



A

REVERBERATIONS

...

Three dots—an omission, an alteration, a trailing off, a break, a pause, or a hesitation; perhaps a breath. Neeraja D is starting to see ellipses everywhere. She contemplates the three dots or circles that make up *anusvara* and *visarga*, which are diacritical marks that both sonically and politically mark the linguistic borders amongst Sanskrit and its derivations. The circle as repetition and re-inscription also marks difference. This is not the pyramidal three dots of the logical sign, indicating *therefore* or *because*; there is no strict teleological gesture forward or backward, but rather a return that simultaneously preserves and destroys origins.

Vowels are incessantly cut into a long scroll that juts from a wall into the gallery space. The scroll's fragile surface can hardly contain the vibrancy of the rounded forms and tiny circles of paper scattered on the floor. Neeraja D's preoccupation with the vowels of Telugu is an opening, a gap, a threshold drawing one into the language's ambit. Vowels often carry sound and movement. To speak a vowel, guts and bones shift to draw in air, then force it back out to vibrate taut vocal folds. The vibrations resonate in the mouth and nasal cavities, shaped by tongue and lips and teeth.

What is its shape and meaning when repeated over and over? Is the incessantly opening mouth forming its own series of ellipses, as if expelling smoke rings into the air?

The vowel is a performative utterance, whether stamped into paper, traced onto walls, or slid in between consonants to form a word. Each repeated mark leaves a residue, building up over time; thus, Neeraja D's work both draws on and generates a heteroglossic configuration. Does repetition discipline or undo the form? Does repetition discipline or undo linguistic identity? Perhaps language and the self simply scatter to the ground under the weight of it all.

Repetition produces its own vibrations, shimmering off the page and resounding in my head even as I leave the space. Sometimes I lose the line—paper circles falling away—but it is always there. Neeraja D exteriorizes urgency through form, and her obsession with language continues to dart about amongst the thicket of vowels and tracings. It shimmers off the page if you spend enough time with it.

In *You Can't Play Yourself Back*, a collaborative work with Ahmed Ozsever, a projected wintry landscape rushes past the frame. An intermittent sound hovers around the edge of my

A-E *Ellipsis* (2015), installation view.

perceptual field, threatening to disrupt my fixation on the flurry of trees and snow. Finally, my eye catches a glimpse of a roving golden ball tracing the contours of the same frame and I notice that its contact with the corners aligns with a dislocated *thump*. The meeting of sound and movement brings my attention to this second superimposed image—a makeshift wooden frame with a brass ball obsessively tracing a halting path around its edges, a conversation of movement. The sonic motion of the ball continues to assert its presence as I meander across the gallery. When I see the frame and ball silently suspended on another wall, freed from their filmic confines, I am struck by the sensory interplay between its visual materiality and its displaced reverberations.

Even amongst these wordless objects, Neeraja D's attention to language pulls at my brain, tuning my ear to different frequencies so that I might hear the communication between scenes that unsettle one another. Perhaps I just cannot ignore the sonic leakage from one scene to the next. Other works strike me in their silence. Hanging on another wall, there is the faint impression of something written over and over on light-sensitive paper, something that I cannot quite make out. My eyes shift left to right over and over, following the tracings of pen to paper. I sink into the visual field. Expression as a squeezing out—will saturation lead to meaning?

In another collaboration, the two artists loop visual projections to a live synthesizer performance by Ithaca artist Sunken Cheek. Both Neeraja D and Ozsever's installation work explores the unfolding of narrative in time, particularly through layering and disjunction in space. Dense sonic layers swell and intensify over the course of an hour until the performance space becomes a fully immersive soundscape.

Synthesized rhythms occasionally align with the video's pulsations of movement and light, then quickly shift out of sync. Meaning surfaces and disperses in these ruptures. Reminiscent images of landscapes and a hand inscribing words onto a page are interspersed with rounded forms: a gallery window, the view from an unfocused camera lens, the brass ball reemerged. Elliptical interruptions.

As with dialect, the ellipsis indicates spaces of inclusion and exclusion while avoiding fixity on either side of the dividing lines, roving back and forth. There is a rhythm to Neeraja D's work in the shifting weight of syllables and their repetition as she traces and threatens the boundaries of language and belonging. Each work seems to settle into a groove that is nonetheless suspended with anticipation.

Lee Kimura Tyson
Ph.D. Candidate
Department of Music
Cornell University



B



A

REVERBERATIONS

...

Three dots—an omission, an alteration, a trailing off, a break, a pause, or a hesitation; perhaps a breath. Neeraja D is starting to see ellipses everywhere. She contemplates the three dots or circles that make up *anusvara* and *visarga*, which are diacritical marks that both sonically and politically mark the linguistic borders amongst Sanskrit and its derivations. The circle as repetition and re-inscription also marks difference. This is not the pyramidal three dots of the logical sign, indicating *therefore* or *because*; there is no strict teleological gesture forward or backward, but rather a return that simultaneously preserves and destroys origins.

Vowels are incessantly cut into a long scroll that juts from a wall into the gallery space. The scroll's fragile surface can hardly contain the vibrancy of the rounded forms and tiny circles of paper scattered on the floor. Neeraja D's preoccupation with the vowels of Telugu is an opening, a gap, a threshold drawing one into the language's ambit. Vowels often carry sound and movement. To speak a vowel, guts and bones shift to draw in air, then force it back out to vibrate taut vocal folds. The vibrations resonate in the mouth and nasal cavities, shaped by tongue and lips and teeth.

What is its shape and meaning when repeated over and over? Is the incessantly opening mouth forming its own series of ellipses, as if expelling smoke rings into the air?

The vowel is a performative utterance, whether stamped into paper, traced onto walls, or slid in between consonants to form a word. Each repeated mark leaves a residue, building up over time; thus, Neeraja D's work both draws on and generates a heteroglossic configuration. Does repetition discipline or undo the form? Does repetition discipline or undo linguistic identity? Perhaps language and the self simply scatter to the ground under the weight of it all.

Repetition produces its own vibrations, shimmering off the page and resounding in my head even as I leave the space. Sometimes I lose the line—paper circles falling away—but it is always there. Neeraja D exteriorizes urgency through form, and her obsession with language continues to dart about amongst the thicket of vowels and tracings. It shimmers off the page if you spend enough time with it.

In *You Can't Play Yourself Back*, a collaborative work with Ahmed Ozsever, a projected wintry landscape rushes past the frame. An intermittent sound hovers around the edge of my

A-E *Ellipsis* (2015),
installation view.



C



B



D



E