

AUDIATING THE LSU DRUMLINE:  
AN ETHNOGRAPHIC PERFORMANCE

A Thesis

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Table of Contents

ABSTRACT.....iii

CHAPTER

1 INTRODUCTION.....1

2 MAKING THE BAND.....13

3 AUDIATION: TERMINOLOGY.....29

4 CREATING A MARCHER.....38

5 AUDIATION: MARCH A MILE IN MY BANDO-S.....52

6 OVERTONES.....55

7 AUDIATION: FINDING THE VOICINGS.....68

8 POINT AND COUNTERPOINT.....72

9 AUDIATION: TRANSPOSITION.....84

10 CONCLUSIONS.....89

WORKS CITED.....94

VITA.....96

## Abstract

This is an ethnographic study of the drumline of the LSU Marching Band and the mock-fraternity they created called Phi Boota roota ( Br). I argue that Br was created as a site to flesh out the various tensions members experience as members of the LSU drumline; they create a rite of passage ritual that functions as a carnivalesque and celebratory inversion of the system they find themselves submerged within. Phi Boota roota marks a created articulation of the transition members make when they become part of the larger ritual of Tigerband; it is a voluntary or liminoid ritual that allows members to deal with the excess parts of their own personalities and individuality while fully embracing, though at times parodying, their inherited identity and image as members of the LSU Band.

Through the use of performative writings combined with more traditional ethnographic field reports and descriptions/interpretations, this thesis strives to give voice to the tensions felt within the rituals of Tigerband and Br, the tension of representation within ethnographic study, and the tension of creative experimentation within academic writing. Throughout the study, I use the metaphor of “audiation” to experiment with representing ethnographic experience and knowledge. Audiation is the practice of thinking and comprehending music with your mind, and it functions as a pedagogical tool for creating and remembering sound. Metaphorically, audiation illustrates an action that requires both memory and creativity; a process that gives sound/motion to a sounding/action by re-creating it in the mind. These audiations provide a forum for both the traditional and the inventive to resonate within the context of an ethnographic exploration of the performance of Br.

## Chapter 1

### Introduction

#### **Purpose of the Study**

In his book Percussion: Drumming, Beating, Striking, John Mowitt makes the following statement:

Thus, if sense-making is fundamental to the holding sway of collectivities, to their very being in time, then musical sense-making, whether rhythmic or not, is an indispensable piece of social analysis. (21)

Undoubtedly, sense-making and ethnography are similar if not identical in aims; describing people within social settings serves little purpose if the overarching goal is not to gain some sort of understanding or sense from it. Mowitt compares the process of sense-making to drumming by comparing beating or striking to a series of actions, through which a beat or pattern is made. The organization of the beat holds a significant place in understanding the music--the collective rhythm that comes from these actions.

The rhythmic metaphor fits this project quite well: the purpose of this project is to describe and interpret the activities of a mock-fraternal organization known as Phi Boota roota, also known as the drumline of the LSU marching band, "The Golden Band from Tigerland." The members of Phi Boota roota ( Br) find part of their collective identity in their percussive role in the larger marching band. Each week, all of the drumline members work on music and marching drill for the upcoming halftime performances at LSU football games. Each drummer in the band also is invited to pledge the fraternity, and through a series of rituals, the new drumline members are welcomed as full members of Br.

As this project unfolded, I began to inquire what function/need the formation of Phi Boota roota performs/fulfills for the members of the drumline. The drumline itself has a unique function within the marching band setting. In his essay "The Summer Music Games," Jonathan Ritter explores the routine of drum corps marching bands as a ritual process. Within this ritual, the drumline functions differently from any other section of the band.

Drumlines bridge the gap between musical and visual performance, as the act of playing is visually transparent in ways that horn performance cannot be, just as it is auditory in ways that the color guard is not. Unison performance in the snare and tenor drum lines demands absolute precision and is further complicated by the high skill level demanded in rudimental drumming; pitched bass drum lines similarly demand the presence and flawless execution of all members to complete the melodic line. Solos do not exist in the drumline; every component of music-making is done as a group.

Due to fewer spots and higher demand, competition to get into a corps is often stiffest for the drumline, and rehearsal for those that make it is thus that much more intense and frequent. As a result, the ideal of group bonding and identity, sought by the corps as a whole, is frequently obtained much earlier and in stronger form within the drumline.

This *comunitas*, to use Victor Turner's term, emerges as an egalitarian bond based on trust in one another's performance and listening skills. Developed over a long period of time, the group bond itself eventually becomes a part of the performance. (Ritter)

Ritter marks the marching band as a ritual process within itself, and marks the drumline members as creating a unique *comunitas* within that system. Through this ethnography, I test Ritter's claims by analyzing the structure of Tigerband as a parent culture from which Br emerges. Beginning with the audition process through which drummers become members of the drumline, I look at a number of symbols and rituals present in both the performance of Tigerband and of Br. The discipline of marching and music combine to produce a specific type of marcher; through an analysis of the biomechanics of marching, we can clarify the image and values the Tigerband culture projects, and that Br both reinforces and inverts. Ultimately, I argue that the formation of Br, while a possible manifestation of the bond "sought by the corps as a whole," works as both a rite of passage into the larger organization and a carnivalesque ritual to help reaffirm the norms of the group.

## **Method**

This project was designed as a qualitative study, and in it I relied on ethnographic techniques of data-gathering, interpretation, and reportage. Ethnography roots in the terms “ethno-” (people) and “-graphy” (describing). The goal of “describing people” is to better understand the reality of the researched people; understanding, though, always implies an understander. When describing any group of people, we must acknowledge the position of the people in their social situation; the meanings there are plural and socially constructed. We must also acknowledge that the observer is positioned in a social situation, and the observations are filtered through a perspective that is socially constructed and relative (as opposed to objective). As Lindlof and Taylor put it, “Knowledge of social realities emerges from the interdependence of researcher and researched. The researcher does not use methodological instruments. The researcher is the instrument”(11). As the instrument of research, the ethnographer gathers data through submergence; by entering into and interacting with the researched, the perspectives of both converge. The results should reflect this subjective experience, and should be communicated through means that acknowledge both the partiality and the subjectivity involved in the research process.

People-describing (ethnography) will always involve the description and the process of describing, or sense making, which is never an objective method. It is messy and complex, and requires that the researcher put any and all theory through the filter of personal interactions with the people being researched. This process generally leads to multiple perspectives and meanings of social gestures; the answer is never reached in any fixed or finalized way; however, the researcher’s results bring new, different, and often more difficult questions to the table. The goal, then, is better understanding, not prediction and control.

Description, especially in using what Clifford Geertz calls “thick description,” engages the researcher in meaning making; by engaging the details of the scene, the actions, and the dialogue, the researcher enters into the process of making meaning out of the situation, much like the researched. Interpretation, then, illustrates both the researcher’s understanding of the situation and the researcher’s own process of meaning-making. In my fieldwork, I attended many

of the drumline rehearsals, both as a section and with the entire band. I arrived early and stayed late at most of the rehearsals, for the social interactions that surrounded the rehearsals were just as important to me as the rehearsals themselves. I chose not to do formal depth interviews with drumline members, hoping to simply observe them as they interacted within the sphere of Tigerband. My methods of data-gathering involved different types of observation and interaction; the situation usually defined my role and the method that best fit in the moment. Mondays were geared towards music rehearsal, so I sat, watched, listened, and jotted down my impressions, their conversations, and whatever else caught my eye/ear/pen. The outdoor rehearsals allowed me more mobility, more opportunities for dialogue, and the option to observe in close proximity to the line as they marched and played. Pre- and post- rehearsal conversations occurred in parking lots, dining halls, pick-up trucks and stairwells, and I had many conversations with members as our paths intersected on the campus. I also researched the history of the LSU band and Br online, in the LSU archives, and through interviews with band staff and members.

Once data was collected, the interpretation process began. While my initial impressions often led to conclusions, the primary method of processing the information was to deeply describe it. By converting field notes to thick descriptions, I could begin to see patterns in my observations. After compiling these descriptions, I began to look for patterns, and also began to research some of the emerging themes and questions I had about what I had noticed. The questions and patterns presented ideas, theories, and problems for me, especially when it came to writing up these notes into some form of reports. Choosing to represent voices through description (as opposed to taped and transcribed events and conversations) proved problematic. What did I see and what did I interpret? How honest are these descriptions?

During his recent visit to LSU, I spoke with Dr. Matt Spangler about my ethnography project. I mentioned that representation continues to be my biggest issue in writing. He responded “Yeah, we all wrestle with that one, and I think we have to as ethnographers. It should never not be an issue.” And here begins the inner-monologue:



The transcription contains the right notes and most of the right rhythms from the original recording. It does not capture the sound Coltrane produces when he plays it, though. John Cage, writing about dance (which he defines—along with music and poetry—as a "time art"), argues that it is balance, achieved through dualistic tension, that defines an esthetic.

With clarity. . . , grace forms a duality. Together they have a relation like that of body and soul. Clarity is cold, mathematical, inhuman, but basic and [of the] earth. . . . Grace is warm, incalculable, human, opposed to clarity, and like the air. . . . The two are always present in the time arts, endlessly, and life-givingly, opposed to each other. (24)

As I began the process of describing and interpreting the drumline, I found myself striving for clarity in my writing, but frustratingly missing the “grace” I found in each encounter with them. Cage noted that the tension between clarity and grace is essential for the time arts of dance, poetry, and music; I would argue that any social science involving time or action feels this tension as well. Grace and clarity are both endless and life-giving in their tension; doing away with it would never benefit the art; instead, the interplay between the two becomes the flicker of life in the art’s performance. Describing and interpreting these musicians brought me deeply within a number of tensions on a number of levels: the coexisting structure and anti-structure of Tigerband, the need for grace in the clarifying field of ethnography, and the rule of tradition straining against the need for invention, just to name a few. In response, I’ve adopted two methods of writing to help me flesh out both the grace and the clarity within this project: Ulmer’s mystory techniques and performative writings.

Gregory Ulmer introduces a method of writing he calls mystory in his book Teletheory: Grammatology in the Age of Video. A mystory involves the use of professional, popular and personal materials to engage an historical or social (or I would argue ethnographic) question. When patterns emerge in the research, he encourages his students to write using a wide image; this wide image guides the creative composition of the project. He suggests that there are three templates that assess how the wide image provides meaning in the text:

- Feeling—as provoked by the image;

- “Metaphysics”—what the image reveals about what the world is like, how things are or how the world works;
- Morality—given the first two points, how one should live (what one must do). (Internet Invention 10)

While doing fieldwork, writing descriptions and researching some of the items that were emerging in this project, I stumbled across my wide image for this writing process: audiation. Audiation is the practice of thinking and comprehending music with your mind, and it functions as a pedagogical tool for creating and remembering sound. Dr. Thom Mason, author of The Art of Hearing, breaks down the ear training skills that “a good musician must have” into six parts:

1. The ability to look at and audiate rhythms and rhythmic patterns from a written page.
2. The ability to look at and audiate melodic material from a written page.
3. The ability to look at and audiate chord progressions from a written page.
4. The ability to hear, audiate and transcribe rhythmic material to a written page.
5. The ability to hear, audiate and transcribe melodic material to a written page.
6. The ability to hear, audiate and transcribe harmonic material to a written page. (ix)

Note that audiating has two primary functions here: one of creating and one of remembering. When a person audiates, they create sound and recall it simultaneously, whether it be melodic, harmonic or rhythmic (and often all three at once).

99 bottles of beer on the wall

99 Bottles of beer

Take one down, pass it around

98 bottles of beer on the wall

98 bottles of beer on ...

Some of you read those lines. Some of you recognized the song and sang along. Some of you are still singing along. I apologize for doing that to you—but I did it to show you that you already know how to audiate. Any song that gets stuck in your head is an audiated event for you.

You can hear it though there's no sounding; you are actually creating a sound by remembering the song internally, and though there's no song playing, you can hear it over and over again.

The links between audiation and ethnography rang true for me both as a musician and a performative writer. Symbolic representation, whether musical, written, or material, depends on both a recall of meaning from experience and a creating of meaning in the moment. Music, or rather, notated music, signifies action; the notes on a page convey specific pitches, specific rhythms and specific styles. When we write ethnographic notes, we represent, and in ways recreate, actions to convey specific things that were said or done. We recall and create, much like a jazz musician draws from theoretical knowledge and experience to play a riff or chorus. For all that the notated music can show, however, there are things it cannot show. Like the earlier Burke/Bowman quote suggests, a way of seeing (or writing) is a way of not seeing (or writing). Writing seems to remove or replace as much as it represents, a problem numerous scholars in history, performance, and ethnography have been wrestling with for a while. I would argue that resolving this tension is not the goal; rather, to give room to both would allow the music to sound, so to speak. Audiation became my wide image for this project because it represents an action that allows text to become music and music to become text. The sound is never robbed from the description of the sounding.

In an attempt to keep the sound in these soundings, I chose to use personal performative writings, or audiations, throughout this project. According to Della Pollock in "Performing Writing," performative writing may have the following characteristics:

- It is evocative, meaning "it works metaphorically to render absence present" (80)
- It is metonymic. "It is a self-consciously partial or incomplete rendering that takes its pulse from the difference rather than the identity between the linguistic symbol and the thing it is meant to represent." (82-3)
- It is subjective: "what I want to call performative writing does not project a self . . . as much as a relation of being and knowing that cuts back and forth across multiple

divisions among selves, contexts, affiliations such that, as Elspeth Probyn notes, ‘the self is not simply put forward, but . . . is reworked in its enunciation.’” (86-87)

- It is nervous, “neither willing nor able to stop moving”. (91)
- It is situational, quoting “a world that is always already performative.” (92)
- It is consequential, and “meant to make a difference.” (95)

How do we capture performed actions and performing people on a page? How do we allow the subject of our writing to re-act, to resonate, through our writings? The audiations represent my own struggles and experiments with interpretation and my position within the ethnographic situation. By acknowledging the existence of the personal, popular, and professional texts within this thesis, and by giving them an opportunity to resonate with and against one another, creating fresh meanings in new dialogues, holes, and collisions, this project highlights both the process of meaning-making and the meanings made as local, subjective, and unfinished.

### **Significance**

The contexts of the significance of this project are personal and professional. The consuming mythology of LSU to the native Louisianan is a hard one to escape. I was born in Baton Rouge, I grew up in Baton Rouge, and I lived and breathed this town and all of its characteristics, both good and bad. This also meant that I would “bleed purple and gold,” the LSU school colors, whether I wanted to or not. Growing up, we always listened to the football games on the radio; even when they were televised, my grandfather insisted we listen to Jim Hawthorne call the game on WJBO instead of the announcers on TV. Sometimes the time delay was a little disturbing, but I always felt more connected to the game and, in a way, the community when we listened to Hawthorne. You could hear the crowds, you could hear the calls, and you could always, always hear the band.

Band is another mythology I couldn’t escape; being born in my family meant playing some sort of instrument. My mom and dad met while marching in LSU’s band, the Golden Band from Tigerland. My dad went on to be the Assistant Band Director at LSU for a few years, then a band director in a Baton Rouge area high school. My mom teaches children’s piano and voice,

and has done so since she was in college. We grew up singing at family gatherings, at church, in choirs, at assemblies at school, playing in jazz bands, concert bands, marching bands, rock bands, musicals: you name it, I've probably played in a music group like it somehow. I started playing piano when I was three, clarinet and sax when I was in fifth grade, and began marching band when I entered high school. I'm a band nerd to the core, and in some way I always will be.

These worlds collide in the LSU marching band: one of my goals as a high school student was to march in the Golden Band from Tigerland. Why? Next to marching for a professional drum corps, the college marching band was the highest level of competition in this particular genre of music-making. LSU had a reputation for being one of the best college bands in the nation (whether this was a local or national reputation is debatable, though it seems to be a bit of both). All I remember from my first football game in Tiger Stadium is the band marching the pre-game show. In high school, we used to transcribe drum cadences and brass parts from the LSU shows after we'd seen them. Making music was to be our job, and LSU was where we wanted to punch in.

My link to drummers began in middle school. Whenever you join the middle school band, there are two instruments everyone wants to play: saxophone and drums. I played the clarinet. By the time you got to be in the advanced band at my middle school, you were happy enough to play what you played--being in the top group was both fun and challenging. There was one group, however, that got to play their own group solo, something they had written themselves, in front of the whole school: the drummers.

When I was in seventh grade, my best friend Kyle, a French horn player, Chris, a trumpet player, and Jill, a drummer, got to play their own drum solo in front of the entire school. I can remember every bit of that solo to this day: Kyle on snare, Chris on quads and Jill on bass drum. It was composed of parts of LSU's drum cadence, Central High's drum cadence, and a little something they made up themselves. Everyone loved it.

I went on to high school, then college at LSU, playing in the band at both schools. I marched in LSU's "Golden Band from Tigerland" for four years, leading the mellophone section for my

last two, and had a blast playing music with other musicians. The people in the band were always like family to me, perhaps because of my family's link to the band, and I still keep in contact with a lot of the people I played alongside in the past. And I loved playing in the mellophone section in Tigerband. But even now, if you were to go watch the band warm up before a football game, though every section would be outside warming up at the same time, only one section draws a crowd--the drummers.

People always love drums--at least most of the people I know, and I've always felt strangely drawn to them. If I wander in a music store for long enough, I always find the drum sets, the drumsticks, the djembe or the conga--something to drum on. The drumline of most of the bands I had marched in works the same way for me- they draw me. Maybe it's because drums are one of the few instruments that have never come naturally to me; maybe it's because I wanted to sign up for drums in middle school, but my parents wouldn't have it because of the noise I'd bring home with me every day. When it came time to pick a group of people to study for my ethnography class, I immediately went to the band, and specifically to the drumline. Why? I still don't know entirely. Hopefully this whole process can aid me in understanding the personal and cultural significance of being a member of Tigerband, as well as being a drummer in that band.

As a student in communication studies, and specifically performance studies, the significance of a project like this becomes harder to gauge, but not impossible. This project directly engages the body, the doing, the performance of Br. It also brings together a number of performative writing techniques to further explore/complicate the idea of what counts as qualitative, scholarly research in communication and performance studies. The tension of integrating new performative writing techniques into the academic landscape proves to evoke tensions that could, with a proper balance of grace and clarity, make some incredible art. By integrating ideas from Della Pollock, Gregory Ulmer and Michael Jarrett, among others, I hope to create an ethnographic project that both describes the doing of something and does something itself; a project that moves, that performs.

Finally, Br functions to bring out the tension in their own crossover situation; the drumline creates a rite of passage ritual that functions as a carnivalesque and celebratory inversion of the system they find themselves submerged within. I argue that Br marks a created articulation of the transition members make when they become part of the larger ritual of Tigerband; it is a voluntary or liminoid ritual (as used by Turner, From Ritual to Theater, 21-59) that allows members to deal with the excess parts of their own personalities and individuality while fully embracing, though at times parodying, their inherited identity and image as members of the LSU Band. This project illustrates the necessary function of ritual and carnival in social systems rooted in discipline and routine.

## Chapter 2

### Making the Band

Fellow Drummers,

My name is Jonathan Helmers and I will be Drumline Captain for the 2003 marching season. This will be my sixth and final year marching with the line and I'm looking forward to having a great football season. The team seems ready and willing to bring us back to the SEC Championship and the "*Golden Band from Tigerland*" is basking in the glory of the Sudler Trophy for collegiate marching band excellence. The scene is set and we are looking for dedicated, talented, hardworking percussionists to help us support the team and represent the University in the best manner we can.

I will be assisted this year by a very qualified colleague of mine, Gordie Sizemore. Gordie is a fifth year member of the line and a dear buddy of mine. Together we have compiled this year's handbook to include all the classic school music but also some new exercises that will help us play better as an ensemble.

**Returning Members:** This year will be just like last year. We will start the auditions on August 15<sup>th</sup>. This is a Friday and it will allow us an extra day to cover new charts. Before the auditions we will have a small meeting to discuss the procedure we will follow, and then we'll jump right into auditions. Please have all the new exercises memorized and review any material you might have struggled with last year.

**New Members:** This handbook contains all the music you will need to know. Please come prepared with all exercises, cadences, and school songs memorized. The audition excerpts do not need to be memorized but they should be worked on enough to play them

clearly at the indicated tempos and dynamics. There will be sight-reading also, so be ready to play.

The auditions will be held on August 15<sup>th</sup> in the order of snares, tenors, basses, and then cymbals. After each selection is done we will announce who made it and move on to the next section.

The important thing to remember is not to let your nerves affect you. We know that auditions create a lot of stress for musicians but they are a crucial part of our job.

At first, it may seem like a lot but this is a precursor to the rest of the season. Members of the drumline are expected to memorize new music each week and be able to play and march it cleanly in a line. From the start, if you have a good method of practicing and working hard you will enjoy marching but if you don't you will be playing catch up a lot.

If anyone knows of someone who is planning to attend LSU and is interested in the drumline, but didn't get a handbook, please have them contact the band hall (225-578-2384). If anyone has questions you can call Gordie [*personal number* ] or myself [*personal number, email address* ]. I look forward to seeing everyone on August 15<sup>th</sup>.

Have a great summer,

Jonathan Helmers, Drumline Captain

(Drumline Handbook 4)

This letter from Helmers is the third in a series of introductory letters in "The Golden Band from Tigerland LSU Drumline Handbook 2003." The first letter from Roy King, Assistant Director of Bands at LSU, and the second letter from Brian Dell, one of the Graduate Assistants, function similarly, though I will highlight the content differences. These three letters act as a

prologue to the auditioning process, a process that ultimately acts as a gateway into both drumline and Tigerband membership. All drumline members are Tigerband members, but not all Tigerband members are drumline members. From the first entry into the organization, this differentiation becomes tangible for the drumline members. In this chapter, I analyze elements of the Tigerband handbook, the music of the drumline, and the uniform worn by Tigerband in all its performances in order to better understand the culture from which Br emerges, as well as some of the expectations placed on members of the drumline from within the line and without.

### **The Drumline Handbook**

Roy King's letter clearly explains the primary function of the handbook: "The purpose of this booklet is to familiarize you with the drumline audition process" (LSU Bands 2). Four of the six sections deal specifically with the audition materials: audition excerpts, warm-ups, cadences and beats, and school songs; the other two sections include the introduction letters from King, Dell, and Helmers, the marching drumline guidelines, and the adjudication forms for the audition. The three letters each offer different perspectives on the drumline from different positions within the power structure of the band department. On the "General Information" page of both handbooks we find this list of positions in the department:

Frank B. Wickes, Director of Bands

Linda R. Moorhouse, Associate Director of Bands

Roy M. King, Assistant Director of Bands

Roger Wattam, Instrument Technician

Laura Launey, Assistant Instrument Technician

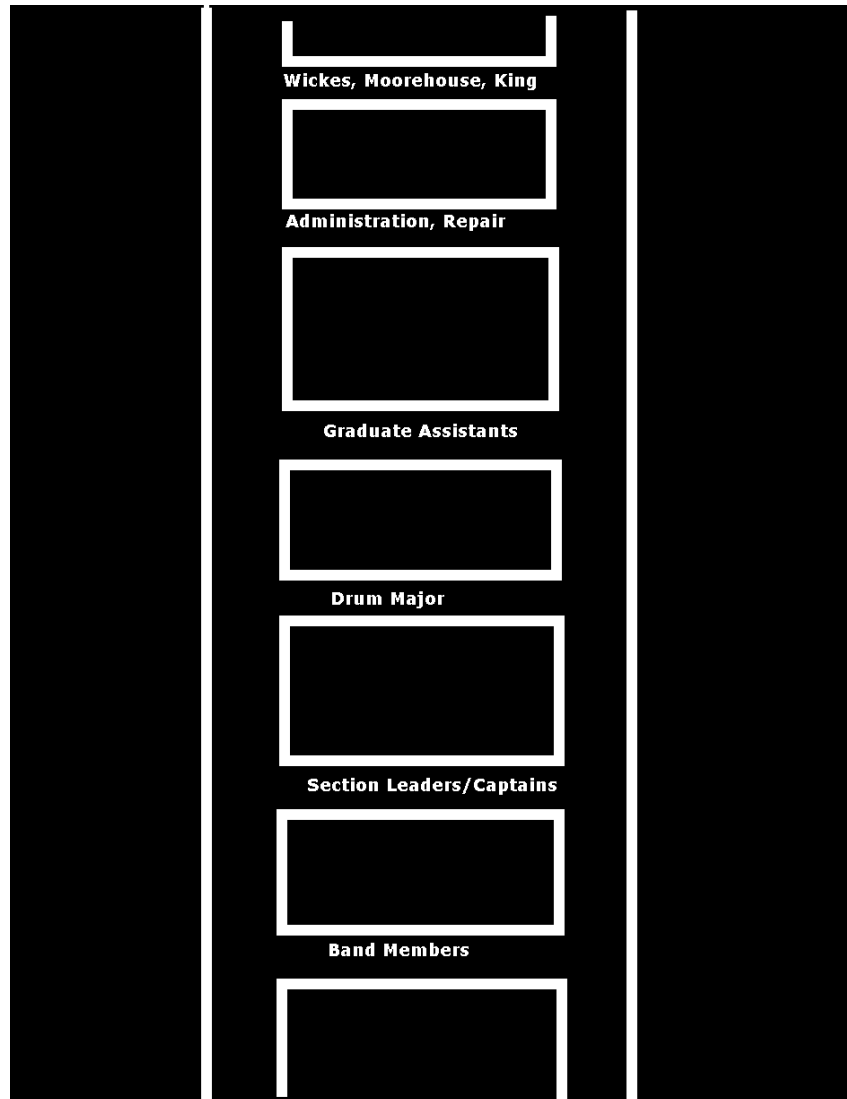
Linda B. Saucier, Department Secretary

Brian P. Dell, Graduate Assistant

James Spinazzola, Graduate Assistant

Lisa Martin, Graduate Assistant ([Drumline Handbook 1](#))

There is also a list of student positions, including Helmers as Drum Captain. The hierarchy of leadership positions is linked to experience, education, function and pay. The ladder starts at the bottom rung of basic band membership and climbs up to the Director of Bands position.



All band members receive a \$640 music scholarship for participating in the marching band. According to the information in the Tiger Band handbook, all of the section leaders/captains except one (junior) are classified as seniors at LSU, and most have at least four years of

experience on the field with Tigerband. Craig Davis performs as the drum major, who functions as the conductor of the band. Beyond the drum major, we enter into graduate students, who perform their duties as part of the fulfillment of their assistantship/fellowship with the School of Music. Above the Grad Assistants we find King, Moorhouse and Wickes, who are full time faculty at LSU; their biographies are found on the second page of the handbook.

Note that the further up we travel on the diagram, the further away we get from the actual performance of music. This phenomenon could explain the different takes on the audition process we find in the drumline handbook. King (who played on the LSU drumline in his undergraduate days, and along with Scooter Wooten was responsible for Phi Boota roota's founding at LSU in 1981) writes, "Do not let the contents of this handbook intimidate you. We invite any LSU student with an interest in the drumline to audition" (Drumline Handbook 2). Dell, being both a percussionist and the graduate assistant assigned to work with the drumline, addressed the technical parts of the audition process in his letter.

It is highly recommended that you have everything in this booklet memorized before August 15<sup>th</sup> except for the audition material. Please pay careful attention to stickings, accents, dynamics, and other nuances that may be on the page. (Drumline Handbook 4) Helmers issues a warning to the auditionee: "The important thing to remember is not to let your nerves affect you. We know that auditions create a lot of stress for musicians but they are a crucial part of our job" (Drumline Handbook 5). Both King and Helmers acknowledge that the audition poses some sort of threat; King, however, encourages the auditionee to abandon the thoughts of intimidation, while Helmers gives the monster big fangs and creepy claws. The stress of the audition is real to Helmers, and King's dismissal of these stresses illustrates the distance between the authorities who direct and the musicians who play.

Dell's letter plays the gap between this performer/director binary (interestingly enough, Dell was the only non-drumline/ $\Phi$ Br member other than myself who regularly attended drumline rehearsals and made the voyage on pledge night); his letter addresses both the audition and some of the goals of the line for the upcoming year, goals set by him and the two captains. These two goals offer an accurate metaphoric representation of the split identity of the drumline members: the percussionists and the  $\Phi$ Br members.

The two captains and I have several goals for the upcoming year, one of which is the development of *esprit de corps* among the section. We highly encourage everyone to socialize and get to know others around you. Being a part of a college marching band and drumline is not only about music making and drumming, but creating friendships and memories of a lifetime.

The second important issue is the introduction of a height system. This system will include five levels: level 1 = 3 inches, level 2 = 6 inches, level 3 = 9 inches, level 4 = 12 inches, and level 5 = 15 inches. Grasping this will take time, but will help take the sound of the line to another level. Please memorize these levels and incorporate them in your practice of this packet. (Drumline Handbook 4)

Curiously, the phrase *esprit de corps* here seems to suggest developing friendships more than the development of a corporate identity or spirit; in my observations of the drumline,  $\Phi$ Br acts as a the surname for this identity, or even as a mechanism to ensure this *esprit de corps* finds a "corpse," a social "body" to inhabit. Here also we see the goal of creating a lasting memory or history; creating a history is something the performance of music cannot in and of itself do.

Note also how the desire for *esprit de corps* supercedes the new performative additions; the primary goal of Dell, Helmers and Sizemore (the other Drum Captain) is to develop this sense of

corporate identity. Perhaps this plays into the notion of being part of a “band,” not only in the sense of a group, but in the idea of being banded together. Without this cohesive connection, the group cannot function as a whole, which becomes quite crucial when considering the nature of the band they were joining: a 325-member wind and percussion group that attempts to play their parts of a corresponding piece of music together while marching in complicated formations on a football field. Without this *esprit de corps*, the kinds of performances this band is designed to perform might not happen.

### **The Guidelines**

Directly following the letters from the leadership staff we find a section entitled “Marching Drumline Guidelines,” in which topics like behavior/attitude, equipment, sticks and heads, attendance, and other rules are addressed. The behavioral section is presented first, and the rules are clearly laid out:

The conduct of the drumline members at all functions is a direct reflection on the Tigerband and, in turn, the university as a whole. This includes all rehearsals, warm-ups, and performances as individuals and a unit. It is important that the exemplary reputation of the band and the drumline not be tarnished by the misconduct of its member; you must remember that everything we do is observed and noted by fellow percussionist, LSU students, alumni, and fans as well as faculty and the administration. It is crucial that we set and maintain a level of professionalism while exemplifying percussion and musicianship. (Drumline Handbook 6)

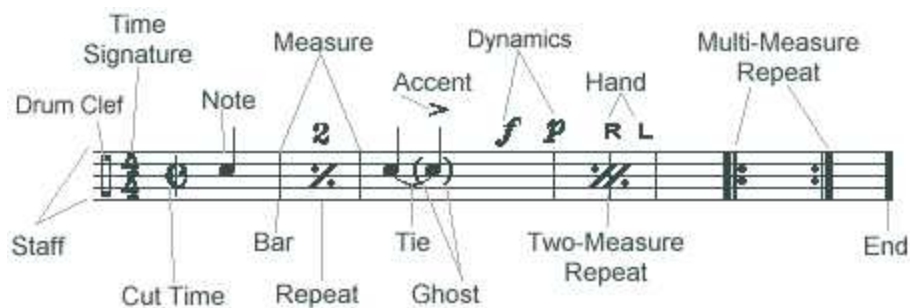
It is here that the drumline members are introduced to their position of representation; the drumline represents the band, LSU, good “conduct,” professionalism, musicianship and percussion(-ness). In order to play this part properly, members should not use foul language,

obscene gestures, disrespect people, and should refrain from using alcohol or any illegal drugs prior to/during a performance; they should take care of their equipment and play as a group. “THOU SHALT NOT HACK [mindlessly doodle on your instrument]. We will start together and end together as a group” (Drumline Handbook 6). Here we hear the *esprit de corps*, though it is not evoked or developed as much as created through this regulation.

Other rules include the memorization of music before performances, the tuning of the drums, and the learning of drill. Rehearsals are to be arrived at 15 minutes early to ensure proper warm-ups: “to arrive when rehearsal starts is to arrive 15 minutes late!” (Drumline Handbook 7). These regulations ensure that the proper image is displayed to all who may see. Making the drumline means not only playing a successful audition, but submitting to the guidelines of the organization.

## The Music

The last four sections of the manual are dedicated to the music of the audition, which is played throughout the season. The system of notated music the band functions within requires knowledge of the fundamentals. Here are some music basics:



John Cage wrote, “Music is an oversimplification of the situation we are actually in” (qtd. in Jarrett ix). This metaphor works quite nicely (on a number of levels) in light of the complexity of the music played by the LSU drumline. The drumline’s composition foreshadows the technical and aural complications within its music: four different types of instruments, all with different designs and purposes, played by multiple musicians to create a single “maker” of sound. If we were to dissect the drum set, the anatomy would seem quite similar; the same types of drums are used, though differing because one percussionist plays them all. However, by dividing the types of drums up into specialized sections, the skill level required on each instrument increases greatly. Compare this exercise for drum set

The image shows a musical score for a drum set exercise, consisting of four staves. The first staff is labeled 'RC' and 'BD' with a '1' above it. It begins with a common time signature 'C' and contains a series of rhythmic patterns represented by 'x' marks on a five-line staff. The second staff is labeled 'HH W/FT' and '2' above it, showing a sequence of eighth notes with 'x' marks above them. The third staff is labeled '3' above it and shows a sequence of quarter notes with 'x' marks above them. The fourth staff is labeled '4' above it and shows a sequence of eighth notes with 'x' marks above them. Each staff ends with a double bar line.

to this warm up exercise for drum line:

2/4 6/8

The image shows a musical score for a drumline. It consists of four staves: Snare, Tenor, Bass, and Cymbals. The score is divided into four measures. The first and third measures are in 2/4 time, while the second and fourth measures are in 6/8 time. The Snare, Tenor, and Bass parts feature complex rhythmic patterns with many notes. The Cymbals part features a simpler pattern with 'x' marks indicating cymbal hits.

The music calls for more technical ability out of design; the specialization demands a higher level of performance on the part of the performer. As an individual, you have less to worry about, so you can do more.

The music, however, is never just the written music. The page never contains everything needed to perform what it says--that's one issue we face as performers. For instance, when you look at the bass line on the above excerpt, there are five different pitches represented.

Consequently, you need five differently pitched drums with five players, who must agree on and play within a system of time that is consistent both internally and with the other sections as they play the excerpt together.

The musical system provides the base-level structure to the actions and performances of the drumline. Their musical interaction occurs on the music's terms (with a few exceptions), and the music and the social apparatus the drumline members function within have direct links, all of which we find here in the audition packet. The discipline and skill needed to perform the music fit the other requirements of drumline membership: good behavior and attitude, memorization of

music, no hacking, attendance, respect for the “job”, and *esprit de co rps*. These values are things we find embedded within the Tigerband image, and its icon, the uniform.

### **Uniforming Threads**



I can't tell  
who you are in this  
snapshot  
blame it on the blur  
the lens  
the camera's  
or my own  
I can't tell  
free-floating snares  
no attachment to anything  
but two primary colors  
bodies  
and a sounding

In the name alone, “uniforms” hold a gold mine of ideological value; police, military, school, work, team, and band uniforms, as well as any other type you might think of, all function to accomplish specific associations with collective identity, or the connection between the wearer and the group. In Wearing Ideology, Brian McVeigh argues that uniforms--in his case, the uniforms of the state schools in Japan--function as symbolic materials that are produced and imbued with sociocultural meanings. Drawing from Victor Turner, McVeigh approaches uniforms from three angles:

The first aspect concerns the exegesis of a symbol: how the people who use a symbol explain its meaning (to themselves and researchers). The second aspect concerns how a symbol derives its meaning from its relationship to other symbols in a complex of meanings. The third aspect concerns how people utilize a symbol in everyday actions to do things, i.e. more to the point, how people use a symbol to make other people do, think, or feel certain things. (McVeigh 11)

Uniforms, then, symbolically highlight political, personal and physical aspects of the organization and its members, especially as we consider how crucial the uniforms are to the public identity of the band. The first time the wearing of the uniform is mentioned in the 2003 Tigerband handbook is under the section “Tigerband Conduct”. It reads:

Uniformed LSU Bandsmen represent the University not only to live audiences locally, but to televised audiences nationally. Any foul language, obscene gestures or disrespectful acts by band members reflect adversely on this Band Department and on LSU. (General Information Handbook 8)

One of the most noticeable links here lies between the uniform and the University. The uniform symbolizes both the LSU bands and LSU as a whole, and conduct while in this uniform should

be/is viewed as such. The performance of the role of Tigerbandsman then focuses on representing, or better yet, re-presenting. What image or action are they (re)presenting again? We find out more as we read how the uniform is to be presented for all band performances.

When you wear the uniform, you will not only be representing one of the outstanding universities of this nation, but you will be recognized as a distinguished member of the famous *Golden Band from Tigerland* . We expect your personal appearance to be an impeccable reflection of your personal taste as well as your organizational pride. An untidy, disheveled (ie: not cared for) uniform may result in an alternate status and/or a lower grade. . . .

In public (even to cross the campus) do not wear an incomplete uniform. This detracts from the image of the Band and you. Treat your uniform with pride. You are expected to care for it accordingly. Cleanness and neatness are expected of all bandsmen.

(Moorhouse 9, 10; emphasis in original)

If we choose to view the upkeep of the uniform metaphorically as the upkeep of the image of Tigerband membership, these two paragraphs can be quite informative. The opening sentence from page nine articulates the issue of representation for us: wearing the uniform means representing both the university and the band, both of which have reputations that members uphold (or re-present) when in uniform. Moorhouse's adjectives show us the organization's attitude about itself and its relationship to LSU: an outstanding university, a distinguished and famous band, an impeccable presentation of self (group and individual), never publicly incomplete, clean, neat, tasteful. These descriptions carry over into most of the performances: Helmers and Dell push the drum line to play "cleaner," the drums are covered until game day to prevent visual wear like scuffs and scratches--even the polishing of the cymbals and other horns

highlight this group value. Moorhouse labels this an “impeccable reflection of [the member’s] personal taste” (9), but, to ensure that everyone’s tasting the same thing, clarifies what the member’s tastes should be.

Some very important points bandsmen will be expected to observe in the interest of a very neat and sharp appearance are:

- **Jacket:** Cleaned, pressed, and COLLAR FASTENED and FRONT ZIPPED AT ALL TIMES
- **Bibber:** Cleaned, pressed, and hemmed at all times
- **White Shoes:** Cleaned and polished
- **Black Socks:** No other color, please
- **Hair:** Properly groomed- long hair (i.e.: touches the collar) must be under the shako (the band hat) at all times when the shako is worn. This applies to both men and women. Hair accessories must be **BLACK**. Unnatural hair color (ie: not born with it) which draws attention, should be avoided
- **T Shirt:** A **gold** Tigerband T shirt is worn under the uniform at all times- No excuses!
- **Gloves:** White (clean- this means no dirt marks or stains)
- **Facial/Head Jewelry:** None (This includes any ring or stud of any kind- ear, nose, eyebrow, lip, etc.) (Moorhouse 9)

The uniform then takes on a larger symbolic value, denoting not only the identification of the wearer with the organization, but projecting (or re-presenting) the values and “tastes” of the organization as a whole. With emphasis on the strict care for the uniform and the need to always

be publicly complete (as opposed to an “incomplete” wearing), the Tigerband uniform fits neatly into the “highly-ordered” category of McVeigh’s continuum of uniformity.

In his attempt to further explain the link between degrees of uniformity with “forms of self-preservation and the rationalized politico-economic order” (112), McVeigh draws a continuum of uniformity leading from the highly uniform to the anti-uniform. He marks the highly uniformed end with the highest level of integration into the rationalized order of society, and also with the “performed self,” as opposed to the anti-uniform’s “expressed self” (113). Highly ordered uniforms show the group is highly standardized, clearly categorized and group-dominated.

As symbols, highly ordered clothing ensembles usually evoke associations of order, control and authority. They also strongly suggest something serious, important and distinct from other activities, and are contrasted with ordinary, casual or plain clothes. (McVeigh 113)

The serious attitude the organization takes towards its performances are embedded in the uniform, and we hear echoes of it in all of its care instructions, as well as how behavior is regulated.

More specifically, high ordered clothing ensembles are related to formalized actions, standardized responses, disciplined bodies and restrained movements in the service of some collective goal. They are linked to group identification and affiliation, unity of purpose, missions pursued, solidarity, fixed social roles, clarification of duties and commitment to tasks. (McVeigh 113-14)

The uniform carries these ideological values in its threads; Tigerband members strive to maintain an image of prestige, discipline, unity, and excellence--and through this performance to identify

them with LSU, implying that LSU holds these values as well. All Tigerband members can be found in the midst of a layered performance, and I wonder which sounds louder, the music or the image of LSU.

While my unpacking of the symbol of the uniform in this chapter is in no way exhaustive, I suggest that an understanding of the symbolic system the drumline members work/play within is extremely important in aiding our understanding of the ritual of Phi Boota roota. The uniform carries many of the values of the organization—including the valuing of ritual itself. The overarching football ritual at LSU casts the members of the band as vital performers. The costumes of this ritual then reveal the role of the performer in the ritual and the overall aims of the ritual. Tigerband uniforms highlight Tigerband values; as we continue to view and better understand Tigerband-ness, we will better understand the cause of Phi Boota Roota's emergence.

## Chapter 3

### Audiation: Terminology

A socialite asked Louis Armstrong to define jazz. He replied, “Lady, if you have to ask what it is, you’ll never know.” (Jarrett 1)

When we get to talking about things, we gotta make sure we’re on the same page when it comes to what is what and who is who so the whys and the hows can start a talkin’. Dig?

**Form:** Structure given to a piece of music. The system used to articulate the ideas in the music. A paradigm. Waltz, Counterpoint, Be-Bop, Chaconne. Style. Confining, yet somewhat needed; calls for creativity to resist within it. The black velvet that brings out the sparkle in the diamond.

Have you ever been caught so off-guard by something that time stops? Contexts vanish?

Company disappears? So bewildered and awestruck that you can’t describe what you’re replaying in your mind over and over in hope that if you repeat it enough, it will be forever etched in your mind? I can recall parts of the first solo I ever heard Rex Richardson play: the notes, the intervals, the breaks, the riffs, the way he breathed, the way he looked at the rhythm section, as if saying, “follow me--I’ve got an idea. . . .”

**Staff:** five lines and four spaces, on which music is notated. The reference point--the position of notes on the staff gives each note its pitch value. The major clefs that designate which notes the staff signals are treble and bass. Context, situation, surroundings, influencing factors.

I want to write things that say things.

I want to say things that say things.

I want to hear things that say things.

I want to learn how to say things, not just speak them.

**Creativity:** birth, newness, sculpting, sounding, speaking, the action, the spontaneous, the meditated, the voicing.

What I hate most about improvising is the fact that you can still suck at it. Words become both the highway and the speed bump on the way to self-expression. Notes do the same thing. Every great poem or novel or play or written expression I've ever read was made with words I both know and use--but not as well as others do. I played a rather lengthy jazz clarinet piece at the 1997 Loyola Jazz Festival, fronting the Central High Jazz Band for one of our three selections. I played well, but mimicked solos of my teacher for the improv sections. The judges at the festival knew it--they called me out on it, for not playing my own solo. At the time, though, it was the only thing I knew how to say.

**Meter:** the time element of music, determining the time structure of the music being played.

Involves the type of note that gets the beat and the number of that note that are repeated to create one bar, the smallest measure of time. E.g., 3/4 time involves three quarter notes per bar; 4/4 = four quarter notes; 5/8 = five eighth notes. Dividing the moment into something tangible, a system of thought. With a staff and a meter, there's a place and time to say or do something.

*chasing the metaphor...  
using the tangible to understand  
the intangible  
trying to  
catch what you can't quite  
follow by putting on running shoes  
seeking the ends of  
the representation of the concept being  
discussed  
finding the three-legged-ness of representation itself  
exercise with no trophy*

**Improvisation:** spontaneously informed action. More than just making something up as you go. It's rooted in something, the moment, the situation, the context it draws from to speak, to move, to find its voice and lose it spontaneously. An improvised musical action may be informed by two major factors - the music that has preceded it or the music that has been or is being made simultaneously by others (as in a group situation). A willful commitment to some kind of activity. inspiration creates thought creates purpose creates decision creates action.

In Drifting on a Read, Michael Jarrett records a story about two jazz musicians who were invited to lecture and perform jazz at the Shanghai Conservatory of Music.

Ruff, who plays French horn, describes improvisation--“the lifeblood of jazz . . . something created during the process of delivery”--to a group of faculty and students. He then joins Mitchell, a pianist, and they improvise on a simple blues theme. The audience

is nonplussed, having never heard anything like this in their lives. Their language doesn't even have a word for "improvisation." After the performance, Ruff is questioned by an old professor.

"When you created 'Shanghai Blues' just now, did you have a form for it, or a logical plan?"

"I just started tapping my foot," Ruff replied, tapping his foot to reconstruct the moment. "And then I started to play the first thought that came in my mind with the horn. And Mitchell heard it, and He answered."

"But how can you ever play it again?" the old professor said.

"We never can," Ruff replied.

"That is beyond our imagination," the professor said. "Our students here play a piece a hundred times, or two hundred times, to get it exactly right. You play something-- something very beautiful--and then you just throw it once away." (72)

**Audiate:** the practice of thinking and comprehending music with your mind. Using language to think thoughts about music. When musicians audiate, they think music rather than numbers or words. That song that gets stuck in your head. The mind becomes the convergence site of creativity and memory. It sounds and it resonates and it's never heard.

A tuning fork is a rather out-dated tuning device, but I can still remember playing with them as a kid (my dad was a band director, remember). A tuning fork was a simple two-pronged metal fork that was designed to ring at true pitches (i.e., not vibrations flat or sharp). I could never get it to ring quite as true as my dad could, because it took quite a strike to get the fork to ring

loudly, but if you hit it and held it up to your ear, almost close enough to touch your ear and give you a tickle, you would hear the purest A440 you could imagine. It seemed impossible that a pronged piece of metal could sing out so true; however it just took one forceful hit to give it a voice. Not a speaking voice, though; it was a voice of resonance.

**Subculture:** a subgroup of a culture that is marked as such by a stylistic variation of sorts; often marks a subversion or re-appropriation of the main culture's values or ideology; the rejection of the hegemony of the parent culture is marked externally through style, e.g. clothing or other visible external markers, as well as performed acts, e.g. punk as a music genre and an ideology.  
(see Hebdige)

*Drum-lines*

*headed indefinitely in the direction*

*their contour demand*

*separating fences*

*showing us the barrier between*

*offering us a place to stand*

*keeping in and out*

*solid and unmoving*

*get in line*

*order, a position, a waiting for*

*don't cross the line*

*punishment, a boundary*

*showing the limits of*

*blurry, curving, broken*

*intersecting a nd parallel*

*drawn*

*maybe I'm out of line*

**Mark Time:** a marching maneuver that requires no forward or backward motion; marching in place; the toes never leave the ground; they heels move up and down on the beat--left--right--left--right, dividing up the time into even increments, holding a position on the field, dynamically static, actively passive

**Percussion:** the act of drumming, beating or striking something to create a sound, a rhythmic reaction, rooting in the heartbeat, moving through the feet and the arms, the body and the mind and the spirit; violent and raw, disciplined by order and technique; action causing reaction causing resonance causing action causing more; a make-shift model for communication

I heard John Scoffeld play at Chelsea's one time; kind of a fluke gig for a legend like Scoffeld. The owner called him up and said that he dug John's music; John said next time he was in New Orleans, he would stop in and play a gig. A friend was kind enough to tell me about it, and we went and heard him play. The cat is unreal, and his band was remarkable; one of the band members used a Gameboy to create drum loops to play over. I loved the concert; and among the highlights for me was watching other people enjoy the concert. It's funny, you can almost tell what other people are hearing by the way they listen (I believe it was Errol Morris who said that listening and looking as if you were listening were two completely different, almost conflicting things). Many people there were dancing and grooving along to the band, which was always

laying down a very accessible pocket to move to. Simon Lott, a local phenom on the drums, stood next to me for part of the concert; he closed his eyes and laughed a lot, seemingly understanding more of the musical conversation I was picking up on.

**Resonance:** a sounding caused by a striking; the waves echo and shake other things up, causing a reaction; the punctum, the prick that causes thing to hold more music than they were written to play; “the accident that pricks us” (Barthes 27), causing the hearer both to hear and to listen.

you are my sunshine my only sunshine you make me happy when skies are grey  
I wish the members would hurry up and leave- singing this song over and over  
that they didn't balk- then again, they did enjoy the sports bras as well- wow-  
everyone seemed to catch on- musicians catch these cues fairly well- and you

you'll never know dear how much I love you please don't take my sunshine away  
is starting to get on my nerves- I wonder what we're doing next- the clue says to go  
they're really starting to get into this- with the clapping and the dancing and  
know- they sing very well for percussionist- oh wow- the gospel sermon with

you are my sunshine my only sunshine you make me happy when skies are grey  
to the clock tower- the bear crawl was hilarious- I didn't think Auby was going to  
harmonies and everything- you'll never know dear- it's amazing how contagious  
crooning, humming underscore- what is Brett preaching about- oh- the Phi Boota

you'll never know dear how much I love you please don't take my sunshine away  
make it- Jude and Brandon really seemed to like the drumstick pass- so strange  
this can become- when Brett chimed in with the gospel choir call and response  
rota gospel- pervading the pledges- sing it again- sing it again- sing it louder-

**Memory:** a recalling of how things were; history re-making; a way of restoring and a way of omitting; whose memories count? whose histories are worth remembering? the twice behaved past via narrative; performative, elusive, subjective, haunting, mythic, epic, stoic, schizophrenic

*circles*

*around and around and around and*

*creating a surface*

*or a (w)hole*

*soft and round*  
*a line that swallowed its own tail*  
*everyone join in the circle*  
*games and playful movement*  
*unity, a ring of promise*  
*an enclosed space*  
*limited but rollable*  
*offering a window, a peep in*  
*or out*

**Ethnography:** Standing in the warm-up box, enclosed by a wall of percussive sound, I look around to see what I can find: it's amazing how the beating swallows up every other sound in the room; it's a consuming pulse--one that won't let you think of anything but its own life. The beat seems too strong to fight, but I don't know if giving in is good or bad yet. The drummers mark time with their mechanical feet and their violent hits on plastic heads, rim shots like bullets whizzing through the air, tonal explosions you could feel move through you, overtaking your sense of hearing mercilessly, overtones of crashing cymbals ringing out, crying out, getting lost in the left-over noise that roams like a nomad when the rhythm stops. I feel unarmed and helpless, unable to fight back, forced to succumb to the pulse that surrounds me, a prisoner of war who marches because the beat is too strong to fight without sticks, yet a patriot who finds the violence of this particular war soothing, if just for a moment, due to the time-less escape found in between the beating. But I have to move, I have to react--I'm a drum that's been struck, and a sounding must happen; the vibrations are too constant not to resonate somehow.

I crawl back to the wall, where I left my only weapon, and begin writing. Paul, one of the cymbal players, sits down next to me.

“You’re getting notes from this? We’re not doing anything. . . .”

**Writing:**

## Chapter 4

### Creating a Marcher

I understand that the manufactures [sic] of men's suspenders hold an annual convention. One of the solemn rituals at the closing session each year requires that all stand and drink a toast to the law of gravity. On the other hand, when space scientists get together their main topics of discussion involve means of circumventing the law of gravity. The college band director's ambivalent relationship to the marching band reflects both of these attitudes: we deplore its existence but we could not exist- in our present state- without it. (Henderson 138)

While marching bands at different schools play different roles in the overarching social/political system of the school, the LSU Marching Band has been called a "goodwill ambassador for the University and State of Louisiana" ([History of LSU Bands](#)). As a representative, the band is plunged into the political system of LSU, and the members become subjects within it. The involvement of the bodies of the drumline members within this political field becomes important to our aims of discovering why these actors act the way they do. What forces/social apparatuses are at play in their decision making? Foucault wrote:

It is largely as a force of production that the body is invested with relations of power and domination; but, on the other hand, its constitution as labour power is possible only if it is caught up in a system of subjection (in which need is also a political instrument meticulously prepared, calculated and used); the body becomes a useful force only if it is both a productive body and a subjected body. (Foucault 24-25)

In this chapter I will address the use of the body in both productive and subjected forms through the biomechanics of marching, as well as the panoptic layers of marching performance and their metaphoric meaning in the power-knowledge schema. By gaining a better grasp on the power

structure of Tigerband, we can view the creation and performance of Br as a by-product of the system its members are performers within.

### **Docile Drumming, Docile Drummers**

A body is docile that may be subjected, used, transformed and improved. (Foucault 136)

There are two major physical requirements for performing in the band: one must play and march well. The audition process, as discussed in previous chapters, establishes the knowledge of the fundamentals of percussion; without these, members could not play the music that is required of them. Upon successfully auditioning for the band, new members are required to attend the pre-season week of training. During this week, the fundamentals of marching are taught to the band. The General Information Handbook has an extensive section dedicated to the execution of marching fundamentals like the forward march, turning, marking time, and transitions between different types of movement. For each type of movement, there is an explanation of the maneuver, the command at which the marcher executes the maneuver, and an explanation of the execution process. For example, the position of “attention” is discussed as follows:

#### 1. Explanation

Attention is a motionless stationary position in which the body stands erect and poised though never tense or rigid. Attention is the position from which all other commands are given. The following points must be observed

- a. Heels together, toes 30 degrees apart
- b. Weight evenly distributed on both feet
- c. Knees should be straight, but relaxed and not locked
- d. Hips should be centered over the ankles
- e. Shoulders should be centered over the hips and relaxed
- f. Hands and Arms

- i. with instrument--to carry position
- ii. without instrument--arms and hands in carry position. Left fist serves as the “base” with the right hand closing in over the left fist.
- g. Head up, chin up, eyes forward to a point on the horizon.

2. Command:

Counts	1	2	3	4
Command	“Band”	“Ten”	“Hut”	(snap)
Hands	(clap)	(clap)	(clap)	(clap)

3. Execution

The Command may be given in cadence or out of cadence

- a. In Cadence: snap to position of attention in cadence on the count after the command
- b. Out of cadence: snap to the position of attention immediately after the syllable “Hut”

(LSU Bands 15)



(Saban, Nick)

The marching field is marked as a grid; unless otherwise told, the step-size of the march should be 22 and 1/2 inches, which averages out to eight steps per five yards, or “8 to 5.” The elaborate designs of Tigerband are a product of marching within this grid of step-size and positioning. When the march command is given, a very detailed action should begin.

Foot action is the same as low Mark Time except that on each downbeat the heel is placed 22 and 1/2 inches in front of the stationary leg. The heel of the foot hits the ground first, and the toe will point up approx. 45 degrees. The body weight is moved forward so that the foot rolls from heel to toe along the outside edge of each foot. The thighs and knees are kept straight forward with the feet lining up big toe in front of big toe in the line of march. As with all motion maneuvers, Glide Step always begins with the left foot. While in motion, the body “glides” across the ground--the legs act as human “shock absorbers.” There is absolutely no upper body movement. (General Information Handbook 15)

The gliding motion allows wind players to march while not disturbing their playing; the upper body plays music in a somewhat stationary position while the lower body marches.

These basic maneuvers illustrate the detailed mechanization of the different parts of the body; the body is broken down into units and specialized. This mechanization allows the body to be laid hold of as parts, not a whole, thus making the body more of a machine than a person and usable for certain ends. Foucault links this mechanization of the body to the types of soldiers found in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

To begin with, the soldier was someone who could be recognized from afar; he bore certain signs: the natural signs of his strength and courage, the marks, too, of his pride; his body was the blazon of his strength. By the late eighteenth century, the soldier has become something that can be made; out of a formless clay, an inapt body, the machine required can be constructed; posture is gradually corrected; a calculated constraint runs slowly through each part of the body, mastering it, making it pliable, ready at all times, turning silently into the automatism of habit. . . . (Foucault 135)

Foucault continues to describe the methods of disciplining the body, the methods through which the “calculated constraint” becomes habitual. Note how similar the bodies of the soldier and marching band member stand when performing their role; the military history of both marching and LSU are engrained into the body through the learning of these marching fundamentals.

Foucault notes that this new control arrived through three new concepts that pressed against the body: the scale of the control, the object of control, and the modality of control, specifically the new types of disciplines. As I noted above, the scale of control shifts from the body as a whole to the body as parts, promoting efficiency and calculated movement. The object of control becomes the efficiency itself; the body is commodified and becomes a producer of commodities, a machine that can (and must) be fine-tuned. The disciplines then become the mode through which the body is controlled:

“Discipline” may be identified neither with an institution nor in an apparatus; it is a type of power, a modality for its exercise, comprising a whole set of instruments, techniques, procedures, levels of application, targets; it is a “physics” or an “anatomy” of power, a technology. (Foucault 215)

The instruments to be used here are both corporeal and musical; the combined disciplines of music-making and music-marching begin to shape the anatomy of the marching band member. The discipline level required for musicians is fairly high: the drumline practices or performs an average of sixteen hours per week. Most music majors at LSU are required to practice at least three hours a day, play in at least two major ensembles and a quintet, as well as any other opportunities that could arise. Musicians must submit themselves to the disciplines of learning the physical rigors of playing as well as the discipline of the music itself. I recall a conversation with my clarinet professor in college; while trying to understand the musical expression of a particular sonata, I complained that I didn’t like the way the dynamics were written on the page. I would play it differently than how both the writer and my teacher play it. I was quickly told that I didn’t have a degree in music, and until I did, I was there to learn, not express my thoughts. I

hadn't earned the right to an opinion yet: I didn't play that well. Music, then, has more of a voice than the musician, at least until that musician has been disciplined by the music.

This discipline-link between marching and music isn't too hard to define; the genre of march in music refers to the playing style as well as the act of walking in time. In essence, marching is different from walking in the fact that marching deliberately follows or marks a tempo; it separates and subdivides time in a way to organize walking. The genre of march in music generally follows a two beat cycle (left and right--over and over again). In this sense, music has both a cyclical and linear drive in it; it is both repetitious and forward moving. If we link this to the emergence of ideas like colonization, forward progress, industrialization, and the like, we can see how marches follow along with most political and social movements since the enlightenment period. Every branch of the US military has its own march, as well as most military branches worldwide.

Music also has been used to pull soldiers together, to create the *esprit de corps* the military (and the marching band) desire.

The questions of what can make a good soldier--and how to develop these desirable qualities- have been the concern of writers for many years. Tolstoy tried to explain the force of armies in warfare as “the product of the mass multiplied by something else, an unknown  $x \dots X$  is the spirit of the army, the greater or less desire to fight and to face dangers on the part of all the men comprising the army, which is quite apart from the question whether they are fighting under leaders of genius or not, with cudgels or with guns that fire thirty-five times a minute.” Music, and ceremony in which music is an integral part, form a significant part of this “unknown  $x$ .” (Camus 2)

If music functions to create this unknown  $X$ , this spirit of an army (or of a band), falling in step with the music seems to function as a performative ritual in which the soldier accepts this tempo as the one to walk by; the soldier rejects the beat of a different drummer and subjects her/himself to the time, the ideas, and the pace being kept by the musicians.

If we choose to accept Camus' observations, the percussionists then inherit a very powerful position within the band—the time keepers for the marching unit. I find this to be interesting because time keeping in most larger musical groups is a function of visual conducting, not aural synchronization. The drumline then functions as beat-makers, but not the keeper of the time; rather, they communicate aurally what the conductor dictates visually as the proper tempo for playing/marching. In this separation of the visual and the aural the owner of the beat becomes the conductor, not the musician.

I am choosing to spend some time discussing this phenomenon for two reasons: the privileging of the visual over the aural in social-scientific research and my audiated attempts at bridging the two in my research. The privileging of the visual over the aural is no new concept: the basis of the scientific method is rooted in observation—sight, the eye, the visible. Sound can only be scientifically measured and gauged by converting it to waves, a visible movement. By controlling the aural through the visual, the aural can become fixed, measured, and “true” or “knowable” in a sense. Any phenomenon that can be visually marked can become a subject for scientific research, which implies not only that sound becomes knowable, but controllable. In this setting, the tension between the visual and the aural becomes a struggle for ownership/control of the action of sounding. Just as the body is being disciplined to conform visually to the image of Tigerband-ness, the sounds of the members of Tigerband are being visually organized into their proper place in the rhythmic soundscape by the conductor to best fit the sounding of Tigerband-ness.

Conceptually, my use of audiation throughout this project echoes my attempt to give the aural a place in the social-scientific field of ethnography. Performative writing finds one of its academic justifications in its ability to evoke, to perform, to do—just as nothing can properly describe a sound, nothing can describe an action like the action itself. Audiation presents a two-way street for the visual and aural to move freely within; the elusive nature of sound/action can become visually tangible in the written while the written acts like the elusive sound/action it mimics. Consequently, the privileging of the visual, to again borrow from Cage, gives us

“clarity” without “grace,” which renders the act incomplete at best. Though the aural and visual both have their place within the context of the band, the authority of the visual in most situations is easily discernable, as I will illustrate in the next section.

### **The Aural/Visual Debate**

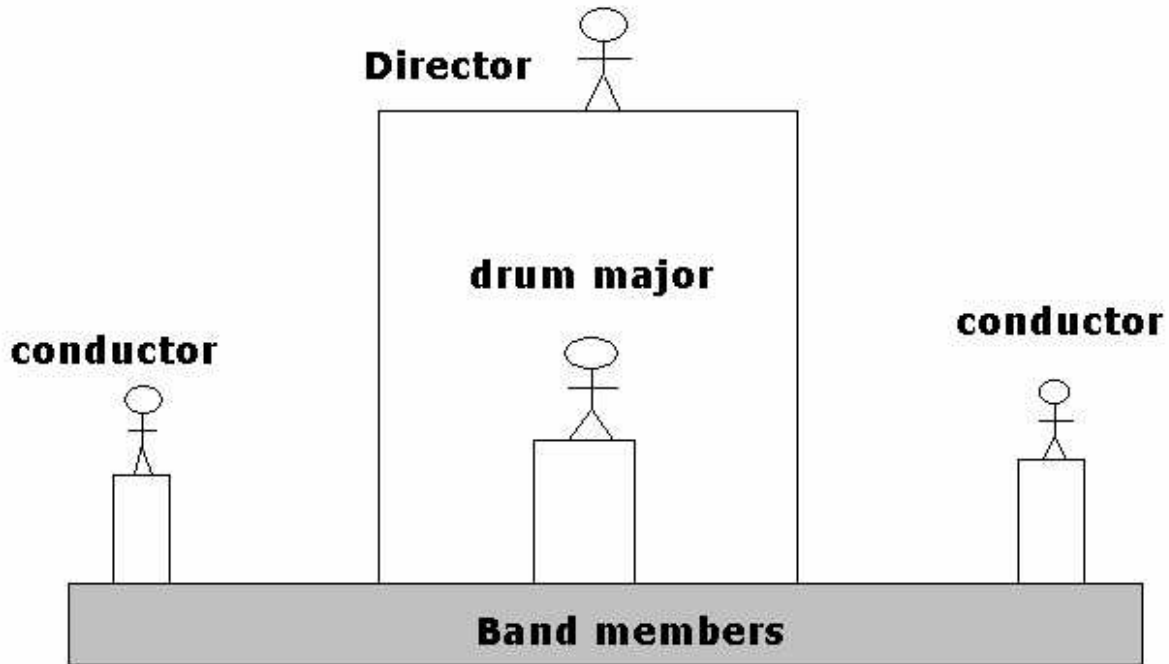
As a long time musical performer and band member, I have had numerous experiences playing in ensembles that are conducted; most orchestras and wind bands are led by a conductor, usually the leader of the organization, who “keeps time” by conducting the patterns of the music with their hands or a baton. Over the past several years, I have played with the LSU Wind Ensemble, one of the Band Organizations that, among other duties, hosts an annual conducting clinic. This clinic is for middle and high school directors, as well as graduate students and prospective LSU conducting candidates, to sharpen their communicative skills from the podium. As a student of communication, this always proves to be quite an interesting time: people using visual non-verbal communication to direct/lead/control the music being made by a group of fifty-five people. A clinician offers tips, tools, and other insights to the conductors while we, the musicians, become guinea pigs in this music lab experience.

One year, H. Robert Reynolds was our guest clinician; he was the director of bands at the University of Michigan, and currently conducts the Detroit Wind Symphony and teaches and lectures worldwide. Reynolds, among his many skills, has a wide repertoire of facial expressions available to him as he conducts. At one point during the clinic, a director was attempting to lead/drag us through a piece by Percy Allen Grainger based on an old Irish tune. Reynolds stopped the conductor, took the podium, and conducted the entire piece (including cueing entrances, crescendo and decrescendos, colors, moods, and whatever other expressions he wanted us to convey) with only his facial expressions. After we finished, he then started us off and walked off the podium and let us play, without any visual marker of time, and we played together, even through fermatas and tempo shifts. After we cut off, he asked the conductors a question: “What is it that we’re really doing up here? If it’s not needed, why do we bother?”

Reynolds went on to talk about the caliber of musicians that the conductors work with and the need to communicate what either the music or the musicians are not saying, so that the performers can then say it. In a wind band or orchestral setting, this proves to be true, especially when we view the conductor position as the position of power or control. I wonder, though, as a musician, how much power could be taken away through the kinds of sound I (or we) produce. One thing Mr. Wickes always tells us before the clinic starts is to play only what we see from the stick; that is, don't do what the music tells you, do what the conductor says the music tells you. Wickes invites us to break an unspoken rule for musicians, and in that infraction places the weight of the musical burden on the conductor.

This shift in thinking is welcomed in a lab for conductors, but not in everyday rehearsals, both in Wind Ensemble and on the Tigerband field. The tension between the music and the conductor still remains, however, and is noticeably exacerbated on the Tigerband field through the phenomenon of phasing: a delayed sound effect caused by the spreading of the music makers over the span of a football field. The placement of the musicians on the field (to make visual patterns) puts a special distance between them, which affects the way they hear each other. Phasing is the variance in tempo and musical time that develops due to this distance. I bring this up for a number of reasons. The drumline functions as the aural time-keeping unit of the band; thus any discrepancies in time/music making point to the drumline to (re)establish the tempo for the others to follow. The aural element of the band is controlled by the visual conducting of the drum major. The title alone implies that the drum major is in charge of the time being played, but the drum major strangely enough doesn't make any sound. This privileging of the visual over the aural displays a power dynamic both on and off the field: what makes the beat and what dictates the beat are two different things entirely.

A simple reading of the practice field helps to illustrate this dynamic. When one reads the field according to elevation, the field looks something like this:



The director is on the tower, an elevated platform that allows them to see the field from a higher angle, thus able to correct field formations and give marching instruction. The Drum Major is centered below the platform, and he (Craig) and two graduate assistants conduct from ladders that are elevated for visibility. The drum line usually marches in a direct visual line with the drum major, and frequently during rehearsals Helmers and Craig communicate back and forth about tempos. Strangely enough, there is also an aural dynamic to the diagram. The directors (Wickes, Moorhouse, and King) all wear microphone headsets that project their voices over the band's sounds using an amplification system; through these headsets they give commands, offer marching and music instruction and correction, and generally address the group of 325 members. Their amplified voice can be heard over the band as it plays; in this way, both the visual and aural power shifts back to the directors and conductors.

When phasing occurs on the field, this tension of privileging the visual over the aural becomes strangely confused; band members are told to do two things: listen in and watch the drum major. Listening in means tuning into the tempo being played within the group; it also implies listening into the center of the field, where the drumline is situated. The drumline

members are told to listen to the inside of the line: Helmers, the captain and center snare, should be the one whose tempo is followed. However, the listening always succumbs to the watching. The Drum Major's hands are the standard to follow, and if the sound doesn't match the conducting, the sound is wrong. During a few rehearsals, Helmers would yell at the line as they played, telling them not to rush the tempo. How do they not rush? Watch Craig.

The conflict of the sound-act and the visual-structure seems to mesh into the marching ideology outlined throughout the rules and guidelines set by the Tigerband Handbook. Uniformity and a group mentality become crucial to the execution of the task at hand: being a marching band. In a lot of ways, this is a pragmatic issue; the 325 pieces of the band playing as one unit requires a lot of coordination and a system that facilitates the kind of music-making implied by its design. I would argue, however, that music in itself functions both as a structural basis for the marching paradigm and a panoptic source of discipline that produces the kind of marchers we find in the drumline.

### **The Multiple Eyes of the Field**

The individual is no doubt the fictitious atom of an "ideological" representation of society; but he is also a reality fabricated by this specific technology of power that I have called "discipline." We must cease once and for all to describe the effects of power in negative terms: it "excludes," it "represses," it "censors," it "abstracts," it "masks," it "conceals." In fact, power produces; it produces reality; it produces domains of objects and rituals of truth. The individual and the knowledge that may be gained of him belong to this production. (Foucault 194)

In Foucault's discussion of discipline and punishment, he marks two shifts in how discipline affected the body: from the external, corporeal punishment and disciplining of the body to a representative visual marking of the subject, and the shift from this marking to an internal, psychological punishment and disciplining of the soul. The first system of punishment viewed the body as a site of the evidence of both crime and punishment; the power of the sovereign was

displayed through this punishment. The second system moves to a visual rearticulation of the penal code; the public was to see the mark of the infraction of the code as represented on the body of the criminal. The third system involves the permanent change of the criminal from the inside-out; the discipline was to enter into every facet of the body's actions by creating a self-monitoring subject, a criminal who became aware of the eye of the discipliner at all times.

In the prison system, this was achieved by a design of prison called the panopticon.

Bentham's *panopticon* is the architectural figure of this composition. We know the principle on which it was based: at the periphery, an annular building; at the center, a tower; this tower is pierced with wide windows that open onto the inner side of the ring; the peripheric building is divided into cells, each of which extends the whole width of the building; they have two windows, one on the inside, corresponding to the windows of the tower, and one on the outside, allowing the light to cross the cell from one end of the cell to the other. All that is needed, then, is to place a supervisor in a central tower and to shut up in each cell a madman, a patient, a condemned man, a worker or a schoolboy.

(Foucault 200)

The structure of the building isolates each prisoner from the others while making their every action visible to the supervising authorities. The panopticon functions ultimately "to induce in the inmate a state of consciousness and permanent visibility that assures the automatic functioning of power" (Foucault 201). The actions of the inmate become highly self-monitored; the exposure and isolation of the inmate create a hyper-awareness of self and a consciousness of the eye/gaze of the other that has power to punish.

Referring back to the diagram of the field elevations, we can see how a panoptic gaze is integrated into the practice experience. Tigerband members are simultaneously placed under two powerful sets of eyes: the director's and the music's. The director has aural authority over the band's sound; Moorhouse's corrections and instructions sound over the music, and in many ways create the kind of marcher and musician she desired through the power built into this elevation.

The director position also works metaphorically as the gaze of the audience, a gaze that both marcher and director work under.

When you wear the uniform, you will not only be representing one of the outstanding universities of this nation, but you will be recognized as a distinguished member of the famous *Golden Band from Tigerland* . (LSU Bands 9)

As the head of the organization, the representation of LSU via the Marching Band falls on the shoulders of the directors. This gaze gains more complexity when considering

. . . you must remember that everything we do is observed and noted by fellow percussionists, LSU students, alumni, and fans as well as faculty and the administration. It is crucial that we set and maintain a level of professionalism while exemplifying percussion and musicianship. (LSU Bands 6)

The importance of the image being represented multiplies with the number and types of eyes watching. The Directors also add another eye through a visiting university band “Competitions.” During the season, a few opposing universities brought their full marching band, which meant that the half-time period would involve two band field performances, not just the LSU Marching Band’s own.

At one Monday night rehearsal, Moorhouse came through to talk to the drumline about the week’s show: “Auburn will bring their band this week. They have a few LSU grads on staff, and they always have tricks up their sleeves” (from fieldnotes). The football competition is echoed in the presence of Auburn, but the fact that their band is coming is a call to arms. Note how the threat of the Auburn band is legitimized: they have LSU grads. They are fighting us with some of our own knowledge. We must rise up to meet this challenge. And through this rhetoric, the band becomes aware of the comparative and competitive gaze of another band, one that they must triumph over through disciplined marching and playing.

This brings us back to the music; the execution of the music in an acceptable form as a band becomes of primary concern. The group is a band, you see; all through high school, most of the students in Tigerband were part of high school bands, which have at least two major

competitions a year: a marching festival and a concert band festival. At each festival, the band performs for a rating, with a “1” being superior and a “5” being poor. From personal experience, walking away with a “2” is not acceptable in most programs, and the competition is as much against the music as it is a panel of judges or a competing band. Tigerband plays and marches higher difficulty levels of music and drill to distinguish themselves among college bands. The music, then, acts as a barrier to break through and a dictator to please; by playing and performing what is dictated, and by doing it well, the band proves it is good at the game of music. The notated music acts like a system of rules that both enables and judges its performance.

Note also that the numbers of gazes operating on the field resonate well with the code of privileging of the visual over the aural. The visual becomes what is right and true, what is presented, and to correct the aural we must return to this correct image. Tempo becomes a construct of the gaze, or to chase it metaphorically, the image dictates the action, and any actions that fall outside the image are corrected ultimately through looking to the right representation of that action.

From this discussion, we find that the members of Tigerband, including the members of *Br*, can be located within a complex system of discipline aimed at (re)presenting an image of both Tigerband-ness and LSU. *Phi Boota roota*, then, emerges from a culture whose primary function is to iconically represent LSU, both aurally and visually. Have the members of the drumline accepted this image as their own? What aspects of this performance do they accept? Reject? I argue that *Br* emerges as a response to the task of performing LSU-ness. By viewing *Br* as a response or reaction to the task of representing LSU, we can begin to understand how the drumline members view this task, as well as how they redefine the social meaning of being a Tigerband member.

## Chapter 5

### Audiation: March A Mile in My Bando-s

Standing before a crowd this size always overwhelms me (at least the me that's remembering this moment). Everyone seems both ready and nervous; ready because we've done this so many times at practice, and nervous because the stadium seems less forgiving than the practice field. When I was in high school, the pre-game show was both a goal and a rite of passage for us. We knew we had made it if we could march LSU's pre-game show; it was breathtaking, it was hard to follow, almost magical, and people loved it. I've never heard anything as loud as th...

"Ready-Ready"

Shit. Eyes ahead, chest out, horn in carriage position. When you march on the grid, your peripheral vision becomes key to staying in line. Dress front and side to side without moving your head or your eyes. It's amazing how many things you can see when you can't look. There's always a big empty section in the left stands where the band sits, and the Greek section is usually filling quickly by the time the downbeat hits. Mr. Wickes prowls on the sideline; I could watch him the whole time--he functions like the band's mascot in a way; calling the shots, but always a showman...

Twee...eee...eee...eet Tweet Tweet Tweet Tweet

Left. Marking Time--it is marching in place, really, but I love the term. Breaking up existence into organized beats to walk in. We do it all the time, I think--in the form of history. This endless flow of moments now written down, fixed, measured and placed into a system that defines them. Maybe we do that with a lot of stuff...



Da-Da-DAAAA DA movetorightand

One Da-Da-DAAAA DAzip and

One. The pattern of steps here is slow and precise, patterned after some of the old military school steps. The stadium salute allows us to play this line of the fight song into all four corners of the stadium. <pivot>We know our part and they know theirs: ours is the four notes, theirs is the total loss of all sanity. There was <step> a time when we were marching to the PMAC where this guy, plastered as I've ever seen, got in the face of every single marcher that passed him and <step> begged for the "da da daaaa da" song. It's so hard to keep a straight face with someone like him yelling in it, begging for a song he doesn't know the title of.

PEAK STEPPING--Wow I hate this part; it is both the most physically grueling and mentally freeing, mainly <hit> because we had done it so much in practice, it didn't require anything but repetition <hit>. You'd be surprised how many things you could look at and think about while marching <hit> full speed down a field, knees high in the air and horn blasting at full strength. The<hit> only rule was: don't look at the jumbo-tron, especially to find yourself on TV. Other than <hit> that, you just succumb to the work you're doing. <THE FUCKIN TTR> Never miss a beat; just keep marching. I used to do the same thing <hit> making coffee at CC's. Pulling shots, frothing milk, calling drinks,<hit> pump the chocolate <pivot>; after a few days, <hit> you just forget you're working, and you<hit> focus on <pivot> other things. <Marking Time> Foucault was right--discipline must be thought of as a productive force. <halt>

breathe breathe breathe breathe

## Chapter 6

### Overtones

While I was conducting my field research, I also taught public speaking at LSU. One day in class, I broke my class into groups with the assignment of writing a speech together addressing a group of incoming freshman on what is most important to know when entering LSU. The speeches covered things like study tips, time management, parking solutions, scheduling shortcuts, and the importance of getting involved on the campus. Concerning campus involvement, though some variations of groups were mentioned, every group without exception listed the following types of social groups: intramural sports, student government, student organizations, and the Greek system. The Greek system was set apart as something distinctive in every speech, sometimes even being addressed in a separate sub-point from student organizations. I note this because this Greek/non-Greek distinction carries over into the drumline's creation of the (perhaps) mock-fraternity Phi Boota roota. This distinction of being Greek, foreign (it's all Greek to me), the marking of other-ness through these letters--what needs exist that necessitate this new identification? One thing is certain: Phi Boota roota symbolizes an identity that clarifies the social identity of the drumline. The drumline sets itself apart in the LSU Band organization via  $\Phi$ ; public displays and private rituals both seem geared towards this differentiation.

John Mowitt makes an interesting link between percussion and identity by looking at the drum's anatomy--the body, the ribs, and specifically the head of the drum. Most drumming occurs on the head of the drum, which traditionally was made from the skin of an animal. The skin of the drum resonates as struck by another--it is played on, and reacts to the outside forces of another. Mowitt's "genealogy of the skin" leads us through the works of Barbara Duden and

Didier Anzieu to discover the skin ego, the skin as the borders between self and other, the site where this interchange between inside and outside occurs.

Every psychical activity is anaclitically dependent on a biological function. The Skin Ego finds its support in the various functions of the skin. . . . The primary function of the skin is as the sac which contains and retains inside it the goodness and fullness accumulating there through feeding, care, the bathing in words. Its second function is as the interface which marks the boundary with the outside and keeps the outside out; it is the barrier which protects against penetration by the aggression and greed emanating from others, whether people or objects. Finally, the third function--which the skin shares with the mouth and which it performs at least as often--is as the site and a primary means of communicating with others, of establishing signifying relations; it is, moreover, an "inscribing surface" for the marks left there by others. (qtd. in Mowitt 18)

The skin ego acts as a personal border, a protective barrier, and a site for communicative (re)action; an inscription site on which I even now am inscribing--at least on the skin of the collective Br.

Though his writings prove to be quite illuminating, Mowitt and I begin to part aims when we begin discussing collective identity. I'm not as concerned with the construction of personal identity as I am collective identity, though I know the two are intertwined. I choose to look at Br as a socially constructed identity that emerges from the context of Tigerband. Phi Boota roota resonates, and thus sounds, as a result or byproduct of the performed role of Tigerband membership. Drawing from Mowitt, I suggest that the percussionists on the LSU drumline form the social "body" of the drum with their collective identity being the "head." This head has both a collective "skin" (through which they make sense of their social settings and on which they are

acted on by social/political/ideological forces) and a collective “voice” (the resonance of these forces as they vibrate against/through the skin--resulting in the performance of Br). In this chapter, I explore the role of names in the organization, as well as the visual markers Br uses to mark itself as an/other.

### **What’s in a Name?**

As taken from their website:

Phi Boota roota is a fraternity dedicated to college drumline unity. Phi Boota was established in 1971 at the University of Southern Mississippi by founding father Connie Sprinkle. In 1982 John Paul Gay of Louisiana State University became the national founding father by helping establish 10 new chapters.

**Phi** – precision, perfection, and any term referring to excellence

**Boota** – one of the “lost” Greek letters, meaning percussion

**roota** – one of the “lost” Greek letters, symbolizing the “Unbroken Circle of Root.”

(Helmets)

The components of the name “Phi Boota roota” suggest a number of things about the group’s identity. According to the Oxford English Dictionary, Phi ( ) is associated with a number of meanings, including love (as in philosopher--‘lover of wisdom’), intuition, perception, renewal and reform. “Precision,” “perfection,” or “excellence,” then, are only linked to the letter through Phi Boota roota. Boota and roota are, of course, not Greek at all, at least from an etymological position, though roota appears in an early definition of a rutabaga, which is a Swedish turnip (Oxford English Dictionary). What I find even more intriguing is that two of the three words were created by the group to define itself. The choice to define the components Boota and roota as “lost” is also interesting to me; lost suggests a history. Were percussion and

“the root” formerly meaningful to the group and, after being abandoned for a time, suddenly rediscovered? Or had they ever been found before--thus their previous omission from the historical records. Either way, Br suggests that it offers phi, boota, and roota to its members; that’s why they call themselves “The group of Precise, Perfect Percussionists of Excellence, (with) the Unbroken Circle of Root” (my translation).

I want to give the name of Br emphasis because names are a form of symbolic currency in linguistics; they hold a value that shifts and changes as used. A name is one of the first things a person is given when they’re born, and that symbol stays with them as long as they live. More importantly, the creation of a new name suggests the creation of something that was previously unnamed or unnamable, or possibly something that didn’t need a name because it was difficult to differentiate it from something else until now. Names, like the identities embedded within them, are symbolic, social constructs, meaning they hold no intrinsic value of their own. Names, and specifically name changes, have also carried a metaphoric link to transformation--caterpillar to butterfly (though the same organism), or the change from the name Jacob to Israel after his wrestling match with God. It’s mythic, in a way, and holds a power within the eyes of the named and the community that named them.

The process of naming takes place in the early festivities of pledge night. In my field notes, I wrote about a conversation I had with a few actives when planning for pledge night.

As the band heads to concert formation, I join Peter, Jack, Brad and Mahood in a discussion about the festivities coming on Friday night. They’re trying to remember what elements go into the night. Peter says he has clues from his freshman year, so they won’t have to make up new ones. They talk about choosing the pledge president, who will lead the pledges on their adventure during the night, then shift to pledge names. The pledges

are each given a Greek name in the beginning of the night, their official ΦBr name.

Greek name? Brad then compares the names to the names given to the Road Runner and Wiley Coyote; Brad's Greek name was stickeus-in-the-buttekus. Do they stick? *No*--most of them couldn't remember theirs.

Memory tends to be an issue--or at least when it comes to the traditions/rituals ΦBr holds to. It seems to be more about the execution of the tradition than what the traditions actually are; for example, the fact that a Greek name is given to each pledge, but the name is never used again. Receiving a new name is a strong symbol--a changing of name, a changing of identity; in this case, the naming marks a transition moment into the journey to becoming a member. The pledge is renamed, making them not a pledge--a person in transition to becoming a member of Br. The name-symbol is trivial, though; the action holds much more meaning. Actually, denaming might be more accurate--seeing how it resonates within the larger ritual of Tigerband. Being re/denamed is the objective--the actual name is irrelevant. The pledge tasks seem to function similarly: content is inconsequential, but the ritual of action is mandatory.

The naming was the first event of pledge night, meaning the voyage to becoming a member of Br starts with the resignifying of who you are/what you are called. This resignification happens by both taking away the former name and being given a new one. Now you are in; now you are different. In Br, names signify a kind of belongingness; a belongingness that, ironically, doesn't concern the playing of drums. The pledges had been and would be on the drumline as percussionists no matter what, but they were not in Br until they had completed the rituals of pledging, which includes a renaming. In this naming ritual, we can see the collective

identity of Br celebrates drumming as something members do, but not primarily what members are. Even more odd, then, is that this de-/renaming, while crucial to the completion of the ritual, has no sticking power in Br or Tigerband; as noted, most of the members don't remember their pledge names. I would argue that this forgetting doesn't render the naming meaningless; instead it resonates from the other name or identity they wear together--Tigerbandsmen. Both organizations strive to represent something, and in both organizations, any personal identity is swallowed up by the larger whole.

### **The Uniformed**

In my observations of the drumline, as well as Tigerband in general, I've found that outside of the official uniform of the band, the drumline is the only section of the band that wears "uniformed" clothes during the week. On Saturdays, the band rehearses in the Indoor Football Facility (IFF). The band's rehearsal becomes much more formalized; the pre-game drill is run meticulously, the spacing in the playing formation is measured out by section leaders, and the rehearsal is run even more efficiently by Ms. Moorhouse (though she never wastes much time anyway). I can't say exactly why these rehearsals are different; though the looming performance of the half-time show could factor in, I did notice that these rehearsals are open to the public, and the performance of "Tigerband-ness" kicks up a notch.

It's during these rehearsals that the drumline adorns its uniform; this particular uniform is much less noticeable than the official one, but is distinct none the less. Each member of the drumline wears a drumline t-shirt, of which there are different types, though most wear the traditional drumline shirt: a yellow shirt with LSU Drumline written on the front left pocket and a picture of Tiger Stadium on the back, except instead of Mike the Tiger jumping out of it, a

LSU icon, they have a squirrel jumping out. From what I understand, squirrels throw acorns at the drummers when they warm up outside the band hall in the “enchanted forest”. Other drumline shirts include member lists and catch phrases like “We’d rather bang than blow” or “Because it’s better to play with a group than play with yourself”. There’s also one with an illustration of two stick men “playing baseball”, though members tell me it refers to a specific type of homosexual activity between men. These slogans strongly contrast the official Tigerband shirts.

#### Official Tigerband Shirts Slogans:

2003--Continuing a tradition of excellence

2002--Suddler Trophy Winner (often compared to the Heisman Trophy, Band version)

2001--Laissez Les Bon Temps Rouler

2000--Marching into a New Millennium

The drumline shirts have an entirely different coding to them--and while strict uniformity is thrown out the window (with the bass drum exception I discuss below), visual identification with the group is important and mandatory for this rehearsal, and seems to be wholly separate from the more obvious coding of drumline membership--the drum itself. The different instruments they carry visually marks most of the instrument groups; each section of the band mark specific musical functions and specializations as well as different social sub-groups. Br, however, codes their identity through the wearing of a uniformed marker of membership.

The bass drummers wear a slightly modified version of the drumline t-shirt; their shirts are black with white writing, and they all wear black shorts with the number “07” on the right leg. When I inquired about the number and the funeral-like all-black garb, I got this (now audiated) story:

The legend of the seventh bass drummer (according to Peter): Things were not always as they are now, especially in the bass line. During preseason, there was another member of the drumline; one who marched the second bass. Jude, who plays second bass now, was a

cymbal player, and Crazy Mike was not crazy--he was not on the line. That is, until “something happened”. Once “something happened,” this member of the drumline was not allowed to march anymore; they were kicked out off the line and out of the band, a feat that seldom occurs. Jude was moved up to second bass, and Crazy Mike was called back to play cymbals. The bass drums mourn the “death” of this former member by wearing all black and the number 07 on their shorts every Saturday.

Peter wrapped up the story by looking at one of the positives from the death of 07: “... if he wouldn’t have goofed up, we wouldn’t have Crazy Mike around. . . .”

A uniformed dress or costume also played a major role in a number of the “pledge tasks,” mini-rituals that occur once a week after practice in the weeks preceding the pledge night ritual. One such ritual is “Gay Day” (as deemed by some of the members). The supposed embarrassment of being discovered that day was quite dramatic: No! No, don’t!”; “Don’t write this shit down!”; “Why did you have to come today?” and other objections were quickly voiced by the pledges, though by their tone it was part of the game. Though the costumes required were often parodic and opposite of the social norm in practice, the pledges never seemed too ashamed. That day the pledges wore a mix of short shorts, midriffs, rainbow designs, dresses and skirts, and other clothes they deemed appropriate for the occasion.

The variance in the necessary uniform/costume for proper completion of Gay Day was interesting; many of the pledges dressed in a thematic way. Actually, Jude was the one who pointed it out to me. To use his words, Brandon dressed as “Disco Gay,” wearing tight capris pants, a wide-collar, tight magenta dress shirt, and gold chains. Jude dressed as “Theater Gay,” with a 40’s style brown paper Boy hat, a scarf, a tight ringer-T with Gizmo on the front, and tight jeans. There was “Athletic Gay” in Biker shorts and a sports bra (there that is again), “Latin

Gay” (He was Latino), and “Whore Gay(?)” wore a tight miniskirt and a crop-top shirt. Mike, who revealed his theme as “Princess,” wore a homemade matching shirt and shorts combo, with florescent colored puff-paint, slits up the sides of his shorts and “Princess” proclaimed boldly on his chest. Interestingly, when I asked him how long it took him to make his outfit for the day, he said about an hour. Another drummer overheard that and accused him of being queer. The pledges who didn’t dress up were also accused of being queer.

Just like in many rituals, successful participation meant dressing up to visually mark the event. “Gay Day,” “Sports Bra Day,” and “Latusso Day” were all framed by the costumed dress deemed appropriate for the ritual.

### **Whostories**

The uniforms of the members of Br contrast with the Tigerband uniforms on two levels--the visual and the representative. The visual contrasts highlight the attitudes of the members towards each other and the task at hand. The uniforms also have a representative story to tell—members claim a collective voice in the larger story of Tigerband through these uniforms and the events they symbolize. Both types of uniform have histories purposely embedded within their design; the Tigerband uniform was designed to reflect the military history of LSU, as well as marching in general. The LSU diamond insignia was taken from the previous uniform, and the Grecian key around the bottom of the jacket was taken from the architecture on Thomas Boyd Hall at LSU (Moorhouse). Each of these choices underlines the desire to carry and display the history of the organization as part of the presentation of self to the public. The Br “uniform” tells stories of squirrels throwing nuts at them while they practice, the “death” of a drumline member, the names and nicknames of members, jokes about sexuality and the odd relationship they have to

one another. It is a totally different history from the larger organization's history, and it tells a story we don't see on the field.

Both the General Handbook and the Official Br website have histories as the opening pages/links of their publication. Here's a sample of a few years of Tigerband History vs. Br history:

### **Tigerband History**

#### 1995

- Linda R. Moorhouse returns as Assistant Director of Bands
- Tigerband held at 325 members.

#### 1997

- Tigerband voted number one marching band in the Southeastern Conference by SEC Band Directors. (Moorhouse 4)

### **Br History**

#### 1995

Traditions such as the Preseason meeting of IAO at the Library are lost as a result of the State Legislature changing the age for purchasing alcohol from 18 to 21.

The most inflammatory issue of the Lug Nut ever printed is distributed on the way to Alabama, resulting in several flared tempers and a few shredded copies of the magazine.

The Golden Girls continue their boycott of the drumline bus.

#### 1996

IAO celebrates its 15th anniversary.

Alumnus Roy King, who was one of the founding members of the IAO chapter, returns to LSU as a Graduate Assistant and is eventually added on as an Assistant Director of

Bands in 1998.

Katy Strickland becomes the first female to make snare by audition in modern times without first being promoted to Drum Captain.

The Golden Girls return to the drumline bus, causing tension between members of Br because there is not room for all drumline members to ride the drumline bus. (Helmets)

While this is just a sample of the histories presented, they are very different. The Tigerband history reflects shifts in structure, leadership, as well as awards and group accomplishments. Phi Boota roota history is marked by the making/breaking of traditions (like meeting at the Library, a bar on Chimes Street), publications and happenings, and the Golden Girls' numerous boycotts of/returns to the Br bus. The Br bus is still a big deal to the members--for the Sugar Bowl this year, the drumline made official " Br Club Bus" shirts, yet another signifying uniform.

The two versions of history presented here point to the gaps in the (hi)stories we're told, as well as the meanings that are lost as they are represented as history. In Cities of the Dead: Circum-Atlantic Performance, Joseph Roach "reads" performed events, photographs, historic documents, costumes, and a wide variety of other texts to (re)examine the histories recorded within them. These items linger long after the performed actions fade, echoes of a happening that loses form as it travels. Richard Schechner defines performance as "restored or twice-behaved behavior," and, running with this definition, Roach immediately points to the inability to perform the same things twice. For Roach, performance is intertwined with both memory and substitution, or *surrogation*. "Performance, in other words, stands in for an elusive entity that it is not but that it must vainly aspire to both embody and replace" (Roach 3). The Tigerband uniform performs this representation, and through it omits a large portion of events, situations and happenings that to some, especially the members of Br, should not be forgotten. In one sense, Br functions to give a voice to some of the people who get lost in the uniform.

Earlier in this chapter, I mentioned the naming ritual that opens the night of pledge initiation; each pledge receives his or her Greek name and enters into the ritual by which they become

members of Br. By examining Br in the context of its parent culture, Tigerband, I've come to a few conclusions about that particular ritual. Naming is important in Br because names (and individuality) are lost when in the Tigerband uniform. The Greek name given to each pledge roots their (hi)stories within the activities of the drumline; they are remembered by/named for their actions in the group. The name is often forgotten because the identity of Br is swallowed by the Tigerband identity; their Br-ness is made possible by their membership in Tigerband. In a way, this ritual functions as a farce of their Tigerband membership, yet it is through this identification with Tigerband that they can become "brothers" in Br.

Then why these specific methods of differentiation? Why write alternative histories, dress as "Gay" or in sports bras, or as one of the other drummers (Latusso), or go through an elaborate naming ritual? Why sports bras and not some other costume? Why form a fraternity? What function do these things serve? Any ritual action roots in introducing or re-enforcing the values of the group as a whole. The actions of Br seem to subvert the ideology of Tigerband; I'd like to argue otherwise, though. To do so, I'll make a distinction between subversive and inversive behavior. Judith Butler wrote:

The rules that govern intelligible identity . . . operate through repetition. Indeed when the subject is said to be constituted, that simply means that the subject is a consequence of certain rule-governed discourses that govern the intelligible invocation of identity. The subject is not *determined* by the rules through which it is generated because signification is not *a founding act*, but rather *a regulated process of repetition* that both conceals itself and enforces its rules precisely through the production of substantializing effects. (185, emphasis in original)

The repetition and ritualization of Tigerband, with scheduled rehearsals, the marching of drill, the precise body mechanics, and the de-individualizing uniforms, projects a certain image upon

the members of Tigerband that is enforced through each performance. Butler argues that a subversive parody of this accepted identity must throw off the repetition of that signification—in this case, the signification of the image of Tigerband-ness or, indeed, of LSU as a whole. As we look at the rituals of pledge night in the next chapter, I will argue that Br inverts, but does not subvert, the ideology of their parent organization through their ritual process. The rituals of both a subversive and inversive ritual would look quite similar on some levels, but function quite differently; subversive parody questions and critiques the social structure in play, while inversive parody, while temporarily suspending the social structures and norms in play, ultimately re-affirms them.

## Chapter 7

### Audiation: Finding The Voicings

Harry Hodges once told me the scariest thing he's ever been asked was, "Can I play you a song that I wrote?" I know that feeling; it would be easier if the person (or band) would just make a CD so I could just choose not to buy it, instead of sitting through the performance and searching for some way to balance honesty and tact. But I think it is even worse when you're on the other side of the coin--you know--when you write something, whether it's a song, a poem, a paper, and you put it into someone's hands and ask, "What do you think?" That might be the scariest thing I'll ever ask someone, especially if I want them to be honest. Some people don't want honesty, they don't want criticism. Why? Perhaps they fear it says more about who they are than what they wrote. Bad writing equals a bad writer. That's a hard equation to overcome, especially for those of us who cannot *not* write. Writing isn't an outlet; it's a bridge in and out, the crossing over into from and between. Maybe that's why the bridge of most of the songs I write are my favorite parts.

soon too

the words will come

ways to say

articulation becomes circulation

encompassed reality

filled with warm blood red life veins

soon too

the space between  
blank with wisdom and force  
in between the beat  
swiftly sounding  
shoes to fill

soon too  
but not too soon  
nor soon enough

I've not been able to send any of my work to the drumline members. Correction: I've not been willing to send my material to the drumline members. In taking up the task of observing them, I've found myself in a strange position; I'm a linguist. Ethnography often puts the ethnographer in the position of translator, and through translation many things are lost. Think about it--you have no clue who Harry Hodges (the quote from my opening paragraph) is. You could assume that he's a musician, possibly one to whom people turn for advice, probably due to his fine ear and musical tastes. Harry is an old LSU football player who sings in a local church choir and has had no formal musical training in his life. That statement is the only thing I remember Harry ever saying to me. Why would people go to him to perform their music? I have no clue. And I feel just like a Harry Hodges--I'm the greatly under-qualified critic telling you about music. The drumline members ask me about my work every time I see them. I just want to respond, "I'm having a great time writing things, but I can't say if it's anything yet." I always feel like my

voice is never enough to really get it right. I can sing, but I don't have the hook down yet. This chorus needs more voices than I have right now.

hooks have barbs that pierce  
grabbing hold in ways that hurt  
they don't let go until you dig  
dig deep into your face cartilage heart gills  
and tear it away  
rips that swell and scar  
heal and infect  
memories stored and stories remembered  
with every touch to the skin

if you pull the scab away quickly  
the feeling will quickly sound  
quickly fading

Audiating is the practice of thinking and comprehending music with your mind, and it functions as a pedagogical tool for creating and remembering sound. The process of translating music from the aural to the written and vice versa require memory and creativity; I believe ethnography requires the same. While music, like performance, finds its power and intrigue in its ephemeral nature, capturing and replaying these performances proves to be a task every record company, every documentary, and every ethnographer take upon themselves (just to name a few). Why? I

can't answer for them. I know I write about these experiences because I cannot not write about them. Writing creatively from memory teaches me about, well, whatever I've heard, seen, or experienced. Every take, every verse, seems worth singing, even if it's only heard on the page.

versus/verses

i saw you looking back into

the question between us

i cannot beat you there

i cannot run any faster

you cannot be caught

but you never win

just another moment before

another begins

quit asking me questions

or i will never stop

ask me questions

or I will never sing

## Chapter 8

### Point and Counterpoint

From my notes on 9-16-03:

I always hate this part of rehearsal; they go to drill and I have to sit on the sideline and observe from afar. This sucks. As I head toward the sideline, a friend who was in Tiger Band when I had marched stops me. We were both caught off guard by seeing one another- probably her more than me, see how I hadn't been on the field all semester- and traded surprisingly awkward hellos.

“What are you doing out here?”

Well, I'm observing the drumline for a project in one of my classes.

“Oh, that's cool. Are you gonna get to go on the run?”

I hope so.

What the hell is “the run”?

It turns out that “the run” was a term I'd hear only once; the members of ΦBr simply call it “pledge night.” The night consists of a number of tasks that the pledges must complete together as a kind of rite of passage into full membership of ΦBr. In this chapter, I examine these tasks as comprising a rite of passage, looking for the transformation its performance signifies, the symbolic values embedded in its performance, and the function these rituals perform in the larger social system Br exists within.

Victor Turner defines ritual as

. . . a stereotyped sequence of activities involving gestures, words, and objects, performed in a sequestered place, and designed to influence preternatural entities or forces on behalf of the actors' goals and interests. (Symbols in African Ritual 1100)

Rituals function as a framed activity that marks its performative nature. Richard Schechner notes that rituals often display what they do; they are “not simply a doing, but a showing of a

doing” (108). The gestures, words, and objects used within a ritual then hold both a pragmatic and symbolic meaning; they are part of the performance and also perform themselves. As we look at the gestures, words, and objects used within the rituals of pledge night, we discover some of the symbolic meaning embedded within the actions being performed.

### **Songs and Sticks**

The pledges performed a series of tasks throughout the night. The following list includes the tasks performed (numbered by the order of stops) and my field note description of the task.

1. Stick retrieval/stick pass

The members were going to hide a drum stick in the forest somewhere, and each pledge had to go hunt down and bring back a stick, crawling like a bear with the stick in their mouth. Then the pledges must link arm to arm in a circle facing outward; this circle must travel from the sidewalk out to Helmers, about twenty-five yards, where someone must pick up a drumstick with their mouth. They must then pass the drumstick completely around the circle, mouth to mouth, and then travel back to the sidewalk. If the circle is broken, they have to start over.

2. Group push-ups/”Golden Girl” kick line dance

The pledges had to do twenty push-ups together, counting aloud, with their hands three steps below their feet. If any one pledge cheated a push-up, they all had to start over. Then they were to sing “Hey Fighting Tigers” (a traditional LSU song) while performing a kick line dance.

3. Group human knot and lap sit

Each person put their right hand into the center of the circle and grabbed the hand of someone. While holding on, the left hand also entered the circle and grabbed a different person’s hand. The entire group now formed a knot, and the goal was to untangle the knot without anyone letting go of the hands they were holding. Then each member turned to their left and moved toward the center of the circle, getting close enough to stand behind the person in front of them. At the count of three, the entire group had to sit on the lap of

the person behind them; because it was a circle, everyone had a seat. The goal was to sit without falling down.

4. Serenade

Peter's description: "Have you ever seen Top Gun? Do you remember the scene in the bar, where they sing to the girl 'You've Lost That Lovin' Feeling'? That's your next pledge task." They sang to a group of girls outside Miller dorm.

5. Kick line dance and dance party

The task this year: a full-out kick line while singing "Hey Fightin' Tigers" to the traffic as it rolls by. Then, when the song ended and "YMCA" played, the whole group would start dancing. Peter would call someone's name, and all the pledges would go dance around/at/on them.

6. Tribute to Mike's nuts and leap-frog

The pledges had to leap onto Mike the Tiger's cage and complete the following sentence:

"Mike's nuts are so big, \_\_\_\_\_"

If what they said wasn't funny, they had to do it again. Then the pledges were instructed to play a game of leapfrog around the entire tiger cage, and with each leap, they had to yell something as if they were having sex. They were awarded bonus points if they used any of the director's names.

7. Fence crossing

There was a four-foot fence, and the entire team had to pass over the fence without touching it. If someone touched, the entire group had to start over.

8. Pre-Game

The pledges march and sing their spots in the pre-game show, the trademark show for Tigerband.

9. Finding of the Root/Photo Scavenger Hunt

One half of the group was to get pictures in certain places all over Baton Rouge, and the other half was to find a "root" and bring it back to the party. A root is a toilet seat that is

complete and circular (i.e., neither broken nor U-shaped). The root had to be stolen from a local restaurant, store, or apartment.

These events were framed: the meal at Mr. Gatti's, the naming ritual and the rules occurred before the tasks began, and the ΦBr pledge party occurred afterwards. I note this because, according to Turner, the rite of passage is marked by three distinct phases: separation, margin, and aggregation (Ritual Process). The gatherings before and after the pledge night tasks mark this separation from and integration back into the drumline. At Mr. Gatti's, the pledges all sat together at one long table, all dressed in black, while the members and friends (past Br members and any of their significant others) sat at other tables. The separation occurred through a visual marker; through the wearing of black, the pledges enter into the marginal or liminal space.

The attributes of liminality or of liminal personae, "threshold people," are necessarily ambiguous, since this condition and these persons elude or slip through the network of classifications that normally locate states and positions in cultural space. Liminal entities are neither here nor there; they are betwixt and between the positions assigned and arrayed by law, custom, convention, and ceremonial. As such, their ambiguous and indeterminate attributes are expressed by a rich variety of symbols in the many societies that ritualize social and cultural transitions. (Turner, Ritual Process 34)

Turner also associates the liminal with death, loss, and the possession of nothing. After the naming process, Peter took the keys, the cell phones, and the money of all of the pledges until they finished the night. The pledges were restricted from drinking or smoking, and had to stay together at all times. These gestures mark the pledges as marginal/threshold people. Their status in the group was marked through these rules and regulations as well as the clothes they wore. Note how these rules also force the liminal together; they were in transition, but they were in it together, marking the emergence of what Turner calls a *comunita*; a group in which all statuses and classifications have been stripped away to bring the group together.

One of the major focuses of my field notes on pledge night involved the traveling time: the time between tasks where just the pledges (and I) experienced this separation through the process of finding the next stop. I think the traveling is part of the ritual primarily because it acts as a marginalizing task for the pledges to complete; in the traveling they are completely separated from the group, and thus find their own group identity as pledges.

As we walked into the Quad, for some reason, the group decided to get in their marching block formation and sing their parts to the LSU Cadence as they marched. Justin took the drumstick and marched the drum major position while the other players sang their parts accordingly: snares, tenors, basses and cymbals. It seemed almost like a parody of what they do every Saturday as they march to and from the stadium; they laughed and cut up while staying in step and singing their parts as well as any drum part can be sang. As they turned at an intersection, Justin (playing the drum major) directed the marchers on how to make the turn: “swing it like a gate,” an instruction I translated as a joke about how they were taught to make parade turns. I remember Roy King yelling that as we marched around the band field practicing parade formations. After a few times through the cadence, Brandon called halt, and after the halt beat was executed, they looked at each other and laughed, “That was a horrible idea!” (from field notes)

Each traveling experience led to some discovery or happening that pulled the group together. Some of my favorite experiences from the field came from these traveling times, and I wrote about them in the audiation after this chapter.

Ritual always involves culturally symbolic objects; the most frequent symbols in this ritual were sticks, lines, and circles. The drumstick was used in the first ritual, and after the second, a stick was given to the pledge class to keep and “not lose” for the night. The drumstick’s phallic connotations aren’t hard to find, nor their link to the overtly-masculine aspects of the ideology of the marching band: power, discipline, honor, prestige, marching, military history, the hiding of long hair and restricted wearing of jewelry. These and many other things highlight the male-ness of the marching identity. What’s interesting about this symbol, then, is how it is used in the first

task: the sticks are hidden by the members, and are to be retrieved by the pledges using only their mouths. A stick was then placed on the ground; the group had to join together in a circle and travel to the stick, where someone must then pick up a drumstick with his mouth. The pledges must then pass the drumstick completely around the circle, mouth to mouth, and travel back to the sidewalk. The homo/sexual connotations seemed obvious to the pledges; they joked about it while performing the task:

The pledges joke about how sexy or hot it is to pass the stick around: “I’ve dreamt of this moment”; “Don’t drop it, just slip it in”; “Oh, we touched lips!”; “If you drop the stick, you go to hell”; “That’s not the stick. . . .” At one point, someone drops the stick, which disappoints all the pledges. Paul yells out, “Yea! I get to kiss Brandon again!” (from field notes)

The joking underscores the link of the stick to the penis, and that the pledges were aware of that link, simultaneously “degrading” themselves by performing actions with homosexual connotations and attempting to deflect those connotations through humor.

Note, too, that the machismo element had been present throughout most of the tasks before pledge night, as well as in a number of the tasks of the night. The tribute to Mike the Tiger’s genitals reveals not only a male-gendered take on the drumline, but on the band and LSU as a whole. “Big nuts” translates to more power, and Mike, LSU’s other mascot, must have big ones to represent LSU (and by extension/association, so must they). This male gender coding also translates over into the push-up task and the serenade, which pulls from the iconography of the military film Top Gun to reinforce/verify the masculinity of Br.

The stick also becomes a signifier for the group, seeing how Brett threw a drumstick to the pledges after their second task and told them not to lose it. The stick then becomes a marker of social classification; as with most of the band’s sections, the instrument acts as one of the few distinguishing markers of individuality when in uniform. Losing the stick then would signify a loss both of power and of identification with the group.

The symbol of the drum “line” represents the line they stand and perform in on the field. All of the drumline’s public performances face outward to the audience, and they march in lines, which makes their performance completely exposed to the audience’s eye. The push-up task and both kick lines involved audiences: the members and the traffic passing by. The line was always linked together somehow, either aurally (through singing or counting) or physically (arms on shoulders); the shape shifted depending on who the performance was for, the audience or the pledges themselves. Even the leap-frog, which occurred around Mike the Tiger’s cage, was designed with all the pledges facing one direction, leaping over each other as the members watched. The only tasks the members didn’t build a crowd for were the circular ones: the lap sit and the knot.

One symbol Peter pointed out to me during the night was the fence; to me, the fence-crossing functioned as the most pronounced marker of transition/transformation for the pledges. The fence could easily mark the divide between “us” and “them”; it could signify members/pledges or Br/band member, or any other binary in which the “us” side is desired and the “them” side is left behind. This crossing over signified a joining of the “us” for the pledges; the side they were selected and pledged to be associated with. However, the next ritual the pledges performed after crossing the fence was the pre-game march: the most routinized part of marching band membership. Marching pre-game is a mandatory discipline for every member of Tigerband; why, then, would it be next in the cycle? I’ll answer this question after a brief exploration of the last major symbol embedded in pledge night: the circle.

The circle was the other of two symbols that Peter pointed out to me during the night. Every task ended with the pledges sitting or standing in a circle and singing a song until the members were out of sight. The songs changed during the night, but the circle was there; Peter pointed out the circle while the pledges performed the lap sit: “Circle. Get it? Like a drum?” The circle represents more than the drum, though; it illustrates the esprit de corps Dell wrote about in his letter to the prospective drumline auditioners. Circles generally have no beginning or end, and symbolize unity and solidarity. The circle was key to the structure of the lap sit and the human

knot. Note that the knot could not be “broken,” meaning that no one could let go of the others; likewise, in order not to collapse, the lap sit required both trust and trustworthiness from each person in the circle. This interdependence parallels the working of both the drumline and the marching band: the line composed of four different instruments and thirty plus members to make one unit of percussion, and the band made of multiple voices to create a single sounding song. The circle also acts as an equalizer, meaning no one person is the focus; everyone faces everyone else. The form pedagogically teaches this concept.

The play of the circle is prominent during the singing sessions in between tasks.

. . . so I sit with them on the sidewalk and wait. Brett gives them (us) a song to sing while they leave: “You are My Sunshine.” The musical elements of the tasks were unbelievably entertaining for me. They began singing, and being musicians, they were quite skilled and quite creative. They began just singing through the melody, but as they repeated the song, they entered a space of play, changing styles, rhythms, and parts. Brett led the singing; he was the member who stayed around to make sure they were singing until everyone was gone. The pledges began to sing a gospel version, then improvising over the top of the melody with a call and respond song. They stood and danced, clapping and beat-boxing rhythms. Brett then quieted them down, to which they responded by sitting down with their arms around each other’s necks and humming an underscoring. Brett started preaching, mimicking a gospel revivalist. I didn’t write down the whole sermon, but I noted him talking about brotherhood, family, friendship, love, and character. “Can I get an AMEN?”

“AMEN,” they responded, and then cranked up the song again. They sang, then all stood and danced in a circle. Soon they were screaming the song and moshing on the sidewalk. Brett conducted the finale, with a huge choral series of fermatas. When they finished, the group gave each other a huge group hug. Jude exclaimed, “I love you guys!”  
(from field notes)

The circle symbolizes the play elements of their routines. Richard Schechner notes that play and ritual often function as two ends of a continuum.

Play is “free activity” where one makes one’s own rules. . . . Ritual is strictly programmed, expressing the individual’s submission to forces “larger” or at least “other” than oneself. . . . Games, sports, and theater [dance, music] mediate between these extremes. (13-14)

The circle rituals of the drumline function as a mediation between the ritual rules and the playful inversion of them. This circle differentiation passes over into the drumline’s other practices as well.

Before each Saturday rehearsal, the bass drums circle up on the LSU symbol on the fifty yard line in the IFF and play their own cadences. However, these cadences are not like the warm-ups or marching cadences; it played more like a hack circle. The basses would get a groove going (a rhythm they all agreed on) and one by one they improvised rhythms on top of the base beat. As each one played, the others verbally reacted to it, possibly even reciprocating rhythms off one person’s solo. As the solo position was passed around, the groove could change, depending on what was happening and the rest of the group’s feel. They played for about ten minutes, and it was one of the few times I remember them playing to a closed audience: themselves. (from field notes)

The circle is also part of the last task of the night: the hunt for the root. As mentioned before, the root had to be stolen from a public place; from there it was cleaned and sanitized, decorated by the pledge class, and used to crown the “ Br sweetheart,” usually a Golden Girl or Colorguard member who is universally admired and generally kind to the drumline. The circle and the line both function as forms the group works within, though for different purposes. These symbols easily carried over into the rituals of pledge night; they are already embedded in the larger ritual of their Tigerband existence.

What I find interesting, then, is that this entire night of rituals doesn’t accomplish what a normal rite of passage would; the pledges do not become members of the drumline because of

these rituals like pledges in a fraternity do. Though the pledges are cast into a liminal role and walk through the stages of separation, margin, and aggregation as a pledge class, they never fully take on this role outside of Br; this transformational ritual doesn't change anything in the sphere of Tigerband. They are not recast as true drumline members—they were always full drumline members and full members of Tigerband. Then why does Br exist? I would argue that Br functions as a partner ritual with the larger ritual of Tigerband; it is the comic release that accompanies the ritual the drumline members truly gather to perform: the (re)presentation of Tigerband.

### **Bakhtin and Carnival in Br Rituals**

In Rabelais and His World, Mikhail Bakhtin describes the use of ritual spectacles or carnival in the writings of Rabelais. In medieval times, spectacle or carnival rituals were usually linked with some serious ritual of the society; Bakhtin calls the carnival “the people’s second life” (8). Carnival rituals marked two different but co-existing spheres: they mark the existing norms and ruling ideals of every day life and a world where these things are no more.

As opposed to the official feasts, one might say carnival celebrated temporary liberation from the prevailing truth and from the established order; it marked the suspension of all hierarchical rank, privileges, norms, and prohibitions. Carnival was the true feast of time, the feast of becoming, change, and renewal. It was hostile to all that was immortalized and completed. (10)

Carnival rituals moved towards laughter and degradation of all things, sacred and secular, and always lead back to the earth, to the body, to birth and death, sex and defecation.

To degrade is to bury, to sow, and to kill simultaneously, in order to bring forth something more and better. . . . Degradation digs a bodily grave for a new birth; it has not only a destructive, negative aspect, but also a regenerating one. To degrade an object does not imply merely hurling it into the void of nonexistence, into absolute destruction, but to hurl it down to the reproductive lower stratum, the zone in which conception and

new birth take place. Grotesque realism knows no other lower level; it is the fruitful earth and the womb. It is always conceiving. (11)

Phi Boota roota never seeks to subvert the norms of Tigerband. The disciplined and mechanized marching bodies, the esprit de corps, the uniformity, the work ethic, the hyper-masculine overtones of the Tigerband image—all these things are undergirded and promoted by the rituals of Br. Gay day, the sports bras, and the kick line dance invert and suspend the norm of hyper-masculinity, but do not seek to subvert or overthrow it. These tasks merely highlight and underline the fact that the norm in Tigerband is a hyper-male image. Naming becomes a parody of the loss of a name that comes with being a Tigerbandsman. They laugh and through this laughter overthrow the overall rule of these norms over them as individuals and as a collective whole.

One of the functions of carnival ritual is a catharsis of the feelings and actions that do not fit the social norms of the group. Phi Boota roota allows the members and pledges to experience a number of things in the frame of spectacle that would not be allowed (officially or unofficially) in Tigerband. The control and power associated with being “in” doesn’t accompany the Tigerband experience; those who make the band automatically have the same status as all the others. Status then becomes a parodic position in Br; being the president of a mock-fraternity only brings mock-status. However, the Tigerband value of membership and organizational pride is reinforced by requiring pledges to go through a rite of passage to become members of Br. The sports bras are allowed in the frame of spectacle both to allow members to laugh at the norms themselves and to allow a space for this cross-dressing to occur as to protect the performance of the ideals of Tigerband.

The use of a rite of passage ritual to mark or frame the spectacle events of Br echoes the observations of John Ritter in his observations of the drumline in the DCI Marching Bands:

Due to fewer spots and higher demand, competition to get into a corps is often stiffest for the drumline, and rehearsal for those that make it is thus that much more intense and frequent. As a result, the ideal of group bonding and identity, sought by the corps as a

whole, is frequently obtained much earlier and in stronger form within the drumline.

This *comunitas*, to use Victor Turner's term, emerges as an egalitarian bond based on trust in one another's performance and listening skills. (Ritter)

The frequency of rehearsals and proximity of the members of the drumline could accelerate the process through which the ritual of Tigerband practice and performance teaches and reaffirms the norms of the group. Frequency and proximity do not explain the emergence of *Br*; instead,

*Br* reflects the serious nature of the larger ritual of Tigerband in the eyes of the drumline. The member's role within the musical system (as time-keepers and visual/aural performers) could catalyze the need to rid oneself of all the things that act as excess to the ideal being striven for.

*Phi Boota roota* would then become a necessary carnival that creates the kind of people needed to perform the serious ritual of Tigerband. While the style *Br* has chosen through which to display this celebrative carnival is unique, the creation of something like *Br* almost becomes a predictable outcome of the system its members are submerged within.

## Chapter 9

### Audiation: Transposition

“Every way of looking at something is a way of not looking at something.” I think Kenneth Burke said that, though I never heard him; I remember Michael Bowman saying that in some form or fashion. Every time I come to this point (you know, the point where creativity and memory collide, the audiation point, the internal sounding) and I try to give the music voice, I find myself leaving something out--and usually it's my favorite part, the colors or nuances I love but can never get right. Ain't it just like the brain? To leave traces of the rememberer in the memory?

As we traveled towards CEBA, Jude asked the group if we were “muggin'” (or possibly “mugglin'”--I couldn't tell the difference).

- muggin': v. to look as if one could be dangerous, threatening or mischievous; see also: mugglin', thuggin', creepin'

Soon the entire group began to take on their “thug” mask, and after a brief planning meeting, they decided to approach the members muggin', and at a signal from Jude, to form a block formation around the person who held the stick, in which they would march to their next task. Who was the person in the center of the block? Who else? The ethnographer! It makes perfect sense!

It's amazing how their concept of strength, or muggin', put them back into marching mode, complete with formation and direction. This ideology creeps into so many of their activities, whether it be the building of an esprit de corps or the projecting of an image of strength or pride. Traveling with the pledges for the night also gave me a strange connection with them: this was

my initiation with Phi Boota roota too, but it wasn't. I'm not on the line, I'm not a drummer; but I was just as clueless as to what was coming next, and I was having this experience with them. Why would they pull me into the center of their box, and give me the stick? It's just starting to resonate within me: I'm just as much a part of their pledge experience as they are my Br experience. Perhaps their esprit de corps cannot let them exclude a fellow journeyer. It's a strange pull: the liminal space of both/and works to move you somewhere--the gap seems to move you places. Perhaps this circumstance best speaks of my strange position within this ethnography: I stood in the center of a muggin' group of guys dressed in all black marching in a block with my khaki shorts, blue tee-shirt, a drum stick and a notepad in my hands. I put on my best muggin' face and hoped maybe no one would notice.

I wish it was the first time I found myself in the middle of my own field work. It wasn't, and Michael warned us that we'd have to deal with our own position within the ethnographic scene. I dealt with it quite a bit on the field; I didn't know he meant on the page, too.

I started talking with some of the drumline members about the ethnography (which I just refer to as "the paper" because I've explained ethnography a lot and either I don't communicate what it is very well or they forget it a lot). They became fascinated with the idea that I was writing down notes on everything that was happening.

"Are you writing down what we're saying right now?"

Yeah . . . well, I'm writing down that we're talking about this.

"Can I see?"

Sure.

We went through my notes from the night; I had to decode a lot of my scribbling for them, and we laughed about some of the random things I had written down. Paul approached me singing a

song he had made up: “I’ve Got a Boner, I’ve Got a Boner. . . .” All of the pledges around me quickly told me to write it down, and I did. Paul was half embarrassed and half proud that his composition would make it into my field notes.

At one point, it was one of the most FAQ’s from the drumline members: did you write that down? did you write that down? There would be a fight over music, and afterwards, they would check to see if I had recorded it. Someone would crack a funny joke and repeat it to me for my notes. At least one person a week would request to see my notes, and they’d decipher if I was getting it right or not.

Towards the end of our semester, I had the opportunity to perform some of my research for the ethnography class from which this project sprang. After the class, I went to the band room to observe another Monday night drum practice and found the group hanging out outside the band room, waiting for Jonathan, the drum captain to show up. They were performing the same show as they had the week before, so they decided not to practice if Jonathan told them they didn’t have to. As we chatted, I mentioned that I had just performed some of my research on them for my class. This piqued their interest; I offered to perform it for them, and they took me up on it. We went inside the band room, and I sat them in a circle and performed some of my field notes on their initiation night. The performance went well and they were very pleased with it. But then the strangest thing happened: I began to receive questions, comments, stories and information for my paper from them. They corrected me on things I’d seen. They told me new stories, or things I missed. One guy told me about his nickname and how I hadn’t mentioned him in the performance.

The missing. The not-represented. The unheard, and by the ethnographer, none the less. It’s hard to think about trying to give voice to a subculture you don’t have the ears to hear. I say this

because I have a lot of field notes, and frankly, I don't know what some of my jottings mean. For instance:

Nathan-white, cat, thumbs

Craig+ #5, Brett

UPS

Honestly, I have no idea if those were important or not. I have no clue as to what I was even referring to. But I noticed it; it was worth writing down for some reason.

As the night progressed, I got more and more away from my notepad and more and more into listening to the conversations the pledges were having. One of the most fascinating discoveries of my entire journey occurred on this venture: I learned a game. This game was similar to rock-paper-scissors or gorilla-man-gun, though the rules were thrown out the window. Brandon and Jude were playing it when I started paying attention; they give two prep beats and then signal something--anything: a bazooka, a tidal wave, a dragon, a waffle iron. They then discuss what they picked and how it would defeat the other person's choice. The only rules were that you couldn't choose God (because nothing beats God) and you couldn't pick the devil (because nothing beats the devil but God). We played for most of the walk to the golf course.

Ruth Bowman always talked about admitting our biases up front; your writing is always going to be coming from some direction, from some perspective, and admitting it alleviates us from pretending it's not there. I always wonder at what point writing becomes more about hearing than what is heard; I wonder about the need to justify the fact that we have ears; I wonder if the songs I hear sound the same to you, or if they ever could. I wonder about the way we talk about other sounds and how we rob sound of its own voice sometimes; I wonder if I'm

taking away a sound and replacing it with my own version of it: I wonder about my own transposition.

Or as Paul put it: “You’re writing stuff down? We’re not doing anything. . . .”

## Chapter 10

### Conclusions

Hot off the press, I marched down to the drum annex to hand a copy of my first major draft to the drumline members at the drum annex. After being questioned about it by every member at every encounter, I finally had something to put in their hands, something they could read and react to. When I arrived at the annex, there was a surprising number of drumline members there; I held the draft up like a prized fish on the pier, and they all seemed interested to get a glimpse of what I'd written about them and their adventures as pledges and members of Phi Boota roota.

As we chatted, different members would come in and out of the annex, working on upcoming ensemble pieces for the percussion ensemble concert. At one point, Dodos and I were sitting on the stairs talking about the paper. I rambled on about how I view Boota roota, its role in forming and claiming identity within the larger framework of the band, the function of uniforms in the band culture, etc. At one point, Dodos smirked and nodded, and I could tell that he wanted to say something. I asked him what he thought about it all. He laughed, put his head down, then looked at me and said, completely straight: "You know a lot of us think this whole Phi Boota roota thing is a big crock of shit, right?"

At the time, I hadn't even thought about it. I laughed with Dodos and walked away, feeling like I had just had my legs swept out from beneath me. It took me about two weeks to make sense out of this comment, but it eventually hit me: they don't buy it.

At least they don't buy all of it--which is affirming of my conclusions on why Br exists: it is a crock of shit, but it is a necessary crock of shit. Without defecation, the body would not be healthy. I don't think this was exactly what Dodos was getting at, but the function of Br for the

drumline of the LSU band seems to be one of release, of laughter, and of degradation of the sacred image they bear throughout every official gathering of the drumline. Dodos admits that he knows that *Br* isn't real, in the sense that it doesn't function for him in the way that it seems to act. Chances are, many of the participants didn't experience the difference within the society of Tigerband that would accompany a rite of passage ritual; there was no status change, no wisdom bestowed or mystery revealed. To me, nothing in their rituals was as mesmerizing as their percussive talents; what they did in Tigerband was sacred, both to them and to me. Phi Boota roota was an opportunity to step into another sphere and turn the rules upside down for a while. After all, they crowned the woman who meant the most to them with a decorated toilet lid that they stole from a public place: Carnival inversion at its finest.

On one level, *Br* displays the grace side to the clarity of Tigerband; it's human, it's incalculable, and it's endlessly and life-givingly opposite to the performance of Tigerband. It is hard to capture in words, and it's ever-performing. I suppose a field study of *Br* each year would yield surprisingly different stories with surprisingly similar functions; *Br* could dissolve as an entity and continue on as a performed ritual if we consider *Br* a stylized carnivalistic spectacle. As the Tigerband ritual is performed, it will evoke a responsive comedic ritual. A close ethnographic study of each section of the band might reveal similar rituals with carnivalesque functions, though with a style all their own.

On another level, *Br* has enabled me to tackle how to bring the tension of grace and clarity back into my ethnographic writing. In his essay, "Rethinking Ethnography: Towards a Critical Cultural Politics," Dwight Conquergood writes:

Performance-centered research takes as both its subject matter and its method the experiencing body situated in time, place and history. The performance paradigm insists

on face-to-face encounters instead of abstractions and reductions. It situates ethnographers within the delicately negotiated and fragile “face-work” that is part of the intricate and nuanced dramaturgy of everyday life. (187)

Through my own experiences in the field, I’ve found that wedding the performance paradigm and the field of ethnography proves to be quite challenging. While the general aim of ethnography is to promote understanding through experience and reflection, the objectification and neutralization of the observed oversimplifies the process of communication itself.

Performance-based research always situates the ethnographer as an active part of the scene being observed. We are always participants—and our perspectives always effect what we are observing. Week after week, members of the drumline would do something, just to follow it with the question, “Did you write that down?” It became hard to distinguish what was normal action and what was performed simply because it might be written down by an appreciative audience. Yet—it’s all performed; if the goal is to understand why it happened the way it did, my presence has to be considered as a possible force to cause action. Performance-centered ethnographies must consider all of the performing bodies within the place/time/history being recorded, including the ethnographer’s.

Contexting the content of our ethnographic writing never leads to the clarity desired by strict social scientific research because it makes all experiences of the ethnographer subjective. Our methods of observation and inquiry, no matter how hard we try, will always lead to results rooted in perspective, and that leaves all research unfinished and open for further review/study.

Performance-based research also forces ethnographers to wrestle with their own position in the field and in their writings. Through the face-to-face encounters we have with our subjects, our relationship and ethical obligations to them continually change. We also gain perspective

through face-to-face encounters that could not exist unless we actively joined the performance. Within this study, the most beneficial and enjoyable findings I had came through my full immersion in the scene; my largest problems in representation and ethical obligation came from the same thing. Yet I believe that these encounters enable me to be a better student of the culture I'm trying to understand, and even a contributing member of it. The culture becomes a changing, free-flowing social exchange instead of a predictable system to abstract. People remain people and are not turned into objects to study. Performance-based ethnography provides a method of understanding that's less like science and more like life itself.

That being said, I think my ethnographic performance of Br brought me just as much grace as it did clarity; there is much more that is ephemeral about the actions of these drummers than I could ever clarify. Through these writings, however, I've come to understand them better, and have learned much about both them as people and myself as an understander. If I were to continue this ethnography, or perhaps to reapproach it, I would not remove any of the performative elements of the project. No matter how messy it got, the performance paradigm requires me to fully wrestle with my own tendencies to complicate the ethnographic scene and my understanding of it; I feel there is no other way to do so than to write in ways that not only tell, but act in some way. I would encourage any of the members of Br who would want to join me in this journey to understanding to begin to write, to ask questions, to contribute their own field notes and performative texts to the project so that the voices of the text could become more numerous, creating more dialogue and more tension between the verifiable and the ephemeral. I'd love to see how they wrestle with their position in the texts, and gain some insight from them about representing others by being represented by them.

One of the most exciting prospects about the field of ethnography to me is the room being created for new ways of understanding. Ulmer's influence on me has extended beyond the mystory; it has forced me to explore new methods of writing and new methods of understanding. To audiate well, musicians must continually submerge themselves in music, in listening to it and writing it. It's a form of training, and one never reaches a point where audiation isn't both needed and useful; art requires the grace of creation and the clarity of knowledge. Ethnography requires the same, and hopefully these ethnographic audiations will add new resonance to the academic soundscape.

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