

notion of blues purity. This reduces Black musicians' agency and self-determination and erases white mentors like Jimmy Vaughan from the narrative. Mack's careful analysis reveals the ways in which apprenticeships both function and are obscured in blues traditions.

By incorporating autobiographical storytelling into the concept of blues, this book is a groundbreaking work that will be foundational for scholars of blues, popular music, American studies, Black studies, and media studies. The book is aimed at scholarly audiences, but the writing is accessible and engaging enough for advanced undergraduates and general audiences. Mack's work offers a new analytical frame for considering who can participate in blues and how, while simultaneously locating and challenging reductive tropes and exploitative and appropriative participants. This work could be built upon by future scholars to include how the blues industry—including blues labels, nonprofits, blues societies, and the blues radio and festival circuit—factors into these conversations.

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Atmospheric Noise: The Indefinite Urbanism of Los Angeles

By Marina Peterson. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2021.

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Atmospheric Noise: The Indefinite Urbanism of Los Angeles follows the transformative significances of noise occasioned by the opening of the Los Angeles International Airport (LAX) in 1959 in terms of new challenges to urban planning, modes of life, and onto-epistemic slippage. Here, Marina Peterson uses a variety of mutually informing methods whose indeterminacy sometimes models the liminality of noise itself. Peterson theorizes the local and contextual significances of sound in the shifting urban world of Southern California in the 1960s and 1970s using rigorous archival and ethnographic work. The book repeatedly eschews fixed definitions of noise in favor of local, contextual, and plastic considerations of the atmospheric rather than the semiotic or formal. "Atmospheric" here refers to a focus on the material entanglements that frame being and occasion knowledge. Rather than respecting subjects or objects as discrete, Peterson's phenomenal approach to the atmospheric emphasizes "sensation and immaterial forms of energy, materializations over materiality—motion, emergence, immanence, in and of air and sense" (9).

Informed by the methodological and epistemic assumptions of "new materialism," this study focuses on the particular qualities of diverse forms of matter and their entanglements.¹ Furthermore, it addresses a lacuna in related literature that has rarely engaged the challenges of the atmospheric; that material space that, in its liminality, connects subjects to their physical and social possibilities of being. Though in dialogue with many strands of sound studies, this method allows Peterson to sidestep arguments about the potential signifying, lisible character of sound and noise

¹Peterson explicitly notes the study's investment in new materialism, a developing field that offers many contributions to humanistic study broadly construed. For more on the methodological and epistemological assumptions of new materialism, see Karen Barad, *Meeting the Universe Halfway: Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007); Jane Bennett, *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010); Diana Coole and Samantha Frost, eds., *New Materialisms: Ontology, Agency, and Politics* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010).

endemic to sound studies.² Peterson's material conception of noise is a starting point that allows it to be multiple and irreducible, "seductive in its malleability, its ability to be at once material and metaphor, matter and method" (8).

Throughout the book, Peterson's concept of noise complements what Karen Barad has called "intra-action": Both are ideas that focus on the dynamic characteristic of being that decenters the stability of objects in favor of the energetic entanglement, cross-modal mapping, and indefinite physicalization of indeterminant boundaries between forms of matter.³ The relationships of affect and aesthetic experience to various types of knowledge become a recurring theme, though her focus on materiality rather than ideological inscription consistently complicates the relationship of noise to epistemic certainty. Peterson thus repeatedly demonstrates how our slippery and irreducible encounters with noise problematize our knowledge, while intra-actively informing how we might be in the world: That is, although noise is inarticulate and irreducible, it is through our phenomenal experiences that we gain knowledge about our environment.

Peterson's approach to ethnographic and archival inquiry focuses on how communities relate sound to knowledge, considering how others have identified noise in ways that influence the development of urban sonic regulations as much as the relationship of bodies to space. Liminality is conceptually the focus of these discussions as Peterson considers the shifting qualities of matter and their entanglements, incorporating approaches that "destabilize not only the human subject but the solidity of all kinds of matter" (9). The attendant noise accompanying the "jet age" brought with it unforeseen perturbances that would alter inhabitants' relationships to constructed urban spaces and modes of life. These relationships are variously addressed in chapters considering intersecting themes of governance and legislation, inscription of the liminal, modalities of social and embodied being, urban materiality, and (post)human encounters with the environment.

In Chapter 1, we are shown how engagements with new regimes of noise (like jet engines) necessitated new ethics of sound, spatial imaginaries, conceptual categories, and affective attunements to the changing world. Case studies from the space surrounding LAX demonstrate the necessity to develop new terminologies for the local, state, and federal governance of volumetric (vertical) space, sound, irritation, the limits of the body, and property rights initiated by the indeterminate specter of noise. Chapter 2 explores the history of the changing ontological status afforded to noise, which has been dependent upon its presentation as "annoyance" in a variety of sensory and epistemic fields. Annoyance is difficult to measure, which has problematized attempts to quantify and ameliorate it as an unverifiable, internal experience rather than something objectively grasped. As Peterson writes, "most annoying to engineers was that annoyance eluded computation and inscription, remaining amorphous and indeterminate" (50). Indeed, these categories are slippery, cannot be fixed, and are largely based on aesthetic judgment. Peterson thus surveys the academic, civic, and commercial attempts to render perceptions of noise from the individual and subjective into more generalized and objective scales of "noisiness" that could be measured and mitigated. Ultimately, we witness how various modes of inscription for noise depend upon application and context: commercial, industrial, and domestic. The challenges of representing noise manifest in dimensions of urban development, housing access, legislation informed by measures of irritability, and the fact that their indeterminate character never allows them to be completely addressed. After tracing the emergence of the concept of "noise pollution," Chapter 3 explores how new conceptual fields are necessary to respond to relationships between political and sensory experiences and to describe changing urban realities. The 1960s and 1970s saw a new concern for the environment that drew together previously discreet phenomena. Like the industrial waste and increasingly alienating material urban conditions in Los Angeles (such as freeway construction and worsening air quality), noise and affectual irritations became conflated in the local rhetoric and legislation during this period. Due to the slipperiness of defining noise (as demonstrated in Chapter 2), it ends up being lumped in with other varieties of

²See Marie Thompson and Ian Biddle, eds., *Sound, Music, Affect: Theorizing Sonic Experience* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013); Paul Hegarty, *Noise/Music: A History* (New York: Continuum, 2007).

³Barad, *Meeting the Universe Halfway*.

unwelcomed detritus resulting from industrial production and consumption. Arguments by city governance as well as the federal Clean Air Act of 1970 therefore rendered noise discursively as material, atmospheric, and environmental, concluding that, “[n]oise pollution evinces a kind of weird realism of escaping forms of matter, of matterings that are in the air” (91). Peterson argues that this important shift demanded a “new mode of attunement toward an amplified atmosphere entangled with a listening self. All of this is channeled into noise as a legislative concern, a machine generating regulation, bureaucracy, and concepts” (95). In addition to detailing how noise might be measured, modeled, and abated, this chapter discusses how noise worked to influence the concept of the body. Informed by the growing awareness of industry’s threat to the environment during this period, the human body was also beginning to be understood as permeable and susceptible to change. The author thus shows how the concept of noise pollution threatened desires for bodily purity through its insidious and unquantifiable entanglement with the atmosphere it inhabits.

The book’s flow is disrupted in Chapter 4, which focuses on “glitching” as a method of investigation, analysis, and writing—concepts alluded to in the book’s introduction. Short, seemingly unrelated vignettes about technologies of sound, experiments of noise and atmosphere, and bits of ethnography, seem “at times as if they do not quite fit” (14). They are, however, meaningful in their discursive and epistemic exclusion, gathering accounts of the indefinite entanglements of noise with issues of law, ways of knowing, embodiment, haptic experience, economies, and cross-domain (re)presentations of noise. Doubling down on the modalities of entanglement presented throughout the text, Chapter 5 considers our engagements with matter, revealing the porousness of all phenomena that supports their continuity, rather than dividing them. Noise, Peterson reminds us, demonstrates there “is no between; rather, matter is continuous, air and skin entangled in various ways despite—or as part of—efforts to control, demarcate, and condition” (131). Particular to this study of the land around LAX, efforts such as soundproofing and air conditioning attempt to attenuate the natural and built environment and, in doing so, alter relationships to materials in those environments as much as our own bodies.

Closing the book, Chapter 6 revisits the significances of shifting traces of infrastructure to the natural world. The author’s discussion of land recycling, smog, and the (de)territorializing work done by invasive species arrives at an analysis of the relationship of the endangered El Segundo blue butterfly to the site of the species’ largest extant colony, which resides on the grounds of LAX. Human action at the site has created the space of possibility for the butterfly community while the airport’s ongoing operations simultaneously endanger it. This demonstrates an interspecies entanglement that is a useful metaphor for the indeterminate urban engagement of noise with human activity that, in its multi-modal inherence, remains overdetermined and challenging to trace. Peterson’s poetic description of this interaction is useful beyond its initial framing: “A nonteleological form of the encounter between butterfly and human is shaped but not determined by other forms, encounters that, though not structuring per se, do not come out of nowhere. Something of history, of long-conditioned modes of thought, endures and inscribes meaning in form. Metaphor and physicality draw together around the human-butterfly encounter” (175). Like our liminal and transforming encounters with noise, Peterson uses the story of the El Segundo blue butterfly to illustrate a situation whose significance might be extrapolated to human interactions in ethical and political modalities. Life is noisy: Anticipated boundaries become blurred, and outcomes are unforeseen.

Writing about noise is difficult. *Atmospheric Noise* contributes much to its consideration in sound studies and urban studies, demonstrating that ideas about relationships between sound, experience, knowledge, and asymmetries of power may be less intentional and more multi-modal than sometimes imagined. This particular study of LAX as a novel sonic perturbation demonstrates how our entanglements with sound as atmospheric material may be unintentional, indeterminate, and epiphenomenal. Without making concrete claims from a fixed framing, this book addresses noise in its myriad historical, material, and social significances. Though not engaging with music per se, this study offers researchers in fields including music, sound studies, urban planning, and American studies a model for the possible contributions of new materialism’s methodological assumptions. In doing so it invites readers and researchers to be sensitive to new attunements demanded by the changing (post)human

onto-epistemologies supporting our own entanglements with the sonic in music and other regimes of tonality.

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Beyoncé: At Work, On Screen, and Online

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Beyoncé Giselle Knowles-Carter is one of the twenty-first century's greatest performers. She is a nexus of cultural productivity and wealth, as a singer, dancer, actress, audiovisual impresario, and business mogul. She is also, increasingly, a nexus of scholarly productivity; scholarship on Beyoncé unites conference panels, journal special issues, and edited collections. The proliferation of Beyoncé-focused scholarship can be attributed to a multiplicity of intersecting factors, which parallel the multifaceted nature of the artist herself as a brand and “star text” and as a commodity and cultural figure.¹ First, she is deeply enmeshed in—and highly successful at—digital cultural production. Additionally, her celebrity trajectory has risen alongside the increasing prestige and proliferation of popular music and popular culture scholarship. The Beyoncé star text is also rich for multivalent analyses: Of racial and gender politics, relationships between pop stardom and feminism, how dramatizations of domesticity and motherhood might fit within a broader frame of respectability politics, relations between Blackness and capitalism, and the possibility (or necessity) of activist political articulations through celebrity action or pop performance.

Beyoncé scholarship flourishes, in part, because of the many ways in which the superstar, as a consummate neoliberal late-capitalist icon, operates and signifies in the world. Recent collections of scholarly work include the 2016 *The Beyoncé Effect: Essays on Sexuality, Race and Feminism*, a 2019 special issue of *Popular Music and Society*, and the 2021 *Beyoncé in the World: Making Meaning with Queen Bey in Troubled Times*.² This scholarship compiles analyses of various aspects of Beyoncé's output, examining the artist's performance of Black womanhood, motherhood, feminism, sexuality, and Southernness through her lyrics, performances, and audiovisual texts. In addition to these broad collections, works like *The Lemonade Syllabus* (compiled by theologian and essayist Candice Marie Bembow) fractal out from single texts. In particular, the *Lemonade Syllabus* situates the 2016 album as central to an intertextual multimedia network of Black feminist diasporic conversation.³

¹The concept of the “star text” comes from Richard Dyer to suggest that a celebrity might best be analyzed not as a person or an individual character or performance, but as a network of bits of media, deliberately made meaningful (though subject to potential misreading by fans and other consumers). See Richard Dyer, *Stars* (London: British Film Institute, 1979); Richard Dyer, *Heavenly Bodies: Film Stars and Society* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1986).

²Adrienne Trier-Bienek, ed., *The Beyoncé Effect: Essays on Sexuality, Race and Feminism* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, 2016); Christina Baade, Kristin McGee, and Marquita R. Smith, eds., *Popular Music and Society* 42, no. 1 (January 2019); Christina Baade and Kristin McGee, eds., *Beyoncé in the World: Making Meaning with Queen Bey in Troubled Times* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2021).

³Candice Bembow, “Lemonade Syllabus,” 2016, <https://diversity.tamu.edu/Diversity/media/diversity/PDF/lemonade-syllabus.pdf>.