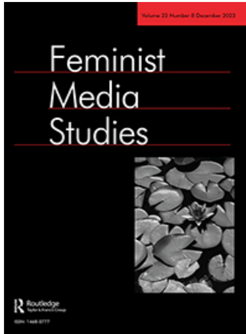

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Screaming along to mixtapes: *Yellowjackets* and the choral female voice as subversive noise

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ABSTRACT

Engaging with collectivist voice that challenges the "communicative injustices" of neoliberal feminism, this article analyses how the TV horror series *Yellowjackets*' soundscape employs unruly female chorus as a form of branded "feminism," vocalised in places traditionally coded as masculine: punk scenes, the wilderness, and soccer as a team sport. Analysing the opening credits, the title track "No Return" employs Riot Grrrl feminist noise that is synaesthetically embodied by the show's female characters. Synaesthetic embodiment continues within the series where the female choral voice pendulates between the monstrous screamscape *acousmêtre* and the joyous singing along to pop music. Furthermore, the article demonstrates how such sonic solidarity becomes the source of "feminist nostalgia" for the then-adult characters whose "affective dissonance" with, and siloing within, present-day neoliberal society leaves them longing for the yesteryears of the 1990s. Finally, the article critically interrogates this nostalgia that, on the one hand, fosters increased diversity onscreen, yet on the other, revises history in popular feminist fashion that obfuscates past and present structural inequalities and the marginalisation of non-hegemonic identities.

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Introduction

Centring on a female high-school team fighting for survival in the Canadian wilderness, their descent into cannibalism, and their subsequent adult lives, *Yellowjackets* (2021) has received ample praise for its use of music (e.g., Quinn Moreland 2022; Carrie Wittmer 2022; Leah Carroll 2022). The series interweaves multiple timelines: the past narrative set in 1996 follows the Yellowjackets after their plane crashes and they must face the horrors of nature during a nineteen-month ordeal; and the present-day narrative where the now-adult survivors receive postcards with a symbol linked to the happenings that took place twenty-five years ago. The group (Shauna, Taissa, Natalie, and Misty) set out to find who sent the cryptic messages and why. Through complex narrative structuring, the storylines jump back-and-forth as the mysteries of both the rural and civilised spaces unfold in

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dialogic fashion. With this, "music is an essential part of the construction of the hyperdiegetic world" (Janet K Halfyard 2016, 3). Yet a dominant argument in the rise of twenty-first century horror television is the employment of cinematic visuality as a marker of quality (Lorna Jowett and Stacey Abbott 2013; Todd K Platts 2020; Stella Marie Gaynor 2022). However, this article contends *Yellowjackets*' soundscape, originally scored music, and wealth of licensed tracks are key to reading the show's horror *and* acoustically indicates quality TV status (Halfyard 2016, 40–42). Furthermore, the article argues the series' audio features dually position *Yellowjackets* within a growing corpus of female-centric quality TV fictions that move away from quality televisions' traditionally masculine codings (Claire Perkins and Michele Schreiber 2019; Julia Havas 2022) and "feminist new wave" horror media (Barbara Creed 2022).

Building on this, the study analyses season one of *Yellowjackets* and its soundscape with particular focus on the unruly female choral voice as gendered subversion that brands the series as "feminist" (Jana Cattien 2019). This begins by highlighting how popular neoliberal feminism stresses female empowerment that is singularised and inward-looking rather than challenging structural inequalities. This actively works to deamplify, discredit, and demonise those that do not or cannot fit this neoliberal agenda, resulting in "communicative injustice" (Jilly Boyce Kay 2020). The article goes on to explore sonic modes of gendered resistance that stress female collectivity. Applying this to *Yellowjackets*, the article contends that homophonic homosociality between these young women and polyphonic female empowerment is produced via choral acts of speech, song, or screams, particularly in spaces traditionally defined as masculine.

Analysis starts with *Yellowjackets*' paratextual opening credits whose title track "No Return" employs Riot Grrrl feminist noise that is synaesthetically embodied by the show's female characters. Reading the series itself, the article argues the natural wilderness—a site for the restoration of traditional masculinity—allows the nascent female screamscape *acousmêtre* to materialise, before addressing how football/soccer as a team sport both undermines dominant representations of femininity in the West and champions female vocality. Moreover, social bonding is furthered as the team frequently sing and dance to 1990s pop songs; a music genre often chastised in its feminine codings. Finally, the article argues back in "civilisation" the adult survivors present "affective dissonance" to neoliberal myths (Amy Shields Dobson and Akane Kanai 2019) as they find themselves divided from each other. This engenders a "feminist nostalgia" and highly consumable nostalgia for the 1990s that the article interrogates as both collectivist and revisionist popular feminism.

Is speaking up speaking out?: gendered voice in neoliberal society

Historically, the cultural construction and constriction of gender has served to manage "women's behavior in ways that enforce[d] their subordination" (Dianna Taylor 2010, 125), particularly via corporeal and judicial punishment. However, in the current neoliberal conjuncture women are paradoxically required to both police and project their voices. Placing onus on individual strength, feminist rhetoric is tethered to, and articulated via, autonomous empowerment; what Rosalind Gill and Shani Orgad (2015) term "confidence as a technology of the self" (326). Neoliberal feminism encourages girls and women to "lean in" to the neoliberal system, rather than challenge it (Catherine Rottenberg 2014),

materialising in more visible positions of power (423). With this, neoliberal qualities such as "entrepreneurial spirit, resilience, gumption" (Sarah Banet-Weiser 2018, 20) are orated by strong individual female voices who ultimately compete *against* one another (Angela McRobbie 2015). Unsurprisingly, then, neoliberal feminism is markedly corporate-friendly, being particularly visible across the media landscape as it is constructed, commodified, and circulated to audiences. Indeed, this "popular feminism," Banet-Weiser (2018) argues, is readily branded across film and television, advertising, pop music, and social media that perpetuates homogeneous representations of female empowerment already afforded the most visibility within popular culture—white, heteronormative, middle-class, cisgendered, able-bodied, consumers—while simultaneously erasing other non-hegemonic and/or resistive feminist modes that challenge structural inequalities.

Indeed, this latter point, Kay (2020) highlights, demonstrates that despite women being presented the "promise of voice" (7), public speech is not readily afforded to all. Kay terms this "communicative injustice" where "women, as well as LGBTQ people, people of colour, working-class people, disabled people and other 'others' are denied voice that is sufficiently expansive, complex and meaningful so as to allow them a position of full citizenship and personhood in contemporary culture" (8). Within neoliberal society, ostensibly inclusive public spaces continue to denigrate, stifle, interrupt, and attack female vocality, from micro-aggressions such as "mansplaining" to extreme threats of bodily violence as "popular misogyny" reacts to popular feminism (Banet-Weiser 2018). For instance, political arenas (Mary Beard 2015), exemplified by Donald Trump's presidency (Zuliati Rohmah and Alda Fitriani Suwandi 2021); #Gamergate (Sarah Banet-Weiser and Kate M Miltner 2016); and online platforms where women disproportionally receive more sexually aggressive commentary and harassing threats compared to men for daring to have a voice (Marjan Nadim and Audun Fladmore 2021). Similarly, there has been pushback against women who use social media to speak out against gendered and sexual violence as part of movements such as #MeToo and Time's Up for being seemingly too loud (Tim Bower 2019).

Moreover, while vital in exposing female victimhood and injustices, social media movements such as #MeToo and #AskHerMore that highlight sexists and toxic mistreatment within media industries are entrenched within Hollywood celebrity culture's representational homogeny. This results in a "tendency for the voices of white women to dominate diverse digital spaces" (Jennifer O'Meara 2022, 9) that reiterates the obscuring of minority voices in popular feminism (Kay 2020, 16). Likewise, the veneration of loud transgressive women has core intersectional components, whereby far-right white women have appropriated feminist discourse of "witch-hunting" in order to spout conservative, racist, xenophobic, and transphobic rhetoric that supports white supremacy (84). Concurrently, non-white women must moderate their public speech to perform a caring disempowered subjectivity (Saskia Witteborn 2023, 40), lest they be punished for challenging dominant neocolonial ideologies. This is significant within other cultural arenas. Appropriate to *Yellowjackets*' character demographic, if, as Kay (2020) explains, "girls are now called upon—and indeed expected—to come forward, to speak up, to express themselves" (5), the education system denies this to Black female students. Born out of racist caricatures depicting Black women "as rude, loud, malicious, stubborn, and overbearing" (David Pilgrim 2012), Black girls in US high schools are frequently made abject by being perceived as "loud" in combination with being "aggressive and having

a lot of 'attitude'" (Joy L Lei 2003, 162). To fit into a system that ultimately works to exclude them, these "loud" Black female students must silence themselves to avoid being disciplined for such vocality. This supports white supremacy *and* hegemonic patriarchy.

Voice can also be nullified by discreditation. As Marylin Yarbrough and Crystal Bennett (2000) write, "[t]hroughout recent history, western civilization's perceptions of sexual violence have defined women as liars, often in order to portray men as innocent" (630). Within a post-truth paradigm, "a mediated *economy of believability* is the context in which public bids for truth are made, evaluated, and authorized" (Sarah Banet-Weiser and Kathryn Claire Higgins 2023, 2), with white men's voices systematically granted more validity over women's testaments. Victims of the "Cassandra curse," women are stereotyped as deliberately deceitful and, therefore, not to be trusted when accusing men of sexual assault (Amy D Ronner 1997). Furthermore, due to lingering colonial and slavery discourses the Cassandra curse works dually, and therefore more severely, for Black women marked as deviant by both their race and gender (Yarbrough and Bennett 2000). This contrasts with the "Karen" who is able to weaponise her gendered whiteness, verbalised through their believable voice that serves their own political ends (Banet-Weiser and Claire Higgins 2023, 173–74). Consequently, "[t]he benefits of speaking out are significantly tempered for *all* women by the simultaneous costs of doing so—but the costs are much less significant, and the stakes much lower, for white, middle-class, cisgendered women" (Kay 2020, 84).

To tackle systemic communicative injustice, some have argued the very voices and labels employed to silence women and nullify their words can be used by women as modes of resistance. Lei (2003) and Signithia Fordham (1993) propound that rather than support a system that actively works to marginalise them, Black women should embrace their loudness to challenge racial and gendered ideals. Taking an intersectional approach Kay (2020) goes one step further, arguing for "a democratic and just conceptualisation of voice [that] must be collectivist and leftist in orientation" (75). They add, "[c]ommunicative justice is not about individuals 'taking back control' of their stories—rather, we need a collective taking back of the means of communicative production" (75). To this point, while pop music is a stellar genre for popular feminism given its visibility, lucrativeness, and emphasis on celebrity culture (Robin James 2020), it is also conducive for bringing young women together as a collective. Female pop music fans are routinely scorned for being over-emotional and too vocal in their love for popular culture deemed trivial and of low cultural value (Mareike Herrmann 2008, 89). Yet, there are subversive qualities in the female fan(dom). Providing the term "screamscape", Nicolette Rohr (2017) argues the adoration young female fans of The Beatles expressed for the band had feminist potential. For Rohr, fans' "screams constituted a rebellion against the gendered norms of public behavior governing the era as well as a precursor to the also gendered social, cultural, sexual, and political rebellions of the 1960s" (1). Mark Duffett (2017) reaffirms this within a present-day context, stating screaming "offers a powerful sense of enfranchisement; the female fans who scream 'own' not just their heroes, but their collective right to emotionally express that sense of ownership" (148).

Individually and as a chorus, female vocality fosters "unruly speech" with the tongue designated as the female's body "unruly member" (Lynda E Boose 1991, 204). Witteborn (2023) explains that "[u]nruly speech is transgressive precisely as it questions boundaries between set categories, exposes the limits of the sayable and doable, and reveals the

conditions for what can be articulated, heard, and seen . . . in a communicative space" (3). Exploring unruliness, Christopher Holliday (2021) argues that "alongside many other grotesque and unsettling violations of traditional neo-conservative gender ideologies, the unruly woman remakes femininity by inverting and diverting feminist cultural logic" (45). A common depiction within the horror genre (Erin Harrington 2018), the unruly female "is rooted in a framing discourse of nonconformity as it provides a challenge to normative female behaviour, decorum and beauty through efforts of power and deviancy" (Holliday 2021, 45). The female tumultuous voice amplified in unison, then, can be seen as an unruly feminist performative act in the face of neoliberal hegemony. This is presented in various ways throughout the first season of *Yellowjackets*.

Moreover, the series' generic hybridity, thematic concerns, and unruly femininity means *Yellowjackets* can be situated within various current cycles of female-centred screen media. This includes post-recessional television's "affective dissonance" with neoliberal post-feminist promises (Dobson and Kanai 2019), dramas that channel anger towards popular misogyny (Kay 2020, 31–32); US quality TV drama focusing on female trauma (Amy Boyle 2023); and "Feminist New Wave Cinema horror" where gendered resistance to patriarchal violence focuses "on woman's voice, woman's journey into abjection, female agency and desire in newly fashioned inter-generic films, such as the coming-of-age film" (Creed 2022, 16). Indeed, while popular feminism predominantly relies on positive feel-good affections of female strength (Banet-Weiser 2018, 15; Rosalind Gill 2017, 610), women's anger has become a fashionable media trope (Jilly Boyce Kay and Sarah Banet-Weiser 2019), incorporated into the genrefication of "feminist' TV (Cattien 2019, 324). Yet, television's reification of "feminism", as Cattien argues, warrants further interrogation. Such critique buttresses my examination of the female collective voice within *Yellowjackets.*

Girls at the front: the noise of Riot Grrrl

Alongside establishing the show's horror generics (Laura Mee 2022), the female collective voice as feminist rebellion thematic is sonically introduced in *Yellowjackets*' paratextual title sequence, where the title track "No Return" "condition[s] our entrance to [the series] . . . telling [us] what to expect" (Jonathan Gray 2010, 4). Composed and produced by Anna Waronker and Craig Wedren, the opening song's "strikingly sinister score harkens back to the punk, grunge, and garage scenes of the '90s and provides a darkly ominous backdrop to the horror series" (Alyson Camus 2022). Notably, the track's distorted electric guitars resonate with the noise of Riot Grrrl (Catherine Strong 2011). The sonic dissonance of noise is "an aggression against the code-structuring messages" (Jacques Attali 1985, 27), musically rendering the feminist ideologies of the Riot Grrrl scene (Julia Downes 2012, 215); a 1990s scene that emerged out of growing anger towards the gender dynamics within the 1980s punks scenes in D.C. and Olympia. Jessica Rosenberg and Gitana Garofalo (1998) explain that "[t]he name *Riot Grrrl* was chosen to reclaim the vitality and power of youth with an added growl to replace the perceived passivity of 'girl'" (809). Galvanising a sonic "battle cry for girls across the country to move outside the 'bedroom culture'" (Kristin Schilt 2004, 115), the aggressiveness of Riot Grrrl's noise – both musically and vocally – serves as part of the punk feminist politics that is mirrored in song lyrics that discuss female rage and resistance against hegemonic gender identities. Importantly,

"Riot grrrl refused to denigrate the feminine and instead created a visual and sonic spectrum of politicized girl signifiers within a subcultural punk context" (Downes 2012, 210); I return to the possibility of various combined feminine identities later. It is Riot Grrrl's female unruly musicality that can be found in *Yellowjackets'* opening titles.

The song opens with a driving grunge bass line with its syncopation placing emphasis on the off-beat, producing an unsettling rhythm. The text's haunting gothic sensibility is then musically introduced via the use of an organ arpeggio riff whose progression from Em to F# engenders discordant tonality. Finally, Riot Grrrl punk power is rendered with the introduction of distorted electric guitars. Combined with this, Waronker and Wedren note that the lyrics, while nebulous, speak to the series' Gothic mystery, reflect teenage angst and depression, but also "the invincibility of youth" (Moreland 2022) reflected in the show's characters. Building on this, the title sequence's use of sound, images, and editing also mimics music videos from the 1990s. This provides a temporal anchoring of *Yellowjackets*' storyworld but also harnesses music videos' dreamlike or nightmarish audiovisual sensibility (Marsha Kinder 1984), offering what Andrew Goodwin (1992) terms "synaesthesia". Goodwin defines this as "the intrapersonal process whereby sensory impressions are carried over from one sense to another . . . [where] video clips build on the soundtrack's visual associations" (50). Interspersed between horror iconography, the moody and abrasive Riot Grrrl tonality is mirrored in the visuals where we see the girls together, smoking, team captain Jackie using her finger to mimic cutting a throat before winking at the camera. The title sequence also depicts the team partying, a girl giving the middle finger, them drinking alcohol, and as a result one of them vomiting. This unruly rebel girl behaviour that undermines gender roles melded with the sonic pushback of Riot Grrrl can be understood as synaesthetic embodiment. This synaesthetic embodiment conflates non-diegetic sound with diegetic corporeality, disrupting ontological textuality that reflects the cultural gender subversion present within *Yellowjackets*.

Furthermore, Arwonker's reverbed voice is frequently doubled on the track or supported by backing vocals. This haunting doubling could foreshadow the splitting of identity between hidden past and present or the characters' mental splitting as they turn animalistic in the woods. Yet, relating to the article's central focus, the co-presence of Arwonker's voice is itself choral, evoking a female collective reflective of Riot Grrrl scenes, where the phrase "same as you" reiterates that synaesthetic embodiment in the series is markedly communal. Likewise, the aggressively sung lyrics "no return, no reason" reflect a rejection of the past and cultural tradition and the oppressive norms of patriarchal society. Consequently, not only does the title track's 1990s musicality serve to paratextuality evoke the nostalgic return to the past seen with the show's complex multi-timeline multinarrative, but it works to sonically reify the type of feminist rebellion that runs through *Yellowjackets* (Cattien 2019). Such noise, chorus, and synaesthetic embodiment are continued in the series.

Girls in the frontier: the screamscape acousmêtre

Generically, rural horror often sees middle-class suburban men (re)turn to nature in order to conquer it as they seek to reinstall traditional modes of masculinity in themselves (John Hartigan Jr. 2005, 140). Comparatively, *Yellowjackets*' young women become part of wilderness that welcomes their subversive screamscape. However, this screamscape is

not an audiovisual spectacle that presents the unruly female body (Rohr 2017), but rather a "vortexical" sound that is both diegetic and non-diegetic, freeing these females from the confines of space, linearity, and narrative (O'Meara 2022); confines reintroduced to the characters in their adult lives within "civilised" society. The series begins (S1, E1) *in media res* with an unidentified girl running through the snow-washed wild. Cut to engravings on the trees, the sound of whispers are located ambiguously between the diegetic and non-diegetic. As the girl flees the unseen threat, it cuts to stick-and-bone totems hanging from trees, the whispers turn to human-projected animal noises and screams. It is the cacophony of female voices that we hear but cannot see where they are being projected from or who by that index the monstrous-feminine as synaesthetic embodiment. Proximate but unlocatable the screams surround the victim. The female unruly scream has long gendered the monstrosity of the witch (Naomi Blacklock 2019, 5; Kimberly Ann Wells 2007, 9). A similar soundscape is evident in *The Vvitch* (Robert Eggers 2015). Saige Walton (2018) writes that "[s]onic dissonance seems to emanate from all directions, creating the impression that the air itself is screaming." The score houses an "invisible presence that resides 'in' nature" (Walton 2018), whereby the witch moves seamlessly between the non-diegetic and diegetic. Therefore, the screamscape auditorily inflects the psychogeographic gendering of the wild landscape, whereby *Yellowjackets*' folk horror juxtaposes the unruly rural and controlled civilisation (see Bernice M Murphy 2022, 139–40). Here, the former amplifies the female monstrous chorus whilst the latter mutes it in favour of neoliberal individual voice.

This female monstrous screaming is what Michel Chion (1994) terms "*acousmêtre*", an "acousmatic being . . . heard but not seen; these characters often have striking 'powers' or 'gifts' because of their acousmatic existence: they see all, know all, are omnipotent and ubiquitous" (Robynn J Stilwell 2005, 55). As she flees, the victim falls into a pit of spikes. With her body quietly twitching, a sound between a moan, horn, wolf cry, and other animal noises is heard as one of the group looks down upon the corpse. Later in the episode, the screamscape *acousmêtre* is repeated as the body is dragged, hung, and bled by the group. As the throat is slit, the female voices gain prominence alongside tribal percussion, and echoed again at the end of the episode as the group partake in cannibalism; the camera flying over them in witch-like fashion to reveal the expansive spectacle of the landscape. Creed (2022) writes that, "[t]he female cannibal's actions display the senses in revolt and the anarchy that comes with challenging one of society's most entrenched taboos" (127). Combining the screamscape's unruliness with the transgressiveness of cannibalism, subversive collective female orality is mapped onto the abject monstrous-feminine.

As the series develops, the screamscape *acousmêtre* leitmotif repeats in the episode "Doomcoming" (S1, E9); the team's makeshift prom held in the forest. As Misty's magic mushroom broth causes the survivors to hallucinate, their sensory understanding of the world around them allows them to feel that something is coming. This is accompanied by a similar score of tribal percussion and wailing heard in the pilot episode. This not only groups those who ingested the cocktail, but further serves to silo Jackie from the pack as the music fades when she takes Travis into the cabin to lose her virginity. Led by Lottie, the group decide that "Travis doesn't belong to [Jackie]" who set out to punish her. Notably, Jackie's role as team captain neoliberal "girl boss," assigned to her by the male coach, yields little power in the wild. Concurrently, the

score elevates with drums and choral shouting as synaesthetic embodiment. Both sonic aspects grow mirroring the carnal empowerment of the group as they move through the forest. Hearing the wolves who had previously attacked them, nearly killing and disfiguring Van (S1, E7), the women scream back in animalistic fashion. This metamorphic act turns them into predators themselves as they become the previously unseen *acousmêtre*. The nascent acousmatic realised, the young women set upon Travis—both sexually and carnivorously—perceiving him as a stag; an animal they have previously shot and eaten. With this, the soundtrack reintroduces the title sequence's three-note organ riff and bassline layered on top of witch tribalistic chants. Likewise, the leitmotif is repeated again as Lottie subdues then kills a bear—another apex predator—solidifying her monstrous turn that positions her as the group's new leader (S1, E10). The screamscape *acousmêtre* serves as an auditory marker of choral female unruliness that is both abject and monstrous. This along with other instances of collective voice are evident within *Yellowjackets*.

Girls playing upfront: soccer and the team voice

Returning to the first episode which shows how the young women's monstrous realisation comes to be, the narrative jumps back in time to the team winning the soccer game that will send them to the national finals. Christine Mennesson and Jean-Paul Clément (2003) note women playing soccer "transgress[es] the dominant representations of athletic women widely publicized and systematically reinforced by the media" (312). This is because sports that focus on individual female athletes and accentuate "feminine gracefulness" (e.g., track, gymnastics, dance, synchronised swimming) are culturally-valued (312), highlighting how sports present another significant popular neoliberal feminist commodity (Holly T Thorpe, Kim Toffoletti and Toni Bruce 2017). Much like Riot Grrrl tonality and the rural monstrous-feminine screamscape that sonically reify the series' gender subversions, the Yellowjackets undermine gender-codings as a team and via their collective noise. This is synaesthetically embodied in this scene of the team playing soccer as the ethereal collective female chants previously introduced in the snowy wild are continued, accompanied by drums beating in battle-like fashion. The score reflects the team's strength and their ability to vocalise emotion. This is exemplified when, after winning the game, they scream in joyous rapture before shouting the team's "Buzz" chant.

Yet the team is far from a gendered utopia. Instead, in line with more recent female-centred dramas, *Yellowjackets* offers an imperfect flawed representation of femininity that challenges the post-feminist discourse of having or being it all (Perkins and Schreiber 2019). To ensure that she will not impede the Yellowjackets' chances of glory in the finals, Taissa suggests the team do not pass to Aly (S1, E1). Yet, in training Taissa's tough-love approach indicates the monstrous potential of these young women. Significantly, as practice starts the witch screamscape leitmotif swells, where synaesthetic embodiment foreshadows imminent horror. As the choral crescendo reaches its frenzy Taissa's tackle brutally breaks Aly's leg, graphically depicted as bone rips through skin. Here, the non-diegetic choral sound reflects the inner innate monstrous power that exists in the women even before they crash in the wilderness.

Alongside discordant monstrous vocality, the team frequently sing pop songs together. Yet, much like the synaesthetic fluidity of witch-orality, the singing combines

diegetic voice with non-diegetic soundtrack. Roland Barthes (1977) discusses two musics: "the music one listens to, the music one plays. These two musics are two totally different arts, each with its own history, its own sociology, its own aesthetics, its own erotic; the same composer can be minor if you listen to him, tremendous if you play him (even badly)" (149). With the latter, Barthes notes, the *act of* making sound produces meaning. Applied to *Yellowjackets*, the girls sing Salt-N-Peppa's "Shoop" (1993) in the changing rooms (S1, E1). Importantly, as the non-diegetic music fades, it is the collective voice reciting the lyrics that rings out. In essence, we have a reversal of synaesthetic embodiment where the group's a cappella voice brings the music into being, which is then supported by non-diegetic sound. This is most starkly rendered during the Doomcoming party (S1, E9) where the team start singing Seal's "Kiss From A Rose" (1994) to one another before the original track is brought in non-diegetically. In both instances, onus is not on singing quality. Rather, meaning comes from reciting lyrics together and to one another that bonds the characters. Singing songs serves a socialising function and *jouissance* of collectively participating in the production of music. This is particularly pertinent when the team sing and dance to Montell's "This is How We Do it" (1995) (S1, E5). Choreographing moves in their pyjamas, the cabin substitutes the teen bedroom, a site that Melanie Lowe (2004) explains is a domestic private safe space for young women to explore identity, sociality, and sexuality; a space violently invaded by Natalie's father back in "civilised" society (S1, E4). As noted, pop music and its young female audience are frequently denigrated. However, Lowe argues, for young women and girls, singing and dancing to pop music fosters collectiveness. Lowe writes,

> [t]he girls could be singing nonsense and still perform this communal activity. Together, in peer groups, they often choose to hear but not listen, to see but not read–a strategy that allows them to maintain strong, often feminist, convictions and still enjoy consuming music that does not jibe with their maturing politics. (93)

Thus, the cabin is a *safe* bedroom that revels in female collective song and dance even if the music is designed for commercial profit. Moreover, while the wilderness is a site of trauma; trauma being a central facet of "feminist new wave" horror (Creed 2022), Kay (2020) argues women and queer folk are constrained by trauma narratives in order to be "considered authentic" (71) in public arenas. Resultantly, this truncates other forms of speech in a reductive, essentialised, and individualised fashion (174). Yet, in *Yellowjackets* the rural wilderness is also a space of collective female joy, laughter, bonding, and queer intimacy (between Van and Taissa). Therefore, the series' oscillation between monstrous-feminine rage and feel-good popular feminism, with the choral voice as the locus between these affective states, offers a more dynamic and polyphonic representation of collective female orality. Likewise, rather than compartmentalising and dividing the women into respective antagonistic musical scenes or cult/mainstream dichotomies (Thornton 1995; Erik Hannerz 2013), the soundtrack allows the women to synaesthetically embody the witch's screamscape *acousmêtre*, the aggressive punch of Riot Grrrl, and the fun of popular chart music in an inclusive manner. Much like the Riot Grrrl scenes previously discussed, this creates a spectrum of femininity which itself fosters unruly feminist potential. Indeed, it is the "civilised" society the girls return to that aims to muzzle this melange of female voices.

"You Gotta keep them separated:" neoliberal muting of the female chorus

The article has explored how collectivist female voice in *Yellowjackets* operates in spaces traditionally coded as masculine—punk scenes, the wilderness, and team sports—and, as such, engenders noisy sonic female unruliness. Similar with other forms of popular feminist gender-swapping media (Claire Perkins 2020), this speaks to the communicative injustice and gender inequalities within neoliberal society. However, present-day civilisation actively works against the female survivors' communal vocality. As the entrance song for Shauna, Taissa, and Natalie's arrival to their high school reunion (S1, E10), The Offspring's "Come Out and Play" (1994) serves to frame the scene as comedic and further signify the characters' punk unruliness. Yet, whilst the song is about gang and school violence, the scene recontextualises the lyrics. The line "you gotta keep them separated" suggests the need to silo the group's strong female characters, supporting neoliberal ideologies that place value on the individual. As Leanne Byman (2019) writes, "[t]he divided feminine is a tool of patriarchal society weaponized both in daily lived experiences and in the narratives individuals consume . . . which isolates women into identities authored by the patriarchy and not by the women themselves" (1).

This individualisation, juxtaposed to the choral collectivity the women had in their younger years, results in "insecurities, anxieties, and frustrations to[wards] a recessionary neoliberal environment" (Dobson and Kanai 2019, 772). Notably, the various synaesthetic embodiments evidenced in the past narrative do not manifest in the same manner for the now-adult characters, sonically indicating the lack of collective feminine power in the present day. Such "affective dissonance" with the myths of neoliberal feminism that strive for perfection "inscribed within specific horizons of value relating to husbands, work partners and boyfriends, family and home, motherhood and maternity" (McRobbie 2015, 7), are evidenced in myriad ways. Trapped as a housewife, Shauna reflects, ironically in the safety of her teen daughter's bedroom, to Taissa that this is not the life she envisioned (S1, E8). As she does, a poster declares "Keep calm and marry Harry" set against a Union Jack backdrop. This possible reference to popstar Harry Styles or celebrity royal Prince Harry is also a didactic myth, directing young females to stay sedate if they are to fulfil hegemonic heteronormative yearnings that have actually stifled Shauna. Taissa herself is politically attacked by her rival candidate and seemingly cannot be a careerwomen and a parent, let alone Black and queer in these spheres of life. Despite a tough exterior, Nat's vulnerability and addictions stem from an abusive father that results in her entrapment within a system that does not support her. In their teen lives, the women are brought together in sport, song, and screams, yet their choral power is diminished as they find themselves divided as adults. On the one hand, popular feminism has failed these women, yet the series' multinarrative takes us back to a time when popular feminism engendered empowered female chorus in these characters. Hence, beyond the commerciality of nostalgic pop culture (Kayla McCarthy 2019, 663), pertinent for "targeting . . . transgenerational co-viewing pleasures" (James Rendell 2023, 71), *Yellowjacket*'s nostalgia is multimodal: a temporal grounding and aesthetic layering of the 1990s, an affective longing for the past by our adult characters, and as a feminist logic. Elizabeth Evans and Prudence Bussey-Chamberlain (2021) characterise white "feminist nostalgia" as "concerning a loss of radicalism and sisterhood [felt for a bygone and imagined past]" (354). In *Yellowjackets*, such yearning for a radical and collective past is

deeply entwined with popular feminism's mediality. This is because the music-soaked pop cultural play in *Yellowjackets* offers what Gary Cross (2015) labels "consumed nostalgia", "longing for goods of the past that came from a *personal* experience of *growing up* in the stressful world of *fast capitalism* … often rooted in the formative years of consumers—childhood and youth" (10–11).

Yet, while the choral female voice speaks to a togetherness of all women, nostalgia is a double-edge sword whose "feminist" potential can be the object of critique (Cattien 2019). On the one hand, contrasted to "nostalgia-driven reboots" that promote a conservative politics of "reproductive futurism" … that normalises heteronormative gender scripts and perpetuates traditional notions of family, heterosexuality and biological reproduction" (Kathleen Loock 2020, 184), *Yellowjacket*'s nostalgia positions such neoliberal scripts as the source of affective dissonance. It is by looking back to their younger selves, rather than relying on a new generation, that collective female voice can flourish outside the purview and confines of patriarchal society. This includes the neoliberal feminist trappings on individualising and ostensibly white social media platforms (Kay 2020, 29), which, as mentioned, are also sites of popular misogyny—during the 1990s social media was nascent while the rural space where the monstrous-feminine screamscape blooms is markedly non-technological. Furthermore, concurrent with the characters' unruly choral voice, *Yellowjackets*' feminist nostalgia is markedly more intersectional than described by Evans and Bussey-Chamberlain (2021). The show's diversity particularly in relation to race and sexuality speaks to the intersectional imperative of Kay's (2020) collective justice and *today's* postmillennial politics. Likewise, these representations of high school students present counternarratives to the longstanding racist silencing of Black women. Notably, Taissa utilises her voice on the pitch, in her peer group, and within the rural horror space, displaying the affective pendulum between feminine joy and rage. This allows *Yellowjackets* to be situated within the current cycle of what Havas (2022) terms "feminist quality television". The series' premium cable graphic aesthetic, horror genre hybridisation, complex narrative structure, and love of popular music, is married with its "politics of female-targeted television" (11) contextualised against the wider US cultural backdrop.

However, nostalgia risks painting a more rose-tinted inclusive past than was readily afforded to all existing in that time and space. As argued, the show brands itself as an unruly feminist text through its utilisation of Riot Grrrl noise. However, Schilt (2004) explains that despite a central Riot Grrrl slogan proclaiming "Every girl is a Riot Grrrl", it was the case, "in practice … like the punk scenes from which it emerged, [the Riot Grrrl scene] was predominantly made up of white middle-class punk girls" (121). Criticisms declared the scene "too white and too exclusive" (121). Similarly, the casting of the show's central white female adult actresses knowingly plays on their previous monstrous and/or horror 1990s film roles (Melanie Lynskey (*Heavenly Creatures* (Peter Jackson 1994)); Juliette Lewis (*Cape Fear* (Martin Scorsese 1991), *Natural Born Killers* (Oliver Stone 1994), *From Dusk Till Dawn* (Robert Rodriguez 1996)); and Christina Ricci (*The Addams Family* (Barry Sonnenfeld 1991), *The Addams Family Values* (Sonnenfeld 1993)). In comparison, *Yellowjackets*' only non-white female lead Tawny Cypress is not afforded the same genre legacy, indicative of women of colour's marginalisation within horror (Kinitra D Brooks 2014). Consequently, while the show offers more visible intersectional female diversity within the horror genre and quality TV drama (Ju Oak

Kim 2022), its feminist nostalgia is markedly revisionist, "rewriting history in a more user-friendly and entertaining way" (Ekaterina Kalinina 2016, 10). Resultantly, *Yellowjackets*' post-racial "feminist" genrefication reified via the series' soundscape and nostalgic longing can be guilty of rewriting histories of exclusion where non-white bodies were kept invisible as the series depicts a mythological past that does not truly reflect the cultural hegemonies of the represented times in question. Equally, as consumed nostalgia, the series avoids any serious critical engagement with the structural inequalities that produced racial invisibility in the 1990s or the horror genre. Indicative of popular feminism (Banet-Weiser 2018), *Yellowjackets*' "backwards looking" thus presents a post-racial storyworld where intersectional feminism appears now, and since the 1990s, to have simply fulfilled its endeavours when in fact, as the article has argued, non-hegemonic voices *still* fight to be heard and valued.

Conclusion: sounds like teen-spirit

Halberstam (2005) writes "there is something all too powerful about a nearly hysterical audience of teen girls screaming and crying together" (177). This in mind, *Yellowjackets* revels in young women who scream loudly, sing heartedly, and devour human flesh carnivorously. Analysing *Yellowjackets*' soundscape, paratextual title sequence, and characters' sonic qualities, the article has demonstrated how the series' brand of "feminist" resistance is noisy. Such unruly collectivist voice (Kay 2020) reverberates through synaesthetic embodiment that subverts ontological textual order between the diegetic and non-diegetic, reflecting the undermining of neoliberal singularity that speaks to communicative injustice. Such an auditory focus suggests moving beyond visual methods that dominate readings of quality TV and the horror genre (Halfyard 2016). This seems particularly pertinent for female-centric media given the historical legacy and continuing cultural salience of voice, speech, and silence in gender constructions, performances, and relations.

Similarly, Marsha Houston and Cheris Kramarae (1991) declare that "[o]ne way that women are breaking silence is by reclaiming the forms of women's discourse that men have labelled trivial" (394). In *Yellowjackets*, the unadulterated pleasure of pop music, the embracing of melodramatic teen relationships, and the playing of soccer all have unruly subversive potential as they bring young women together. It is this camaraderie that underpins the popular feminist nostalgia in both the show's aesthetic rendering of the 1990s and the adult-characters' affective dissonance towards present day neoliberal society. Yet, nostalgia "raises pertinent political questions" (Loock 2020, 184). Whilst the show's feminist nostalgia endeavours for a more diverse and intersectional representation of womanhood in TV drama and horror, that further supports Kay's (2020) argument for inclusive collectivist voices as feminist resistance, its historical revisionism rewrites, and thus obscures, structural inequalities that silence woman of colour and queer folk both now and then. Thus, whilst a voguish commercial trend, this prompts a more critical reading of nostalgia and its employment within popular culture.

Furthermore, if *Yellowjackets*' branded unruly feminism reflects greater representation in Quality TV shows and/or the horror genre then future empirical audience-based research is also necessary to examine how various audience demographics respond to its popular feminism (e.g., Sue Jackson 2021), onscreen characterisations

(e.g., Julie Scanlon and Ruth Lewis 2017), and use of the horror genre that has repeatedly marginalised and/or Othered them (e.g., Rendell 2023). Rather than ridicule or diminish female joy, anger, or disenfranchisement, *Yellowjackets*' characters are complex, flawed, fierce, and ferocious, especially when in chorus. More importantly, they are (up)front and centre in this horror TV series that welcomes the noise they make.

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