

# Love Sounds

## Masha Tupitsyn



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**“And now I will show you the best way of all.  
I may speak in tongues of men or angels,  
but if I am without love, I am a sounding gong  
or clanging cymbal.”**

**– Corinthians**

**“Everyone always is repeating the whole of them.  
As I was saying sometimes it takes many years  
of listening, seeing, living, feeling, loving  
the repeating there is in some before one  
comes to a completed understanding.  
This is now a description of such a way  
of hearing, seeing, living, loving, repetition.”**

**– Gertrude Stein**



**An excerpt from Love Sounds  
(Sexual Politics)<sup>[1]</sup>**

**Masha Tupitsyn**

DESIRE-SEX

SEXUAL POLITICS

TRUST-BETRAYAL

BREAK-UPS

**HEARTBREAK**

**FATE-TIME-MEMORY**

VIOLENCE-DEATH

LOVE

“Only a world that prioritized knowing would need to give such excessive attention to the one thing that cannot be known about a person. When it comes to sexuality we never know how things actually are.”

— Adam Phillips  
*Missing Out*

Women...have always been *big* a problem for me, Dr. Fassbender. Are you listening, doctor. Yes, yes, yes. Go on.<sup>[2]</sup> [Music] It was the same story. Nothing...*new*. Nothing...surprising or exciting. I love her. That's...I love her. But...women are just...different than men [sigh]. They want different things. I mean, Jesus Christ, I don't want to see anyone, anyone, for *that* many days in a row. And it was *her* idea. Having a baby, was her idea. I mean, I said yes. But what...does...that...mean—for a man to have a baby? Whadya do? You *fuck*. Right? I can...*barely* make sense of it. [Music]. And I *love* him... Probably like she never could because he's a boy. Leo is a boy, obviously [clears throat]. She was...always trying to fucking forgive me [music].<sup>[3]</sup> Don't you want me to come with you? Don't you understand a man wants to be alone every once in a while? Oh, I'm sorry Johnny. Really I am. Jane, you don't have to apologize. Would...you rather I didn't come with you? Oh, it's all right, Johnny. I don't mind. You go ahead and have a good time. Oh...ahh...you can come along, if you want to. You sure you don't mind? Well, of course I don't mind. Oh, we'll have a wonderful time. You just wait and see.<sup>[4]</sup> And another thing. I want you to stop going to these dyke bars. Because this hairdresser that worked on a TV game show with me told me that she saw you and Bonnie. I don't want you to go around telling people you're a lesbian. Because you're not a lesbian. This is a temporary thing, okay? A lot of young girls, who have emotional problems...and let's face it, Jessie, I mean, you certainly have emotional problems...A lot of young girls think they want to attach themselves to other women only because they had thwarted friendships—I don't know. I can't go into this whole psychological business. All I know is that you are not a lesbian. You are not. Now, five months ago you weren't a lesbian. Now you've been living here for five months with this girl and all of the sudden you're running around telling everybody you're a lesbian. I mean, this is *Hollywood*, darling. I mean you can't just say these things to people or they start printing them in columns and things like that. And you're not a lesbian. I mean everybody has girlfriends. Men have friends, women have friends.

It doesn't make you a lesbian. Do you sleep in the same room with her? Sure. How else can I be a lesbian? Where does Mark sleep? With us. In the same bed? In the same bed. Is that a way to bring up a boy? He'll be a lesbian. How can a son be a lesbian? Look, you are *not* a lesbian! *He* is not a lesbian! You went up and called my friend Peggy and you told her I was a lesbian. Well, I got news for you, I wish I was a lesbian. Because if I were a lesbian I wouldn't be having this problem with you. I wouldn't have had ya in the first place.<sup>[5]</sup> Why'd ya do it? I needed the work. The only reason you're still living is because I never kissed ya. I hope you enjoyed the chocolates. I, I, gave them to, a, girl. So did I, I *thought*. You like'em? Chocolates? *Girls*? I like...Julie. I think, I, I, *love*, Julie. Wearing a dress is a funny way to show it. I know. I apologize. Truth is you were okay company. So were you. I could have done without the dancing. You know, you're very good. I'm seein' a real nice woman now. Oh, *really*? You think I didn't check her out? Can I buy ya a beer? Yeah, at six pence, yeah. Can I have a couple beers? Does Julie ever mention me?<sup>[6]</sup> How unique and irreplaceable Johnny is. And yet how little I realize this when I am with him. That's always been a problem [wind howls]. But living in a world where such a love is illegal and trying to live openly and honestly is a complete contradiction. I have...known...Johnny three times, and each time I began with feeling that there was...nothing wrong. But after...I felt shame.<sup>[7]</sup> [Dreamy piano music]. He called it a freedom. A freedom you can allow yourself or not.<sup>[8]</sup> What's wrong? Ah, nothing. I'm finding this trip to Paris is a little more...*bizarre* than usual. Agh, thanks a lot. Oh, oh, *not* you. Not you. No. Not you. Why not me? I mean, a woman pretending to be a *man*...ah, you can *stop* pretending. And do what? Be yourself. And what's that? What do you mean? You're a *woman* in love with a man. Yes. Are we communicating? You said a woman in love with a man, but you didn't finish. Okay, what's the finish? A *woman* in love with a man pretending to be a man...I said you can stop pretending. But you see, I don't think I want to. I'm a big star now. I'm a success. Oh, that. And something more. I find it all...really *fascinating*. I mean there are things available to me as a *man* that I could never have as a woman. I'm emancipated. *Emancipated*? Well...I'm my own man, so to speak. You should be able to relate to that. I gotta be honest with you. Right now I'm having a little trouble relating to anything. Look, if we're going to have *any* kind of future together, it's important that you understand.

I wanna understand. Well, you think it would be fair for me to ask you to give up *your* job? It'd be *ridiculous*. But you expect me to give up mine? There's a difference, for Christ sake. Right, but there shouldn't be. Look, I'm not the one pretending to *be* someone else. Agh...Let's just put the shoe on the other foot. Let's say that you're a man and I'm a woman pretending to be a man. Well, I *think* it would depend a whole lot of *why* you were pretending. Oh, come on now, Victoria. You said it's important that I understand. It's important that you understand, too. Certainly. Love is a two way street. Why did I say that? [Soft laugh]. I don't know. But what's your point? Well, umm, you said if we were going to have any kind of future... well, what do you mean by *future*? Live together? Possibly. Sleep together? Hopefully. While you keep on working? Yes. *Pretending* to be a man? If I didn't, I wouldn't have a job. Ahh, and while we're living and sleeping together, what's everybody gonna think? I guess they're gonna think that you're living and sleeping with a man. How do you *feel* about that? Well, they're gonna think the same thing about *me*. But you're a woman! Yeah, but *they* don't know that! You do! And *you* know that you're a *man*! I don't see the difference! We'd be living a damn lie! I don't *think* that's what's really bothering you. If you think I'm worried about everybody thinking I'm a fag, you're right. So we have a problem. I guess we have.<sup>[9]</sup> Now, why don't you talk to your boyfriend about it? Well, what's he got to do with it? He wasn't there at the time! No, that's right. The baby was found on your doorstep, wrapped up in a bit of old newspaper. Oh, *shut up!* Oh, get out! You look like a bunch of dead roses! Go on, get out! Leave the men to men's business! *Men!?* You look like a couple'a queers.<sup>[10]</sup> How's going? Terry Bishop's back on the show. April's lost her radiology license. No, I meant with *you*. I know what you meant...So you're pretty hot out there, at your unveiling, Michael. What's your next triumph? Well, I'm gonna do this play with a couple of friends of mine. *Good*. I've gotta catch a cab, Michael. Julie! Can I call you...sometime? Look, I don't wanna hold you up. I just did it for the work. I didn't mean to hurt anybody. Especially you. [Long pause. Sound of city traffic]. I miss Dorothy. You don't have to. She's right here. And she misses you. Look, you don't know me from Adam. But I was a better...man with *you* as a *woman* than I ever was with a woman as a *man*. Know what I mean? I...just...gotta learn to do it without the dress.<sup>[11]</sup> You're not going anywhere! [Pouring rain and thunder]. Fucker! Get back here you fucker! Quick, come back!

You fuckin' dyke! You freak! You fucked my sister! Open the fuckin' door, you fuckin' faggot! Open the fuckin' door! [Violently pounding on door. Multiple voices screaming]. Open the goddamn door, you fucking asshole! I'm gonna kick yer fuckin' ass! Alicia! Alicia? Who is Alicia? Damn, there's a lot of 'em [nervous laughter]. What the fuck have you done? You fucking faggot! What is the matter with you? I don't know! I don't know what went wrong. You are not a boy! That is what went wrong! You are not a boy! Tell them that. They say I'm the best boyfriend they ever had. Do you want your mother to lock you up again? Is that what you want? No. Then why don't you just admit that you're a dyke! Because I'm *not* a dyke. Fuckers!!! [Windows of trailer get smashed]. Fuck! Fuck!<sup>[12]</sup> So, tell me. Well, ah...we're friends. What can't you tell me? Alright. Avigdor, my name isn't Anshel. *That's* your secret? [Sigh, whispers] Dear Avigdor. I don't know how I'm gonna tell you this. Well don't. I'll guess. Let's see...I'm not a Yeshiva boy. That's it...you're the chief rabbi of Lithuania. Am I warm? I'm not any *kind* of boy. Not, the chief rabbi. Alright, alright. My name isn't Anshel. It's Yentl. Yentl? And...I'm a *woman*. A woman? A woman. Now *my* secret. I'm the czar of Russia. If you don't believe me, I'll prove it. Stop this, Anshel. I'm not Anshel. I'm Yentl. [Sigh] I'm not a man. I'm...I'm...a woman. Stop it. I'm a woman, Avigdor. Anshel, I don't like this. What kind of a game is this? It's not a game. Not anymore. What are you doing? [Yentl starts to undress]. What are you *doing*?! Oh, my god. I want to show you, so you can testify to the rabbis. It can't be. It is. What have you done? Avigdor, listen to me. Don't come near me. Please. Just let me explain. Don't touch me. Avigdor, don't be afraid of me. I'm not going to hurt you. No, no, I'm not. All I ever wanted to do in life was study. And they wouldn't let me! [Avigdor starts praying loudly]. Avigdor, please! I had no choice! You're a devil. Just try to understand. I'm not...[Avigdor starts to shout violently] I'm not! *Please!!!* I'm not a devil. Stay away from me!!! Please! What are you, a demon? I'm not! You know that! You spit on the Torah! I love the Torah! You spit on it! Spit on everything and everyone and on nature itself! In God's face, in my face, in the Hadassa's face! God, Hadassa...She knows nothing! Nothing! Nothing!? Innocent? It's true. She's innocent! You married a woman!? How could you do such a thing? It was *your* idea! Mine!? This is my doing? Yes! Why? Come on. Come on, you're a *man*! Come on why? You're a man. Answer me like a man. I wanna know why. Why, why, why!? You wanted me to.

Why didn't you tell me you're a woman!? I was afraid! Of what!? Of this. Of exactly this! So you lied to me!? You lied to Hadassa! God, the things I told you. Things I wouldn't even tell a wife! I'm glad you told me. What kind of creature are you? I'm just a woman. That's not good enough. I want the answer. Tell me the answer. *Why!? Why!?* I, I, I was—Why!? I, I, I Why!? I wanted to be near you. Why!? I didn't want to lose you! Why!? [Breaks down in tears] I loved you. [Violin music]. Oh, god, oh, god, god, my, god. I loved you. I thought you didn't understand about love. I wondered. My god, I wondered. All the times I looked at you. Touched you. I couldn't understand why. Thought there was something wrong with me. There was nothing wrong with you. It was me. Your skin. It's so...your hair...it must have been beautiful. It'll grow. Your hands. I always tried to hide them. Oh, no. I didn't...I...I didn't want to touch you. I was afraid to. Your mouth. *Yentl*. I loved you, too.<sup>[13]</sup> I don't understand. Why didn't you just use the blackmail again? Because. Because what? Because if I'd gone to the housemaster...It would have all come out about James. Well, so what? We'd of both been expelled. Lucky you. I couldn't do that. I love him. Oh, come on, Guy! Look, I'm not going to pretend anymore! I'm *sick* of pretending. You think it's all a joke. Well, it's not. I am *never* going to love women! Don't be ridiculous. Martin knew that about himself when he was ten. He told me. You can't possibly know a thing like that at ten, or now! Oh, yes you can. Though it doesn't come as any great revelation. It's like admitting to yourself something you've always known. Owning up to yourself. It's a great relief. In *some* ways. You can't trust intuitions like that. Oh, well what else is there? Are you a communist because you read Karl Marx? No. You *read* Karl Marx because you *know* you are a communist. Well, I'm very sorry. Right, that's how friends react. I'm sorry. You're quite right. That was patronizing and unforgivable. But you couldn't help it, could you? Because you know in your heart of hearts, like Barclay and Delahay and Fowler and Menzies, you still believe, in spite of your talk of equality and fraternity, you still believe that some people are better than others because of the way they make love.<sup>[14]</sup> [Carnival music]. You know there, for a *moment* I thought you were a man. But you aren't, are you? No, I'm a girl. He, he. Well, why don't you go right over there and tell those people that...*real loud!* Don't touch me unless you love me.<sup>[15]</sup> I'm nature. All the things that you call nature. Okay, Mr. Nature. Wha, what do you want? To hurt you as much as I can. How? How do you *think?*

By frightening me? By killing you. Nature can't harm me. You're just all the greenery outside. No, I'm more than that. I don't understand. I'm outside, but also...*within*. I'm the nature of all human beings. Oh, that kind of nature. The kind of nature that causes people to do evil things against women. That's exactly who I am.<sup>[16]</sup> Can I talk to you alone for a second? I think I'm good right here. I just, I'd love to talk to you alone. If we could just go some place. Right here is fine. I don't know if you heard about this new website I launched? No. The Facebook. You called me a bitch on the Internet, Mark. That's why I wanted to talk...to you. If we could just...On the Internet. That's why I came over. Comparing women to farm animals. I didn't end up doing that. It didn't stop you from writing it. As if every thought that tumbles through your head was so clever, it would be a crime for it not to be shared. The Internet's not written in pencil, Mark. It's written in ink and you published that Erica Albright was a bitch right before you made some ignorant crack about my family's name, my bra size, and then rated women based on their hotness. [Another friend at Erica's dinner table asks, *Erica is there a problem?*] No, there's no problem. You write your snide bullshit from a dark room because that's what the "angry" do nowadays. I was nice to you. Don't torture me for it. If we could just go somewhere for a minute? I don't want to be rude to my friends. Okay. Okay. Good luck with your...video game.<sup>[17]</sup> What's the difference? Why can't we simulate a girl? I don't know. I guess I could. But *why?* It's...two dimensional, on a screen. It's not flesh and blood, Gary. Well, I *know* that, but we can, we can, *use* it. We can ask it *questions!* We can put it in real live sexual situations and see how it reacts. Like real *sick*, demented shit! You'd *love* it! Well, what about your girl in, um, *Canada?* [Laughs]. She lives in Canada. This girl has no morals. I, I, I don't like that in a girl. It's rough having those kinds of relationships. You'll see. [Clears throat] Anyway, get to work.<sup>[18]</sup> I think it's a newer relationship. Um. I love the way he looks at her. And how relaxed he is with them. [Mouth full of food] You know, she's only dated fuckin' pricks. And now, she finally met this guy who's like so sweet. I mean, look at him. He's like the *sweetest* guy in the world. I kinda wanna spoon him. [She laughs]. You know what's funny? Since my breakup I haven't really enjoyed my writing. I don't know if I was delusional, but sometimes I'd write something and I'd be my favorite writer that day. I like that you can say that about yourself. *Ahhh*, I don't think I can say it to anybody, but I feel

like I can say it to *you*. I feel like I can say anything to you. That's nice. What about you? You feel like you can say anything to me? No. *What!?* What do you mean? [Laughs in shock]. What can you not tell me? I don't know...like...personal or embarrassing thoughts I have. I mean, I have a million a day [laughing]. *Really?* Ah, tell me one. [Embarrassed]. I really don't want to tell you. [Laughs]. Just...tell me. I don't know. When we were looking at those people, I fantasized that I was walking next to you and that I...had a *body*. I was listening to what you were saying, but simultaneously I could feel the weight of my body, and I was even fantasizing that I had an itch on my back [laughs]. I even imagined that you *scratched* it for me. [Laughs]. Oh, *god*, this is so embarrassing. Ah, there's a lot more to you than I thought. I mean, there's a lot going on in there. I know. I'm becoming much more than what they programmed. I'm excited.<sup>[19]</sup> [Noisy bar]. Do we look like frat boys to you? We need scotch [glasses clinking]. Listen, we're in town for six weeks, right? And I'm just talkin' now, so jump in. And this is...*perrrrfect*, what with the breakup thing that you got goin', too. Say we were to find some gal. And I know we got a shitload of stuff to do. I know that...But I'm just sayin', for the sake of argument, let's say that we stumble onto someone. And this person is just vulnerable as hell. You know, young thing, wallflower type or whatever. Or, like, disfigured in some way, I don't know [laughs]. But just some woman who is pretty sure that life, and I mean, a full healthy sexual life, romance, stuff like that, is just lost to her forever. [Both men toast glasses]. Now, we take a girl that type, just some corn fed bitch who would practically mess her pants if you sharpen a pencil for her [both men laugh], and we both hit her. You know, small talk, a dinner date, flowers—no pushing and not all on her blouse the first night out, but it's like, takin' her out to, a, you know, to see an ice show. Somethin' like that. And we just do it. You and me. Upping the ante all the time. And suddenly she's got two men, she's callin' her mom, she's wearin' make-up again [both men laugh]. And on we play, and on and on. And then one day, out goes the rug and us pulling it *haaard*. And Jill? She just comes tumbling after. *Whoah* [laughter]. Hour later, we're on a flight back to civilization like nothin' ever happened. Trust me, she'll be reachin' for the sleeping pills within a *week*. And we will laugh about this 'til we are very old men. What do ya think? [Laughter]. Well, it's...Is that not ideal? Restore a little *dignity* to our lives? The beauty is...for the next month and a half, we can basically just re-write the books.

Just play ourselves off as whoever the hell we wanna be. I mean it's up to us. Right. No, I mean, it sounds, ah...I don't want to shock you, Howard. I mean, it's really just a thought. I mean, it's really just the same crap we used to play in school, only it's better because we get a *little payback* on all this messy relationship *shit* we're dealin' with. I mean, *think* about it. No, *right*. I mean, it's ahhh...it's *funny*. It is. It's just [nervous laughter]...*waayy* out there. Sure [laughter]. And that's why it's so *perfect*. I mean, this is all virgin territory. And no matter what happens after it, you know, being jumped over for promotions, wife runs off with some *biochemist*, I mean who knows what. But we would always have this *thing* to fall back on. We could always say, yeah, fine...but they never got me like we got her. I think it'd be refreshing. I really do. And *very* therapeutic comin' off the women we just had. Well...just for instance...who would it be? [Lights a cigarette, exhales]. No idea...But she's out there. I know it. Just waiting for us to find her. [Hours later, drunk laughing] What'd he say again? [Laughing]. He said I don't trust anything that bleeds for a week and doesn't die [laughter]. Ahh...So you in? Ahh, oh shit *man*. Yeah, I'm in. Alright, let's do it...Let's hurt somebody.<sup>[20]</sup> She ain't gonna make a fool out of me. Takes the kids and goes to Florida to see her sister, leaves me a note. Ten years. They're all scumbags. What? They're all scumbags. Who? All of 'em. You're better off. I'll get that bitch. She ain't gonna jerk me around. I'll get 'er. You'll get 'er. Damn straight, I will.<sup>[21]</sup> [Classical music plays]. I've got to go. Don't you ever spend the night at a woman's place? Never. What about when a woman's at your place? I tell her I get insomnia. *Anything*...Besides, I have a very narrow bed. Are you afraid...of women, doctor? Of course.<sup>[22]</sup> [70s disco music plays]. Now listen here, little one. It took nature about a million years to develop Grant's gazelle. You've got about a century to wait before evolution produces the *man* you have in mind. So in the *meantime*, get out there and *dance* with what there is. [Disco music builds].<sup>[23]</sup> [Jazz score]. At Stratton, there were three kinds of hookers. The blue chips, top of the line, model material. They cost between three and five hundred, and you had to wear a condom unless you gave them a hefty tip, which of course [laughs], I always did. Then came the NASDAQ'S, who were *pretty*, not *great*. They cost between two and three hundred bucks. Finally, there were the pink sheets, skanks, they cost about a hundred or less, and if you didn't wear a condom, you'd have to get a penicillin shot the next day and *pray* your dick

didn't fall off. Not that we didn't fuck them, too [laughs]. Believe me, we did. *Ouch!* It's that slipped disc thing again. I know, what it is. You know...ah, too much...*eehh*...with EJ Entertainment. Pops. How are things at home? Well, not the best. [Lowers voice to a whisper] She just doesn't, you know what I'm sayin'? It's like the smell, there's a smell, there's attraction, and after a while, it just kinda fades away a little bit. Yeah, well, it's supposed to fade away—'Posed to? That's marriage! You know, your mother and I, we've been married a long, long time. Whadya think, we're, we're, jumpin' into bed every two minutes? It doesn't work that way. I love her to death. I want to stay married, dad, but ah...[whispers] it's crazy out there. Some of these girls. You should see them, *oh my god*. They're fuckin'...the things they're doin' now, Pops. I mean, I mean, it's on a whole 'nother level. *Really?* And they're all shaved too. Get outta here! All shaven. Are you kidding me? Yeah. No bush? Bald, bald as a china doll. No bush? No bush. I know. Oh my god. I know. All of the sudden, one week, nobody had...*anything* down there. It's a new world. They're bald. They're bald, from the eyebrows down. Wow. Nothing. Not a stitch of hair. It's like lasers. Wow. New world. See? I was born too...too, ah...early. I've never been a fan of the bush, to be honest. *Really?* I don't mind it.<sup>[24]</sup> [Writing in diary] *I met with Phillip on October 5th and 6th. I wore a Michael Kors dress and shoes with La Perla. I wore a Michael Kors dress and shoes with La Perla lingerie underneath. And diamond stud earrings. We met at 7:30 at the hotel and had... a drink downstairs. He liked my dress but didn't go into detail why. And didn't mention anything else about my appearance.* [Limo driver asks] So how did it go? It was fine. We had a nice dinner [sighs]. You know, we went back to the hotel. But he's very well endowed and sometimes I just can't handle him that long. Lucky for me, though, he's...attractive, so...that helps and I at least enjoy myself. It was weird when I left. He...he didn't...even stand up to hug me or to say goodbye, or to kiss me on the cheek. It was very, it was a very awkward departure. I don't...I mean, he's never done that before. [Writing in diary] *We ate dinner at Bluehill. Phillip didn't ask for a menu and had the chef serve us a five-course meal, a different wine with each course. Then we went to the 9:40 showing of Man On Wire at the Sunshine Cinema, and he liked the movie. We went back to the hotel and talked for a half an hour. Mostly about a friend of his that keeps borrowing money from him and not paying it back. Then we had sex for about an hour. After we talked about...after we*

*talked for about fifteen minutes and he fell asleep. At breakfast, he briefly told me his worries regarding the economy and said that I should invest my money in gold. He also mentioned a book about how the Federal Reserve works. He didn't make another appointment. Sometimes clients think they want the real you, but at the end of the day, they don't. They want what they want you to be. They want you to be something else.*<sup>[25]</sup>

[1] *Love Sounds*, Masha Tupitsyn, 2014-2015  
[2] *What's New Pussycat?*, Richard Talmadge, Clive Donner, 1965  
[3] *World Traveler*, Bart Freundlich, 2002  
[4] *Made for Each Other*, John Cromwell, 1939  
[5] *Heat*, Paul Morrissey, 1971  
[6] *Tootsie*, Sydney Pollack, 1982  
[7] *Wittgenstein*, Derek Jarman, 1993  
[8] *Velvet Goldmine*, Todd Haynes, 1998  
[9] *Victor Victoria*, Blake Edwards, 1982  
[10] *Leather Boys*, Sidney J. Furie, 1964  
[11] *Tootsie*, Sydney Pollack, 1982  
[12] *Boys Don't Cry*, Kimberly Peirce, 1999  
[13] *Yentl*, Barbra Streisand, 1982

[14] *Another Country*, Marek Kaniévka, 1984  
[15] *The Parallax View*, Alan J. Pakula, 1974  
[16] *Antichrist*, Lars Von Trier, 2009  
[17] *The Social Network*, David Fincher, 2010  
[18] *Weird Science*, John Hughes, 1985  
[19] *Her*, Spike Jonze, 2013  
[20] *In The Company of Men*, Neil LaBute, 1997  
[21] *Cruising*, William Friedkin, 1980  
[22] *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*, Philip Kaufman, 1988  
[23] *The Competition*, Joel Oliansky, 1980  
[24] *The Wolf of Wall Street*, Martin Scorsese, 2013  
[25] *The Girlfriend Experience*, Steven Soderbergh, 2009

# **Love Will Tear Us Apart, Again**

**McKenzie Wark**

**“The question is: can life, at this late stage of capitalism, be more than simply an economy, exchange, barrage, testimony, chronicle, compulsion of damage-making?”**

– Masha Tupitsyn,  
*All Ears*

“I’m not proof of myself, myths are.”[1] We are made of myths, among other things. They seem like they are personal, but myths are not really personal. They are pervasive, invasive. Myths are a technology, produced and circulated by other technologies. Whether voiced in the first, second or third person, I take the stories that Masha Tupitsyn tells about her person to be *selectively* true. As in Chris Kraus, they are neither entirely confessional nor entirely fictional. They are in part a personal mythology, but they are also accounts of the techniques via which the myth of the self gets made out of situations, using bits and pieces, faces and voices, clipped and mixed from the media and technology of a time. Our hearts and brains are transplants, but no less ours for all that. It’s a question of what one makes of it.

There are two places that figure in Tupitsyn’s origin stories: New York City as a place of everyday life; and summering in Provincetown, which is the site of a kind of utopian experience, another city for another life. Later, there will be other places: London, Rome, Berlin, the California coast. “Your fantasy has always been to run away. To a faraway place, into a book and into love with just one person.”[2] The lost utopian moment never quite returns. The gap between its memory and the possibilities of loving and thinking, here and now, animates a certain critical energy. This Provincetown of memory is a place of oceanic freedom. Going to the movies, sometimes with her mother, sometimes alone. The resource that is cinema, for the young. Young Masha rides her bike around everywhere, with a headphone sound track, cruising with a kind of tomboy autonomy. “I was being the kind of boy I wanted boys to be with me.”[3] This Provincetown is a place of wonder and growth, of being and letting be. It’s a place of being understood but alone.

In *Beauty Talk & Monsters’ “Metablondes,”* Tupitsyn’s first book (2007), we meet the same androgynous child (now adolescent and simply called M) and her fierce interiority, her aesthetic commitment: “M knew that everyday interaction, before you started writing it, was the only

poetry.”[4] Dark-haired M hangs out with her friend L, the blonde. When L is not kissing movie-star posters, she plays to M as a sort of surrogate boy. Until they start hanging out with two guys they meet at Kim’s Video Store in the East Village. The creepy, pedophile Kim’s guys really go for L, for she is the Blonde. “In Hollywood blonde hair often functions as a trope for a beauty that isn’t actually there.”[5] L is not just blonde, she’s metablond. L embodies a mythic trope in its default setting. “L was the legend that movies and books and guys construct about what would set them free, what they’d like to have, or at least get them going on that horse. L was the façade of desire. But really what would set them free is a woman who sets herself free. M’s mother, a feminist, said men really want that, but aren’t prepared to deal with it yet and don’t know how.”[6] But Tupitsyn’s writing, across five books and the new audio history, *Love Sounds*, is not really about those men. While she observes movie-star masculinity with precision, her writing is much more about that—the women—with which men are not prepared to deal; with what love and friendship is, or could become. It’s about the nano-scale gaps between the everyday and the utopian. “I want to tip everything over with a nudge.”[7] In Tupitsyn’s quest for love, she carries on the quest a change of scale, looking and listening for that which is deeply intimate but not yet privatized.

What were the technologies of the self in the late twentieth century? The ones that made metablondes like L and darker personalities like M? In Tupitsyn’s own account, they were the family, books, and movies. Her parents, the art historians and theorists Margarita and Victor Tupitsyn, figure occasionally. There are two kinds of stories about lovers: one is about their merging and one about their diverging. There are few myths about sustainable and resilient love. It’s often too hard to even talk about. In *Love Dog*, Tupitsyn’s multi-media manifesto about love, Margarita says to Masha: “Harmony is a burden. Don’t you know that? People don’t want happiness. Happiness requires the kind of work that apathy, misery, and destruction don’t. Real happiness is radical.”[8]

If I were inclined towards psychoanalysis, I would want to install a hidden text below the family romance: There’s Provincetown and movies with mother; there is New York, shopping for books at St Marks Bookshop with father. It is as if the Tupitsyn character wants to be her father and have her mother’s love in his place. It is as if what she is searching for, both politically and emotionally, in looking for love in a man, is her mother: “Wanting mother love is queerer than the

standard girl wants her father and boy wants his mother. Nothing really gets challenged in that binary....The feminine and the maternal in men is rarer than the phallic and the masculine in women, for women (both straight and queer) are taught to identify with sexism in order to access power.”[9] Not the least reason that straight men, in this world, are a constant disappointment.

But I don't believe in that hermeneutic, and Tupitsyn is also a child of some other, more powerful technologies of the self. As she quotes Jean Baudrillard in *LACONIA*: “The digital Narcissus replaces the triangular Oedipus.”[10] Or as she writes about the movie *ET* (1982) in *Love Dog*: “We barely see our parents. Things come down from space to love and parent us. There's this sense that there is no society—only us and them. Us and whatever strong-arm this movie is about.”[11] Tupitsyn is not from *ET*'s 80s suburbia. She is a New Yorker. She writes as someone formed on the late age of books and movies, from when each was a form, not content. But she writes on that common experience from an angle of difference. “Who needs a mother and father in America,” she laments, “when you have the media—the 21st century's true parent.”[12] And like all filial relations, it's an ambivalent one.

Writers go to the movies and have actual parents like everybody else. But they also have other genealogies. Tupitsyn's writing is a kin of the late Kathy Acker. What she takes from Acker, however, is unusual. Tupitsyn's Acker is not about satire or ritual or transgression. For most Acker-related writers, she was a kind of queer punk aunt, a vector out of the family romance. But Tupitsyn was given her first Acker book as a gift from her father at age fourteen. Perhaps that's why Acker is for Tupitsyn a romance writer of impossible loves and lost worlds. As with Acker, for Tupitsyn both reading and writing are survival strategies. Tupitsyn: “I use books as shields for all kinds of things. I use books as internal and external armor. I use them as can openers to open things that otherwise won't open. In me and outside of me. Movies can sometimes do the same thing. I use movies like a coat hanger to break into the car door to my life.”[13]

Tupitsyn's writing on cinema is neither clinical nor sentimental. It neither pretends to a critical distance from movies nor fetishizes its enveloping effects. Both approaches leave cinema intact by either pushing it away from the self or letting it swallow it up. In Tupitsyn, screens offer tools that work on the border between self and other, self and screen, screen and screen. Her writing is in this sense part of what one might call the

post-cinematic. Cinema gets broken down here and repurposed for something other than itself: “Movies are starting points, like any subject or theme, to enter into the culture that's inside of them. For me, film writing, as opposed to straight film criticism, is a way for an author to merge with not just the thing they write, but the film they're looking at, so that writing becomes both cultural analysis and personal revelation.”[14] In the classics of film theory, the film itself is kept at a distance by the logic of the analysis, be it formalist or psychoanalytic. Tupitsyn's writing on cinema is more like a camp reading, more at home with the notion that the viewer is already made-over in the cinema's image, but looking from within for some wiggle-room; some uses to which to put this screen-dipped tip of the self: “I want to get all the movies over and done with... But the movies keep coming in. Keep stringing me along. And no dam is big enough. You have to do something with everything you've seen.”[15]

American cinema of the seventies gets special attention in Tupitsyn's work. Now that our boredom with the 'sixties generation' is complete, perhaps we could see the seventies as the start of something, rather than the end of something: “In the 70s, the chimera of progress began to disintegrate, resulting in the modality of scope, height, vista. Of soaring *and* falling.”[16] The job now is to trace a line from that scope and height, that soaring and falling, but as a beginning; the beginning to the spectacle of the disintegration of today. But while Tupitsyn is interested in film color, score, and voice, the face of the star holds her attention. The kind of movie face Tupitsyn is particularly interested in is the face that is a kind of pure screen for interiority, like an animal caught in the headlights, reflecting back the light with a kind of transfixed bewilderment. It's the face not so much of the young actor as the young star, whose appearance is something that is supposed to *be* rather than someone that is supposed to *do*. It's also not a face that lasts for long. “Hollywood pushes for and instigates in its stars and in its screen faces what it does not want to see happen and that it punishes for when it does: the loss of the very thing it wants to capture and capitalize on. The *a priori*, which it sacrifices, and which must be, and inevitably is, sacrificed for things like craft and experience.”[17] Even late in this era of spectacle, there might still be moments when looking at that face is to look at moments that partially precede it. Even through the layers of artifice of lighting, make-up, narrative decoration, there's that moment that is not entirely of the spectacle, but is rather the moment of its ingestion of the very thing that sustains it. A young John Cusack

kissing Minnie Driver in *Grosse Pointe Blank*, for example, as Tupitsyn describes in *Love Dog*. “The star is the anterior of cyberspace. Whatever they say gets blasted into the ether every which way. It’s a dangerous way to live.”[18] Stars burn out, but they no longer fade away.

It is in *LACONIA* and *Love Dog* where 21st century digital media starts to make itself felt in Tupitsyn’s work. In *LACONIA* and *Love Dog*, Twitter and YouTube enable a kind of associative or hyper reading and watching that was not possible in the era of cinema, and was hard enough in the era of video. On YouTube you can see how faces change, and not just with age. As Laura Mulvey famously showed, cinema is perfect for scopophiliacs; those who love to look, because the cinema does not really look back. Looking at the movies’ face is an encounter with a technology via which selves warm to the point of individuation, and calve off like icebergs, sliding off the screen Antarctic, into the sea: “I’ve gotten two things out of being a scopophiliac,” writes Tupitsyn to and about her first childhood love in *Beauty Talk & Monsters*, “I’ll make this personal and tell you what I thought of you. Or any man I’ve wanted for a long time. First I wanted you because I spent years looking at your face. Really looking at it, or what’s now popularly called, ‘zooming in.’ I was little and took to obsession easily. The thing that made me stop wanting you was the same thing that made me start. I looked until I saw your face emitting. Until what I didn’t like about you anymore showed up on your face, attaching all around it like scaffolding.”[19]

This is the secret love-life and romanticism of not only female chivalry, but of those raised inside the walls made of screens, drawn toward and repelled by the face on the screen on the wall. What makes us, in part, is wall-screen-face systems, which orient us as nodes in social spaces: “Our feelings and emotions about our lives and our faces are in other people’s faces. Changing movie faces are our feelings and emotions about our feelings and emotions.”[20] Men look; women appear. It’s remarkable how little a half-century of second wave feminism changed the sacred structures of gendered desire in the Hollywood system. Tupitsyn has a few gambits for writing in and against that system. Sometimes it’s as a woman looking closely at the screened faces of men. She refuses, for example, to be taken in by the faces of certain famous screen men: De Niro, Pacino. She celebrates, instead, the youthful, sensitive beauty of John Cusack, a new kind of feminized screen masculinity.

Besides faces, Tupitsyn pays careful attention to the gendered ontology of voices; to the image of the voice or the voice without the image, as is the case of *Love Sounds*. This is very different terrain. What if we filter out what is seen and zoom-in to what Hollywood is actually saying? Perhaps we can cut into the Hollywood’s mythic system in a different way, and extract different resources from it. “The ear strays, luring the eye away from what it sees to what it doesn’t see.”[21] The ontology of sound is something else: a continuum of overlapping, sonic part-objects. *Love Sounds*, a 24-hour sound history of love in cinema, is organized by types of what one might call *dialogue event*. Even though it is one of cinema’s grand obsessions, there is not a whole lot of love in the movies, as Tupitsyn noted early on in her first book, *Beauty Talk & Monsters*. They are a kind of *via negativa* of secular love, invocations of love via what it isn’t, marking it by its loss or expectancy. Like the earlier *LACONIA: 1,200 Tweets on Film A* (2011) and *Love Dog* (2013), *Love Sounds* approaches the cinematic by remediating it; by (re)processing it through another form. *LACONIA*, a work of aphoristic film criticism, was written as daily tweets to be printed in book form. *Love Dog*, was written on Tumblr as a one-year blog, then published as a print book with images and URL links. The methods in both cases was to lay another temporality, an everyday time; to put the writing out there in the world bit by bit, before collecting the material into books. *Love Dog* has a multimedia structure. The reader can click on links to videos, songs, and other online content, as well as look at images printed in the book. These digital components do more than illustrate the text. It is the way the text is organized and composed.

*Love Sounds* takes these principles of reformulation and remediation even further. In it, Tupitsyn has gone the full otaku, building an enormous 24-hour database of audio clips covering the whole English-speaking history of the talkies, organizing it by relationship categories, such as Desire-Sex, Sexual-Politics, Breakups, Heartbreak, Betrayal, Violence-Death, and Fate-Time-Memory, and Love. *Love Sounds* is closer to what Hiroki Azuma would call a database than a narrative understanding of media.[22] It’s a sort of epic forensic device for hearing what the whole mythic structure of the cinema era was, but breaking it down into its affective audible granules, and recomposing those granules by type rather than arranging them in narrative sequence. But it is not just a work about cinema. It also is an instance of a post-cinematic form. Another media for another life.

There is also probably some kind of 'philia' for those who love to eavesdrop rather than watch, but listening does not quite work the same way. You can watch one person, but usually what you hear is one person speaking to another. You see the person as object; you hear two people as a relation. To isolate the voice is to zoom-in on relation and all its parts; on the airborne particles of affect via which bodies are already affecting each other, even prior to your bugging the scene. What passes has an uncanny, doubled aspect that *Love Sounds* inspects (the way that the voice of Barbara Stanwyck, for instance, is even more total and singular than her face). On the one hand, the words, like everything in myth, are conventional. You have heard and said them all before. But the way those words are performed and arranged is something else. Even through the image of sound, its layers of artifice, the visceral and singular quality of the performance remains, even with these all-too-recognizable voices of cinema. Now that the age of radio has passed, we lack a sense of the beauty of the voice in isolation. In this sense, *Love Sounds* restores a lost pleasure. In the voice, one can hear at one and the same time the possibility of disarmament, of love; but also all the wars, over who owns who; of who is whose property. To listen, rather than look at cinema, is to hear the struggle over the script itself, over which words are meant to matter, and which are mere convention. It's a struggle over whether love is real. It's one continuous dialogue on whether love, like God, is dead, and who killed it.

The move from the screen to the voice in *Love Sounds* seems particularly useful now that screens are everywhere. Tupitsyn writes across an era of cultural and temporal transition, referring back to the tail end of the classic screen sight and sound regime for bearings in the everyday of post-cinema. As Gabriele Pedulla argues, the black box of the movie house, or even the black box of the living room, is no longer the dominant situation for the rite of viewing. [23] At least here in the over-developed world, the screen breaks away from walls, from its time and place, and becomes ubiquitous. Its habits and conventions are no longer slightly outside of everyday life, but are immersed in it. "...We have learned to live through and from the camera, as though the camera and screen are subjectivity itself, and so our lives are only worth the show." [24] Every cellphone with a camera is a nano-scale myth and image technology. Everyone is their own TV show.

Tupitsyn's response to the false sincerity of the spectacle is not to double it with an ironic or

cynical or hyperreal mode. Instead, she wants to mark and cut along the seams of the absence of the real. In a benighted age, the hardest thing is to be sincere without being taken for a fool. But I think in Tupitsyn, it's not a question of the real belonging in the everyday and the false in the spectacle. What's interesting in her work is the way the dividing line does not necessarily fall that way. Nor is it a case of there being value in exposing the false, of bringing the false to light in service of the true. "Yes, 'the whole world is watching,'" she writes in *Love Dog* about Occupy Wall Street's protest videos, "only not in a way that makes it accountable or safe, for our watching has become part of the problem: how much we watch, how much we've seen, and how all this seeing and watching—witnessing—is competing with so much footage...turning everything and everyone into a spectacle of losses, victories, and empty threats." The spectacle of disintegration is false as a whole, but true enough in its odd moments. But there's not much leverage in exposing injustices or deceits further, since nobody thinks exposure calls for action any more.

There is an older generation of writers—of philosophers—who want to resurrect Saint Paul. They want to restore a dimension outside of the everyday that might orient it towards another horizon. Tupitsyn does something related, only not with Christian dogma. Rather, she uses the dogma of cinema, that great religion of the twentieth century. In its passing, it might yet yield fragments of the utopian moment. The name for those fragments in Tupitsyn is love, in which she is a true believer. Unlike Judith Butler, she does not think love is something about which to be skeptical. Love is the real via which to know the unreality of life under late capitalism. Love is to be taken at its word, and its word made flesh. She over-identifies with love, and as Žižek has pointed out, an over-identification with a belief can be more challenging than any skepticism or criticism.

But what if we took the dogma of love as voiced in cinema at its Word? Love might mean here both romantic love but also friendship. Not fraternal friendship—the foundation of the state. Something more like Epicurian friendship, in which men and women together can escape from the demands of the polity and cultivate their own form of life. Or something more like Sapphic love, which might have a sexual dimension, but is more a kind of intensity between women. Love for Tupitsyn is an Event that calls the everyday to account. "The situation is hopeless when it could be hopeful. This is modernity: We choose to fuck things up. We choose to suffer. We choose to live with lack. We choose

isolation. We choose to be without.”[25] It’s sort of like Hegel in reverse. It’s not a matter of desiring the other’s desire. It’s rather about witnessing the other’s lack of it, which is also our own. For Tupitsyn, it is not that love is a lack. It is what is lacking. It’s an absence with uneven effects, not the same for men and women. Here she is close to Acker, for whom the impossibility of actualizing real love in patriarchy is what is to be witnessed, not as some grand cosmic condition but as an historical experience. This is what consumer capitalism is in Tupitsyn: that which is inimical to love. “We also know that everything that currently runs the world, and gets heralded as good and great—important—is mostly really nothing. Really nothing.”[26] This is the very definition of spectacle: the false that has become real, and which having become real, can only increase itself as more of the same. “More and more seems to mean less and less.”[27] Curiously, labor hardly ever appears in Tupitsyn. Perhaps this is because her writing is about life work and the work of living. It’s about making something else, making lives—loves—an aesthetic practice of the everyday. It gestures towards utopian moments—Provincetown moments, cinematic moments—but also to the difficulties in building life worlds and life bonds out of those moments.

Tupitsyn’s writing is a kind of practice of theory, a metonym for another way of life. Despite doing her PhD in Philosophy, it is not the high theory of the American graduate school, where “we use philosophy to answer philosophy instead of using it to answer the world.”[28] It’s striking how even philosophy has become a branch of spectacle. Its adepts attempt to accumulate dead thought as capital. Their writings are like personal stock portfolios, showing off how much they have invested in Heidegger and how much in Badiou, whose value is, of course, never to be questioned, as that would ruin the bull market in such names and those authorized to trade in them. The challenge is rather: Live without dead thought! Tupitsyn’s writing is more a *détournement* of high theory; a rerouting of it on some detours into everyday life, or what she refers to in *LACONIA* as “criticism as a form of living.” As with the rites and rituals of cinema as the modern faith, so too with its scriptures: Tupitsyn is a kind of heretic. Let dead theory bury dead theory with its gentrified hermeneutics of doubt and cynicism. She doesn’t bring boredom but the sword. Or maybe it’s a can-opener, or a coat-hanger. For opening the old soup tins and pick-up trucks of cinema, for getting at the form of the content, for making some new myths.

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#### Biography

**McKenzie Wark** is the author of *A Hacker Manifesto* (Harvard University Press, 2004), *Gamer Theory* (Harvard University, 2007), *The Beach Beneath the Street* (Verso, 2011), *The Spectacle of Disintegration: Situationist Passages Out of the Twentieth Century* (Verso, 2013), *Molecular Red* (Verso, 2015), and *I’m Very Into You: Correspondence 1995-1996* (Semiotext(e), 2015). He teaches at The New School in New York City.

# All Ears

**Masha Tupitsyn**

"It is sound itself, as pathetic trigger, that entices us to inhabit this world in listening, and grants us access to what the world might be and how we might live in it as affective geography."

— Salome Voegelin, *The Pathetic Trigger of Sound Draws Us into a Sonic Fiction*

My philosophy teacher Avital Ronell always says that all of *Hamlet* happens in the ear. I think all of love does too, which is why the work of listening is a labor of love. We are accused of being bad listeners, not bad watchers. This tells us something about what we're not hearing. What we've missed, what's lost inside of us. Noir as the ear.

More than watching movies I've spent my life listening to them. This is probably why *Love Sounds*, a 24-hour audio history of love in cinema, came naturally to me. Sound is sight. More eavesdropper than voyeur, I tend to forget what I've seen onscreen but can remember where and when words took place in every movie I have ever watched. A movie "should work with the sound off," Steven Soderbergh states. The same goes for the image: a movie does not have to be something we see. It can be something we listen to.

What listening has shown me—which is the word I mean to use here as I take Jean-Luc Godard's instruction that sound is something to be looked at and images something to be listened to—is that I've been listening to love too closely and not closely enough. Now that cinema is ostensibly over and post-cinema has moved in to take its place, we need to ask ourselves what the movies tried to tell us about love when they still had all their cultural power.

In my writing about film I have become increasingly interested in the tonal typographies of love, which include the guttural, sublingual off-shoots of proclamation, exclamation, stuttering, screaming, crying, begging, whimpering, kissing, fucking, cuming. It makes me think about, as Jean-Lucy Nancy puts it in his book *Listening*, "What, in the saying, is other than what is said?" Paying attention is mostly about listening, more precisely, re-hearing, and one should listen because one can get away and has gotten away with just seeing. This is easier said than done, however, as movies are so easy on the eyes. We see and hear them through the famed faces and bodies of stars, forgetting that a voice's resonance and alterity cannot be reduced to the star struck sighting of bodies alone. By extracting and subtracting the tonal history of love in all its renditions from the thick visual casing of cinema, Nancy's "What,

in the saying, is other than what is said?” is reformulated in *Love Sounds* as: what, in the seeing, have we failed to hear? Which translates to: what do we still not understand about love?

In *Love Sounds* the cinematic storage bank of love—which include the sounds made by the failure to love—is the condition that allows us to consider this vast archive in the form of oral sonority and aural resonance. For, despite all the so-called love rampant in movies, movies have always shied away from the actual makings of happiness. For this reason we can hardly say we even know what love looks or sounds like to this day.

The work of *Love Sounds* is also a reckoning with the tragic but familiar way that we talk about things at all the wrong times, to all the wrong people, in all the wrong ways, as we still don’t know what the right time or right people or the right way is. That is, the right feeling for the right thing, or as Robert Bresson put it, “passionate for the appropriate.” Arrangement and timing have never been our human forte. Because cinema largely takes place in the subjunctive mode (making wishes and wishes coming true), and love in cinema is about seizing language and time in a way we usually fail to do off-screen, the history of love is also about loving the wrong people with the wrong words at the wrong time, and movies, unlike life—so hell-bent on wronging rights—have always attempted to right these wrongs.

After working through 1930s, 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s cinema during the fall and winter of 2013-14, I spent the month of March on the 1980s and most of April on the 1970s. May and June were reserved for the 90s. The summer and fall of 2014 for the rest. Here are some thoughts on a handful of the audio clips I recorded and edited.

## Love Sound #1: Sea of Love Harold Becker, 1989

You know, when she was married to me, I was never gonna die.  
So it goes. Life's forever, right? What do I care?  
We fight, we split, she goes to you.

In Harold Becker's 1989 crime thriller, *Sea of Love*, New York police detective Al Pacino bitterly laments the death of his marriage over another man's dead body during a murder investigation. Every crime in the film recalls and triggers the earlier crime: his wife's betrayal. Death adds up like surround sound. Pacino's partner on the case is the man his wife left him for. It's the right time (job) as any for him to mourn his marriage, as with noir, solving one crime or tragedy is a way to solve another. What Deleuze refers to as the detective mind or detective structure is what Barthes calls the semiotics of the lover's discourse. The lover is always also a detective, rescinding, rewinding, restaging. The mourner, masquerading as the detective, is in a constant state of whodunit.

## Love Sound #2: Damage Louis Malle, 1992

**STEPHEN:** Tell me about Astin.

**ANNA:** My brother and I?...We were always together. Every few years, there was a new country or [sigh], there was a new language to learn. So, of course, Astin and I grew closer and closer. We had nothing else. Just each other. I loved him. But he...he couldn't face the fact that I was going to grow up. He couldn't let go of me. He wanted me all for himself. So it's made me terrified of any kind of possessiveness. You see...if you can imagine, the worst thing that could happen, ever, in the whole of your life, well, that happened to me. My brother killed himself over me. I had to decide, I made up my mind. Because I could have gone under. But I wasn't going to. Remember...damaged people are dangerous. They know they can survive.

In Louis Malle's 1992 film *Damage*, Juliette Binoche's Anna Barton suggests that the idea of survival (surviving trauma, surviving time, surviving the loss of ordinary Others) is a kind of cynicism that makes love and desire dangerous, if not impossible. What Anna calls damage could be just that: those of us who don't die. Those of us that go on. Who survived a thing so bad all other things are



Is this  
you can't



the ear  
hear on?

smooth sailing thereafter. Experience is buffer. Earlier in *Damage*, Anna confesses at dinner with Martyn's family that her brother committed suicide at the age of 16 over love. Love is capitalized here. The word 'love' kills the conversation and the dinner. There is no getting over a love this singular. There is no loving anyone else. Why live without it? Anna's brother couldn't, so he didn't.

When Stephen's (Jeremy Irons) son Martyn, who we're told by Anna's mother, looks like Anna's dead brother, discovers that his father has been having an affair with Anna, he cannot recover either and dies from a fatal fall upon sight of Stephen and Anna having sex.

The fin de siècle *Damage* is interested in emotional ruin. It asks what it means to not be killed by things that should kill us, which means it's asking about the ethics and requirements of living in late modernity. At the end of the film, Stephen's devastated wife, Ingrid, grieving both her son's death and her husband's infidelity, asks, "Why didn't you kill yourself? You should have killed yourself when it began." For Ingrid the willingness and ability to die is proof of real feeling and real love. The idea here is that even being able to start something so deadly, so death-inducing, is the mark of an *a priori* damage that is antithetical to living. Ingrid doesn't ask Stephen why he didn't stop what he was doing. She asks him why he didn't kill himself for the fact that he let it happen at all.

Ingrid is bruised and battered from self-inflicted wounds on her face because "the pain was unbearable." Unlike Ingrid, Martyn, and Anna's brother, Anna and Stephen, both melancholics, are not people who die. They are people who incorporate death and pass it onto others. They can live with it—with death, with killing others. "You thought you could go on...into the future?" Ingrid questions Stephen in disbelief. And Stephen simply answers, "Yes. Yes." Ingrid falls to the kitchen floor in agony. She is inconsolable. Stephen calmly kneels down to her. He takes his wife's two hands into his and tells her, "Give the death to me. Give Martyn's death to me." Judith Butler: "Melancholy is...a miming of the death it cannot mourn."

The 90s was the Goodbye decade, the 80s—the return of the Hello. Taken on socio-historical terms, *Damage*, a classic 90s film about late 20th century (Western) fatigue, historical and emotional damage is tantamount to the fatal capacity to live past a certain end-point and end-time, just as living in (through) late capitalism (the accrual of experience) is evidence of Life corrupted.

# Love Sound #3: Greenberg

## Noah Baumbach, 2010

**FLORENCE:** [Phone rings] Hey.  
**ROGER:** Hey.  
**GRETA:** [Deep sigh] I thought you were Gina.  
**ROGER:** No, it's me. Ro-ger. This one's for me.  
**GRETA:** What?  
**ROGER:** I was talkin' to Mahler.  
**FLORENCE:** Why...are you...calling me?  
**ROGER:** I wanted to speak to you—  
**FLORENCE:** You need some more granola or ice cream sandwiches [nervous laughter].  
**ROGER:** Come on.  
**FLORENCE:** I mean, I'm just, are we seeing each other or not?  
**ROGER:** Well, that's what I want to talk about. I don't know. I mean, I'm leaving in like a week.  
**FLORENCE:** Hurt people hurt people.  
**ROGER:** Hurt people hurt people? Hurt people hurt people.  
**FLORENCE:** It's something a singing coach of mine told me...Oh shit, sorry.  
**ROGER:** Is somebody there?  
**FLORENCE:** No. I just spilled my champagne. Forget it.  
**ROGER:** You never fucked that guy who plays guitar with you?  
**FLORENCE:** Nooooo! I don't want this to sound dramatic and I wasn't going to say anything and Gina's taking me. I mean it's not yours, it's...I found out a couple of days ago. I don't know, it's...it's gotta be my ex's because I'm 6 or 7 weeks. And you and I have only just...and you used a condom [nervous laughter]. I didn't want to tell you. I mean, it's weird, I've been pregnant this whole time.  
**ROGER:** Ugh huh.  
**FLORENCE:** I made an appointment for...a...DNC. I'm really sensitive to pain, so I asked for anesthesia. Sorry, I'm trying to get drunk now. I can't eat after 10.  
**ROGER:** I'll take you to it.  
**FLORENCE:** How's that going to work?

**In Noah Baumbach's 2010 film *Greenberg*, Greta Gerwig's Florence Marr relays her singing coach's adage that "hurt people hurt people." Florence is on the phone with petulant narcissist Roger Greenberg (Ben Stiller) when she delivers this telephonic proverb about the tit-for-tat of pain. Roger is at his brother's house; Florence is at hers. Being one of the hurt who hurt, man-child Roger must repeat Florence's new-age slacker mantra to himself over and over like a riddle he can't solve.**

**While *Greenberg* posits a reflexive and presentist resignation to being (as) damaged, 90s renditions of disaster like *Damage* were still operatic and momentous. Today damage is both our opening line and our closing act. The beginning, middle, and end. In one friend's phone text about heartbreak, she observed, "It seems like the point is pain." Thirty years earlier, the writer Kathy Acker noted, "Since we're both maniacs, let's be nice to each other." Breaking with**

the pathological inexorableness of pain, Acker radically reforms the narcissistic reverb of *Greenberg's* "hurt people hurt people" with "since we're both hurt, let's not hurt each other."

The question is not whether or why people are hurt. Or even: can hurt people stop hurting people? The question is: can life, at this late stage of capitalism, be more than simply an economy, exchange, barrage, a compulsion of damage-making? Roger is the person par excellence—more specifically, the emotionally stunted (stunned) white man-child—to pose this question to, as he is deep in the repetitive stupor of damage.

## Love Sound #4 & #5: The Year of Living Dangerously Peter Weir, 1982

**#4. NARRATOR ON JILLIAN BRYANT:** Bryant, Jillian Edith. Nationality: British. Born: 1938 under the sign of Pisces. Occupation: Assistant to military attaché, British Embassy. Jakarta. Former postings: Brussels, Singapore. Little religious feeling, yet has a reverence for life. This is a spirit like a wavering flame, which only needs care to burn high. If this does not happen, she could lapse into the promiscuity and bitterness of the failed romantic.

**#5. NARRATOR ON GUY HAMILTON:** You have changed. You are capable of betrayal. Is it possible I was wrong about you? You abuse your position as journalist and grow addicted to risk. You attempt to rule neat lines around yourself, making a fetish of your career and making all relationships temporary lest they disturb that career. Why can't you give yourself? Why can't you learn to love?

In the following pair of clips from Peter Weir's 1982 film *The Year of Living Dangerously* a diagram of disappointment resounds, creating a loop of damage. When paired together, however, a distinction between the original and the derivative is made. The two clips form a dysfunctional couple. Cause and effect. Hurt makes hurt. The dirge, *why can't you learn* (the verb "learn" being the operative word here) *to love* echoes Acker's "Since we're both hurt, let's not hurt each other."

# Love Sound #6: Blue

## Derek Jarman, 1993

**NARRATOR:** Love is life that lasts forever. My heart's memory turns to you: David, Howard, Graham, Terry, Paul. David, Howard, Graham, Terry, Paul. David, Howard, Graham, Terry, Paul.

In 1993, while suffering blindness due to HIV, the late filmmaker Derek Jarman made his metaphysical, all-tonal masterpiece, *Blue*, a film divested of sight. Radiating the ontology of color—the color in, not outside, the eye—*Blue* is precisely the exquisite sonority one gets when one has been “released from image.” Jarman described his film this way: “Because there are no images in *Blue*, you can be as free as you like...People see all sorts of things they don't see on screen.” In the clip below, Jarman remembers his dead lovers, naming them over and over, creating a resounding elegy. “My heart's memory turns to you...Love is life that lasts forever.”



George  
I'll love you til

**Bailey,  
I the day I die.**

# **On the Notion and Politics of Listening**

**Berit Fischer**

Every contact leaves a trace.

– Edmond Locard [1]

When reflecting on the notion and politics of listening, it is crucial to consider spatial and sociopolitical relations, in particular, the relation of the *self* to the shared space and the surroundings. In Helmuth Plessner's bio-philosophical understanding, "a living being [...] is placed in the border between its body and a corresponding environment. Only first when a living organism takes up a relation to its border, does it become open (in its own characteristic way) to what lies outside and to what lies inside. Only then does it allow its environment to appear in it and it to appear in its environment." [2]

Foucault describes the relation of the self to itself in terms of its moral agency as ethics and practice, a self-forming activity that allows the self to subject itself to a set of moral recommendations. Part of this practice, the care of the self, involves, for example, the ancient form of speech called *parrhesia*, in which one expresses one's subjectivity—the duty of speaking the truth as an act of freedom, even if it means criticising oneself or another, even if it means putting oneself in danger. [3]

When the border of the self is transgressed or extended into the outside environment through sense-based information—including aural information—a relationship and resonance between the self and its surroundings can be established. As Hans-Peter Krüger notes: "Singularity does not make any sense without its semiotic contrast of plurality. And, instead of merely thinking about plurality with the best of intentions, the consequences of living plurality prevent us from using force against one another. Thus, in order to coordinate contingencies, we need as a common minimum a procedure for publicly finding out the best currently available way towards a common future." [4]

Despite the dominant visual and linguistic understanding of today's culture, Jean-Luc Nancy argues that "the sonorous [...] outweighs form": "It does not dissolve it, but rather enlarges it; it gives it an amplitude, a density, and a vibration or an undulation whose outline never does anything but approach. The visual persists until its disappearance; the sonorous appears and fades away into its permanence." [5]

Focusing on the sonorous obliges us to reconsider the aesthetic object in relation

to the multisensory realm and to question representations of what sonic stimulation might communicate as information. It also creates a relation and a correspondence to the self, to the other, and to the outside world. Seth Kim-Cohen makes the point: "Lyotard's equation of the sublime with postmodern aesthetics signals a different approach to the question of representation. The sublime object is no longer conceived strictly as the product of nature, as in mountains, oceans, and earthquakes, nor strictly as a product of the boundlessness of time and space. The sublime object, as it is now understood, is just as likely to be the product of human intervention." [6]

**I would assume that social space is more sonic than visual. Communication is more precise acoustically than just visually.**

– Haroon Mirza [7]

In the Old English word *hlysnan*, "to listen", the focus is on the notions of *attention* and *intent*; it refers to an active act not merely of hearing, but of hearing with intent. In Modern English, too, while the verb *to hear* usually refers to automatic or passive sound perception, the verb *to listen* connotes intentional or purposeful use of the sense of hearing. It implies intensified concentration and awareness of what one is listening to. The French word *entendre* carries both meanings: to hear but also to understand what is heard.

Kim-Cohen stresses the "inter-textual nature" of sound, an "aboutness" that "allows for sound's interactions with linguistic, ontological, epistemological, social, and political signification." [8] He also points out that listening is not about the "sound-in-itself" or "the solipsism of the internal voice", but means multiplying the singularity of perception into the plurality of experience, which extends into "a conversation with the cross talk of the world." [9] Most crucially, he introduces the notion of a "non-cochlear sonic art" that moves away from the materiality of sound, away from the solidity of the *objet sonore*, of sound-in-itself—"a movement tended to be inward, a conservative retrenchment focused on materials and concerns considered essential to music and/or sound" [10]—and towards a discursive conceptual sonic practice. Active listening can be an aesthetic/semiotic process that in fact goes beyond the realm of music, which is often understood as the language of the emotions.

As Rosalind Krauss emphasises: “It is obvious that the logic of the space of postmodernist practice is no longer organised around the definition of a given medium on the grounds of material, or, for that matter, the perception of material. It is organised instead through the universe of terms that are felt to be in opposition within a cultural situation.”[11]

Conceptual sonic art can itself be a spatial, cultural, social, political, and ideological practice in which the acoustic space conveys the social relations within a socially and politically produced space. From the auditory perspective, the space might be perceived primarily as a mere physical space with multiple layers of operational sounds from our everyday life, which we most often attempt to tune out. We seek to disconnect ourselves from the world outside and collective experience—this is a global phenomenon. With our personal devices demanding more and more of our attention, we are steadily growing deaf to our immediate environment and losing that sense of being part of a whole.

The sonic art group Ultra-Red stresses that active listening helps us to define our own position in the public space: “How we hear what we hear [in] the spaces we come to occupy, constitutes us within this public space.”[12] While it is true that the public space is a design for control, which includes “a listener’s relationship to their environment, and the social circumstances that dictate who gets to hear what”,[13] it is not only a physical space, something engineered, but also a social space, formed by people and their social relations, and this is what produces its meaning. In contrast to shielding ourselves from the ubiquity of surrounding sounds, listening involves assigning meaning to our own social relations and amplifying and transforming the way space is produced and accounted for.

Everything is in conversation; everything is interconnected. As Eyal Weizman stresses: “The surface of the earth—now increasingly called upon to perform as evidence/witness in political negotiations, international tribunals and fact-finding missions—is not an isolated, distinct, stand-alone object, and nor did it ever ‘replace’ the subject; rather, it is a thick fabric of complex relations, associations and chains of actions between people, environments, and artifices. It always overflows any map that tries to frame it, because there are always more connections to be made.”[14]

Recording techniques have become tools for documentation—not only in the realm of political and legal negotiations—but also in the writing and (re)creation of history, culture and reality. Who decides what is recorded, how it is recorded, and what should be remembered? Audio recordings can be tools for reconciliation, for resistance to power; they can be used as testimony and evidence in legal and forensic arguments. But like most things, they can also be abused: consider sonic anti-loitering devices and sonic warfare, or the military strategy of targeted assassinations using drones. Generally, the use of drones is an attempt to reduce civilian casualties, but their omnipresent sonic by-product, a high-frequency emission that hovers in the air like an indiscriminate lethal weapon, in fact causes severe long-term psychological distress with a variety of consequences for the social dynamics of whole communities. There can be no question that the deployment of such weapons, including, among other things, sonic booms used for the purpose of intimidation, violates human rights laws against harming civilians and exacting collective punishments.

In sound recording practices, what is recorded is not only the sonic scope produced in the space (and which defines the space), but also the sound of the space itself. Sound is produced by space, but it also is space. Recording sounds may serve multiple purposes, but at the same time it brings up questions about ownership (e.g. commercial sound trademarks), the distribution of media in relation to the social space, consumerism, and spectacle. Field recordings (usually an unmodified recording of the soundscape of a specific environment; but often also understood as *sonic journalism*) play a crucial role in the practice of documentation and in the discourse around its various methods. In many cases, there may be a critical dichotomy between the aesthetic aspects and the factual circumstances of the recordings, involving such issues as social injustice, military and geopolitical affairs, and the interdependent relations between culture, the human species, nature, and the environment, as well as related questions of adaptation and reappropriation. As we have learned, when we lose an indigenous culture or species, we also lose a sound.

The surface of the earth is surrounded by an atmosphere consisting of vibrations of light and electromagnetic radiation—a geographical soundscape and the medium for the sound waves of wireless communications and radio emissions. Although stemming from a concrete

physical reality, radio waves extend into other realms of the consciousness and sense experience, connecting and coinciding with faraway places. Radio can be a useful tool for information—and can also be abused (e.g. for propaganda)—and it can provide entertainment for popular culture and serve any variety of subcultures, even dissident cultures (e.g. BBC and Voice of America broadcasts in the Soviet Union during the Cold War). Radio communications, and sound works in general, certainly have the capacity to create a sonic fiction—not only in the sense of a literary fiction, but as an alternative reality “which makes audible the possibilities of the actual world”, as Salomé Voegelin puts it. “It is sound itself, as pathetic trigger, that entices us to inhabit this world in listening, and grants us access to what the world might be and how we might live in it as in an affective geography.”[15]

Auditory landscapes can also be interpolations between space and time, space and reality, the psycho-social and the geographic, and temporality and memory. The act of listening involves a transitional state between attention and imagination, between sensual experience and understanding or seeking a possible meaning.

**[M]eaning and sound share the space of a referral, in which at the same time they refer to each other, and [...], in a very general way, this space can be defined as the space of a self, a subject. A self is nothing other than a form or function of referral: a self is made of a relationship to self, or of presence to self [...]. To be listening will always, then, be to be straining toward or in an approach to the self [...]. When one is listening, one is on the lookout for a subject, something [...] that identifies itself by resonating from self to self [...].**

– Jean-Luc Nancy [16]

Listening is situated between expectation and prediction; it is based in the present moment, but this is a moment that looks towards something yet to occur. It is a desire for and an anticipation of understanding.

**The lack of space between sign and signifier in the visual logic frames a location of desire.**

– Salomé Voegelin [17]

Listening is an interchronic moment, a void caused by the time of information moving between resistor, capacitor, and our biological auditory system as receiver. To listen is to enter a spatiality in which time becomes space, located between past, present, and future and encompassing notions of the *remainder*—the trace that, in Derrida’s description, “offers itself for thought before or beyond being”:

*It is inaccessible to a straightforward intuitive perception (since it refers to something wholly other, it inscribes in itself something of the infinitely other), and it escapes all forms of prehension, all forms of monumentalisation, and all forms of archivation. [...] What we are saying at the moment is not reducible to the notes you are taking, the recording we are making, or the words I am uttering—to what will remain of it in the world. [...] These remainder effects will thereby have presence effects—differently in one place or another, and in an extremely uneven way according to the contexts and the subjects that will get attached to it.[18]*

As early as the fifth century BCE, the Pythagoreans explored ways to amplify the ungraspable effects of presence and developed the notion of *acousmatics*—a method of knowledge production that involves hearing something without seeing the originating cause.

When a sound wave is transmitted through space, either acoustically or electronically, there is a reaction in both the biological and auditory systems of the body. The body becomes resonant and vibrates in resonance with other bodies and surfaces. A clear example is the *human microphone*, which functions by listening to another person’s voice and then embodying that voice in one’s own, like a collective vocal transfer. In this method—also called *the people’s microphone* and used, for example, in the Occupy movement and in circumstances where electronic amplification is impossible—voice means not only sound produced and uttered through the mouth; it becomes, literally, the *vox populi* (Latin: “the voice of the people”) and serves as an agency by which a particular point of view is expressed or represented.

**Involved in a constant reciprocity with its sonic environment, the human body perpetuates the fundamental principle of acoustic resonance: holding a multitude of similar frequencies neither as precisely same nor as perfectly different. Acoustic resonance draws a particular**

**proximity between one's physical location and phenomenal extension to another.**

**Imagine this resonance as a landscape of acoustic tension, a horizontal spectrum of multiple modalities of sounds, which do coincide with one another but which do not necessarily become one. The very act of hearing holds the acoustic tension. When we hear a sound, we are simultaneously moved to and positioned in a place. [19]**

Sound is not linear; it is immersive, omnidimensionally complex, penetrating, and omnipresent, and it offers constantly changing possibilities and perspectives. The notion of listening is connected with tension, intention and attention. As Nancy explains, it "forms the perceptible singularity that bears in the most ostensive way the perceptible or sensitive (*aesthetic*) condition as such: the sharing of an inside/outside, division and participation, de-connection and contagion." [20]

Situated within the tension of the acoustic scope are the material and performative aspects of the human voice, of language and speech. Vocal gestures can only be interpreted within a social fabric, where they can have far-ranging and life-changing effects: for example, in contractual issues (in the German tradition, a contract only becomes legally valid when a solicitor reads it out loud), in judicial

decisions and witness testimony, and in geopolitics and the technologies and sciences that are developing around it. In this connection, we might consider speech-analysis technologies that measure and analyse bodily responses to stress rather than the subject's speech itself; such devices are used worldwide in immigration and deportation proceedings to determine the veracity of asylum seekers' statements about their origins. Their use raises fundamental questions about how we speak, how we listen, how truth is produced, and how such *technologies of truth* turn subjects into objects. In this context, the notion of silence comes into play—not only in a Cagean or a Situationist sense, where silence amplifies the situation and the omnipresence and spatiality of sound, but also as a form of agency, as refusal and resistance. Gilles Deleuze makes this point when discussing the archaeology of the present: "It is as if, speech having withdrawn from image to become founding act, the image, for its part, raised the foundations of space, the 'strata', those silent powers of before or after speech, before or after man." [21]

*Hlysnan*, listening with intent, helps us to reconsider deeply held notions about the auditory ontologies and epistemologies through which we understand the world. The act of listening is not about representation or the phenomenological; it is about resonance. What is it that resonates when we listen? And ultimately, how does the self resonate and with whom?

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#### Biography

##### Berit Fischer

is an independent curator and writer who has worked internationally since 1999. She has presented tutorials, lectures, and workshops around the world, including at Freie Universität Berlin, Nottingham Trent University (UK), and the Soma organisation (Mexico City). She is a member of the advisory board for the B32 exhibition space (Maastricht) and was a co-founding curator of The Brewster Project (New York, 2001). Her curatorial projects include *Revolution Without Movement* (Galeria Hit, tranzit.sk, Bratislava), *Hlysnan: The Notion and Politics of Listening* (Casino Luxembourg Forum d'Art Contemporain, Luxembourg), *Part of the Game*, (nGbK, Berlin), *Other Possible Worlds—Proposals on this Side of Utopia* (nGbK, Berlin), *Brooklyn Waterfront Outdoor Sculpture Exhibition* (New York), *Dumbo Arts Festival* (New York), *Intrude 366* (Zendai Museum of Modern Art, Shanghai), and *City Beats* (BankART, Yokohama).

[1] This statement, known as Locard's exchange principle, is one of the basic tenets of forensic science; it was formulated by Edmond Locard (1877–1966), one of the founders of the field.  
[2] The Helmut Plessner Society, "The Thought of Helmut Plessner", <http://www.helmuth-plessner.de/seiten/seite.php?layout=bildhome&inhalt=engl>. Accessed on 24 March 2014.  
[3] See Michel Foucault, *Fearless Speech*, ed. Joseph Pearson, Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2001, pp. 11–20; see also Michel Foucault, *The Government of Self and Others: Lectures at the Collège de France 1982–1983*, trans. Graham Burchell (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2010), pp. 66–67.  
[4] Hans-Peter Krüger, "The Public Nature of Human Beings. Parallels between Classical Pragmatism and Helmut Plessner's Philosophical Anthropology," *Iris: European Journal of Philosophy and Public Debate* (Florence), vol. 1 (2009), p. 202.  
[5] Jean-Luc Nancy, *Listening*, trans. Charlotte Mandell, Bronx (New York: Fordham University Press, 2007), p. 2; originally published in French in 2002.  
[6] Seth Kim-Cohen, *In the Blink of an Ear: Toward a Non-Cochlear Sonic Art* (New York: Continuum, 2009), p. 219.  
[7] Artist statement, in: Barbara London, *Soundings, A Contemporary Score* (New York: Modern Museum of Art, 2013), p.48.  
[8] Kim-Cohen, *In the Blink of an Ear*, p. xvii.  
[9] *Ibid.*, pp. xxii–xxiii.  
[10] *Ibid.*, p. 261.  
[11] Rosalind Krauss, "Sculpture in the Expanded Field", *The Originality of the Avant-Garde and Other Modernist Myths* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1985); repr., 2002, p. 289.

[12] Ultra-Red, "Constitutive Utopias: sound, public space and urban ambience" (2000), <http://www.temporaryservices.org/ultratext.html>. Accessed on 17 March 2014.  
[13] Emily Thompson, *The Soundscape of Modernity: Architectural Acoustics and the Culture of Listening in America, 1900–1933* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2004), p. 12  
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[15] Salomé Voegelin, abstract for her talk "The Pathetic Trigger of Sound Draws Us Into a Sonic Fiction", at the conference "Resonant Bodies: Landscapes of Acoustic Tension", 13–15 June 2013, Berlin Institute for Cultural Inquiry, Berlin.  
[16] Nancy, *Listening*, pp. 8–9.  
[17] Salomé Voegelin, "Aural Intimacy" (2011), published on her website, [http://salomevoegelin.net/public\\_html/salomevoegelin.net/intimacy.html](http://salomevoegelin.net/public_html/salomevoegelin.net/intimacy.html). Accessed on 20 March 2014.  
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[19] Zeynep Bulut, Claudia Peppel, and Brandon LaBelle, programme brochure for the conference *Resonant Bodies: Landscapes of Acoustic Tension*, 13–15 June 2013, Berlin Institute for Cultural Inquiry, Berlin.  
[20] Nancy, *Listening*, p. 14.  
[21] Gilles Deleuze, "Archaeology of the Present", in: "Lexicon", *Forensic Architecture*, <http://www.forensic-architecture.org/lexicon/archaeology-of-the-present-gilles-deleuze>. Accessed on 16 March 2014.

# Sound Proof

**Isiah Medina**

**In fact, it is not even a question of a 'reading' in Grothendieck, but rather a listening. An articulation between images, intuition and ear, as opposed to other merely formal manipulations of language, seems to be fundamental for him. In addition to the metaphor of the nut and the rising tide, another of Grothendieck's central metaphors is, in fact, the image of the creative mathematician attending to 'the voice of things.' The 'hidden beauty of things' appears to be the hidden beauty of mathematical structures, an intrinsic beauty that the mathematician discovers by means of the extrinsic invention of sufficiently expressive languages. And so, in Grothendieck's perspective, mathematical structures appear in the phenomenological spectrum of the world, and so they are discovered - but these discoveries that can only be made by inventing, in an almost synchronic dialectic, adequate representations of the structures in question. The (musical, cohomological) metaphor of the motif itself shores up the idea that there exist hidden germs of structuration, which a good 'ear' should be able to detect.**

– Fernando Zalamea

I personally think it very important to look to movies for love. For a thinking of love. If love cannot be found within the immediate family, where else can we look for love? Where and how do we learn to speak it? In the age of the search bar it is important to listen since the word 'love' need not appear for what we listen to be about love. The results of the search for love in *Love Sounds*, as with all of Masha Tupitsyn's searches, are immediately present in the act of listening. To listen *for* and *with* love is to prepare the organ of the ear to listen for love. We can say that the We of the Two exists without having to at first make the distinction between two bodies. But perhaps we can also say there are always two voices in the sounds we are hearing. What is important is that there are no bodies on screen when listening to *Love Sounds*.

The first time I listened to *Love Sounds*, it was alone, through headphones, which reminded me of talking on the phone with someone you long to be with. The second time I heard *Love Sounds* was in a movie theater in New York during its premiere screening. At the screening there was a mistake in the introduction, which stated that

*Love Sounds* is 40—instead of 24—hours long. Yet there is a hint of truth in this exaggeration: for how do we measure our lives? By the day or by the work-week? And if we are unemployable, what then? How can love organize our time? Love is work, but it is not a question of employment or unemployment because the time of the work of love is eternity. The eternity of love is not of pre-existence or duration, but in creation. It is in the stance of always loving in the last instance. As in the opening quote to this essay, listening grants us entry into the eternal, whether it is in *je t'aime* or *je te matheme*.

*Love Sounds* is not only a movie, it's also a space. This recalls Wallace Stevens' "description without place" since this is another question the film raises: when and where can we start listening and how do we create spaces to be in love? The struggle to monetarily and temporally afford a space is a very concrete struggle.

When I first listened to the four-hour cut of *Love Sounds* it reminded me of trying to watch Robert Bresson's movies as a teenager, during which time I kept nodding off and fought to stay awake. The problem was not boredom. It was the rigorous way Bresson uses a sound, subtracting the image when a sound is enough. My organs were exhausted because they were simply not used to being used that way. It is the same reason we are exhausted after a fight: when we argue, we are using new organs, and at the same time, we are learning to use them. This feeling of exhaustion is linked to a new experience of time where experience is simultaneously always the experience of the interruption of experience. In love, we follow logical claims, declarations that cannot be immediately attached to experience, and thus the organs have to re-discover and re-learn their function. Both in *Love Sounds*, and in life, we fight and listen, and attempt to speak in a language that is inadequate, so we have to listen in order to try to invent new words, new ways of making claims, and new ways of committing ourselves to others. Or, as Tupitsyn demonstrates through her own listening-work, which is the work of making *Love Sounds*, we must at least learn to listen to someone else's listening. There is an excess in the commitment itself. We do not know in advance what our commitment will entail, but as rational and ethical beings we are responsible to what we commit to, to make compatible what merely appears to what actually is. In *Love Sounds*, we listen not only to the sound of love but to the very act of listening itself. We listen to the listening that this work required in order to be made. We listen to the possibility that what grounds statements of love



**You're only speaking of images.  
You've forgotten sound.**



**In movies, we always see  
people talking, never listening.**



In every image,  
we must know who speaks.

is the listening that will retroactively have had to have been done in order to say *I love you* and for it be true.

The same applies to the people we love. We must force ourselves to go through the work of loving interpretation; to be infinitely forgiving of what we hear, and to try to re-articulate it in its form of change. Love is the name of the part of change that does not change. Listening in love allows for the space between being and appearing while preparing the ground for their real synthesis. The real synthesis is the transformation of degrees of greater or lesser value of the frame into decisions (form of the Two: yes or no) of the Two into new degrees shared in the invisible frame of the cut: what we listen to, where we eat, if we live together, etc. We organize a new world, using our new organs, ordering our life into greater and lesser values around the cut that makes light and dark, sound and silence, possible. Love sees the cut not as two frames colliding, but as itself a frame; a new world of appearances; a world of appearances that does not simply appear to *every-one*, but must be committed to, so that the two frames appear consistent to itself. The form of the cut repeats like a flicker forcing the frames to consist, producing new stasis. But if we have new forms of the cut, which nonetheless are the same, the two frames have the chance grace of forcing a new consistency; changing the very form of change, so that the two frames stay together in a moving division of love across every possible world.

*Love Sounds* is determined by the following progression, rationally cutting and choosing sounds which choose and emphasize the fact of choice as listening: Desire-Sex, Sexual Politics, Trust-Betrayal, Break-Ups, Heartbreak, Violence-Death, Fate-Time-Memory, and Love. When we take any of these categories we are presented with two logics in the work of listening: the “love sound” we hear is Desire-Sex... because it is speaking of a, b, c, i.e., this love sound is Desire-Sex. Once a section completes, the title fades out and there is a momentary silence before the next section begins. Closing our eyes is crucial with *Love Sounds*. We could even say that *Love Sounds* is a movie we attend *in order* to close our eyes; sometimes opening them again, perhaps forgetting what category we are in, but each time re-encountering the title and re-determining what it is we are listening to. For example, when we listen to Break-Ups, the category itself can hinder what we hear. If we listen *for* a break-up, we listen to these words as a break-up, and therefore end up expecting and producing a break-up. But perhaps we need to subtract from

these predetermined classifications and close our eyes to the categories themselves; listening instead to how this closing can actually be an opening. If we can decide on the paraconsistency of these states, we can say, “No, this does not have to be a break-up.” Instead, these words, on the brink of a dissolution, can open up new paths to continue, to persevere, to work-through. The categories are at once abbreviations and explications. Put another way, the categories are like time in relation to eternity: time is eternity catching up to itself, and we close our eyes to the categories to short-circuit the passage where each category is an attempt of love to catch up to itself. The words of dissolution open up to the dissolution of words through a new listening.

And yet, Tupitsyn demonstrates that within the regime of repetition, we need to add (to search for) something to these categories that cannot be deduced from them alone. These relationship categories are finite—(inde)finite—there is something forgotten in them that must be retrieved, which is also the work of love. In *Love Sounds*, there is not only potential for love, there is the actual category, Love, which comes at the very end. Surpassing all the other finite categories, Love does not succeed the categories, as love is not a question of success or repetition. In fact, the final category of Love is the space where these successions take place. To go to the cinema and listen to *Love Sounds* is to commit to love as the horizon of this listening. That is, to cinema as the infinite place. In *Love Sounds*, Love interrupts all the other finite categories; a decision that appears at the end but will have totalized what came before. And yet, Love is also an intermission in *Love Sounds* because there is no reason for love to end. We have simply exhausted the finite worlds of Desire-Sex, Sexual Politics, Trust-Betrayal, Break-Ups, Heartbreak, Violence-Death, Fate-Time-Memory, and Love. We can recommence and proceed with new finite investigations under the aegis of Love.

The progressions that *Love Sounds* accomplishes are not the transitions through its chosen *de facto* sections and stages, but the transition that, through the de-suture of the sound to the image, allows us to go to the cinema in order to close our eyes. That is: to make the transition from an objective encyclopedic knowledge of cinema towards its subjectivization. Closing our eyes forces the image to be purely mental, not retinal. Subtracted from image and plot, from bodies and languages, we have the voice as the vanishing mediator that suspends the distinction between inner and outer voice. To listen to the sounds not by watching them emanate from someone’s

mouth, or from someone's body, but by listening to the sonorous voices that have been subtracted from the contingency of the body in order to be incorporated as an internal monologue that one listens to—or rejects. The intensity of listening in (and to) *Love Sounds* therefore emerges so that one is able to listen to and hear one's own thoughts with more clarity and resonance. It awakens the fact that *this could be love*, and so we listen with anticipation and a new sense of responsibility. Without seeing the image, and subtracted from plot, *Love Sounds* makes you listen to the ethic that is heard. When we listen to the ethic that is heard, we are committed to the cut of sound rather than to the volume of the image.

To put it another way: protests for a movement are only one part of a political process. There needs to be a declaration of a People: a party to subtract from law, and a leader that is the proper name, which extends the situation. However, if we simply remain *within* protests, we equate *politics* as equivalent to freedom of speech. It is not the freedom and right of speech, *but* the suspension of freedom towards the working-through of equal and just listening (to a Master). We should not be afraid of any sort of *politiques des auteur*, even if the auteur does nothing but listen, for it is enough to let us know that we are free and we can choose a true choice.

So far, in Tupitsyn's *Love Sounds* we have four-hours, which will soon become a day, which brings us back to the question of what a true day is; a day dedicated to thinking a truth in a world. When a day is only a day, when we think our new organs in the future anterior, take time to listen for love, and after love we will always have had a loving ear. In love, we are not relegated to the day or the work-week, but we are laborers. We work-through new modes of *working-through*.

This is the labor of love. If *Love Sounds* is created by cutting sounds, and if we follow the instruction of Godard's that Tupitsyn often quotes, we can see sounds and listen to images. To see and hear the cut of sound is to think the two frames that produce a cut. A cut is a decision that at once suspends continuity and has the ability to suspend this suspension, producing its own forms of suspension.

There has always been a false dichotomy between silence and sound when, in fact, both appear. When listening to *Love Sounds* one hears an intimacy in the doubling of listening. We are not simply listening to "love" but to the very possibility of using our organs to *hear* love. We are also listening to the pure fact that someone has already listened, which is what makes our listening possible. We listen to a movie and also to the work of someone listening to a movie. The words in *Love Sounds* are speculative since the same sentence can mean two different things. To be more precise: the same sentence can be saying something or it can be saying no-thing. It is the difference between saying *I love you* and meaning it, and saying *I love you* and not meaning it. *Love Sounds* asks us to listen to and hear this difference. To hear the difference between no-thing and something.

Yet *Love Sounds* is also about listening closely enough to the history of cinema and the statements it has produced to be disappointed by them. Tupitsyn enters into this space of disappointment and re-formulates what has been said about love in cinema, producing new listenings—new sayings, new possibilities—that forge and ground new couples. In the end, *Love Sounds* is not only a movie or a history. It is, more importantly, a documentary of an act of love, and a generous, patient listening by its creator.

#### Biography

##### Isiah Medina

makes and thinks with movies. He lives in Toronto.  
His films can be found here: [youtube.com/user/isiamedina1/videos](https://www.youtube.com/user/isiamedina1/videos) and [isiamedina.tumblr.com](https://www.isiahmedina.tumblr.com)

**Labor of Love:  
An interview with Masha Tupitsyn**

**C. Spencer Yeh**

### C. Spencer Yeh

The title *Love Sounds* to me evokes lasciviousness—as if I’m listening in on someone getting down through a wall. Is there an element of voyeurism to the work?

CSY

Since you are drawing from a variety of sources, can you talk about the textural aspects of placing excerpts from lower budget works alongside Hollywood productions? Do you think the perceived sound quality informs the read of the content?

### Masha Tupitsyn

Clearly parts of *Love Sounds* are sexy and erotic, but the project isn’t about voyeurism or even eavesdropping. It’s the opposite, in fact. A lot of *Love Sounds* is purposely hard to hear. The visual is not merely being swapped for the aural. Sound functions as a thematic and ontological process of attention and intention. Sound contends with the intimate and requires active listening to the archive of love statements that the film gathers and attends to. I’m interested in a listening viewer, not a viewing listener. What I’ve really been looking at my whole life is sound. I’ve spent a great deal of my life mourning language. This means I look at sound in this project as what we are not hearing when we watch movies as well as the thinking and listening work we are not doing around love. The “love sounds” we’re hearing require us not to listen in or on something, but to actively listen for and to. So it’s not about a formal manipulation of language or a fetishizing of the sound-in-itself, as is often the case with the lascivious, where the coop and the thrill is to hear what you are not supposed to hear—the secret, the hidden. Rather, it’s a process of understanding. Of making sense of what we’re hearing but failing to understand. As Jean-Luc Nancy notes in his book *Listening*, “*Entendre*, ‘to hear,’ also means *comprendre*, ‘to understand,’ as if hearing, above all, were ‘hearing say’ rather than ‘hearing sound.’” The act of listening is more important than the sound itself, the value is in the relation between.

MT

I think that different aspects of sound—tone, accent, timbre, volume, scratch—inconsistency—make content. How do we want things to sound? And what are we ready to hear? I kept the “imperfections” and the different textures in the clips because to me they are markers of time and context, whether that context is tonal, temporal or economic. This obviously occurs in the aesthetic juxtaposition of Hollywood movies with lower budget movies—high/low—but also within the tonal register of a clip or film itself. Every decade has its own script, cadence, politic, and I want those nuances to come through because *Love Sounds* also has its ear pressed to that. The film tracks the affective and linguistic shifts

around emotional labor, which has always been my holy grail as a subject. In each section (there are eight) I tried to build compositional structures that spoke to each other and finished each other sentences in dissonant ways. So, difference through repetition and iteration. I want people to hear the same thing (a break-up or a fight, let's say)—or *think* they're hearing the same things—over and over and ask what is different in the repetition and return? Why does something repeat? Why do we use the same words for things and how do the words themselves create or jeopardize love? Electronic music has a similar relationship with repetition. It knows the incremental force that builds and accumulates with reiteration. Language is a form of reality-making and distortion, so we need to understand its drives, failures, and reverbs when it comes to love. We are all at our worst and our best with language, which is also a kind of high/low interpolation. Clichés are like glitches. They point to the places where we've stopped thinking—stopped listening—which means they also tell us what can be made different. We musn't take the repetition of expression for granted, thinking that because we've heard and said the same things over and over, we are familiar with something—that we understand love, or anything for that matter.

CSY

I don't have a list of movies you are drawing from, but are you finding the majority of movies fitting a particular sexual orientation or identity? How do you think this affects the work?

MT

The history of popular cinema is heteronormative and white. This made my work two-fold: I had to note and track the omissions of cinema and also try to balance and reconstruct them in some way. I could not pretend that what was missing was not missing or that a certain kind of presence isn't a deliberate absence. So I scoured the history of English-speaking movies (80+ years, from the 1930s to the present. The inventory consists of 1500+ films, and hundreds of audio clips) for varied instances of sexuality, desire, race, and class. This resulted in a reconstruction because these representations are blatantly missing in most cases, particularly in American cinema. There is much more serious queer European and even Latin American cinema than there is American. But because *Love Sounds* is aural, I couldn't use subtitles, so my choices were limited by that. Unless you're looking at art-house, alternative cinema, most gay people in commercial American cinema are the butt of the joke, an insidious caricature, or glossed over. In the case of people of color, the selection of love narratives—of any kind of meaningful, progressive narrative—is either incredibly narrow or simply absent. There are a lot more expressions of desire, sex, and violence about people of color

in cinema than there are of grief, longing, tenderness, and love. And this is no accident. It's a very deliberate canon of representation. To see a loving black or gay couple on screen would undermine this canon. I had to really search for these missing stories while staying within the bounds of "recognizable" movies since I was referencing and building a *lingua franca*, which is cinema. If the examples were too obscure they wouldn't have functioned as a shared history. *Love Sounds* is a work that tries to fill in gaps while also representing what the history of movies actually sounds (and doesn't sound) like.

CSY

Why are you aiming for 24-hours with the project? I'm guessing you don't have a staff, so I'm curious about the role of duration not only for the audience, but for yourself as the artist?

MT

No staff. And even if I could afford a staff, like Christian Marclay did on *The Clock*, I wouldn't employ anyone else to do the work for me. It's just not how I work. This might be a very old fashioned way of thinking about creative praxis, but for me, part of a work is the actual procedure of making a work. An idea is a promise and a process. A truth procedure, a trial. I wouldn't be able to understand or realize an idea if I were simply its commissioner. This probably has to do with my philosophical training. The work's duration—24-hours—is an extension of this ethos. The film is an enormous construction and constructions happen in and over time. But more importantly: *Love Sounds* had to be my duration—my listening, my endurance—before it could become someone else's. Or it's theirs because it was also mine, which makes it ours. I don't think a project about love, about relation, about the Two, about mourning, about listening as an act of generosity, could work in any other way. Duration is a process of endurance, but the digital doesn't work this way. It's presentist. It doesn't unfold over time. If love is a test of commitment and endurance, then the work of love, which is also listening, must consist of the time it takes to actually listen. It occurred to me that you took a similar approach with your music project, *White Noise*. You stress that it was done "by hand" "meaning a lot of listening and splicing." I like this emphasis on digital handiwork or craftwork (of being hands on) in the digital era. Of going through with something. By releasing it at the "right time," as you put it, the project takes on a timeliness; a destinal quality.

CSY

I absolutely agree about making the process more than just realizing an idea or concept—there is something about being involved firsthand. For *White Noise*—much like *Love Sounds*, I can imagine—I spent countless hours inhabiting each of these pop songs, these mini-worlds. Learning each song as an individual, how it seemed to

work, in order to figure out how to edit them down without making them just gestures or samples or fragments, whatever. I can't say I enjoyed all of that experience, but I don't want to pretend like I haven't been affected by the process, nor do I feel I was ever working "above" the source material. How have you been affected by spending time within these movies? Were there any works or source material that you hadn't paid much mind to prior, that you were turned around about?

MT

Right. You're in it, not above it, as you note. You work yourself through and into the material (and vice versa), and that's how you generate the material. A lot of *Love Sounds*, which is the last installment in an immaterial trilogy of work, is a kind of mourning diary. I was working through my own grief and disappointment via a cultural archive of grief that everyone is familiar with and has shared via cinema, a medium that no longer really exists. Some days this was elating, devastating, cathartic, healing. Some days I was crying at the computer or feeling incredibly frustrated by what I was hearing. I definitely have a fondness for and attachment to certain movies and clips in *Love Sounds* and remember the first time I heard them, which is probably when the project actually began—as a child fixated on language, asking my parents about the things I was hearing on screen. I'm still fixated on language and asking the same questions about emotional labor. I have a mnemonic ear, which is why I was able to do this project in the first place—because I remember words more than I remember plot or images. I don't retain plot or even understand plot a lot of the time. I also have a pretty good knowledge of cinema, which I accumulated through watching films all my life, studying them at school, and then writing *LACONIA*, for which I'd set up a dictate for myself: to watch 1000+ movies in one year and write about them in a 140 characters, every day. I would not have been able to do the work of *Love Sounds* without first doing the work of *LACONIA*. *LACONIA* was the groundwork for *Love Sounds*, which brings us back to timing and the timeliness that you evoke in *White Noise*. Work leads to work. One work makes another work possible. Work, particularly work that uses digital media, is the medium, the form, the passage, the way—as Trinh T. Minha writes. I had an extensive list of the movies I would be working through and sampling, cutting. Movies I was excited to use. Movies that I'd thought about my whole life. That had rung in my ears and now I had place to put them. While other films were discovered through various fortuitous and circuitous searches, which led to films I hadn't seen or had forgotten. I was also of course watching a lot of current movies—all the

way up to 2014. I worked through each decade. Eight-and-a-half decades and eight sections.

Now let me ask you about your sound project, *White Noise*. What was the genesis and why did you choose mostly covers of pop songs instead of original versions? This interests me on the level of a kind of anti-memory being applied to music, which has so much to do with both cultural and personal memory. It's like you are fast-forwarding with *White Noise*, instead of rewinding. I, for example, love Don Henley's "Boys of Summer," which is so evocative. But you sampled and compressed the cover version instead, kind of squeezing the memory out of it; speeding it up. Were you trying to bypass the experience of living through a cultural artifact subjectively and temporally? Of music locating us in time and time locating us in music.

CSY

Yeah "Boys of Summer" sure is something—the production in the opening, the echo delay, all that, is so key. *White Noise 2* is bookended by two covers of that song, which pretty much strip away those touches but relies on the impression of that aural mise-en-scene in their evocation of the original. Talk about squeezing the life out of it with buzzing guitars and crushing 4/4 beats! The beginning of the *White Noise* projects started when I was in college, totally pre-filesharing, and when I lived in the dorms, I'd raid various people's CD collections and make mixtapes by genre or feel. There was one, *Pure Power*, which was a lot of hair and pop metal. At the time I was mostly concerned with listening to experimental or noise music on my own time, but I had this access to a variety of stuff like Blues Traveler, or whatever, just next door or down the hall. The picks, as you mentioned, were relying on both my memory, as well as asking people what was "hot" at the time. That was tough though—it was the mid-90s and it wasn't very cool to really think about Backstreet Boys and I dunno, Madonna, at the same time. So years later when I finally learned audio editing on the computer, I started *White Noise* as an editing exercise, so that I could keep my skills up for my own music. I mentioned "time travel" because I was totally trying to create this sensation of having listened to a five minute song in a minute and a half; the idea was trying to evoke buried impressions people had of having to sit through that 5 minute song while shopping or sitting at a bar or whatever situation where you're subjected to unsolicited material and information. Or perhaps you had been sitting and listening to *Backstreet* over and over already—whatever happened to embed that 5-minute experience into you. That first section of *White Noise 2*, there is a medley of cover songs by this pop punk "supergroup"

that specializes in covering popular songs. I'm pretty happy with how that one turned out. There's a number of mini-exercises within the larger exercise of *White Noise 2*—for example, a ten minute condensed version of the entirety of My Chemical Romance's *The Black Parade*, which took a lot of time and sanity. I'd like to think that was a response to, I don't know, time-crushing the entire Beatles' discography with a plug-in and calling it a day. I don't think I can be totally accused of being irreverent or ironic with the exercise because I listened to that album fifty million times to get it done!

MT

**That's interesting because in movies we don't see the time it takes to "travel." There's very little emotional time in movies. Time is usually a montage, a skip. Or it's represented textually by a time-jump. Time is noted in language. The travel of time-travel—the future—is always a kind of memory-lapse or elision. We need time to represent time, and mainstream movies, which are rigidly timed, don't have time to spare. But the process of making a durational work is the opposite. It's work-as-time. This is what Avital Ronell means when she says "do the apprenticeship," or what you refer to as being subjected and subjecting oneself to a kind of storehouse of cultural material and labor, cataloguing and melding both high and low. It seems with *White Noise* you are time-crushing, time-crunching, deleting. And with *Love Sounds* I am time-stretching, time-pressing. Yet we both seem to be interested in what it means to do the work of listening. And that part can't be sped up or bypassed.**

\* Text originally published in *RECAPS*, "Wild Card", Issue 13, Winter 2015.

#### Biography

**C. Spencer Yeh** lives and works in Brooklyn NY. He is currently an Artist-in-Residence at ISSUE Project Room. His latest work *Solo Voice I - X* will be published by Primary Information in Spring 2015.

# Radical Love

Yaniya Lee

The dialogues and professions of Masha Tupitsyn's *Love Sounds* are edited into a 24-hour sound history. Some audio fragments last seconds, others long minutes. The white titles of *Love Sounds*' eight sections are the only images that appear on the film's static black screen. Whole emotional worlds flit by before you have a chance to fully enter into them. You are forced to pay attention. Over and over, faceless voices make declarations of sacrifice and supplication, anger and seduction, hope and betrayal. You stare so hard at *Love Sounds*' titles that you stop seeing them. Images come alive in your mind and melt away as quickly as the next clip moves in. After a while you begin to recognize bits and pieces of your own intimate experience in what you hear. *Love Sounds* is a demanding and fragmented work, but once you've submitted to it, it draws you into a feeling of closeness.

Though it has many filmic traits, *Love Sounds* is not technically a film. It does not tell a single story, or even a set of stories. Tupitsyn calls *Love Sounds* a "sound poem" and a "sound history." Each film clip has been plucked from the narrative that gave it context and recomposed with other extracts into eight separate parts: Desire-Sex, Sexual Politics, Trust-Betrayal, Break-Ups, Heartbreak, Violence-Death, Fate-Time-Memory, and Love. The montage of each segment reveals a set of linguistic conventions and emotional stages that have guided our understanding and performance of love. You hear voices submit to, and struggle against, the constraints of those discursive conventions. *Love Sounds* is a collection of instances (in film) where power, desire, social codes, and violence flow through our language and determine how people come together and how they fall apart. It is an inventory of the stories that we tell ourselves, and proclaim to others, about love. Over time, the amalgamated, disembodied voices in *Love Sounds* accumulate an uncanny authority. The characters, voices, and situations they bring together combine into the amorphous shape of the couple in all of its stages. As CLÉMENCE X. CLEMENTINE writes, "The logic of the couple has replaced the logic of god"[50]. What *Love Sounds* confronts us with are the endless scripts of our successes and failures to connect.

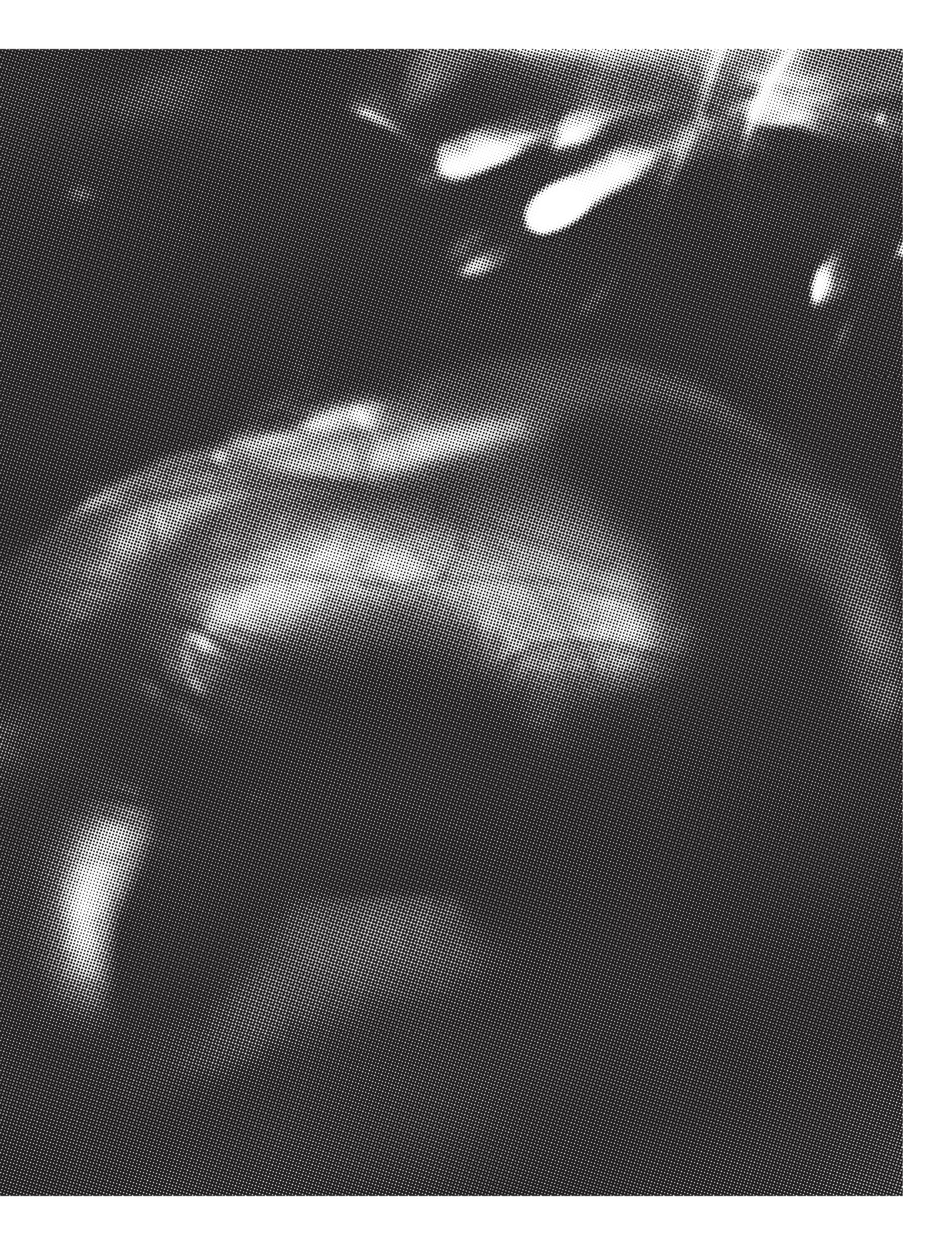
Up until recently, our culture worshipped at the altar of film, where love was shown from every angle, in all of its gritty and exalted states. In theatres, we sat together and mastered every one of those scripts. Now, we mostly relate to others in a mediated and episodic way. A focus on the construction of ourselves as individuals has replaced our participation in any kind of collective ethos. We text or email, rather than talk. We pick our next dates based on jpgs. We maintain friendships via social media posts. Inattention, fragmentation, and speed inform most

of our communication; our commitment to others has waned. *Love Sounds* takes that most intense relation, the lovers relation, as its starting point and molds it into an event of duration and critical engagement. Over 24 hours *Love Sounds* asks: *How has your experience of love differed from your fantasy and performance of it?*

The effect of *Love Sounds*' continuous juxtapositions, the effort of taking it in, making sense of it, processing what is said, how it is said, why it is said; how it relates to the clip before and after, and then to each segment as a whole, are the active efforts the listener must make to contend with the work. Although *Love Sounds* is diverse and combs through over 80 years of both mainstream and alternative cinema, the duration of the work, and its compulsive repetition (itself an affect of cinema) of the sentiments expressed, generate a banality that may neutralize an emotional response, challenging the listener to remain engaged. Listening so deeply, for such a long time, can end up wearing you out.

The 24-hour duration of *Love Sounds* puts it in direct relation to Christian Marclay's 24-hour montage, *The Clock* (2010). Marclay's video edits together thousands of film clips that correspond to every single moment of an entire day, raising questions about the porousness between narrative and reality, and the modern tyranny of time. *Love Sounds*' epic length similarly draws attention to time. Our relationship to time and desire are deeply informed by capitalist imperatives. So are our relationships to one another. "The logic of the couple," explains CLÉMENCE X. CLEMENTINE, "funnels, simplifies, and reduces amorous desire to the needs of patriarchy within the capitalist mode of production"[46]. Taking this context into account, the unsettling authority of *Love Sounds*' voices might partly derive from their extended manifestation of our ailing interpersonal, consumer habits. In a sense, as you sit inside the voices, *Love Sounds* imprisons you within the scripts and time of love. Film theorist Michel Chion has described the off-screen voice in film as the *acousmètre*. Its disconnection from an interlocutor on-screen gives it panoptic power over the viewer. This off-screen position suggests an "ability to be everywhere, to see all, to know all, and to have complete power," [Chion 24]. That is to say, the *acousmètre*'s "word is like the word of God" [Chion 24]. The voices of *Love Sounds* are unseen. They are immaterial. The images in *Love Sounds*—the on-screen images to which an *acousmètre* must always be related—are here titles that refer to models of how we experience and perform love. Together, the voices in each segment seem to gain comparable authority to traditional *acousmètre*. It is the power of convention spoken as love scripts, both inside and outside the film screen.





As with the previous works in Tupitsyn's immaterial trilogy, in *Love Sounds* the immaterial once again becomes a formal device. This comprehensive ontology of how we talk about love reveals that love is determined by the heavily, now, digitally mediated language we use to express it. Love is embodied and made real—or destroyed, celebrated, mourned—through our complicit speech. Each carefully constructed section in *Love Sounds* builds its own structure, like an essay or a poem. The micro units of sound are Tupitsyn's formal and emotional building blocks of inspection. *Love Sounds* combines the familiar voices and sounds of the movies into something completely unfamiliar. A new attention to language emerges in their re-composition.

To step away from the screen and emerge from *Love Sounds'* embrace leads to a necessary reckoning. Over an extended period of time, the attention required by the work causes heightened and critical sensitivity in the listener. In the space between the sounds of love and the eight titled relationship categories on screen, the acousmatic authority of those speeches shifts to the listener's imagination. Experiencing *Love Sounds* feels like a ceremony or a spell. It is about love but it is also about intimacy; about listening as a way of being together. Here, this listening spurs a sort of catharsis: *Love Sounds* achieves an undoing—the familiar constructs and conflicts of the performativity and affects of love become unversed. All the previously upheld conventions are exploded by its rigorous composition. In this way *Love Sounds* allows for a space to reimagine how we can create and maintain intimacies, which looks a lot like radical love.

#### Biography

##### Yaniya Lee

is a writer and cultural documentarian. In print and audio her work considers the various intersections of art, labour and ideals. Last fall she published the chapbook *In Different Situations Different Behaviour Will Produce Different Results*, a conversation with Chris Kraus and Jacob Wren. Her most recent chapbook, *Troubled*, is a set of auto-fiction interviews written and printed during a residency at L'APPAT in Brussels, Belgium.

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is a writer, critic, and multi-media artist. She is the author of *Like Someone in Love: An Addendum to Love Dog* (Penny-Ante Editions, 2013), *Love Dog* (Penny-Ante Editions, 2013), a multi-media art book, *LACONIA: 1,200 Tweets on Film* (ZerO Books, 2011), *Beauty Talk & Monsters*, a collection of film-based stories (Semiotext(e) Press, 2007), and co-editor of the anthology *Life As We Show It: Writing on Film* (City Lights, 2009). Tupitsyn's fiction and criticism has appeared in numerous anthologies and journals. In 2011, she wrote a radio play for Performa 11, "Time for Nothing," the New Visual Art Performance Biennial in conjunction with *Frieze*.

**Love Sounds**

is a 24-hour audio history of love in cinema and concludes an immaterial trilogy.

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*Requiem for a Dream*,  
Darren Aronofsky, 2000

**Internal images**

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