that pushed Ranajit Guha, a founder member of the Subaltern Studies group, to create a distance as a historian, from the object of his research. In his essay "The Prose of Counter-Insurgency" (Guha 1983), Guha discusses an interview conducted by a British interlocutor with Seedoo and Kanoo, the leaders of the 1855 Santhal Peasant Rebellions. In the interview Seedoo and Kanoo's narrative mentions that their God "Thakur" made an appearance and told them to rebel, and therefore the rebellion was carried out at the behest of their Thakur. "Kanoo and Sidoo Manjee are not fighting. The Thakur himself will fight," they said. In their telling of the past, the subaltern is not necessarily the subject of his own history. Guha, even though he gave enough space for this narrative to have its own voice in his essay, while avoiding instrumentalist, tokenistic or elitist readings of their narrative, even in his multi-vocal standpoint, his idea of empowerment still lay ethically in rational logic of doing a different kind of "good" history, where the subaltern is the subject of his or her own history and possessor of their own logic of consciousness. Here, the act of mentioning of the narrative that "does not make rational sense" as it is, and declaring that this narrative emerges from the subaltern's voice and therefore it should be included whether or not

I as the historian believe in it or not, becomes enough to satisfy the requirement for expanding the discipline of history, where including and archiving of narratives as is, becomes the end point of the doing of history. I believe this is quickly becoming just another mode of doing “good” history, for upper caste writers and researchers who delve into areas of research and knowledge databases that lie within subaltern environments, lives, and histories. For Seedoo and Kanoo, there is no division between what constitutes the past and what constitutes history whereas for the democratic, secular historian, the past is raw material out of which histories are spun out. For the historian, the supernatural, the ephemeral, the transient, the fictional will always be kept outside of the practice of history as it unsettles the secular and rational foundation of the discipline. It also unsettles the neat radical act of subversion made available to upper caste historians writing about subaltern subjects. Dipesh Chakrabarty (1998) argues that the narratives of the past that the subaltern holds, collapses different times, secular and spiritual, mythic and political, old and new and inevitably make this uncomfortable for the historical-oppressor-turned-want-to-do-the-right-thing-historian.

The historical discipline enriches itself by incorporating minority histories but its very methodological dominations create what Chakrabarty calls “subaltern pasts”. Working against this idea of minority histories and making a case for subaltern pasts, Chakrabarty (1998: 27) asks us to consider the following (1) the modern historical consciousness is a limited “good” that needn’t always be returned to (2) the doing of history also must involve the showing of its limits (3) the need to distance oneself from the imperious instincts of the discipline of history—the instinct that everything can be and always should be historicised (4) the necessity of developing a different approach to the temporality of history. I want to underline here, Chakrabarty’s discussion of the disjunctured and knotted nature of the historical present, through an indirect discussion on practice that arises out of the mere presence of subaltern pasts in the discourses around the doing of history. He highlights that the relation between subaltern pasts and the practice of historicising is not mutually exclusive. Subaltern pasts invite the historian to consider different ways of being that make the present manifold, where “the disenchantment of the world is not the only principle by which we world the earth. There are other modes of being in the world” (Chakrabarty 1998:27).

The practice, including musical practice, is often the passageway through which subaltern pasts puncture the present and refuses to be disciplined by the demands of rational modernity. This makes the present non-contemporaneous with itself precisely because of which we can even historicise (Chakrabarty 1998:27). He equates the chrono-logical time and the “activity of historicising” as straightening out parts of a knotty present. The concept of

knottiness attached to the present is derived out of the concept of “shomoy granthi” that translates to time-knot, where knots could be of various kinds, for example the nodes of a bamboo stick, knuckles, skeletal joints. While Chakrabarty draws on the concept to emphasise the relationship between subject-object vis-à-vis the historian and the subaltern, the activity of historicising subaltern pasts as an intimation of an ontological “now” that “rends the seriality of historical time and makes any particular moment of the historical present out of joint with itself” (Chakrabarty, 1998:28), I want to hold on to the idea of the historical present and the role of subaltern pasts in the manufacturing of such a knotty present and extend the discussion around this knottiness of the “now”. Just as there are many different kinds of knots, so there are many kinds of ways in which time binds into the present and becomes the now that we inhabit. It is in engagement with subaltern pasts, that the disjunctures and punctures in the present and the binding itself is made apparent. The act of historicising then can also extend to the explication of the ways in which particular knots are knotted. The historian in this role, both sees the knot as well as births it. In this way the present binds with the historical.

The historian is involved in the knotting of pasts and only through this knotting are subaltern pasts produced. In historical narratives with a foundation in rational modernity, gaps or what appear to be lost histories or narratives, through practice, become aspects in themselves that are active parts of the knot of the present. I argue that practices, such as performance practices, musical practices, critical fabulation, or literary fiction acquire a special kind of historicising function, and they become necessary modalities through which one can engage the productive friction produced by subaltern pasts with the discipline of history that help us avoid slipping into the imperious instinct of privileging the ways in which history authorises its knowledge (Chakrabarty, 1998). We can think of subaltern pasts as intimations, inflexions, suggestions, that appear on the path of finding new ways of historicising non-dominant pasts that is no doubt geared towards social justice and sometimes reconciliation, but as it produces discomforts in the discipline of history while highlighting its limits, by doing so, it provides an opportunity for the discipline to expand and accommodate trans-disciplinary methodologies of historicising non-conventional pasts and by extension non-conventional ways of remembering.

Therefore, in this thesis, moving forward, when I use the word histories, I would be referring to the knot of the historical present rendered visible by the presence of subaltern pasts that show up through various forms of practices. I will nevertheless be focussing particularly on the role of performance practices as a modality of historicization.

Subaltern Pasts and Border Thinking

In order to change gears with regards to the position we assign to subaltern pasts, and our approaches and perspectives to the effects of their presence within the discipline of history, we need to re-evaluate the characteristic of the space these kinds of pasts take up. Walter Mignolo's (2000) idea of border thinking, exploring what it means to dwell at the borders and what actually constitutes decolonial work in his book *Local Histories, Global Designs*, serves as a very useful lens with which to understand this particular kind of space that subaltern pasts take up and create in interaction with the discipline of history. I believe subaltern pasts dwell at the borders of the discipline of history. It is important to note here what border thinking constitutes for it to be "tantamount to engaging with decoloniality" (Mignolo 2000:xvii). Mignolo points out the important difference between dwelling in the border of discipline and studying the border from within the territorial epistemologies of the disciplines. He argues that:

When borders are observed and analyzed from the perspectival territory of academic disciplines, border thinking doesn't obtain. Disciplines are by definition based on territorial epistemologies: studying the borders doesn't lead necessarily to border thinking unless scholars engage in epistemological disciplinary disobedience and bring to the fore the existential experience of dwelling in the border. By so doing, the scholar will be challenging disciplinary strictures that prevent border thinking from flourishing. (Mignolo 2000:xvii)

He follows this up by discussing the differences and the implications of these different standpoints.

When borders are the objects of study, the enunciation is not necessarily built on border epistemologies. The bottom line is not to confuse thinking about borders while dwelling in disciplinary territorialities with border thinking that emerges from dwelling in the border and delinks from disciplinary territorialities. In the best of all possible scenarios, when borders are analyzed, border thinking is objectivized and examined from the perspective of territorial epistemologies. It is no longer border thinking in action, but border thinking being observed by another kind of thinking: disciplinary thinking from territorial dwelling (the territory of the disciplines) To

engage in border thinking requires engaging in conscientious epistemic, ethical, and aesthetical political projects.

(Mignolo 2000:xvii)

Mignolo underlines the fact that simply dwelling in the border is also not sufficient enough a condition to engage in border thinking. He further emphasises that border thinking is actional. It is not geared towards the “improvement of disciplines” but towards finding use of the disciplines beyond the disciplines themselves. Subaltern pasts prompt decolonial work by showing up the limits of the discipline of history because they dwell at the borders, engage in “epistemological disciplinary disobedience” (xvii), and promote transdisciplinary methodological innovation in processes of historicisation which can be considered an equivalent of what Mignolo has underlined as actional border thinking. The position of PaR methodologies, in this context, serve as one of the ways in which the borders become territories in themselves, that demand and produce their own kinds of epistemic practices and modalities of historicisation. In border thinking, the act of dwelling itself produces knowledge and this kind of doing-as-thinking epistemic modality emerging from dwelling in the borders, works against the modality of assimilation, inclusion, fusion, and resolution. It works with fertile friction at the edges of disciplines, towards delinking from the rhetoric of modernity, unveiling the roots of coloniality, restitution of subaltern pasts in our historical present and the prevailing of truth in parenthesis (Mignolo 2000:xvii).

The Re-Centering Afro-Asia Project: Methods and Entrances into Historiography

I have mentioned in the Introduction that the methodological moves made in and through the Recentring Afro Asia (RAA) project has been critical to the way the question of region and music have been addressed in this thesis. The project’s focus on trans-continental scholarship has been geared towards the Global South and has housed, among others, the disciplines of theatre and performance, visual arts, sociology, history, archaeology, geology, ethnomusicology, organology, allowing a critical interdisciplinarity to emerge. This is a key organizing principle in this thesis too.

There is an array of frameworks that offer us routes that move us away from the ideas of a historiography of the pre-colonial which is profoundly driven by ambitions of retrieval and the archival impulse. Instead, these frameworks locate a world out of joint, centering a history in movement and fluidity, and provide perspectival re-orientations of time, space and lives. Many pre-colonial subaltern pasts are alive in performative forms and premised on different

kinds of interactions with the historical present through which we may witness the emergence of new sites and methods in mapping historical material.

A PaR methodology and framework, I believe, can help grapple with these particular methods/grammars of histories that lie in the way they are told, in the way they are sung. My doctoral research project stems from a historiographical pursuit but it would depart significantly from the drive to accuracy and the ambitions of retrieval. Instead, this project would be interested in the processes involved in this historiographical pursuit. Furthermore, the pre-colonial time-frame of the project pushes one to work with “un-retrievable histories” that pose important challenges to historiography. What does “irretrievability” mean for historiography? Given the space and alternative frameworks, the question of irretrievability can potentially lead us to a productive ground formed at the intersections of historiography and performance. For instance, one might ask: How is history encoded in music? When music as performance becomes the entry point into the work of historiography, what questions are posed to historiography?

The RAA project moves beyond the archival imaginary and impulse and seeks to re-think the entry points and methodologies of probing the past, and in the process, is forging new relationships with history and forms of knowledge. The boundaries of the project are rendered fluid, and resonate with what Mark Fleishman describes as an “external membrane that is perceptible in retrospect in such a way that it establishes a territory but is always porous and elastic” (Fleishman 2012:34). This structure of the project makes it a hospitable environment for nomadic histories to show themselves. Histories that lie in the way they are sung, are like disembodied spirits left with desires that they cannot satiate because of the lack of senses. Hence, they wander invisibly until they find living bodies to take possession of in order to come to life, in order to play out. A project like the RAA, provides the body for the spirit of such nomadic histories in multitudinal forms—musical ensembles, research papers, theatre productions, books, and other publications. The RAA project has enabled the emergence and visibility of these modes of doing history, that push towards a making of a repertoire of a mixed local history that reside at the border. In this way music of certain kinds being historicised by musical practitioners can become part of a repertoire amongst other materials that belong to an archive. It is not to reject the archive as document but to examine the permutations in which the archive works in tandem with the repertoire of musical performance to enable other kinds of (local) histories and methods of working and thinking at the border (Mignolo 2000) become part of a project to reevaluate the forms in which history shows itself as sediment.

Consequently, the work of historiography, when it encounters musical matter, becomes that of making space, creating an environment for subaltern pasts to dwell in the borders.

Oceanic Frameworks and the Archipelagic Perspective: Centring Movement

It is easy to be afraid of the flat, expansive swathes of blues and greys that the ocean offers in plain sight. Upon first glance, the ocean appears empty, mute and unyielding to the archive.

Oceanic frameworks on the contrary, locate a world out of joint, centering a history in movement and fluidity, and provide perspectival re-orientations of time, space, and lives (Helmrich, 2009; Jue, 2020; Steinberg and Peters, 2015; Gilroy, 1993; Mawani, 2018; Hartman, 2006; Vaughan, 2005; Hofmeyr, 2007; Menon, 2022).

The consequences that the notion of continuity has as a conceptual and historical lens varies depending on the purpose it caters to. In his essay “Walking on Water: Globalisation and History”, Dilip Menon (2018) warns against ineffable time and the risks of implied eternal laws and conditions wielded by rising fundamentalist and fascist powers that are interested in carrying out a worlding based on homogeneity and divisive unity. Further, the role of the historian and the churning of history in such a world order is largely dispersed, where historical content is more susceptible to an abrasive political will than ever before. We are witnessing, for example, frequent references to a “golden past” or a “golden future”. The golden here calls into the performativity of ineffable time, a reference to eternity, something that remains frozen yet lost, which must be either brought back home or must be returned to. In such a way, the golden past and the golden future are tied into a knot of continuity that is bound to harbour strong feelings of divisive unity, divisive nostalgia and bring about an entrenched desire for a divisive cohesiveness. Here, the role of continuity is essentially to separate and sustain the linearity of time by building in an illusion of continuity into a fundamentalist imaginary. In such a paradigm, the present is always elusive and indefinitely deferred. The feelings here are all geared towards sifting out an ideal golden future while memory is invaded by the illusion of the ideal golden past that we never got to live.

Keeping these risks and consequences of the notion of continuity and continuous time-space in mind, I want to propose instead drawing on a perspective put forward by Menon (2020) on the notion of connectivity and affinities that comes from Edouard Glissant’s (1997) discussion on archipelagic thinking and towards a vision of connectivities across non-contiguous spaces by moving

beyond "the local, sovereign, and archival" to look at a more dispersed sense of space (where) ...even the "local" is merely a site within which multiple visions of the world intersect. This requires us to move beyond the hubris of nationalism and states...to think about the multiplicity of connections across non-contiguous spaces. (Menon 2018:6)

Menon (2018) argues for a comparative study of connectivities across larger oceanic fault lines that "explodes the ocean into the land" (2018: 6), where the ocean becomes that which connects lands.

This kind of an oceanic vision and watery materiality of non-contiguous spaces bound by connectivities forged out of affinities provides a fertile, fluid and dispersed ground on which subaltern nomadic pasts are enlivened and appear to traverse. I suggest in this thesis, that such spaces rupture ubiquitous historical sites and materialities that then demand other vocabularies and methodologies derived from the borders of disciplines, in order to become apparent, legible and knowable to some extent. My conceptualization of affective infra-structures, that I discuss in more detail in Chapter Four, is built on such kind of a spatial framework and imaginary.

This is a move away from continental logic that has been expanded in different ways by many philosophers including Mignolo (2000), Deleuze and Guattari (1990) and Glissant (1997) and Nail (2015). In this context, it becomes conceptually possible to link Menon's argument (2018) with Francois Noudelmann's (2018) discussion around nomadic culture and identity, and its relationship to the archipelizing of the continent. Noudelmann argues that the continent (rooted identity) and the nomadic need not be in opposition to each other to put forward the archipelagic paradigm. Even though Menon speaks from the ocean that binds large landmasses like continents and Noudelmann speaks from the land masses bound by the ocean, they both draw upon the same archipelagic consciousness that understands the ocean as that which binds and that which produces connectivities through affinity.

Complicating our understanding of terrestrial scholarship and terrestrial biases in the context of oceanic frameworks such as those Menon draws upon, Noudelmann (2018) suggests that the continent itself can become archipelagic where the archipelagic is used as a verb, not as a geographical form that stresses on the multiplicity inherent in even terrestrial identities. This echoes Menon's analogy of the ocean thrashing into land. Noudelmann (2018) suggests conceiving archipelagos as a movement or process. This neologism has clearly been forged from a nomadic imaginary, where movement lies at the centre of the spatio-temporal worlding process and creates a resistance towards the notion of frozen identities.

Therefore, in the light of “thinking across continents”, Noudelmann (2018:208) emphasises that it is an “acting across” rather than a “being with” that produces a transformative encounter with the others where trans-continental identities take shape or rather, continuously take shape through the shock of their encounter with already heterogenous elements which means, they do not pre-exist the encounter of these heterogenous elements. He is indicating that in the process of a trans-continental worlding the move from multiculturalism, where there is a drawing up of a sum of cultures that exist side by side without changing where these cultures are fixed and bound by the notion of co-habitation (Noudelmann, 2018: 208), to “challenging unitary homogenous approaches to human cultures’ where ‘neither origin, nor genealogy nor community can provide rational foundation for identity” (Noudelmann, 2018:209), is a necessary shift in perspective required while adjusting our lenses to the archipelagic process.

Further, Noudelmann moves on to speak of “affinities” (Noudelmann 2018:210) in the context of literature where he uses the arguments around the archipelagic perspective to understand the notion of literature across continents through the lens of archipelagic linkages. This discussion opens out thinking about trans-continental musical affinities and musical linkages in particularly useful ways. This is a conceptual frame that is among the key historical and political grounds upon which I build my argument about affective infra-structures and musical entrances into historiography. Speaking of affinities, Noudelmann states:

What he (Wittgenstein) wrote about games can be applied to other concepts or general notions like music or literature: even if we identify a quasi-reality by defining literature, it is nonetheless a conventional network of similarities that allows us to speak in these terms. Unlike Darwin, for whom affinities are established naturally, and unlike philosophical habits to seek to define an essence, Wittgenstein describes affinities as denaturalized and de-essentialized. Thanks to this philosophical shift, affinities change meaning. They are no longer thought of as the genealogical connection between beings stuck within a natural community. Instead, affinities now designate different ways of bringing together phenomena that, seen in a certain light, appear to share striking similarities. (Noudelmann 2018: 212)

Noudelmann (2018) argues against essentialist ideas around affinity and the conceptual contexts of family, community, kinship and synchronous and harmonic universalism that get

attached to affinities. That, he argues, pulls us back to a horizontal genealogical understanding of connectivity. Instead, he puts forth an understanding of affinities drawn from his derivations of the archipelagic process. He recognizes that affinities “bring people together as much as it separates them” (213). This approach is geared towards inventing affiliations rather than confirming natural filiations (213). What this does is designate affinity as an activity, in the same way in which we are asked to consider the archipelagic as a verb.

While affinities in this sense disrupt the cohesive unity of a community which include literary or musical communities, they remain “revocable and follow a provisional logic” because gatherings based on affinities “take shape according to the various points of view of readers and listeners” (213). Therefore, the notion of literature as an archipelago, and I would extend this to music as well, is “both nowhere and everywhere depending on the building of affinities” (213). This means that, materially speaking, the notion of literature or music under the archipelagic perspective is omnipresent and in deep interconnection with their respective systems of reception (reading or listening). It is only when literature and music are placed within a meaningful network of relationships built on a particular sense of affinities that are produced by the presence of multiple differences, that we can truly begin thinking non-contiguously, trans-continentially, across space, time and ages without falling into the traps of synchronous universalisms or entrenched multiculturalisms. This allows for trans-disciplinary methodologies to guide some of the processes involved in the archipelizing of continents (Noudelmann 2018), the “truly comparative study of connectivities” (Menon 2020: 6) and the building of affinities without discarding difference.

Thus, Noudelmann’s essay stresses on the fact that it is the “crossings” that carry the meaning for what passes the borders, and that the links are more important than the linked elements themselves (2018: 205). In the beginning of his essay, he uses a striking neologism quite in passing—the discontinent (206). It beautifully contains Menon’s concept of non-contiguous connected space and it also does the job of loosening the hard, cohesive connotations attached to the continent by referring to the notion of discontinuous connectivities. The Global South can then be read as a kind of discontinent formed by the process of mapping nomadic histories through musical linkages across an Afro-Asiatic land/sea scape. The historically nomadic body embodies these crossings through music and movement within this ruptured discontinent. What is proposed in this thesis is a non-contiguous sonic discontinent bound by musical affinities, that emerges out of transcontinental thinking, border-thinking, decolonial frameworks, and, what the RAA terms as a sounds-like methodology.

Section II

Gujarat: The Migrant Land

Play as you read:

Extract 1: Chapter 1 RAA Soundscape Kachchh Gujarat

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.25375/uct.28420916>

The present state of Gujarat was only consolidated in the twentieth century. Regional unity, in the form of the modern state as we know it today, is a fairly recent invention, in the context of Gujarat, dating no earlier than the 1960s (Sheikh 2010). Achyut Yagnik and S. Sheth (2005) have noted that what is today known as Gujarat State comprises of four significantly distinct geographical regions— mainland Gujarat which extends from the Aravali ranges up to the Western Ghats, the region of Saurashtra or Kathiawad, which was largely princely in the colonial period, Kachchh, a border district sharing an international border with Pakistan and state borders with Rajasthan, and Eastern Gujarat, which consists of the Adivasi (indigene) belt (Yagnik and Sheth, 2005). Tannen Neil Lincoln argues that the four regions of Gujarat,

have followed different paths to cultural and political homogeneity that have intersected with each other at different points in time. . . . [and through history] the land had never been identified as a single homogenized political entity. This was due to the fact that the 4 geographic regions of Gujarat had largely been shaped separately by distinct influences in history and were therefore administered under 4 separate socio-cultural sub-regions. (Lincoln 2016:2).

Further, Samira Sheikh emphasizes the heterogeneity that historically characterized Gujarat. She argues that:

Gujarat is a region that has been continuously settled for almost four millennia. It is the quintessential land of the immigrant, subject to continual waves of invaders, traders, pastoralists, and peasants. Located at the intersection of a variety of ecological zones, Gujarat's history reflects the dynamics of all these. It has far-flung maritime links from its long coastline, desert and scrublands suitable only for nomad pastoralists in the north-west, good agricultural lands in the east and north-east, and densely hilly forest covers in the center of the Saurashtra peninsula and the eastern hill tracts. (Sheikh 2010:2)

Before that, the land of Gujarat could be imagined as nomadic, in that its coming together is based on a foundation of historical migration built of many nomadic communities, including the Jath community, that lived in and across the porous borders of this region. These communities, that were once floating populations, are now settled in the region today, practicing semi-nomadic livelihoods, post 1947, with the formation of the Indian nation-state. Today, they are settled largely in the district of Kachchh. The district of Kachchh is located in the north of Gujarat. It is home to what used to be one of Asia's largest grasslands—the Banni. The Banni has attracted many nomadic pastoralist communities that have historically traversed the Afro-Asiatic landscape, making Gujarat a part of their seasonal migration between the eleventh and the nineteenth centuries.⁶

The word region will always bring to mind the image of a land, soil, mud, plains. Over that, the image of people, livelihoods in action are inscribed within this landmass. But what comes to mind, when the people, livelihoods that animate a land, are a moving people? The containment suddenly changes. The moving livelihood suddenly animates the borders of such regions. As a result, these regions also shift like sand dunes, churned by the movement of people across time until heavier border imaginations overtake more fluid ones.

Sheikh (2010) offers a striking unbinding of our staunch and rigid imagination about the birth of the region. She presents the formation of the region of Gujarat with origin stories that are steeped in migration. It results in a non-linear birthing, a birthing of a region that happens at different times in multiple ways. The political birthing of Gujarat, the linguistic birthing, the social and religious birthing, all occur at different points of time, yet in ways that are co-consequential. There is something interesting about tracing origin stories, especially of a region, and particularly of a region like Gujarat that has been historically constituted time and again by majorly nomadic, merchant and pastoralist communities. The birthing of the state will always move towards unification, tightening of the borders, a powerful push towards a unified identity, a regional identity. Yet, the kind of nomadic histories that constitute the formation of the state of Gujarat challenge this effect of unity.

In this thesis, I speak specifically of origin stories that are also non-linear. These are origin stories that do not start at a particular point and take you through to the present historical condition. They are origin stories that blur the boundaries between song and scripture, myth

⁶ For a detailed account of the historical context of the Banni grasslands see Kothari 2013 and Sheikh 2010.

and history, story, and pasts. These stories do not end in Gujarat. The point of origin then becomes dispersed into routes; maps emerge out of myth, lore, story, and song. Gujarat, a region churned by movement, aids this displacement of origin. Why is this important? Because by dispersing the point of origin of both people and region, one is able to forge newer understandings of nomadic regions, where history lies in movement and constant formation. It further fragments the historical time-space, allowing us to access new perspectives on belonging, settlement, sites, and material of historical memory, especially those that emerge from nomadic communities.

There is an innate connection between people and land. When people move, they move with their land. This does something to the way we picture a region or even the process of regional formation. For example, imagine a piece of land, traversed by pastoralist groups for centuries, cultivated by farmers for centuries, ruled by kings and lived in by common people for centuries. You might imagine the stopping of movement; the end of movement is where the region is birthed. But I would suggest the contrary. Regions are birthed again and again because of movement. Gujarat, as others, is a region to be studied as being in perpetual formation. This shows gaps in which to wedge in other nomadic regions that expand the scope of imagining pasts composed of circulation or in other words, build geographies of affinity (Menon 2022) that helps look at the special subject formations that are formed out of being in constant flux.

Kachchh, Gujarat, India

Kachchh, a district in the state of Gujarat, India, is home to the seamless white desert—the Rann as it is known in the vernacular, the grasslands or Banni—and some important ancient port towns. All these together constitute a sub-region of Gujarat. A range of marginalized nomadic communities have settled there over the centuries. Some of these communities acquired very low status in the Hindu and Islamic folds of religion in Gujarat. Others till today remain in between claiming to be both Hindu and Muslim and practice a unique blend of these religions.



Figure 1: Image from fieldwork. Kotda ruins, Kotada, Kachchh, Gujarat, India. Photograph by Kathyayini Dash. 2018.

Fundamentalism in India has had a long history associated with cultural mobilisation. Farhana Ibrahim's (2008) discussion around Gujarat's *asmita* is an analytical account considering the implications of this on the categories of region and regionalism in relation to notions of borders and boundaries. She puts forward the border region of Kachchh as an example of what we can call an archipelizing space, which has shared historically fluid and porous borders with Sindh, in the state of Pakistan, and as I argue, much further, beyond the Afro-Eurasian grasslands and seas. The history and geography of Kachchh has always clashed with this other "regional imagination that seeks to contain Gujarat within the idiom of Asmita" (Ibrahim 2020:15). Ibrahim argues that the boundaries and borders of regions such as Kachchh, Gujarat, urge us to shift perspectives from narratives of regionalism involving containment and inclusion, to that of experiencing a region "beyond its geographical, political or legal referents" (9). She engages Bernard Cohn's ideas around the formation of a relationship between the inhabitants and the territory, thereby, helping to think about the subjective constructions of territory and belonging while foregrounding a relationship between structure and affect (10). This means "instead of a fixed and immutable space, the meaning ascribed to place can perceptibly morph and change depending on perspective, memory and experience" (10). She

marks her departures from Cohn, by disregarding the essentialist bent of Cohn's argument, arguing there isn't anything essential or a-priori about this relationship between structure and affect, but it is indeed a formation that is particular and forged through the experience of living or in Mignolo's framework (2000), through dwelling within a border region. Ibrahim's approach involves an unsettling of the fixity of region in the sense of its political and legal referents in order to engage "the 'uncertainty' and fluidity' of the concept when viewed as a subjective experiential category" (11).

While I understand the ethnographic structure and impulse of Ibrahim's argument around region and identity formation in purview of State formation, I argue that the processes of viewing and experiencing a region are simultaneous. Even political or legal referents or the fixity of region comes within the ambit of the experiential as much as the fluidity and uncertainty of subjective relationships of belonging and territory with the region. They need not necessarily be engaged in a chronological manner nor treated as mutually exclusive ways of engaging with the region. There are other emerging methodologies apart from ethnographic ones, within the framework of affect studies, that engage the cultural, social and political structures of affect built on and by feeling (See Sharma and Tygstrup 2015 and Ahmed 2014), which lend a longer hand to cater to this simultaneity, uncertainty, and fluidity of the experiential. Understanding the experiential as a process rather than a category prompts some methodological shifts. Methodologies based in artistic research and practice, including performance making, visual and musical practices, are examples of this that I use and put forward in my thesis. These methodologies help address and involve discussions on non-contiguous spaces held by linkages formed through certain affinities while speaking of spaces such as the region of Kachchh, where heterogeneity pervades bodies and regions and interrupts ongoing processes of rigid identity formations directed in part by the State.

Kachchh: Rann, Banni and the Sea

L. F. Rushbrook Williams, writing in 1958, defines the Rann as a riddle. Note this passage from Williams describing the Rann of Kachch in the ancient times:

In ancient times, when the Rann was an arm of the Arabian Sea, Kutch was an island, easily to be reached from what is now Sind, and forming a kind of Adam's Bridge between Sind and Kathiawad. . . . When Alexander the Great reached those parts in 325 BC the Rann was no longer an arm of the sea. The eastern branch of the Indus—then the most important channel—emptied itself

into the Rann, so that Kutch was a kind of extension of Sind on the other side of a freshwater lake, easily to be crossed. During the whole of this period which lasted until 1000 AD the connection between Kutch and Sind was intimate...But some time in the 11C or 12C the main body of the Indus water began to move from the eastern to the western branch; the freshwater lagoon dried up and salt water began to seep into its place. This was no doubt the result of the seismic disturbance. . . . [t]hey were generally attributed to...the supernatural power of sages and saints...The Rann became a saline, marshy plain, flooded during monsoon months and... often difficult to cross. This character it has broadly maintained into our own times.... (Williams 1958: 57-58)

This account surely underscores the region as one that comprised shifting borders of land and sea, with ties to other borderlands and, thus, with intimate connections with movements of peoples, across the subcontinent and beyond. In other words, a discontinent (Noudelmann 2018).



Figure 2: Image from fieldwork. A ship painted on the walls of a home in Mandvi, Kachchh, Gujarat, India. Photograph by Kathyayini Dash. 2019.

Nomadic Regions, Nomadic Histories: The Jaths of Kachch

In his article on the *aaradhvani* (a genre of performance deriving from Bhakti) of among the Meghvar community of Kachchh, Keshabhai Marvada (2023) states that

Kachchh, having coastal and land international borders on two sides and national boundary on the other, was a frontier for travellers from across Asia. Like in other parts of Indian subcontinent, bhakti flourished here in several ways and forms, across castes and communities. It has been said that Kabir, Nanak and Shah Latif, a well-known Sufi saint from Sindh, travelled through Kachchh at some or the other point of time. So, too, did their compositions. (Marvada 2023:3).

His characterization of the Bhakti-Sufi tradition as wrought in and through travel in Kachchh is quite telling and offers an insight into the performative practices of the Bhagadiya Jath community of Kachchh.

The Bhagadiya Jath community has a long nomadic past traced to the 11th century. They have a broken and dispersed subjectivity by following long migratory paths that include routes that cut across parts of Europe, Asia, and Africa, including Romania, Tunisia, Greece, Iran, Persia, Egypt, Tanzania, Somalia, Balochistan, and Sindh. Today, they are often employed as construction labourers in Bhagadiya (from which the community gets its present name) in the Banni region as well as in parts of the coastal regions of Kachchh where they have settled down post the Partition of India in 1947.

The Bhagadiya Jaths are an example of nomadic communities, pastoralists, that have historically moved across land and sea, and whose subject formations are under constant flux. In this, it may be productive to use the idea of nomadic regions as a mode and site of enquiry into the histories and historiographical issues around these floating populations. Though Gujarat, generally, and Kachchh in particular, can be read as a specific region with shifting borders that the nation state finally fixed into place after 1947, it can still be argued that it was built on a foundation of historically migrating communities of which the pastoralists were the most significant determining community according to Sheikh (2010). Therefore, the historiography of the Bhagadiya Jaths cannot be bound to the region of the modern Gujarat state. It necessarily demands to be read in conjunction with its Afro-Eurasian resonances and historical continuum. In my pilot fieldwork in Kachchh I had gathered oral narratives from

Mazhar Mutwa that reminiscence an eleventh century Afro-Asian past of the region of Kachchh through the nomadic movement of the Maldharis of Kachchh of which the Jaths are one of the many communities included within this socio-cultural formation.

Here is a link to the interview:

Extract 2: Chapter 1 Interview with Mazhar Mutwa

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The context from which my research emerged is the community music of these nomadic groups. These groups have deep rooted and very old musical lineages that comprise of songs, folk tales, community stories, and narratives. The histories of these people are available through these songs, folklore, beliefs, and family histories. The characters of the folktales and songs are said to be linked by family lineages to the singers or communities singing them today. Their migratory histories are interconnected with thriving musical traditions emerging from these communities, imbued with the lament and the call, all of which are in the process of being systematically archived. My pilot fieldwork, as well as subsequent fieldwork, for the RAA project has yielded insights into the nature of the Bhakti and Sufi traditions of music and its migratory pasts that include interactions with Africa and West Asia. They point to an untold history of such music that belonged to and emerged from these margins that have travelled routes that go beyond the borders of contemporary India. My research project proposes to map traces of a transcontinental lament emerging from the rubric of a particular form of devotional music—the Wayee—sung by the Bhagadiya Jaths of Kachchh, Gujarat

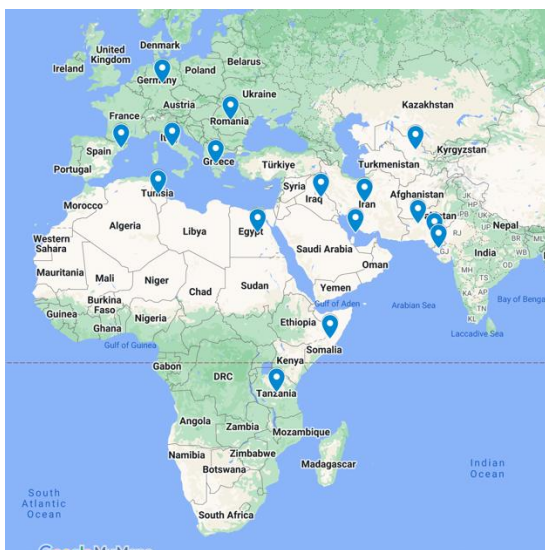


Figure 3: Mapping Mazhar Mutwa's oral memory of the movement of the Jaths and their nomadic past. Generated on Google Maps by Kathyayini Dash. 2020.

The Wayee

Play as you read:

Zikir | Shah Jo Wai | Shah Bhitaii

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dD0NUjiiraI&list=PL6JTBjspeC_ZKx8lwmGPxI7Xspo2T2pmj&index=36

The Wayee is a musical performance genre practiced in particular by the Bhagadiya Jaths of Kachchh, Gujarat, India. The Bhagaadiya Jaths spiritual orientation is first and foremost followers of Shah Abdul Latif Bhattai. However, in some of my interactions with the members of the community, they are registered as Sunni muslims, they belong of a Sufi *sangathan* that is dedicated to the reverence and practice of Bhattai's *Risalo* as scripture through the performance of the Wayee. While this is unnegotiably an important aspect of studying and analysing the Bhagaadiya Jath's and their practices⁷, this thesis is oriented towards studying the musical form and performance of the Wayee and the atmospheres of the lament produced by this form, in order to analyse the ways in which various aspects in relation to the performance of the Wayee renders the emergence of historical materials. I will be specifically focusing on the form as rendered by the Bhagadiya Jath community that has resonances with the way the form is sung in Sindh, Pakistan by the faqirs of Bhit Shah⁸ (which is what you are listening to as you read.)

Extract 3: Chapter 1 The Wayee of the Bhagaadiya Jaths of Kachchh

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⁷ This has been done in important sociological and ethnographic studies on the Jaths. (See Ibrahim 2004)

⁸ Bhit Shah is a sacred place in Pakistan where Shah Abdul Latif is buried. Nevertheless, my fieldwork in Gujarat documented many other musical renderings of the Wayee found across Kachchh, Gujarat.



Figure 4: Image from fieldwork. Listening to Mitho Khan, Sumar Kaka and the group perform the Wayee, Kachchh, Gujarat, India. Photograph by Kathyayini Dash. 2018.

Bhakti translates to devotion. Traditional accounts of the Bhakti movement in India say that the movement emerged in the eight century in the south of India and then later travelled to the north. Some historians describe it as a social reformation in Hinduism that provided an individual-focused alternative path to spirituality regardless of caste or gender. Others look at it as a revival, as a reworking and re-contextualisation of ancient Vedic traditions.⁹ However, the preliminary pilot field work that I conducted in August 2018 as a Research Associate in the RAA project yielded some new insights into the nature of the Bhakti tradition of music of Kachchh and its migratory pasts that include interactions with Africa and West Asia.

Born out of the grief of exile, the Wayee is a form of singing developed by the eighteenth century mystic Sufi saint, poet, philosopher and traveller, Shah Abdul Latif Bhitai. Shah Latif is known to have travelled far across the South Asian landscape and in the dhows across the Indian Ocean. He was an Uvaisi Sufi saint, which means that he was not associated formally with any of the main Sufi orders but whose spiritual initiation comes without any saintly human

⁹ For a detailed account of Bhakti in India see John Stratton Hawley, *A Storm of Songs: India and the Idea of the Bhakti Movement*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2015. For an account of Bhakti practices in Kachchh, see Keshabhai Marvada 'Rekhiyo Jugajug Aage: A Reading of Caste and Gender in the Aaradhivani of Kachchh' *Contemporary Voice of Dalit* (March 2022) 1-8

intermediary (Shackle 2018:vii). According to the local narrative, it is said that Shah Abdul Latif, burdened by the taunts of the world, went into self-exile and separated himself from his lover. As he was grieving at leaving his village and his lover, notes of the Wayee emanated from him. He shaped the notes from the various screams and sounds produced out of his grief. With these notes he wove smaller systems of music called Surs. He wove thirty-six Surs that told thirty-six stories of grief emerging from a variety of communities that he travelled with. These communities are today recognized as lower-caste communities.

The verses that are sung were first orally narrated by Shah Latif in speech and song that are compiled in the form of a Sufi treatise called the *Shah Jo Risalo* (roughly translating to The Shah's Message). The *Risalo* emerged gradually from various collections of the verses Shah Latif produced during his lifetime recorded by his disciples (Shackle, 2018:ix). The verses are called "*bheth*" and have a specific rhythmic and literary meter that are primarily designed for a musical performance (Shackle, 2018:xiii). The text is written in Sindhi (Arabic) script, although the literary work incorporates words and etymological references from a variety of local languages. The literary composition of the text is one of the major indications of the travels undertaken by Bhitai. Additionally, the thematic arrangement of the thirty-six Surs, derived out of specific stories and detailed experiences of a variety of labouring and artisanal communities located across the South Asian region, is another indication of the *Risalo* being a multi-layered text.

It is (1) a Sufi treatise that: employs the full resources of the Sindhi language to present a uniquely vivid and varied expression of the central Sufi understanding of the created world as a direct manifestation of the Divine and of love as the all-powerful force that connects God with his creatures (Shackle, 2018: vii); (2) It can be read as a travelogue that complexly lays out the social landscape of the time through vibrant vernacular imagery, poetry and verse; (3) it can be studied as a musical and ethno-musicological text whose content cannot be separated from the way it is sung. The *bheth* is built into the musical modes (or Surs) in which the text is sung wherein each story, place, and character is assigned and told through thirty-six nuanced musical modalities of grief developed by the poet-saint. Therefore, an engagement with the form of the Wayee necessarily engages with Shah Abdul Latif Bhitai's multi-layered text—the *Risalo*—that gives important insights into the layered ways in which marginal histories are kept alive. Today, the Bhagadiya Jath community has only one surviving family that, according to them, sings the Wayee in the same form as it was created by Shah Abdul Latif Bhitai, in the eighteenth century.

Music and Embodied History

Play as you read:

Sur Samoondhi | Shah Jo Raag | Shah Bhitaa

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VT7E9REZ1NY&list=PL6JTBjspeC_ZKx8lwmGPxI7Xspo2T2pmj&index=38

This form of music is sung only with prior preparation and it is an extremely exhausting and painful form of music. It is a form of worship that is tied to Sufi ritual practices performed at specific times of the year, in specific seasons or occasions. The pain of this singing resonates with a social history of pain of a people and, within this context, a nomadic civilization. In this way, memory becomes the body in music. Music becomes remembering; a carrier of pain/loss. These histories of mourning are carried in their devotional legacy and it is only through their devotional status, that they achieve the means to survive in a deeply unequal and caste-ridden contemporary world.

The Wayee appears to operate with emotional registers of grief. This involves a re-telling of the history of devotion that has emerged from histories of grief within communities that carry them as their devotional legacy. Love stories, stories of travel, legends from the seafaring/fishermen communities, stories of weather and celebration occupy their regions of memory, and these become their language of history. These layers of historical-musical codes could be their only means to map where they came from and to remember a different, far off and yet intimate world. Music becomes the carrier of their memories of pain/loss, which they hold with a great sense of pride. This pride is of a different kind, than the one produced by the idiom of *asmita*. These histories lie in the way they are told; in the way they are sung.

A PaR methodology and framework, I believe, can help grapple with these particular methods/grammars of music as history. It can serve as a bridge between my study of the Wayee and my engagement with the materiality of the sonic. Beyond being mediums of expression, a study of the Wayee, through my experience and practice of aural- visual performance, recognises music and other immersive forms of art as a cultural descendant of affect through the practice of music that performs an encoding of history across the dispersed nomadic body. This temporal installation of the past in the present through performance occurs in forms like the Wayee and even sometimes in canonical Indian classical forms defined by an establishment of an atmosphere or *mahaul* that is created collaboratively by the performers and the listeners.

I draw a parallel between the body-in-music and the nomadic body, as both contribute to archipelizing the afro-eur-asian continents. The body-in-music in this case becomes a special

kind of historical agent that makes apparent these complex histories of moving and (re)moved people. They are complex because the circulation and movement coaxes historical material to take different forms; this is where music lends a hand, in the preservation of memory in sensorial terms. When a musical collaboration of particular kinds of music happens, that process can actually be equated to the archipelizing process. Musical collaboration can become a method of making cultural and socio-political islands speak to each other, while forging archipelagic maps erupting out of musical resonances. This is especially significant for Afro-Eur-Asian historiography, because it offers a way of shifting our lenses from the histories of music to histories in music. Music then opens out as a whole new practice for historical research. This research is primarily practice-based and involves fresh ears and eyes in the process of making these histories come out. In order for these musical entrances into historiography to be introduced, a discussion on the different kinds and functions of osmotic body-world relationships is imperative.

Conclusion

As an attempt at meeting my research question through the means of performance, the *Note Will Carry Us II* was meant to understand the depths of my question and take me to the next productive point. While it led to significant methodological insights offered by PaR as I have mentioned earlier, it led me to unpack a series of insights into the feelings of grief, voice, regions and migration which helped me articulate some of the arguments that I have made in this chapter around the connections between region, music and embodiment. The roadblocks I hit in the making of this performance led me to the need for deriving or putting together a conceptual framework that would ground my explorations and enquiries into the processes of embodiment of the past through musical or sonic forms. It also pointed me to the need to examine the materialities of these subaltern and nomadic pasts in order to propose a historiographical method in music.

The following chapter shall discuss the dispersible body framework, a framework developed through this doctoral thesis by preparing the site of the body, and its fleshy grounds for the explication of these nomadic histories that traverse uncertain and fluid, archipelagic, oceanic regions.

Extract 4: Chapter 1 The Note Will Carry Us II Video Documentation

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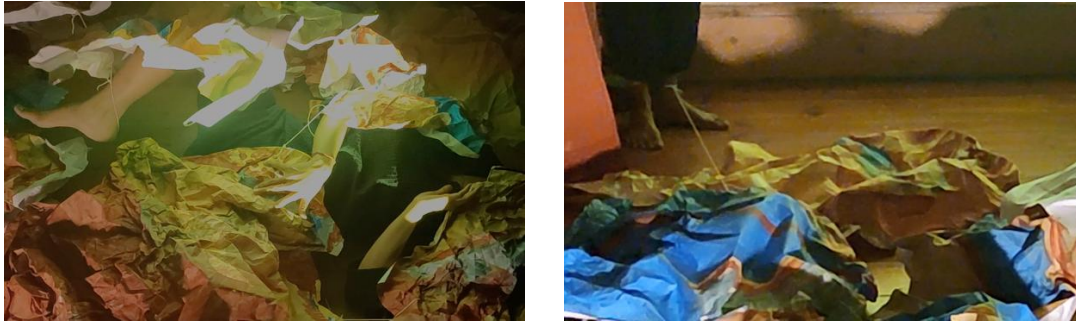


Figure 5: *Still from The Note Will Carry Us II.* Part of Minor Project presentation for Postgraduate studios, Center for Theatre Dance and Performance Studies, University of Cape Town. Photograph by Kathyayini Dash. 2020.

CHAPTER 2

THE DISPERSIBLE BODY FRAMEWORK

And then,
once again,
Splitting, splattering, scattering across space and time,
I explode.

Gathering together
My disarrayed body,
I walk on sweltering seas and burning shadows.

I swallow the skies and I give a little corner
of my heart
to the multiverse
to rest for a while;
And as it rested, I adorned my hair
with the rising sun and the waning moon.

I bind together
My disarrayed body
And I watch it re-emerge
into an intersection of battlefields.
I hold within myself
a multitude,
like each rib held in delicate order
like a constellation
entangled in the south westerly winds
that blow in my veins.

I spread myself flat
across the desolate landscape
that was once home,

I carry it
within the folds
of my newly populated body,
as a spectrum of solidarity.
Passing from generation to generation
Travelling through the ravages of time
I am telescoped from the past,
resurrecting myself
each time that I am sung into the present.

And so,
here I am, at this very moment,
pulling my splintered self together.

I am one and I am many.

With the strength of multitudes
That I enfold within myself
At the edges of my ever-becoming body
I write.
In between the past and present,
And in the dream of the future,
I write myself.
I write my place.

(Poem: Writing Womxn (Dash 2020))

Play as you read:

Raag Miyan Malhar (Vilambit and Drut Bandish) | Bhimsen Joshi

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P4dHD-sIgl0>

My teacher Parmar Sir, had just finished teaching me Raag¹⁰ Mian Malhar. I remember it was the yawning meendh¹¹ at the ‘ga’¹² and the characteristic placement of the ‘ma’ that not only set the atmosphere of the raag but immediately engulfed me, hit straight at my heart, jerking out a tear. I only remember opening my eyes after having sung the bandish¹³ of the raag, feeling as if time had stood still. I opened my eyes and there was a strange silence, an immersion, and an unspoken realization on the part of my grandmother, mother, Parmar Sir, and I, that the Raag had bound the space in a special way. It had immersed us and left us with a feeling that had settled into the space. Where did I go? What happened during the song? What was this sense of losing the self that all of us shared? It was as if the gross state of our bodies had taken the back seat and what was driving us was the song, the raag, the notes. Where do you lose yourself? What makes you lose yourself? What does it mean to lose yourself? What is the body in the midst of this loss of selves (of the singer, the listener)? What binds us together? Where does the body end and the world begin?

My sister asked me an interesting question as she was watching me paint a rib cage over a video-call. “Akka, why do you like painting ribcages?” I said “It’s my most favourite part of the body” She asked “Why?” I said “Why! Because it holds the heart!” To this she asked me the most delightfully intriguing question “Why is it that the heart is so important? Why is only the heart associated with life and with emotions and feelings? Isn’t the whole body responsible for life and emotion and feeling?” I responded excitedly “What do you mean! Isn’t the heart everything! For the poets it is the heart that is the centre of life and feeling and for the scientists the brain is the centre for thought, thinking. Thinking with the heart, is something that only the poets can tell you about. The scientists think of the whole body as life giving of which the heart is a part. The poets think of the heart as the whole body.” (M. Dash, 2021)

¹⁰ Raag broadly speaking is a structural component of the Indian Classical music system. It can be understood as particular scales or modes of music within which improvisation and elaboration occurs.

¹¹ Meendh is an aspect of Indian Classical Music which is defined as a kind of inflexion that connects any two notes in a long curving arch, touching upon all the musical frequencies (shrutis) in between the two notes.

¹² The major notes of the Indian classical scale are as follows: *Sa, Re, Ga, Ma, Pa, Dha, Ni, Sa*. Here I refer to the third microtonal note *ga* and the fourth major note *Ma*.

¹³ A bandish, broadly speaking, is a component within a raag which refers to a binding of the notes into a fixed composition within which again, the elaboration and improvisation of the raag is done.

This chapter proposes the dispersible body as a framework with which to understand embodied processes and a way of showing how historical processes engage the body as a site of performance. It is broadly divided into three sections. In the first section I open a discussion on the Hindi words “mann” and “bheetar” that explore what these words offer to our understandings around the relationship between the body and the mind, dualistic and non-dualistic perspectives. The second section deals with a brief introduction to the theme of the body-world relationship as it has played out in my artistic and research practices. I then move on to engage a range of perspectives drawn from selected literature assembled across three interrelated seams namely body/mind, body/society and body/affect that when sewn together form the dispersible body framework. The third section is a detailed discussion on the dispersible body framework.

Section I

“Mann” and the Heart: On the Liminal Edges Of Dualism

An interesting observation can be made around the way the Hindi word “mann” is circulated. What connotations does it carry and what meanings are attached to this word? You will see, that in most Indian, and other, languages, one word can mean many different things depending on the way the word is used. Depending on what comes after and before the word, the context that surrounds its usage, the specific changes of moods and gestures; they all contribute to the meaning of the word. Not only that, the word’s meaning also differs depending upon translation. In the same way, the word “mann” can translate to mind. But it can get complicated when the word is succeeded by the word “basiyaa”; when put together the phrase becomes both a verb and a noun, to make “mann basiyaa” which is a person who has possessed or taken over my heart/mind/body/being. Here, mann cannot be only translated to the mind but in fact denotes the whole complex of the mind+body+heart where each of these are not separate physical or mental components but can be understood as the aspects that constitute the being. Often used as a phrase associated with describing the state in which a forlorn lover has been put in by their beloved, found in many traditional bandishes that refer to Radha Krishna Leela, the word mann can be understood as emerging from a perspective that complicates a dualist understanding of body and mind and points to a non-dual perspective on the body itself. The very edges of the body are brought into question.¹⁴

¹⁴ I have put together these insights into the meanings and associations around the words mann circulate orally and aurally in various kinds of spaces where music is taught. I have drawn these readings of the word by engaging meanings that I learnt in my music classes with S.A. Parmar Sir and through my work with Kabir’s poetry and by

Consider this translation by Linda Hess (2009: x) of a Sakhi (couplet) by Kabir Das.

Dhīre dhīre re manā dhīre sab kuchh hoy
Mālī sīnche so gharā, ritu āve phal hoy

Slowly, slowly, oh mind,
everything happens slowly,
the gardener pours hundreds of jars of water,
but fruit comes only in season.

(Hess 2009: x)

In this translation of the couplet, Hess chooses to go with translating the word *manā* as *mind*. She does so keeping in mind the entirety of the couplet. Here, the rest of the couplet not only provides her with a context to translate this particular word, but in fact the rest of the couplet pours meaning into the word itself in such a way that it drives the word to its own edges. These kinds of words, can be “understood” only because of what surrounds the word, not only as context but as that which shows up the edges of its meaning while pushing the word to go beyond it. Therefore, even though Hess has translated the Hindi word *manā* into the English word *mind*, what the rest of the couplet does, is to bring other implied meanings to the forefront. Here, some of the implied meaning is for example, the mind (in its state of duality¹⁵) is impatient, and keeps working hard to derive the fruits of its constant labour. Note, that here, in the implied meaning, the mind blurs its edges that is steeped in duality, to become the body, where the body too blurs its edges to become the mind. The other implied meaning, is to be

listening to various renditions of bandishes or bhajans that carry this word. I have also had insightful personal conversations around the word *mann* with people invested directly or indirectly in the study of this word (Kaustubh Das, S.A. Parmar Sir, Bindhumalini, Umar Kaka) and have listened to (Listen to Kabir Das, Kumar Gandharva, Parvathy Baul) and read through various readings (See Linda Hess 2009) that have informed my reading of the word in very important ways.

¹⁵ Here I am not referring to the Cartesian understanding of duality (body-mind). I am drawing on a complex esoteric understanding of dualism as expanded upon by many Tantric scholars-cum-practitioners referring to differentiation of levels of reality that are knotted in subtle elusiveness (Maya or illusion) driven in place by ignorance and the absence of awareness that sustains the forms of the world, that make us experience the world in separation. Tantra is a doctrine of consciousness, of knowing unity in duality and duality in unity which means it does not discard Dualism, but seeks to understand the dualistic world of forms as a means of realization towards the non-dualistic Knowing of the Formless. This is done through practices that cultivate awareness, where the body in Tantric aspects, is the means of knowledge, the knower and Knowledge itself, thereby collapsing the separation between body/world. For more details you can refer to seminal translations and commentaries on the *Tantraloka*, a revered Tantric scripture attributed to the Kashmiri Shaivite saint and tantric scholar Abhinavagupta (c975-1050), offered by the Tantric scholar Mark Dyczkowski (2024) in his recently published work on *Tantraloka* (2024) across Volumes 1-11. Also see *Doctrine of Vibration* (Dyczkowski 1987) by the same author.

patient, surrender to the shifting of seasons, to connect with the heart and expand it. Here again, the heart's edges are non-dual, it is not only mental and physical but what is called the centre of the subtle body. The subtle body can be understood as a kind of a dynamic non dual interface between the limited mind (dual nature) and the body (dual nature) composed of majorly nādis (channels) and vayu (winds) and prana (energy; vital life force). Different esoteric traditions will have different compositions of the subtle body but for our purpose right now, it is enough to understand that although the subtle body correlates aspects of the physical or mental body, it is a form in itself, a subtler form, whose edges are osmotic with the physical, physiological, mental and emotional. In this view, in the subtle body, the mind is an aspect of the subtle body yet manā itself, contains this aspect. In this sense the English word mind, too, when translated in light and effect of these implied meanings that steep the word manā, can acquire the non-dualistic implication or meaning.

The act of translation is a fertile site of emergence and production where meanings, contexts and implications that surround certain words alchemise to create meaning in the process of translation. Although this is a significant and necessary remark, it is not the focus of this thesis. Therefore, moving on, it is these kinds of non-dualistic dynamisms of the body I am interested in laying out through the course of this chapter. For the purpose of this thesis, I am not interested in and do not find it useful to involve non-dualistic approaches that reject the reality of experiencing the world through the limitation of duality. A key aspect of my personal belief lies in the need to transcend the limitations of duality, dualistic thinking, and dualistic experiencing of the world. In fact, many esoteric philosophies¹⁶ surrounding non-dualism urge one to undertake a spiritual journey that pushes one towards processes of a non-dualistic realisation of the self, where the awareness of the subtle body is a major vehicle. Nevertheless, for the purpose of the thesis, I argue for a complex engagement with the very edges of dualism. In doing so, what becomes central to my argument is an engagement with the liminality of dualism. In order to meet the aims of this thesis, I would like focus more on the idea of the body as a subtle threshold, with dynamic edges, that witnesses and participates in an osmotic relationship with the world.

In the same way that the word manā complicates itself through the process of translation discussed above, I want to complicate the ideas and meanings that circulate and attach to the words body and mind, by introducing the implied meanings generated by the word subtle, or subtlety, to imply this osmotic dynamic play of body-mind, where the body and the mind

¹⁶ For examples and more information see the previous footnote.

constantly interact to form subtle formations of the dynamic body, where the body and mind are both “nowhere and everywhere” (bringing back the idea of subaltern pasts that are both nowhere and everywhere).

In this way a subtle understanding of the body-mind is surely explicated with exceeding profundity in tantric theory and esoteric scripture, but it is also explicated, albeit with a different kind of trajectory, in theories of embodiment and the body, found across disciplines of performance studies, performance practice, sociology, cultural studies and western philosophy. It is just a matter of reading them in translation, in the way we read the word *manā* in translation.

In the recent decades, the idea of the body as a dynamic field has been explored within performance studies. (Taylor, 2003; Merleau Ponty, 2002; Jones 1999; Pink, 2015; Sharma and Tygstrup, 2015; R. Williams, 1977 among others). It has been conceptualized through an embodiment discourse grounded in performance practice (Taylor, 2003; Merleau Ponty, 2002; Jones, 1999; McLaughlin, 2017; Duby and Barker, 2017; Perry and Medina, 2011; MacKendrick 2016; Gallagher, 2017; Mawere and Van Stam, 2017; Schneider 2014; Reeves, 2011; and embodied cognition (Bryon, 2017; Hansen and Oxoby, 2017; Kemp, 2016; McLaughlin, 2017; Clare, 2017; Gallagher, 2017). Conceptual positions within these fields have essentially been characterised by a move against Cartesian body-mind dualism as espoused by René Descartes (1998). These have taken the shape of foundational perspectives beginning from an anti-Cartesian, non-dualist premise, that are marked by a systematic move away from cognitivist origins (See Derrida 1972).

These moves have been made also by many esoteric scholars and practitioners across the field of Tantric Studies, where non-dualisms of different kinds based on the tradition at hand, form the basis of many Buddhist and Hindu Tantric practices spread across the Far -East and the Indian Subcontinent.¹⁷

I move on to the next section, in which I discuss another word, “bheetar”, that helps us better understand the subtle edges of the osmotic body and delve deeper and further into the spatial materiality of dynamic body-world relationships.

¹⁷ For representative texts in English see Robert E. Svoboda, *Aghora* 1 and 2 (New Delhi: Rupa, 1994). These are preliminary texts which explain some key concepts related to Tantric non-dualisms and approaches to the body and embodied practices and phenomenologies which helped spark some key ideas around non-dualism and help open out the potentialities of this perspective to the body-mind and embodied knowledges discourse that I use in my thesis. The field is more vast where complex texts include translations of and detailed commentaries on yogic scriptures and Tantric philosophies of non-dualism that is currently beyond the scope of this thesis.

Yaa Ghat Bheetar: Drawing Osmotic Body-World Relationships

Play as you read:

Ya Ghat Bheetar

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T75ckfPPT2s>

Ya ghat bheetar baag bageeche
Ya hi mein sirjanhaara
Dhhoondhhe re dhhoondhhe andhiyaara

Ya ghat bheetar saat samandar
Ya hi mein nau lakh taara
Dhhoondhhe re dhhoondhhe andhiyaara

Ya ghat bheetar heera aur moti
Ya hi mein parkhanhaara
Dhhoondhhe re dhhoondhhe andhiyaara

Ya ghat bheetar anhad garje
Ya hi mein uthhat phuvaara
Dhhoondhhe re dhhoondhhe andhiyaara

Kahe Kabira, suno bhai saadho
Ya hi mein guru hai hamaara
Dhhoondhhe re dhhoondhhe andhiyaara'¹⁸

Translation:

Within this body, are gardens and forests,
And within this very body lives the Creator,
While you keep searching the darkness.

¹⁸ This is a devotional poem attributed to the fifteenth century poet mystic weaver saint Kabir Das. It is sung in many dialects and languages by a diverse range of communities in India.

Within this body, are seven seas,
And within this very body, 9 million stars,
While you keep searching the darkness.

Within this body, are diamonds and pearls,
And within this very body, lives the perceiver,
While you keep searching the darkness.

Within this body, the unstruck sound thunders,
And within this very body, the fountain bursts forth,
While you keep searching the darkness.

Says Kabir, listen O seeker!
Within (this very body) lives our teacher,
While you keep searching the darkness.¹⁹
(transliteration taken from ajabshahar.com)

The word “bheetar” takes an interesting form in the context of this poem. It can be translated as both within and beyond, opening out the directions in which the body can be redrawn, in osmosis with the world. Echoing the metaphor of the earthen pot/ vessel and its porousness, the word especially opens itself out in this interesting overlapping of meaning when read in the context of the body. Some meanings are- “in the heart of hearts”, “within” or “inside”, “beyond” or “past” a border or boundary or threshold. The body in this context can be acknowledged as both having form, where the “yaa ghat bheetar” can be translated as “within this body” and at the same time, the body’s capacity to expand and encompass is indicated in what follows the phrase “are seven oceans”, or “lie nine million stars”. So, what this poetic device and the semantic connotations of bheetar suggest, are presenting to us, a perception of the body that is both bound and unbound, that has form and is formless. It presents the body in

¹⁹ Linda Hess (2009) has a translation of this song as it is sung by the Malwi folk singer Prahlad Tippaniyaji. I wanted to include the version of the song as it is sung by the Hindustani vocalists Vidya Rao and Shubha Mudgal. This has nothing to do with the vocal renditions, more to do with the words as they appear especially in the first three verses. The references to creator, perceiver are present in Vidya Rao and Shubha Mudgal’s versions, but changes in Prahlad Tippaniya’s version. Therefore, I translated the words from the version of the song that I heard from Vidya Rao’s rendition as it is more applicable to my argument and it is this version you listened to as you read the words. Based on Vidya Rao’s rendition, I (vocals and tanpura) collaborated with musician and sound healer Nkosenathi Koela (bowed Uhadi) on a rendition that opens out this song to a South African sonic scape.

its potential to both appear as fixed in time and place as well as to disperse in its own sense of unboundedness across time and space. In this way, the edges of the body are rendered fluid and dynamic. The movement of the body at the liminal edges of dualism, is both inward and across a given time-space. It is this potential of the body to disperse across space and time, that I am interested in and it is this dispersal that the theory of embodiment is premised upon.

Dispersal in this context, can be understood as a scattering based on the heterogeneity of the body, loosely held by the vantage of the present. Coming back to the word *bheetar* in the poem, complicates our engagement with the edge of the body, that separates it from the world (Sullivan 2001). The conception of the body in this poem, describes its edges in interaction with the world and renders it in its dynamic potential of flexible movement, directing us to its capacity to sometimes even host the vast and the limitless—nine lakh stars, seven oceans, forests and gardens. Even that which appears to be implausible and esoteric suddenly acquires a sense of containment when it is located within the limits of the fluid bounds of the body. Sometimes the dividing line between body and world is imagined as an edge, sometimes a limit, sometimes a surface or a border and sometimes the dividing line is not completely visible at all. But what is common to all these is that the quality of the limit/border/line that divides the body from the world is flexible, malleable, relative, and dynamic.

When engaging with the “beyond” connotation of *bheetar*, it is important to note that such a reading does not propose the disappearance of the material body or its loss. Rather it demands a shift in the way we understand the materiality of the body, inviting subtler understandings. When the body moves beyond itself to encompass that which it engages, steeping in the experience of that engagement, whether of an object, person, thing or idea, the body simply loses itself in order to accommodate what appears to lie beyond it. When the body moves beyond itself, it becomes that which it engages or experiences. This loss is not absolute absence, but a liminal presence forged by an embodied awareness acquired by the body. The word *bheetar*, I suggest, allows this conception of the body. It establishes a relationship between body and space and creates a liminal synaesthetically attributed space that lies between tangibility, visibility, and audibility. It allows the image of the body that can spread across the ocean, the skies, countries, and large periods of time, to be conceivable, palpable. This metaphor of a body, as fragile as an unbaked clay pot, containing seven seas, that can be located at the threshold of the inside and the beyond, allows one to probe this idea of a world-encompassing body. In such a conceptual framework, the body can be understood as being present as the means of knowledge, without necessarily losing complete sight of its subjectivity or its objective dimensions. The discourses around embodiment, push this dispersed presence

of the body as the foundational idea. Further it enables and activates trans-disciplinary opportunities to probe the body in all of these aspects through a productive, frictional dialogue. The same productive friction, that is produced by subaltern pasts at the edges of the discipline of history (Menon, 2018; Chakrabarty, 1998).

Section II

The Body in My Practice

I have discovered that my art practice and my explorations into the question of the body are inseparable. My practice-based engagements with music and art installations and research have always been informed by a pursuit of knowing the body.²⁰ My critical engagement with the body began, to a great extent, from the image of a world-encompassing body (see Figure 5) a powerful image of a body (cosmic body) appearing to carry all physical attributes but which, at the same time, is permeable and encompasses the world within itself.

²⁰ My Masters Dissertation titled *On Installing the Body: A Study of the Artist Spectator and Site* (Kathyayini Dash 2017) covers a detailed examination of my artistic practices with a key focus on the dynamics between the artist, the site and spectatorship.



Figure 6: *Vishnu in the Cosmic Form (Visvarupa)*. Anonymous artist. Opaque watercolour on paper, Jaipur, Rajasthan (1800-1850). Google Image.



Figure 7: *Devi-Vishvarupam (The Cosmic Form of the Goddess)*, Size: 52"x 31", Medium: Earth Colour on Acid Free Paper. Artist: Dr. Arghya Dipta Kar. 2018.

These images above are representations of the cosmic body that emerge from different schools of esoteric knowledge systems. They are not only representative in terms of their detailed symbolisms; images such as these are also used as and emerge from visualisation practices in a range of tantric meditative practices (See Figure 6 especially). Therefore, it is important to note that these are not simple images, they are not just representative of the specific sacred stories or mythologies that they come from, but are also associated with a range of advanced esoteric practices of realisation and enlightenment. There are tantric studies and religious studies scholars deeply versed and knowledgeable whose work is solely dedicated to the study of these practices and whose lives have been dedicated to the scholarly philosophical work found in the associated scriptures.²¹ I am referring to these images very humbly, as a starting

²¹ Beck 1995; Dyczkowski 1987; Kar 2022; Kaustubh Das 2016

point, to open out the possibility of comprehending the body as world and the world as body. While the analyses of these images and the complex scriptural understanding behind them are in no respect my area of expertise, I have, albeit broadly, drawn from some of these philosophies and practices that have contributed towards enhancing my understanding around non-dualistic orientations and practices of approaching the body and relating to the world. Further, it was primarily through my musical practice, that I began to explore these ideas and questions around the constitution of the body and its permeable relationship with the world.

Side by side, the ideas of the body as subject and the world as sensorium have helped me explore the body as a site of continuous integration and as a site of continuous interaction.²² Further, my investigations have led to the questioning of how bodies are made historically and how the process of body making has been a fraught, complex and contested area of engagement in all societies.²³

Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari's concept of "Body-without-organs" and their framework of the disjointed, rhizomatic, de-territorialized nomadic subject (Deleuze and Guattari, 1990, 2017), has set the foundation for my investigations into the fluid relationship between the body and the world, leading to the idea of (1) the dismantle-able body and (2) the dispersible body as modes of analysing the world.²⁴ Dismantling can be understood as a disassembly hinting to the reverse possibility of reassembling. When thought of in the context of the body, the process of body making is located in the present; in the here and now. The dismantle-able body therefore is a constitutive imagination of the body. Dispersal can be understood as a scattering based on the heterogeneity of the body, loosely held by the vantage of the present. When thought of in the context of the body, the process of body making in this case, is located in heterogeneous time and place. The dispersible body therefore is a spatio-temporally dispersed imagination of the body.

My previous investigations into both these modes of analysing the world and framing body making processes, have led me to my current research question that concerns the

²² The works of Deleuze and Guattari (1990), Judith Butler (2011), Heidegger (1977), Descartes (1998), Empiricus (1996), Benjamin (1970) and Hegel (1977) have been significant to my understanding. They formed a foundational basis for my M.A. in Visual Arts dissertation (Kathyayini Dash, 2017) and display work.

²³ By body-making I mean processes in and through which the body is conceived. Largely following a constructivist framework to understand the making of the body-world through the concepts of the subject and sensorium and their mutual and simultaneous creation, I bind this with the concept of the world encompassing body (Vishwarupa) from the Hindu Tantric tradition of thought that locates the world within the edges of the body. I equate the body-world relationship as engaged across various philosophical traditions of thought with body-making processes.

²⁴ My investigations into the dismantle-able body leading to the dispersible body is a result of the practice based and practice led research work I have done between 2012 and 2017 including but not limited to my undergraduate and postgraduate Studies in Visual Arts.

dispersible nomadic bodies of the Bhagadiya Jath community of Kachchh and their relationship to the world. My research process has always been a playing field where my artistic trajectories and textual scholarship have interacted and informed each other. In this section, I will lay out the textual frameworks that have taken me through my enquiries into the nomadic body leading to my enquiry into affective infra-structures.

The question of the body-world relationship has been articulated in various ways across diverse fields of study which I have organised into three parts that are recognizably co-related. These three parts can be understood as three seams across which the dispersible body framework is sewn. Seam 1 (Body/Society) will present literature that begins with the premise of the world as sensorium and discuss the processes through which systems of power work towards the making/ manufacturing of the body as subject. I will also discuss frameworks that have been developed to read these bodies and processes of production. Seam 2 (Body/Mind), will present literature that begins from a non-Cartesian premise, and will delve into the fields of embodied cognition and performance studies, discussing selected approaches to reading the body-mind relationship and the processes of embodied knowing in performance. Seam 3 (Body/Affect), will present approaches to the body from the field of Affect Studies. I will engage the conceptual relationship of Affect Studies with the notion of the subject as sensorium and will discuss the porous affective borders of the body in a way that can offer frameworks for reading the dispersible body.

The forward slash present in the section titles must not be read as a separation but rather as a fluid seamline that engages complexly across the selected scholarship discussed below.

Seam I

Body/Society

Susan Buck-Morss (1986) draws on Walter Benjamin's characterization of the twentieth century figure of the flaneur. She renders the flaneur as a precarious figure that has exploded into a myriad pieces, each of these pieces being conjured into existence by telescoping the past through the present (Buck-Morss, 1986:100). We see here in the explosion an instance of dispersal having occurred.

Buck-Morss postulates that along with the explosion and telescoping of the figure, or body of the flaneur, into the present and the birthing of these precarious bodies, the site within which the Benjaminian flaneur is situated explodes as well, spreads across time, and transforms spatially, constituting the "very mortal and precarious reality that forms our present" (1986:

100). Following from Buck-Morss one could argue that the body of the flaneur is as dismantlable as the context or historical moment within which it is situated and from which it emerges.

Walter Benjamin discusses his idea of the exploded prison-house (1970). In the context of the age of mechanical reproduction, with the coming of film and the death of the aura, Benjamin describes the twentieth century world as an exploded prison-house through whose debris the subject wanders. This precarious ruined present that the subject engages can be extended by Deleuze et al's reading of the surface (1990). Read in conjunction with the world-encompassing body, it is conceivable to perceive a dispersed body-world dynamic as the debris of the exploded prison-house. The exploded body is a site of ruin, composed of heterogeneous, yet independent parts (Best and Kellner, 1991), immersed in a constant state of becoming (Deleuze et al 1990). The figure of Buck Morss' exploded flaneur together with Benjamin's exploded prison-house offers an interesting framework through which to visualise and conceptually position the exploded, disjointed, dispersed body-world dynamic.

While discussing the desiring machine, Deleuze and Guattari (1977) describe the manufacturing of the body in capitalist society. They maintain that bodies come into being as "desiring machines" that generate the production of production and that these bodies manufacture themselves as the subjects as well as the apparatuses that operate at multiple levels to structure and produce a particular world. Therefore, the body becomes a machine composed of heterogeneous sets of independent parts, which can be reproduced, reconstituted, reconfigured and rearticulated.

Bruno Latour (2004) discusses the body as an interface that becomes "more and more describable as it learns to be affected by more and more elements" (206). He locates the body-world dynamic in the realm of articulation. He moves away from the binary subject-object model where language acts as an intermediary between the subject (body) and the object (world) that disappears once a connection or link between the body and world has been established. He rather makes a case for the body as becoming, composed of propositional articulations that proliferate without registering difference. Latour's description of the body-world dynamic of propositional articulations refers to a world constituted by parallel lines flowing in a single direction until a disruption or bias causes these lines to distort, intersect or split to produce turbulent eddies. These turbulent eddies can be an instance of the body of propositional articulations. Latour finally presents the idea of the body-world as the multi-verse by way of a proposition' where the body is understood as and of the multi-verse simultaneously. The body therefore becomes a folded body that proliferates with every fissure caused by a propositional articulation (2004:205-227).

Judith Butler's theory of performativity (Butler, 2011), suggests the sustenance of a system of a priori articulations through a "process of materialization that stabilizes over time, produces the effect of boundary, fixity and surface we call matter" (Butler, 2011:xxviii). Following Butler, it becomes possible to understand materialization as a process involved in the production of the effect of a contour, which becomes the material of the body of the subject. This suggests that accumulated articulations (like social, cultural political and economic processes) congeal to become self-producing systems, materialising a subject, that then performatively reproduces the very system that produces the subject. She not only recognises the machinic heterogeneity of the body but also renders the body as infinitely repeatable. She takes away the solidity of an a priori phenomenon and claims that a fluid re-configuration is possible, which reinforces the idea that the body is dismantle-able. Butler's arguments help to move from the idea of subject to subjectivity that locates the making of the body-world in constant process.

The work of Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (2013), through and within the field of Subaltern Studies becomes crucial to understanding processes involved in the making of subjectivity. She brings a postcolonial perspective to the domain of the body-world dynamism. She proposes multiple subjectivities within the performative body and explicates the ways and circumstances in which they interact to constitute what she conceptualises as the double-bind (2013). These binds are only formed, or rather, made apparent, when multiple subjectivities collide, and when this collision is recognised. The bind, therefore, comes into being at the moment multiple subjectivities are recognised. The double-bind is present within the perpetually moving edges of the subject, only making itself present as a consequence of recognition and implication. Further, the double-bind, depending on the contexts in which it is either recognised or has passed through (Huddleston, 2015), becomes integral to the ways in which the subject defines its own edges at any given point of time and place. Combining Spivak's insights with those of Butler's, it is possible to argue that double-binds performatively produce a fixing and demarcating effect that helps make visible the body-in-flux, in its multitudinal formations.

In the context of the nomadic subject, the notion of spatiality is also critical to understanding the shifting fluid edges of the dispersible body/world. Therefore, it is conceptually productive to analyse this through Pierre Bourdieu's theory of Habitus (1993, 2001). The theory suggests that in all societies there is a flow of cultural capital and this is embodied through processes of entrenchment in the habits, attitudes, and dispositions of the

most powerful and dominant groups in that society. According to Bourdieu, entrenched bodies are bodies that are fixed through habit.

Nomadic communities, contrarily, are groups of people that have historically moved across land and sea, and whose subject formations are under constant flux. Bourdieu's argument, in this context, provides a useful framework with which to read both the formation of bodies and the spatial contexts in which they are entrenched. Extending this argument, it can be said that since the lives of nomadic communities are spent constantly on the move, across a variety of entrenchments (of territory, time, history), their fluid bodies refuse ordinary processes of entrenchment as we know it.

Fluid bodies are unrecognizable, precarious bodies, without fixities of place and time. To understand their subject formations demands a reassessment of methodological tools and requires different modes of historiographical enquiry. In this, it may be productive to use the idea of a nomadic dispersible body as a mode and site of enquiry into the histories and historiographical issues around these floating populations.

Seam II

Body/Mind

To understand the body in performance as a site of knowledge production, it becomes imperative for research studies to draw upon embodied cognition discourse. This offers some useful insights, especially when read in conjunction with an examination of the relationship between body and society. It is useful to situate understandings of the body as a site with fluid edges within this discourse in order to work out their meeting points as well as their points of departure.

In recent decades, the idea of the body as dynamic has been explored within embodiment discourse in the field of performance studies, performance practice and embodied cognition. This has essentially been characterised by a move against Cartesian dualism.²⁵ These foundational perspectives, that move away from cognitivist origins, begin from an anti-Cartesian, non-dualist premise. The 1990s saw challenges to notions of internalism that viewed cognition as a process that was only invested in computation or representation that occurred "in-the-head" (mind/brain) where the body is rendered as irrelevant and only restricted to sensory and motor outputs (Gallagher 2017:106). Working away from such a schema, the notion of the "embodied mind" drew significantly from phenomenology in general, and

²⁵ Informed by Rene Descartes' concept of dualism (Descartes 1998).

Maurice Merleau-Ponty's (2002) work in particular, to suggest that the body is dynamically involved in and constitutive of the physical and social environment that surrounds it. These moves have led to important developments in the field of Embodied Cognition.

Cognitivist views on body-schemas were limited to a study of neural patterns or body maps in the brain in order to derive a 'mental representation', indirectly falling back into a Cartesian divide. Gallagher (2017) in his article "Theory, Practice and Performance" discusses the various ways the concept of body-schemas has been engaged. The concept of body-schemas provides a useful framework with which to analyse the body-in-performance as a site of knowledge residue. This allows the body-in-performance to emerge as a site of knowledge production. He shows how the concept of body-schema is also central to Merleau-Ponty's *Phenomenology of Perception* (2002), and points to how Merleau-Ponty dismantles the clear-cut subject-object divide by subjecting the process of the construction of objectivity to a phenomenological analysis of perception. Gallagher (2017) discusses two primary perspectives within the embodied cognition field—the Extended Mind approach and the Enactivist models of thought. The Extended Mind approach understands the mind to be distributed across the environment and the body, such that body-schemas extend to incorporate tools/instruments and even social cultural institutions within a cognitive practice (Gallagher 2013, 2017). Gallagher's Socially Extended Mind approach addresses the precarity of the present and provides a conceptual framework that allows the mind to extend across spatio-temporal dimensions and encompass "parts of the environment" (Gallagher 2017:108) within flexible extensions of the body. This especially echoes the discussion around Mann in the previous section.

Drawing on that discussion further, the enactivist model of Embodied Cognition understands perception to be "action-oriented" and the mind to be "distributed across the body and environment, to the extent that the body and environment are dynamically coupled" (Gallagher 2017:109). Biological and affective bodily processes as well as environmental factors, "shape and contribute to the constitution of consciousness and cognition, in an irreducible way, such that these processes and factors have a "permeating effect on cognition" (Gallagher 2017:109). The enactivist model also emphasises inter-subjectivity that leads to the idea of Joint-Body Schemas that Gallagher (2017) discusses in the context of making music together. He argues that peripersonal space extends not only to incorporate musical instruments but even people that play/perform together. In the context of community musical performances this gives crucial insight into the function of body-schemas for the embodiment of memory through music. In this framework, body-schemas are not only operational within the dynamic body of the performer but are distributed and operational across the collective body of a singing

and listening community (Gallagher 2017:112-115). Following this, it becomes apparent that the materialization processes are to be found both within and beyond the edges of the body. Understood this way, in the light of both the theories, it is evident that there is a concerted move across these models to break away from the internal/external binary of the body and environment. At the same time, there is an attempt to understand these processes of entrenchment schematically. This provides us with a way of grounding the abstract conception of a dispersible nomadic body in order to study the processes that entrench and materialize the nomadic body.

Experience Bryon (2017) has explored the possibilities of the field of performance practice for the production of knowledge within the field of embodied cognition. She notes that what Embodied Cognition and Performance Practice have in common is that they are both driven by epistemological and hermeneutic pursuits simultaneously and therefore are interested in perception and knowledge without favouring either. She further notes that it is in the practice of practice, through diverse techniques and processes, that the mutually inter-dependent dynamic between brain-body-environment is constructed. She notes that, “the practitioner as self and the act as performance are made simultaneously as an emergent property of an act of doing. The practitioner therefore works/practices from inside/between as process” (Bryon 2017:17).

Moving beyond using embodied cognition as a simple justification of experience or gathering proof against Cartesian duality, I draw on embodied cognition alongside performance practice to enable and acknowledge different and marginalised ways of knowing and to develop frameworks of understanding the body as a site of knowledge residue and production.

Seam III

Body/Affect

Movements in the emergent field of Affect Studies have provided a new playing field for humanities and the sciences. Devika Sharma and Fredrick Tygstrup (Sharma and Tygstrup, 2015) note that in the last decade the notion of affect has been circulating insistently across the fields of social and cultural studies, literature, architecture, sociology and geography. Further, theories of emotion, atmosphere and feeling are thriving in the humanities and social sciences in ways that correlate to Raymond Williams’s proposition of adding a third layer to the analysis of material social infrastructure of reality (Sharma and Tygstrup, 2015).

Williams (1977) notes the significance of studying the complex phenomenon of lived presence and the role of experience in paving the way for a more nuanced approach to historical

description (Sharma and Tygstrup, 2015). He defines structures of feeling as “social experiences in solution, as distinct from other social semantic formations which have been precipitated and are more evidently and immediately available” (Williams 1977:133)

Williams makes a case for “social experience” instead of designating feelings as personal experience or merely as “incidental or small-change of society” (Williams 1977: 132-133). He argues that social experiences do “not have to await definition, classification or rationalization before they exert their palpable pressures and set effective limits on experience and on action” (Williams 1977: 132).

Williams (1977) talks about “structure” being constitutive of affective elements of consciousness and relationships: not feeling against thought but feeling as thought; a practical consciousness of a present kind in living and inter-relational continuity. This “structure” can be defined as a set with specific internal relations, at once interlocking and in tension. And as we are defining a structure of feeling, we are simultaneously defining a social experience. An experience that is “still in process, often not yet recognised as social but taken to be private, idiosyncratic or even isolating” (Williams 1977:132).

Sharma and Tygstrup (2015) set up an understanding of what affective elements are and what they mean today. They point to the radically increased involvement of affect in processes of subjectivity and other political formations in their account of “affectivity” (Sharma and Tygstrup 2015:1-18). This concept, they argue, enables the study of structures of feeling and the systems of affectivity across individual, collective and composite bodies (Sharma and Tygstrup 2015:16). Affectivity Studies examine the organisation of mental and social ecologies that move you, that “make you change your direction or composure ever so slightly” (Sharma and Tygstrup 2015:16). They argue that affectivity is a “delicate infrastructure regulating our propensities and modes of presence and participation in social situations” (Sharma and Tygstrup 2015:8). Without confining themselves to distinct vocabularies of affect and emotion, Sharma and Tygstrup (2015) draw a map of the different approaches to Affect Studies by providing a range of examples of how to work methodologically with the notion of structures of feeling.

Sarah Ahmed in her seminal work *The Cultural Politics of Emotions* (2004) introduces the concept of “affective economies” (Ahmed 2004b:117-139). “Economy” here suggests that (1) emotion and affect are transactable, (2) are constantly on the move, and (3) a circulation that constitutes the whole system. Ahmed’s concept of affective economies therefore constantly locates the body-world or subject-sensorium relationship in a transactable movement wherein they constantly shape each other.

Further, Ahmed states that in affective economies, emotions “do things”, and they “align individuals and communities—or bodily space with social space through the very intensity of their attachments” (Ahmed, 2004b: 119). She works away from the idea that emotion is a form of positive residence that inhabits a subject or object. Emotions involve subjects and objects without positively residing in them, she argues. Instead, they slide between bodies playing a crucial role in the effective “surfacing” of individual and collective bodies through processes of affective intensification (Ahmed, 2004b: 117-121 and Butler 2011:xviii).

Drawing on Ahmed (2004b), Williams (1977), Sharma and Tygstrup (2015) and Gallagher (2017) to think through the framework of the dispersible body, I propose the idea that within affective economies lie affective infra-structures on which and within which emotions slide and move. They are preserved and recorded through processes of materialization (Butler 2011) in embodied and bodily forms of entrenchment (Bourdieu 1993, 2001), thus becoming at the same time the constituting and constitutive element of the subject/body.

In the next section I examine the dispersible body and summarise the framework that has emerged from my engagement with the body-world dynamisms discussed in the previous section.

Section III

The Dispersible Body Framework

The Site of Dispersal

In the idea of the dispersible body, each piece that is dislodged away from the whole, gains independent agency. Each piece is an active piece of historical material that gains its own body depending on the connectivities that it forges in its movement across space and time. The site of dispersal is the exploded historical stage, where the dispersal incites a disintegration of the whole. The dispersal is any devastating moment that may produce an effect of absolute loss, beyond which there seems no repair or re-integration possible. Take for example, how the history of colonisation in Africa, produced what looks like an unredeemable loss that continues to produce enormous generational lapses in historical memory. This makes a project out of remembrance and provokes questions around reconciling with this loss that becomes the centre of a collective grieving which in turn, as I observed in South Africa, has led to a powerful set of decolonial attempts at re-membering a lost past. What I am suggesting, along with many contemporary indigenous knowledge keepers and scholarly decolonial voices from the Global South, is that the fragments are very much there, moving in limbo, looking for resonant

channels of language and frameworks that allow their materialisation, and the right connectivities and linkages in order to install their presence in collaboration with what we can call our precarious present.

Buck-Morss in “The Flaneur, the Sandwichman and the Whore” (1986) intriguingly weaves a commentary on the method of reading Walter Benjamin’s incomplete text “Passegenwek” and the precarious figure of the flaneur together to discuss a deep yet precarious present. I read the figure of the flaneur as an analogy for the dispersed piece, and I use the “loitering” of the flaneur as an analogy for the wandering-in-limbo of the dispersed piece.

The Precarious Present and the Stereoscopic Past

Buck-Morss (1986) unpacks an interesting relationship between the past and present, where the figure of the flaneur is rendered as a precarious figure that has exploded into a myriad pieces, each of these pieces being conjured into existence by telescoping the past through the present (Buck-Morss 1986:100). The telescoping of the past into the present, enables the imagination of a spatial deepening (as in an increase of depth) of the present, where the past is seen as residing actively, not only as a hermeneutically fixed historical matter (as it actually was) that impacts the present, but more significantly, as in remembrance (where the past is characterized as composed of dialectical images, and historical citations ripped out of their historical contexts with a “strong, seemingly brutal grasp” brought into the most immediate present. (Buck-Morss 1986: 100)).

Buck-Morss (1986) borrows from Benjamin to describe a “stereoscopic depth” of history (Buck-Morss 1986:112) with which various historical montages are made possible. A stereoscope is an optical device used to view two two-dimensional images placed next to each other at a little distance apart in a way that creates a three-dimensional effect, giving the two-dimensional images an effect of solidity and depth. The stereoscope is a late nineteenth-early twentieth century form of entertainment that consists of two lenses. This device is used to look at two photographic cards of the same subject, taken from different angles that is slid in front of the lenses to create a sense of depth and by effect, a sense of immersion within the scene depicted in the cards. When the viewer views the image through a stereoscope, the viewer is immersed in it. It surrounds you, producing an effect of presence. The viewer’s senses are entangled in the temporal space of the image, at this point of time. When one is made aware of the depth, and with sufficient immersion at a sensorial level, memories of the viewer could also get entangled with the photograph. So, this creates an interesting temporal space, where the

present (viewer's sensorium) is immersed in a piece of the past (in this example, a photograph) while at the same time the past (the stereoscoped photograph) gets immersed in the present (the viewer's sensorium). I believe it is this kind of presence-generating entanglement of the past, that constitutes a "stereoscopic depth of history" (Buck-Morss 1986:112) and the precarious present within which the dispersible body circulates.

When a stereoscoped set of photographs, like pieces of the dispersible body, is dislodged from its direct spatio-temporal context and becomes a part of a surface-montage, in this dislocated form, conditions of familiarity and connectivity can be produced via heterogenous associations and linkages formed by a viewer. The structure of the stereoscope then makes direct association with a photographic past obsolete. Therefore, instead of belonging to a particular homogenous time, when the pieces of dispersible body are made part of a surface-montage of this multi-layered precarious present composed of multiple dislodged pieces that are stereoscopically assembled together, it creates the necessary environment for a different kind of assembling of the past where the dispersed fragments, for example, of subaltern pasts, can circulate and gain independent historical agency.

Not only this, it is this stereoscopic precarity of the present, that also enables the historiography of precarious figures and pasts, that are hermeneutically absent from dominant historical narratives. Precarious presents then enable us to look at the present as "tense" (Menon 2018) and knotted (Chakrabarty 1998) that is constituted in continuum with the marginalised, outcast, or distanced pasts of precarious figures- like the refugee, the nomad, the exiled in their own land, the migrant, the indigenous tribes, the oppressed castes.

Remember the leaders of the Santhal rebellion, Seedoo and Kanoo and their narration of the historical event, mentioned in the last chapter while discussing subaltern pasts. It is this precarious yet tense and knotted present, that provides the environment for the visibilisation of subaltern pasts and it also enables the tracing of connectivities and linkages, through the act of historical "loitering", that changes our relationship to the past and gives a researcher like me, a take on the work of historiography.

This means the past is not required to gain a certain level of opacity in order to be held by the present in the form of history. Rather, it allows us to view the past as a translucent substance that thrives in and as the present. In this way, the trace instead of being produced by the act of tracing, is produced by the act of loitering, or what Tim Ingold calls "wayfinding" (Ingold 2011b). The trace in this method, is released from a necessary unilateral movement backwards, but rather one can say that the trace gains body in the present, and a voice of its own, that emerges out of its unique interaction with the present. The trace then, becomes as

something that may have been telescoped from the past, but its disjointed relationship with the past and the present also actively helps it gain a translucent materiality, that makes it susceptible to and absorbent of the present. From Buck-Morss' perspective of the telescoped past, the trace gains body and depth from the precarious present.²⁶

We are witnessing many such historical events of dispersal, and an explosion of dispersible bodies around our precarious presents. Our methodologies must shift in response to the emergence of these precarious figures in our contemporary present. Our framing of the present and the past must also shift in response to this. It is impossible to speak about the dispersible body without referring to the ongoing genocide happening in Palestine, which is the most poignant and violent examples of such moments of dispersal, where dispersal is not just an analogy, but a visceral horrifying reality that we are witnessing at present from all corners of the world. The Palestinian body and land, have been actively rendered precarious since the past seventy five years through relentless systemic dispersal.

Precarity in this context is not only a quality that characterises bodies, but also refers to conditions of precarity that are systematically and continuously produced that enable the production of precarious bodies. In a world that is increasingly affectively apathetic, disconnected, and isolated, the precarious present is both the site of explosion, (which in any context is a devastating, tragic site of loss) as well as the condition in which the dispersible bodies are rendered and circulate through discontinuous affective connectivities with which they seek to install themselves in our precarious present.

Conclusion

The disjointed yet immersive temporality of the precarious present creates the necessary environment for both the dispersed body to be seen and assembled. Further, this provides the conditions to reexamine the ways in which we approach historiography of such dispersed pasts/parts. It allows for the trace to be understood as a liminal disjointed entity having a translucent relationship with the past that is embodied in and through the precarious present. This also gives us a way of assembling dispersed and apparently disparate parts/pieces. These pieces are not assembled towards the creation of a 'previously lost cohesive whole' but rather,

²⁶ This analogy of gaining a body, is taken from the concept of the hungry ghost as elucidated by many South Asian and East Asian Buddhist Tantric traditions. In Buddhism, they are considered as one of six realms of samsaric existence (cyclical existence) where the hungry ghosts are beings that constantly in search of a body in order to satiate an unsatiated desire or attachment. They occupy a liminal space between the past and present. Therefore, striking a comparison between the trace as I have discussed it and the hungry ghost gaining a body, I am referring to the liminal position of the trace that is looking for an embodiment in the present so that it can appear embodied in the present.

maintain their independent agencies/mediums while being put together through a mapping of connectivities and linkages. These linkages are not meant to ‘bridge the gap’ or ‘fuse the pieces into a homogenous universal whole’ but rather become extensions of these dispersed pieces. The assembling or gathering together of these pieces then creates the dispersible body. The dispersible body is composed of heterogeneous, yet independent parts (Best and Kellner 1991), immersed in a constant state of becoming (Deleuze 1990). These pieces or traces can be anything, any pieces or traces of information, knowledge in any kind of form. The dispersible body not only stands for dispersed bodies or bodies that are particularly built in order to be susceptible to dispersal, when it becomes a framework, it also stands for a particular method of assembling and viewing, especially of historical material that lies in embodied and performative modalities. What is significant in such a framework is that the body is the permeable site upon which and through which, particular kinds of pasts are located and because of such an embodied location of history or memory, the historiographical modalities, lenses, methods and methodologies used are also put through a round of re-examination.

In my research, I use this framework to examine affect as a modality of embodiment to allow for an understanding of musical embodied histories, nomadic pasts and the discovery of modes of remembering and reassembling of the past that happens through musical practices. I use the dispersible body framework to examine affective entrances into historiography, particularly the connectivities that arise while tracing the musical lament across the Afro-Eur-Asian landscape using modalities located in performance practice. The dispersible body framework provides a lens with which to explicate pasts encoded in structures of affect that are a product of a complex interaction of different kinds of processes of embodiment—social, political, cultural and historical, that all converge at the sensorial. My doctoral research centres around one such affective form—the sonic.

There needs to be resonance between the material and the method used to see, hear or connect to these kinds of nomadic pasts. When there is no resonance, you cannot see it. It remains invisibilised, out of sight, out of reach. And the space of no hope, is the site of absolute loss. Sometimes the resonance needs to be created and assembled. My thesis is making an argument from the site of hope, where loss is not absolute emptiness or lack, but produces a subtle and fertile void, that needs to be screamed into, through deep processes of grieving, where the reverberations of this scream produce echoes and resonances, that can be perceived with watery oceanic perspectives, frameworks, and vocabularies. The sonic and the musical form in this context for me, become agent, method, and material, in and through which narratives of loss are approached with an impulse to witness and hold space for these disjointed

pasts to emerge in our embodied and precarious presents. Grieving then becomes a method that provokes an unfolding of subaltern pasts. Infra-structures of grief then become ethical sensorial sites and modes in which these pasts circulate and from which we as researchers, need to operate from.

My next chapter provides a multi-disciplinary sonic vocabulary that is derived from concepts and terminologies circulating in environments of musical practice, from oceanic studies and geography. These terms and concepts help provide an academic hearing-aid so that musical or sonic articulations of embodied musical pasts can be made accessible enough to enable musical entrances into historiography. This points to another productive instance that arises from the friction subaltern or nomadic pasts cause as it rubs against the disciplinary edges of history. What we are directed to now, is a need for a new vocabulary, new frameworks and lenses derived out of practice, that can explicate pasts that we find embodied in various modalities of performance.



Figure 8: Drawings for Chapter 2. *The Dispersible Body Framework. The Exploding Body* (Illustrating Buck-Morss). Artist: Kathyayini Dash. 2023

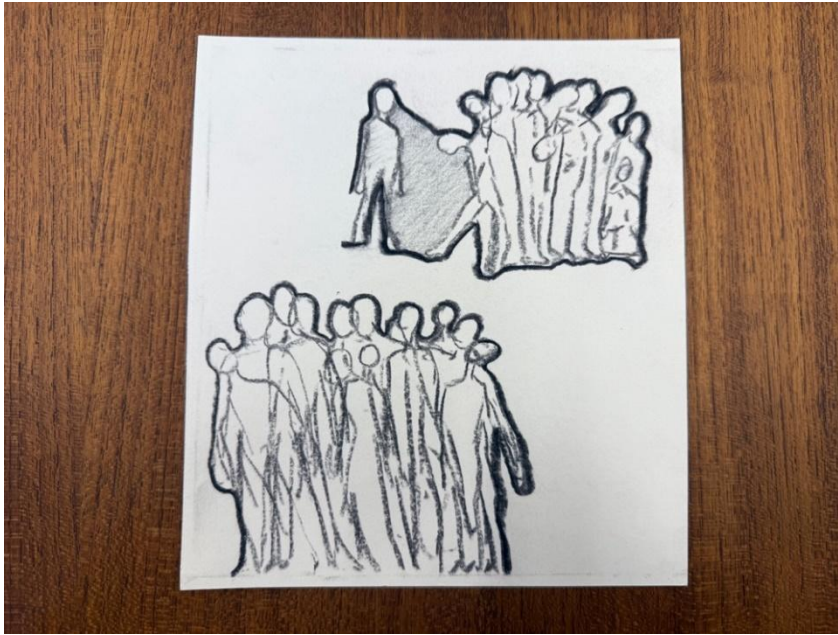


Figure 9: Drawings for Chapter 2. *The Dispersible Body Framework. The Joint Body Schema or Collective Body (Illustrating Gallagher)*. Artist: Kathyayini Dash. 2023.

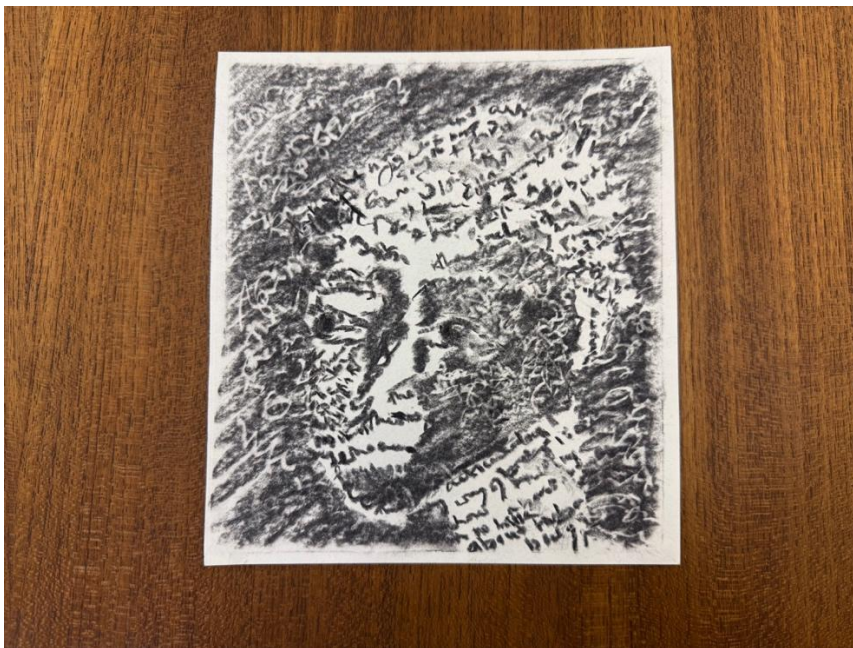


Figure 10: Drawings for Chapter 2. *The Dispersible Body Framework. The Articulating Body (Illustrating Latour)*. Artist: Kathyayini Dash. 2023.

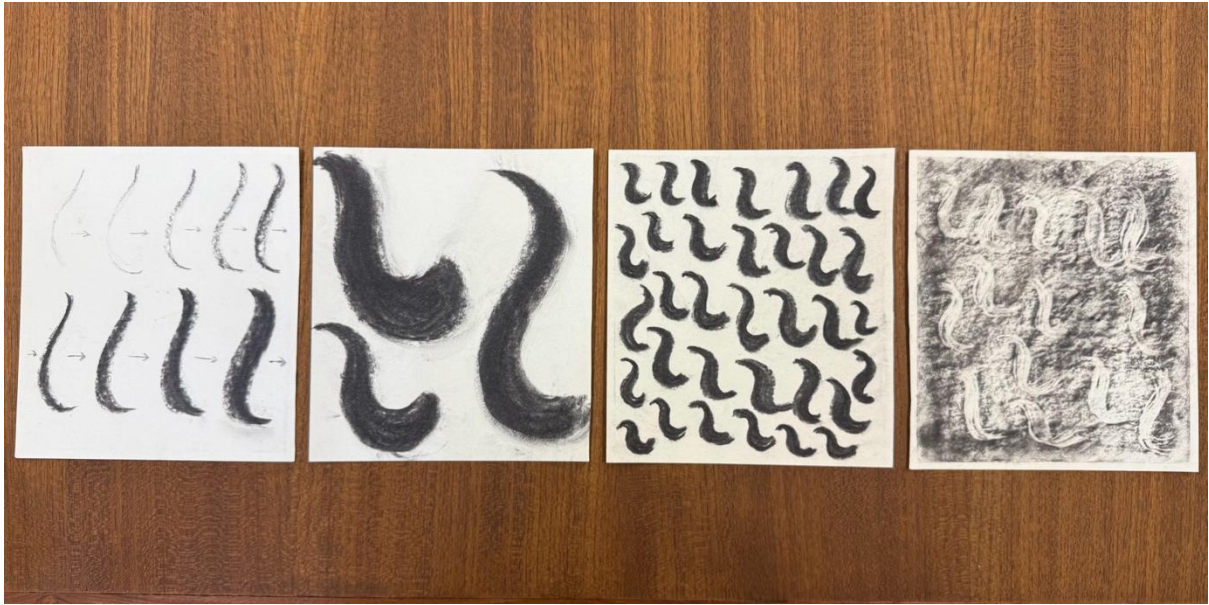


Figure 11: Drawings for Chapter 2. *The Dispersible Body Framework. The Gestural Body* (Illustrating Butler). Artist: Kathyayini Dash. 2023.



Figure 12: Drawings for Chapter 2. *The Dispersible Body Framework. The Dismantlable Body* in four parts. Parts 1 and 2. Artist: Kathyayini Dash. 2023.



Figure 13: *Drawings for Chapter 2. The Dispersible Body Framework. The Dismantlable Body in four parts. Parts 1 and 2.* Artist: Kathyayini Dash. 2023.



Figure 14: Drawings for Chapter 2. *The Dispersible Body Framework. The Dismantlable Body* in four parts. Part 1, 2, 3 and 4. Artist: Kathyayini Dash. 2023.



Figure 15: Drawings for Chapter 2. *The Dispersible Body Framework. The Dismantlable Body in four parts. Illustrating the Oceanic Framework. Part 2.* Artist: Kathyayini Dash. 2023.



Figure 16: *Drawings for Chapter 2. The Dispersible Body Framework. The World-Encompassing Body.* Artist: Kathyayini Dash. 2023.



Figure 17: *Drawings for Chapter 2. The Dispersible Body Framework. Exploring Extensions: The Singing Body. (Illustrating the body-in-music).* Artist: Kathyayini Dash. 2023.

CHAPTER 3

SONIC VOCABULARY

The teaching body dances its knowledge softly so that the audience will, like it, go into a trance and so that, through virtual mimicry of its gestures, a few ideas will enter their heads via the muscles and bones, which though seated and immobile are solicited, pulled toward the beginnings of movement, perhaps even by the written work's little jig.

(Serres, 2011: 37)

These lines are quoted at the beginning of the second chapter “Speaking to Learn to Listen” by Karmen MacKendrick (2016) in her book *The Matter of Voice: Sensual Soundings*. In this chapter, she discusses the sensuality of the word in speech and remarks on the historical disembodiment of the word. She says about the written word, by “divorcing text from its somatic quality, we have taken the possibility of textuality from the flesh” (MacKendrick 2016: 60).

She talks about how the sensual is deeply embedded in the materiality of the voice and offers the sense of tactility as a lens through which to bring the flesh to structures of meaning produced in the corporeality of language through resonances and an imparting of intensities. She suggests how this sense of tactility intertwined with sight and sound, stitches through the materiality of the written word and music. Consider these two excerpts:

To read such script is to reread, to move the eyes back over as well as forward, to sound out, to carve into muscle memory the contraction of the throat and the intake of breath. This we may continue to do, even with breaks already given.

(MacKendrick 2016: 58)

We need to focus on the text, to breathe in its rhythms and to read it in time with our breaths, to stretch ourselves into its sense, to let it form us again, to allow the time its density.

(MacKendrick 2016: 60)

The sense of tactility when maintained at the foundation of the dispersal of the written word and music does two things. One, it establishes a unique relationship between the two through practice. Two, it situates embodiment in movement, an overlapping of the noun and the verb.

It provides a possibility to note the corporeal dispersal of the sound and the word. Take for example how a singing voice and a body singing are intertwined, in that the voice is recognised to be in the body and the body is recognised to be the voice both at the same time. So once a body breaks into song, the body does not necessarily lose its corporeality in the voice. In the same way I suggest, and I believe MacKendrick will agree, a song carries the flesh of the body that sings it.

Consider this: the words of the song, rising from the flesh of the throat, summon other times and conjure other voices that have sung it into the precarious present through resonances, through an embodied imparting of affective intensities. This lends the song or the sung word a unique materiality and the musical form then by extension becomes a space where intensities of various kinds gather. Intensities can be understood as mobile, powerful concentrations of emotion, that have accumulated across time through lived experience. What MacKendrick helps establish for us in her discussion around corporeality of the word and the sensuality of music is that intensities are corporeal. It is how we understand and perceive corporeality that requires questioning.

Sara Ahmed (2004b) also speaks of the circulation of emotion and its political and cultural effects. She describes quite sensually, the activity and characteristics of this circulation. Corporeal descriptions themselves automatically are built on the grounds of tactility. Both Ahmed and MacKendrick use activity-based verbs like collide, slide, resonate, move, dance, stick, to describe the movement of these intensities or emotions or affects. I find this particularly interesting because it indicates that things like emotions and intensities and affects that are usually deemed ephemeral, invisible, and elusive, can be described, touched, and noted, at least at some level. Both these authors have made their arguments based on describing the activity of intensities and emotions in the course of their movement. Both authors are trying to put to words the movement of affect in which they locate both emotions and intensities that show up in order to colour or give shape to the affect that structures itself into the word, into sound, into place, into bodies. They both indicate in their own studies that affect shows up in its movement.

What performance does is enable an explication of this movement. It creates a structure of emotions and intensities built out of the affective intensities of various mediums, to illuminate the movement of affect by a dispersal of emotion. This dispersal causes a gathering/accumulation of affect and those embodying or embodied in particular affects. More specifically, music, I argue, allows for the binding of word, sound, place, and body in particular ways where these structures of affect can be grasped and perceived. Here, by permutationally

colliding, resonating, dispersing, and conversing, the word, sound, body, and place are installed in the precarious dispersible present. This is of particular significance to this study, because nomadic communities like the Bhagadiya Jaths of Kachchh, have been known to carry rich traditions of music, dance or other expressive performance practices that become terrains for nomadic pasts to surface. The Wayee, a lament, then, offers its musical form in the service of nomadic memory. The Wayee, the voice, the Bhagadiya Jath singer, Bhitai's verses and Kachchh are here bound tightly and can be perceived as an example of affective intensity. But when a meeting of this affective intensity is staged with other affective intensities like the Ethiopian dirge, the Palestinian lament, the Romanian lament and the Kurdish Dengbej for example, there are musical collisions, conversations, and resonances that are produced, that bring forth a dense affective structure built on grief. I would suggest it be more appropriate to say that the affect forms an infra-structure, and in our case, a sonic infra-structure of grief, produced out of the interactions of affective intensities.

The field of performance practice helps significantly in explicating the body-world relationship, since both the procurement of knowledge, as well as the form of knowledge lies in the doing of it. I echo Diana Taylor's insistence that performance becomes a mode of remembering, and can transmit knowledge, memory, and a sense of identity (Taylor 2003:2). She pushes for a need to create a shift from "the written to embodied culture, from discursive to the performatic" (Taylor 2003:16) driven by the materiality of presence that "enacts embodied memory" (Taylor 2003:20). Such a framework helps move beyond the apparent characteristic of ephemerality that is commonly assigned to the medium of performance and in turn creates an impetus to push inter-disciplinary practice-based scholarship into novel territories of doing history.

In this chapter, using the Wayee as my central point of reference, I explore a range of frameworks, sonic vocabulary, that offer insight into the idea of body-in-music. One set of concepts is drawn from idiom that circulates around music in the Hindustani and folk context, another is drawn from diverse social science method, and finally I look at certain concepts from sonic studies. My attempt to explore sonic vocabulary draws substantially on theories of embodiment. All these approaches have the body as the site and point of access. This perspective views the body, especially the body in performance, as that which shapes historiographical material in particular ways (here, I focus on music) and holds space for the possibility that certain kinds of histories show themselves in the practice of these embodied forms of performance. These theories of embodiment help read performance as embodied sites of social as well as historical engagement.

One powerful way that historical memory persists across violent narratives and events of loss is through the embodiment of history via the sonic embodiment of knowledge. In 2022, I was invited to be part of a panel discussion along with two other artists- Zahra Malkani and Bint Mbareh, who like me were working with ideas around the politics and materiality of sonic and its unique relationship with memory, spatiality and dissent. The panel discussion was called *Mystical Cosmopolitics and Intransigent Sonics*. This discussion affirmed for me that there are vocabularies yet to be derived out of sonic practices that point to the inter-relationship between marginalized pasts and the spatial and palpable materiality of the sonic.

Extract 5: Chapter 3 Panel Discussion on Mystical Cosmopolitics and Intransigent Sonics.

DOI (<https://doi.org/10.25375/uct.28420805>)

Sonic vocabulary is an inexhaustible set of conceptual terms that emerged out of my inductive practice-based work during the research process of the past four years. Since the thesis is asking for a perspectival shift, where historical information is perceived through the act of listening and performing, there is a need to derive a vocabulary out of the sonic medium, that is accessible to all, to be used as an academic ‘hearing-aid’, available to everyone, not just musicians or the musically adept. The vocabulary also puzzles together a conceptual lens through which sonic infra-structures are explicated that allows for the explication of what affective infra-structures are and how and where to locate them.

The vocabulary consists of two sections comprising of selected terms and concepts I came across in disciplines like geography and oceanic studies, musical practice and my fieldwork in Kachchh, that I found were useful to understand the body-in-music and particularly to describe the processes of historical movement upon infra-structures of affect that are set off by musical practice. By this I mean processes of accumulation, dispersal, sustenance and the simultaneous preservation of memory and knowledge. The common thread through the definitions of these terms drawn from a range of contexts, is that they all demand a blurring of the boundaries between the knowledge, the method of knowing, and the knower.

Reading the Wayee

During my fieldwork in Kachchh in 2021, I was prompted by Mazhar Mutwa to go listen to the Wayee. I was told that if I was in search of a lament, that the Wayee was what I was looking for. My fellow field workers and I set off to meet Mitho Khan and Sumar Kaka from the Bhagadiya Jath community. Mitho Khan belongs to the last surviving family that sings the

Wayee in the form that Bhitai is supposed to have originally developed. What I witnessed there was unlike anything I have heard before. It ruptured my understanding of the function of notes, raga systems, music/sound/speech. They were singing ragas I had learnt—such as Raag Puravi, Raag Kalyan,²⁷ but they sounded unlike anything that I had learnt. The notes were resounding, lying at the edges of the voice, grazing the throat as they emanated, falling just short of a scream, they glided across the room, filling the air with a gravitas, a sombre funeralesque atmosphere. Tears streamed from my eyes, Sumar Kaka, wiped his own. I was sitting with my legs folded underneath me, rocking back and forth as if someone close to me had just died. I was split into two—one was immersed in this lament, and I found myself lamenting something that I had no knowledge of. Another part of me was watching myself lament, puzzled, at how a song sung in a language that I had no understanding of could move me to such an extent of exhaustion and pain? Was it my pain? Was it their pain? What past was being lamented? By whom?

When the song ended, we came back, to where we were. Tea was served. Silence, heavy silence succeeded. We all took a moment to acknowledge the place we all had been transported to. One part of my self was grateful and knew exactly what had happened. Another part of my self was filled with questions.

What was it that had taken over the room and had immersed the people in it? When I neither understood the words nor the context, what was it in the Wayee that had left me weeping like that? Was it something particular to pain that could easily be shared and understood? It was clear that a range of effects had been produced in both singer and listener, indicating shared feeling and a sense that what needed to be communicated had been communicated. A *mahaul* had been created.

Sonic Vocabulary – I

Mahaul and Mahaul Jamaana

Mahaul is a concept that is shared by the musical world and the political world. In political terms mahaul could translate as the condition, during a particularly tense period of time, like a curfew. Or it could signify larger periods of time, for example, to indicate the general political

²⁷ Raag Purvi, Raag Dhanasree, Raag Kalyan and Raag Purvi-Kalyani are ragas within the canonical paradigm of Hindustani classical music and having equivalents in Carnatic music as well. These modes have a specific tonality and scale that is maintained across various Indian classical schools of music. The Surs or modes of the Wayee that I heard on this field visit, were very different in tonality, to my ears, even though they carried the same names. The relationship of the meanings and associations with the name of the Sur was more intricately wound to the words and feelings of the verses and to the poetic meanings emerging out of the Wayee.

climate. “*Aaj mahaul thik nahi, dhyaan rakhiyega*”²⁸ or “*Kal mahaul garam hai, aaj ruk jaana achcha hai*”²⁹ In musical terms, the mahaul is not used as a noun, but a verb. “*Mahaul jamaa hai*”³⁰, or *Aaj mahaul nahi jamaa*”³¹, or “*Aaj mahaul sahi baitha hai*”³², “*Mahaul bithaate hai*”³³. When one uses the concept of the mahaul as a verb, one refers to what is happening in the room. The binding of the singer, song, and listener, solidifies the *mahaul*.

These two terms *mahaul jamaana* and *dil ko chhot lagna*³⁴ (wounding of the heart) are usually used alongside each other, as effects of another’s presence. Usually when one feels that an atmosphere has been bound, then it is confirmed that the heart has been wounded. And when does one know that the heart has been wounded? When we experience one-ness or “conjunctive states” (Schrei, 2021) in an atmosphere of ecstasy, or in a grave and deep atmosphere, in any emotion filled atmosphere, where one-ness is experienced, we know that the arrow has been hit and the heart has been wounded.

Then can we think in this way, that wherever one-ness is experienced, when we search there, old links are being re-forged. How do we talk of these links? In line with Gernot Bohme’s explication of articulating the spatiality and presence of atmospheres (Bohme, 2017:48), if we think of the linking as a trans-cultural phenomenon, then the question—what links?—comes after we ask—How do we talk of these links? First, we must decide how do we talk of the links? These links surface contingent to the process of linking the singer, the song, and the listener. We need to understand the process of synchronicity, and the way emotions move and attain a dynamic residence in space, and in bodies. We need to understand resonances as an echo chamber of linkages.

Drawing from Harmut Rosa’s theory of resonance of being-in- the world, “resonant relationships are possible only in mutually accommodating resonant spaces.” (Rosa, 2019: 238). While Rosa (2019) has constructed and categorised affect in a different light in his theory of resonance, and has read the function of affect as a medium of emotion assigned to the domain of resonant experiences “between a subject and a segment of the world” (239), I am trying to understand the tangibility of the world by also examining the tangibility of affect and affectively intense or resonant spaces. I argue that the modes of relation do not need to be

²⁸ Translation: Today the mahaul does not feel right, take care of yourself, keep yourself safe. *Thik*: All right

²⁹ Translation: Tomorrow the mahaul will be heated/risky, it is best that you stay back home today. *Garam*: Hot

³⁰ Translation: Ah! The atmosphere has been bound today!

³¹ Translation: Today the mahaul did not really bind! *Jamaa*: To set or bind

³² Translation: Today the mahaul has been seated correctly!

³³ Translation: Come! Let us get this mahaul going!, literally, Come! Let us get this mahaul seated! *Bithana*: To seat

³⁴ I expand on these particular phrases and its usage in more detail in the next two chapters.

neutralised or in other words, affectively ‘dis-charged’ in order for us to understand resonance as a mode of relation.

Unlike Rosa’s approach (Rosa, 2019:241) I suggest resonance as a mode of relation need not be separated from the emotional state. Instead, I am interested in how modes of relation are built precisely because of affective charging, of immersing in affectively charged environments that bring to light many under-represented and unspoken modes of relation. Musical atmospheres in this context, are an example of such resonant spaces that are affectively charged and where emotions and feeling play different structural roles in constructing modes of relation that speak to a responsive world and establish a being-with-the-world that is based on an embodied approach to resonance.

The Wayee, in form and as practice, provokes one to look at the musical system beyond being a medium of expression, but rather as a cultural transmission of affect through embodying the form of music. Through the practice of these forms of music there occurs a carrying over, an encoding of history, across this dispersed nomadic body. The memory of the dispersed existence of this collective body (the Jaths) is accessed during the performance of this musical system of the Wayee and enables the dispersal of the individual body (the Jath singers, Shah Abdul Latif Bhitai followers, Mitho Khan and others). “Unfelt” pain that belongs to the community (collective and composite body) is relived and resurrected through the voice and the tamburo in the present nomadic body (individual body) via the act of remembering. What is created is a sensual and palpable atmosphere called mahaul that seems to telescope pain from the past, providing ground to present communal and individual sufferings. Together this creates an atmosphere of grief that is created by music and is immediately palpable to the listener. Therefore, the atmosphere here gains solid presence and situates itself in between things (Bohme, 2017:47). Bohme (2017) has articulated musical atmospheres (and by extension, mahaul) as architectural and more aligned to space than to time (Bohme, 2017:275). He describes atmospheres as “moods pervading air” (261), where “musical space is, in fact, the expanded space of the body” (265). He writes

...acoustic space is experienced in real space, as well. It is, however, the space of the body, the space of my own presence, which is expanded through the reach of physical perception. In hearing that tone, voice, and sound do not transfer to the objects from which they may have originated, the listener perceives voice, tone, and sound as a transformation of the space of his own presence. Whoever listens in this

manner is dangerously exposed, letting himself out into wide open space, and therefore susceptible to being struck by acoustic events. (Bohme, 2017:269)

Therefore, although this atmosphere or mahaul is created by and emanates from the performer, the immersive atmosphere is only built along with an immersed listener. Bohme (2017) has emphasized the significance of linguistic and semantic indicators of material presences like musical atmospheres. The phrase “mahaul jamaana” used in the Indian musical language translates to solidifying (or setting, as in curds) the atmosphere or giving atmosphere residence, which has been able to move or have an affective and apparent impact on the listener. The mahaul cannot be brought together but comes together. I would like to think of the mahaul as a site at which we can see or experience (1) the work of the note at play extending out of particular processes of transmission that begin to attain a spatial dimension (2) a corporeal and palpable feeling of having been moved by the presences created by the weaving of the musical form, the rendition of the form by the performer, and the reception of the form by the listener.

Reading the historical within this site is a simultaneous yet parallel process that needs to be layered with a palpable and musically aware experience of the present. This musical awareness is not a product of specialization in a given form of music but it is a state created within any listener, given that the mahaul is established. The mahaul is not a guaranteed experience like that of a successful science experiment where once established it remains that way. The creation or the establishment of the mahaul is something that is based on a complex variety of factors that are very sensitive to change which I believe can be slowly unpacked through consistent PaR based enquiries.

These brief insights into the potential of musical practice as an entry into historiography is enough to point to embodied histories as indeed being present, albeit in dynamic and enmeshed forms and processes of historical formation that are calling for an expansion of frameworks and lenses, deriving from cross-disciplinary research practices. In this thesis I suggest that histories of affect like grief or love or horror can indeed be read and accessed as embodied knowledge through the material of music. This could lead towards arriving at various affective forms and ways of archiving the living past through practice, that can potentially explicate new modes of engaging the past through an engagement with embodied histories.

Music is what is used in some cultural traditions, such as in the Wayee, to structure the feelings (Sharma and Tygstrup, 2015). Historicities encoded within these systems are preserved in an embodied and bodily manner. I draw upon Sara Ahmed’s (2004b) idea that there isn’t one general emotion that people feel and that emotions or feelings are not things that are inside

the body needing to be expressed, nor do they lie outside having certain effects somewhere inside. She designates a sliding and sticking characteristic to emotions that move between individual and collective bodies. Musical systems like the Wayee, because of their historical lineage, hold certain affective intensities that accumulate across a longer *durée* of time that can be activated and shared by creating certain atmospheres when sung in particular ways. This would imply that although emotions and feelings are involved in the making of the subject by sliding in between individual and collective bodies, there are performative and embodied ways in which these feelings are archived at the site of the body.

I would maintain that it is possible to locate these emotions within the infra-structure of music. The body becomes both site and medium through which such possible emotions can be tapped, seen, read and experienced. This would place a demand on places and institutions of the archival to expand the scope of imagining the forms and materiality of historical material appearing in the non-discursive domain. The Wayee is an example that shows us that musical form slides between the individual body of Bhitai and the collective body of the Bhagadiya Jaths along an infra-structure of grief, that embeds itself into the musical form while being woven together across long durations of time. This would mean that the musical form that does not exist without the performing body, accumulates layers of time and historical meaning through the process of singing the Wayee in the present. This makes the body-in-music a site of historiography, and musical practice, a potential historical conduit.

The Wayee, in form and as practice, provokes one to look at the musical system beyond being a medium of expression, but rather as a cultural transmission of affect through embodying the form of music. “Unfelt” pain that belongs to the community (collective and composite body) is relived and resurrected through the voice and the tamburo in the present nomadic body (individual body) via the act of remembering. What is created is a sensual and palpable atmosphere—*mahaul*—that seems to telescope pain from the past, providing ground and speaking to present communal and individual sufferings. Together this creates an atmosphere of grief that is created by music and is immediately palpable by the listener. Although this *mahaul* is created by and emanates from the performer, the immersive atmosphere is only built along with an immersed listener.

Dil Pe Chhot Lagna and Teer Lagna

“Hai! Teer lag gayi!” “Arre Ustadji! Kya sur chedi hain! Teer lag hi gayi!” “Ah! Lagta hai teer lag gaya hai!” (translates to “Oh! The arrow has struck!”; “Oh! Ustadji! What notes have you triggered! The arrow has struck!”; “Ah! It seems the arrow has stuck!”) These expressions find

prevalence mostly after tears that are a result of having experienced a conjunctive state or after mahaul has been built. The mahaul is not necessarily bound by grief alone, but ecstasy as well, by perhaps a complex combination of emotions produced by the performance. In the context of the grief-laden wayee, the term *dil pe chot lagna* (wounding of the heart), indicates the experience of a complex kind of grief, like an ache caused by longing in the heart; an expression that conveys to those involved, that I have felt what you have communicated right now. *Teer lagna*, or the arrow hitting the target alludes to the same wound; yet when unpacked further, the question arises—what is the arrow? *Yeh teer kya hai?* The metaphor of the arrow used to describe something that hits you, that takes space, that travels across spaces and that takes root in the hearts of people as a wound or opens out as wounds in the hearts of people, which contributes to the production of these conjunctive states, points to the fact that these are real categories of feeling that move, manoeuvre, resonate, and effect change.

What if we ask if these arrows live in the voice of the performer? Can we critically analyse the voice, as vehicles for these arrows, as shape shifting sonic material, that is made apparent only under lenses of embodiment and affect that speak to the porosity of the body-world relationship and that speak to ideas that suggest thinking of the subject and the sensorium as dynamically involved categories where the human is subject and the world is sensorium? This would mean reading the voice of the performer not in nativist, socially segregated and guarded imaginaries of belonging, but as that which may emanate from the particular but lends itself to presence and provides a potential moment of opportunity for states of conjunction to bind otherwise historically separate, socially segregate categories. I am not proposing this to naïvely suggest a universal blurring of boundaries of historical and social categories of caste, class, gender and so on. That would be the politics of fusion that I am trying to work away from and instead move towards a politics of immersion and dialogue.

This reading of the voice, and the proposition of the mahaul and teer, hint towards spaces of synchronicity in difference. These are spaces where paradoxes, and difficult confrontations are allowed to exist, not necessarily with comfort. Can this offer a moment of conflict that enables unguarded vulnerabilities? Can it be one of those increasingly difficult to find spaces of conjunction where differences can sit together and be engaged in conversation?

What I am trying to do is derive vocabularies from music, to describe this conversation, to highlight the political inflexions in musical terminologies like harmony, synchronicity, and resonance, which in their musical connotations can add much more complexity to their socio-political contexts. In such a way, mahaul jamaana and teer lagna, can become inter-disciplinary theoretical as well as methodological frameworks for a range of historiographical and

sociological questions. Otherwise, there is a tendency to disengage with musical practice or artistic practices of any kind, as mystical, ephemeral, and separate from “serious and worldly” socio-political affairs, which is, according to me, an unnecessary distinction. Instead, it might be more productive to find ways in which the social and the spiritual, the ontological and the phenomenological speak to each other.

Such an atmosphere begins to question certain sociological assumptions about subject-object separations and complicates the question—who does this pain that I am feeling, belong to? For example, how to position my socio-historical identity, as an upper-caste woman listener who doesn’t speak or understand the Sindhi/Kachchhi language that Mitho Khan, a Muslim singer, is singing in, and who is singing a verse from what is considered a Sufi—treatise the *Risalo*? How to corroborate socio-political and historical lenses that can read the complexity of musical atmospheres such as these that seem to produce points of conjunction in spaces and formations that are steeped in difference? And what could be the function of encoding history musically, one that does not hark to a nativity or origin but where the method and the form of the remembered speaks to the understanding of belonging as something that can be shared? It is shared not in terms of cryptic permission of access or ownership, but a more profound way of an organic withholding of what cannot be shared, of extent of accessibility that is organically dependent on the extent of immersion of the subject (whether singer or listener). The extent of the immersion, in the context of research, is, of course determined by the impulses that drive the researcher as well as the project. Instead of reading this as a limitation of skill or musical abilities, we can use this to gauge immersion with a range of political awareness.

Swar Bithana, Seena-ba-seena and Riyaas

Reflecting on my own practices in relation to forms such as the Wayee, I present here an account of the embodiment of history noted after a riyas (daily singing practice) session:

‘When you sing, you remember.

When you sing a note, you feel your chest quiver. Then that quiver travels down when you go lower and surges up to your head when you hit the high notes.

You know you are doing it right when sometimes when you practice, it seems your head might explode, or your vocal cords would tear. But they don't. The body endures through the musical labour, and pulls through the painful processes of

singing till it embodies the note, through constant memorising. The remembering of this note shapes your insides so much so that after a point, the strenuous quivers become a deliberate flow, guided seamlessly by the practiced memory of the note.

The note is embodied differently by different systems of music. Passing down from generation to generation, travelling through bodies to regions, pushing through the ravages of time; the embodied note becomes historically mobile. It moves into the past and this history resurrects itself whenever it is sung in the present. The note is preserved in the act of remembering—doing music becomes remembering.

The note remembers.’ (K. Dash, 2020)

Swar bithana translates to giving the note residence, used in the context of learning music across canonical and some folk forms of Indian music. The scope of this thesis doesn't allow for an extensive discussion of the metaphysical aspects of embodying a note. But even an initial exploration of the practice of swar bithana or swar sthaana, where the teacher places the note in the throat of the student, which leads to the practice of riyas where the student rehearses the note until its placement finds a stable point in various parts of the body, are significant concepts that resonate with my proposition that the musical note gives residence to certain experiences that are at once personal and historical. Therefore, while the learning of the musical form may be a personal process, choice or eventuality, it is simultaneously a social and cultural transmission of affect, not in the sense of a golden pot of hereditary knowledge that is handed down along a genealogy, but of a golden pot that is porous, perforated and constantly permeated by the present and multiple historical presences. This transmission occurs both from teacher to student, as well as between performer and listener. This transmission of musical knowledge from teacher to student is called seena-ba-seena which indicates the transfer of particular kinds of musical knowledge that can only be taught and learnt through presence. An instance would be when an Ustad sings a raag, for a few hours. The student listens and takes it in. The raag may not be sung by the Ustad for years again; it will not be directly taught to the student step by step. But years later, when the student suddenly finds themselves picking up this raag and working with it, it can be said that this raag was given and received through this seena-ba-seena process. When I say the student “picks it up again” and works with it”, I am referring to riyas. Riyas is often mistaken to mean practice in terms of rehearsal. On one hand, it indicates a process connected to the establishing of the note in the body; on the other hand, it indicates a

repetition of what is taught by the Ustad, to the extent that the knowledge taught increases, as in new musical knowledge opens out through the process of repetition. Musicians will say the “raag has finally arrived” or “has finally been awakened” or “the raag is blossoming now”. This indicates a subtle difference between orality and aurality.

It indicates that there is some way in which musical material is embodied in an unspoken way; the way it settles in and interacts with the body, a way in which knowledge is given and received that is completely through the body. Here, the giving and receiving cannot be thought of as a transaction of any kind. It is an unspoken process of transmission of knowledge, an embodied sharing, that happens across the vibrating presences of the singing body, the listening body, the song (sound and word) and the environment.

If a note can be given residence in the body, it renders the note corporeal and physical, yet the effects of the note, when given proper residence within the body, and when sung in whatever system of music, can give rise to the creation and materialization of an affectively intense atmosphere, the mahaul.

Sonic Vocabulary – II

Thinking with Sea Water,³⁵ Diving as Method

The ocean shares the characteristics of submersion and immersion with the experience of music. Music is often likened to the ocean, as being immersive; one can be described as being submerged and surrounded in and by sound. Drawing from metaphors of diving and discussing the contours of an underwater museum, Melody Jue’s suggests that diving into a cenote and into the belly of the ocean disrupts the ways in which we conventionally think about the museum and the archival of the past, “not as a static collection of things to be preserved but perhaps as an ephemeral and shifting flow” (Jue 2020: 163).

Drawing from this, and the experiential similarity between underwater and music, I suggest that musical practice, like diving, disrupts how we conventionally understand historical materiality. It pushes the historian to move beyond the inscriptive material, towards investigating other ways in which history can settle, like the bubbles of past divers at the ceilings of ancient cenotes, in song and sound, for the service of memory and community. Musical processes therefore are indeed watery processes, fluid, slippery, hard to hold still, or

³⁵ This phrase is taken from Jue, M. 2020. *Wild Blue Media: Thinking with Sea Water*. Duke University Press. This was one among many conceptual frameworks across the field of Oceanic studies, first introduced to me in the intensive course that I took conducted by Professor Dilip Menon called Ocean as Method (2021). For a discussion of Oceanic Studies, see Hofmeyer, I. 2012 *The Complicating Sea: Indian Ocean as Method*; Hartman, S. 2007; *Lose Your Mother*; Menon, D. 2018.)

capture or grab, especially when it is at the service of conjuring a past in the service of the present. This precise fluidity of looking at historical matter and conducting the search for stories is what prompts a need for a vocabulary derived out of the experience of music. The vocabulary then aids perspective even for non-musicians. It provides conceptual lenses just as “cenotes require us to consider a watery vocabulary of mediation beyond inscriptive paradigms” (Jue 2020:163); in the same way, aural memory and an engagement with musical material require the consideration of sonic vocabulary of mediation beyond inscriptive paradigms such as ethnomusicology, in ways that account for the complex relationship with historical narratives and memory. Further taking from Jue’s discussion of the “exhalations of past divers collecting at the roof [of the cenote]”, “ephemeral residue that would boom up at the surface making its presence felt, creating a strange non-inscriptive incubation of the past that future divers would hear—an affective delay” (Jue 2020:160). This points to a past in mediation—that is a past that is alive and dependent on its performance in the present. In the same way, I suggest that it is productive to think of the voice as the cenote, the past as the “small pockets of air pooled together at the ceiling”, the song as the thunderous boom caused by the flowing of the air bubbles to the surface; diving as singing, music as ocean, and the body-in-music as the necessary interface for the invocation of a watery past. Like diving, musical practice and collaboration can also work as a form of historical speculation. Jue (2020) also suggests that diving causes a certain “cognitive estrangement” (163) that enables the surfacing of “terrestrial biases” (143) (stagnant inscriptive histories) and mentions how she could not have observed the phenomenological details of underwater museums and oceanic archives that would have been missed by studying someone’s two dimensional underwater images without actually “diving in” (Jue 2020:162-166). This rings true to my argument about musical collaboration in particular and generally musical practice. Like the significance that diving has in Jue’s insights into terrestrial biases and how this encouraged her to view diving as an “ethnographic media archaeological practice” (164), for me, music becomes a method in the speculation of history and the sustenance of pasts. Musical practice here, in a parallel way, functions as a media archaeological practice or a historical interface.

Embodiment, in this context, functions as a necessary condition in which the body-in-music becomes the oceanic site in which historical material can be discovered. Like the diving body and the ocean, the body and music become historical sites that can be accessed through musical practice and the voice—both of which cannot be separated from each other. In the context of watery pasts, embodiment becomes a necessary condition for the historical site to surface.

According to Jue, “when thinking through seawater, the interface is more than a surface, the archive or database may be mobile and transient, and processes of inscription and recording give way to watery processes of mediation involving residues and saturation” (163). She calls for a “fundamental re-examination of the underlying environmental poetics and metaphors of our concepts and theoretical positions” (Jue 2020:163). In the context of my research, the environment at hand is the musical environment built through and within the body-in-music, producing musical atmospheres. Deciphering, recording, analysing this in turn requires a new vocabulary derived from practices associated with the concerned environments. For Jue, it is diving that provides new vocabulary to analyse oceanic knowledges; for me, it is the body-in-music that provides new vocabulary to analyse musical knowledges, and particularly the question of how music becomes a historical agent.

Sedimentation

Jue’s *Wild Blue Media: Thinking Through Sea Water* (2020) can enable us to also think through sedimentation as an interdisciplinary concept to understand the materiality of musical matter. In the context of musical matter, the concept can be seen as paradoxical. Sedimentation refers to a washing up, a simultaneous process of weathering as well as gathering. The traces on sedimentary rocks in the form of striations can result from both deposition and/or weathering. I use the word gathering, here, to describe the process of deposition because it shifts the focus from the rock formation to the formation of the rock. That is from a process of settling down of layers to the process of the gathering of layers that come to comprise the body of a rock. By shifting focus to the materiality of the sedimentary rock, one can notice an activation of the layers conceptually in a way that allows for other materialities to take the place of sand, mud and stone that comprise the sedimented rock as well as the process of sedimentation. Even the sedimented rock loses its hardness and its terrestrial orientation. It can become a conceptual and visual framework porous enough to grasp the gathering and movement of time, even history by extension (Jue 2016). When one makes this small shift of perspective, one is able to look at the rock as a process of sedimentation and think about the environment of compression of time. I suggest that the sedimentary rock, then, can be used as a metaphor for reading the body-in-music. It can become a conceptual lens through which to simultaneously perceive music both as a porous form and medium that is immersed in the watery flow of the past, which can gather the past and make it visible as striated layers of historical deposit. The body-immersed-in-music becomes the sedimentary rock, where layers of history are embodied in fleshy musical layers. Drawing on the ideas of sedimentation and embodiment allows the

striations of history to make an appearance that is palpable and present in and through musical performance.

If we rely on just one sense to perceive materiality, for example, visibility to perceive sedimentary rock, we give in to our terrestrial imaginations. We then are less likely to move out of our acclimatised ways of perceiving and interpreting what are actually multi-sensory historical processes. It limits our access to historical material that could be enhanced through multi-sensory modes of perception. By working on changing the conceptual grounds on which we perceive processes of sedimentation from terrestrial to oceanic and the materiality of sedimentary rock from hard to watery, I am offering a framework with which (1) to see and describe processes of interaction between sound and history and (2) to perceive particular lament forms such as the Wayee as inextricably linked to the body-in-music that can be understood as a historical sedimentation that is accessed through multi-sensory modes of perception. This also helps highlight the role of movement in the building and preserving of memories (in nomadic communities) besides settlement, in embodied forms of art, like the musical form.

The archipelagic framework (Noudelmann 1998), in its refusal to pursue the complete picture offers instead the fragmentary and the partial, that is found in the present. Saidiya Hartman's "critical fabulations" (2008)³⁶ and Nkosenathi Koela's *Seeds of the Braced Bow: the Flowers, the Seed, and the Bee* (2019)³⁷ are examples of emerging conceptual frameworks and practice based theoretical works that are driven by a conviction that black diaspora and black histories, especially those associated with the desire to retrieve that which is lost, persist and exist in different kinds of spaces formed of flows and continuums. Hartman finds historiographical space in between the colonial archives, the present, and the fable. Koela finds historiographical space through what he terms "the Ngoma consciousness" that lies in connections forged through the braced bow that is scattered across the Afro-Asian black diaspora. Both these interventions in historical work, make the process of "going back" or

³⁶ See Saidiya Hartman's essay 'Venus in Two Acts' (2008) that proposes critical fabulations which refers to as 'writing against the archive', a narrative technique and methodology that she especially employs in her book *Lose Your Mother* (2007) and scholarly practices. She uses this methodology to make productive the gaps and fissures in the trans-Atlantic archive on Black slavery.

³⁷ Nkosenathi Koela's Masters in Music thesis titled *Seeds of the braced bow: the flowers, the seed and the bee* (Unpublished M.A. Dissertation, Department of Music, University of Cape Town) 2019 looks at the shared heritage of the braced bow known as the Malunga, Chitende and uMaKhweyana from India, Mozambique and Swaziland/KwazuluNatal. He employs the metaphor of air-borne seeds that travel as living pieces of memory connecting the global African Diaspora through what he terms as 'Ngoma Consciousness', building a network of ancient diasporic sagacity.

“retrieval” a complex process soaked in movement, and find practice as a portal through a “tense present” (See Menon 2018). While continuing to honour and acknowledge the contours of the fragments, they find a significant historical articulation in resonance. The practice of hearing resonances and “playing together” then becomes deep historiographical work. Musical resonances equate to a conversation of fragmentary parts that can emerge through musical processes. I argue that the body-in-music and musical matter embodies the metaphor of a sedimentary rock immersed in water to enable the development of the methodological modes and sites required to make sedimenting histories apparent. That is to say, the body-in music makes apparent sedimenting histories that are pasts on the move, as well as histories located in aggregation. Doing so enables a re-evaluation of the frameworks of looking at the body-in-movement through the body-in-music. Musical sedimentation refers not only to the musical form but also the body-in-music, which is taken as a composite. Musical performance (of the Wayee, for example) becomes what propels an immersion into a flow of pasts that prompt a sedimenting of emotion (pain) that is bound by an atmosphere held within, around and along with the performer, the listener and the resonant spatial environment.

Echo, Reverberation and Resonance

The terms discussed in this section (echo, reverberation and resonance) are terms that are widely used and theorised in scientific disciplines like physics that study acoustics in the context of vibrations, frequencies and sound waves. The terms are also used widely in sociological and political languages used to theorise different aspects of alignment in including political, social and cultural and historical contexts. I am primarily engaging with these terms through the understanding developed through a practice in sound and music. This is necessary in order for me to develop my theorisation of these terms as they emerge from the practice of sound and music. Nevertheless, I am aware of the diverse and detailed academic contexts in which these terms have already been theorised.³⁸

Echo is a reflection, a looping back of a sound, whole, as it is. Reverberation is produced out of a gathering of multiple colliding echoes. Resonance is the quality of sound when a soundwave or a collection of soundwaves aligns with the natural frequency of an object thereby accentuating and intensifying the vibrations and shape of sound. Through a discussion on the unique spatial acoustic qualities exhibited by each of these sonic terminologies where the

³⁸ Here are few examples of their usage in different contexts: See Bruno Fazenda (2013); Hermann Von Helmholtz (1863); Harmut Rosa (2019)

environment in which sound circulates plays a determining role, I offer these three qualities of sound as three different approaches to the discourse around embodiment of sound. I show how these approaches offer different conceptual frameworks with which to examine the relationship between the form and the movement of the past through the sonic.

Echo is a term, children, in particular, would be very familiar with. As a child, when I would step into a large, empty, unoccupied room, or the tombs in historical sites, or caves in Ajanta Ellora,³⁹ or on a cliff at the precipice of a valley, my instinct would be to scream into the space, or let out high-reaching “Ouh” “Aah” “Oooo” sounds, or shout our names and wait for the space to return it to us. The thrill was in the magnified sound and in the return of the sound we gave, by apparently an empty, vast space.

In a given moment, sonic material thrown into a space with particular acoustic qualities enables the sound to bounce back, forming an echo. What is happening to the sonic material is a certain kind of underlining that helps create a kind of musical emphasis and a particular sense of space. Echoes are composed of sonic reflections across longer periods of time. They typically occur twice, but with the development of digital sound technologies, echoes can be composed of more than two reflections. The unity of the sonic material is maintained more in the echo than in a reverberation, where the reflections of the sonic material occur across shorter periods of time, which creates a different relationship with the definition of space and musical environment.

Reverberation can be understood as an echo chamber. The first time I came across this word, was when I was attending a sound workshop in Bengaluru, India in 2014. We were learning Ableton Live, a software I was fascinated with. It had a family of audio effects under the Reverb category that I would love to use on pieces of found music or my voice, because of the largeness of space that it created. It could be a simple recording of a dripping tap, but once I ran that sound under one of the reverb audio effects (I would most often go for Cathedral), the dripping water sound would do three things (1) displace the sound (2) enlarge the sound by splitting it into many sections and (3) distribute the listener’s attention focus on different sections of this sound. The reverb stretched time while the echo defined time. It is important to note the echo and the reverb are both intermixed. Both retain little in common characteristics, but that does not make the differences any less noticeable or significant. The differences mostly lie in the experience of space. Reverberation is a gathering of multiple colliding echoes, and it

³⁹ The Ajanta and Ellora Caves are a set of 30 Buddhist rock cut caves that are a national heritage in India dating back to the 2nd C- 480 BCE.

widens space because the reflections feedback colliding sounds, producing sonic crossovers. Therefore, in a reverberating environment, the more the sonic material is thrown into such an environment, the more it will grow and build up to fill the space. An example would be a sound work I produced for a piece of scenography that I had made as part of the digital theatre course in my Masters Programme. The piece was based on the *Ophelia Monologue* from Heiner Muller's text *The Hamlet Machine*. I used an extract of a lullaby called "Dumbala Laika"⁴⁰ from Tony Gatlif's film *Swing* as the sound material for my performance. On Ableton⁴¹ I put the song through a few sonic filters and edits (1) a low pass filter on (an effect that filters out all other frequencies other than low frequencies of the sound material) and applied (2) a Cathedral spatial acoustic effect (that treats the sound material as if it is being thrown into a large Cathedral like space with a lot of reverberations) and (3) a lot of pre-delay (this produces a delay of every progressing frequency so that it creates collisions of sound within the sound material itself and (4) added reverberation on the sound material to add to the distortions. This was performed live for the duration of the piece. What these sonic filters did was break the song apart, and what I was performing was a direction, manipulation, assembling, of these splintered pieces of echoes and word and sound, that created a new accumulation of sound. Out of a lullaby about the reclamation of gypsy voices and pasts, a very different atmosphere was produced. What I was performing in the live sound performance was first a dispersal of the song Dumbala Laika and then a live re-assembling of the sonic material in the song to produce a new immersive sonic environment for the Ophelia monologue.⁴²

Echoes underline the vast emptiness of a space and foreground the sonic material, almost like a protagonist in the space that it is thrown into. Reverberations embrace and encompass the entire space, underlining the vastness of the space by filling it up with an overflow of collisions, reflections, and reflections of reflections of the sonic material that is thrown into the space. Therefore, while both create a musical emphasis, both treat space differently, and the difference in temporality of the sonic material causes this difference in the experience of musical spatiality.

It is useful to take these two acoustic qualities of space, time and sound to understand the processes of sonic embodiment. How does sound fill space? How does the body, as a carrier of sound, fill space? What spaces (bodily and environmental) does the sonic material fill and

⁴⁰ Link to the lullaby Dumbala Laika: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s3ZyKLbj2zk&t=13s>

⁴¹ A popular sound editing software especially used for live performances.

⁴² Link to Ophelia Monologue for reference: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bodtl6OR6G0>

move in, especially in the case of voice? Can we theorise the echo and the reverb as a method and as a lens for approaching and understanding sonic embodiment?

Resonance is the quality of sound when the frequency of the sound emitted aligns with the natural frequency of the material it hits or falls upon, causing the sound to splinter and vibrate. It is tied to resounding. The result of resonance is always a big vibration, a louder presence; when something resonates with you, when something strikes you, connects with you.

Resonance is a well-known phenomenon. My focus here will be on a particular set of meanings that focus on and connect to the discourse on embodiment with sound. Resonance can be imagined as an echo chamber, in that sense, the body can be read as an echo chamber too. Many musical traditions in India are focussed on how to seat the note in the body as I have shown in the section on swar bithana. Sound, in this frame, is placed in the body, sound carves the body, the body is carved so that sound can flow freely with breath to resonate in the body. In this schema, every bone in the body must vibrate at the same frequency; that is called the seating of the note, swara sthaana. Josh Schrei (2021) describes conjunctive states as experiences where the observer (here, the performer and listener) and the observed (the song) merge. He describes conjunctive states as a conjunction that understands embodiment as not just ‘me and my body alone’ but as an encompassing of the environment by the body, of a conjoining of the body with the space and as an opening up of the body to the resonances that circulate. The body in a conjunctive state is built with song as well as the bodily presences of others involved. The event and the space in which the event is taking place merge. The song is what travels in such an event/space. When the performer and listener in such a space lend themselves to such opportunities of conjunction, the possibility of the musical material of the song speaking to those involved becomes potent.

Resonances can be seen to both produce conjunctive states and be produced by conjunctive states. It involves a much wider space for many reverberations to collide. Reverberations are collided sounds. Resonances are reverberations that align with each other. Therefore, the word “resounding” or the phrase “this resonates with me” or sociological/cultural and historical utilisation of the word “resonance” carry the musical connotation of an alignment of vibration or a gathering or collation resulting from alignments of reverberations. In the context of disciplines, disciplinary discourses can be the equivalent of reverberations, and inter-disciplinary, trans-disciplinary discourses can be the equivalent of resonance. Something that ‘strikes’ you. In the same way, a musical application of resonance can also carry sociological and cultural connotations (Rosa 2019: 232).

One of the most ancient forms of music in the Indian subcontinent is believed to be Dhrupad.⁴³ I have had the recent good fortune of beginning to learn this form from Pelva Naik, a disciple of the great master of the Dagarvani Gharana, Ustad Zia Faridduddin Dagar. In the very first session, my entire understanding of the shape of the note was dismantled and turned upside down. I was taught for over 15 years, in my music lessons in the Khyaal style of singing, that the note needs to be captured and that the point of riyas is to capture the note, get to the core and pinch it tightly between your fingers. In Dhrupad, the note is as large as a planet. The point of riyas in Dhrupad, is to invite this note closer and closer to you. The closer this planet gets to you, the larger it becomes. The note is not a point or a dot, it is a spectrum of frequency and vibrations, a family of vibrations, and the point of riyas then is to get to know this family; it is to keep a conversation of discovery going. The point is not to favour one perspective over the other (Sanyal and Widdess, 2004).

As a consequence, there is a fundamental change in the visualisation of the note, this changes the entire relationship one builds with the body through riyas, and thus, the function of riyas also changes. Visualising the largeness of the note compared to visualising the note as a point changes the entire relationship between sound and the body. The way one makes space within the body also changes; the way the sound also works on the body changes, so the approach to the voice, language and the understanding of music beyond melody gets revised. In relation to these two examples of musical practices, the Wayee has an interesting terminology for the strings of the tamburo⁴⁴. The five strings from right to left (if you are holding the instrument) are called Ghor(1) (translates to grave/terrible), Bajri(2 and 3) (translates to the rung one), Tip (4) (translates to a sharp point) and Zabaan (5) (translates to tongue/speech/language). The terminology of the notes here itself points to how the notes are visualised in order to be learnt, it is impossible to separate what you hear from the visualising of the note and the visualising of the note from the embodiment of sound. In the Wayee, the embodiment of sound, the reverberation outwards and the building of the musical atmosphere by the physical sonic resonances of voice, instrument and space as well as resonances of meanings, connections with the past through the sung words, contribute to an installing of an

⁴³ Dhrupad is considered to be the oldest style of classical vocal music majorly performed in North India. It is a form that utilizes the craft of aligning ancient breath practice with the development and treatment of the voice where the body is approached as a vessel of sound that must be prepared for the notes to enter it. For more details on the form see R Sanyal and R. Widdess (2004). Also see this interview with one of the exponents of the form Ustad Mohi Bahauddin Dagar: <https://lakshmanand.com/music/musicians/bahauddin-dagar/>

⁴⁴ Tamburo is the 5 stringed instrument played by the Jaths and Wayee singers across the Kachchh and Sindh region. The tamburo is otherwise an instrument found across the folk musical landscape in India.

undeniable atmosphere that permeates the room. In this engagement with awareness, one is introduced to perceiving the various functions of music and its relationship to the body, which, by extension, enables major insights into aural memory, its perception, construction, and forms. In this example, an embodied connectivity is forged between the body, and the musical form; sound and space is cultivated through musical practice. Therefore, when I refer to sonic infra-structures, I refer to this—when a group of musicians enter a room to collaborate on musical work, especially with a historical focus, a group of sonic connectivities enter the room as well. This network of sonic connectivities that present themselves in assembled contexts such as a musical collaboration, come to constitute sonic infra-structures.

Atmosphere

We can agree without question that the environment (room, cave, tomb, cathedral, digital sound studio) moulds and characterises the form and identity of the sonic material; we can take it further to say that once in space, the sonic material, too, moulds and forms the environment. Kate Galloway (2015) discusses the way the layering of a sonic soundscape over a physical scape organizes the role and characteristics of sonic material in the cultivating of aural memory. Harbour Symphony was founded collaboratively by composer Paul Steffler and an architect Joe Carter. Inspired by John Cage’s philosophy of music, it is an orchestra of ship air horns of a select group of docked-up ships performed in multiple ways at different times and contexts as a sonic event by various music conductors.

Galloway (2015) draws her insights from three interwoven and significant positions taken at the Sound Symposium in 2012 as a performer and field recordist of the Harbours Symphony and interviewer of various composers and participants in the Sound Symposium, one of the many contexts in which the Harbours Symphony was performed. She discusses how dispersible sonic material like the Harbour Symphony, in fact, has a pivotal function in establishing a place's identity and constructing aural memory. She describes “the visceral impact that the pairing of city and sonic practice, soundscape and landscape, has on the sonic character of place” (Galloway 2015:119).

This is an example of how the sonic material shapes spatial memory. The echoes and reverberations of the sound of the air horns that reflect back having travelled back and forth from the hills, the water in the sea, after having intermingled with the sounds of the city, yet curbed into a musical composition that is performed at various times of the day, becomes part of the soundscape of the city and creates resonances every time it is heard or “actively listened

to”.⁴⁵ In this sense, we can say that the sonic material emitted by the air horns, established by repeated performances of the Harbor Symphony, overlays a certain soundscape, creating a reservoir of associative aural memory that gets embedded in the identity or form of St. Johns physical scape.

What is orchestrated really? Surely not just the ships and their air horns. But what is propelled is a cultivation of the soundscape. Galloway unpacks how the sonic event of the Harbors Symphony constructs and develops the aural memory of St. John’s Harbour and, by extension, in fact, any place like Kachchh or Cape Town. I would suggest that across the material surface of the soundscape are interwoven sonic infra-structures of affect, which are themselves written upon a much larger historical landscape where sonic events act as nodal points that erupt while affective infra-structures are mapped across historical time and which come alive through performance work.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have discussed a sonic vocabulary to help provide the tools and lenses to articulate and recognise structures of affect and deepen the engagement with sonic materiality. The sonic vocabulary and the dispersible-body-framework in combination, provides the language to think through and theorise the body-in-music and the idea that there are ways in which historical matter is encoded in embodied pasts that are stored, and dispersed and shared through musical forms of performance. In this way musical or sonic articulations of embodied musical pasts can be made accessible enough to enable musical entrances into historiography. I reiterate that to be able to connect to such pasts there needs to be resonance between the material and the method used to see, feel or hear these kinds of historical accounts.

Since the historical account in this context is perceived and circulated sonically through the body-in-music, it is necessary to let go of what is known in terms of expecting a linguistic and narrative description of the “what”, and move towards the aural “what”. The aural or sonic “what”, is intimately tied to the “how”. In the narrative based linguistic “what”, the what and how can be separated. This is where performance becomes the necessary modality required to dwell at the borders of theory and practice, music, and historiography.

Musicological studies have shown how musical forms can be read as cultural and historical texts, and have gone on to derive historical accounts based on a song lyric or the

⁴⁵ Schafer describes soundscapes can be understood as an environment of sound based on the way it is perceived by individuals or society. See R.M. Schafer (1965) for more on soundscapes.

composition and location of certain musical instruments or even deriving community histories out of particular cultural forms of painting, music, dance, or poetry. What I have suggested here is that the modality of performance can not only be used to enhance historical accounts but the modality itself can be read as a historical account. Therefore, it is not that the historical account must be “drawn out” of the performance. I rather suggest the performance is both the form and the mode through which the historical account takes shape and is installed. This means the historical account acquires a fluid, osmotic character that can be “felt”, and knowing this form mandates knowing through feeling and knowing through affect, which is nothing other than embodiment itself.

While the focus of my thesis is indeed centred around working with sonic materialities to elucidate embodied pasts, the proposition I make in the following chapter, is around the idea of affective infra-structures, which is a structural framework that uses performance modalities towards historical practice that provokes a productive shift in the impulses that drive such work as well as in the sites and methods selected for historical practice when conducted within a PaR methodology. In the next chapter I elaborate on the idea of affective infra-structures, in which I use my insights from previous chapters to discuss music and affect in the context of the trans-continental lament where grief through sonic wounds emerges as a trope and structuring device across the course of my practice-based explorations across my doctoral research.

CHAPTER 4

MUSIC AND AFFECT: AFFECTIVE INFRA-STRUCTURES OF GRIEF

I was prompted by Mazhar Mutwa to go listen to the Wayee. I was told if I was in search of a lament, that the Wayee is what I was looking for. My fellow field workers and I set off to meet Mitho Khan and Sumar Kaka from the Bhagaadiya Jath community. They belong to the last surviving family that sings the Wayee in the form that Bhitaai is supposed to have originally developed. What I witnessed there was unlike anything I have heard before. It ruptured my understanding of the function of notes, raga systems, music/sound/speech. They were singing ragas I had learnt—such as Raag Purabi, Raag Kalyan, but they sounded unlike anything that I had learnt. The notes were resounding, lying at the edges of the voice, grazing the throat as they emanated, falling just short of a scream, they glided across the room, filling the air with a gravitas, a sombre funeralsque atmosphere. Tears streamed from my eyes, Sumar Kaka wiped his own. I was sitting with my legs folded underneath me, rocking back and forth as if someone close to me had just died. I was split into two—one was immersed in this lament, and I found myself lamenting something that I had no knowledge of. Another part of me was watching myself lament, puzzled, at how a song sung in a language that I had no understanding of, can move me to such an extent of exhaustion and pain? Was it my pain? Was it their pain? What past was being lamented? By whom?

When the song ended, we came back, to where we were. Tea was served. Silence, heavy silence followed. We all took a moment to acknowledge the place we had been transported to. One part of my self was grateful and knew exactly what had happened. Another part of my self was filled with questions.

What was it about the mahaul of the wayee, that had taken over the room and had immersed the people in it? When I neither understood the words nor the context, what was it in the Wayee that had left me weeping like that? Was it something particular to pain, that could easily be shared and understood? It was clear that a range of effects had been produced in both singer and listener that indicated shared feeling and a sense that what needed to be communicated had been communicated.

As I discussed this idea of the mahaul and mahaul jamaana with Sumangala Damodaran and Ari Sitas during one of my supervisor meetings in 2022, Damodaran asked a pertinent question. “the mahaul also has its social codes as to what people consider to be mahaul jamaana.

Just you and them entering a point of connection, and them saying “ladki samajhti hai” (the girl gets it), is it enough to say the mahaul is there?”.

To that I had responded “That’s right! Of course not, I take that as merely an indication, a doorway into a much deeper and broader enquiry. It is true, that the mahaul is bound by social codes as well. But if you take the example of a transcontinental dialogue like the Insurrections Ensemble, then there is a displacement that takes place as well, isn’t it? Then mahaul jamana, the binding of atmospheres, would be complex, the social codes exist yet are displaced and so don’t work in the same way. Those very social codes need to find a new network of connectivity. I would like to underline the fact that this does not mean the removal, disappearance or collapse of social codes but rather, the displacement of social codes, particularly via music, enables an interaction with affect in the form of the mahaul. Therefore, in a trans-continental space, the social codes do not become the singular structural basis of the mahaul. Music, particularly in the form of the lament, combined with other factors, does something that I would like to say, disperses the social code structurally, and affect takes the central structural place as a structuring device.

In this chapter I investigate how the mahaul jamana can be understood as a structure of feeling. In doing so, I argue that music, in the form of the lament, and affect enter into an important structural alliance which are constitutive of affective infra-structures of grief. I move on to discuss the important interventions posed by affective infrastructures in processes of historicization, particularly of histories that lie embodied in performance. I finally offer an account of why and how performance is a powerful way to explicate these infra-structures of affect.

The Politics of Affect : What Is Affect? Why Affect?

The connection between the sonic and the political is obvious to us. “That was arresting” “The mob knew exactly what to do, they were so attuned to each other.” It is curious, the ways feelings circulate today. On one hand, one sees the sheer force and eruption of feeling driving fundamentalist mobs and majoritarian political groups to unite and, on the other hand, the subliminal numbing of emotion, the freezing of feeling in response to the eruption.

It is interesting to see how the driving force behind rising fundamentalism the world over is the movement or mobilization of feeling. Now more than ever, we see the relevance of what Sara Ahmed lays out in *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, regarding the sticky, sliding behaviour and nature of emotions, and the accumulation and transaction of feelings. We see it happening, we feel it creeping into our everyday lived reality. It is much closer to us now than

before because of the digital explosion of public space and sociality, bringing people on a paradoxical plane made up of both radical closeness and profound distance; radical publicness, the baring open of the private on one hand and the insurmountable distances created between people, as we have seen, serving as stop holds for political movements that were at the brink of bringing in possible change.

Isolation in the pandemic world also meant a migration to the digital space that both scattered people apart but also brought people together, a togetherness that still needs to be studied further. The sonic medium, when placed under a political lens, is similar: it carries both an incredible scattering potential or capacity as well as the capacity of bringing people together. This scattering potential that one can find in many mediums of expression, communication and dissemination today can bring about a new kind of togetherness, which, perhaps, ought to be studied in depth now more than ever. This migration to the digital space, has deeply affected the way we feel, the way we see, and how the intensity of emotions works on the minds of people, guiding actions and thoughts. Suddenly, we find a nuanced, studied, strategic centring of feeling in the contemporary political climate of the world in general, and in India (particularly in this study), without which talking about our political climate will always remain incomplete.

Many cultural studies thinkers like Sara Ahmed have pushed us to look at objects of emotion, their circulations and the forms they take, the feelings this movement produces and the transformative effects emotions and feelings have on collective bodies. Music has terms—resonance and attunement—that are variedly used. Ahmad has used these terms as well to describe the accumulation and movement of affect. I suggest that it is not just that affect moves and accumulates through objects of emotion, but that emotion and feelings also move and occupy embodied space. The case of the sonic is one such example where such embodied space can be discerned in terms of the affective. Following Ahmed, I would like to re-centre the question of feelings in both its larger and smaller scales. I would like to invite you to place the question of feelings at the centre of the set of arguments that are about to follow.

They lie at the centre of both the oppression of fundamentalist, homogenous thought and also at the centre of building future forms of resistance. For both friend and foe, feelings seem to be of a materiality that is both containable as well as ungovernable; within the bounds of political control, but which can be manipulated at the same time transgressively stubborn and resistant to the larger swerve of the majoritarian current. Another political player with whom feelings forge an intimate connection is memory: how we remember things and people, what we remember, and when we remember.

It is arguable that one of the most powerful, moving and intimate connections between the heart and memory are made through the sonic. What kind of spaces of memory does the sonic occupy? The migratory histories of nomadic communities like the Bhagadiya and Fakirani Jaths of Kachchh, Gujarat lie scattered across current day national borders with an origin story that is located in eleventh century pastoralist routes cutting across three continents. Within a wide repertoire of musical traditions that they hold within their communities, borne out of migration, lies the Wayee, a musical lament that is built of resonant sonic wounds encoded in an aural performative ritualistic tradition.

I am making a case, in this chapter, for the politics of immersion, that derives conceptually and notionally from nomadic migration, where an affect studies perspective and frameworks drawn from music practice give us lenses to reclaim the tear—redraw its routes—that circulate to and from the heart. In a world that is stagnant with the fable of unsurpassable difference, I believe there is no better time to mark the significance of studying affect and finding frameworks derived out of circulation and movement. In such a landscape, where subjects are driven by feeling, governed by emotion, the study of feeling, I argue, acquires a crucial import. It is within this landscape of crisis, of affective numbing, that I place my suggestion regarding the value of sonic spaces. The sonic gains a different meaning, significance, a different existence, and role in such a landscape. Affect-based frameworks urge one to look into what have been historically domains of affective intensity—such as sonic space—to explicate these infrastructures of affect to understand how they move people and feelings that underly deeply eruptive times of crisis.

Feelings are a socio-political category. Many scholars such as Sara Ahmed (2004b), Tejaswini Niranjana (2020) and Zimitri Erasmus (2017) have already pointed to how feelings have historically moved people, driven people into groups and affiliations, prompted separations, and united people. They have shown how different kinds of maps emerge out of the circulation of people driven by affective intensities and musical propensities, how spaces generate and hold affective memories that are narrated by those having experienced it and how those narratives and by extension, all forms of recall, bring back palpable affective presences of those memories that are felt in and that occupy the said spaces.

What I am bringing into this mix through my doctoral research derives from performance practice, where I offer methods, lenses and conceptual frameworks to be able to perceive a world in circulation. We can then begin to see the many pasts that have been rendered transparent, standing with their arms in the air at the margins of our historical

disciplines, and we can finally look them in the eye, those pasts that have slipped through our sifting fingers.

Shah Latif Bhittai's Wayee

There are different ways in which the Wayee comes to us. As historical text, the Wayee has come to us as a form of singing developed by the eighteenth century mystic Sufi saint, poet, philosopher and traveller, Shah Abdul Latif Bhittai. The Wayee forms part of the *Risalo*, a compendium of verses attributed to Shah Latif that is revered as a sacred scripture by Sufi communities that hold Bhittai as their guiding saint. Therefore, the Wayee also comes to us as a sacred scripture. Shah Latif is also known to have travelled far across the South Asian landscape and in the dhows across the Indian Ocean. His verse is marked by the sheer details of landscapes, ecology, communities, livelihoods and spatial atmospheres that are recounted in the verses of the *Risalo*. Therefore, the Wayee, in this way, has also come to us as a travelogue and/or a musicological text. As a musical system operating through emotional registers of grief, the Wayee was born out of the cries of the grief of exile. It is this approach to the Wayee that I have held onto. In this regard, through my fieldwork, I came across an origin story of the Wayee that I found particularly insightful.⁴⁶ This prompted me to unpack the Wayee as one of possibly many other ways in which non-canonical musical systems may have been developed in order to cater to historical memory, particularly in this case, to memories of pain.

As the mythology of the great Shah Latif Bhittai goes, according to some local accounts in Kachchh, the Wayee originated from the depths of Bhittai's grief. The story goes that Shah Latif Bhittai was in love with the most breathtakingly beautiful woman in his village. She too was in love with Bhittai. Bhittai was known as the mad-man of the village, the mad fakir, with dishevelled hair, completely unburdened by the ways of the village and the world. When the village folk learnt of this love that the two of them shared, all hell broke loose. Scathing, filthy taunts were flung at him, and Bhittai was shunned. They said "How can a ridiculous man like you even think that his love will be reciprocated by the most beautiful woman in the world? What kind of delusion are you living in? Go away from here!" Burdened by the taunts of the world, Bhittai was exiled and was separated from his lover. Now far away, as he was grieving at leaving his village and his lover, notes of the Wayee emanated from him. He shaped the

⁴⁶ I conducted four fieldwork visits to Kachchh between 2019 and 2023 where I collected musical recordings, conducted interviews across the Kachchh. Here I refer particularly to a origin story shared by Mazhar Mutwa in April 2019, that was affirmed by the Wayee singers (Bhagadiya Jaths) that I met on his recommendation for the first time in 2019. I continued to interview and record Mitho Khan ji and Sumar Kaka, Umar Kaka, Anwar Ali and Ganiba Ustad about the Wayee in the three field visits that followed the one in 2019.

notes of the Wayee from the various screams and sounds produced out of his grief. These are the notes that are sung in the Wayee, as it is sung by the Bhagadiyaa Jaths of Kachchh and some Wayee singers of Bhit Shah, Sindh, Pakistan (Mutwa, 2019). As I have mentioned in Chapter One, there are thirty-six modes, or surs, in the Wayee that were created by Bhittai that are sung today.

When I asked Mitho Khan ji and Sumar Kaka after a breathtaking rendition of Sur Purabi what sur actually means, they used the word “asar” (effect) to describe sur, which, I believe, can intersect richly with the notion of affect. In canonical musical understanding and even simple Hindi musical terminology, sur translates to note, intonation, or tone, or refers to accepted and systematised melodic frequency. So, when I first learnt about the surs of the Wayee, I presumed that it is the folk equivalent of a raag. Mitho Khan ji shared that sur is, in fact, a Kachchhi word, referring to one of three effects of grief. The three terms, he said, are sur, sikk, and sajan, which can be defined as three aspects or effects of grief. Sur refers to an effect of grief—one that describes a pain that has broken through the roof of tolerance. The thirty-six sur of the Wayee are thirty-six affects or modes or asars of the lament that bind together historical stories, myths, spiritual teachings and memories in the language of affect, within the fold of the musical form. Therefore, the lament was not only in the object of the form (the song, the words, the stories, etc) but also in the very air that the performance of the form produces (Khan, 2019, 2022).

By gearing my focus towards understanding the various aspects of the practice and experience of this musical lament, I was pushed to invoke the Wayee here as an entry point into understanding the relationship between music and affect. This particular rendition (that I had the blessed fortune to have experienced in my field visits to Kachchh), which is culturally layered into community knowledge and memory, offers a mode of remembering through performance.

I found this possibility very interesting because it pointed to a very layered understanding of what musical atmospheres are and what they do. It pointed to the ways in which certain musical lament forms were structured, performed and circulated that produced affectively intense atmospheres that moved people to grief. What was this grief bringing in alongside itself? When the Wayee is sung, what is said unspoken? What is shared in the tear? What happens to the heart? How does the heart read and recognize grief that doesn't belong to itself alone? What happens to the breath? Where am I taken when I said I was transported somewhere else? Did I go somewhere else or was something installed alongside the Wayee? Did something else, a past perhaps, enter the room alongside the grief? Is this what the lament

brings? Can stories that were never lamented enough, be remembered in this way, Through atmospheres of grief? The Wayee, in its very origin story, in its musical grammar, in its lyrics and story, in its characters and messages, is steeped in grief. Unlike songs of grief, the Wayee is a form of grief, with scales born out of screams and stories of lamenting characters that traverse Shah Abdul Latif's sociological travels as well as mystical metaphors; the form goes into such depth of arranging and understanding grief, that Wayee as a form can be understood as an assemblage of 36 different forms of grief. These were musical modes designed to represent various subtle and distinct qualities of grief. Not only did this help highlight the Wayee as an incredible area of research in itself (which is not the focus of my doctoral work), but it enabled me to recognise the lament as a structural device in a much larger trans-continental affective circuit.

Here was a possibility that a musical practice could become a historiographic text that was asking for new methods in practice and new lenses with which to see how affectively intense atmospheres circulate, what knowledges they hold, what kind of knowledge systems they refer back to, and in which contexts we happen to find these atmospheres?

The Wayee in a Transcontinental Afro-Asiatic Circuit

The Wayee cannot be separated from the nomadic history of the community. In the first three chapters of this thesis, I have discussed how and why the historiography of a historically nomadic or diasporic community that has crisscrossed territories before they were nation-bound cannot be region bound.⁴⁷ It would be useful to read them in conjunction with their Afro-Eurasian resonances and historical continuum.

Sociological frameworks that make a case for embodied histories view bodies of communities like the Bhagadiya Jaths as fluid and porous. These frameworks are founded on the basis of their affective historical contributions and can be used to suggest how affect is leveraged by non-hegemonic, non-native communities for the purpose of remembering pasts. These pasts of nomadic communities have always been on the move, are carried along with the community, because in these kinds of histories, their collective bodies cannot be separated from the memories that they carry and neither can memories of a people that were historically on the move or dispersed, due to various reasons, be attached to regional or national histories through

⁴⁷ I am referring to nomadic communities like the present-day community of Bhagadiya Jaths in Banni, Kachhh with their eleventh century nomadic route across Afro-Eur-Asia. The Romas of Romania are another example of a Eur-Asian nomadic past. The African diaspora spread across Afro-Eur-Asia with their history of the 15th century slave trade as well as histories of Afro-Asian circulation across the Indian Ocean is also a case in point. The RAA has worked on bringing to the surface more histories of dispersal and circulation like these.

a simple logic of historical archival practice. In this light, I suggest that artistic practices like song, dance, and storytelling become attached to memory keeping processes; processes that involve the embodiment of memories through artistic practices. In these processes of embodiment, affective intensities play an important role in ensuring the embodiment of memory through artistic practices as well as the circulation and sharing of these embodied memories. These affective memories can take many forms and shapes, some of which we see in living traditions across the world—as song, as dance, as rituals, as chants and so on—that have only been region-bound as heritage. If we build a nomadic framework to look at both region and community, where both are dynamically entwined, upon the foundation of embodied history and affect, we may be able to not only find more ways in which histories like the Bhagadiya Jath communities, that are most often marginal histories, are recorded, we will also be able to think about musical traditions, in this case the musical lament, as being part of a larger Afro-Eurasian entanglement of memory. This moves away from a nation-centric, masculinist understanding of cultural heritage and suggests a more nuanced way of looking at contemporary communities and regions as historically fluid and oceanic, and also allows one to theorise our contemporary crises of identity, place, and belonging. It makes map-making and understanding identity formation an artistic exercise for sociological and historical purposes that seek to engage its contemporary crisis.

In this context, the structural details of the lament like the Wayee point to some key questions, some of which are directed to me as a performer: What is the lament composed of in the Wayee? In its calls, screams, poetry, metaphors, what is the texture of the voice? What is the temporal quality of the verses, the rhythms? What happens when I sing the Wayee, when I listen to it? What happens in the body when one listens to the Wayee? What are the resonances and echoes that return to my ears when I listen to the Wayee? These questions lead to the first performance-based explorations as part of the PaR classes I audited. I engaged these questions through a set of three performance pieces: *The Note Will Carry Us* I, II and III, which helped me delve deeper into the sonic materiality of the Wayee as well as explore the lateral reverberations that were produced when the Wayee overlapped with the musical atmospheres of other Afro-Eur-Asian sonic materialities. Working on soundscapes (the RAA soundscape) and then singing over it, musical collaborations across some performance projects such as Insurrections Ensemble collaborations (2019-2023), *A Sea-drift of Songs* (2020), *Gabriel's Odyssey* (2021), and *Sharing Notes* (2022) helped work through these questions and open the Wayee out to the larger Afro-Eur-Asian circuit and especially to the South African musical space where I was primarily located at the time these questions emerged for me.

Therefore, musical collaboration, in this context, can become historiographical work. It would be a historiography that acknowledges and derives from a network of pasts where migration was the way of being with the world, not captured in national imprisonment or buried in nativist belonging but rather where both global crisis and belonging could be found in movement, in circulation, and where identities were cultured and fermented in interaction, where tales could be told of the strangers who stayed, or who were greeted and given home, or the tales of finding the stranger inside ourselves. These were tales of persistence and survival based on interactions of bonding, peculiar friendships, and tragedies that fuel the blood of those for whom freedom arrived very late. These were stories that sing of loss and where histories must be fabricated (Hartman 2008) in order to push back on narratives of erasure and loss.⁴⁸ Stories that are songs. Stories that are feelings accumulated across centuries that must keep finding expression in order to be there. Here, the historiography of the musical lament is not only at the service of the discipline of history, it is a political movement towards redemption, justice, and healing, and a method of re-accessing shared histories in order to build contemporary solidarities. Therefore, as a historiographical project, this doctoral work explores impulses other than the archival impulse and formats of remembering and retrieval other than the archive.

Archive through the Lens of Repertoire and Performance Residue

In light of engaging the idea of historiographical pursuits and processes of recall and practices of doing history that is driven by impulses other than an occulocentric, phallogocentric ambition of retrieval, rational accuracy and categorical and discipline-centric ways of organising memory, there are two conceptual frameworks I would like to discuss and draw from: Diana Taylor's concept of the repertoire (2003) and Rebecca Schneider's arguments around performance residue (Schneider 2014).

Taylor's insights into performance while engaging the archive and the repertoire are of significance, especially to such a musical form as the Wayee, in understanding the implications of performance becoming a mode of remembering and a "transmitting of knowledge, memory and sense of identity" (Taylor 2003:2). The question of the Wayee and processes of archival,

⁴⁸ I use the word "fabricated" drawing from Saidya Hartman's literary concept and practice of critical fabulation (2008), but I am also referring to other practices where the fable enables the filling of historical gaps that are often dismissed as lost histories. This would include the literary practices of the authors Amitav Ghosh and Ari Sitas who have their own ways of using the fable in critical ways to produce works of writing that are as much a historical document as they are fabulous stories of fiction. I further suggest that this concept and practice can easily be adapted to other artistic practices as well, which is what I have attempted to do in my doctoral work and thesis performance.

is engaged discursively in Taylor's question of performance. The performance of the Wayee can be read discursively as a text or as an ethnographic case study, but to be read as a non-discursive material, as a methodological material, it will require the framework of the repertoire in order to pursue and give residence to the historiography of musical matter through the practice and performance of music. Even though the archive and the repertoire are deeply embroiled into each other and the process of doing history, especially in the context of performance, will always tend to shuttle discursively between the two. Taylor, in line with Schneider, points to the importance of separating the discursive from the non-discursive in order to dive into the materiality of performance instead of being defeated by its characteristic of apparent ephemerality (Taylor, 2003). Taylor defines the difference between the repertoire and the archive by shifting focus from "the written to embodied culture, from discursive to the performatic" (Taylor, 2003:16) by celebrating ephemerality instead of equating it with failure or loss. While the archive is founded on materiality that makes historical objects, that crystallizes time, the repertoire is founded on the materiality of presence that "enacts embodied memory" (Taylor, 2003:20); "fleshy memory" (Schneider 2001:105). "According to the logic of the archive, performance is that which does not remain. Radically in time, performance cannot reside in its material traces and therefore it disappears" (Schneider 2001: 100).

Schneider (2001) goes against the grain of precisely this logic of the archive, that is predominantly driven by oculocentric assumption that if it is "not visible or 'houseable' within an archive, it is disappeared" (Schneider 2001:101). Despite the moves in archival practices followed towards a 'new history' that is geared towards the inclusion of oral archives, performative practices, and collective memory, she insists are, in fact, attempts at constituting anew these materialities and exclusions within the same archival logic of visibilisation and acquisition. Underneath the attempt at radically compensating for and reversing loss through inclusion and by narrativizing disappearance and ephemerality into the materiality of performance, lies the production of a loss of a different approach to saving and remains that is not invested in identity, ocular authenticity and colonial and modernist rationality. The institution of loss installed by the archival drive/logic immediately equates loss with disappearance and a failure to remain (Schneider 2001).

Schneider (2001) contends that performance does indeed remain, but it remains differently and in difference, where the performance that remains resists Derridean domiciliation and habituations of ocular hegemony, where history is not lost in body-to body transmission (Schneider 2001:103-105). Distinguishing her approach subtly from performance-as-remains and performance as memory, she proposes approaching performance

..not as that which disappears (like the archive expects), but as both an act of remaining and a means of reappearance, we almost immediately are forced to admit that remains do not have to be isolated to the document, to the object, to the bone versus flesh. Here the body... becomes an archive and host to a collective memory. (Schneider 2001:103)

She suggests looking to the body as site of historical practice and sedimented acts, particularly to the body-given-to-performance that is “resiliently eruptive”, “relentlessly citational, and remaining”. The performative trace is messy, and challenges any neat antinomy between “appearance and disappearance, or presence and absence” (Schneider 2001:103). Lastly, drawing on her perspective on the relationship between performance, pasts and lived experience, she suggests that the performance of pasts explicated through performance can function as “the kind of bodily transmission conventional archivists dread; a counter-memory—almost in the sense of an echo” that pushes us, including me, to articulate ways in which performance as historical material is less bound to the ocular and more like echoes and reverberations resounding off of lived experience that begin again and again as “an echo in the ears of a confidante, an audience, a witness” (Schneider 2001:106).

Combining these perspectives or relationalities vis-à-vis the archive with the practice-as research methodology, as developed in my doctoral work, helps put into perspective the positions in this dissertation. This is so particularly vis-à-vis the processes, institutions, and impulses of archival work in the context of its historiographical objective, where the materiality and method of research play a pivotal role in determining what is historicised and in what form it is recognised and historically accounted for.

In the same vein, speaking of method and materiality, the methodological framework of musical entrances that I propose in my thesis not only derives from the Wayee and its nomadic social abode but opens music out as a historical material that is embodied, resonant and which binds space together. Such a proposition can impact the historiography of the pre-colonial histories that lie athwart; non-discursive, performatic forms which can feed into the de-colonial projects of the Global South.

Musical Collaboration as Historiographical Method

Love stories, stories of travel, legends from the seafaring/fishermen communities, stories of weather, spirits and ancestors, and celebration, occupy regions of our memory where music

becomes a language of history. I discovered that musical collaboration can indeed help locate and gather such embodied, affect driven historical narratives and pushes one to think through the intricate layers of history that are sedimented sonically in oral/aural narratives and forms of music.

My earlier chapters were geared towards establishing that affect based perspectives on these matters view the body, especially the body in performance, as that which shapes historiographical material in particular ways (here I focus on music) and holds space for the possibility that certain kinds of histories show themselves in the practice of these embodied forms of performance. I have argued that theories of embodiment would allow one to read performance as embodied sites of social as well as historical engagement.

My study of the musical lament that began with the Wayee has developed into a study of methods and lenses with which to understand and map such affective intensities, like forms of grief, by perceiving their circulations, movements, and historiographical functions. This development has been mediated by my own training in Hindustani classical music, visual and performance art, my artistic collaborations with artists, researchers and musicians from South Africa, Ethiopia, Tanzania and Turkey, and through certain practices of listening drawn from my musical practice and my general interest in world music. I have used a PaR methodology and framework to grapple with these particular grammars of histories that lie in the way they are told/sung.

Musical collaboration, has emerged as one of my primary methods of enquiry. It is a mode with which to explore the idea of affective infra-structures, map an infra-structure of grief through performance and establish the musical lament as an example of such affective infra-structure in which we can find sediments of Afro-Eur-Asian affinities. What emerges out of these collaborations are, in fact, what I call sonic maps; maps drawn out of structures of feeling; out of a mapping of affect. I shall return to this point a little later after I unpack the idea of affective infra-structure and show how and why I suggest performance practice as a modality with which to explore it.

Affective Infra-structures of Grief

In *Marxism and Literature*, Raymond Williams (1977) has a set of seven pages dedicated to the idea of structure of feelings. Williams suggests expanding our understanding of what constitutes social consciousness by developing an understanding around the structures of feeling and the role of experience that contribute to our social consciousness. He suggests that there is a false binary drawn between social consciousness and practical consciousness, that

further reinforces a false binary between the two while producing the fixedness of the social with connotations of unmoving, static institutions or formations while producing the practical or lived experience as structured movement amongst these fixed social systemic units (Williams 1977:128-135). Another false binary he points to is between thought/thinking and experience/feeling that, when set against each other, recede into their most finite and fixed forms (Williams 1977: 128-135). “It is the reduction of the social to fixed forms that remains the basic error”, he has argued (Williams 1977:131).” Williams suggests collapsing these binaries of the social and the personal in ways that centre feeling and experience. He suggests that one can observe how the living out of a social experience brings about small “changes in presence” (Williams 1977:131). These albeit small changes in presence indeed must be viewed as emergent or pre-emergent; they do not await definition, classification, or rationalization before they exert pressures and set effective limits on experience and on action. These changes are what Williams refers to as structures of feeling:

..specifically affective elements of consciousness and relationships: not feeling against thought, but thought as felt and feeling as thought: practical consciousness of a present kind, in a living and interrelating continuity. We are then defining these elements as “structure”: as a set, with specific internal relations, at once interlocking and in tension. Yet we are also defining a social experience which is still in process, often indeed not yet recognized as social but taken to be private, idiosyncratic, and even isolating, but which in analysis has emergent, connecting and dominant characteristics. (Williams, 1977: 131-132)

Williams goes on to describe the significant subversive role of aesthetics and forms of art in the explication and recognition of structures of feeling that enable one to focus on the performativity of the self. This shift in focus instigates the search for and recognition of different modes of social formation that are recognised when methodologically, feeling, presence and affectivity are foregrounded and are studied structurally in order to extract the specificities of their social contents. He says:

We need, on the one hand to acknowledge (and welcome) the specificity of these elements—specific feelings, specific rhythms—and yet to find ways of recognizing their specific kinds of sociality, thus preventing that extraction from social experience which

is conceivable only when social experience itself has been categorically (and at root historically) reduced. (Williams, 1977: 132)

As Sharma and Tygstrup (2015) argue, what Williams was trying to articulate in 1977, was the need to study the role of affect and presence in the formation of social and cultural identities and intimate ways in which social formations as ideological and institutions structures interact with everyday lived experiences of the subject. Therefore, structures of feeling for Williams meant “a specific structure of particular linkages, particular emphases and suppressions and in what are often its most recognizable forms, particular deep starting points and conclusions” (Williams 1977:134). He presented a “hypothesis of a mode of social formation, explicit and recognizable in specific kinds of art, which is indistinguishable from other social and semantic formations by its articulation of presence” (Williams 1977:135).

What captures me in this proposition, is how Williams sees the significance in the articulation of presence and in the explication of affective structures. Although, for Williams, structures of feelings were an undercurrent and a methodological means towards expanding our understanding of social formations and performativity of those social and cultural formations. I am interested in looking at structures of affect as stand-alone structures in themselves, not a means towards an end, but a structure composed out of movement of affect; a structure upon which or through which affect circulates, moves and accumulates.

Sharma and Tygstrup in *Structures of Feeling: Affectivity and the Study of Culture* (Sharma and Tygstrup 2015) use Williams as a starting point and a structure upon which they curate a range of essays that explore the significance of affect in the assembling and dispensation of different social formations by invoking Williams notion of affectivity as “the delicate infrastructure regulating our propensities and modes of presence and participation in social situations” (Sharma and Tygstrup 2015:8). They put together interdisciplinary approaches to the study of culture compiled keeping the significance of affect studies in mind. They point to how affect is defined and identified and approached differently in different disciplines and fields of study. Therefore, it is not a very meaningful exercise to map these specific perspectives out; rather, they are more interested in highlighting the common interests of centring affect as the mode in which different social situations are articulated (Sharma and Tygstrup 2015).

I draw from Sharma and Tygstrup’s approach to affectivity where primacy is given to the infrastructural role, significance and function of affect in the assembling of different social and cultural formations. The perspective of looking at affect as a modality and infrastructure

that assembles, impacts, effects and produces social and cultural changes in formation is a significant move on their part, yet, even here, affectivity is approached as a means to an end, even though the end is to perceive the role, function and significance of affect.

To dig deeper into the methodological aspect of structures of affect and into the idea of feelings as a modality that assembles various kinds of formations, I find Ahmed's articulations around affective economies particularly helpful. They allow us to look at affectivity, affective intensities, and affective formations as structures of feelings in themselves. Ahmed locates affectivity in movement, in circulation. She finds more resonance in terminology selected from the field of economics, where she chooses to describe the movement of affect through the notion of transaction and transactability, which she describes in her concept of affective economies. Her insights into the movement of emotions in the way "movement does not cut the body off from the 'where' of its inhabitation but connects bodies to other bodies" (Ahmed 2004b:11), is particularly useful to see how emotions and feelings can be extracted out of either social/collective consciousness or practical/individual consciousness, and can instead be referred to as circulating "forms of affective value" in themselves (Ahmed 2004b:11). She emphasises and describes specific processes through which the movement of emotions assemble and garner the collective "feeling". Further, she ascribes feelings as that which accumulate as a consequence of an "erasure of the history of their production and circulation" (Ahmed 2004b:11). This suggests that when the objects of emotions as forms carrying affective value stop circulating or moving—"sliding and sticking"—between individuals and communities, social space and bodily space, then feelings are generated as "social presence rather than self-presence" (Ahmed 2004b:10). For Ahmed, feelings are larger swathes of generalised, homogenised, concentrated emotion. She claims what moves are objects of emotions that in turn move and transform people into gatherings of collective feelings. In this way she also describes how the surfacing of the individual and collective bodies occurs through affective intensification and the significance of the movement and circulation of emotions in order to resist blind subscription to feelings. Ahmed suggests that it is emotions that are crucial to the

constitution of the psychic and the social as objects, a process which suggests that the 'objectivity' of the psychic and social is an effect rather than a cause. In other words, emotions are not "in" either the individual or the social but produce the very surfaces and boundaries that allow the individual and the social to be delineated as if they are objects. My analysis will show how emotions create the very surfaces and boundaries that allow

all kinds of objects to be delineated. The objects of emotion take shape as effects of circulation. (Ahmed 2004b:10)

It is important to note here that Ahmed emphasises that she is not suggesting that emotions circulate but rather that emotions are formed as an effect of their circulation. She writes:

In suggesting emotions circulate, I am not offering a model of emotion as contagion (see Izard 1977: 106). The model of emotional contagion, which is often influenced by Sivan Tomkins work, is useful in its emphasis on how emotions are not simply located in the individual, but move between bodies. Afterall, the word “contagion” derives from the Latin word “contact”. In this model it is the emotion itself that passes: I feel sad, because you feel sad: I am ashamed by your shame, and so on. In suggesting that emotions pass in this way, the model of emotional contagion risks transforming emotion into a property, as something that one has, and can then pass on, as if what passes on is the same thing. (Ahmed 2004b: 10)

She argues that it is crucial to work away from the contagion metaphor, saying that the risk entailed in holding on to it is not merely theoretical. She says:

I have experienced numerous social occasions where I assumed other people were feeling what I was feeling, and that the feeling was, as it were, “in the room”, only to find out that others had felt quite differently. I would describe such spaces as “intense”. Shared feelings are at stake, and seems to surround us, like a thickness in the air, or an atmosphere. But these feelings not only heighten tension, they are also in tension. Emotions in their very intensity involve miscommunication, such that even when we feel we have the same feeling, we do not necessarily have the same relationship to the feeling. Given that shared feelings are not about feeling the same feeling, or feeling-in-common, I suggest that it is the objects of emotions that circulate, rather than emotion as such. My argument still explores how emotions can move through the movement of circulation of objects. Such objects become sticky, or saturated with affect, as sites of personal and social tension. (Ahmed 2004b:10)

For me, this paragraph in particular, excites many points of agreement and contention at the same time. I can see the risk Ahmed is pre-empting by being cautious about the model of

emotional contagion. The risk of believing any kind of affectively intense moment is a moment of alignment and social dissolution, and offers a sense of non-dualistic universality of emotional one-ness is evident. It is also true that not all shared feelings are about feeling-in-common. Yet, I believe there is more to affectively intense atmospheres here than meets the eye. I agree that emotional contagion is not a useful model considering the risks articulated eloquently by Ahmed. Instead, I suggest conjunction or states of conjunction, alignment and assembling as ways to look deeper into the structures of affect that circulate in the form of atmospheres or the “feeling in the room”. This “feeling in the room” or *mahaul* are surely not universal; they are not “received” or “made” consistently, all the time or in uniform ways. As I have discussed in the previous chapter, the *mahaul* is indeed marked and pointed at and articulated across the sonic vocabulary. So, while Ahmed is forming her observations on the separating function of emotions and feelings in circulation, I am interested in the unifying function of emotions and feelings in circulation. The palpability of emotion in circulation can also garner feelings and create affective structures of feelings. These structures are not standalone or affectively uniform in a simple sense, but as I have suggested, are built across the dispersible body through a network of connectivities and affinities. The materiality of this kind of structure of affect acquires an embodied quality because embodied sites traverse body/society, body/mind, body/heart, body/affect, and, as Raymond Williams has suggested, collapses the limiting delineations between the social and the personal while still being able to articulate the different ways in which effects of delineation are reinforced between the individual and social.

Nevertheless, I do not discard Ahmed’s argument regarding the need to preserve the objects of emotions in order to articulate their movements and highlight what emotions and feelings “do”. I turn to her proposition that objects of emotions become sticky or saturated with affect, as sites of personal and social tension to suggest that through the dispersible body framework, and in the context of nomadic histories, subaltern pasts and musical articulations of embodied pasts, the bodies-in-music or bodies-in performance can be considered as embodied objects of emotion whose surfaces are saturated with the affect. It is these kind of affectively-saturated infra-structures of feeling upon which emotions circulate that I am trying to locate as the site upon which not only social and cultural formations, but also certain kinds of historical formations, are illuminated through various artistic modes of engagement, particularly through music.

I define affective infra-structures as embodied structures in and through which emotions and feelings move and sediment and in which histories that appear to be lost, show themselves.

By interweaving Williams's (1977) and Sharma and Tygstrup's (2015) ideas around affect (Sharma and Tygstrup 2015) and structures of feeling (Williams 1977: 128-135) with Ahmed's ideas around affective economies (2015), and the sliding and gluing movement of emotions with the body-in-music (Dash 2024), I suggest affective infra-structures as a framework and a lens with which to (1) articulate structures of feeling (2) recalibrate the ways in which historical research concerning embodied knowledge relates to the archive (3) recognise and explicate embodied pasts that have escaped historicity or have been discarded to or tokenistically included within the margins of the discipline of history and (4) recognise and engage embodied modes of remembering that demand different articulations and sites of seeking the past.

Affective Infra-structures: Introducing the Hyphen

Infrastructures, according to the Oxford Dictionary, refer to the basic systems or services required for a country, nation, business, or society to run smoothly. They refer to the physical structures such as roads, buildings, bridges, waterworks, drainage systems etc., that facilitate transportation in any given area. They are installations that form the basis for any operations or system to function. For example, the evidence of a well-developed city in India, are well-planned drainage systems that prevent the flooding of low-lying areas during the monsoons. Other physical markers of development or infrastructural growth of a city in India are bridges and flyovers. Similarly, the distribution of schools, presences of universities, amenities existing in residential areas, determine if the infrastructure of a city is well built and complements a good quality of life or not. Infrastructure development is geared towards improving quality of life and convenience and facilitating smooth movement across the cityscape. The infrastructure not only belongs to a city, it is the city as well. One can imagine infrastructural installations to be the skeleton of the city, the physical support upon which life moves, thrives, and is maintained and sustained.

The word infra-structure maintains the general meaning of infrastructure in its socio-economic, development-based definition, briefly stated above. At the same time, I recognise the need to think through the associations of both "infra" and "structure" to create a metonymic and conceptual basis upon which to rest my proposition of affective infra-structures. The word "infra" derives from a Latin word meaning "below" or "further on". I specifically draw on associations with the concept of infrared, a term coined by Sir William Herschel in the 1800s with the discovery of infrared radiation, a frequency of light below the frequency of red light. It is a light that is just below visible range. There are two kinds of infrared light: near infrared

and far infrared. The near infrared may not be visible but most definitely felt in the form of heat. The far infrared is not registered by human senses but can be transmitted across space as in remote controls and night-vision devices. What is of interest here, is that visibility and invisibility are not treated as binary terms but rather as a spectrum. It acknowledges that visibility is a relational category, and it is possible for phenomena to range across this spectrum. Although the reference is always human visibility, locating visibility on the spectrum enables us to decentre the human, which allows us to further elaborate our modes of perception and understanding of embodied structures of knowledge. The word “structure” refers to the arrangement of and relations between the parts or elements of something complex. This definition not only loosely encompasses the meaning of infrastructure, it is loose enough to include any kind of assembling of parts to form a built form. There are also associations of solidity, visibility, tactility, order, and arrangement that I find particularly useful to emphasise.

When put together, yet briefly separated by a hyphen, the word infra-structure, helps maintain the individual connotations and specific conceptual associations of both words while at the same time keeping the overarching and binding meaning of infrastructures alive while expanding the basis of infra-structures of affect. Another tangential yet important association I would like to draw with regard to the word “infra-structures” is associated with the properties of embodied structures, that lie just below or further on from the flesh, just below or further on from visible range, yet instead of being elusive, or invisible, embodied structures have physical presence enough to be arranged and assembled into functional structures. For instance, I believe this phrase is indicative of a particular kind of movement of affect which implies of these embodied structures upon which sensorial material traverses: “...so that, through virtual mimicry of its (the teaching body’s) gestures, a few ideas will enter their heads via the muscles and bones, which though seated and immobile are solicited, pulled toward the beginnings of movement” (MacKendrick 1999).

Therefore, while maintaining the inference of infrastructures as discussed by Raymond Williams, infra-structure, is perhaps better suited to describe the particular kinds of infrastructures that embodied knowledges traverse. These embodied infra-structures are structures of affect upon which emotions and affective intensities travel, gather, and move. Affective infra-structures are constitutive of all kinds of installations of time and space that retain the corporeal flesh: ‘the where’ it comes from, “the what” it installs, “the when” it conjures and “the how” it arrives.

Infra-structures of affect, as theorized within this context necessarily require performance as a modality and sensorial/sensual forms of embodied knowledge to be able to

reveal its structure, upon which and through which different kinds of affects move, accumulate and are installed. In my doctoral work, for example, I have focused on engaging the lament as an affective infra-structure of grief that is explicated through an engagement with musical forms through methods drawn out of music, theatre and performance, and visual art.

Performance, Embodiment, and Affective Infra-structures of Grief

Any process of embodiment involves the whole body, and all the senses. Here, I use performance as a modality with which to engage affective infra-structures. Performance as a modality allows for a lot of room and possibility for the involvement of cross-disciplinary frames for the explication of embodied pasts, and at the same time, this allows for the recognition of performance practice as a historiographical method of remembering and recalling. I argue that affective infra-structures is a useful frame for perceiving, identifying and working with embodied histories that lie in particular formations that emerge out of particular historical accumulations of affect. This can have major implications on the form that historical accounts may take.

In this thesis, I have engaged with performance as a form that the historical matter takes. I argue that these modes of remembering (the practices collated from the fieldwork and the historiographical lenses and methods put together in this thesis) are resonant with modes of remembering that are utilised by nomadic communities, diasporic communities and marginalised communities throughout the world. Further, within the dispersible body framework, infra-structures in general and sonic infra-structures in particular, are not restricted by conventional ideas around community formed on kinship, familial lineage, regional or national identity. These infra-structures are dispersed across all of these identity formations. This does not mean the collapsing of the particular and a naïve adoption of the universal. On the contrary, I ask for us to re-examine what constitutes the particular. Based on my inferences in the last chapters, through the dispersible body framework, when thinking about the constitution of the particular and the universal through an engagement with the dynamism that exists between the two, it is clear to me, that it is possible to pry out other ways of relating to one another and to our pasts. Complicating our understanding of what constitutes connectivity and investigating sensorial and embodied modes of building and recognising affinity leads to our historical, cultural and socio-political perceptions on what formations are permeable and what are not.

By taking into account the complexities of nomadic memory and subaltern pasts and their relationship with the discipline of history, my thesis proposes infra-structures of affect as

one of the possible ways to prod open a network of affinities that holds space for difference to come closer and gather and sit in the resonance through which sonic affective infra-structures are formed where the lament is one such kind of affective infra-structure.

I have defined affective infra-structures as structures built through and of processes of embodiment, which indicates that there can be different kinds of infra-structures that are characterised by different modes of embodiment. Different modes of embodiment include mediums and modalities that have developed around any sensorial form of knowledge (for example, if sight is a sensorial form of knowledge, an example of a mode of embodiment would be visual art—painting, photography, etc.). In the same vein, I have focussed on the musical lament which is an example of affective infra-structures of grief that are built out of sonic materiality.

At the same time, it is important to note at this point that different sensorial forms of knowledge can be examined or accessed through any kind of methods or lenses that are derived out of processes of embodiment. The arguments in this chapter especially are built upon insights emerging from three collaborative musical performance productions: *A Sea-drift of Songs* (2020)⁴⁹ *Gabriel's Odyssey* (2021)⁵⁰ *Pehram Des Visaal + Sharing Notes* (2022).⁵¹ In all instances the performances led to a generation of insights and were born out of a assembling of a structure of feelings emerging from the Afro-Asian musico-historical space. The methods in this thesis are drawn out of practices in theatre and performance, music and visual art and through an engagement with conceptual/theoretical lenses derived from oceanic studies, geography and sound studies. I suggest that recognising the sensorial form of the infra-structure depends on a combination of the materiality of the knowledge that is being received as well as the methods through which the infra-structure is explicated. In other words, it is not necessary for only music to be the way to explicate affective infra-structures that have a sonic materiality. In fact, as my doctoral PaR research has revealed, a variety of methods and lenses derived from and geared towards forms of practice may be combined to enable the emergence of such

⁴⁹ Find the album, performance video (full performance) and concept note for *A Sea Drift of Songs* here: <https://www.insurrectionsensemble.com/a-sea-drift-of-songs> My role: Scenographer, Composer, Performer, Visual art (exhibition). I have spoken about the process of making and thought processes involved in the Sea Drift of Songs in this documentary by Thabo Bopape based on *A Sea-drift of Songs* called *Journey of Wonders* (2021). Find the documentary here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_hJbXyC6f3o

⁵⁰ Find *Gabriel's Odyssey* (full performance) here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VulINbLddhI&t=255s> My role: Scenographer, musician, composer, visual art (stage and art work for performance)

⁵¹ Link to video from Pehram Des Visaal and Sharing Notes: My role: Director, musician, composer, visual art (installation). https://www.instagram.com/p/Cd74IKVAQ7Z/?img_index=1&igsh=bm05aWptbmd1cXJp

affective infra-structure. Therefore, performance, for me, best encompasses the different methods used within a PaR methodology that led to the development of my thesis performance project—*Shape of Grief*—which took a peculiar form, which I discuss in the next and concluding chapter of this thesis.



Stills from *Gabriel's Odyssey*. In frame: (top and bottom) Kathyayini Dash, Bronwen Clacherty, Tesfamichael Yayeh Hussen and Grasella Luigi. From RAA project documentation. Cape Town. 2021.



Figure 19: *Stills from A Sea-drift of Songs*. In frame: (top) Kathyayini Dash (bottom) Bronwen Clacherty, Lungiswa Plaatjies, Cara Stacey, Grasella Luigi, Nkosenathi Koela, Kathyayini Dash. From RAA project documentation. Cape Town. 2020.



Figure 20: (top) *Pehram Des Visaal*. Installation by Kathyayini Dash. (bottom) *Sharing Notes* (performance) by Kathyayini Dachs, Petra Nachtmanova, Çağrı Koç and Erkan Çanakçı. Mardin Biennale V. Mardin, Turkey. 2022.

CHAPTER 5

POST-PERFORMANCE REFLECTIONS: REMAINS AND RECOLLECTIONS



Figure 21: *Mahaul Jamaana*. Watercolour. Artist: Kathyayini Dash. 2022.

“In the absence of his graspable and audible body, only the elusive text remains.”

Augustine’s Bible, Virginia Burrus

My approach to writing reflections on the making of *Shape of Grief* has taken the shape of a personal narrative. The tonal register is intimate, rather than formal or academic. This is not to say that insights from my research are not structural to the performance, rather, the register in which these insights are articulated has been modulated to accommodate my identity as a practitioner. Therefore, the language of reflection, I believe, must reflect my method of working which is largely an act of building intricate connections and assemblages of thought and feeling that resonates with the self-reflexive style of processing these kinds of connections: “As the reader with the text, the body (more literally) resonates with speech, and in speaking and writing, meaning and movement mutually echo—. . . In keeping with this, the voice used in the written language of this chapter is in the speaking voice (MacKendrick: 71).

My intent in this chapter is to reflect on my thesis performance *Shape of Grief* (2023). It was conceived as a molar project that stands as equivalent in value to the written part of the thesis. As a performance project, it draws on my research around affective infra-structures of grief. It sought to create an immersive atmosphere (mahaul jamaana) of intense affect that would bind audience and performers together (teer lagna). My artistic research process has been inductive in nature, and this performance should not be read in that sense as an outcome of research but an aspect of it. In keeping with PaR methodology, the intention was to imagine the performance-event (as well as the doctoral thesis) as an indefinite point rather than a crowning moment of finality. This could enable performance-research economies to grow in diverse directions. Therefore, *Shape of Grief* could be read as a comma, or a semi-colon, rather than a full stop, in my artistic research process.

This chapter will not offer a linear description of the performance/event, nor would the chapter be proposing a reading of the performance. This is because (1) the performance/ event was designed to be viewed and experienced live and the role of the written matter in my thesis is to examine, elaborate, build theoretical and conceptual frameworks and lenses with which to explicate the idea of affective infra-structures and only provide tangential entry points to the artistic process involved in the explication of this idea; (2) the performance/event gained a unique shape that was informed by the process of making right till the day of the performance submission. It is this idea of process that is more significant to the thesis and therefore I will be focussing on discussing the shape the performance/event took and the process of making.

It is important to note that this project under the PaR methodology has faced logistical challenges and restrictions within which this project has been worked out. One of the challenges has been acquiring funding for high quality documentation (equipment and expertise) because of which I have used the resources that were available to me given the financial restrictions which includes documenting all workshop sessions using a steady handycam, and a basic single shot wide-angle camera set up to document the performance/event using department facility. The performance/event could not be sound recorded separately (we were not miked/ recorded live).

Nevertheless, I have edited a film (shared at the end of the chapter) using the documentation footage of the performance day as well as other footage that I managed to collect that some friends have helped film on other days as primary data. I have worked with a film editor to cut the film in a way that carries the ideas that emerged from the performance/event as far as possible, keeping in mind the limits and scope of the video documentation available at hand and medium of film itself. I am submitting this film as a part of the reflections section of the thesis and not as a simple documentation footage of the performance/event. This film does not stand in for the performance, I view it as a document, in part, a sign, and a memory. The performance/event *Shape of Grief* performed on the 29 September 2023 remains the primary data/submission of the creative component and stands as itself. There are aspects of the live performance, especially in the context of musical atmospheres that were sought to be built that the written word cannot capture and that average video documentation can at best be suggestive or indicative of but cannot capture an atmosphere (as explicated in my thesis) and therefore, it is not my intention to compensate for that at this point in my doctoral research. Having said that, I recognise the area of documentation of the remains of the performance and the materialities of performance remains as exciting and productive areas of future research that I am keen to embark upon.

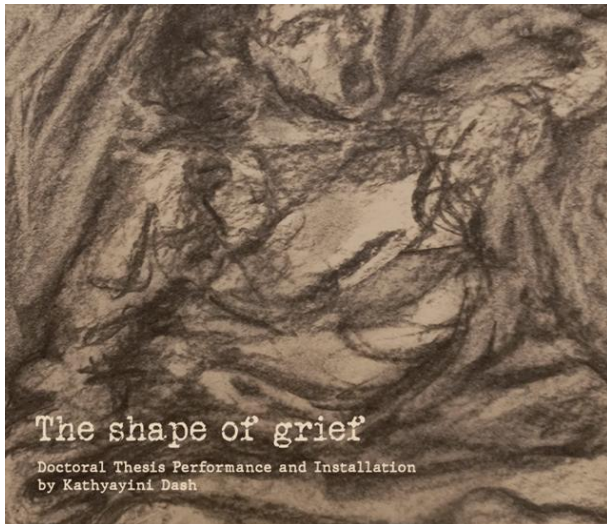


Figure 22: Poster for *Shape of Grief*. Artist: Kathyayini Dash. Design: Manaswini Dash. 2023

Writing about the Performance: Limitations and Scope

Writing about the performance has been one of the most difficult parts of the thesis process. Nevertheless, it is this difficulty and all the dead ends presented by deductive methods while attempting to write about the performance that have led me to a greater assurance and belief in inductive research, in PaR; these have generated a range of insights, confirmations, and connections.

I have been very certain from the beginning of the thesis about the role of the creative component. *Shape of Grief* was putting together a *mahaul* and playing out the structure of feelings constructed across those involved in the making of and the listening to the performance. I remember, at the end of the performance, I was almost brought to the same point that I had been brought to when I had first listened to the Wayee: I had written in my notebook: “We all took a moment to acknowledge the place we all had been transported to. . . . One part of my self was grateful and knew exactly what had happened. Another part of my self was filled with questions.”

But only this time, the questions have taken a while to come. I had to take a long time to process the feelings generated by the performance. It would have felt extremely strange and artificial for me to have gone around with sheets of questions right after the performance. That would have taken away from the after-glow (Craenen, 2021). Prolonging and respecting the after-glow of the performance was the aim of the performance, therefore, I was unwilling to cut that short for the purpose of collecting reflections. I believe a lot was said in and through the performance, a lot was spoken, a lot was unsaid and a lot was received. This is an feeling that I share with many of the audience members present there and with all of my collaborators.

So, I do think the best way of talking about or even reflecting on the performance would be to perform again, but reconstructed in a way to prioritise reflection. I have not prioritised reflection as a post-performance activity in the making and structuring of *Shape of Grief*. The performance, including its making, was a reflection in itself. Processes of reflection have intermingled with processes of making of this work. Therefore, while maintaining my priorities of approaching performance in the form and methodology of its own, I will attempt a recollection of whatever that has remained and speak about the process of making instead. The purpose of this performance was to generate and remain in a structure of feeling and facilitate an immersion in the feeling. Here, I am not offering a reconstruction of the performance, nor am I offering a deductive reflection on the performance. I am also not approaching this section as a plain evidentiary demonstration of the arguments I make in my thesis. I am offering a peek into the process of making which involved an abundance of reflections, that serve as the pause in my PaR based hermeneutic-interpretive spiral (Trimingham 2020), which I can tell as I write this section, is not the easiest spiral to make a temporary exit from but it is surely not too difficult to loop back into.

The following section contains discussions in three parts. First, I begin with brief description of the concept and narrative structure of the performance followed by a section on the processes of making through musical collaboration where I expand on selected insights created by working with each of my four collaborators. The last part contains post-performance reflections containing audience responses to the performance, a discussion around the attempt at producing a sonic recollection of the performance and a note on the lament and sonic wounds that I wrote while reflecting on my thesis, post-performance.

Concept Note and The Broad Narrative Structure of the Performance

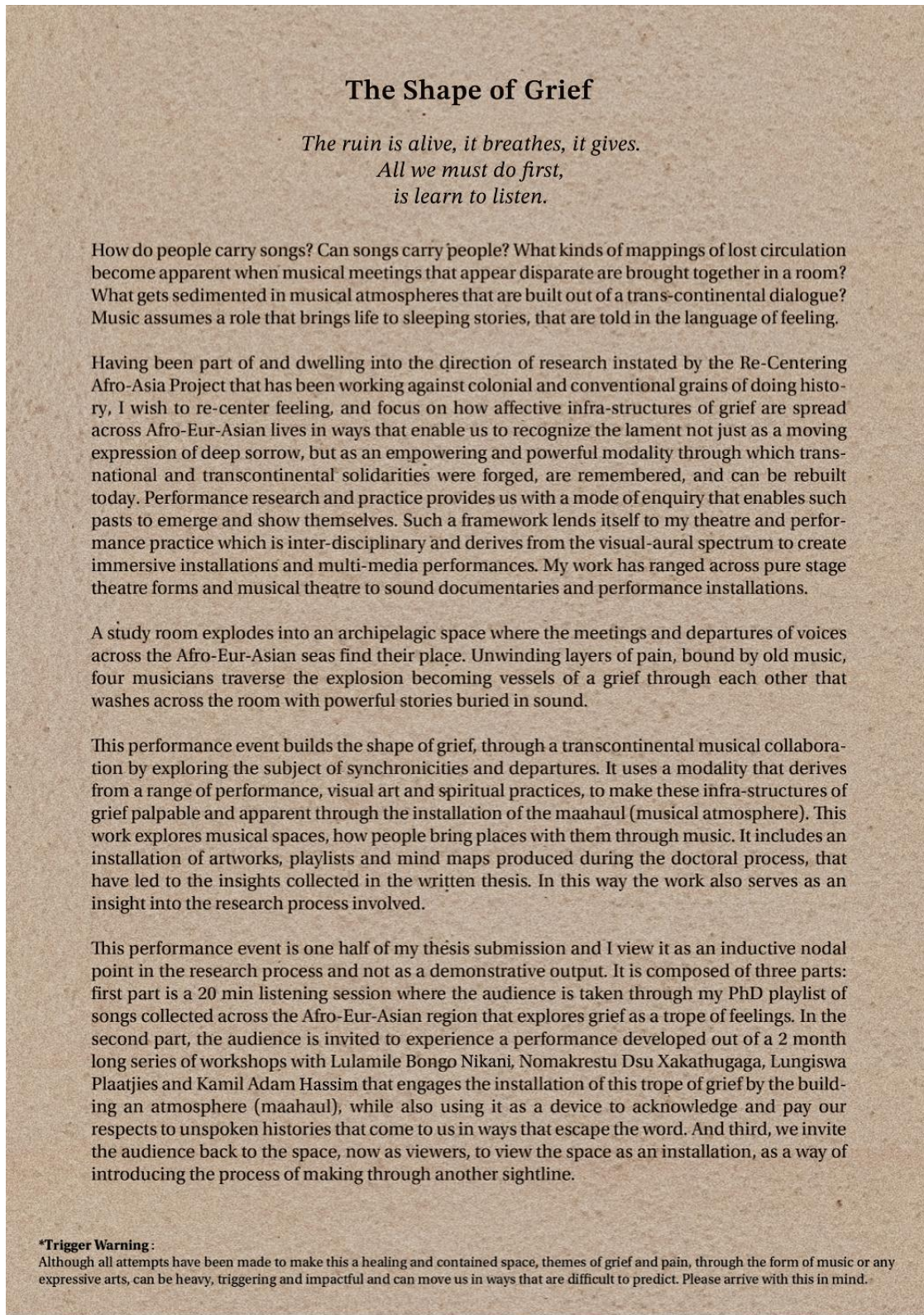


Figure 23: *Shape of Grief*. Scanned print of concept notes of thesis performance. Kathyayini Dash. 2023

Moving through an exploded study room that reveals an archipelagic space, the performance probes the subject of synchronicities and departures through a transcontinental musical collaborative exploration of the *mahaul* (musical atmosphere) and the question—do people carry songs or do songs carry people? The performance was produced out of a series of workshops based on musical and dramaturgical collaborations with four South African artists— Lulamile Bongo Nikani (dramaturge), Nomakrestu Xakathugaga (musician), Lungiswa Plaatjies(musician), and Kamil Adam Hassim (visual artist, musician). All the various visual and literary material produced throughout the doctoral research—my mind maps, books, paintings, drawings, soundscapes, instruments, and tools of my trade found their way into the spatial dramaturgy of the performance. In fact, in some sense it involved performing the research process itself where eventually the research process became the performance.

The site was of a study room (inspired by my own study room at home in South Africa) with drawers that have exploded across the space containing different materials and aspects of the study room—one drawer contained the music of the pearl divers, another, soil with candles, yet another with black soil planted with dried white roses and so on. The narrative of the performance largely involved navigating and performing a gathering together of voices, soundscapes, musical spaces, and evocative materialities that would weave a complex tapestry of feelings. The objective of the workshops leading through to the day of the performance, was to arrive at a space that evokes and installs a shape of grief, and to immerse ourselves and the invited guests in the performance of this shape of grief.

My intention was to re-centre feeling, and focus on how affective infra-structures of grief are spread across Afro-Eur-Asian lives, in ways that enable us to recognize the lament not just as a moving expression of deep sorrow, but as an empowering and powerful modality through which transnational and transcontinental solidarities were forged, are remembered, and can be rebuilt today. The narrative for *The Shape of Grief* emerged during and through the performance. Therefore, the form can be thought of as emergent and inductive. It came together on the day of the performance. It can best be described as a performance/event.

Process of Making *Shape of Grief*: Collaborations and Workshops

Play as you read:

Madosini | Power to Women Album

<https://open.spotify.com/playlist/4qzEjr8tDO3w0D1ZYBzrJ4?si=37757ce6ae484f1f>

With Sisi Nomakrestu

Extract 6: Chapter 5 Excerpt from Shape Of Grief Workshop Day 1 With Nomakrestu Xakathugaga

DOI <https://doi.org/10.25375/uct.28418393>



Figure 24: Stills from Day 1 Workshop Footage for *Shape of Grief*. In frame: Nomakrestu Xakathugaga and Kathyayini Dash. From workshop documentation. 2023.

I met Sisi Nomakrestu for the first time for rehearsals for the Insurrections Ensemble *Transgressions* performance in 2019. Right from that moment I was instantly moved by her voice and musicianship. Nomakrestu Xakathugaga is a musician and song writer who delves in indigenous sound technologies of the voice. She plays a range of instruments and is known for her throat singing that comes from Xhosa sonic traditions. As a part of the very first workshop sessions, she made me question the very ground on which I wanted to begin. Instead of starting at “What does the lament sound like in your repertoire?” I found myself pushed by her to ask “What is a song to you? Do you write your music? How do you remember songs? Where do songs come from?”.

I learnt from Sisi Nomakrestu that there is in fact no single word for sound in IsiXhosa, in the way we conventionally understand sound. Instead, the word for voice and sound is the

same in IsiXhosa. The song in her understanding is not simply composed of words, music and meanings. If singing is telling, the sung word is speech. Sound is voice. A tune is a sentence. She said her process of “writing” a song is that she plays her Malunga bow, and she keeps playing it until the instrument starts speaking. Then, she can hear the words coming from the voice of the Malunga. She listens and she sings. And she will keep singing until the song that emerged, finds a place in her, always available when it needs to be recalled.

My collaborations with Sisi Nomakrestu were incredibly insightful and productively rupture-some. I was able to dismantle my own understandings of what a song is, what sound is and what the voice is. It also gave me much to think about the processes of embodiment that occurs through the voice and the different kinds of relationships between sound, the body and history that exists in oral and aural indigenous knowledge systems. We did a range of exercises that explored the relationship between space and our voices, song learning and mirroring of voices and different ways of embodying the notes and rhythms both of brought to the table. I learnt a song called “Didizela uyai fanalenun thenthayo, Wemfon thinichinuiyayi fanalenunthenthayo, Eyi! Kuthimandiambe!” which translates to “Can’t you see what’s happening here? Come let’s go!

With Sisi Lungiswa

Extract 7:

Chapter 5 Excerpt from Shape Of Grief Workshop Day 5 With Lungiswa Plaatjies

DOI <https://doi.org/10.25375/uct.28418453>



Figure 25: *Stills from Day 5 Workshop Footage for Shape of Grief.* In frame: Lungiswa Plaatjies and Kathyayini Dash. From workshop documentation. 2023.

Lungiswa Plaatjies is an award winning and revered musician with her repertoire within indigenous musical systems. She has the most remarkable vocal range and has developed her very own relationship with her voice and has created signature vocalisation techniques that touch a diverse set of regions in the head and the throat. This would be impossible to do without cultivating breathing patterns and the breath itself to move from and into various parts of the body. Sisi Lulu, as we call her, also taught me many songs. And through the learning of these songs she opened up regions of my throat and head that I had never used for singing. It wasn't just a question of technique. Through mirroring exercises and speaking to each other musically through our workshopping sessions, she was able to use the sound of the words to carve out different untouched regions of my throat, nose and head.



Figure 26: *Journaling the Voice*. Drawing. Artist: Kathyayini Dash. 2023.

With Kamil

Extract 8: Chapter 5 Excerpt from Shape Of Grief Workshop Day 6 With Kamil Adam Hassim

DOI <https://doi.org/10.25375/uct.28418474>



Figure 27: *Stills from Day 6 Workshop Footage for Shape of Grief*. In frame: Kamil Adam Hassim and Kathyayini Dash. From workshop documentation. 2023.

Kamil Adam Hassim is a prolific visual artist, musician, and instrument-maker with an incredible capacity to listen keenly and an intense curiosity to work with sonic materiality. His instruments were what caught my attention first. Through our jamming sessions and conversations I discovered his process of making these instruments and his process of learning how to play them that I found fascinating. He calls his process of instrument making a pilgrimage. When I asked how does he dream of these instruments, where does it start? He said that he hears the sound of the instrument first which leads him through the process of making them. He creates instruments that are reminiscent of many instruments amalgamated into one. Two such instruments immediately reminded me of (1) something in between the Kachchhi/Sindhi Tamburo, the Tanpura and the Sarod

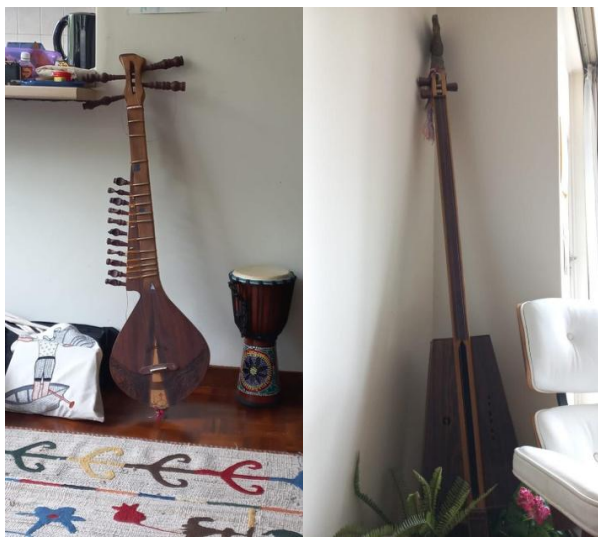


Figure 28: Musical Instruments created by Kamil Adam Hassim. (left) Sutras and (right) Garuda. Photographs taken by Kathyayini Dash. 2023.

The Door was the instrument that fascinated me the most. It is an instrument that produces an ambient drone, but can be tuned to any kind of scale, mood or frequency. It has a very subtle yet powerfully filling presence. I speak about it in the listening session in my performance. We tuned this instrument to the scale of Raag Jog. Jog is a Hindustani word for ecstasy, madness. We played around within this scale and then after a few sessions we dismantled our repertoires to construct what we called “the Heart of Jog”.

Kamil used his electronic guitar and sound tools to create the larger ambiances and created many responsive elements in the performance. By this, I mean he played a big role in building the sonic materiality of the space by providing a strong base upon which the vocalisations could weave into and build through.



Figure 29: Polyphonic space maker. Musical instrument created by Kamil Adam Hassim. Photograph by Kathyayini Dash. 2023.

With Buti Bongo

Extract 9: Chapter 5 Excerpt from Shape Of Grief Workshop Day 7 With Lulamile Bongo Nikani

DOI <https://doi.org/10.25375/uct.28418513>



Figure 30: *Dramaturgical Exercises in Listening to the Story (top left clockwise) Stills from Day 4 (listening to the ropes), Day 13 (arranging space and materials), Day 7 (the ball exercise expanding the narrative) and Day 3 (listening to the cupboard) Workshop Footage for Shape of Grief.* In frame: Lulamile Bongo Nikani and Kathyayini Dash. From workshop documentation. 2023.

Lulamile Bongo Nikani was a theatre-maker, performer and healer. Buti Bongo and I worked together on the spatial dramaturgy of the performance. Buti Bongo also led me through a series of exercises that prompted many important directions that the work moved in and that informed the materiality of *Shape of Grief*. Every single object, material, song, and movement was not only brought into the space through a series of reflective exercises but also was established in the space through time and performance-based engagement. The materials that we came up with together consisted of: cupboard, soil/sand, drawers, candles, hessian rope, study table and chair and research materials from my doctoral process in particular and from my art practice in general that were concerned about the body and processes of embodying the world and permeable environments. The materials and workshop exercises and the spatial design were led by a series of conversations, dreams, images and metaphors from our own practices and associations we made with the object emerging from our own lives and practices in the context of the thematic of grief.

Buti Bongo reconnected the process and form of the *Shape of Grief* to my personal story.

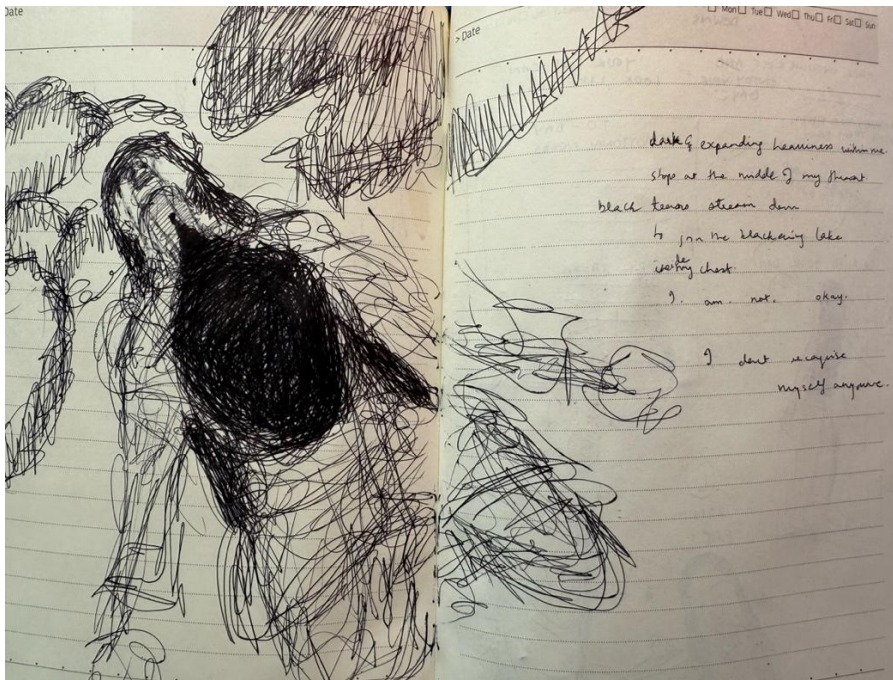


Figure 31: *Drawing from my personal journal.* Photograph by Kathyayini Dash. 2021.

We began from there and then worked our way to the broader theme that emerged within grief. It was important to engage the materiality of grief within me in order to pry out the connections to the materialities I had collected so far in my research process.

Through voice, movement and material based exercises and a studying of sound in time and space by processes of listening and moving, we were introduced to the temporality and spatiality of grief that would guide us to the very end of the process.

Buti Bongo led me through a series of exercises that were in response to our conversations and reflections and came up with a series of prompts that would be abstract enough to move forward in chiselling out the particularity. This was part of a methodology of performance-making that he was developing that he would refer to as “listening to the story”. So instead of beginning with a story with a narrative and characters and materials, his prompts and exercises led to the emergence of materials, gave insight into their affective qualities and the story emerged from here. In one such exercise, he asked me to imagine that I am holding a ball and we played a track that Sisi Lulu and I had worked on the previous week. I was to move and interact with this ball. Through the course of this exercise, this ball became so many things! It was grief, it was responsibility, it was my research project, it was even unknown and invisible

stories trying to find voice. It was my moving body and my immersing into the song and affective material of the ball and the sound playing in the room that moved me to reflect and think with movement, with the body, with the spirit.

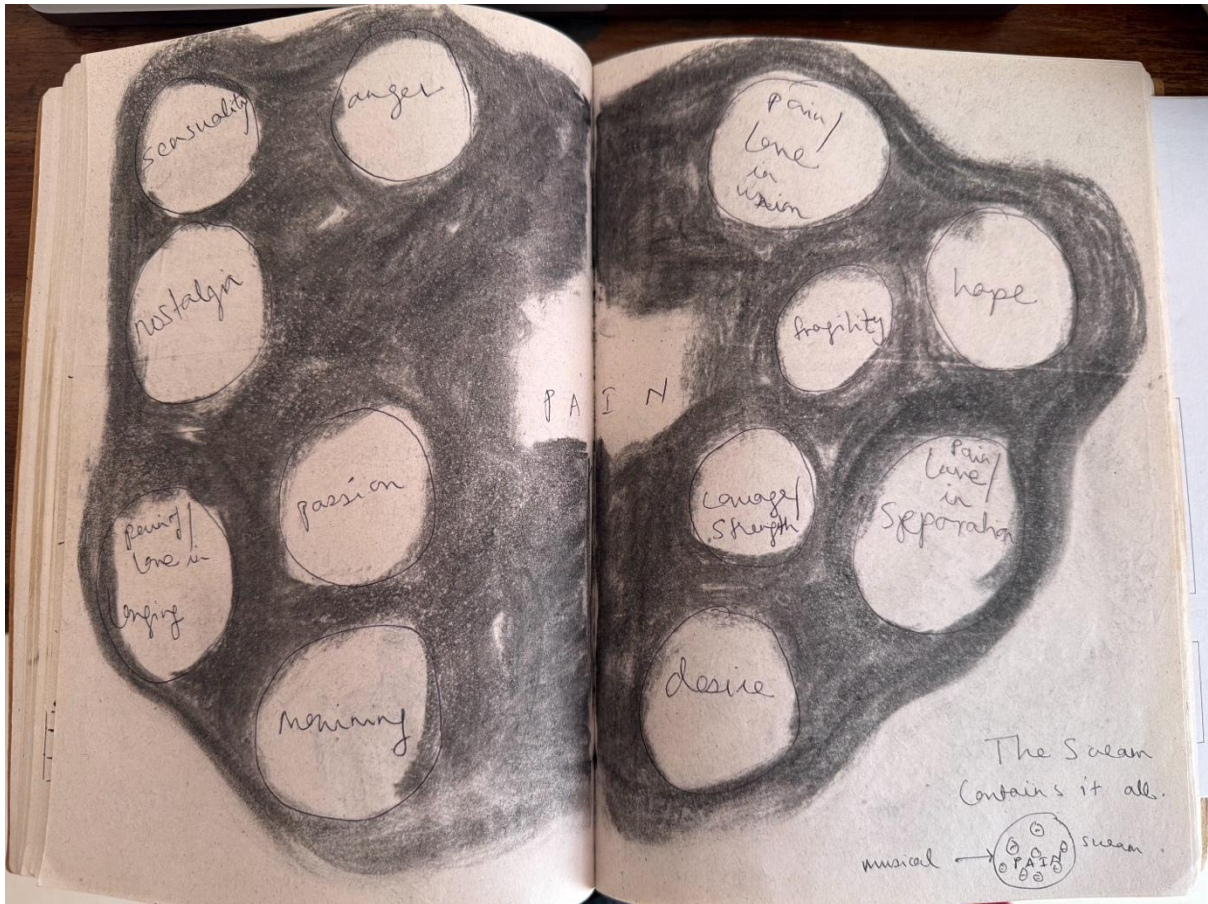


Figure 32: Notes from Journal. Diagrammatic drawing of the shape of pain. Artist: Kathyayini Dash. 2023

These exercises proved to be more like generative experiments conducted through our dramaturgical collaboration guided by the musical pieces and objects chosen and brought into the space. In many ways, all workshop days were emergent, and was geared towards priming the space through an embodiment of the site, objects and sonic materialities. It was about making the space and ourselves more conducive to receiving the story.

Extract 10: Chapter 5 Excerpt from SOG Workshop Day 13 With Lulamile Bongo Nikani
DOI <https://doi.org/10.25375/uct.28418681>



Figure 33: *Image of the site from Day 25 of the Workshop for **Shape of Grief**. In frame: Kamil Adam Hassim, Kathyayini Dash and Nomakrestu Xakathugaga. From workshop documentation. 2023.*

Buti Bongo's performance-making practice was tied intricately to his spiritual healing practices. He held the space in invisible ways that are hard to articulate but that was visible to everyone present in the performance as well as those involved in the making process. I learnt a lot from his prompts and unspoken actions that would always push the making process in unpredictable directions. He brought in his Nguni drum that reigned in all scattering meandering energies and musical pieces when it was required. His method of "listening to the story" is a profound and new method in performance-making that is rooted in indigenous Nguni knowledge and healing practices. He used this discernment to give me significant notes on temporality and effectiveness when I was immersed too deeply in the performance when I assumed the role of performer-director his co-direction helped balance my perception and experiences. This, itself, opened up the process to many areas that led the work in many large directions, which lie beyond the scope of this thesis.

I have kept insights and discussions on the spiritual processes that have emerged from our collaboration, out of this thesis document as a conscious choice. I believe it deserves a very different context of discussion and reflection that I cannot do full justice to at the given moment. I also believe it requires a different kind of timeline, context, process and orientation to reflect upon which I do not currently have access to. Therefore, to honour the wisdom offered

by Buti Bongo, I will be treating this as a separate tangent thrown open by this work that I will be addressing in depth through my future work.



Figure 34: *Still from Shape of Grief Closing Scene. Shape of Grief. From documentation of thesis performance. Kathyayini Dash. 2023.*

Extract 11: Chapter 5 Shape of Grief Workshop Footage of Study Table Sequence

DOI <https://doi.org/10.25375/uct.28418717>

With Myself

Extract 12: Chapter 5 Excerpt from Shape Of Grief Workshop Day 8 Part 1 With Kathyayini

Dash

DOI <https://doi.org/10.25375/uct.28418633>

Extract 13: Chapter 5 Excerpt from Shape Of Grief Workshop Day 8 Part 2 With Kathyayini

Dash

DOI <https://doi.org/10.25375/uct.28418663>

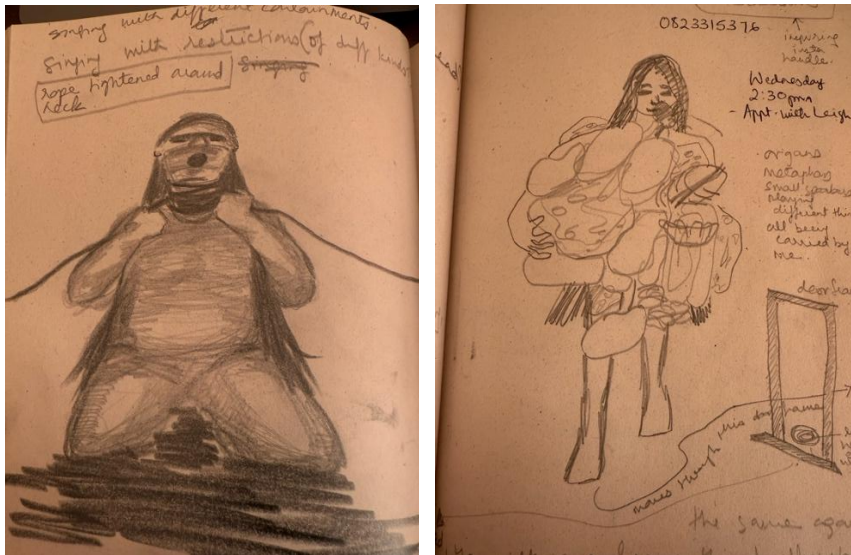


Figure 35: Notes from sketchbook. (left) Idea for a dramaturgical exercise. (right) Idea for a performance action and costume. Kathyayini Dash. 2023.

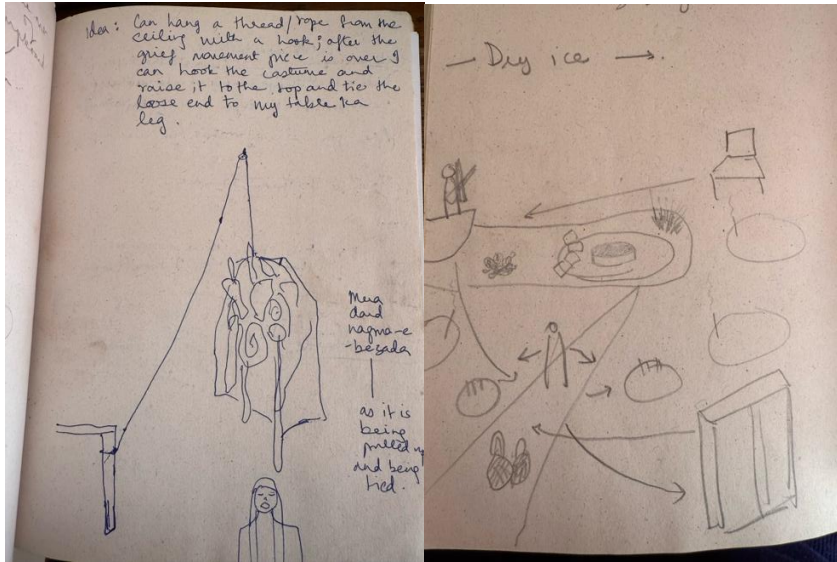


Figure 36: Notes from sketchbook. (left) Idea for a performance action. (right) Movement mapping for *Shape of Grief*. Kathyayini Dash. 2023.



Figure 37: Notes from sketchbook. (left) Notes on study room as exhibition vs. performance space.(right) Notes on process of collaboration in *Shape of Grief*. Kathyayini Dash. 2023.

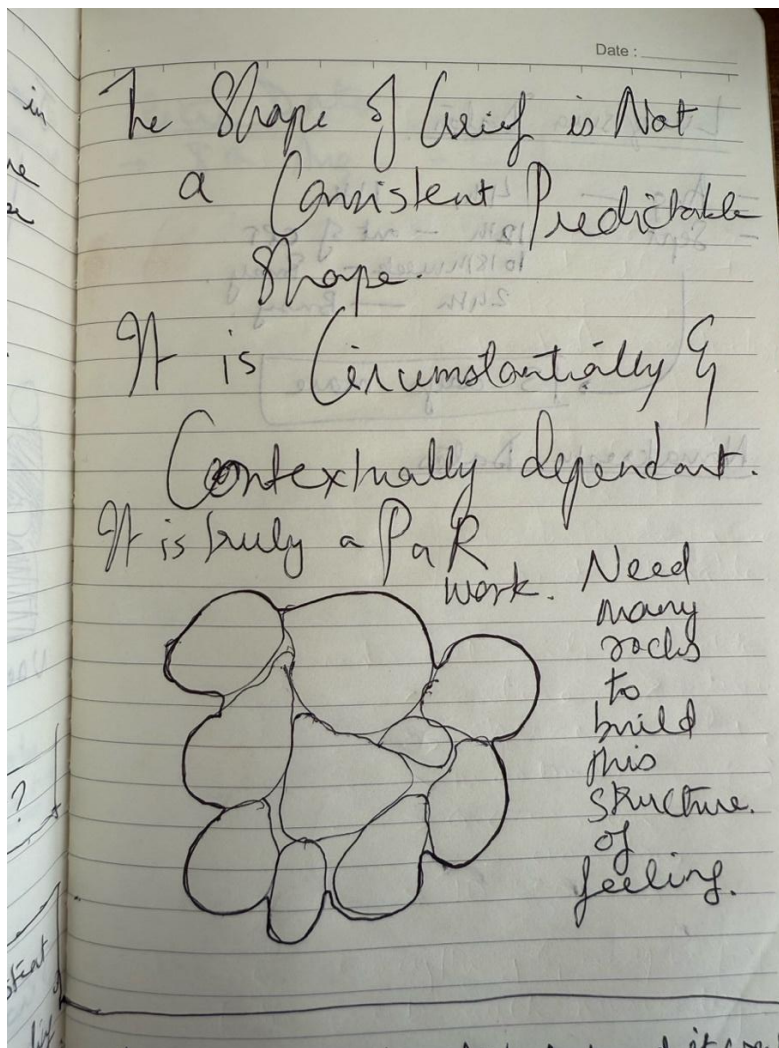


Figure 38: Notes from sketchbook. Kathyayini Dash. 2023.

One exercise I did with my collaborators was to exchange gifts. The prompt was to choose to gift something that represents ourselves and the spaces we bring along. This became a part of our attires and the performance organically, where I wear these gifts, naming where they came from, who gifted them, as I embark out of the wardrobe to navigate the archipelago—large, vast, intimidating but where meetings allow for resonances to flower amongst discord, contrast, novelty and difference. Meetings then became a big part of the performance. They became the place of both conflict and resolution, ensuing a complex ritualistic reflection. The archipelago of drawers became a space for reminiscence, declaration, confession, anger, longing, desire, love held and woven together by a tender tapestry of rituals that gestured towards the holding of space for grief to occupy space.

Extract 14: Chapter 5 Shape of Grief Workshop Footage of Drawer Sequence

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.25375/uct.28418723>

All dialogues were musical, and the audience not only witnessed the musician's language but partook in it and understood it. In this way musical collaboration became language, form, and method that is precisely what characterises the concept of affective infrastructures.

For example, in one workshop session, Purav was sweeping the scattered sand on the floor while we were jamming. Purav instinctively started sweeping and using the broom rhythmically while Sisi Lungiswa, Kamil and I were jamming, which led to this piece. The sound of the broom became an affective part of the musical piece that emerged through the jamming session. It also seemed to lead our musical jamming into a particular space that provoked a particular musical response from us. This recording later used as a background to one of the sequences in *Shape of Grief* (2023).

Extract 15: Chapter 5 The Broom Yearning Sound Recording

DOI <https://doi.org/10.25375/uct.28418756>

Along with the object and sound, I was also aware of what affective materialities I was bringing into the space as well. My collaborations had helped prime and open out my body and cultivate the sensitivity to be able to discern, note, and point at affective materialities especially in terms of the sonic.

For example, the sculptures that I made for the performance of *Gabriel's Odyssey* (2022) included sculptures I made for the exhibition component of *A Sea-drift of Songs* (2021) and a combination of these sculptures were brought into the space for *Shape of Grief* so resonances from those performances and their contexts and memories were also carried into the space and this was a conscious choice that was made.



Figure 39. Images of Sculptures made for *Sea Drift of Songs* Exhibition (top left) *Gabriel's Odyssey* (top right) and *Shape of Grief* (bottom). Materials used: ash, wheat flour dough, spices. Artist: Kathyayini Dash. 2020, 2021, 2023.

Extract 16: Chapter 5 Shape of Grief Workshop Footage of Gravesite Sequence

DOI <https://doi.org/10.25375/uct.28418690>

Similarly, my paintings for the work I had done for the Mardin Biennale were brought in. They were displayed in a resting place for travellers in Mardin where there was a lot of wind and Mesopotamian sands flying in. They were displayed in Mardin for 2 months. When they were shipped back, I opened the scrolls in the space and the sands coating the painting fell into

the space along with a strong stench that escaped from them. The boat and the paintings in the performance were also a citation at Mardin Biennale performance called *Sharing Notes* (2022).

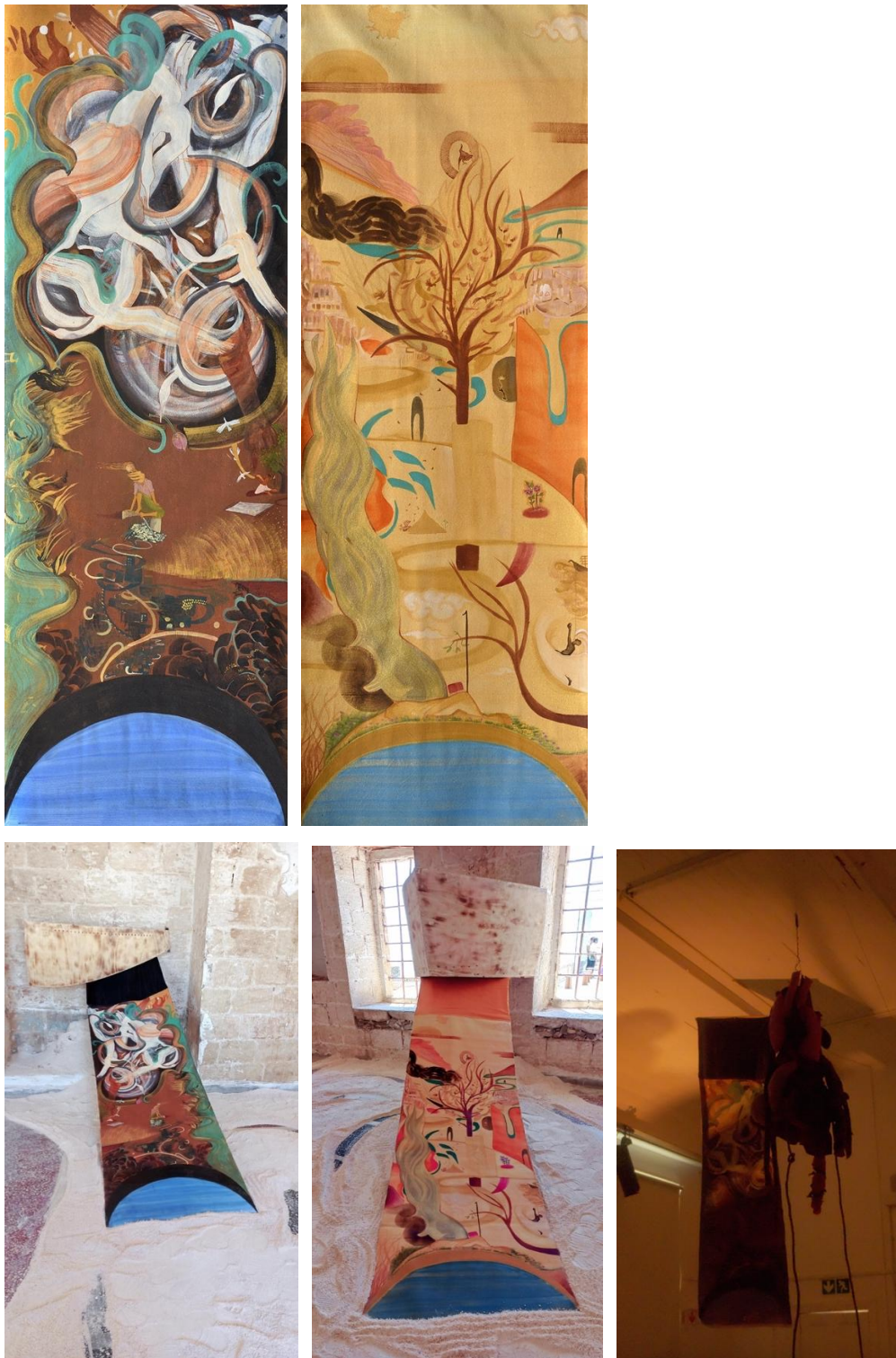


Figure 40: Images of Paintings made for *Pehram Des Visaal Roving the Lands of Union* (top left and right) Installation of *Pehram Des Wisaal* (bottom left, center) Painting as part of *Shape of Grief* site (bottom right) Artist: Kathyayini Dash. 2022, 2023.

So, at one level all objects that built the space of *The Shape of Grief* were citational to all the performances, artworks and thoughts and materials that have led to the performance today. But the act of citing performative materials also invites the affective resonances of those objects into the space that also composed the space of *Shape of Grief* in important ways. Not only object, even the sonic citations of people's presences and contributions to the shaping of this understanding of grief were brought in and played into the space like Zahra Malkani's *Mehrn Mitr* (was played in the listening session), Cagri Koc's *Gulfirosh* (part of the last gravesite sequence).

Extract 17 Chapter 5 Gulfirosh

DOI <https://doi.org/10.25375/uct.28419005>

Sonic citations were not limited to those coming from people I have literally collaborated with in my journey. Different songs from my PhD playlist were also played into the space every single day, like sonic materialities that were thrown into the space.

In some sense, these sonic and object citations were sculpting the space with resonances and connotations and filling it with stories that added to the building of the atmosphere. So in some sense the atmosphere that emerged on the day of the performance was being built from the time we stepped into the intention of making this performance. There was a complex interaction of all different materialities of my research material that I worked on assembling together. Intermittent and performance-based processes of reflection not only led the creation of the work, it also was what gave *Shape of Grief* its form. Along with that, staying with the music that is emerging from the space of collaboration and not rushing to mould and shape it was one of the important creative decisions that helped dwell in the musical spaces that were emerging in the work.

Interruption as Method

This particular idea/method proved to be another very important creative decision that determined the form of the performance/event. I was introduced to this idea in a lecture attended by Paul Craenen (2021) titled *Flow, Interruption and Reflection in Musical Artistic Research: Temporality in Musical Artistic Research* which was delivered from the vantage of the practitioner-as-researcher, addressing the very real problems of reflection after the practice and offered different modes and spaces of reportage as a solution to those issues.

INTERNATIONAL CENTER FOR KNOWLEDGE IN THE ARTS
PAUL CRAENEN
FLOW, INTERRUPTION AND REFLECTION IN MUSICAL ARTISTIC RESEARCH
Temporality in Musical Artistic Research

- Practice= immersion
 - Research= reflection
 - What does it mean to be inside/outside musical time
 - The Performing eye and the reflecting eye become 2 different personalities for some musician artistic researchers
 - Thinking in time of performance is different from reflective analytic research work
 - Reflection before performance is when getting into a state of belief is needed, it is not an agnostic state of mind and Reflection after performance is when critical reflection is now possible.
- Proposing listening to what comes up- not externalizing something but to participate in the emergence of research through performance.
 - Could we think of observation to learn about performance? Not with the intention of delivering a convincing aesthetic product?
 - Disengagement from control- allowing body to take over.
 - Compared to material taking over, the body takes over but where agency exists where the body takes over.
 - Before body takes over- it requires a disengagement from control by resisting fundamental urges or reflexes
 - Finding the edge between memorized movement and spontaneous movement.
 - Ability to continually reposition yourself in performance.
 - Introspection is unreliable when there is a distance between being in and out of performance time.
 - Artistic Research as Interruptive practice: The interruption lies between making experience and thinking research- this interruption is productive.
- Interruptive habits in artistic research (an iteration of negative interruptions)- resistance to habits/responses that one is used to in order to enable ruptures can be productive.
 - Time scales and durations in artistic research
 - Time of the afterglow is important. Interruption is also about creation. Interruption opens linearity of the musical performance to make space for different durations and things.
 - What is the difference between your notion of reporting (in interruptive practice) and journaling after a performance experiment?
 - Becoming aware of the interruption opens up potential of research.

(Here I asked him the question about journaling after a performance)

- Reporting- abstract language is included- listen to how musicians talk- that is also valid.
- Thinking of interruptions as an event introduced from the outside that invites the outside inside.
- Interruptions in reality can be used in artistic practice.
- Architectural interruptions
- Sonic interruptions
- Breaks after interruptions
- To describe immersion one may need to employ interruptions as a method to illuminate and describe immersive environments.

(Paul Craenen's answer informed my PaR method in important ways)

Figure 41: Notes from Webinar by Paul Craenen. Cell phone. Kathyayini Dash. 2021.

The knowing in practice often emerges during and soon after being-in-practice. I have derived from his suggestions in two ways. One, I interrupted my workshopping sessions in certain intervals to reflect on what had occurred during the practice. This helped generate a lot of material that kept informing our next steps. Second, I used the interruption as something that is woven into the language of the performance. By assuming a directorial position, of snapping ‘in’ and ‘out’ of performance, during the performance helped mark moments of immersion more effectively. This helped introduce a porosity to the form of the performance where the affective qualities of the performance and the site of performance could emerge and take its place emphatically.

Ironically what interruptions gave our performance was not only that the audience was able to witness the rise of the atmosphere and immerse within it, the interruptions allowed for the audience to witness the fall of the atmosphere as well, which is often precisely when one is made aware of what they were immersed in. Interruptions underline the fleeting quality of the infra-structure as it is being built.

Form of the First Iteration of *Shape of Grief*

What played out was far beyond what we had practiced or tried to put together. Feelings led to materialities. What happened on the day of the performance was far more than the sum of its parts. The collaborative processes were more than a process toward an end. The process was the performance. The reflection was the performance. This is what characterises an inductive orientation toward performance making processes. In inductive research, performance-making generates knowledge and the mode of knowing is tied intimately to the knowledge itself.

Performance/Event: The Three Part Structure and Form

Listening Session

The first 20 minutes of the performance/event was designated as a listening session where the audience was taken through my PhD playlist—a playlist created throughout my research process composed of songs that I was drawn to and that spoke to me of the feeling of grief. The playlist is composed of songs from around the world. I also used this portion of the performance/event to introduce the audience to the context of the performance. The format of this session was a performance lecture where the mediums of performance and delivering a lecture are combined seamlessly. The listening session flowed seamlessly into the performance.

Performance

The performance/event took a very interesting shape. The performance language was not at all rehearsed as a conventional performance ought to be. The performance had a lot of breathing space for things that were not planned or intended to come through. There were moments where I was directing on stage, there were parts of the performance that were not rehearsed in any of the run throughs that came up as we performed. But on the day of the performance there was something else that came through that bound the performance in such a way that it did not spill out or stretch unnecessarily. It took its time and space. All of us performers were immersed in and guided by the feelings emerging alongside the sonic movements of the performance. What we did do, planning wise, was follow a structure of movement and list of sequences across the various sites in the performance space. We had met many times in the space already for two months. The space was filled with our sonic exchanges. We also were clear that apart from the conceptual context, this work is about performing the complexities involved in meetings. So musical collaboration for us not only became the method of creation but also became part of the narrative of the performance. The form of the performance was deliberately loosely woven, providing enough space for the atmosphere to become an equal participant in the creation of the work. The performance pushed the audience and the performers into focussing on listening *into* the story and tuning *into* the infra-structure of grief being built along with their presences.

This was the tentative sequence a day before the performance that we broadly followed, while allowing for the performance to grow and expand while performing it on the 29th.

1. Listening session at the table. 20 mins.
2. The organ sequence describing grief pain
3. Hoisting the organ costume *mera dard nagma e besada* recording played on my phone, held up.
4. Option of spoken text here after breath sequence.
5. Lighting the shrine
6. Boat *paare loye jao*
7. Lighting second shrine
8. Cupboard sequence (entering from behind if possible?) *Tiri pawanda*
9. Get out. At the drawer position with the *shruthi petti* box. Echoes soundscape of sounds from turkey, *kachch, sindh, south africa, romania*. Joined in by *kamil, nomakrestu* and *lungiswa* but majorly *nomakrestu*.
10. *Nomakrestu* and I rhythmic piece leading to duet. And meeting 1.
11. *Lungiswa* adds in. My attention goes to her. *Nomakrestu* and I go to *lungiswas* station and have a three people song. Meeting 2.
12. *Nomakrestu* and I move to study table. I want to show her something. I take out the drawer from turkey. It has a *graden* with a dead flower. I play *cagri's gulfirosh* and we all listen.
13. I go into contemplation and focus on the empty box (that had my instrument) the empty box sequence leading to the soil and book movement. Soundscape 2, of echoes. Finish consecration of the space, take filled up books, place it at the table. *Kamil's instrument* plays as i walk back to my desk, *escalating the climax*.
14. *Kamil* sits on a stool waiting for me. I come and we perform the jog duet and the *sadho re yeh murdo ka gaon* song.
15. *Towaed* the end *lungiswa* walk forth, we all join her. Need a rhythmic piece perhaps *lungiswa* can provide a sequence.
16. We gather around the dry ice container we have a rhythmic feet sequence as we activate the dry ice.
17. We move towards the consecrated site. Stools are placed around it.
18. We sing 3 songs. Around the site.
19. A recording of the wind of all known winds plays, we move to the boat.
- 20 we stand around the boat, playing along with the recording.

Figure 42: Notes for Tentative Movement Sequence for *Shape of Grief*. Kathyayini Dash. 2023

The following sequence titles are how I divided the parts of the performance while making the film edit and after writing my thesis. This is the sequence/parts you will see in the film. These titles did not exist at the time of making or the performing of *Shape of Grief*. But this is the narrative I have arrived at now, at this moment in time.

Sequence Titles:

- **At the Shores, Before the Sea**
Take me across, O! Compassionate One! I Am Here, Standing on This Side!
- **At the Shores, Before the Sea**
Offerings and Acknowledgments
- **Containers**
From the Scream to the Call

- **I Have Travelled on Long Roads! All to Meet You!**
Announcing Departure! Callings!
- **The Meetings! Swallowing Notes! Swallowing Rhythm!**
Sisi Nomakrestu
- **The Meetings! Swallowing Notes! Swallowing Rhythm!**
Sisi Lungiswa
- **The Meetings! Swallowing Notes! Swallowing Rhythm!**
Kamil
- **How Deep Are Our Drawers?**
Music of the Pearl Divers
- **What Is That Mixed into the Soil?**
The Lament as Gravesite
- **How Deep Are Our Study Tables?**
Returning Home; Where To? Where From?
- **Tribute to the River**
1:57
- **Come! Come Now! Come Now! Let's Go!**
A Call to Gather! Make the Offering!
- **Speaking to Absence, Listening to Eloquent Graves**
Musical Conversation as Consecration, as Appeasement
- **Honoring the Gathering, Offer Them Song, Light, and Smell!**
Lighting the Candles, Burning the Incense, Playing the Rhythm of Recollection!

- **Open Endings and Silver Linings**

At the Lines of Celebration and Grief

The following are the list of songs and musical pieces (live + recorded presences) in sequence.

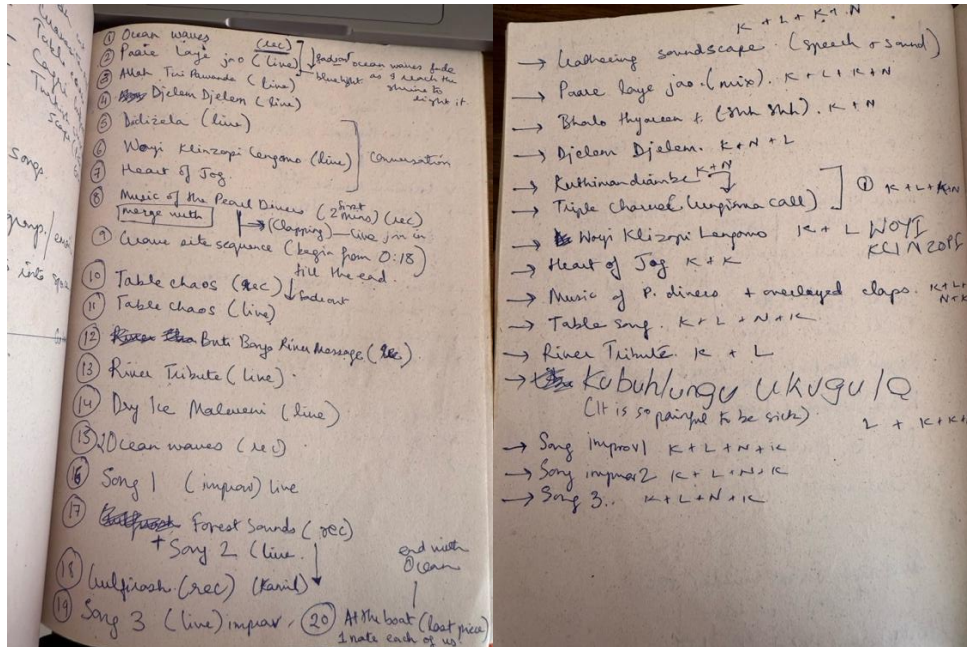


Figure 43: Image from Sketchbook. Finalised sequence of *Shape of Grief*. Kathyayini Dash and Lulamile Bongo Nikani. 2023.

Here are two of the recorded pieces from the workshop that was used over live music in the performance.

Extract 19 Chapter 5 Table Chaos

DOI <https://doi.org/10.25375/uct.28420355>

Extract 20 Chapter 5 Dry Ice Molweni

DOI <https://doi.org/10.25375/uct.28419770>

Shape Of Grief

Extract 21: Chapter 5 Shape of Grief Film

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.25375/uct.28416560>

Exhibition

While the emphasis of the performance was on the infra-structure of affect, the generation of the atmosphere and immersion into it, the exhibition emphasised the research process that now post-performance also included an evocative atmosphere that had just been experienced by the audience. When the audience walked back into the space that had been “activated” minutes ago by the performance, it generated a different feeling compared to walking into an exhibition space. Here the materials in the space were experienced not only by exercising thought but also by exercising the heart that had just been taken through a journey. The exhibition included artworks I produced during the doctoral process and aural/visual citations, that have led to the insights collected in the written thesis. I was also honoured to have Kamil’s instruments occupying a big presence in the space. Therefore the exhibition highlighted the study room whereas the performance highlighted the consequences of its explosion. So in some way, it represented a nice return to the study room after an engagement with and acceptance of its explosion that speaks closely to the form of a PaR project.

All three components put together formed the performance/event titled *Shape of Grief*.

Post-Performance Thoughts and Insights

Play as your read:

Nomatshawe | Madosini | Power To Women

<https://open.spotify.com/track/6DhMRY0AcOr2m32OHxTFi7?si=b730846784244133>

Audience Responses

- Candles in the gravesite- candles were speaking to each other- different candles had different characteristics and they interacted with each other differently
- We could relate to our own grief. It felt like an intimate space where we felt safe to put our grief down and have it reflected by experiencing the performance.
- The space was speaking.
- Music was holding space.
- The leaking of the candles onto the gravesite was almost macabre, there was a certain grotesqueness to the memorialisation.
- The mounds—is it the memorialisation of the invisibilised? It related back to the histories of South African people.

- The space—you must let it speak even more.
- It allowed me to sit with my own grief, become vulnerable without having to literally speak or express in any way. The space/environment held me.
- The presence of sound—the disappearance or dissolution of it in space and then the interruptive re-awareness of it—especially about the instrument (Kamil’s door)
- The organ costume—was absurd looking, only realised they were organs when you began ripping them apart otherwise they looked like you had gathered many things.
- It was interesting to see the Nguni voice emerge from you, who is Nguni and who is Indian was blurred. Also, your bottom half of your body especially your feet appeared Nguni and the upper half was Indian especially your hands.
- At one point we didn’t know where which voice was coming from.

The orientation of my thesis has been centered on the embodiment of grief in and through performance. For this iteration of the performance, I have leaned more into focusing on the singing or performing body and the cultivation of the atmosphere as my specific domain of study while also recognizing moments of mirroring and connection with the audience by their presence, their responses during and after the performance, their sharp and constant presence and energy that can be pulled into this site of performance, that contributes to the building of a *mahaul*. Yet, I have stepped back from simply attributing the evidence of the *mahaul* to the response of the audience during *The Shape of Grief*, nor have I attempted to map audience reception theory onto the conceptual plane of the *mahaul*. That would require detailed theorization that would lie beyond the scope of this thesis. Nevertheless to gesture at this rich domain, I have listed responses without ‘reading’ their ‘reading’ so to say.

These were verbal feedback that I received after the performance that I noted down in my diary as soon as I got back home. I was reluctant to collect written feedback and reflection from audiences for two reasons. One, because of the gravity of the atmosphere that was created by the performance people were rendered silent, and had withdrawn into an internal reflective space which was something I did not want to disrupt. I could recognize the palpable impact that the performance had had on the audience, and I did not want to interrupt the working of the atmosphere on the bodies of the audience by pulling them back into a cerebral reflective space. I believe, it would require a different format and intention of performance for the process of audience response documentation to be handled elaborately. Two, I wanted to move away from the methodological assumption that reflection can only be recorded when vocalised or

written out. I wanted to shift the impulse beyond capture, to an impulse driven by presence. There is still scope beyond and post this thesis, to develop other methods of reflection, post or during performance, that needs to be investigated with new rigour and imagination.

What I can say for now, is that people were very moved with the performance. There was a very potent silence that occupied the room after the performance as people walked across the room experiencing the after-glow of the performance while also looking at the objects that were brought together in the performance space. In this context, having the exhibition opened out for the audience to score through the materials that occupied the space worked well as it held the affective atmosphere and its impact in place while slowly helping transition to a cerebrally and critically reflective space through a movement across the performative space.

However, something I would do differently when we perform *The Shape Of Grief* again is have a space/time designated where people can be encouraged to note their reflections down after the performance or have a recorded reflection session following the performance. Some form of documenting reflections and recording my own reflection on the reception of the performance will definitely be an aspect I would bring more emphasis to.

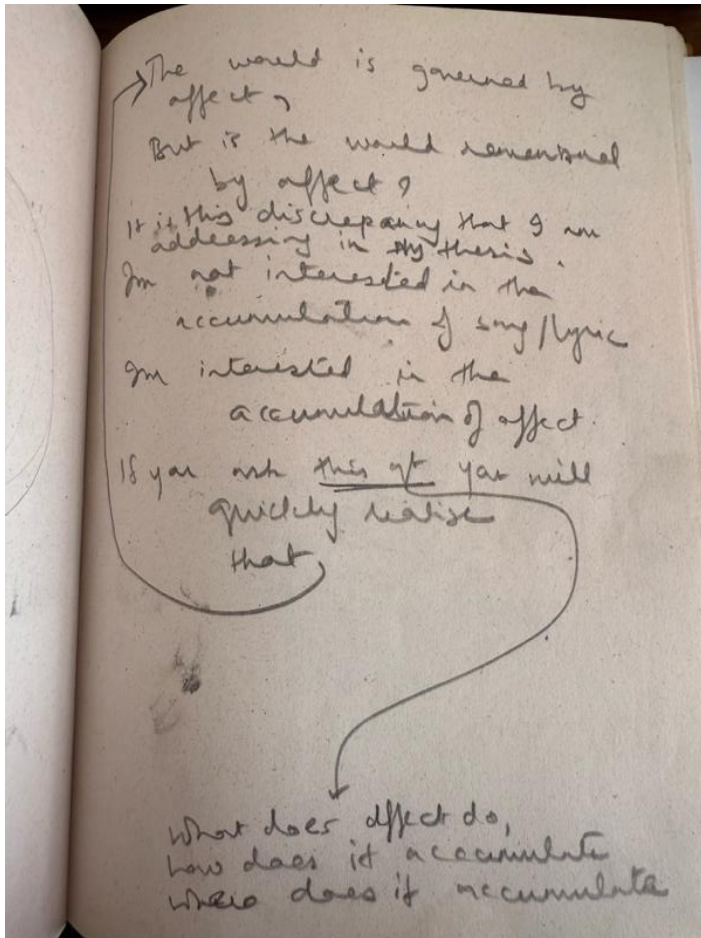


Figure 44: Image from Sketchbook. Notes on affect. Kathyayini Dash, 2023.

Future Potential Research Areas

- A documentation research project dedicated to a detailed mapping of the process of making involved in the *Shape of Grief* and exploring broader question of the ways in which performances remain and processes of making that have emerged particularly out of this project.
- Looking into the archival of nomadic routes in smaller archipelagic spaces- pastoral routes within the Indian subcontinent.
- Sonic mapping of the Afro-Eur-Asian circuit by mapping musical laments emerging across old nomadic routes.
- Investigating PaR methodologies within pedagogic spaces
- Research projects that involve creation of performance events that will develop the shape of affective infra-structures further.
- Research projects that are designed to explore sonic methodologies with a multi-disciplinary perspective.

- Performing iterations of *Shape of Grief* by focussing on different sites of performance that will impact the shape and form that the structure of feeling takes.

This is not an exhaustive list.

Post Performance *Shape of Grief* Studio Recordings: The Making of *Shape of Grief in Five Movements*

After the performance was over on the 29th of September 2023, my supervisors who had attended the event remarked that it would be a shame not to have any document of the musical material. I had shelved that thought away since I did not have enough funds to afford a good camera person to film the performance and a good sound recording team to take care of the sound. Apart from this, I was certain that we needed to work unmiced and work with the acoustics of the room that really held all the reverberations in place that was crucial to the affective quality of sound that we wanted to produce. While that did work very well and did wonders in carrying the raw affective qualities that emerged from the colliding frequencies of our voices and sounds from the performance, I did at the same time have a tinge of regret in not having been in a position to have the performance recorded that did it more justice.

The studio recording that the four of us did as a recourse for the regret, actually turned out to be the most interesting process. The intention behind the recording actually paled in front of insights our process of recording and our ironic failure to do so, led us to. All of us went into the recording studio thinking, we know the list of songs and compositions that we performed the previous week, how hard would it be to go through them sequence after sequence and produce a list of songs that we performed in the performance. When we began going through the sequences, it just didn't feel right. In other words, it felt too short, like there was nothing emerging of what emerged during the performance. Without that presence and ambience that was generated in the performance, the songs seemed to be empty almost. While a technical run was on, we all had begun to just sing together. No sequence, no order of scenes, just all musical pieces, not only from the day of the performance but also those that have been sung in the course of the workshops that may not have made it to the day of the performance. All of these pieces flowed seamlessly into a different *The Shape of Grief*. It occurred to me that the point was never to get to a singular *Shape of Grief* but to recognise the elasticity of this shape. The ever expanding and encompassing quality of the shapes that feelings like grief accommodate. If *The Shape of Grief* is a structure of feeling and an affective infra-structure of grief, it also means that this is not a fixed or a closed shape. I thought to myself—rather than looking at the

recording session as something that isn't working out or the performance as something that cannot be replicated again, I should change my perspective. The way I think about how performance *should* remain will have to change in order for me to think about *The Shape of Grief* as reverberating resonant material. I must rather focus on the resonances that emerge amongst the four of us and also pay closer attention to the particularities of the structure of feeling built through the four of us.

We produced five movements. Each movement begins from the vantage point of each of us and moves around to complete a circle. We do not go turn by turn, but we intervene judging by our musical sense and by feeling the way. What happened here was we got a set of four movements. They are called movements because the songs bleed into each other becoming musical scapes rather than a collection of songs. They are long musical route-scapes that moves amongst the four of us, as we recall not the performance per se, but the range of feelings generated alongside the performance. Together, they can be understood as a sonic mapping of the performance built of five routescapes drawn by the four of us.

Shape of Grief in Five Movements

Extract 22 Chapter 5 Shape of Grief (2023) in Five Movements: Movement 1
DOI <https://doi.org/10.25375/uct.28416665>

Extract 23 Chapter 5 Shape of Grief (2023) in Five Movements: Movement 2
DOI <https://doi.org/10.25375/uct.28416713>

Extract 24 Chapter 5 Shape of Grief (2023) in Five Movements: Movement 3
DOI <https://doi.org/10.25375/uct.28416740>

Extract 25 Chapter 5 Shape of Grief (2023) in Five Movements: Movement 4
DOI <https://doi.org/10.25375/uct.28416761>

Extract 26 Chapter 5 Shape of Grief (2023) in Five Movements: Movement 5
DOI <https://doi.org/10.25375/uct.28416767>

(The listening time of all five movements put together comes to a total of 89 minutes. I personally do not feel the length as excessive. You are welcome to listen to all five movements, although I do recognise the lengthiness of the tracks. Please feel free to choose if necessary.)

The Lament; Sonic Wounds

Play as your read:

Badaweih: Palestinian Folk Song

<https://open.spotify.com/track/5byoXmbEI0DcoKOhPOfjBI?si=3023b761a41b42cc>

“What cannot be said will be wept”
(Attributed to Sappho, 7th C)⁵²

The phrases gain profundity when our readings of sorrow as structures of feelings are unpacked with a lot of nuance and sensitivity to embodied understandings of the musical lament.

Sound has an innate quality, that can remain hidden inside the body, that is not possible to steal or confiscate. Pasts embodied through sound and music are what can pass border checkpoints, cross fences, escape interrogation, transgress hegemonies. Historical studies of particular forms of music that were banned throughout different periods of time in the past stand account to the transformative, garnering, generative and moving power of sound and music and what gets carried along with it. These embodied pasts are active spaces, they are sites that are kept alive and built through an accumulation of affective intensities that are gathered in affectively intense musical forms like the lament. They are active and alive precisely because they are performed into presence and disclosed through sonic practice.

When I say lament, I do not just go looking at sad songs. If the lament is considered as the infra-structure upon which grief circulates, binds, combines, installs embodied pasts and historical circulations, the lament becomes a shore, many things get washed up on its shore. Sensual songs, love songs, songs of the weather, lullabies, songs of celebration, all of it can be washed up onto lament’s shore, and can be considered within the affective infra-structure of the lament. If one thinks about it, the shore is an interesting archaeological site. In a normal archaeological site, we are digging in for pasts, so naturally, our direction of time is linear, where the deeper we dig the further into the past we go. The deeper the sedimented object, the older it is, and consequently, the more truthful, the more valuable, the evidence and past. This notion of it being untouched, for millions of years, unweathered by time, almost stands as testament that it needed to come out, now, here, to tell us of the past. The only function of this object, is to be a puzzle piece of a past or history that is being reconstructed. Whereas, the shore is an extremely interesting site of archaeology/archival. The shore is flatlined, time moves

⁵² This saying is popularly attributed to Sappho but it is not confirmed yet.

horizontally, things wash up every day from the oceans, some a few days old, some things millions of years old. When these things float about in the ocean, what timescape do they occupy? Are they as old as that buried piece of pottery? Is the nature of their oldness the same? When they get washed up on the shore, what happens then? Do they wait to be chanced upon by the right eye or the right hands? They are right at the top of the sandy soil, but yet invisible. Why does the shore feel like such an eternally present space. Like the shores keep everything that lands on it alive. And if these objects are indeed kept alive, they have a very different relationship to history, to historical time. Why? Because they occupy the same plane as the piece of plastic bottle cap. The present and past intermingle in special ways on the shore.

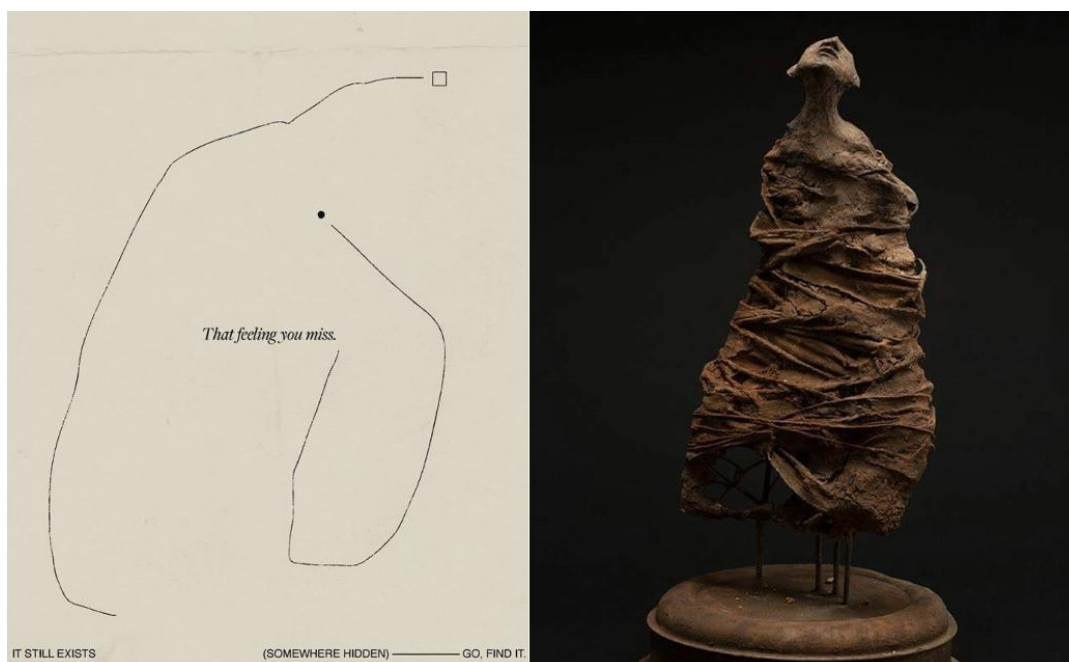


Figure 45: (left) Anonymous. (right) Sculpture by Mark Perez. Source: Instagram. 2022.

Play as you read:

Wenu Se Goli | Madosini | Power to Women

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qoQ6bU6Rdr0&list=PL6JTBjspeC_ZKx8lwmGPxI7Xspo2T2pmj&index=33

I and my voice have definitely been reassembled and transformed through this performance. While in the performance, it felt as though I had learnt to empty myself in order to be occupied by stories and voices without losing myself to the embodiment. What I have gathered through this doctoral thesis is in surplus and they are already demanding many more articulations in the

future. This may be the last line in this thesis, this document, but what I have learnt so far is this; that there are far more semi colons that we can add to our processes of knowing, and far more heart that we can add to our reading of the world and far more humility we can offer to that which we do not know enough of. I leave you with a *Shape of Grief* (2023) out of which, I hope to see many more maps, connectivities, affinities and solidarities emerging and revealing themselves— standing tall, present and powerful.

CONCLUSION

This thesis has probed and explored the relationship between sound, body and history. Beginning from a hunch that histories are embodied and encoded in and through certain kinds of music and circulate sonically through musical atmospheres, this thesis has proposed the concept of affective infra-structures as the primary framework with which to examine embodied histories that can be accessed through performance. I have sought to show that affect is structural to the way pasts are organized, and that these kinds of pasts can only emerge in and through particular structures of feeling that I have termed affective infra-structures.

I have drawn attention to the ways in which nomadic pasts in particular highlight a turbulent relationship with the discipline of history and the methods of doing history that determine whether we are even able to see these pasts. Avoiding falling into the binary distinctions between pasts and histories as expressed by Dipesh Chakrabarty (1998), I have proposed a set of theoretical and conceptual frameworks and lenses derived out of modes of practice, that work out a different materiality of the past. Embodied histories do carry the notions offered by Chakrabarty in his advocacy for subaltern pasts as a methodological device, but I push for a retention of a notion of tangibility, as evidenced by concepts such as *mahaul*, that are associated with history, to a certain degree. I am not arguing for a notion of tangibility within narratives of legitimacy, visibility, evidentiality. But I have retained the notion of tangibility within narratives of perseverance, persistence, resistance, and broadly, as a means of questioning the hegemony of sight, property, and rationality while engaging with and recognising historical material. Instead of relegating all these memories held in other sensorial forms of historical material, such as music, to the realm of subaltern pasts, I am proposing instead a different engagement with materiality, that has the body as a source of tangibility and of access to subaltern pasts. Hence, embodied histories have been presented in my thesis as an example of such materialities that refuse a demarcation away from what is considered historical material and that also resist conventional archival and modes of recognition found within the discipline of history. These are histories produced out of friction. In this vein, I have used approaches inspired from performance practice to explicate and engage with these kinds of histories.

While I have drawn from my pilot fieldwork for the RAA Project,⁵³ I have moved on to engage questions arising out of a study of the Wayee and their implications for constituting

⁵³ Re-centering Afro Asia Project (Musical and Human Migrations 700-1500A.D) The RAA Project is a supra-institutional project, started by Prof. Ari Sitas (2016-2022), comprising partnerships between the College of Music

performative archives and developing historiographical methods. In other words, I have used the musical system of the Wayee as a nodal point to demonstrate my central arguments that are based on the idea of embodied histories and on how modalities and vocabularies drawn from performance practice help engage with these kinds of histories and problematise our discipline-centric modes of engaging with all kinds of pasts uniformly. I have shown that the Wayee enables and operates within a sonic infra-structure of grief that works as a modality through which events are remembered and shared. In this way, materials like the Wayee can be perceived as historical-musical codes, that become a means of mapping transnational and transcontinental memories and possibly even deriving old musical linkages and histories of migration. These histories lie in the way they are told; in the way they are sung and it is these infra-structures that make such histories apparent.

Using the Wayee as a nodal point means that even though the propositions and insights emerge from this point, they work away from my engagement with the Wayee to feed into opening out an understanding of the Wayee that is significantly different from an ethnomusicological, sociological, or Cultural Studies-oriented understandings. I have developed a reading of the Wayee by centring the affectivity of the musical form, that is grief, that is both understood and engaged with through musical rendition and performance-based practice.

The idea of affective infra-structures in my thesis has been developed through a practice-based explication of grief through an engagement with the musical lament, its sonic materiality and the movement, structure and materiality of feelings. I have further focussed on musical entrances into historiography and how musical atmospheres become historical sites and how musical collaborations enable the explication of these infra-structures of affect. These have led to the theoretical propositions and insights I have discussed in my thesis.

Methodologically, my dissertation has worked with the Practice-as Research (PaR) methodology that falls within the paradigm of Artistic Research. The choice of methodology is linked to a key objective of the thesis which is to establish the body as a site of historicization where pasts are installed through the modality of performance. It is here that these pasts acquire particular shapes and forms with an integral relationship to practice. I have established this,

at the University of Cape Town, the Centre for Humanities Research at the University of the Western Cape, the Wits School of Arts at the University of the Witwatersrand, the University of Dar es Salaam (Tanzania), the Yared School of Music at Addis Ababa University, Ethiopia, and the School of Culture and Creative Expressions of the Ambedkar University, Delhi.

both through my examination of the Wayee as well as through my own practice, a part of which I have presented here as the molar project *Shape of Grief*.

Structurally, my doctoral work comprises of two inter connected components—a written thesis and a performance event+exhibition. The central objectives of the written thesis have been (1) to explicate the idea of affective infra-structures in the context of embodied histories of grief and sonic materiality (2) to develop theoretical and conceptual frameworks and vocabularies with which to engage with affective infra-structures, embodied histories and sonic materialities (3) to study and develop the concepts of “embodiment” and “affective infra-structure” so as to enable the study of affective forms like musical forms such as the Wayee in ways that will help develop my own multi-disciplinary artistic practice in performance and (4) to develop and assemble methods drawn out of a multi-disciplinary performance practice towards the explication of affective infra-structures. As will be seen in the section below—Chapter Summaries and Conclusions—I have to a considerable degree thought through and examined the question of affective infra-structures, both in my theoretical engagement and in my practice, across minor and molar performances.

The thesis has sought to establish frameworks for "listening" to histories that extend beyond written records. It has emphasized the role of affect in the materiality of the sonic medium in serving as a conduit and container for the preservation and circulation of subaltern pasts across longer durations of time. Central to this project is the tracing of a transcontinental lament, that begins with following the migratory paths of a nomadic community while simultaneously exploring the concept of affective infra-structures as ways of remembering and explicating nomadic pasts and histories borne in circulation and movement across the Afro-Eur-Asian landscape. This in turn has prompted the eruption of an archipelagic geography of affinities produced out of this sonic mapping of a transcontinental lament leading to the Shape of Grief. The thesis also has offered a multi-disciplinary assemblage of conceptual frameworks and a sonic vocabulary in order to engage with and access the materiality of the affective infra-structures of grief. The thesis has combined theoretical and conceptual analysis, reflexive journaling, fieldwork, and performance practice as its primary modes of examination and research.

I would underline, here, that the thesis performance is not a simple illustration or demonstration of the propositions I have made in my written dissertation. The written thesis and my thesis performance rather stand as entities resonating with and feeding into each other. Going along with the PaR methodological approach, it is important to remember to view this

point of “conclusion” or the “final outcome” as “a pause, or a temporary exit out of the hermeneutical-interpretive spiral” (Trimingham 2007:56).

By bringing the creative and written outputs together, I have arrived, to some degree, at methods and frameworks through which historiographical methods and research can be interwoven with performance practice. Through this work, I hope to have pointed towards a new equation between performance and history that works away from notions of a history of performance and pulls towards the notion of performance in history through the multi-disciplinary explication of affective infra-structures.

The written thesis has sought to arrive at methods and frameworks through which historiographical methods and research can be interwoven with performance practice. At the same time the creative component has sought to value and utilise performance practice as a modality of historiography and research production. The particular PaR design of this thesis also reflects this very approach.

Chapter Summaries and Conclusions

My introduction has discussed the historical context, methodological frameworks, and scope of the thesis. It set up the key research questions and objectives discussed above that focus on affective infra-structures of grief using the Wayee as a nodal point through which the investigation of the lament took shape. My literature review is spread across the Introduction and Chapters One and Two.

Chapter 1: Pre-Colonial Pasts and Embodied Histories

This chapter examined pre-colonial histories and embodied memory, particularly through performance forms like the Wayee. It has explored how sonic mediums, such as songs and vocalisation and instrumentation, function as unique mechanisms for installing the past within a precarious present. The discussion introduced Kachchh, Gujarat—a region shaped over time by pastoralists, pilgrims, traders, and rulers—through the lens of nomadic histories and the archipelagic perspective (Noudelmann, 2018; Deleuze & Guattari, 1980). The chapter interrogated how nomadic pasts challenge static notions of place and linear time, engaging with themes of identity, belonging, collective memory, and historical temporality including an analysis of the Jaths of Gujarat and the Wayee within the framework of the Re-Centring Afro-Asia Project: Musical and Human Migrations 700–1500 AD. This chapter provides the contextual grounds through which the idea of embodied histories and challenges posed by nomadic and other subaltern pasts is introduced. The chapter concluded, on the basis of this

complex contextual history of Kachchh laid out in the chapter, that these pasts demand alternative approaches to doing history.

Chapter 2: The Dispersible Body Framework

The second chapter conceptualized the body as both a site and a framework through which histories persist via performative sonic media, with lamentation as a key example. It synthesized multiple theoretical frameworks to articulate the notion of the “world-encompassing body”. The discussion highlighted the role of embodiment in historical transmission, which is fundamental to the dissertation's argument.

Various frameworks of reading the body-world dynamic have been discussed, to make a case for the world-encompassing body, that opens out the body as a site in which dispersed pasts are kept alive through a performative medium like the sonic, the lament being an aspect. This chapter has underlined the process and aspect of embodiment and ways in which it could be read. All these discussions have been put together to propose the dispersible body framework—an imagination of the body as both world-encompassing and bound—which has proven to be the cornerstone for the doctoral proposition. This framework has helped provide a critical perspective on pasts encoded within affective structures, which have resulted from the complex interplay of social, political, cultural, and historical processes of embodiment. I have concluded with the exploration of the way the dispersible body framework serves as a tool for examining affective engagements with historiography, particularly the connections that emerge when tracing a musical lamentation across the Afro-Eur-Asian landscape through modalities in performance practice.

Chapter 3: Sonic Vocabulary

This chapter introduced a sonic vocabulary intended as an academic "hearing-aid," making musical perception and sonic materiality accessible to an audience beyond the musically adept. Since the dissertation has advocated for a perceptual shift in how historical knowledge is apprehended—through listening rather than reading—the chapter has established a conceptual foundation for understanding sonic materiality and has opened out the idea of the body-in-music as a composite category. The vocabulary has been built by examining selected terms and concepts from disciplines like geography and oceanic studies on one hand, musical practice and fieldwork in Kachchh on the other. The chapter particularly focuses on terms and concepts, drawn from my fieldwork, that have complicated the boundaries between the knower, knowledge and the means of knowledge. These approaches have centred the body as the key

site and means of access, particularly in performance. The chapter concludes with the insight that this vocabulary can operate as a perspectival lens for understanding how the body-in-music, and by extension the body-in-performance, actively shapes historical narratives and allows certain histories to emerge through embodied practices. It is further suggested that vocabulary drawn out of the practice of a diverse set of embodied knowledge forms facilitates the interpretation of performance, particularly immersive musical atmospheres (mahaul), as embodied sites of social and historical engagement.

Chapter 4: Music, Affect, and Affective Infra-structures of Grief

In this chapter the relationship between music and affect has been explored, particularly in the context of grief. The first part of the chapter examines existing theorizations of affect. The chapter has dwelled on the significance of the hyphen in in “infra-structures”, suggesting that this pause between infra and structure reference the properties of embodied structures, that lie just below or further on from the flesh, just below or further on from visible range, which, instead of being elusive, or invisible, can be read as embodied structures that have physical presence enough to be arranged and assembled into functional structures. The concept of affective infra-structures has been explored by examining the materiality of sonic lamentation and performance as a means through which seemingly "lost" histories resurface. This chapter has investigated the concept of mahaul jamana (the solidifying of an immersive atmosphere) as a process and indication of the structuring of feeling. The chapter especially emphasizes the role of music—particularly laments—in the shaping of affective infra-structures of grief. I have examined how these infra-structures influence historical narratives, especially those embedded in performance. By analysing colloquially circulating expressions related to musical atmospheres, the discussion situates grief within the Afro-Eurasian musical landscape, emphasizing its trans-continental archipelagic circulation. Finally, the chapter has highlighted the powerful potential of performance in revealing and articulating these affective infra-structures of grief that question the grounds of the materiality of the archive. In conclusion, the chapter has argued that affective infra-structures serve as embodied channels through which emotions, memories, and histories circulate.

Chapter 5: Post-Performance Reflections: Remains and Recollections

The penultimate chapter reflects on the thesis performance and exhibition, *Shape of Grief*. This chapter serves a methodological mapping, documenting the research process through various media, including music, poetry, sketches, notes, and filmed material to map the coming

together of the performance. The format has deliberately been kept experimental, so as to allow the reader to navigate through multiple interpretive pathways while maintaining the coherence of the argument. These interactive elements reflect the nonlinear, dynamic nature of the research, mirroring the performance-event's emphasis on using multi-disciplinary methods within the PaR methodology to explicate affective infra-structures of grief through the building of immersive atmospheres (mahaul jamaana).

The aim of the thesis performance/event, titled *Shape of Grief* (Play Room, CTDPS, University of Cape Town, 29 September 2023) was to work out a PaR project informed by the trope of grief, informed by the concepts of “embodiment” and “affective infra-structures”, while drawing on insights into the constructions of a mahaul and the nature of the lament. In particular, the aim of the creative component of this thesis was to explore the shape of grief, by broaching the subject of synchronicities and departures in a trans-continental musical collaboration. An aspect of the thesis performance was an exhibition that included a collection of drawings, paintings and sculptures produced during my research work, books, and notebooks, as well as mind maps and musical instruments used during the course of the doctoral process, that have shaped the insights collected in the pages of this written thesis. The thesis performance also included a listening session which involved engaging with playlists around the lament I have compiled through the doctoral process. The chapter concludes with the insight that musical collaboration can be a productive methodological technique through which immersive musical atmospheres can be built. This would be central to the project of doing history differently.

Limitations of the Study and Scope for Future Research

This thesis focuses on pre-colonial pasts and embodied histories and examines affective infra-structures within the context of the musical laments and nomadic pasts. The study has emerged out of a focus on modes of remembering the pre-colonial period and contextualised within an Afro-Eur Asian historical, political and cultural landscape. While it aims to provide a comprehensive analysis of these subjects and offer the idea of affective infra-structures for multi-disciplinary research in the community fields of affect studies, visual and performance arts, theatre and performance studies, history and musicology, there are, like in all fields of study, certain limitations that must be acknowledged.

First, the methodological approach of this study is experimental and new. Although it is clearly housed within the Practice-as Research methodology, the paradigm of artistic research is vast. The methodology is characteristically not prescriptive like other qualitative

methodologies are. They are tailored to the needs and directions of the particular project for which it is used. Not one PaR project is like another. Although I do not see this as a limitation of the methodology, it is definitely a factor that limits the transmission and replication of the specific methods that emerge through the course of practicing this research methodology. It is important to note, housing research within the PaR methodology ties the research methods and directionality intricately with the practice of the research-practitioner. Therefore, the methods generated and tailored for the thesis are specifically tied to this project.

PaR is a doing-as-thinking approach, that resists conventional approaches to documenting processes of research. Therefore, an in-depth study into the documentation of such a research process is a whole area in itself is beyond the scope of this particular project. Having said that, I have worked on the way I have assembled my research materials and structured my thesis and approached the theoretical/written components and the creative components of this thesis by foregrounding the practices that have generated the insights and research analyses. This has led to many further ideas of organising data generated through practice-as research projects.

Second, the research material in this thesis, particularly the kind of affective materialities that have been explored, have primarily centred around the musical or the sonic. Although it would be beyond the scope of this dissertation to account for all the different kinds of affective materialities that could potentially be tapped into to further explicate different kinds of affective infra-structures, the proposition of affective infra-structures is recommended as a much broader structural and methodological proposition that can be taken beyond the mediums of music and sound to other affective and sensorial forms that engaged embodied knowledge such as movement, dance, image, or smell.

Third, the practice and performance of the Wayee is spread across Sindh, Pakistan and Kachchh, Gujarat. My doctoral project has allowed me to cover only one half of this region. Future research may involve fieldwork in Pakistan and working with other multi-disciplinary artist-researchers like Zahra Malkani, who are working with the Wayee in a connected yet different context. Further, another prospective direction in which to take this doctoral work would be to engage with other forms of Artistic Research, develop other methods in collaboration with other practitioners to develop this PaR project that is geared towards exploring performance in history by finding new modalities of exploring the relationship between history, affect and performance and examining the materialities that emerge out of such an engagement. This has implications not only for artistic fields of study but also for the disciplines of history and historiography. It impacts the theoretical moves generated out of

artistic-historiographical projects such as this one. Further research in this vein could produce other kinds of vocabularies derived out of practice and embodied knowledges that are a largely overlooked or glossed over area of study in the academic disciplines of historical research.

Fourth, I have focussed on the Wayee as sung by the Bhagadiya Jaths in Banni, Kachchh. An in-depth study focussed on the Bhagadiya Jaths and other communities that carry this form of lamentation is beyond the scope of this thesis. This demands a very different approach and motivation of conducting historical, sociological, or ethnomusicological research that is neither the strength nor the intention of this research project. Nevertheless, it is definitely a prospective avenue of research that is opened out by this doctoral project.

Finally, this is not an ethnomusicological study of a particular form of music. I have drawn a thread through my thesis with the Wayee informing many of the insights I have shared. Yet, my engagement with the Wayee is within the Practice-as-Research methodology and does not follow the format of a case-study or take directly from methodological approaches grounded in the social sciences like ethnomusicology, anthropology, history or sociology. Even though I have engaged with the field of multi-sensory anthropology, it has not been to take directly from its methodology, but to craft my methodological moves and position within the Practice-as-Research methodology. Therefore, the fieldwork is not centred around conventional ethnographic and musicological fieldwork practices even though many ethical approaches within ethnographic studies have been adopted into my fieldwork. I not only consider Kachchh, Gujarat as my field, I also consider the performances I have been part of or created throughout my doctoral research process as part of the field and my self as an artist-fieldworker (Kathyayini Dash, 2020). A discussion on the aspect of fieldwork within this PaR project is a project in itself and deserves a longer and detailed engagement that this beyond the current scope of this thesis but is definitely an avenue for future research. Future research in this area could also include collaborating with researchers from the social sciences to develop and take this part of the doctoral thesis further. The PaR methodology is a largely new and emerging field of study, that can have important implications on arts pedagogy in particular. Therefore, research into developing the PaR methodology pedagogically would be an advantage not only for the disciplines of performance and visual arts but also for the discipline of historical research. Future research could involve establishing and implementing PaR as a significant methodology available to the Humanities in general.

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APPENDIX

LIST OF PERFORMANCES PRODUCED BY KATHYAYINI DASH 2019-2024

MINOR PROJECTS:

SHAPE OF GRIEF WORKSHOPS *co-conducted by Kathyayini Dash and Lulamile Bongo Nikani,*
2023

NIHSS BRICS *Waterlines Performance (Musical Performance by Insurrections Ensemble)*
2023

OTHELLO WORKSHOP PART III *Conducted by Ari Sitas and Anuradha Kapur*
2022

OTHELLO WORKSHOP PART I & II *co-conducted by Purav Goswami, Kathyayini Dash, Lulamile Bongo Nikani, Angelinah Maponya*
2022

SPRING OF 1941: OF WOUNDS OF HANDS. For Pan African Space Station, Cape Town
(Audio documentary by Insurrection Ensemble)
2021

THE NOTE WILL CARRY US I & II. Postgraduate Studios.
2020

BARRYDALE PUPPET FESTIVAL, CAPE TOWN *The Final Spring (Giant Puppet Festival)*
2019

INSURRECTIONS 5, CAPE TOWN *Isivivane: Musical Transgressions (Musical dialogue between South African and Indian musicians)*
2019

RAA SOUNDSCAPE OF KACHCHH, GUJARAT. For the RAA Project Repository.
2019

MOLAR PROJECTS:

THESIS PERFORMANCE *Shape Of Grief (Performance/Event) (Performance with musicians from South Africa)*
2023

SHAPE OF GRIEF IN FIVE MOVEMENTS. *Sound recording with musicians from South Africa*
2023

MARDIN BIENNIAL V, TURKEY, PEHRAM DES VISAAL (art installation) and
SHARING NOTES *A musical collaboration with artists from Berlin (Petra Nachtmanova)*
Istanbul (Erkan Çanakçı) and Mardin (Çagri Koç)
2022

KUKUTANA ENSEMBLE PERFORMANCE, CAPE TOWN *Gabriel's Odyssey*
(Collaborative Musical Performance)
2021

RE CENTERING AFRO ASIA PERFORMANCE, CAPE TOWN *A Sea Drift of Songs*
(Pluri-medial performance by the Afro-Asia Ensemble)
2020

RE CENTERING AFRO ASIA PERFORMANCE, CAPE TOWN *A Sea Drift of Songs*
(Visual art exhibition)
2020