

Splicing the Sonic Color-Line

Tony Schwartz Remixes Postwar Nueva York

Jennifer Stoever-Ackerman

When Tony Schwartz died in 2008, his Manhattan neighborhood lost a steadfast anchor and devoted chronicler. For over sixty years, Schwartz and his wife, Reenah, made their home in a converted church in the upper Fifties between Ninth and Tenth avenues. Here the Schwartzes lived, worked, raised their children, and quietly amassed an archive of more than thirty thousand recordings now housed in the Library of Congress, the lion's share of which Tony made just feet from their front door. Recording began as a hobby but quickly became an obsession; it soothed the agoraphobia Schwartz had struggled with since age thirteen. His recording equipment enabled him to turn a concrete grid of strangers into a familiar home filled with potential friends. While unable to leave his New York postal code without extreme discomfort, the portable recording technology Schwartz developed allowed him to explore the many thousands of lives lived on the streets of New York 19, now 10019.¹ His relationship with independent record label Folkways allowed him to travel even further, at least metaphorically; Folkways released ten records of his material by 1962.² While the success of his early recordings exhibited an almost gravitational pull—Paul Robeson, Woody Guthrie, Pete Seeger, Harry Belafonte, Mahalia Jackson, Langston Hughes, and W. E. B. Du Bois all came to the Schwartz home to record in the 1950s—his investment in and fascination with the everyday sounds, music, and stories of the people in his neighborhood never ceased. Even at the end of his life, Schwartz took afternoon walks to check in with friends, neighbors, and favorite shop owners.

Schwartz and his tape recorder have been two constants in a perpetually changing neighborhood. His immense audio archive documents



Figure 1. Tony Schwartz making live street recording, New York City, circa 1955. Courtesy of Anton Schwartz

decades of flux within New York City's core. Schwartz not only witnessed the city's postwar demographic shifts but was an active participant, strapping microphones to his wrist and capturing Manhattan's shifting soundscape with the twelve-pound Magnemite recorder over his shoulder (see figure 1). Sometimes called Midtown, Schwartz's community is a diverse crossroads of several neighborhoods: Hell's Kitchen, the Upper West Side, Times Square, and the now-defunct San Juan Hill and Lincoln Square districts, razed to build Lincoln Center in the early 1960s. When Schwartz migrated to Midtown in 1944—against the tide of “white flight”—he arrived amid one of the neighborhood's biggest population shifts, when New Yorkers of Irish, Italian, Jewish, and German descent began leaving in droves and Puerto Rican migration brought more than a hundred thousand new residents, pushed from the island by economic hardships wrought by U.S. economic policy and pulled to Manhattan by promises of opportunity.

In 1955, Schwartz released a Folkways album called *Nueva York: A Tape Documentary of Puerto Rican New Yorkers*.³ Culled from over 120 hours of tape, his 45-minute composition mixes interviews, ambient sounds, and musical performance to represent various Puerto Rican migration experi-

ences. The record is organized loosely along an archetypal “im/migrant experience,” beginning with the arrival of a plane from San Juan and using snippets of stories, interviews, and music to depict the migrants’ quest for employment, housing, cultural centers, and schooling. Schwartz only occasionally reminds listeners of his presence as an interviewer, relying instead on editing strategies to remix and reorder sounds without any narration, a technique he later dubbed “sono-montage.”⁴ Behind many of the interviews are the sounds of midcentury city life: rushing traffic, honking horns, children playing, and murmuring crowds. *Nueva York* blends the voices of Puerto Rican migrants with the sounds of their new city to examine the stakes of assimilation alongside the material effects of racism.

At the time, Schwartz’s audio interventions seemed a lo-fi novelty to many listeners, perhaps explaining why he has little scholarly legacy today. Although public radio tributes abound, this is the first full-length scholarly article to be published on Schwartz’s life and work.⁵ The initial dismissal of his recordings as mere “sound effects” is perhaps unsurprising in an era when hi-fi enthusiasts regularly brought home records featuring roaring tigers, subway trains, and ringing telephones to fine-tune their speaker setups.⁶ Certainly, the small circulation of Folkways records factors into the critical silence surrounding Schwartz; *Nueva York*’s production folder only shows approximately 589 sales between 1960 and 1981, although digitization has since enabled it to be heard anew.⁷ Ultimately, though, Schwartz’s critical neglect may be due to a long-standing scholarly “deaf spot” concerning audio culture. Western culture’s deeply embedded visual bias has meant that sound is treated primarily as an augmentative effect of vision rather than as an epistemology in its own right. Or, as Schwartz once told a reporter: “History up to now has been writing and pictures. . . . I should like to start a public archive of the sounds of our times.”⁸

This essay represents a first engagement with Schwartz’s sonic archive, treating its contents not as a random assortment of “sound effects” but as heavily mediated sounds grounded in time and place and engineered to intervene in public discourse. Working from assumptions located in sound studies, namely that sound represents a realm of knowledge related to—yet distinct from—vision, I argue that Schwartz’s recordings are essential listening for two reasons. One, Schwartz’s meticulous attention to the “sounds of [his] times” (and, I would add, of his place) helps scholars reconstruct the 1950s from an entirely different vantage point: the ear. Two, Schwartz understood something that sound studies scholars are only beginning to tease out: sound is not merely a scientific phenomenon—vibrations passing through matter at particular frequencies—it is also a set of social relations.

Listening to the 1950s through *Nueva York* amplifies precisely how much sound has played a role in historical processes of racialization, both

in terms of assigning and maintaining clearly racialized identities and segregating urban space. To understand Schwartz's audio intervention, I examine how sound already appeared in the dominant discourse of race during the postwar era, a period that simultaneously marked the beginning of the modern conception of "color blindness" and the high-water mark of segregation. Through original archival analysis, I trace the emergence of sound as an efficient medium for racial discourse during this period of white racial crisis, what Howard Winant has called "the postwar racial break."⁹ Sound not only operated in conjunction with visual racial hierarchies but—in the context of color blindness—it frequently operated in its place, especially in volatile debates over the American metropolis and its supposed decline into a dangerous urban wasteland overwhelmed by people of color.

In this essay, I theorize the mutually constitutive relationship I find between sound, listening, and race as the "sonic color-line," and I hear Schwartz's *Nueva York* as symptomatic of the ways in which listening experiences both reflect and generate ideas about racial difference and its historical connection to American citizenship. Schwartz himself is not immune to processes of racialization; while actively involved in the Puerto Rican life of his neighborhood, he was neither Puerto Rican nor Spanish speaking, factors which constrain and compel his project to take on what the liner notes for *Nueva York* describe as "various forms of translation." While he does manage to unsettle the voices of white New Yorkers within the edited dialogue of *Nueva York*, the various aural translations that Schwartz undertakes—of Spanish to English, of urban noise to city sound, of white stereotype to Puerto Rican realities—yield to the listening ear of white consumers and amplify his own privileged access to recording technology and radio media, largely unavailable to Puerto Ricans themselves. Beyond describing racialized modes of perception and reception, the sonic color-line also demarcates unequal access to modes of sonic production that have historically separated the recorders from the recorded.

Because *Nueva York* asks its listeners to examine sound as a primary discourse that is socially constructed and historically contingent, both context and theorization are essential to my analysis. Therefore, "Splicing the Sonic Color-Line" closes with a reading of the record rather than beginning with it. I open by detailing my methodology and theorizing the sonic color-line, locating my intervention at the intersection of ethnic studies and the emerging field of sound studies and positing listening as an interpretive site where racial difference is coded, produced, and policed. The subsequent section uses original archival material to reconstruct the historical soundscape of Tony Schwartz's street recordings and reveal the sonic color-line as the aggregated racialized constraints and protocols regarding sound that *Nueva York* is both embedded in and struggling

against. Through an analysis of mainstream media representations of urban space contemporary with *Nueva York*, I excavate invocations of “peace and quiet” and descriptions of “noise” to reveal the racialized edges of both terms. My final section returns to *Nueva York* to trace the way in which Schwartz’s “sono-montage” splices the sonic color-line, translating mainstream representations of the so-called homogenous “noise” of Puerto Rican life into textured, meaningful sound to assimilated (white) Americans. Flipping the script on white flight, *Nueva York* uses sound to rewrite the dominant narrative of fear and (white) victimization as an exercise of power and xenophobia.

Methodologies of the Sonic Color-Line

Certainly, bringing theories of racial formation to bear on conversations about sound and music is not an entirely novel proposition.¹⁰ I am particularly informed by Fred Moten’s examination of sound’s role in/as “blackness” in *In the Break*, especially his careful attention to a wide range of sonic phenomena within the black radical jazz tradition—screams, cries, groans, hollers, and whistles—and his exploration of literature’s overlooked aurality. Josh Kun’s *Audiotopia* also utilizes a multigenre archive to articulate the resistant role popular music plays in shaping American racial identity, although he emphasizes liberatory “audiotopias” that belie the limits of American racial formation. Inspired by and indebted to this work, I broaden it by theorizing the racialized constraints that created the conditions of/for the sonic resistance that Moten and Kun detail.¹¹ To further a more comprehensive understanding of listening as a racialized practice, I depart from an emphasis on musical production and reception to examine representations of everyday auditory experiences in urban soundscapes, of which music is only a part. “Splicing the Sonic Color-Line” acknowledges how listening has been and continues to be imbricated in the processes of raced and gendered subjection that we usually ascribe to the visual realm.¹² My notion of the “sonic color-line” bridges the theoretical with cultural and historical representation to provide a framework for understanding the crucial and undertheorized relationship between listening and oppression. Without foreclosing the resistant possibilities of listening that are integral to a work like *Nueva York*, I believe that interventions like Schwartz’s help us to understand how listening and sound are always already enmeshed in power relations.

Tracing the sonic color-line in its historic and cultural contexts necessarily requires an interdisciplinary methodology that traverses multiple archives and utilizes more than one critical method. Because of the well-documented visual bias in Western culture and scholarly criticism, sound is frequently marginalized within historical accounts and/or treated

as ancillary to visual media.¹³ Finding rich audio material like *Nueva York* is rare enough, but properly contextualizing it within larger historical American attitudes about sound is especially challenging, involving listening for aural representation in multiple representational outlets, including written sites where it is not usually or easily located—such as newspaper coverage, readers’ letters, film, and memoir.¹⁴ Once located, I use close-reading strategies to distill what Richard Cullen Rath described as “sonic protocols”: culturally specific and socially constructed conventions that shape how sound is made, used, and interpreted at a given moment.¹⁵ The sonic color-line forms a dominant sonic protocol that attempts to contain the sound of “Others” and silence alternative listening practices as aberrant and dangerous, even inhuman. In effect, sounds from the past come to us already listened to; they are mediated through and by raced, gendered, and historicized “listening ears,” an expression I use as a theoretical construct to describe how listening functions as an embodied cultural process that echoes and shapes one’s orientation to power and one’s posture toward the world.

To reconstruct the historical presence of the sonic color-line and examine its mobilization against Puerto Rican migration in the immediate postwar period, I close-read the *New York Times* as a primary source document symptomatic of mainstream white American attitudes at the beginning of the cold war.¹⁶ My close-reading practice—theoretically informed and culturally and historically contextualized—enables me to intervene at the critical site where audio intersects the literary and both meet the epistemological: language. Precisely because newspapers were designed for rapid consumption and were never meant to be subject to the scrutiny of close reading, they are especially revealing of cultural mores and historical attitudes concerning race and sound. I pored over articles specifically addressing Puerto Rican migration, white migration to the suburbs, and urban renewal-related construction in Manhattan from 1949 to 1959, looking for mentions of “noise.” Although several newspapers were published in New York during the 1950s, I chose the *New York Times* for its large circulation and deliberately centrist politics. While more overtly racist references to Puerto Rican soundscapes abound in the Hearst-owned *Daily Mirror* and more sharp racial awareness and strident cultural critique are present in African American papers like Harlem’s *Amsterdam News*, this essay focuses on news coverage that professed “unbiased” color-blind representation from a (white) mainstream vantage point.¹⁷ I argue that it is in moments where race is strategically and deliberately downplayed that the sonic color-line performs the most cultural work. Furthermore, the *Times* covers the same terrain recorded so thoroughly by Tony Schwartz, while self-consciously publishing with both a national and international audience in mind.¹⁸ The *Times*’s representations of New York City during

this period reached beyond the city's borders; its coverage treated the city as a microcosm for American identity at large and was self-conscious about how the city appeared on the world stage during the cold war.

Theorizing the Sonic Color-Line

I have developed the term *sonic color-line* to describe the relationship between listening and bodily codes of race. Inspired by and indebted to W. E. B. Du Bois's concept of the visual color-line in *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903) and his later reimagining of that color-line as a suffocating plate-glass enclosure in *Dusk of Dawn* (1940), my notion of the sonic color-line posits listening as an interpretive site where racial difference is coded, produced, and policed.¹⁹ In essence, we hear race in addition to seeing it. Sonic phenomena like vocal timbre, accents, and musical tones are racially coded, like skin color, hair texture, and clothing choices. At one level, the sonic color-line posits racialized subject positions like "white," "black," and "brown" as historical accretions of sonic phenomena and stereotypes that can function without their correlating visual signifiers and can often stand in for them. The tropicalized "jungle drum" motif that opens the film version of *West Side Story* (1961), for example, signifies nonwhite bodies in the streets of Manhattan long before the Puerto Rican Sharks make the scene.²⁰ Through multiple simultaneous processes of dominant representation—such as the journalistic and photographic evidence of this essay—particular sounds are identified, exaggerated, and sutured to racialized bodies. These sounds include musical ones like the drums described above, vocal sounds like accents, dialects, "slang," and extraverbal utterances, as well as ambient domestic and street sounds. For example, Lisa Gitelman describes how early recording technologies ushered in a new era of blackface minstrelsy in which "sounding black" was far more important for white minstrels than applying burnt cork, positing music as "another possible substance of intrinsic racial difference."²¹

White-constructed ideas about "sounding Other" have historically circumscribed the complex range of sounds actually made and produced by people of color, marking the main contour of the sonic color-line. Aural signifiers of race are thoroughly enmeshed with the visibility of race; they never really lose their ultimate referent to different types of bodies despite being able to travel beyond an immediate physical presence. While "sounding black" is certainly linked to looking black, aural ideas of "blackness" often trump any notion of authenticity proffered via the racial logic of visible phenotype. White actors Freeman Fisher Gosden and Charles Correll played the neominstrel characters Amos and Andy on the radio, for example, while black actor Frank Wilson was not hired to narrate the 1941

radio program *Freedom's People* because he sounded “too much like a white man” to both white and black producers.²² These examples point to the instability of sound as a racial determinant and the possibility of crossing the sonic color-line; however, they also highlight that there are very definite ideas within American culture that connect racialized bodies to sounds, even if these labels prove to be unproductive and inaccurate. Ideas about race are thus (re)produced through aural imagery and performance. Traffic across the sonic color-line is policed at the level of representation.

Whiteness, on the other hand, is notorious for reproducing itself as “invisible”²³—or in this case, inaudible—a condition and expression of power that has dramatically shaped the contours of the sonic color-line. The inaudibility of whiteness is due to a considerably wider palette of representation, as well as to a general perception that white representations stand in for “people” in general, rather than “white people” in particular. The inaudibility of whiteness does not mean that it has no sonic markers,²⁴ but merely that they can be harder to hear because of their perceived role as the keynote of American identity, which I will address in the following section. As the dominant “listening ear” is disciplined to process white male ways of sounding as default—natural, normal, and desirable—alternate ways of listening and sounding are deemed aberrant and, depending upon the historical context, as excessively sensitive, strikingly deficient, or impossibly both.

While it never seems to speak its own name, the centrality of white sonic identity is imagined against circumscribed representations of black and brown sound that are often white-constructed. The binary hierarchy of proper/improper marks one border of the sonic color-line; the socially constructed divisions between sound/noise and quiet/loud mark two others. The centrality of whiteness has meant the construction of direct associations between particular brands of white speech and “standard English.” The propriety of standard white speech is amplified—and represented as continually threatened by—dialects, accents, and “improper” slang terminology attributed to immigrants and/or people of color. The entanglement of whiteness with “correct speech” has direct material effects when it comes to obtaining good housing and employment, as Schwartz’s *Nueva York* illustrates and as sociologist John Baugh’s research into linguistic profiling has borne out.²⁵ In addition to speech, other sounds linked to racialized bodies, such as music and the ambient sounds of everyday living, are frequently deemed as “noise”: sound’s loud and unruly “Other.”²⁶ Like Schwartz, I understand the concept of noise not merely in scientific terms—loudness measured in decibels. Schwartz resolutely maintained that the definition of a concept like noise was almost entirely in the ear of the beholder: “Noise is an editorial word. When you talk about noise, you are talking about sound that is bothering you. There’s no party so noisy

as the one you're not invited to."²⁷ I define *noise* as a shifting analytic that renders certain sounds—and the bodies that produce and consume them—as Other: different, out of place, dangerous, ignored, and/or what Cornel West describes as “incomprehensible and unintelligible” under white supremacist epistemologies.²⁸ Loudness, in particular, seems to be a quality of noise frequently linked to ethnic communities. While cultural uses of the term are not exclusive to race—the noise of industry, for example, or of a sporting event—I refer specifically to the ways in which noise is invoked in direct connection to (or as a metonymic stand-in for) people of color. Sometimes tolerated, but more often fetishized as exotic or demonized as unassimilable, noise and loudness frequently function as aural substitutes for and markers of race.

“Quiet Surroundings” versus “Hives of Buzzing Spanish”: Imagining the Postwar Urban Soundscape

In her memoir, *Silent Dancing*, Judith Ortiz Cofer remembers the year her family left El Building—the Puerto Rican tenement barrio in Paterson, New Jersey—for an apartment over the Schultz family grocery store in a white neighborhood. After buying a home in affluent West Paterson, the Schultzes decided to rent to Cofer’s father based on his “fair skin, his ultra-correct English, and his Navy uniform,” three important qualifications for first-class American citizenship during the 1950s.²⁹ In the hopes of inhabiting the apartment and the racialized class status attached to it, Cofer’s father set out to prove to the Schultzes that they “were not the usual Puerto Rican family.”³⁰ Her father lovingly but constantly corrected her speech—“not ‘jes’ but ‘y-es.’ Y-es sir”—and insisted that they remove their shoes to remain inaudible during the store’s operating hours. “We were going to prove how respectable we were,” Cofer recalls, “by being the opposite of what our ethnic group was known to be—we would be quiet and inconspicuous.”³¹ The sonic color-line’s determination of what “usual Puerto Rican” families sounded like caused Cofer’s family to discipline their speech, bodies, and psyches to an ever-present and unceasingly judgmental white American listening ear. After moving across the sonic color-line, the entire family is ensconced in a profound silence.

So where did the bonds between sound, race, and citizenship originate? How did the aural stereotype that Puerto Ricans were noisy and loud become disseminated throughout American culture? How did silence and quiet become the province of white suburban identity? I subsequently address these questions by tracking the sonic color-line in the dominant discourse of the 1950s—represented by the *New York Times*—and reconstructing the racialized soundscape that Cofer remembers and Schwartz’s *Nueva York* documents.

The *Times*'s 1955 series "Our Changing City" provides a sociohistorical backdrop for the complex intersections among race, sound, so-called urban renewal, suburbanization, and American identity. The series paints a fearful portrait of a treacherous concrete jungle threatened by mass migrations of poor people of color, using taglines that echoed the gloom of film noir and the doom of science fiction: "poverty and overcrowding," "creeping urbanization," "Bronxification," "gang fights and muggings," "West-siders fleeing a Puerto Rican influx."³² "Our Changing City" tells the story of white residents struggling to comprehend the rapid transformations of "their" city—at the precise moment they are leaving it in large numbers for Westchester tract homes, racially exclusive Levittowns, and posh Connecticut hills, ensuring the proliferation of the very ghettos they so feared. The series reflected and shaped the dominant perspective that white residents were being pushed out of the city by im/migration rather than pulled into the suburbs by a new spatialization of white privilege.

Within "Our Changing City"—and similar *Times* coverage from the period—writers frequently utilize sound as a stand-in for race. By racializing sound and mapping it onto particular spaces and bodies, white New Yorkers constructed new pockets of segregated space without explicit reference to race or wholesale acknowledgment of racism. White flight during the immediate postwar period was increasingly justified by characterizations of the city as a noisy place, where victims of industrial and construction noise (largely poor people of color and/or immigrants) were represented as its natural and essential causes. When zoning laws and other forms of citizen activism failed to keep the noises of the city at bay, wealthier whites sought a private solution "by turning inward and creating acoustically efficient refuge from the noises of public life" in the suburbs.³³ The sonic color-line demarcated the "quiet" suburbs as a selective respite for economically and racially privileged Americans while allowing them to evade responsibility for their role in creating the din experienced by increasingly (re)segregated black and brown residents of the inner city.

In spite of the fact that white flight often preceded Puerto Rican in-migration, Puerto Rican New Yorkers are represented throughout "Our Changing City" as an invading mass—a hive, a swarm, a teem, a spill—that displaces previous residents. Signaling the power and material consequences of representation, the article on the Lower Bronx reports that the "flight of whites has begun in some cases with the announcement of a forthcoming [housing] project, perhaps years before it is completed."³⁴ Careful to operate within the bounds of postwar color blindness, the writer notes that the arrival of Puerto Rican (and African American) migrants is "not so apparent" as "some of the outward evidences of change apparent to the eye."³⁵ While apparently easy on the eyes, New York City's newest residents are frequently depicted as grating on the ears. As a 1966 ret-

respective on migration put it, the “typical Puerto Rican neighborhood looks peaceful enough though it is teeming with life all of the time and often noisy.”³⁶

To the listening ears of the so-called average American across the sonic color-line, the familiar city landscape was transformed by an invasive Puerto Rican soundscape. “Loud” and “voluble Spanish” filled the air, along with “Caribbean rhythms and guitar twangs,” “wild shouts [of] children in the streets,” “boisterous” and “characteristic Latin dissension,” and the sound of “television and radio blaring simultaneously.”³⁷ Puerto Rican Pentecostal storefront churches were described as “unseemly” gatherings filled with “noisy hymn-singing camaraderie and handclapping.”³⁸ Puerto Ricans were sonically represented by the *Times* as “rough, rowdy, loud, and hilarious,”³⁹ terms that evoke the antithetical image of the disciplined decorum of body and voice demanded by (white) American cold-war norms and listening practices. As Cofer recalls in her memoir: “We were expected to behave with restraint . . . to defeat the stereotype of the loud, slovenly tenement-dweller.”⁴⁰ Stereotypical descriptions of Puerto Ricans deemed them out of place in dominant (white) America; the racialized social construction of noise was a key arena where their alterity was built and maintained.

During these postwar migrations, the “noise” of Spanish and the much-derided Puerto Rican accent became sonic stand-ins for Puerto Ricans themselves. The “Our Changing City” feature on Western Brooklyn described how old “family mansions have been subdivided into warrens” for Puerto Rican residents, transforming them into “hives of buzzing Spanish,” an image with obvious industrial and insectoid resonance.⁴¹ A 1949 article about anti-Puerto Rican sentiment describes how mainland Americans “considered all Puerto Ricans ignorant, unintelligent, and stupid because they [did] not speak English.”⁴² “Spic”—a derogatory term whose origins date back to 1913—made a dramatic resurgence, racializing Puerto Ricans by the sound of their speech rather than through color.⁴³ The sonic color-line socialized mainstream American listening ears to discern a particular type of English as a citizenship standard and deemed the very sound of Spanish—or Spanish-inflected English—as a threatening and racialized sign of intellectual, cultural, and national inferiority. The forcibly exaggerated vocal representations of 1940s and 1950s Hollywood stars Carmen Miranda and Desi Arnaz signified this generalized “Latin accent” to mainstream Americans.⁴⁴

For Puerto Ricans, the sonic color-line worked in conjunction with the vestiges of the visual color-line to mark them as noisy and foreign, thus silently contesting and undercutting their legal claims to U.S. citizenship. As Alberto Sandoval-Sánchez has argued, images of the Puerto Rican migrant hovered on the tense border between “Latino Foreign Other” and

“Latin domestic ethnic and racial other.”⁴⁵ For example, Spanish-speaking Puerto Rican voters were subject to the New York State literacy test, a state law from 1922 to 1965 that required all persons to speak and write fluently in English to register to vote; the test dramatically reduced the political voice of Puerto Ricans in New York.⁴⁶ Furthermore, the sound of Spanish or a “Latin accent” to a landlord’s ears often meant de facto segregation into substandard and overpriced housing.⁴⁷ Under the logic of the sonic color-line, the sound of a Spanish accent or a Spanish last name became noise that immediately classed and raced Puerto Ricans, labeling them slum dwellers and preventing them from moving into areas that lighter skin privilege may have afforded them under the visual color-line.⁴⁸ The marker of noise labeled as “slums” the inner-city neighborhoods with ethnic enclaves—like the Bronx or the West Side of Schwartz’s *Nueva York*—making them vulnerable to wholesale displacement and demolition in the name of progress under urban renewal programs. In a 1958 letter to the *New York Times* titled “Invasion of Privacy by Noise,” a reader went so far as to declare the entire city “an audio slum.”⁴⁹ Another *Times* letter writer pleaded on behalf of the “peaceful people in the nice, quiet, clean neighborhoods, upon whom the hordes of Puerto Ricans descended.”⁵⁰ When thus linked to the bodies of Others, noise was a classed and raced marker of difference that implicitly threatened the idea of a unified American nation and was used to justify segregation, disenfranchisement, and forced intracity migration.

Heavily supported by federal investment in suburbanization, the postwar sonic color-line hailed newly constructed suburban neighborhoods and their white inhabitants as quiet in contrast to the “slums, dirt, and noise” of the sonically polluted metropolis.⁵¹ As Schwartz was becoming interested in the sounds of city life, the *New York Times* was publishing lifestyle pieces in the Home section such as “A Quiet House,” which detailed how recent advances in acoustical engineering could banish noise from one’s suburban home.⁵² Other pieces hailed the overwhelmingly white suburbs of Queens, Long Island, Westchester, and Fairfield as “quiet surroundings where people can live, work or seek refuge from the din of homo mechanicus.”⁵³ In positing the suburbs as a quiet refuge from the noise of modernization projects and industrial labor, the article deftly elides the fact that the majority of urban-renewal projects in New York City were undertaken in the interests of facilitating automobile traffic from outlying areas and increasing office space for suburban workers. The resulting din of modernization projects undertaken in the service of white privilege—like the construction of the Cross Bronx Expressway in 1948—is neutralized as a sign of necessary progress and slum clearance. Schwartz heard this firsthand in the West Side.

Many of the recordings that eventually became *Nueva York* were

made in San Juan Hill and Lincoln Square, neighborhoods that planner Robert Moses slated for slum clearance in 1955 to develop Lincoln Center. In addition to living just blocks away from years' worth of earsplitting demolition and construction, Schwartz understood how thousands of his neighbors were silenced in order to create the quiet entertainment space for the powerful, prosperous, and privileged. Schwartz produced a radio program for WNYC in protest, drawing on the many Puerto Rican, Jewish, and Italian musician-residents he had recorded within the new center's looming footprint. A skeptical Schwartz closed the program with the equivocal "hope [that] it [Lincoln Center] brings as much culture to the community as did the people who were displaced."⁵⁴

While Puerto Rican residents displaced by urban renewal generally resettled in other New York neighborhoods, Jewish, Italian, and other (newly) white ethnic identities frequently shed their inner-city immigrant pasts for a "deeply racialized fantasy of suburban whiteness,"⁵⁵ which often meant exchanging certain sonic markers of difference for suburban peace, quiet, and conformity. In 1952, for example, 160,000 Jews either shortened or replaced their last names.⁵⁶ The popular radio program *Meet the Goldbergs* was renamed *Molly* in 1949 when its cast left the Bronx for the fictional suburb of Haverville and the show migrated to television screens; Molly's accent also became "much less Yiddish."⁵⁷ Kun describes a similar exorcising of the Yiddish sound from both Hollywood and Tin Pan Alley as part of a wholesale racial project to "reconfigure the Jew as meltably ethnic, white Americans no different from anyone else on the suburban block."⁵⁸ In a 1950s cultural landscape, suburban automatically equaled white American. For Jews eager to enter the ranks of the fully assimilated, the stakes of "sounding Jewish" in public were too high. Rather than risk the stereotype of "the Jew as a language-corrupting, racial alien,"⁵⁹ Jews silenced the aural markers of Jewishness or left them behind as echoes in the aural palimpsest of inner-city neighborhoods like the West Side.

Nueva York

At the moment when other Jewish Americans were leaving New York City by the thousands, Schwartz's life took the opposite trajectory. Rather than shedding his "not quite white" past—his father was a Romanian immigrant who grew up in a Lower East Side tenement—Schwartz rejected suburban homogeneity in favor of Manhattan's intercultural crossroads.⁶⁰ While his decision to move into the city (rather than flee from it) belies the mobility of his racial and class privilege, this decision was not without its own sociopolitical stakes: "Those who fought urban renewal, or who sought to make a home in the urban ruins, found themselves locked out of the middle class. They also faced an ideological assault that labeled their

neighborhoods slums and them slumdweller.”⁶¹ For Schwartz, making a home in New York City went hand-in-hand with countering ideological assaults on the city’s residents through artistic representation. Almost immediately after moving to Manhattan in the mid-1940s, Schwartz bought his first wire recorder. Liberated from recording studios—“studios are for silence, not sound,” Schwartz proclaimed—his mobile technology allowed him to make live recordings on the street and in his neighbors’ churches, schools, stores, and homes.⁶²

Though he was neither an anthropologist nor a trained ethnographer, Schwartz’s stake in documenting West Side life, in general, and Puerto Rican migration, in particular, was shaped by his father Samuel’s turn-of-the-century immigrant experiences. Samuel’s story embodies the “bootstraps” European immigrant success story so prevalent in mainstream American culture of the 1940s and 1950s. Tony described his father surviving with fifty words of English—learning at the rate of one word a day—while doing heavy lifting at the shipping department of Klein’s, a discount women’s store near Union Square.⁶³ As Tony returned to ethnic urban space, Samuel was becoming “meltably ethnic,” even joining the cold-war effort in the Army Corps of Engineers. While privately sharing his immigrant past via bedtime stories in suburban Peekskill, New York, Samuel publicly achieved the middle-class success of the assimilated (white) American ideal.

The sonic juxtapositions of *Nueva York*, however, undercut the cold-war era’s quintessentially American immigrant success story by representing im/migration as a sequential practice of spatial discrimination. *Nueva York* posits racism as endemic to American society, targeting assimilation as a form of cultural amnesia and a process of absorbing and perpetuating racial discrimination rather than of resisting and altering it. While his father’s experience gestured toward a more tolerant America, Schwartz observed: “In the 1940s and the 1950s I saw Puerto Rican families moving into the same areas [where my father had lived]. I heard and saw situations that reminded me of the stories that my father told me. New Yorkers who had a few years or a generation ago been in the same situation were dealing with the Puerto Rican New Yorkers with the same misunderstanding they had been dealt.”⁶⁴ By representing the voices of assimilated New Yorkers as willfully misunderstanding Puerto Ricans, Schwartz calls attention to the racism underpinning the dominant narrative of American immigration and amplifies the deliberate exclusions that facilitated the 1950s expansion of whiteness. Despite their supposed citizenship privilege, Puerto Rican migrants were corralled into the same areas circumscribed for America’s Others generations ago. For the privilege of being considered unmarked New Yorkers, former immigrants and their descendents became the newest gatekeepers of the white America that had once vehemently excluded them.

Framed as a corrective to nostalgic immigrant stories and a counter-argument to nationalist-edged racism, *Nueva York* uses sono-montage to navigate across the sonic color-line and tell a different story of Puerto Rican migration. Schwartz's sono-montage relies heavily on editing to create meaning and narrative flow; there is no plot or narration, no names are used, and little context is given for any sound beyond brief liner notes like "Landlord comment." Time is almost completely collapsed within the cords grooves; while Schwartz culled the pieces over eight years, the edits are so smooth that *Nueva York* sounds like a continuous experience or collective day. Using editing to create narrative, Schwartz's splices reimagine 1950s New York as a space of heteroglossia, full of competing, coexisting, and conflicting languages that cannot be contained or neatly cordoned off from one another, regardless of segregation and monocultural American identity discourses.

However, Schwartz does not claim totalizing representation of "the" Puerto Rican story in *Nueva York*, offering only to reveal "some understandings" of the "problems of a people."⁶⁵ Similarly, my reading is not intended to be comprehensive, but focuses instead on how Puerto Rican and (white) American voices are represented on the record overall, especially in two moments when sounds are spliced together to create edited encounters. Because the sono-montage technique retains a large amount of ambiguity and openness to alternative listenings, I highlight the way in which editing can suggest new meaning under the sonic color-line.

Nueva York is particularly attentive to how sounds of English are equated with American identity while Spanish sounds represent a simplistic foreign noise. Five minutes into the record, an anonymous resident of Riverside Drive—a traditionally wealthy street whose residents felt particularly affronted by Puerto Rican migration—sneers that her new neighbors "don't want to learn how to speak the language." The remaining forty-five minutes counter with a broad range of Puerto Rican voices in terms of accent, tone, language, gender, age, and social class; as the liner notes do not depict the speakers' ethnicities, listeners' assumptions of what Puerto Ricans sound like are frequently challenged. The multiplicity of voices rejects any notion of a homogenous Latin accent and creates an aural spectrum ranging from monolingual Spanish to bilingualism, code-switching, monolingual English, and varied linguistic competencies in both languages.

Through strategic placement of (white) American voices within the sono-montage, *Nueva York* illustrates how Puerto Rican encounters with American English are structured by colonial power. Voices sound white not simply because of their Standard English or New York accent but because of their authoritative tone and the way in which they structure the record's narrative. Although both white and Puerto Rican voices remain

anonymous, Puerto Rican voices are quoted largely as private residents; white voices operate as authorities of capitalism and other institutions of Americanization, representing landlords, shop owners, social service workers, and teachers. From the mechanized drone announcing “the arrival of flight 848” to the closing teacher’s insistence that her students “have additional problems in their home life,” white American voices are represented as telling Puerto Ricans what to do, where to go, and how they are. I trace this confluence of power, voice, and race through two edited “encounters” that dramatize white and Puerto Rican conflicts over urban space. The first, titled “Housing Discrimination,” deals with Puerto Ricans’ right to claim the city’s interior spaces and the second, which I will refer to as the “Music” segment, examines the conflict over public space.

In “Housing Discrimination,” Schwartz splices white and Puerto Rican voices together, amplifying how the sonic color-line shapes listener’s perceptions of racial identity and who belongs where. Such assumptions, based on what people think they hear, have profound material consequences. The segment opens with a man imitating the rude tone of Americans who, from the “moment they hea[r] [his] foreign accent,” decide “they ‘do not open the door to foreigners!’” Though not “foreigners,” Puerto Ricans were frequently represented as such in the dominant discourse; the man’s Spanish accent was enough to trigger racialized assumptions that led to his rejection. Schwartz juxtaposes the Puerto Rican man’s story with an audibly angry comment from a “West Side” woman, a spliced representation of those on the rejecting side of the door. In a thick New York accent, this woman voices virulent judgments that echo the discourse of “Our Changing City” and the *New York Times*’s letters to the editor. While the woman’s tone is agitated, her pacing is slow, and she hardly breathes throughout her litany, producing a memorized—almost bored—effect. In her neighborhood, she says:

The houses are very beautiful and very well kept. Between the streets of West End Avenue and Riverside, the houses are filled with Puerto Ricans. They dirty the steps, they sit all day in front of the house, they make lewd remarks when I pass by. I can look in the window and see them, living in filth and misery. . . . I wish they hadn’t come here in the first place. They aren’t welcome. They don’t want to learn how to speak the language and it’s a shame they don’t stay in their own country.

Her tone suggests an automatic, learned anger; she blames Puerto Ricans for the crowded and noisy conditions on the West Side, as opposed to the “very beautiful and very well kept” (white) streets bookending the neighborhood. Quite certain she knows Puerto Ricans, she finds their visual and sonic presence offensive—“they dirty the steps . . . they make lewd remarks”—even as she feels entitled to voyeuristically peep through their

windows. There is no hint of irony in her voice when she sneers “they aren’t welcome,” a passive phrase that masks her aggression and ignores that her Puerto Rican neighbors are, in fact, “in their own country.”

After a slight pause, Schwartz juxtaposes the angry woman’s thick accent with an “accentless” female voice, ironizing the way in which sound has been used to mark race and claim citizenship. The second woman’s tone is calm, even, and pleasant, contrasting with both the West Side woman and the story she tells:

He started telling us, “oh the people around here you don’t have to worry about them, they’re terrific. . . . And one thing you don’t have to worry about ever: ‘Puerto Ricans’” he says. . . . So after a little while Andy says to him, “oh, you know something, we’re Latins,” and I think his face got white and he says, “Oh no!” because he’d already talked to us and he liked us. . . . so I figured, well, why let him know that I am a Puerto Rican, lose the chance on getting a terrific setup like we would have. . . . we figured in some time to come we will let him know, so that he’ll realize that not everybody is the same.

Nueva York’s editing strategies produce several ironies here. First, the woman’s “accentless voice” evacuates the bluster from the angry woman’s claim that Puerto Ricans “don’t want to learn how to speak the language” and casts aspersions on her own accented speech. Second, this woman’s story reveals the angry woman to be one of the “terrific” people in the neighborhood who have joined together to ban Puerto Ricans. Finally, Schwartz’s editing practice utilizes voice and accent to raise the issue of “passing”—both visually and sonically—to unsettle perceived assumptions about Puerto Rican racial identity. By refusing to reveal the ethnicity of the various speakers, Schwartz forces listeners to become aware of how much they use sound to determine a speaker’s identity and how much cultural baggage accents are freighted with. This specific passage places potentially hostile white listeners in the point-of-audition of the surprised landlord, who assumed the speakers’ whiteness until they revealed their “Latin” identity. The speaker’s English is flawless—as is her husband’s, whose story directly follows hers.⁶⁶ Even though they are visibly and sonically white according to the normative codes of the period, the young couple’s disclosure jeopardizes their “chance on getting a terrific setup”; the fact that this couple is essentially forced to pass to obtain adequate housing exposes the racialized power dynamics of the postwar housing market and questions the visual and sonic color-lines that supposedly divide the white American self from a Puerto Rican Other.

A subsequent speaker further marks the sonic color-line barring Puerto Ricans from adequate housing in New York City. As upsetting as the young couple’s story may be, Schwartz splices in a thickly accented

woman who reveals their relative linguistic privilege. An unhappy tenant, she details her substandard accommodations and the exploitation that keeps it that way: “You know the hall is dark, and I report that about four or five times. And then later and tomorrow and then later and never come. . . . I am waiting until summer because no se I’ll come back to Puerto Rico because this is terrible. It is a place terrible. You can’t sleep because many troubles [voice fades out].” The neglected tenant’s story also counters the West Side woman’s narrative of dirty Puerto Ricans and places the onus for substandard housing on the shoulders of the landlords who profit from unsanitary conditions. Schwartz’s choice to fade her voice out while she is still talking mirrors her marginalization within the system; by tuning her out, like her landlord, Schwartz suggests that she has only begun to expose the horrors of her building. As her story fades, the even tones of a man speaking Standard English rise: “Well, I think it’s good business to give good housing,” he says. Placed directly following the woman’s story, the landlord’s speech is jarring, especially the way he speaks in abstractions of units, square footage, and tenants. Schwartz’s splicing creates what Mikhail Bakhtin describes as a “contact zone” across the sonic color-line, using the woman’s accented and racialized voice—a voice in Bakhtin’s schema “frequently not even acknowledged in society”—to challenge the landlord’s “authoritative discourse.”⁶⁷ Though the landlord goes on to describe renovations that will give tenants “twice the space for the same money,” his authority has been dramatically undercut by the voices that came before. The juxtaposed vocal grains and accents comprising this segment both affirm and challenge the ways in which sound functions as a material and social relation in 1950s American culture.

Accompanying the Puerto Rican struggle to obtain quality domestic space was a fight for equal access to the public sphere. In addition to issues of voice and language, *Nueva York* takes on the mainstream representation of Puerto Rican street music as threatening noise—a frequent complaint in the *New York Times*—especially the percussion groups popular with New York youth (see figure 2). Schwartz features young percussionists in the segment titled “Music.”⁶⁸ Young men’s voices layer mambo lyrics over a polyphonic beat encompassing fingertips on car fenders. An abrupt cut directs attention to one man’s voice, whose simmering Standard English punctuates his critique of a group he identifies only as “they.” To ears tuned by and attuned to the sonic color-line, there might be just the briefest recognition, an expectation that this young man is about to critique “they” who make noise in the streets. However, the young man is a Puerto Rican New Yorker—on the inside of the drum circle—and he candidly criticizes the objectifying gaze of outsiders: “They come by and they watch us dancing out in the streets. . . . they think it’s terrible and disgusting, but you know they do the same thing too, only they do it in the nightclubs.”



Figure 2. Tony Schwartz recording children on the street, New York City, circa 1955. Courtesy of Anton Schwartz

The speaker makes a potent critique of the voyeurism inherent in the act of watching—whether through windshields, apartment windows, or newspaper—calling attention to its power dynamics and limitations as a way of knowing others. A horn honk punctuates his statement, an aural reminder that this exchange takes place on the street and that the musicians are engaged in a tense cultural conflict over what constitutes the proper sound and movement of bodies through urban space.

Nueva York amplifies how Puerto Rican youth tried to make themselves visible and audible in defiant violation of white cultural norms concerning privacy, propriety, and “peace and quiet.” The interlocking forces of poverty and racial segregation, which limited migrants’ access to private space—in combination with Puerto Rican cultural views regarding the street as an active, shared public sphere—compelled Puerto Rican youth to make space for themselves on New York City’s streets. In recognizing the judgment of the gaze, in which dancing in public is immediately equated with a brown (hyper)sexuality deemed “terrible and disgusting,” the speaker calls attention to the displacement of white sexuality onto this same construction. After all, those who watch like to shake it to the mambo beat

as well, but only inside the cordoned-off space of the exclusive nightclub, as a privilege of both class and race.

In the next sound bite, *Nueva York* continues to refute charges that street music is noise by exploring its sonic affinities with the sounds of mambo emanating from the Palladium nightclub.⁶⁹ After the young man's speech, there is a lengthy silence and a cut to an older man's voice with a mambo orchestra behind him. He reveals himself to be the "owner of the Palladium, the Home of the Mambo," precisely the type of place where the young man argues that "they" go to dance. The Palladium was particularly symptomatic of the appropriation of mambo within mainstream American culture and the Anglicization of its sound in the mid-1950s.⁷⁰ As the club owner advertises: "We have 95% Puerto Rican people come in on Friday, Saturday, Sunday. On Wednesday nights, we have nothing but Americans come and see us. We play nothing but mambo music and we have a terrific show." By exploiting sound's ability to bleed into other sounds, *Nueva York* shows that mambo music was being generated on the segregated streets of New York City—not just imported from Cuba and other Latin American countries—and was being consumed in nightclubs equally segregated. The owner's words are literally drowned out by a large, professional band playing a mambo typical of Xavier Cugat or Perez Prado, with screaming horns charging over a quirky staccato beat. The orchestra sounds distant and slightly canned when compared to the sound of the teenagers jamming on the street that still lingers in the cut, even as their beat is echoed faintly within the smooth, polished stylings of the nightclub musicians. Starting the music sequence with the boys' street band encourages listeners to hear echoes of their rhythms playing in the sound of the professional mambo band that follows their segment, rather than the other way around. The music climbs to a fevered pitch and then: silence. Suddenly, two young girls' voices singing a cappella in Spanish take over. Listeners have left the nightclub and are back on the street, which *Nueva York's* edits have repositioned as a wellspring of musical expression, the source of its energy and life rather than its noisy debasement. By surrounding the familiar strains of popular mambo music with the noise of the streets, *Nueva York* alters the sound of both.

Mediating the Sonic Color-Line

In segments like "Housing Discrimination" and "Music," Schwartz's recording privileges the voices of Puerto Ricans in the story of their migration and, in so doing, calls explicit attention to the absence of their voices in the unitary language of official media. While interviewing Puerto Ricans may seem a commonsense necessity rather than a resistant decision, I must underscore that the *New York Times* printed hundreds of

panicky articles about “our changing city” and the “Puerto Rican problem” in the same period and rarely, if ever, do the articles invoke a Puerto Rican perspective or include even one quotation from the Puerto Rican community. In the mainstream American media, Puerto Ricans are spoken about by city officials, by angry white New Yorkers, by politicians, and by police; and they are spoken for by academics, journalists, teachers, and settlement workers; but they are rarely spoken to, and they are almost never allowed to speak directly about their lives and the issues affecting them.⁷¹ *Nueva York* succeeds in presenting a sono-montage of different Puerto Rican voices to embed a believable image of a divergent, multi-racial American city emergent within segregation’s silences. Schwartz used aural media channels to challenge mechanisms like the sonic color-line that create—and then silence—Others.

However, in splicing the sonic color-line, *Nueva York* risks becoming ensnared in it. Because it focuses so intently on reforming white listeners, there is a way in which the record can also work to domesticate Puerto Ricans, undercutting their narrative agency. While *Nueva York* calls attention to the way in which sound functions as a set of social relations, its representational strategies also remind us that sound is not a utopic space devoid of power. The sono-montage technique problematically enables Schwartz to evacuate his audible presence from the final recording—except as a somewhat distanced arbiter of sound—creating a false boundary between the recorder and the recorded that allows his own cultural deaf spots to go unchallenged. Furthermore, the very project of countering mainstream imaginings of noisy Puerto Rican life during the 1950s moves the narrative along a pathway predetermined by (white) American expectations of assimilation and citizenship. Using sound to emphasize sameness and interpolate Puerto Rican migrants so heartily into the “We are immigrants, all” narrative of American identity risks what Juan Flores has described as the “enforced melting-down of genuine cultural diversity”⁷² by constructing American identity as ahistorical and unchanged by its divergent citizens, muting the distinctive challenges that Puerto Ricans faced as a colonized people.

During the 1950s, cultural and linguistic assimilation offered only a perpetually second-class American citizenship for Puerto Rican migrants, unlike the social mobility that enabled former European immigrants to leave their inner-city enclaves behind. Therefore, while *Nueva York* culminates in a section where Puerto Rican children are heard learning English—saluting the American flag, singing “America,” and reciting the rhyme “Pollito—Chicken, Gallina—Hen, Lápiz—Pencil, y Pluma—Pen”—the sonic color-line reemerges to fracture any unitary reading of this moment as a triumph of Americanization for both white and Puerto Rican listeners. Placing this segment so near the record’s end

submerges the history that Cofer traces in *Silent Dancing*—including the fact that, for most of the twentieth century, Puerto Ricans have been forced to learn English before ever setting foot on U.S. soil. “My father began his school day by saluting the flag of the United States and singing ‘America’ by rote, without understanding a word of what he was saying,” Cofer remembers; “to this day, I can recite ‘Pollito-Chicken’ mindlessly, never once pausing to visualize chickens, hens, pencils or pens.”⁷³ While the form of *Nueva York* gives rise to a more nationalistic interpretation of the children’s performance, the actual content of the sound remains ambiguous. Their recitation could sound earnest, mindless, or both at once. More than any one argument or interpretation, perhaps Schwartz’s best legacy to his listeners is the realization that resistance and subjection are never so easily separable and, like “noise,” remain dependent upon the listening ear of the beholder. Far from being a natural or arbitrary function of perception, listening is an act riven with power relations.

Notes

I thank the family of Tony Schwartz (especially Anton Schwartz) as well as Ann Weiss, Ava Chin, and Nisha Kunte for their research support in New York City. I am also indebted to Andy Lanset, archivist at WNYC; Jeff Place, archivist of the Ralph Rinzler Collection at the Smithsonian Center for Folklife and Culture; and Janet McKee, the librarian for the Recorded Sound Reference Center at the Library of Congress, for their tireless assistance. Binghamton University provided research funding, and my colleagues in the English Department were particularly incisive readers, especially David Bartine, Donette Francis, Praseeda Gopinath, Scott Henkel, Joe Keith, Kelly Kinney, and Monika Mehta. Liana Silva provided key translations of portions of *Nueva York*. Frances R. Aparicio also shaped this essay through careful comments and wonderful conversation while visiting the BU Sound Studies Collective in spring 2009. I remain grateful for the enthusiasm of Josh Kun, and the feedback given by Fred Moten, Judith Jackson Fossett, Joanna Demers, and Carla Kaplan during my graduate studies at the Department of American Studies and Ethnicity at the University of Southern California. I also wish to thank my editor and anonymous reviewer at *Social Text* for their particularly thoughtful comments. Finally, this essay is indelibly imprinted by years of conversation with Charlie Ackerman and the stellar scholarly work and editorial feedback of Priscilla Peña Ovalle.

1. The boundaries of New York 19 are Sixtieth Street to the north, Times Square to the south, Fifth Avenue and the Hudson River on the east and west.

2. Folkways was an independent record label headed by Moe Asch that boasted the “World’s Largest Collection of Authentic Folk Music” by 1956. The stakes of Folkways’ mission were great—misrepresentation, mistranslation, exoticization, appropriation, and exploitation—and their recordings often risked reifying the sonic color-line while purporting to dissipate it.

3. Tony Schwartz, *Nueva York: A Tape Documentary of Puerto Rican New Yorkers*, Folkways Records (FP 58/2, 1955).

4. “The Sound of the Family of Man: A Sono-Montage by Tony Schwartz,” n.d., NSI XTV 124896, Ralph Rinzler Folklife Archives and Collections, Smithsonian Center for Folklife and Culture, Washington, DC.

5. There is only one other scholar that I know of working on Schwartz: Angela Blake, at Ryerson University, in the context of what she describes as “urban acoustic ecologies.”

6. Schwartz himself put out a high-fidelity test record that was given away with stereo purchases at a local shop, although in typical Schwartz style, the 45—titled *11 People*—was a measured collection of street interviews designed to rattle the ears of audiophiles seeking sterile, studio-produced hodgepodes of sound. Tony Schwartz, *11 People*, Standard Brand, FW-45-4607, Ralph Rinzler Folklife Archives and Collections, Smithsonian Center for Folklife and Culture, Washington, DC.

7. Tony Schwartz Production Folder, Ralph Rinzler Folklife Archives and Collections, Smithsonian Center for Folklife and Culture, Washington, DC. This data provides merely a baseline. Sales data from Moe Asch is notoriously unreliable, especially because of his abysmal record of royalty payments. There are several requests for overdue payments from Schwartz in the production folder. I do want to add that Folkways had a longer reach than their sales data shows, as their marketing concentrated primarily on libraries, academic conferences, and magazines devoted to audiophiles. Folkways’ largely white audience is detailed in Tony Olmstead’s business history *Folkways Records: Moses Asch and His Encyclopedia of Sound* (London: Routledge, 2003).

8. Quoted in Ira Henry Freeman, “About New York: Collectors: Of City Sounds, Magician’s Props, Dolls of Stars, Antique Apothecary’s Jars,” *New York Times*, 2 September 1953.

9. Howard Winant, *The World Is a Ghetto: Race and Democracy since World War II* (New York: Basic, 2001).

10. See W. E. B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903; New York: Penguin, 1996); Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993); Lisa Gitelman, *Scripts, Grooves, and Writing Machines: Representing Technology in the Edison Era* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1999); Mark M. Smith, *Listening to Nineteenth Century America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001); Mark M. Smith, *How Race Is Made: Slavery, Segregation, and the Senses* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006); Fred Moten, *In the Break: The Aesthetics of the Black Radical Tradition* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003); Richard Cullen Rath, *How Early America Sounded* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2003); Alexander Weheliye, *Phonographies: Grooves in Sonic Afro-Modernity* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2005); Shane White and Graham White, *The Sounds of Slavery: Discovering African American History through Songs, Sermons, and Speech* (Boston: Beacon, 2005); Josh Kun, *Audiotopia: Music, Race, and America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006).

11. Although Kun, in *Audiotopia*, describes “the American audio-racial imagination”—a phrase he uses to summarize the “extent to which meanings about race, racial identity, and racialization within the United States have been generated, developed, and experienced at the level of sound and music” (26)—it functions predominantly as a backdrop for the resistant listening practices of popular music’s artists, fans, and connoisseurs.

12. While the studies that connect race and listening are still few, those that connect listening and gender are fewer still. Susan McClary’s *Feminine Endings: Music, Gender, and Sexuality* (Minneapolis: Minnesota University Press, 1991) continues to be a key text, while Nichole T. Rustin and Sherrie Tucker’s new edited volume *Big Ears: Listening for Gender in Jazz Studies* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008) takes up the lack of critical work on this subject.

13. See R. Murray Schafer, *The Soundscape, or the Tuning of the World* (New York: Random House, 1977); Jacques Attali, *Noise: A Political Economy of Music*, trans. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1985); Peter Bailey, *Popular Culture and Performance in the Victorian City* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998); Michael Bull and Les Back, introduction to *The Auditory Culture Reader*, ed. Michael Bull and Les Back (London: Berg, 2003), 1–18; Jonathan Sterne, *The Audible Past: Cultural Origins of Sound Reproduction* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003). See also Moten, *In the Break*; and Kun, *Audiotopia*.

14. Literary sound studies scholar Bruce Smith describes this process of finding and cataloging historical sound as “acoustical archaeology” and describes it as a process of “learning to hear, and not just see” the evidence embedded in written materials. “Listening to the Wild Blue Yonder: The Challenges of Acoustic Ecology,” in *Hearing Cultures: Essays on Sound, Listening, and Modernity*, ed. Veit Erlmann (Oxford: Berg, 2004), 24.

15. Richard Cullen Rath, *How Early America Sounded* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2003), 152.

16. A New York location was a crucial selection factor here, as Puerto Rican migrants overwhelmingly selected the city as their residence in the states, with more than 245,880 people—82.9 percent of the entire Puerto Rican diaspora—relocating there in 1950. Carmen Teresa Whalen and Victor Vásquez-Hernández, *The Puerto Rican Diaspora: Historical Perspectives* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2005), 3.

17. According to the *New York Times*’s chronicler Edwin Diamond, the daily’s reputation as a leading American paper was well established by 1950. Readers did not turn to the *Times* for flash or gossip, but rather “its thorough reporting, and its air of serious purpose” see *Behind the Times: Inside the New “New York Times”* (New York: Villard, 1994), 51.

18. The international edition of the *New York Times* began publishing in 1946. Pride in the international edition suffused the paper at the local level and contributed to the gravitas of the *Times*’s postwar reportage.

19. Du Bois, *Souls of Black Folk*; and his *Dusk of Dawn* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction, 2007). I retain Du Bois’s hyphenation of “color-line.”

20. *West Side Story*, DVD, directed by Robert Wise and Jerome Robbins (1961; Los Angeles: MGM, 2003).

21. Gitelman, *Scripts, Grooves, and Writing Machines*, 135. Barbara Dianne Savage dubbed the vocal tone of minstrelsy as “aural blackface” in *Broadcasting Freedom: Radio, War, and the Politics of Race, 1938–1948* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999), 74.

22. Savage, *Broadcasting Freedom*, 74.

23. See Richard Dyer, *White* (London: Routledge, 1997).

24. See Derrick Valliant’s discussion of the “sounds of whiteness” as the baseline identity for U.S. radio broadcasting in “Sounds of Whiteness: Local Radio, Racial Formation, and Public Culture in Chicago, 1921–1935,” *American Quarterly* 54 (2002): 25–66; see also Geoff Mann’s work on how American country music “became white” in “Why Does Country Music Sound White? Race and the Voice of Nostalgia,” *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 31 (2008): 73–100.

25. John Baugh, “Linguistic Profiling,” in *Black Linguistics: Language, Society, and Politics in Africa and the Americas*, ed. Sinfrey Makoni, Geneva Smitherman, Arnetta F. Ball, and Arthur K. Spears (London: Routledge, 2003), 155–68.

26. For additional theoretical discussions of “noise,” see Schafer, *Soundscape*; Barry Truax, *Acoustic Communication* (Norwood, NJ: Ablex, 1984); Attali, *Noise*;

Tricia Rose, *Black Noise: Rap Music and Black Culture in Contemporary America* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1994); Douglas Kahn, *Noise, Water, Meat* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1999); Emily Thompson, *The Soundscape of Modernity: Architectural Acoustics and the Culture of Listening in America, 1900–1933* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2002); and Moten, *In the Break*.

27. Tony Schwartz, quoted in Alan L. Otten, “Noise?” *Wall Street Journal*, 31 May 1973.

28. I use white supremacy here as Cornel West defines it in *Prophesy Deliverance! An Afro-American Revolutionary Christianity* (Philadelphia: Westminister, 1982), as “the controlling metaphors, notions, and categories of modern discourse that develop and delimit specific conceptions of truth and knowledge, so that certain ideas are rendered incomprehensible and unintelligible” (74).

29. Judith Ortiz Cofer, *Silent Dancing: A Partial Remembrance of a Puerto Rican Childhood* (Houston: Arte Público, 1991), 63. I thank Frances Aparicio for pointing me to this reference.

30. Ibid.

31. Ibid., 53, 64.

32. Emanuel Perlmutter, “Our Changing City: Northern Brooklyn; Area Has Had Big Population Shifts, But Is Still Drab,” *New York Times*, 22 July 1955; Richard Amper, “Our Changing City: Conflicts in the Upper Bronx; Creeping Urbanization Meets Staid Suburbia,” *New York Times*, 15 July 1955; Merrill Folsom, “Our Changing City: To Westchester and Fairfield; Hinterlands to the North Get Big Office and Shopping Centers,” *New York Times*, 15 August 1955; Peter Kihss, “Our Changing City: Upper and Middle East Side; U.N. Buildings and Big Apartments Remake Face of Four Square Mile District,” *New York Times*, 1 July 1955.

33. Thompson, *Soundscape of Modernity*, 168.

34. Sydney Gruson, “Our Changing City: New Faces in the Lower Bronx,” *New York Times*, 11 July 1955.

35. Ibid.

36. Paul Hoffmann, “Rising Hispanic Migration Heightens City Tensions,” *New York Times*, 4 April 1966. While the article was written after the bulk of Puerto Rican migration, I find this piece to be symptomatic of the entire decade, as well as a representative compendium of many articles written in that time span.

37. Ibid.

38. George Dugan, “Churches Scored on Puerto Ricans,” *New York Times*, 9 March 1958.

39. “Bias Here Charged by Puerto Ricans,” *New York Times*, 19 November 1949.

40. Cofer, *Silent Dancing*, 119.

41. Charles Grutzner, “Our Changing City: Downtown Brooklyn Glistens,” *New York Times*, 19 July 1955.

42. “Bias Here Charged by Puerto Ricans.”

43. The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines the term as a “contemptuous and offensive name for a Spanish-speaking native of Central or South America or the Caribbean; a spiggoty” and cites the etymology of the word as deriving from “broken English.” In the memoir *When I Was Puerto Rican* (New York: Da Capo, 1993), Esmeralda Santiago remembers asking her father about the term *spic* while still in Puerto Rico during Eisenhower’s presidency: “Well,” he tells her, “there are many Puerto Ricans in New York and when somebody asks them a question they say ‘I don’t spik English’ instead of ‘I don’t speak English.’ They make fun of our accent” (73).

44. Carmen Miranda's radio and film scripts were prewritten in heavy dialect emphasizing her (incorrectly) assumed ignorance of English; newspaper quotes depicted her words in thick, grammatically incorrect visual dialect. I thank Priscilla Peña Ovalle for calling my attention to Miranda's radio work; see her chapter on Miranda in her forthcoming book from Rutgers University Press. Also see Shari Roberts's "'The Lady in the Tutti-Frutti Hat': Carmen Miranda, a Spectacle of Ethnicity," *Cinema Journal* 32, no. 3 (1993): 3–23, for a more thorough treatment of the press representation of Miranda's accent.

45. Alberto Sandoval-Sánchez, *José, Can You See? Latinos On and Off Broadway* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1999), 63.

46. According to José Ramón Sánchez, in 1952, for example, only 35,000 Puerto Ricans registered to vote out of a potential 250,000. Mass disenfranchisement, coupled with the fact that Puerto Rican voters were not centralized in one borough or district, prevented Puerto Ricans from being heard by politicians or electing city officials who would listen to them during this period. *Boricua Power: A Political History of Puerto Ricans in the United States* (New York: New York University Press, 2008), 120.

47. In 1947, Charles Abrams, special counsel to the New York State Joint Legislative Committee on Housing and Multiple Dwellings, described Spanish accents as enabling "housing bias against Puerto Ricans—light and dark. The 'Spic,' as the Spanish-speaking, slum-dweller is scornfully called, is rated a less than desirable tenant than the native Negro." Charles Abrams, "How to Remedy Our 'Puerto Rican' Problem," *Commonwealth*, February 1955, 122.

48. Cofer writes in *Silent Dancing* of her father's multiple failures to secure good housing because of their last name, Ortiz, "even though my father had the fair skin and light brown hair of his northern Spanish family background and our name is as common in Puerto Rico as Johnson is in the U.S." (89).

49. Erica Landis, "Invasion of Privacy by Noise," letter to the editor, *New York Times*, 3 September 1958.

50. Domenick Roamer, "Who's to Blame?" letter to the editor, *New York Times*, 1 November 1959.

51. "Essayist, 14, Finds Manhattan Is Roseate Even to 'Thorn' of Slums, Dirt, and Noise," *New York Times*, 30 June 1947.

52. Mary Roche, "A Quiet House," *New York Times*, 19 November 1944.

53. "City Is among Tops for 'Noisiest' Title," *New York Times*, 6 May 1949. The term *homo mechanicus* explicitly debases New York City life and characterizes its residents as mechanized and dehumanized; after all, "people" seek "quiet surroundings."

54. Tony Schwartz, "Lincoln Center Community," RXF 4787, Recorded Sound Reference Center, Library of Congress, Washington, DC.

55. Eric Avila, *Popular Culture in the Age of White Flight* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 15.

56. Alvin J. Kugelmass, quoted, in Kun, *Audiotopia*, 50.

57. Karen Brodtkin, *How Jews Became White Folks and What That Says about Race in America* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press), 157.

58. Kun, *Audiotopia*, 50.

59. *Ibid.*, 68.

60. Tony Schwartz's father moved the family to Peekskill, New York, when Tony was four and commuted to the city to work as a civil engineer designing subway tunnels. Schwartz returned to Brooklyn after high school to attend Pratt Institute;

after graduating in 1944 and briefly serving as a graphic artist in the Navy, he eventually moved to West Fifty-sixth Street in Manhattan.

61. Brodtkin, *How Jews Became White Folks*, 50.

62. Tony Schwartz, interview with Peter Goldsmith, 7-18-91, PG035, Ralph Rinzler Folklife Archive and Collection, Smithsonian Center for Folklife and Culture, Washington, DC.

63. Ibid.

64. Liner notes, *Nueva York*.

65. Ibid.

66. I have been able to identify the two speakers as Norma and Amador “Andy” Chaidez, whom Schwartz thanks in the liner notes. In personal correspondence, Schwartz’s former assistant Forrest Gray described Norma Chaidez as a close friend of Schwartz. His archive includes recordings, made during the mid-1950s, of the waiting room during the birth of her child and of her singing to her newborn baby in English and Spanish.

67. Mikhail Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1982), 342, 344. The concept of “contact zones” has been productively furthered by Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (London: Routledge, 1992), and by Josh Kun in *Audiotopia*.

68. Schwartz used recordings of the music of Puerto Rican youth on almost every recording he put out on Folkways, including *1,2,3, and a Zing, Zing, Zing* (FW 07003, 1953), *Millions of Musicians* (FW 05560, 1954), *New York 19* (FW 05558, 1954), and *Sounds of My City* (FW 07341, 1956).

69. The Palladium was a famous ballroom that mambo saved from bankruptcy in 1947. The club went from an all-swing to an all-mambo policy in 1952. For a discussion of how the Palladium finally opened up to Latinos, see César Miguel Rondón’s *The Book of Salsa: A Chronicle of Urban Music from the Caribbean to New York City* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008).

70. Kun, *Audiotopia*, 79. Perry Como and Rosemary Clooney both had hit mambo songs by the time *Nueva York* was released.

71. The first literary explorations of Puerto Rican migration were both published in 1952—“El pasaje” by José Luis Gonzáles and *La carreta* by René Marqués—but were written in Spanish and were not yet translated or accessible to a mainstream American readership. Jesus Colón’s collection of English vignettes, *A Puerto Rican in New York and Other Sketches*, was not published until 1961, and although he was writing prolifically for the *Daily World* and the *Daily Worker* during the 1940s and 1950s, the circulation of these papers dropped rapidly due to anticommunist paranoia and persecution. Piri Thomas’s groundbreaking memoir, *Down These Mean Streets*, was not published until 1967.

72. Juan Flores, *Divided Borders: Essays on Puerto Rican Identity* (Houston: Arte Público, 1993), 14.

73. Cofer, *Silent Dancing*, 56. “Pollito–Chicken” is also the name of a 1981 short story by Puerto Rican writer Ana Lydia Vega, which similarly deals with the resonances of English as a colonial language. Carmen Lugo Filippi and Ana Lydia Vega, *Virgenes y mártires (cuentos)* (Río Piedras: Antillana, 1984), 73–80.

