

Overall, the book provides a valuable glimpse into the different forms that urban poverty and informality take in Latin American cities at present. However, the failure to connect with a well-established research literature on urbanization and development in the region renders the collection less valuable than it could have been. Building “from scratch” has its costs, both for cities and for academic projects. Inventing a field anew is a poor strategy when a solid foundation already exists to frame and to clarify the theoretical and practical implications of contemporary studies.

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ANA MARÍA OCHOA GAUTIER: *Aurality: Listening and Knowledge in Nineteenth-Century Colombia*. Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2014.

In this book, Colombian ethnomusicologist Ana María Ochoa Gautier examines how voice was embedded in the 19<sup>th</sup>-century debates on the boundaries between nature and culture, between the civilized and the barbaric, and between inclusion or marginalization in a public civic domain. Through voice, sound becomes a way to make sense of the world and a medium to build knowledge about it. Hence, the book speaks of the relevance of the aural in the construction of history, culture, and politics in late 19<sup>th</sup>-century Colombia. A key feature of the theoretical framework, though, is that Ochoa Gautier, uninterested in simple oppositions, does not pose the aural as an “other” of the lettered city, but rather as an element that questions and upholds, alternatively, its very foundations. She is also keenly attentive to how, in the context of the postcolonial period, the zoopolitics of the voice—a term coined by Argentine scholar Fabián Ludueña to distinguish between politically qualified life and a more natural version—served as a means to redefine the relationship between the colonial and the modern. The volume is judiciously divided into four chapters that deal in an orderly manner with each of the pertinent cases.

Chapter 1 dwells on the difference between the way Creole elites and Europeans assessed and mapped the vocalizations of *bogas*, the boat rowers of the Magdalena River, and the way Afro-descendants and indigenous groups understood these very same vocalizations. According to the author, the *bogas*’ capacity to envoice animal sounds resulted from their acceptance—unlike Creoles and Europeans—of a shared capacity of humans and animals to have a voice, to sing, and to speak. Through their mimesis, *bogas* did not enact hybridity. Instead,

through their transduction—Ochoa Gautier borrows the term from Brazilian anthropologist Eduardo Viveiros de Castro, meaning the transformation of one form of matter or energy into another—they undermined the politics of purification as categorization, upsetting the aesthetic measurement that Creoles and Europeans so eagerly embraced. The chapter also includes the work in Colombia of German explorer Alexander von Humboldt, who questioned the distinction between music and sounds, between culture and nature. In the context of the “Berlin Enlightenment,” with the rise of ideas like the acceptance of clear pitch as a main element of music, the interrelationship between language and identity as central to musical nationalism, or how climate influenced the production of racialized ideas related to music, language, and culture, Humboldt’s work points to the ecology of acoustics.

The second chapter explores how the idea of popular song in 19<sup>th</sup>-century Colombia became part of a literary knowledge. To do so, the author discusses the works of philologist José María Vergara y Vergara (1831-1872), Afro-Colombian poet Candelario Obeso (1849-1884), and renowned novelist Jorge Isaacs (1837-1895). Through the inscription of popular song into the literary, it is possible to see how demographic heterogeneity defied a clear relation between an imagined community and the foundational texts or genres that are supposed to embody and contain it. The case of Obeso, in particular, highlights the distance between an alternate understanding and the world of Bogota grammarians, who were so bent on a fixed way of conceiving the popular.

In Chapter 3, relying heavily on theories by Viveiros de Castro, in which the conceptualization of difference does not depend on the history of social construction but rather assumes the presence of different modes of comparative, mutually constituted notions of alterity, which do not fit a conventional paradigm, Ochoa Gautier explores the importance of conceptualizing a relationship between the valorization of indigenous languages and the political in the dialectic between nature and culture. Colombian scholar Ezequiel Uricechea (1834-1880) as well as Isaacs, the two main cases covered, used comparative methods to study indigenous languages and answer questions about the nature and history of Colombia. The former tried to substantiate his theories about the origin of the American continent. Through his travels around the Colombian Caribbean, hoping to finish the work begun by the Agustín Codazzi Geographical Expedition, the latter tried to incorporate indigenous groups into a secular state through a broadening of the auditory configuration of the public sphere, a move that was promptly attacked by grammarian and conservative politician Miguel Antonio Caro (1845-1909). Gautier discusses the legal implications of the controversy between these authors and its effect on the drawing of boundaries between nature

and culture, between the sound of languages and their political inscription, and the definition of a value of indigenous languages for the nation-state.

In the fourth and final chapter, borrowing the term “anthropotechnologies” (*antropotecnía* in Spanish) from Ludueña, Ochoa Gautier explores the way in which Miguel Antonio Caro, philologist Rufino José Cuervo (1844-1911), and composer and poet Diego Fallón (1834-1904) employed a series of techniques—eloquence, etymology, and orthography, respectively—to substantiate notions like the use of the voice as an instrument for the “proper” enculturation of the population, the development of a means to control language and its potentially dangerous change amid postcolonial diversification, and the use of alphabetic writing for the encryption of music and the avoidance of its inherent emancipation from language, as had occurred in Europe. Taken together, these so-called anthropotechnologies produced a politics of immunization that generated an understanding of orality that was crucial to the political theology of the state. Both chapters 2 and 4 discuss the articulation of a racialized culturalism that transformed the politics of blood purity into cultural theories of exclusion and discrimination, a development that applies equally well to other corners of the Americas.

The volume is a must for enthusiasts of sound studies and/or Colombian history. Ochoa Gautier has done a fine job chronicling the way in which the aural played a key role in the definition of a relation between humankind and the body politics of the nation-state. It deserves wide recognition and ample endorsement. Amid considerations of autocratic grammarians, it is only ironic that more attention was not awarded to language, which occasionally comes across as a tad verbose.

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MARCIA OCHOA: *Queen for a Day: Transformistas, Beauty Queens, and the Performance of Femininity in Venezuela*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2014.

Within the same analytic frame, Marcia Ochoa’s *Queen for a Day* analyzes *misses* (beauty pageant contestants) and *transformistas* (transgender women), producing a queer reflection on the cultural logic of Venezuela. Moving from the transnational to the national to the local, her critical analysis of the “frivolous” space of spectacle addresses serious questions about how both marginalized populations and the country of Venezuela itself use glamour to negotiate power