

Beyoncé's *Lemonade*: She Dreams in Both Worlds

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Beyoncé calls *Lemonade* a “visual album.” There’s been buzz about the image of Beyoncé smashing up cars, and a lot of talk about the autobiographical themes of the lyrics (lines like “better call Becky with the good hair” have been getting attention for the way they call out Jay-Z’s mistress). But this 65-minute film’s songs, text and sound design haven’t been talked about in relation to its images. *Lemonade*’s unusual form—a long-play music video—gives it the capacity to draw connections between the personal pain of infidelity and America’s terrible history of racism. Twelve video clips are linked by brief passages comprised of poetry, visual tableaux and sound collage. These interludes lean toward avant-garde aesthetics. One thing avant-garde aesthetics and music video share is the capacity to hold several vantage points in suspension. In *Lemonade* this capacity allows the work to embody opposites: love and hate, engagement and alienation, forgiveness and revenge.

Lisa: I’m from New Zealand, Holly’s from England, and Carol’s from America, and we’re white. Though we’d like to contribute some audiovisual analysis, I feel hesitant. In New Zealand, my interpreting Maori culture would raise concern.

Holly: Yes, but we might still do our best. There aren’t yet many scholars who provide close readings of sound and image. Considering *Lemonade*’s audiovisuality leads us to different readings from our fellow academics, even, to our surprise, our mutually-revered bell hooks, who finds the film violent, apolitical, and overly invested in showcasing beautiful African American female bodies.

Lisa: Let’s first address some of hooks’s concerns about Beyoncé’s “fantasy feminism,” then discuss *Lemonade*’s special avant-garde/music-video aesthetics, and finally consider the ways the film negotiates infidelity and America’s racism. Hopefully we’ll answer critics like Adam Szetela, who claims *Lemonade* is “boutique activism of the left.” (see figure 1).

The ways *Lemonade* politically incorporates African American men is first subtle, and it’s addressed to the ear. The many instances of the film’s plaintive, empathetic singing performed by men, often in the role of chorus and/or call and response (The Weeknd, James Blake, Kendrick Lamar, Jack White, and early field recordings of male, African American prisoners) is one example.



Figure 1 Incorporating men: James Blake sings “Forward” while a young girl holds a photo (of a deceased relative?).

Carol: It's important to say that editing and camera also suggest a space beyond the fourth wall (as do the songs, sound design and lyrics). Beyoncé's first addressee often seems to be Jay-Z ("You're the love of my life," she claims, directly addressing the camera; "If you try this shit again/You gon lose your wife," hurling her wedding ring at the camera). A girl holding a photo of one of the murdered African American men, dressed in a Native American Mardi Gras costume, also circles a table with empty place-settings. As she approaches the lens, the scene mirror flips. I love the moment when a girl puts her foot on her father's and they spin together around an implied center, again playing with the two sides of the frame—an open, evolving space for better relations. This moment (Beyoncé sings "woo hoo") begins our journey through a sequence that celebrates community. That offscreen space is a live space, for any gender.

Holly: A second aural example: during passages between songs, Beyoncé's voice is so close-miked we might feel we're eavesdropping on her thoughts. This interiorized self references listening and silence ("pray I catch you whispering, I pray you catch me listening"). A moment later, as the "Pray You Can't Catch Me" song splits in two to make a space for a more avant garde-influenced, poetic, interstitial section, she asks "Where do you go when you go quiet?" Later, a drummer sits at her instrument, silent and motionless; later still, Beyoncé laments "we can't hear them [the orchestra]." These evocations of seeking to utter and straining to hear suggests a facility at both guiding and responding to an offscreen auditor. Beyoncé's intense attentiveness, a musicianly approach, might also be read as a mark of oppression—people with power don't need to pay close attention (see figure 2).



Figure 2 An interstitial section: Beyoncé wonders, "Where do you go when you go quiet?"



Figure 3 Shifts between moments of audiovisual sync and non-sync: in the song "Freedom," Beyoncé sings "tryna rain, tryna rain on the thunder."

Carol: There are also visual moments when young men prepare to turn away from patriarchy: the adolescent driver who meet the president, the prepubescent boy who kisses a horse.

Lemonade's shifts between moments of audiovisual sync and non-sync also provide an opening. Sometimes we're asked to turn away from what we're experiencing to construct histories and futures. When the young man speaks about meeting the president, the lack of sync initiates a confusing temporal play that continues when we see this man again in (anachronistic) Super-8 home-movie footage. Sonic connections deepen this temporal confusion: the Super-8 footage appears alongside sounds of rain and thunder, and later, in the song "Freedom," Beyoncé sings "tryna rain, tryna rain on the thunder." (see figure 3).

We're also asked to turn back. The previous sequence emphasizes a matriarchal line of descent: young girls play in a Southern manor with Beyoncé's voice-over ("You look nothing like your mother. You look everything like your mother. How to wear your mother's lipstick"). Then there's a closing shot of a smiling, seated elderly woman; Beyoncé says, "Your mother is a woman. And women like her cannot be contained." Might we bridge time and see her (and the young girls) envisioning a grandson? What happens when? This section, with its striking sonic and visual disjunctions, encourages viewers to make connections.

Avant-garde and music-video aesthetics have also been known for eliciting a mix of embodied participation and critical distance. Often, when moments of ambiguity and non-sync appear, we're also held in suspension to then be ferried or carried across to a moment of communal sync (much like the young daughter in "Daddy Lessons" who is lifted up, kissed, and then carried on her father's back in a series of intermittent shots).



Figure 4 Beyoncé’s overdubbed voice is dislocated from her body.

Holly: Near *Lemonade’s* beginning, Beyoncé appears kneeling before a red-curtained stage, singing as if in prayer. Her voice, layered on itself, is strong and unified, but dislocated from her body. Later, in a section devoted to images of community, we see archival footage of a New Orleans jazz band playing in the street. While their performance seems plausible, we hear non-diegetic music (the trumpeter fingers a different tune; the camera shifts perspective while the mic’s point of audition remains constant; no one is clapping). In moments like these, we’re thrown. How might we align ourselves with these instances? (see figure 4). But following these are often moments when we’re swept back in—Beyoncé enunciating the word “Texas;” the girl wearing the Mardi Gras’ costume shaking her tambourine, and James Blake intoning “oh death;” Beyoncé exclaiming “magic” before an infant appears; or declaiming “freedom!” from the stage. Surely many viewers might wish to bond with others during these communal, political moments. I agree that *Lemonade’s* hybrid form moves us affectively and encourages critical reflection. bell hooks might claim that a viewer would not perceive these moments on first viewings, but music videos are intended to be watched many, many times.

Lisa: In *Lemonade*, demonstratively performed physical gestures sutured to heightened moments in the soundtrack also momentarily pop. Music videos and *Lemonade’s* clips often showcase what we might fancifully call audiovisual koans strung together like an archipelago. Throughout “Anger,” Beyoncé’s gesturing body directly addresses the camera, as though unleashing her anger upon all men who have ever been unfaithful. Arm, hand and finger gesticulations, head rolls, lunging and strutting all serve to parody many gangster rappers’ expression of masculine power (note her later “suck on my balls”). By re-performing these overtly masculine power-gestures as a strong woman oozing with femininity, Beyoncé challenges the predominance of these gestures in popular music video, and thus engages in an act of detournement (see figure 5).

“Apathy” and “Sorry” are also rich with gestural signification. From painted faces (inspired by Yoruban rituals and designed by Nigerian-born, Brooklyn-based Laolu Senbanjo), swaying bodies and heads nodding in unison, to provocative twerking, and then playful switching between the pointing finger, the “peace” fingers and the “middle finger up” to denote disrespect breeding disrespect, audiovisual moments shift teasingly from close



Figure 5 Physical gestures suture to heightened moments in the soundtrack. Beyoncé directly addresses the camera.



Figure 6 A first attempt at collective political action: the soundtrack alludes to gamelan, a collectively performed music.

marching in the film’s second half. “Sorry”’s closing bell-sounds, melded with the music-box playing *Swan Lake*, could be heard as gamelan, music nearly always performed collectively. The music-box’s tune, first appearing in a minor key and a-rhythmic while Beyoncé drives a monster truck over parked cars, jars against the previous “Hold up” (sung in a major key with Jamaican rhythms as Beyoncé laughingly dances). The music-box’s tune has now been incorporated, even if its mood remains mournful. This is the first, perhaps unsuccessful, attempt at collective political action. (I interpret the gamelan-like sounds as a hearing of and calling out to other women.) (see figure 6).

Carol: The next, more politically successful audiovisual sequence draws on a viewer’s memory and *Lemonade*’s mirrored, dream-like arch structure (ABCBA), in which songs in the first half point to the second. First Jack White traces Beyoncé in “Don’t Hurt Yourself.” Later, James Blake’s heartbreaking falsetto at a home piano, seconded by Beyoncé’s voice, sounds against images of women holding pictures of lost male family members. Soon we hear the song “Freedom,” a meld of a 60s Caribbean psychedelic group, field recordings of imprisoned African American men, Kendrick Lamar’s political rap, and Beyoncé’s raw voice (gospel-influenced, distorted as if through a megaphone), while Beyoncé performs on a late-19th-century stage before a rapt audience. Engaged viewers may find themselves turning back to “Don’t Hurt Yourself”: its musical arrangement, lyrics, voice-over, images and onscreen text (“Motivate your ass, call me Malcolm X,” “The most disrespected person in America is the black woman” [Malcolm X], and “Love God herself”).

Carol: We should say something about how *Lemonade* draws on music video’s poetics—its form, length and use of interstitial passages are unusual, but all its sections, even the interludes, do the kinds of things we tend to see in music video. It’s true the *Lemonade*’s songs and experimental audiovisual passages feature atypical forms and unpredictable lengths. These unusual forms and lengths can also keep viewers watching. The video clips don’t follow traditional treatments. (In a typical music video the verse might show the singer walking and singing, and the chorus will shift to several people dancing in formation.) Here, songs with audiovisual inserts group together into larger, more filmic sections. Despite, or probably because of, these formal distortions, *Lemonade* elicits a strong sense of beginnings, middles, and ends—much as music videos do.

Moments of emergence are especially crucial because of *Lemonade*’s dark themes: Beyoncé moves from a suffocating underwater bedroom to a Kubrickian opening of city hall doors and floodgate of waters (see figure 7). We soon hear low hums, sputters and other David Lynch-like sounds that morph into musicianly drumming. She



Figure 7 Moments of beginning and emergence: Beyoncé opens the city hall’s doors.

sync and non. “Bye, bye, bye, boy” and “middle finger up” could be addressed to a younger person; it’s underscored by late-80s, low-fi, quick-decay, bell-like synth sounds.

Holly: *Lemonade* claims that painful emotions like anger, so close to love, can be transmuted to grace—and activism. Images that evoke political activism follow Beyoncé’s “Sorry.” Women stand in military attention around a graffitied van; multiple Beyoncé’s, or she and many others like her, march upward through grass—an audiovisual nod to Beyoncé’s overlaid vocal tracks, and the long swatches of



Figure 8 Establishing beginnings, middles and ends: long tracking shots and figures in motion appear frequently.

calls forth “I am the dragon breathing fire.” Out of a dark vaginal hallway, Beyoncé steps up in search of pesos. Later, a young girl plays a tambourine and calls up the spirits around a table with empty place-settings. Then Beyoncé and her crew suddenly call “magic”: we see an infant on the bed and we hear celebratory Hammond organ. Beyoncé climbs up from the underground through a slit.

Sections with long, tracking camera movements or figures continually in motion also appear as beginnings, middles, and ends; but they’re primarily in middles, as a way of creating continuity. Some examples include the monster truck driving along tops of cars; the camera’s traversal of a red, darkly lit hallway; the young girls’ running to a fence in the distance; and Beyoncé’s extended lope through streets in “Hold Up.” (see figure 8).

Endings are very clear, often characterized by extreme quiet: the drummer who listens; the music emptying out and Beyoncé calling “come back” at the end of “6-Inch;” Beyoncé saying “we can’t hear it” after a string quartet stops playing.

Music flows in time, and music video imagery changes to show off the music. A core music-video technique is the deployment of varied visual speeds to highlight the many levels of rhythmic articulation in the music. At mid-tempo, *Lemonade’s* figures move in imaginative ways. Beyoncé rides horseback alongside a moving car; she lopes past cars and a fire hydrant, striking at them with a bat; she sings on a stage with a ballerina dancing before her; she and a group of women walk through water. Stationary or slow-moving military trucks and vans present a different kind of movement (see figure 9). Fires, smoke, candlelight, noisy film-footage, wind, circling dabs of light, leaves fluttering, and other representations of motion connect with faster musical articulations. Complementing these forms of movement are images of near and perfect stillness—the periodic appearances of bounded stages (Beyoncé’s squared rim of fire, the glass performance box nested in a white house’s facade). These images, too, create strong formal demarcations.

Lisa: Yes, and besides very active bodies are the still figures, sometimes ghostly, sometimes like dolls or mannequins, or posed as living photographs. The latter provide links between music videos and the interstitial poetic sections which are more like tableaux. The motionless figures also highlight the music’s slowest rhythms, like MeLo-X’s long, heavily reverberant electronic basslines (see figure 10).



Figure 9 Visual speeds highlight the song’s varied rhythms: at mid-tempo, figures move in imaginative ways.



Figure 10 Audiovisual bridges are comprised of visual tableaux, moving, relatively static or still.

Carol: And there are many other details one might draw attention to, like the ways songs in the film’s second half mirror the first. “Hold On” and “All Night” connect via Jamaican ska (both have reverby guitar on the off-beats and heavy bass on the strong beats). “Sorrow” and “Love Drought” foreground glistening synths (reminiscent of DX7s of the 80s) and light, busy percussion pads in the high register. *Lemonade*’s songs and sonic materials sometimes transition smoothly into one another. James Blake’s “Forward” fluidly emerges out of “Sandcastles.” “Sorrow”’s bell-like synth slowly thickens to become what Holly has described as a gamelan figure. The rhythmic pattern that momentarily comes to the fore as Beyoncé sings “better call Becky with the good hair” threads through the album. Might *Lemonade*’s atypical forms and unpredictable song-lengths showcase Beyoncé’s fluid phrasing and unusual rhythmic delivery?

Holly: Alright, we’re moving to our close! We’ve said that the sound design in the experimental-avant-garde-interstitial sections work with a variety of types of audiovisual sync, from close to striking ruptures, encouraging a viewer to pay close attention and to consider questions about futurity, presence and memory. The three-dimensional sonic space also complicates the visual space. *Lemonade*’s songs come from a range of genres—dubstep, hip-hop, country, reggae, indie-rock. These bridges are comprised of three elements: visual tableaux, moving, relatively static or still (reminiscent of Andre Tarkovsky and Ingmar Bergman); poetic, intensely personal spoken-word poetry (by Somali-British poet Warsan Shire); and rich sound-design (breaths, machinic hums, water dripping, all recorded with microscopic focus).

Sound takes us inside and out in many ways. The audiovisual bridges often evoke horror or noir tropes. Internalized sounds are often strange, even nightmarish. During the “Denial” passage, the noises are strangulated, distant, and not immediately identifiable in the image, although they speak to a similar aesthetic. Sometimes sound does not belong directly to the world depicted, but rather to memory, thought, emotion, or something momentarily alluded to in the song’s lyrics. As spoken passages draw to a close, they frequently morph, sonically as well as visually, into the beat and timbre of the next song. The ambient, abstract sounds of the underground carpark that pulse like Lynch’s famous room-tone slowly coalesce into an intermittent drum beat; this beat becomes the driving force of the raw, low-fi “Don’t Hurt Yourself,” featuring Jack White. The heightened sounds that refer to nothing onscreen—footsteps, sighs and less-identifiable noises—crescendo upwards as we travel up the Kubrickian red until releasing into “6 Inch,” with its low, gravelly voice and lush vocal texture. The distorted sounds that stretch beneath the voice-over and that move into James Blake’s tantalizingly brief “Forward”—the

only song that foregrounds a voice other than Beyoncé's—quickly falls away again into a real-world noise tableau. The movement from noise into music ensures that the long-form and shadow story of *Lemonade* holds together, and that the songs speak to one another despite their sonic differences.

Carol: We can now talk about the ways that *Lemonade* shimmers between depictions of infidelity and a history of racial oppression—the murdering of African Americans, from the Middle Passage and lynching, to the floods of

Hurricane Katrina and police shootings (see figure 11). Much has been written about *Lemonade*'s focus on infidelity, which is clear on the surface (“You can taste the dishonesty/It’s all over your breath as you pass it off so cavalier...my lonely ear”). But there’s been little on the film’s broader themes. Perhaps the sound in the interstitial passages, as Holly has described it, connects to the shadow story for *Lemonade*. What if *Lemonade*'s first brick edifice resembles a slave ship or warehouse? (Fort Macomb, a pre-Civil War structure outside New Orleans, bears a striking resemblance to the abductees’ cells in Ghana’s and Nigeria’s castle-like prisons.) Or if Beyoncé were on the lam? If her crime of arson burnt down the massa’s house (as in Quentin Tarantino’s *Django Unchained*), and the river and bayou enabled her second flight? (see figure 12). If the too-heavy fruit of her mother’s neck were the same as Nina Simone’s version of “Strange Fruit”? If the women standing and seated in the tree branches, with others keeping witness on the ground, were a memory or reenactment of lynchings? Also worth con-



Figure 11 Details take us back to the era of slavery.



Figure 12 Did Beyoncé burn down the massa’s house (as in Quentin Tarantino’s *Django Unchained*)? Figure 13 In “Formation,” a shadow memory of a lynching?

sidering are *Lemonade*'s ghostly figures: Beyoncé's first white-fleshed and white-haired guises, and the painted-white female dancers in the night-lockers, necks snapped back and then forward, as if they had been cut loose from the hangman's rope. Later, when an immobile Beyoncé intones “Freedom” from a stage, the dangling lights behind her resemble nooses. In “Formation,” her bobbing head and grasping hands alongside a “doing-doing-doing” sample might suggest a shadow memory of a hanging. Other details, too, take us back to the era of slavery and later structures of oppression: Beyoncé's and young girls' antebellum kerchiefs and dangling iron chains; a woman with a scar; old photographs scattered among grass and metal. Beyoncé's threat of “your worst nightmare” may be this. As she sings in “Formation,” under these circumstances, “Always stay gracious, best revenge is your paper.” (see figure 13).

Lemonade's cluster of dark imagery is complemented by other, more redemptive images. Music videos can develop several visual and aural threads, each containing symbols and meanings. Because each is connected to

separate musical motifs, timbres, and/or song's sections, none needs to win out or be annihilated.

Sometimes a motivic strand has a strong affect that shifts between positive and negative valences. In one of the interstitial passage Beyoncé says “plugged up my menses with pages of the holy book,” and in another “Tills the blood in and out of uterus.” Wakes up smelling of zinc.” (see figure 14). It's frightening and profane. Later, the camera tracks down a terrifyingly red, Kubrickian hallway. But



Figure 14 Music video's visual threads: images of menses become redemptive.

then she says “are the hips that cracked the deep velvet of your mother and her mother and her mother?” It's a moment of reconciliation (this section is called “Forgiveness”): we see Beyoncé's feet as she walks toward the camera, in a domestic setting that seems clearly like “home.” We then move up through a birth canal of brick and candles (the first- and second-born daughter) to the march of a drum and heartbeat. This sequence is bounded by James Blake's “Moving On” and Beyoncé's “Freedom.” Even as Beyoncé's gown turns white, by the film's end the birds have become blood red. Bird songs carry through the video. Contra bell hooks, we find this strand highly political: the vaginal imagery leads directly to a revolutionary call for freedom.

Images of race become more inclusive; depictions of whiteness could also be said to become more generous. First linked to ghost corpses, whiteness is posed in relation to blackness and vice versa. As the film progresses, we see a young girl who is possibly albino; a woman who might be first identified as trans-racial (she has vitiligo); a young girl, most likely multiracial but also able to pass as white (with braids and fairer skin); and then in “Freedom,” some characters we've seen earlier whose skin is now painted lighter or darker. These depictions raise questions about the tendency to link identity with skin tone. In “All Night,” couples of many ethnicities, with a variety of gender affiliations, embrace (see figure 15).

Suggesting redemption, skyward lights are seen from an underwater bed, or from the ground to a parking-lot roof, or a street lamp. They become horizontal (the cut-out square in the hallway), to rise up again and become part of a thunder cloud during the day, and then as a burst of light like a star at dusk (Hattie's birthday party, the sun behind Beyoncé for “All Night”).

A series of beautiful African American women with long oval faces evoke Madonna figures: one with a scar and a tattoo saying “dream big;” two, one as a medium close-up, one in long-shot standing on a street; one as a sculptural head on a side table; one an image of Nina Simone on an LP cover.

What is the relation between the themes we've been discussing—fraught heterosexual relations; the painful history of violence against African Americans, and an acknowledgment that the oppression continues; and calls for receptive listening and collective action? At certain moments Beyoncé's and other women's words suggest that



Figure 15 Images of whiteness become more generous, depictions of whiteness more generous.



Figure 16 Images of forgiveness

re-choosing a relationship is the right choice: “I’ll trade your broken wings for mine; I’ve seen your scars and kissed your crime.” “We’re going to heal.” “L-O-V-E the Lord.” We assume that the principles that have enabled a people’s survival have become a sacred mode of life. (“Grandmother, the alchemist. You spun gold out of this hard life. Found healing where it did not live. You passed these instructions down to your daughter. Who then passed it down to her daughter.”) (see figure 16).

Lisa: In *Lemonade*, and in many music videos, the sheer complexity of the relations between music, image, text and lyrics can seem overwhelming. Correspondences between music, lyrics, and image can range from the strictest to the most subtle or enigmatic—the most fragile can suddenly seem to carry the most weight or become the most engaging. We haven’t even gotten to the music videos proper! Or the beautiful ways gesture is choreographed to the music. There are six credited choreographers, even though we don’t see much conventional dance.

Holly: The dance, art and film allusions Lisa, Carol and I point to—Pina Bausch, Stanley Kubrick, Pipilotti Rist, Andre Tarkovsky, and Jacques Tourneur, differ from references that others have found (like Terrence Malick and Julie Dash). *Lemonade’s* allusions create crossings among visual and aural threads. The second instance of Yoruban face painting (after “Love Drought”) took me first to experimental-film director James Broughton (so I’m suddenly carried back to the 60s countercultural, largely gay San Francisco renaissance; the corresponding synthesizer sounds now possess greater resonance), but the face painting also points back to “Sorry,” and its allusions to Nigeria (many of *Lemonade’s* characters are of Nigerian descent. There’s much more watching, listening, and thinking to be done.

Lisa: Fans and critics have already commented on the enormous range of contributors to sources for and influences on this film—129 credited musicians, producers and composers (including Boots, Diplo, Diana “Wynter” Gordon, Led Zeppelin, Burt Bacharach)—and on its many references to Africa and the African diaspora (Akan clothing, Nefertiti’s cap-crown, Oshun’s yellow dress, Venus figurines). Half a dozen music-video directors contributed to the project: Jonas Åkerlund, Kahlil Joseph, Melina Matsoukas, Dikayl Rimmasch, Mark Romanek, and Todd Tourso. Knowing something about who and what shaped this work deepens my respect for it.

Carol: Beyoncé says she “sleeps in both worlds.” I turn back—a music video’s ending often encourages a return to its beginning, and a sense that everything is present simultaneously. *Lemonade* closes with Hurricane Katrina; at the beginning Beyoncé could be said to dive into its waters from the ledge of a tall building. Jon Brion, who did the music for *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind*, composed *Lemonade*’s music for strings; MeLo-X was also responsible for the soundtrack’s often concrete score, its backwards voices, record clicks, helicopter sound-effects, noises of breathing and reverberant electronic tones. *Eternal Sunshine*’s score returns its protagonist back to his strongest memories. Together, Brion and MeLo-X help carry viewers back to collectively repressed memories in *Lemonade*. Beyoncé, too, drives back hard to them. She takes a monster truck over parked cars and *Swan Lake*’s music (with its myth of a beautiful but cursed princess), then follows three women into an underground passage, coming upon the ghostly women in an abandoned locker room. We may go back before antebellum times, to older religious and cultural practices (“Her teeth as confetti. Her scalp, a cap. Her sternum, my bedazzled cane.”). I shuttle forward across the film. The waters of “reconciliation” remind me of the Middle Passage—Beyoncé’s shrouded body, shipwrecked. Beyoncé, in white paint, is ministered to by women again. Later, a woman, clad in gold warrior’s costume, standing in a crumbling brick basement, reminds me of the Underground Railroad. Thunder-clouds against a brightly lit sky reenact the struggle (“Tryna rain on the thunder”).

In *Lemonade*, a bus appears behind a suburban street parade (a spooky moment: I hear a train, though none seems present). It reappears in “Sorry” as a conveyance to the afterlife, then becomes a revolutionary, military vehicle. There are threads we haven’t yet considered—lineages of families, the shots of New Orleans today that look like the 70s (gold tones and Super-8 footage). “Formation” makes the connection clearest, with its imagery of local stores, Walmart, and American cars once built in union-run auto plants like Detroit. Clocks embedded in the imagery and soundtrack raise questions about time. So many eras accessible at once, sonically and visually.

I shuttle again to *Lemonade*’s beginning with Beyoncé and Jack White: “When you hurt me, you hurt yourself. Don’t try to hurt yourself.” I think of Trump, with his schemes of excluding Latinos and Muslims, creating huge numbers of broken families. Helicopter sounds on *Lemonade*’s soundtrack remind us how our world can feel like a police state. Is this an audiovisual, spatial, sonic struggle? A fight for air, a call to breathe, to gather information, to get “in formation”? (see figure 17).



Figure 17 A sonic and spatial struggle? A fight for air, a fight to breathe?

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Carol, Holly and Lisa are currently co-editing a collection entitled *Transmedia Directors: Sound, Image, and the Digital Swirl*.