Journal of the Society for American Music (2007) Volume 1, Number 1, pp. 57–77.
© 2007 The Society for American Music doi: 10.1017.S1752196307070034

The Virtual Discourses of Pamela Z

GEORGE E. LEWIS

Abstract
Pamela Z is an American composer-performer and audio artist whose use of extended vocal technique and live, body-controlled electronic processing takes place in events ranging in scale from solo events in galleries to large-scale works that combine video, audio, and live musicians, singers, and actors. Her work raises important issues regarding transnationalism, Afrodiasporicism, and identity; acoustic ecologies; the articulation of race and ethnicity; and the place of women in technological media. The essay discusses several of Z's works from the late 1990s and early 2000s, in articulation with cybertheory; the aesthetics of popular and avant-garde music, voice, language, and poetics; intermedia and performance art; and contemporary technological practices.

Pamela Z is an American composer-performer and audio artist who deploys a complex, ever-developing mix of extended vocal techniques, live electronic processing, studio-based concrete techniques and sampling, and the hybrid analog-digital technologies with which she manipulates sound via physical gesture. Central to Z's creative oeuvre are two elements: her own classically trained voice, her primary performance instrument, which in her intermedia works becomes transformed, mixed, looped, and otherwise recombined into new and often playful combinations; and her computer, which serves as creative tool, artistic medium, and performance partner. Z's performances, which range in scale from solo events in galleries to large-scale works that combine video, audio, and live musicians, singers, and actors, raise significant issues regarding the articulation of sound with place, as well as the articulation of race, ethnicity, and the place of women in technological media. As sociologist Herman Gray has noted, "Pamela Z rejects thinking about musical production in terms of conventional assumptions about race, bodies, gender, even genre and audiences, and as such she challenges preconceived notions about identity, technology, and new music."[1]

Pamela Z's early years were marked by her family's affinity with technology. As a child, she built her own musical instruments, and her early experiences with sound were piqued by her father's purchase of tape recorders for the family. Not surprisingly, these early efforts clearly foreshadowed her future path as an artist; from the very beginning, Z was active as a composer, as she told Tom Sellar in an interview for *Theater Magazine* in 2000: "I used to make these absurd radio shows in

This essay began life as a commissioned article for the 2004 American Section of Dak'Art, the Biennial of Contemporary African Art. The author would like to thank Professors Cheryl Finley and Salah Hassan of Cornell University, who were instrumental in coordinating the American entries to the Biennial, for the initial commission for the creation of this piece, and for providing permission for the publication of this expanded version.

[1] Herman S. Gray, *Cultural Moves: African Americans and the Politics of Representation* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 177.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1752196307070034 Published online by Cambridge University Press

which I would perform all the parts, layer voices, and manipulate the sound."[2] Her early adult years in the 1970s found her studying classical voice at the University of Colorado by day and playing the guitar and singing in clubs at night. Continuing to make her own music, Z was avowedly fascinated by Israeli folk music, as well as the music of singer-songwriters Joni Mitchell and Laura Nyro, both of whom combined playful whimsy with extensive ruminations on social dislocation, alienation, and loss.

Moving to San Francisco in 1984, Z became active in the new music and performance art communities. Playing in small coffeehouses, punk rock bars, and galleries such as New Langton Arts, one of the more influential experimental performance spaces that emerged in the Bay Area at this time, she began to develop her unique approach to sound and gesture. The influence of European and American "classical" experimental music, as well as British and American punk, new wave, and "ambient" forms, was vital in leading her to the discovery of artists such as Laurie Anderson, who in the early 1980s were combining punk sensibilities with minimalism, electronics, and interdisciplinary performance.

Theorist Kofi Agawu metaphorically locates the "origins of African rhythm" precisely at a nexus between sound and movement, drum and dance.[3] Similarly, Pamela Z's work during this first period in her artistic trajectory is strongly marked by a close assimilation of sound with gesture, articulated through technological means. Z began to extend her influences as a singer-songwriter into a series of short works for her own solo voice, mediated by electronic processing and metaphorically surrounded by a battery of sound samples.

In the mid-1990s, drawing on her childhood experiences, Z transformed everyday objects found on the street into percussion instruments. In a 1993 article, Z recalls using "a Slinky ('the wonderful wonderful toy'), a pair of hammer handles, an empty 5-gallon plastic water bottle, and some strips of Plexiglas as performance tools."[4] It was at this time that Z realized that her own body could be similarly transformed, with the advent of a new device that became affixed to her performative musculature: the BodySynth, invented by choreographer Chris Van Raalte and computer scientist Ed Severinghaus, which transformed the muscle motions involved in body gestures into digital data that could be used to control samplers, synthesizers, and other MIDI-compatible devices. "In the studio," she told Sellar, "I was also using samples I made of noises in my apartment, machines in my neighborhood, and so on. I loved those sounds, and I wanted them in my performances, but I didn't want to be stuck behind the keyboard playing them. I wanted to be free to gesture."[5]

[2] Tom Sellar, "Parts of Speech: Interview with Pamela Z," *Theater Magazine* 30/2 (2000); Pamela Z website, http://www.pamelaz.com/theater.html.

[3] Kofi Agawu, *African Rhythm: A Northern Ewe Perspective* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 27–30.

[4] Pamela Z, "A Tool Is a Tool," in *Women, Art, and Technology*, ed. Judy Malloy (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2003), 351. Slinky is the brand name of a popular coiled spring toy invented in the 1940s that can perform unusual tricks, such as "walking" itself down a flight of stairs.

[5] Sellar, "Parts of Speech." Pamela Z's work with the BodySynth is well documented on her compact disc release, Pamela Z, *A Delay Is Better,* Starkland ST-213, 2004. Other audio and video examples may be accessed via her website, http://www.pamelaz.com.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1752196307070034 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Z's strategic placement of BodySynth electrodes—eight small sensors that can be positioned practically anywhere on the body—moves past the prosthetic readings envisioned by the technology's creators towards the dynamics of the incarnative, the embodied, and the integrative. Z gradually developed a use of the technology that was fundamentally rhythmic, providing sonic markers of empathy that allowed her to personally guide the listener/viewer through the complexity of her work. In performance before live audiences, the sensors allow Z to articulate a protean sensibility to an unprecedented degree. Here, Z's background in bel canto singing and the interpretation of art song, in which gestural communication constitutes a vital aspect of the communication of meaning, becomes extended to the realm of the cyborg.[6]

In Z's 2003 work *Cellovoice*, the BodySynth allowed her to create a "virtual cello," where Z's gestures of bowing and plucking controlled both sampled cello sounds and voices. A centerpiece of one section of *Cellovoice* was the duet between Z's virtual cello and the innovative cellist and cofounder of the Kronos Quartet, Joan Jeanrenaud.[7] In this work, Z's body becomes redefined as both a source of data and as a bidirectional, permeable membrane of transference. Her insistence on the primacy of her body's subjectivity—not as exoticized or sexualized fetish object, but as a locus of emotional transduction—defies those who insist that in the digital age the body need not concern us further.

Indeed, the voice itself announces the centrality of the body, and like a generation of electronic singer-songwriters, Z digitally recuperates the trope of the singer-songwriter-troubadour-griot, long known both in the West and in Africa for a mysterious, woman-identified oracularity. Z is part of a generation of women sound artists, including Laurie Anderson, Hildegard Westerkamp, and Sarah Peebles, who reassert the human need for exchanging stories in a logocentric culture that has privileged written over oral modes of discourse and, reflecting a valorization of land and property rights, has favored a transient, atemporal notion of space over historical time.[8]

[6] For an explanation of the BodySynth by its inventors, see Chris Van Raalte and Ed Severinghaus, "The BodySynth," Synth Zone website, http://www.synthzone.com/bsynth.html. For an important early contribution to theorizing the body in virtual space, see N. Katherine Hayles, "Embodied Virtuality, Or How to Put Bodies Back into the Picture," in *Immersed in Technology: Art and Virtual Environments*, ed. Mary Anne Moser and Douglas MacLeod, 1–28 (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1995).

[7] "Pamela Z Programs: Voci," Bernstein Artists website, http://www.bernsarts.com/pamelaz/pamelazprog.html. Some of the descriptions of works by Pamela Z come from my own reactions to an unpublished DVD she provided me with as documentation for her work.

[8] See, for example, Susan McClary's account of Anderson's technological transformation of her body and voice as part of her storytelling in "This is not a story my people tell: Musical Time and Space According to Laurie Anderson," in *Feminine Endings: Music, Gender, and Sexuality* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991), 132–47. For a discussion of Westerkamp's strategies of acousmatic narrative, see Andra McCartney, "Cyborg Experiences: Contradictions and Tensions of Technology, Nature, and the Body in Hildegard Westerkamp's 'Breathing Room,'" in *Music and Gender*, ed. Pirkko Moisala and Beverley Diamond, 317–35 (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2000). Also relevant in this context is Pirkko Moisala's work on the composer Kaija Saariaho's engagement with advanced computer technology. See Pirkko Moisala, "Gender Negotiation of the Composer—Kaija Saariaho in Finland: The Woman Composer as Nomadic Subject," in ibid., 166–88.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1752196307070034 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Small Talk (1998) contrasts three different kinds of speech.[9] A disembodied computer voice mediates between a working-class, African American male voice, delivering a series of well-worn pickup lines, and the object of his interest, a female voice that is clearly expressing disinterest in the male's attempt to frame her as fair game. The work recalls performance artist and philosopher Adrian Piper's well-known "Calling Card" series of performances. In "Calling Card # 2," a strategically proffered card expresses Piper's desire to remain undisturbed at the bar at which she has chosen to sit.

> A come-on in a bar can be or can masquerade as the paradigm of friendliness; so it's up to me to deliver the message without being the first to violate that assumption. The card is distributed only after I have verbally expressed my desire to remain alone, politely at first and then with some vehemence. Typically it elicits further jokes, put-downs, attempts at flirtation, and so on, before the offender beats a sullen retreat.[10]

Piper's calling card plainly and unambiguously confronts this attempted projection of male dominance:

> Dear Friend,
>
> I am not here to pick anyone up, or to be picked up. I am here because I want to be here, ALONE.
>
> This card is not intended as part of an extended flirtation.[11]

Comparing Piper's 1986 text with Z's reveals a compatible desire to, as Piper puts it, "prevent co-optation."[12] As Z's *Small Talk* character says emphatically, "You say 'How's it going?' like it was a command, not a question. What am I supposed to reply? And what if I don't feel like chatting? The last time I checked, responding to a compliment does not constitute a marriage proposal."

Like Piper's calling cards, *Small Talk* critiques the casual verbal violence that seems so endemic to U.S. public culture. As in Z's 1991 *In Tymes of Olde*,[13] *Small Talk*'s operative question is "You don't know me, I don't know you/Why do you talk to me that way?" As Piper observed, her calling cards "must combat the 'no-matter-what-she-says-she-really-wants-it' fiction."[14] In *Small Talk*, the chorus of verbal smirks as Z's character attempts to pass by is resisted and eventually overcome by a soprano-identified, strongly emphatic, heterophonic chorus of "No." At the same time, it is Z's own body gestures, technologized through the medium of the BodySynth, that ventriloquize the sound of the man who leeringly observes that she is "lookin' *good*. . . ." This points to the seemingly paradoxical dynamic that at times one is obliged to internalize, to some extent, those values and attitudes to

[9] Pamela Z, description of "Parts of Speech," Pamela Z website, http://www.pamelaz.com/partsofspeech.html.

[10] Adrian Piper, *Out of Order, Out of Sight, vol. 1: Selected Writings in Meta-Art, 1968–1992* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1996), 221.

[11] Ibid.

[12] Ibid., 219.

[13] The performance is recorded on Z, *A Delay Is Better*.

[14] Piper, *Out of Order, Out of Sight*, 221.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1752196307070034 Published online by Cambridge University Press

which one is resolutely and publicly opposed. Here, resistance demonstrates the fiction of originary purity.

The Anti-Avatar

The griot's exhortations inevitably express the history of the people through the history of the performer, and it is in this light that one must recognize, as Z does, that women performers, even those working with advanced technology, have been disproportionately channeled into vocal roles:

> People seem more enamoured of female voices, or more attached to the idea of the woman as singer, so that when we use our voices as a primary means of expression, we are rewarded and noticed for it. . . . Therefore you wind up with most of the well-known women in the field being vocalists, even though there are quite a few women doing very compelling non-vocal experimental music.[15]

Of course, this kind of channeling is hardly limited to gender, and theorists such as bell hooks and Ruth Frankenberg have brought many feminists to the sometimes uncomfortable but unavoidable realization that gender and racial oppression are usually coterminous. In that regard, as critical race cybertheorist Alondra Nelson observes, "Racial identity, and blackness in particular, is the anti-avatar of digital life."[16] Certainly, the life and work of Cheikh Anta Diop, the Senegalese radiologist and national hero whose radical historical interventions resonated fiercely across the Afrodiaspora and beyond, provided strong evidence that the technological is hardly incompatible with African histories.[17] During Diop's lifetime, however, similarly lionized literary figures of the Afrodiaspora also appeared to celebrate this supposed lacuna separating blacks from technology. A crucial passage from poet Aimé Césaire's 1938 *Cahier d'un retour au pays natal* (Notebook of a Return to the Native Land), for example, appears to base the purity of black subjectivity in nonengagement with technology:

> o friendly light
> o fresh source of light
> those who invented neither powder nor compass
> those who could harness neither steam nor electricity
> those who explored neither the seas nor the sky
> but those without whom the earth would not be the earth[18]

[15] Quoted in Kathy Kennedy, "A Few Facets of Pamela Z," *Musicworks* 76 (Spring 2000); available at Pamela Z website, http://www.pamelaz.com/musicworks.html.

[16] Alondra Nelson, "Introduction: Future Texts," *Social Text* 20/2 (2002): 1.

[17] See Cheikh Anta Diop, *The African Origin of Civilization: Myth or Reality* (New York: Lawrence Hill, 1974).

[18] Aimé Césaire, *Notebook of a Return to the Native Land,* trans. and ed. Clayton Eshleman and Annette Smith (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, [1938] 2001), 34. In the original:

> ô fraiche source de la lumiere
> ceux qui n'ont inventé ni la poudre ni la boussole
> ceux qui n'ont jamais su dompter la vapeur ni l'electricité
> ceux qui n'ont exploré ni les mers ni le ciel
> mais ceux sans qui la terre ne serait pas la terre

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1752196307070034 Published online by Cambridge University Press

The ensuing years have complicated the interpretation of this and similar passages, particularly in the wake of more recent scholarship (such as Diop's) that asserts historical and cultural continuity between the technologically advanced civilizations of ancient Egypt and the contemporary black diaspora.[19] Writing in 2000, literary critic Abiola Irele contends that this section of Césaire's famous epic "derives quite evidently from a partisan rejection of the scientific and technological culture of the West," but "beyond its polemical intent, the passage is also a poetic statement of an alternative path to knowledge—that of an intuitive grasp of a living universe in intimate relation to human consciousness and sensibility."[20] Thus Irele concludes that the passage uses the technical nonproficiency of African civilizations as support for a "vibrant affirmation of racial pride."[21] Of course, the views of many producers and critics, both within and beyond the music industry, were hardly as nuanced as Césaire's, advancing often enough an oversimplified, essentializing view of black music as best served by a minimum of technological mediation. Norman Mailer, writing in 1973, went so far as to say, "Since the Negro has never been able to absorb a technological culture with success, even reacting against it with instinctive pain and distrust, he is now in this oncoming epoch of automation going to be removed from the technological society anyway."[22]

However, as Alexander Weheliye has maintained of a later, post-1990s R&B generation, "even though numerous cultural discourses have done their best to authenticate and naturalize the soul of black popular music, the musical practices themselves frequently defy these authenticating mechanisms by embracing new technologies, hybridities, and self-consciousness about the performative aspects of soul."[23] To augment Weheliye's critique of cybertheory's apparent erasure of race (though concomitantly, as Weheliye maintains, "gender takes center stage"[24]) it is worth noting that electronically assisted black resistance to naturalization has rather

---

Aimé Césaire, *Cahier d'un retour au pays natal,* foreword by André Breton (Paris: Présence Africaine, [1938] 1971), 115.

[19] See G. Mokhtar, ed., *Ancient Civilizations of Africa, UNESCO General History of Africa,* vol. 2 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981).

[20] Aimé Césaire, ed., *Cahier d'un retour au pays natal,* 2nd ed., with introduction, commentary, and notes by Abiola Irele (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, [1938] 2000), 117.

[21] Ibid.

[22] Norman Mailer, quoted in Michele Wallace, *Black Macho and the Myth of the Superwoman* (London: Verso, [1978] 1999), 46. Also see Norman Mailer, *Existential Errands* (New York: New American Library, 1973). More recently, ripostes to this framing of black engagement with technology can be found in the growing body of Afrofuturist literature, such as the work of Mark Dery, generally credited with introducing the concept of Afrofuturism. See Mark Dery, *Flame Wars: The Discourse of Cyberculture* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1995). Complicating matters still further, media theorist Martin Kevorkian's novel thesis is that black subjects (usually men) represented in more recent U.S. film and television are now overvalorized as technical wizards, and simultaneously represented as safely imprisoned by the technology they control for the ultimate benefit of unseen masters. See Martin Kevorkian, *Color Monitors: The Black Face of Technology in America* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2006).

[23] Alexander G. Weheliye, "'Feenin': Posthuman Voices In Contemporary Black Popular Music," *Social Text* 20/2 (2002): 30. Weheliye's recent book extends the thesis presented in the article. See Alexander G. Weheliye, *Phonographies: Grooves in Sonic Afro-Modernity* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2005).

[24] Weheliye, "'Feenin,'" 22.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1752196307070034 Published online by Cambridge University Press

deep roots and, moreover, often appears in tandem with an assertion of mobility of practice designed to place artists beyond the reach of racializing genre markers.

For example, a powerful counternarrative to both genre typing and technophobia was articulated in the 1960s by a group of cosmopolitan black musicians of the 1960s, including three frequent collaborators from Chicago, Charles Stepney, Eddie Harris, and Muhal Richard Abrams. These musicians, despite a lack of institutional or foundation backing, were nonetheless early adopters of real-time electronic music technology to the extent that their resources allowed. By 1966, in the wake of his mainstream pop hit single, a jazz version of the *Exodus* film theme,[25] saxophonist Harris became one of the first musicians in any field to experiment seriously, in concert and on records, with the new real-time music technologies. Forging a trenchant connection between advanced electronic music techniques, extended acoustic instrumental technique, and down-home funk, Harris recorded pieces with real-time electronic sound processors such as the Varitone, a so-called octave divider that synthesized parallel octaves above or below the pitch of a horn, and the Echoplex, an early tape-based delay line noted for its portability.[26]

In 1967, Abrams, cofounder of the African American experimental music collective the Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians (AACM),[27] documented the first example of his long engagement with electronics. Each of the three pieces on Abrams's first recording, *Levels and Degrees of Light*, was awash in dense studio reverberation.[28] In the same period, legendary Chicago producer Stepney drew on the work of Russian musician and polymath Joseph Schillinger and American composer Henry Cowell in his innovative articulation of a form of "black psychedelia" between 1967 and 1971 with the Rotary Connection and the brilliant singer Minnie Riperton; hear, for example, Stepney's unusual and ironic version of Otis Redding's "Respect."[29]

However, the use of electronics by these artists, as well as the later work of Miles Davis, proved controversial and widely misunderstood in a world in which acoustic instruments became conflated with musical, and eventually, cultural and even racial authenticity. Critic Ron Welburn, apparently referring to Harris in Addison Gayle

[25] Eddie Harris, *Exodus to Jazz*, Collectables 7145, 1960.

[26] See Eddie Harris, *The Tender Storm*, Atlantic SD-1478, 1966; and *The Electrifying Eddie Harris*, Atlantic SD-1495, 1967.

[27] For an account of the AACM, see George Lewis, "Experimental Music in Black and White: The AACM in New York, 1970–1985," in *Uptown Conversation: The New Jazz Studies*, ed. Robert G. O'Meally, Brent Hayes Edwards, and Farah Jasmine Griffin, 50–101 (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004); and George E. Lewis, *Power Stronger Than Itself: The Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, in press).

[28] Hear Richard Abrams, *Levels And Degrees of Light,* Delmark DS-413, 1967. The vinyl disc version is preferred because, inexplicably, a later compact disc release of the album managed to remove the reverberation, seriously damaging the recording's musical integrity. For reference, the compact disc version is Abrams, *Levels And Degrees of Light,* Delmark DD-413, [1967] 1991. The majority of Abrams's recordings since 1980 feature at least one electronic composition; the many examples include Muhal Richard Abrams, *Spihumonesty*, Black Saint 120032, 1980; and Muhal Richard Abrams, *The Visibility of Thought*, Mutable Music MM17502-2, 2001.

[29] Minnie Riperton, *Petals: The Minnie Riperton Collection*, Capitol 72435-29343-2-4 (2 CDs), 2001. For an interview with Stepney that discusses his interest in electronics, see Edwin Black, "For The Record: Charles Stepney," *Down Beat*, 26 November 1970, 12, 32.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1752196307070034 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Jr.'s historically important collection of Black Arts Movement manifesti, *The Black Aesthetic*, felt that "black musicians should re-evaluate the technological intrusions now threatening our music; times may come when that technology will be useless. Our music is our key to survival."[30] This variant of technophobia was shot through with ethnic essentialisms; for instance, rock musicians were said by Welburn to have emerged from "a technological lineage extending through John Cage, Stockhausen, Edgard Varèse, all the way back to Marconi and the wireless. White rock is a technology, not a real music."[31]

To be sure, rock recordings being produced at this same time, such as the Beatles' 1967 *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band,* were not being policed for racial authenticity; free from these strictures, the Fab Four eagerly embraced studio techniques influenced by European composers such as Karlheinz Stockhausen. Here, if Welburn's comments are considered in tandem with Theodore Gracyk's observation that rock artists used the studio in quasi-compositional fashion, while jazz recordings were designed to represent the live experience of music-making, the racialization of the discourse of studio practice becomes more evident than with Gracyk's account taken alone.[32] Thus, Davis's innovative album *Bitches Brew*, with its post-representation approach to the electronic manipulation of improvisation in a studio context, was criticized by Welburn and many others. "Electronic music," Welburn wrote, "can make the black man blind from the sight of money and the white man rich on his deathbed, laughing absurdly at having fooled the niggers this last go-round."[33]

Moving towards the 1990s, it can be observed that despite the apparent acceptance of African American electronics in popular music, which Weheliye takes note of, experimental electronic artists of Z's generation and after still seem at times to be subjected to the old naturalizations, as a letter in the British magazine *Wire* from electronic musician Morgan Craft rather testily explained:

> So here we are in the year 2005 and I actually agree to sit down and write about being black, American and experimental in music. The genesis springs from looking at a magazine devoted to challenging, progressive musics from around the world, and seeing their top 50 list for last year, and the only black Americans were rappers (three) and old jazz-era men (one living, one dead). So I bring up this observation about the lack of a black American presence on the avant-garde scene under the age of 50 just to see if maybe I'm not paying attention. I'm constantly fed this steady stream of future-thinking folks from Germany, Japan, UK, Norway, etc, but when it comes to America all I hear about is the genius that is free folk or if it's black it must be hiphop, jazz, or long dead.[34]

In fact, black experimental artists on both sides of the age of fifty divide shared Craft's dilemma, as literary critic Fred Moten succinctly notes:

[30] Ron Welburn, "The Black Aesthetic Imperative," in *The Black Aesthetic*, ed. Addison Gayle Jr. (New York: Doubleday, 1971), 149.

[31] Ibid., 148.

[32] See Theodore Gracyk, *Rhythm and Noise: An Aesthetics of Rock* (Durham, N. C.: Duke University Press, 1996).

[33] Welburn, "The Black Aesthetic Imperative," 149.

[34] Morgan Craft, "Towards A New Consciousness," *The Wire*, October 2005, 8.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1752196307070034 Published online by Cambridge University Press

> The idea of a black avant-garde exists, as it were, oxymoronically—as if black, on the one hand, and avant-garde, on the other hand, each depends for its coherence on the exclusion of the other. Now this is probably an overstatement of the case. Yet it's all but justified by a vast interdisciplinary text representative not only of a problematically positivist conclusion that the avant-garde has been exclusively Euro-American, but of a deeper, perhaps unconscious, formulation of the avant-garde as necessarily not black.[35]

As it happens, one of the most interesting commentaries is Z's own published essay from 2003, "A Tool Is A Tool," not because it references race (it doesn't), but because it comes from a representative "anti-avatar" in the world of techno-experimentalism.[36]

Voice, Culture, Identity

Certainly, artists such as Pamela Z reject the notion that electronics could be rigidly raced, and that any entry into the medium by African Americans necessarily constituted inferior imitation of white culture, economic opportunism, and/or general racial inauthenticity. Moreover, in Z's post-genre (and post-racial) experimentalism, we find a twinned practice of cultural mobility with self-determination that authorizes her to draw from any source, to deny any limitation whatsoever. This assertion of methodological and aesthetic mobility may be viewed as an integral aspect of the heterophonic (rather than simply hybrid) notion of identity found in her work. Z herself has remarked simply, "Many observers of my work seem to find strong implications of identity embedded in the work."[37] This seemingly noncommittal remark can easily be interpreted as embodying a reluctance to foreclose the variegated play of meanings that her work, with its layered multiplicity, inevitably evokes.

Z's 2004 residency in Dakar for Dak'Art, the Biennale of Contemporary African Art, was her first visit to the African continent. She installed a site-specific sound work at the Maison des Esclaves on Gorée Island, the *point du non-retour* for the massive deportations on *négriers,* the ships that overflowed with human misery during the period of the Atlantic slave trade. The multiple cries and whispers that the piece presented, which I witnessed at the site, were sometimes barely audible in their understatement; Z's similarly understated proposal for the piece said that her initial visit to the site "stirred up a lot of feelings for me related to language and identity."[38]

At first blush, Z's classically trained vocal identity seems to defy easy identification with the set of vocal timbres most routinely identified as "African" or

[35] Fred Moten, *In the Break: The Aesthetics of the Black Radical Tradition* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003), 32.

[36] See Z, "A Tool Is a Tool." For a series of oral histories of African American technologists who were associated with the Massachusetts Institute of Technology between the Second World War and the turn of the twenty-first century, see Clarence G. Williams, *Technology and the Dream: Reflections On The Black Experience at MIT, 1941–1999* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2003).

[37] Pamela Z, "Performance & Installation Proposal for Dak'Art," unpublished manuscript, 2004.

[38] Ibid.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1752196307070034 Published online by Cambridge University Press

"Afro-American," and consequently the association here may seem indirect for listeners and critics unfamiliar with the long history of engagement of Africans on both sides of the Atlantic with pan-European vocal tropes. In any event, for Z, "Being classically trained is just one of the millions of things that you could do if you are interested in exploring the human voice."[39] Indeed, an introspective work such as *The Larynx* (2003), part of her suite *Voci*, takes as its subject the experience of singing itself. Its quasi-clinical examination of vocal production is presented as public transcript, pointing to an intimate relation between voice and identity that is asserted through its absence. Simultaneously, multiple Pamelas, heard through digital delay, constitute a hidden, private transcript that fragments experience, demonstrating how malleable, fluid, and ultimately transient our voices really are.

As Kali Tal points out, African American intellectual and social history "already provides political and theoretical precedents for articulating and understanding multiple identities, fragmented personae, and liminality."[40] Paul Gilroy's expansion of W. E. B. DuBois's "double consciousness," used to ground a dialogically rooted conception of a Black Atlantic, points to what cybertheorist Alondra Nelson describes as "a flux of identity that has long been the experience of African diasporic people."[41] Thus, we find Pamela Z's solo voice being continually transformed, multiplied, and detuned through digital and analog processing, breaking apart into a heterophony of perspectives that seem to exemplify Gilroy's and Kobena Mercer's understanding that identity, including black identity, is plural, polyphonic, and heterogeneous.[42] "The essence of what I do straddles so many different things," Z has said. "As a composer I require more than just a single voice. . . . I think most of the interesting music is being done by people who've been trained in varied of schools or traditions—who did more than one thing."[43]

Community and the Nomad

The large-scale, evening-length performance work *Gaijin* (2001) is an outgrowth of Pamela Z's six-month residency in Japan in 1999. The work combines electroacoustic sound, text, and projected video with *butoh* performance, which Z studied in Japan. Z takes the general meaning of the Japanese word *gaijin* (foreign person) as a starting point to explore "the idea of foreignness—whether that means visiting a country you're not used to, or feeling like a foreigner in the place where you live, or all kinds of other ways that a person could feel foreign."[44] The piece blends her own stories of her extended stay in Japan with other personal "foreigner" narratives.

At least since the adventures of Lafcadio Hearn, white visitors to Japan have long drawn upon a special trope of Otherness, in which the dominance of whiteness with which they grew up in their homelands is radically upended. Like Hearn, who first

[39] Kennedy, "A Few Facets of Pamela Z."
[40] Nelson, "Introduction: Future Texts," 3.
[41] Ibid.
[42] Kobena Mercer, *Welcome to the Jungle: New Positions in Black Cultural Studies* (New York: Routledge, 1994), 62.
[43] Kennedy, "A Few Facets of Pamela Z."
[44] Sellar, "Parts of Speech."

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1752196307070034 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Figure 1. Pamela Z with Leigh Evans, Kinji Hayashi, and Shinichi Momo Koga in *Gaijin*. Photographer: Marion Gray.

went to Japan in 1890, Z found that "one of the most profound lessons was finding out what it is like to truly be an alien in the place where you live."[45] However, this trope becomes considerably and unavoidably altered when the subject singing of her Japanese experience is an African American woman who, as Michele Wallace and many other commentators have pointed out, sits as a group near the bottom of the U.S. social hierarchy.[46]

Moreover, unlike many white Westerners, black Westerners coming to Japan are not encountering themselves as "the Other" for the first time, as Z's work points out. The complex Japanese language contains many different words signifying the relation between phenotype and ethnic membership; the term *nihonjin* denotes a person of native Japanese ancestry, while according to Joe Wood, whose travelogue "The Yellow Negro" recounts his 1990s-era visit to the country, the term *kokujin* refers specifically to "black foreigners"—in particular, persons who would be routinely raced as "black" or "African American" in the United States.[47] In Wood's account, the presence of both blackness and whiteness as objects of fascination in Japanese culture (however differently instantiated the two might be) focuses his attention; in a committed creative environment, however, these sorts of ethnic, racial, and gender essentialisms are inevitably tested and problematized. If Joni Mitchell's colleagues could tell an interviewer that the singer sometimes feels "like

[45] Pamela Z, description of "Gaijin," Pamela Z website, http://www.pamelaz.com/ gaijin.html.
[46] See Wallace, *Black Macho and the Myth of the Superwoman*.
[47] See Joe Wood, "The Yellow Negro," *Transition* 73 (1997): 40–66.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1752196307070034 Published online by Cambridge University Press

a black man in a white woman's body,"[48] Z's performance of "Other," a movement within *Gaijin*, can frankly evoke the blues lament, while also asserting an ambivalent intimacy, as if she were in the room speaking only to you, the listener, but might be wary of an easy familiarity that takes too much for granted.

In *Gaijin*, Z's conscious articulation of the theatrical, a central aspect of art-song performance practice, becomes key to this testing. "I don't talk about it very often, but this idea of a character is really important," she told an interviewer. "I assume some character in each of the pieces I perform."[49] Critic Tom Sellar describes Z's performance persona this way: "Pamela Z stands with quiet assurance at a microphone console, building and inhabiting a lonely character who generates and absorbs the sounds around her."[50] Thus, at short remove from the portrayal of foreignness is the dynamic of *Verfremdung*. Describing a section of *Gaijin*, Sellar felt that Z's harmonizing with "an endless loop of basic phonetics underscores her painful estrangement."[51]

In a sense, standing all alone constitutes an important, if less frequently acknowledged subtext in Z's work. Indeed, Z's texts often present characters who function as solitary observers, wry commentators who are able to take part in the fray while standing at a remove. The tradition of the observer who points out the foibles in contemporary humanity is exemplified in American letters by the nineteenth-century writer Ambrose Bierce, though Z rarely indulges in the frank misanthropy and apparent hopelessness in which Bierce reveled. Rather, Z often finds humor in alienation, as her early influences Laura Nyro and Joni Mitchell did years before. A sense of whimsy and a hint of irony are never far from her work; one broadly witty segment of *Gaijin* features her emulating Japanese *enka*-style crooning. The humor and pleasure that her work evokes undoubtedly contribute to the accessibility of Z's work to audiences who sometimes find computer-based work forbidding, or simply a bit wan.

The British-born Hearn must have experienced both the pleasure and the terror embedded in becoming a nomad. A key figure in the favorable interpretation of Japanese culture in Europe and North America in the late nineteenth century, Hearn's privately expressed bitterness at never becoming truly accepted, despite taking on a Japanese name and citizenship, speaking the language fluently, and marrying a Japanese woman, has only recently been documented via a letter he sent to a colleague in 1903.[52] Wood's text expresses a similar combination of alienation and fascination, his with the young Japanese *kokujin ni naritai wakamono*—"blackfacers" who mime blackness, a practice Wood sees as akin to white appropriations of black culture, albeit in a very different space from the American minstrel tradition. Z's travelogue asserts that a complementary transformation is

[48] Neil Strauss, "The Hissing of a Living Legend," *The New York Times Magazine*, 4 October 1998.

[49] Sellar, "Parts of Speech."

[50] Ibid.

[51] Ibid. In contrast to this image, and unlike Wood's experience, Z's own reprinted letters seem rather upbeat and optimistic about her experiences in Japan. See Pamela Z, "Japan Letters," Pamela Z website, http://www.pamelaz.com/nihon.htm.

[52] See "Letter from Hearn's Late Years Shows Bitterness in Japan," Kyodo News Service, *Japan Economic Newswire*, 23 September 1998.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1752196307070034 Published online by Cambridge University Press

available to her, but the work as a whole is not about black culture in Japan but about the foreigner in us all—a black *nihonjin*, rather than a yellow Negro. In the end, like Wood, Z's character is not immigrating but just passing through, evoking the experience of the visitor who relies on her own resources first and foremost, and who knows just how long she will be able to count on a warm welcome from her hosts.

For Canadian sound artist Kathy Kennedy, Pamela Z is an "electrodiva."[53] The image of the diva certainly references the celebration of lonely, haughty unapproachability, but in *Divas* (2003), another section of *Voci*, Z confronts and even sends up the familiar image, singing an operatic lament, accompanied by a trio of video-projected virtual singers, one of whom functions as her Doppelgänger. Here, Z creates a virtual community through video, extending and complementing the sonic multiplicities she regularly presents. Further complicating the narrative of the solitary, Z's larger-scale works, such as *Voci*, involve interdisciplinarity and collaboration, particularly with film/videomakers Jeanne Finley and John Muse, designer Lauren Elder, lighting designer Elaine Buckholtz, kotoist and electronic musician Miya Masaoka, and digital instrument builder Donald Swearingen. Moreover, the socially articulated aspect of Z's work is nothing if not syncretic and collaborative, drawing from a panoply of sources and creative communities. This diversity clearly dates from her early experiences in San Francisco, where "I discovered a lot of micro-communities of electronic musicians, or performance artists, or dancers, or instrument builders, and I was always flitting from one world to the other."[54]

Certainly, the life and work of Maria Callas has brought a certain tragic loneliness to the image of the diva in popular culture, but in the end Z's work refuses tragedy. Pamela Z takes on many dramatis personae, but two that practically never appear in her work are the hysterical victim and the Medea figure so beloved by European opera. In general, Z's stage personae represent women in full control and authority—never confrontational, but powerful and confident. For Z, opera (and its bel canto evocation and extension in her work) does not lead inevitably, following Catherine Clément, to "the undoing of women."[55]

Collage, Bricolage, Delay

In a preconcert lecture in Los Angeles, I once heard composer Pierre Boulez remark that the taped collages that animate Edgard Varèse's 1954 composition *Déserts* were bound up with the sensibility of *bricolage*. The younger composer-conductor's use of

[53] Kennedy, "A Few Facets of Pamela Z."

[54] Pamela Z, "Z Programs History," Pamela Z website, http://www.pamelaz.com/ zphistory.html.

[55] See Catherine Clément, *Opera, or, The Undoing of Women,* trans. Betsy Wing (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988). A recent thesis by Naomi André explicitly extends Clément's view by focusing on women characters who are not "undone." See Naomi André, *Voicing Gender: Castrati, Travesti, and the Second Woman in Early-Nineteenth-Century Italian Opera* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006). Even more salient to Z's work, however, is Chela Sandoval's critique and intensification of Donna Haraway's theory of the cyborg, where "methodologies of the oppressed" draw upon oppositional technologies of power embedded in both the individual psyche and in social praxis. See Chela Sandoval, "New Sciences: Cyborg Feminism and the Methodology of the Oppressed," in *The Cybercultures Reader*, ed. David Bell and Barbara M. Kennedy, 374–87 (London: Routledge, 2000).

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1752196307070034 Published online by Cambridge University Press

the term was not meant as a compliment: Boulez was explaining why he did not use the tape in performance, against Varèse's specifications. Despite the rehabilitation of its meaning offered by anthropologists beginning with Claude Lévi-Strauss, in the French quotidian imagination (as well as *Le Petit Robert*) the word continues to mean "thrown together," "makeshift," "haphazard"—not a set of qualities generally regarded as salutary in the context of French musical high culture. In the American context, however, in which twentieth-century processes of improvisation formed the basis for a new, Afrodiasporic art music, the *bricoleuse* can become the discoverer of new vistas, the rugged American maverick individualist, the harbinger of change.

Pamela Z's already keen interest in language reached a higher and richer register with her discovery of the digital delay. "In 1982," she told Sellar, "I went to a Weather Report concert and heard Jaco Pastorius do a solo on his fretless bass, during which he made a loop on a digital delay and played over it. I was so impressed that the next day I went out and got a digital delay."[56] Here, one might observe that for Pastorius, as with Eddie Harris, the attraction to delay line technologies was fueled at least in part by the ready ability of the technology to instantiate, from a single source, both sides of the call-and-response dynamic of the African American musical culture with which their work was imbued. Z herself has observed that the digital delay, with its capability for instant, highly controllable recording and playback of complex sound material, "allowed me to create elaborate sound beds; it allowed me to become an ensemble, not just a singer."[57]

In fact, the early repetition-based minimalism that so entranced Pamela Z from her days in college radio in Boulder was thoroughly imbued from the outset with Afrodiasporicisms. In this context, it seems fitting that Steve Reich's 1966 tape delay–based work *Come Out*, composed during the same period as Harris's recorded experiments with the Echoplex, featured an Afrodiasporic resident of Spanish Harlem as the central sonic presence.[58] Reich's important 1971 work *Drumming*, sections of which pointedly recall the Northern Ewe music that Reich briefly studied the year before in Ghana, became a seminal work of what came to be known as process music.[59]

But there is much more to repetition than simple processual flow. As James Snead writes in his important essay on repetition:

[56] Sellar, "Parts of Speech." For a fuller description of her first encounters with the digital delay, including specification of the model number of the first unit she ever worked with (an Ibanez DM1000), see Z, "A Tool Is a Tool."

[57] Sellar, "Parts of Speech."

[58] Hear Steve Reich, *Come Out,* Nonesuch 79451 (10 CDs), [1966] 1997). Over the years since Reich's music came to prominence; his interest in Afrodiasporicisms has been the subject of considerable discussion and revision, in which the composer himself has been a central participant. For an extended and useful recent analysis of Reich's work that engages the composer's associations with the Afrodiasporic, see Martin Scherzinger, "Curious Intersections, Uncommon Magic: Steve Reich's *It's Gonna Rain*," *Current Musicology* 79–80 (2005): 207–44. However, the various twists and turns regarding Reich's complex anxieties of influence regarding Africa are best made evident by engaging the compendium of his own writings. See Steve Reich, ed., with an introduction by Paul Hillier, *Writings on Music, 1965–2000* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).

[59] See Reich, *Writings on Music, 1965–2000*, 34–36.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1752196307070034 Published online by Cambridge University Press

> In black culture, the thing (the ritual, the dance, the beat) is "there for you to pick it up when you come back to it." If there is a goal (*Zweck*) in such a culture, it is always deferred; it continually "cuts" back to the start . . . this magic of the cut attempts to confront accident and rupture not by covering them over, but by making room for them inside the system itself.[60]

The notion of the "cut," or the assertion of and inevitable return to an originary source, is intrinsic to the phenomenology of the digital-delay line. For Snead, the cut, exemplified by the music of James Brown, "overtly insists on the repetitive nature of the music, by abruptly skipping it back to another beginning which we have already heard."[61] On this view, repetition actually brings materiality to sound: "The greater the insistence on the pure beauty and value of repetition, the greater the awareness must be also that repetition takes place on a level not of musical development or progression, but on the purest tonal and timbric level."[62]

Similarly, Pamela Z's digital delay line became a tool for the exploration of the material nature of spoken language:

> When I started making sound loops I began to listen to text as music. When spoken text is repeated by a machine, you can hear the fundamental tone of something that you thought was unpitched. So I began composing based on the melodies in natural speech, which I never would have done if I hadn't discovered the digital delay.[63]

Despite evincing a certain petulance in painting bass-baritone Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau as an agent of mass culture to disguise a lack of sympathy with his performance of Schubert lieder, Roland Barthes's 1972 essay, "The Grain of the Voice," speaks powerfully of the relationships among voice, language, and the body. For Barthes, "The 'grain' of the voice is not—or is not merely—its timbre; the *significance* it opens cannot better be defined, indeed, than by the very friction between the music and something else, which something else is the particular language (and nowise the message). The song must speak, must *write*."[64] What Barthes calls "the sung writing of language" is facilitated in Z's work by the use of digital electronics as an *outil de bricolage par excellence*. "When I started using samplers," Z recalled in an interview, "I started detuning sounds, spreading a sound out over the whole pitch spectrum, sculpting found sounds as if they were notes, and playing samples of sounds and language in a pianistic way."[65] Here, the materiality of language itself seduces both the theorist and the *bricoleuse*. Indeed, following Z's initial visit to Senegal,

> I carried home with me the echoes of less tangible things such as the sound of people's voices, the mingling of languages (English with French—with which I am very

[60] James Snead, "On Repetition in Black Culture," *Black American Literature Forum* 15/4 (1981): 150.

[61] Ibid.

[62] Ibid.

[63] Sellar, "Parts of Speech."

[64] Roland Barthes, "The Grain of the Voice," in *Image-Music-Text*, trans. Stephen Heath (New York: Hill and Wang, 1977), 185–86.

[65] Sellar, "Parts of Speech."

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1752196307070034 Published online by Cambridge University Press

> familiar—and Wolof, which was very unknown to me). . . . I was taken in as much by the music of the combination of their voices . . . as I was by the content of what was being said.[66]

Even now, Z is fascinated by the sheer sound of language, or what Barthes referred to as "that apex (or that depth) of production where the melody really works at the language—not at what it says, but the voluptuousness of its sounds-signifiers, of its letters—where melody explores how the language works and identifies with that work."[67] As Z began to develop work on a larger and more complex scale, however, her encounter with language began to deepen, and new questions and challenges emerged. Her 1998 *Parts of Speech*, for instance, explored not only the materiality of language, syntax, and the human voice, but also the ways in which language projects codes of a gendered technology. The piece brings to mind a canonical Chomskyan example; here, "colorless green ideas sleep furiously," as language is literally fragmented into "parts" of speech in order to reveal translation as a site for the projection of power.[68]

Sound artist and poet Bruce Andrews has theorized at length about the possibilities and challenges that will emerge from this kind of "electronic poetics." Andrews's collagist conception of language strongly recalls Z's frequent deployment of the term *layers* to describe her techniques of combining sonic (and later visual) imagery. Andrews raises the possibility of developing, via electronics and hypermedia, "'agrammars' of collage & multiple sequence . . . 'workings' of nonidiomatic, labyrinthine difference."[69] Along the way, Andrews also raises another pertinent question, seemingly descriptive of Z's multilaminar approach to sound, language, and performance: "Can we lay out—sometimes keeping them present as separate & navigable layers—the alternative choices & building blocks of discourse as an array of hypermediated readymades, with the bleed-throughs of palimpsest-like sense solicited by the reading process?"[70]

It is in this sense, finally, that Z's use of sound collage recalls that of Varèse, a celebrated resident of Greenwich Village who once performed his *Poème Électronique* at his neighborhood local, the Village Gate—a French composer gone native and appropriated by his adopted land after taking a long drink from the wellsprings of American *bricolage*. Z's multilaminar articulation of rhythmized language is intimately bound up with the possibilities of *un bricolage numérique*:

> I didn't have all these ideas about doing layered vocal pieces and then suddenly think Wow, I could accomplish that really easily if I used digital delays! It was really more like this: I bought a delay, started experimenting with it, and discovered all of these wonderful sounds. When I added more delays to the mix, I discovered even more amazing things.[71]

Z is well aware that the electronic medium offers a fundamentally different aesthetic and emotional experience, one that is not reducible to a simple replacement of the

[66] Z, "Performance & Installation Proposal for Dak'Art."
[67] Barthes, "The Grain of the Voice," 182.
[68] Noam Chomsky, *Syntactic Structures*, 2nd ed. (Berlin: Mouton De Gruyter, 2002), 15.
[69] Bruce Andrews, "Electronic Poetics," http://www.ubu.com/papers/andrews_electronic.html.
[70] Ibid.
[71] Kennedy, "A Few Facets of Pamela Z."

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1752196307070034 Published online by Cambridge University Press

human by silicon. As she maintains, "There is a big difference between the identical repetitions that happen with delay loops and the changing repetitions that humans make. There is also a difference between one person's voice heavily layered and several different voices combining their timbres to make one sound. Both are good. Just different."[72]

Acoustic Ecology

In his important 1961 manifesto, *Silence*, composer John Cage, intending to distance our experience of sound from "taste" and "psychology," described sound—all sound—as having four attributes: loudness, duration, pitch, and timbre.[73] However useful this view of sound might have been at the time as a way of orienting composers towards new vistas, it appears to founder on the shoals of our complex everyday experience. For those who maintain that sounds can exist autonomously, "in themselves," lacking relationships to culture, history or memory, everyday life routinely provides powerful evidence to the contrary. Certainly in any major U.S. city, even very young children are obliged to learn a particular kind of acoustic ecology, one related to the survival value of parsing sonic utterance. In the words of one parishioner in a church in one of Chicago's poorest communities, "You could even hear the gunfire while we were singing."[74]

While not directly autobiographical, Z's work draws upon the acoustic ecology of her world. Her frequent use of field recordings recognizes the survival value in the human birthright of finding coherence in the environment, as it asserts the congruence of her sound-making, gesturing body with those around her. For Z, sound is connected with interactivity, connectivity, and empathy, and her strong affirmation of intentionality and personal narrative poses a considerable challenge to a post-Cage aesthetic stance based in sonic autonomy. *Syrinx* (2003) finds Z dialoguing with the sounds of birds, learning to sing in their languages and seeking deeper meaning in the sounds. Z's vocally constructed bird calls are transformed electronically, along the lines of Eric Dolphy's Messiaen-inspired improvisations.[75] For both Z and Dolphy, however, the sounds of the birds are not simply appropriated as sources in the way that dominant cultures have historically appropriated the labor of subaltern peoples. Rather, Z and Dolphy posit a dialogic relationship with

[72] Ibid.

[73] Cage's sonic taxonomy, which draws upon the post–Cold War scientism that was becoming a strong influence upon academic composition in the United States during the late 1950s, is frequently restated throughout *Silence*, e.g., "A SOUND IS HIGH OR LOW, SOFT OR LOUD, OF A CERTAIN TIMBRE, LASTS A CERTAIN LENGTH OF TIME, AND HAS AN ENVELOPE." John Cage, *Silence: Lectures and Writings by John Cage* (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, [1961] 1974), 49. "Each aspect of sound (frequency, amplitude, timbre, duration) is to be seen as a continuum" (70–71); "To repeat, a sound has four characteristics: frequency, amplitude, timbre, and duration. Silence (ambient noise) has only duration" (80).

[74] For a thoughtful discussion of Cage's notion of sounds in themselves, see Frances Dyson, "The Ear that Would Hear Sounds in Themselves," in *Wireless Imagination: Sound, Radio, and the Avant-Garde*, ed. Douglas Kahn and Gregory Whitehead, 373–407 (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1993).

[75] A brief discussion of Dolphy's interest in birdsong is to be found in Don DeMicheal, "John Coltrane and Eric Dolphy Answer the Jazz Critics," *Down Beat*, 12 April 1962, 20–23.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1752196307070034 Published online by Cambridge University Press

the birds, assuming mutual sentience in the service of a dialogic imagination of subjectivity.

In Z's *Voice Studies* (2003), the multiplicity of accents that mark U.S. English serves as material for a pointedly political exploration of the relationship between vocal production and cultural expression. Z stands before the audience in the fashion of a prim motivational speaker, presenting the latest research, while a forest of vocal click sounds evoke the primordial all around her. The composer's brief but telling evocation of "vocal profiling" asserts the political in an offhandedly whimsical way that, far from making light of the experience of racism, clarifies the point at which the modalities of race and class intersect with the ecologies of sound. As Z has said of one recent work, "The stage is alive with unexpected visual and auditory transformations."[76] The observation can be well taken to refer to Pamela Z's work as a whole, since her concept of "sound" becomes a metaphorical pointer to deeper levels of meaning beyond simple, objectified morphologies of pitch or timbre, and listening becomes an encounter with memory, identity, and history.

REFERENCES

Agawu, Kofi. *African Rhythm: A Northern Ewe Perspective.* New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995.

André, Naomi. *Voicing Gender: Castrati, Travesti, and the Second Woman in Early-Nineteenth-Century Italian Opera.* Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006.

Andrews, Bruce. "Electronic Poetics." http://www.ubu.com/papers/andrews_electronic. html.

Barthes, Roland. "The Grain of the Voice." In *Image-Music-Text*, trans. Stephen Heath, 179–89. New York: Hill and Wang, 1977.

Black, Edwin. "For the Record: Charles Stepney." *Down Beat,* 26 November 1970, 12, 32.

Cage, John. *Silence: Lectures and Writings by John Cage.* Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, [1961] 1974.

Césaire, Aimé. *Cahier d'un retour au pays natal.* 2nd ed. Ed. with introduction, commentary, and notes by Abiola Irele. Columbus: Ohio State University Press, [1938] 2000.

———. *Notebook of a Return to the Native Land,* trans. and ed. Clayton Eshleman and Annette Smith. Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, [1938] 2001.

———. *Cahier d'un retour au pays natal.* Foreword by André Breton. Paris: Présence Africaine, [1938] 1971.

Chomsky, Noam. *Syntactic Structures.* 2nd ed. Berlin: Mouton De Gruyter, 2002.

Clément, Catherine. *Opera, or, The Undoing of Women*, trans. Betsy Wing. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988.

Craft, Morgan. "Towards a New Consciousness" (letter to the editor), *The Wire*, October 2005, 8.

[76] Pamela Z, description of "Voci," Pamela Z website, http://www.pamelaz.com/ voci.html.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1752196307070034 Published online by Cambridge University Press

DeMicheal, Don. "John Coltrane and Eric Dolphy Answer The Jazz Critics." *Down Beat,* 12 April 1962, 20–23.

Dery, Mark. *Flame Wars: The Discourse of Cyberculture.* Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1995.

Diop, Cheikh Anta. *The African Origin of Civilization: Myth or Reality*. New York: Lawrence Hill, 1974.

Dyson, Frances. "The Ear That Would Hear Sounds in Themselves." In *Wireless Imagination: Sound, Radio, and the Avant-Garde*, ed. Douglas Kahn and Gregory Whitehead, 373–407. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1993.

Gracyk, Theodore. *Rhythm and Noise: An Aesthetics of Rock.* Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1996.

Gray, Herman S. *Cultural Moves: African Americans and the Politics of Representation.* Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005.

Hayles, N. Katherine. "Embodied Virtuality, Or How to Put Bodies Back into the Picture." In *Immersed in Technology: Art and Virtual Environments,* ed. Mary Anne Moser and Douglas MacLeod, 1–28. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1995.

Kennedy, Kathy. "A Few Facets of Pamela Z." *Musicworks*, Spring 2000, http://www.pamelaz. com/musicworks.html.

Kevorkian, Martin. *Color Monitors: The Black Face of Technology in America.* Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2006.

Kyodo News Service."Letter from Hearn's Late Years Shows Bitterness in Japan." *Japan Economic Newswire*, 23 September 1998.

Lewis, George. "Experimental Music in Black and White: The AACM in New York, 1970–1985." In *Uptown Conversation: The New Jazz Studies,* ed. Robert G. O'Meally, Brent Hayes Edwards, and Farah Jasmine Griffin, 50–101. New York: Columbia University Press, 2004.

Mailer, Norman. *Existential Errands.* New York: New American Library, 1973.

McCartney, Andra. "Cyborg Experiences: Contradictions and Tensions of Technology, Nature, and the Body in Hildegard Westerkamp's 'Breathing Room.'" In *Music and Gender*, ed. Pirkko Moisala and Beverley Diamond, 317–35. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2000.

McClary, Susan. "This Is Not A Story My People Tell: Musical Time and Space According to Laurie Anderson." In *Feminine Endings: Music, Gender, and Sexuality,* 132–47. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991.

Mercer, Kobena. *Welcome to the Jungle: New Positions in Black Cultural Studies.* New York: Routledge, 1994.

Moisala, Pirkko. "Gender Negotiation of the Composer—Kaija Saariaho in Finland: The Woman Composer as Nomadic Subject." In *Music and Gender*, ed. Pirkko Moisala and Beverley Diamond, 166–88. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2000.

Mokhtar, G., ed. *UNESCO General History of Africa.* Vol. 2, *Ancient Civilizations of Africa.* Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981.

Moten, Fred. *In the Break: The Aesthetics of the Black Radical Tradition.* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003.

Nelson, Alondra. "Introduction: Future Texts." *Social Text* 20/2 (2002): 1–15.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1752196307070034 Published online by Cambridge University Press

"Pamela Z Programs: *Voci*." Bernstein Artists website, http://www.bernsarts.com/pamelaz/ pamelazprog.html.
Piper, Adrian. *Out of Order, Out of Sight.* Vol. 1, *Selected Writings in Meta-Art, 1968–1992.* Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1996.
Reich, Steve. *Writings on Music, 1965–2000,* ed. with an introduction by Paul Hillier. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002.
Sandoval, Chela. "New Sciences: Cyborg Feminism and the Methodology of the Oppressed." In *The Cybercultures Reader,* ed. David Bell and Barbara M. Kennedy, 374–87. London: Routledge, 2000.
Scherzinger, Martin. "Curious Intersections, Uncommon Magic: Steve Reich's *It's Gonna Rain*." *Current Musicology* 79/80 (2005): 207–44.
Sellar, Tom. "Parts of Speech: Interview with Pamela Z." *Theater Magazine* 30/2 (2000), http://www.pamelaz.com/theater.html.
Snead, James. "On Repetition in Black Culture." *Black American Literature Forum* 15/4 (1981): 146–54.
Strauss, Neil. "The Hissing of a Living Legend." *The New York Times Magazine*, 4 October 1998, 46.
Van Raalte, Chris, and Ed Severinghaus. "The BodySynth." Synth Zone website, http://www. synthzone.com/bsynth.html.
Wallace, Michele. *Black Macho and the Myth of the Superwoman.* London: Verso, [1978] 1999.
Weheliye, Alexander G. "'Feenin': Posthuman Voices in Contemporary Black Popular Music." *Social Text* 20/2 (2002): 21–47.
———. *Phonographies: Grooves in Sonic Afro-Modernity.* Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2005.
Welburn, Ron. "The Black Aesthetic Imperative." In *The Black Aesthetic,* ed. Addison Gayle Jr., 132–49. New York: Doubleday, 1971.
Williams, Clarence G. *Technology and the Dream: Reflections on the Black Experience at MIT, 1941–1999.* Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2003.
Wood, Joe. "The Yellow Negro." *Transition* 73 (1997): 40–66.
Z, Pamela. Description of "*Gaijin.*" Pamela Z website, http://www.pamelaz.com/gaijin.html.
———. Description of "*Parts of Speech.*" Pamela Z website, http://www.pamelaz.com/partsofspeech.html.
———. Description of "*Voci.*" Pamela Z website, http://www.pamelaz.com/voci.html.
———. "Japan Letters." Pamela Z website, http://www.pamelaz.com/nihon.htm.
———. "Performance & Installation Proposal for Dak'Art." Unpublished manuscript, 2004.
———. "A Tool Is a Tool." In *Women, Art, and Technology*, ed. Judy Malloy, 348–61. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2003.
———. "Z Programs History." Pamela Z website, http://www.pamelaz.com/zphistory.html.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1752196307070034 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Discography

Abrams, Muhal Richard. *Spihumonesty*. Black Saint 120032, 1980.
———. *The Visibility of Thought*. Mutable Music MM17502-2, 2001.
Abrams, Richard. *Levels and Degrees of Light*. Delmark DS-413, 1967.
Harris, Eddie. *The Electrifying Eddie Harris*. Atlantic SD-1495, 1967.
———. *Exodus to Jazz*. Collectables 7145, 1960.
———. *The Tender Storm*. Atlantic SD-1478, 1966.
Reich, Steve. *Come Out*. In *Steve Reich: Works 1965–1995*. Nonesuch 79451 (10 CDs), [1966] 1997.
Riperton, Minnie. *Petals: The Minnie Riperton Collection*. Capitol 72435-29343-2-4 (2 CDs), 2001.
Z, Pamela. *A Delay Is Better*. Starkland ST-213, 2004.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1752196307070034 Published online by Cambridge University Press