THE MIDDLE MATTER
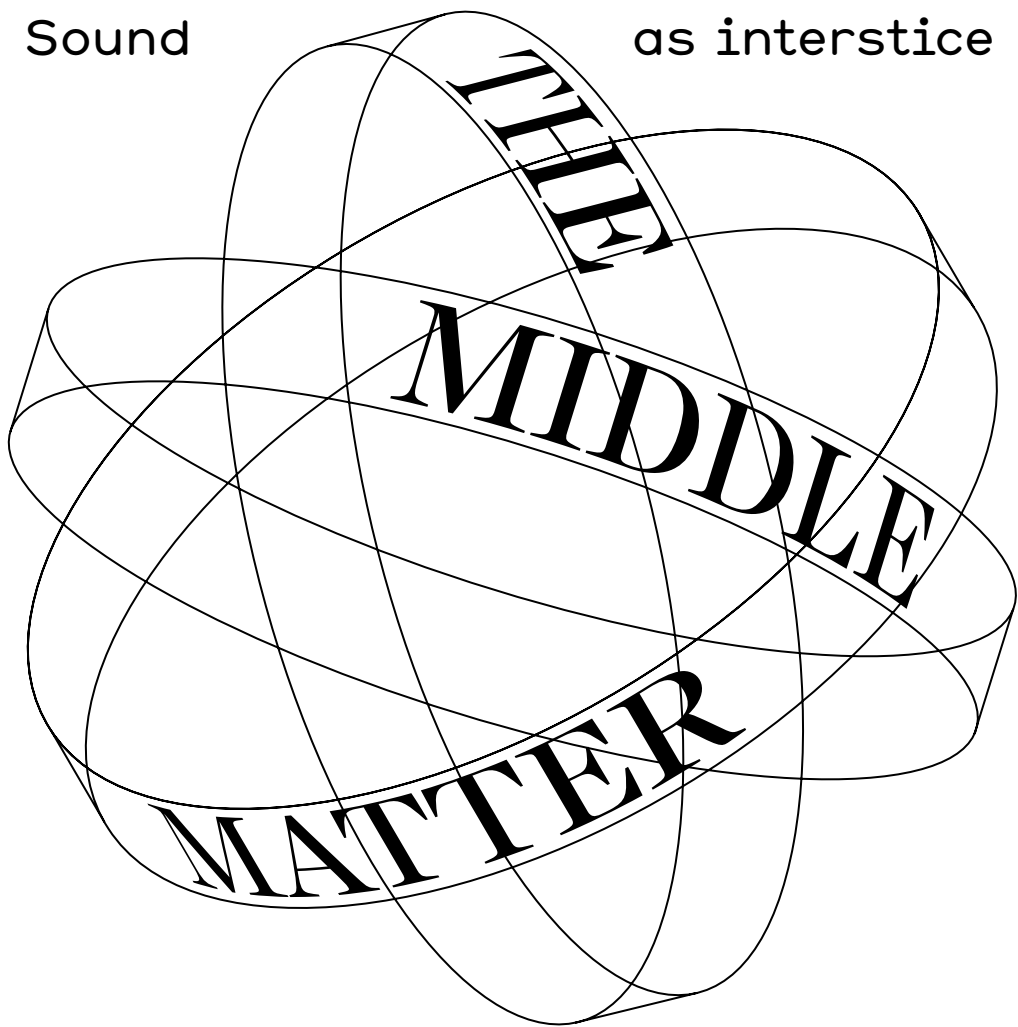
This reader brings together thoughts on the nature of sound; its substance, specific qualities, and potential—with a specific curiosity to its propensity to occupy the spaces in-between, the instertitial gaps between different spaces, times, cultures, and world views, between the interior body and the exterior space.

Sound

as interstice

THE MIDDLE MATTER

Caroline Profanter, Henry Andersen, and Julia Eckhardt (eds.)

INTERFACES RESIDENTS

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INTRODUCTION

The Nature of Sound

The impetus for this publication was a reflection on the nature of sound. What is its substance? What are its specificities, and what does that mean for its place in society and the arts? What does it transport, and how can it be described? These and other questions have been explored in the framework of several subsequent research activities, on sound itself, its capacity to connect and be used in participatory art, and its role in creating bonds with audiences through a variety of formats.

Sound describes a particular kind of matter-in-motion; a passage of waves propagating through carrier-materials like air and water. Sound is invisible, ungraspable, and ephemeral, giving it an unruly, mercurial character. As a medium, it can itself become a carrier for meaning that often passes under the radar, intuitively, on a gut level. In this way, sound can transport a lot of what is "only" felt: meaning that is hard to name or rebuild as an intellectual construction.

With these prominent traits, sound will always involve an interaction: between inside and outside space; between materials meeting in friction, percussion, oscillation; between bodies being connected through vibration; between sound emitters and listeners. Sound travels, hops borders, passes through walls. This interaction is part of life, and for a large part happens involuntarily and even unconsciously. In this sense sound is extensively participative, entangled in the complicated gaps between us.

These concerns drew us to go deeper into sound as a participatory artistic means, through the symposium Sound & Participation which we organised together with our project partner Ictus in February 2018. The talks opened an impressive scope of sound's capacity for creating and sharing space, and especially its propensity to occupy the zones *in between* spaces, positions, events, discourses, etc: it offered the idea of sound as a "betweening" space. The input and questions from this seminar, along with that of the residencies, lay the grounds for the festival Oscillation—on sound's nature and the present publication, which together serve as an intermediary conclusion of this phase of research.

   Hearing is always hearing-in-place, and the spaces in which this hearing unfolds affect the experience of listening in manifold ways; physical, cultural, lingual, etc. But this sited-ness is positioned *between* spaces: between walls, between the "external" room and the "internal" ear, between languages, across divisions between producer and listener, artist and audience. Sound is able to connect on an intuitive level, and as such it obliges us to negotiate and interact. At the same time, music and sound are not innocent; they carry ideology and can have political momentousness even without being discursive. In this sense, sound might be said not only to occupy space, but to create it as well; physical, social, mental, and shared spaces that do not necessarily follow the limits set by architecture, sight, geography, or language.

In line with the notion of sound as a material of the in-between—"the middle matter"—the festival aims to connect not only different artists, but different spaces with different ways of working. We feel fortunate to have received the support and input of a variety of partners—the majority of which are our neighbours in the Brussels Canal Zone—in linking their artistic activity to ours for this occasion.

Audiences, Reciprocity

This investigation takes shape within the framework of the Interfaces network, a project which circles its explorations around the audience. As an arts laboratory, our first curiosity went to the mechanisms of interaction which take place between artists, listeners, and organisers. How, for instance, do understandings of audience shift when listeners are split apart in time or space? When the material is not composed by people but by artificial intelligences or other technologies? When listening is to sound that is unwanted, or unnoticed? Artists might be their own first (even occasionally only) audience, and the sense of audience then grows and stretches as it starts to include collaborators, listeners, those who hear *about* a work, the communities and contexts in which a practice is developed or presented. An audience might also be deliberately narrowed, when artists direct themselves to specific communities or groups of people. Such changing understandings of audience affect the ways that artists make work, just as changing formats ask different modes of being a listener. Audience and format co-construct each other.

To ground these reflections in practice, we invited ten artists for residencies of one to two months at Q-O2, to explore some aspects of sound's potential to create a shared space. We issued an open call, inviting artists, practitioners, theorists, and educators to propose sound research projects that looked at ways to connect to the city, experimental modes of producing knowledge, and discursive or educational formats.

The ten artists we invited worked with very different aspects of sound in relation to sharing, participation, and connectivity: there was work around sound and the meaning of language, creative communal working processes, public and private oral archives, meditations on noise, radio and the imaginary, soundwalks and personal sound maps, sound as an artefact of time spent with people, music as a framework for structuring time with others, the creative use of distribution infrastructure and legal frameworks, and more. These ten artists opened up the scope of the collective research, and through observing their practices and ways of working, we were better able to formulate the questions underpinning both the festival and publication. Each of the artists has been invited back to present her or his work at the festival, and their thoughts and voices are present in this publication as extracts from interviews.

In general, for many of these artists, there was a natural propensity to experiment with non-traditional formats. The concert, the exhibition and the seminar are but a handful among a wide variety of possible frames to

communicate with an audience. As formats become more established, they develop into a kind of ritual, proposing or defining certain kinds of behaviour to certain kinds of audiences. This can be soothing at times, stifling at others. In more experimental situations, when the stakes for meaning are still fuzzy and not yet defined, the conditions for legibility become a responsibility shared between audience, artist, and organiser.

Technology and the Microscopic Perspective

This widened scope of perspectives on perception has been fuelled by sound reproduction technologies which emerged at the beginning of the last century and which have not yet been fully digested by the field of the sonic arts. Means of electronic reproducibility, such as the microphone, the loudspeaker, the material support (e.g. the tape, vinyl, hard-drive), have allowed for the taking of a microscopic listen to the inner life of sound. Further, as the site of production and the reception of sound become dislocatable and the possibility to repeat a sound recording shifts our subjective perception of its time, sound becomes, in a way, a means of understanding one's own listening. In the first decades of this century, there are likewise a wide variety of technical tools and infrastructures which may be appropriated by artists, including highly accesible softwares for sound manipulation, tools of virtual distribution like file-sharing and streaming services, modes of artificial

intelligence and the attendant legal and aesthetic questions about the traditional role of the author. With each new technology comes new practices of listening and, in this way, understandings of audience may thus change in ways that have less to do with the particularities of sound and music than with the technologies which produce or distribute it.

The Inbetweenness of the Sonic:
Thoughts and Perspectives of this Reader

The contributions to this publication take a wide variety of approaches to these topics —theoretical discussions, transcriptions of spoken conversations, image essays, captions, and ephemera. The definition of sound is taken broadly in this reader. Several observations and questions came back regularly, all circling around sound as a particularly apt means for sharing culture, for participatory artistic work, and therefore for the development of interaction with different audiences.

It should be noted, finally, that this publication is not a catalogue for the festival, though it springs from the same research and includes many of the same artists and thinkers as the festival does. It is better thought of as a parallel track, an equal part of the research trajectory which we covered together with a variable group of artists over the course of three years and with a variety of projects, extending similar questions beyond the limited time and defined space of the festival. If the festival asks us to be an audience who share in an experience of listening within the same space and time,

the publication lets us be an audience who share in a set of thoughts but who do so in our own space, in our own time.

Included are contributions of the residents with brief reflections in interviews about their experiences, and the contributions from artists and thinkers who have in one way or another been part of this research trajectory, either in the symposium Sound & Participation, or the festival Oscillation. They come from a diverse range of positions, formal backgrounds, and traditions, and split across continents, generations, and languages. The choice of articles doesn't aim to prioritise certain aspects of the reflection on sound, but simply tries to give a large scope of the ground sound can cover.

Caroline Profanter, Henry Andersen, and Julia Eckhardt

Annotations
Enrico Malatesta

Translated by Piero Bisello

The following text comes from a transcription of some notes taken intuitively during my residency at Q-O2 Workspace for Experimental Music and Sound Art in Brussels in July 2018. It is a first attempt at expanding the implications of these notes.

Drum.

Polyrhythm.[1]

1   Polyrhythm: the production of multiple sounds coming from
the movement of a body hitting a surface, and the following
repositioning of said body into a state of quietness (decay).
Sound translates the instability of the surface reactions when
it spreads to the connecting points of performer-body-space
and the unfolding of the conditions that define listening.
The drum is a *field of action* where sound shows itself as
a bundle of forms moving simultaneously but with different
levels of autonomy, nourished by the vitality of the surface.

Drum.

Mimesis.[2]

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2   Polyrhythmic multiplicity can exist because every element of sound—whether direct, peripheral, or transitive—assumes dignified autonomy and specific localisation at once, keeping the complexity of the surface relations alive. Mimesis concerns only those elements of sound that are disconnected from the system of reactions to movement, dislocated and ephemeral. These elements cannot be understood within the overall sound activity, but only through an attempt at isolating them from the others and from their context.

Drum.

Accumulation.[3]

Outdistancing. Continuously migrating
and retaking position.[4]

3   My research into polyrhythm and its implications grows
        according to the bodies I collect, to their propensity to
        move, to the ways in which they make themselves accessible,
        to the vitality of the surfaces I use as fields. My action
        takes place while waiting for these bodies to follow paths of
        unexpected relations, with results that are not reproducible
        in terms of mere sound performance. The accumulation of
        these bodies increases the available aural potentialities,
        all of which are specific to the bodies, all of which are based
        on how these bodies express themselves when exposed to
        transitory conditions.

4   Obtaining an attentive and mobile structure through which
        to inform the listening experience.

Intensity of bundled-up fetishes deforming the surface.[5]

Nourishing the body's vulnerability to things.[6]

Unfolding sound within the multiplicity of the listening backdrop.[7]

Avoiding reaching the chosen destination.[8]

Opening. To uproot every comfort from the surface relation.[9]

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5   The pure material presence of some bodies, as well as the position they take in the space when they are in a quiet state, influences the direction of my focus, producing a call for action.

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6   Space is littered with accumulated *things*. The word "thing" refers to objects with undeclared capacities, whose functional purpose is not the production of sound. In order for these objects to be described as tools, it is necessary to create precise links between them within a field of activity, in which every thing can produce an effect by expressing—or supressing—specific material properties in relation to the action.

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7   *Background noise* is a constant growth of ephemeral sounds and transparent events inhabiting the space. It is the product of sounds that are hardly intelligible, whose potentiality doesn't express itself immediately and closely. These sounds are remote, and apparently devoid of depth. They are constantly being confused, overlooked, or even removed from the listening experience. However, the listener can enhance the experience by focusing on the background noise, intervening in the redistribution of the roles each of these sounds can take in relation to the main events.

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8   To steer the action away from initial expectations.

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9   Moving on a surface until every familiarity is lost.

To give back some dignity to the diverted trajectory, admitting capitulation.[10]

Laying sound on the skin's *fiore*, on the back line, and in-between smells.[11]

Inhabiting known territories until the revolt, until they lose solidity.[12]

Finding the basic principles, letting bodies go adrift.[13]

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10   That is, to accept the necessity of changing one's path.

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11   The skin's *fiore* is the most valuable part of natural membranes used for drums. It consists of the most external skin layers, whose few imperfections are only due to hair bulbs, pores, and the spinal line. Some drum membranes are made from the skins of lamb foetuses, a skin that allows for greater uniformity and thinness thanks to the fact that pores and hair bulbs are still underdeveloped. Its smoothness increases the response to percussion and the speed with which the vibrations propagate.

Thinness and smoothness of the membrane are crucial characteristics of a drum, and the design of some percussion instruments evolved directly from the quality of the membrane. Fish skin is sometimes used for drums in North Africa, the Middle East, Central Asia, and in some parts of Eastern Europe. Membranes of fish skin are extremely thin and highly responsive. They create a unique tactile and visual experience for the drummer, thanks to their translucency, elasticity, and oiliness.

In the southern Italian region of Calabria and the central Italian region of Marche, one can find frame drums with membranes made of cat skin. Thick and poorly resonant, this membrane was fixed to the frame in such a way as to increase its insensitiveness: the thinner, hairy part is placed in the handle while the thick and fleshy part becomes the striking surface. Moreover, this membrane was never stretched except for the necessary sewing onto the frame, and it was softened with water before use in order to further diminish its potential for resonance. In this way, the only sound coming from the drum is the one of the hand hitting the surface. (Thanks to Fabio Tricomi for the fruitful exchange on organology.)

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12   To insist until movement, reaction, and sound are transfigured.

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13   To allow oneself only basic elements for polyrhythmic movement.

Beginning.[14] [00:00:00] (daily)

Asking for continuity to paths of other vitality.[15]

To act within the sustainable rhythmicity of discontinuous light.[16]

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14   Stone immersed in water. Beginning of the exercise.

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15   The exercise "Wet Stone—Dry Stone" helps to suspend judgement about the length of a listening action whose beginning and end are in relation to those of a process of non-human change, and whose temporal implications are not foreseeable. The beginning of the action consists of submerging a stone in water and subsequently positioning it in a stable viewpoint (for example, a drum). The action continues until the stone looks dry. This exercise was born from reading Tim Ingold's book *Being Alive* and more specifically Chapter 2, "Materials against Materiality": Tim Ingold, *Being Alive: Essays on Movement, Knowledge and Description* (Routledge: 2011).

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16   In the first test of the exercise at Q-O2 in Brussels in 2018, it took 02:11:00 for the stone to appear (mendaciously) dry. In order to keep producing sound during an unforeseeable period of time, I was more and more forced into innaction according to a mental representation, or to a desire to shape sound. I rather had to sympathise with the ongoing process, following reference points. The way the stone kept changing in its appearance was the most important of these reference points; its surface seemed to behave according to a certain rhythm, as it reflected the changing daily light dimmed by the moving clouds and the shining of the water on it. At the beginning, the drops moving down to the drum broke the uniformity of the soaked and darkened surface of the stone, which became dry with time. Drops eventually disappeared, leaving behind only some traces of their paths. At the very end, small fissures in the stone showed themselves with intensity: water reached and filled up the inner parts of the stone, which then appeared as dark outer segments marking the separation between the dry and wet surface areas.

Observing the surface collapsing, and the stone becoming dry again.[17]

Collecting the stones only at the end.[18]
[02:11:00] (daily)

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17   After approximately 01:45:00 the upper surface of the
      stone seems completely dry to me, so I focus on the lower
      supporting part. The drum's membrane has collapsed after
      absorbing all the fallen water, and the burden that the
      membrane had to bear has created a wrinkly hollow on it.
      I observe the thickened hairs of the membrane, as well as the
      dust on its roughened surface. I am unable to look away from
      this zone of interchange, which subtly testifies to my action.

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18   The stone is dry outside. End of the exercise.

Rain.[19]

Quietness.[20]

19.   Exercise #1: To hit while listening to the rain. #2: To hit
while listening in the rain.

20.   To read again the text by Jakob von Uexküll about
direction signs, in Jakob von Uexküll, *Biologia teoretica*
(Quodlibet: 2015).

Shake the white ant in several directions.[21]

Walking on earth drums.[22]

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21.   "For his rituals, the Shaman uses a specific maraca
called *nyaxsàru*, a word derived from *nyaxsà*, which means
"white ant that stings". The denomination of this drum refers
to the fact that white ants are extremely fast at escaping
after their nest is hit. It is with similar speed that sound
propagates from the maraca, which becomes a prosthetic
in the Shaman's body": Gerardo Reichel-Dolmatoff, *Il cosmo
amazzonico: Simbolismo degli indigeni tukano del Vaupés*
(Adelphi: 2014). A maraca is a rattle belonging to the family of
idiophones, which are musical instruments made of naturally
resonant materials, that is, instruments that don't need
strings, membranes, or additional tension to produce sound.
Their sound rather comes from the action of the player, so
that the instrument becomes the aural extension of his/
her moving hand. The main topic within my research into
idiophones is the various ways in which their material is made
to vibrate. Some possibilities are: concussion, percussion,
friction, scraping, shaking, pinching, bending.

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22   In its most basic version, the earth drum (or slit drum)
consists of a large tree trunk, laid sideways in a hole that
is dug or found on the ground, hit by the player with his/
her feet or with sticks while standing on top of it. A row of
dancers can also hit the drum as they move on the edges of
the hole. The earth drum is often decorated with a woman
or alligator head on its sides. The common drum, despite its
apparent simplicity, originates from the sophisticated evolution
of larger instruments, which were fabricated according to the
peculiarities of the ground on which they were placed. These
instruments were the first slit drums, for which documentation
is now lost due to their ephemeral nature.

Walking on a multitude of stones.[23]

Lowering expectations, waiting for the (vegetal) explosion.[24]

Turning sound into a zone of autonomous connection through an encounter.[25]

23   With reference to the research on the Bessa reserve carried out by Attila Faravelli, Adam Asnan, and Lucia Palladino between 2017 and 2018. The main characteristic of the nature reserve of Bessa (Biella Alps, Italy) is its enormous heaps of stones surrounded by vegetation. This specific landscape is not the result of geological phenomena, but rather the leftover from a gold mine that employed thousands of workers during Roman times. The high surface tension of the landscape makes the location prone to investigations into listening and ecological perception. In the reserve of Bessa, attention to sound neccesitates a constant presence of the body; stones tend to slide down under the weight of the steps, producing sound and making us participate in an ever-changing context.

24   The explosion of the *ecballium*: the fruit of this plant (also known as exploding cucumber) develops such an inner pressure and outer tension that a touch causes its explosion and the squirting of the seeds.

25   I often come back to my collection of ready-made metal objects, picked up in the surroundings of Cesena, and especially from Maestri Pino Ltd. Going through large heaps of metal scraps, I have selected some objects that are both visually appealing and highly reactive to the most basic stimuli, that can create unforeseeable conditions of movement and sound. My interest in these objects stems from their occupation of a grey area between human beings and functionality. Each one of them is not a definite point in the evolution of my practice; they are so eroded that their original function is no longer understandable, yet they are not sufficiently broken to be considered mere junk. I collect them because I immediately grasp their potential to define a trajectory away from consumption. They are able to become something other than my instruments. They are and will ever be foreign, their location is unreachable. The entire project consists of giving dignity to a world outside me, a world of objects, their corruption and inner generation, which are activated through relation, movement, and sound. The latter plays a specific role: it is the effect of the object in a state of movement, and it is constantly generated through action between me and the object. Sound is the true space I share with the object; it is our *zone of autonomous connection*. (This expression is an adapted reference to the title *Temporary Autonomous Zone* for which I thank Gaia Martino). See Hakim Bey, *T.A.Z: The Temporary Autonomous Zone* (Autonomedia: 1991).

Rain, still.[26]

26   To read again Francis Ponge's "La pluie" from *Le partis pris des choses* (Gallimard: 1942).

22   The Middle Matter

Sonic Harbour
Séverine Janssen

Translated by Deborah Birch

As a discipline, history results from the act of structuring, solidifying, and consecrating lived experiences and their significance for human communities. History, of course, is constructed *a posteriori,* but its urgency is always in the present. We are at all times embedded in historical forces and the stakes are always high. This is true also of the modes of *making history*, of *claiming history*, of *transmitting* or even *trying to outwit history*. At no time or place can history as a discipline claim to have identified or indexed the totality of forces that have played out—and are currently at play—upon its stages. By definition, it is a discipline cut off from itself. An ideal or total history is only conceivable from a post-historic perspective, beyond time itself and, consequently, beyond us and the ensemble of our practices. And it is precisely because of such gaps in its fabric that spoken or written history can be repaired, can be reworked and reappropriated by those who were forgotten, erased, silenced, or objectified. It is at the heart of these structural lacunae that the fabric can be rewoven, that new techniques of historicisation can be worked in, and that other presences, other patterns, can emerge. The pattern of the weave is a system, and each fabric is a collection of such patterns. Every history is a collection: a collection of facts, acts, events, places, materials, and words. And every so often, history is a collection of sounds. This history may not have a name, but it does create an echo. It may not have an author, but it does have a voice.

For almost two decades, bna-bbot (Bruxelles nous appartient—Brussel behoort ons toe: "Brussels belongs to us") has been creating a history of Brussels. A microhistory in the medium of sound, its writing is the voice. The voice as a micro-trace that cannot be reduced to keyboard strokes, to its visual presence. An undefined collection of voices and sounds surging up from times past, bna-bbot's sound archive forms an organic, polyphonic biography of the city. It speaks to how the city might have been, how it is, how it might someday be. The singularity of the work process resides less in the desire to historicise and archive a corpus that the humanities readily qualify as "ordinary"—the historical inventory of the ordinary, the unremarkable, and the trivial having long

existed [1]—and more in the wager that this process poses: sound as history and history as statement, as story rather than fact. Here, sound does not narrate a history, rather it *is* that history. The voice does not dictate the event, rather it *is* the event.

The Resonance of History

The creation of history in the sonic medium multiplies its perspectives—from the general to the specific, the individual to the collective—particularly from a methodological and political standpoint.

      In terms of methodology, the fact of intentionally constructing a body of archival material rather than electing to work with an already constituted archive is a radical break from the historian's method, even from the standpoint of oral history. Within a standard model, the historian would, from an ensemble of documents, select one element judged to be exemplary and decide to grant it archival status (bestowing upon it certain conditions of conservation and professional valorisation). The archive *becomes* an archive at the end of this process: it and the elements it contains have secured their future against all that disappears. Our practice could be said to invert the ideology and methodology of this standard: we collect sounds as well as voices, and we record stories, songs, and conversations in order to create an archive *from this moment on*. It is a production that precedes the division into valuable and trivial, into true and false. It precedes the struggle for legitimacy over illegitimacy, remembrance over oblivion. Making history in real time implies, intrinsically, modifying its course. By inscribing oneself *here and now* into a collective history, the speaker takes charge of the story, adding his or her own historicity—which will survive the usual ephemerality of the utterance. The discretion of the voice recording apparatus, which makes it minimally invasive and even "invisibilising", constitutes yet another methodological achievement.

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1   Even if this inventorying is often inscribed into struggles for power, as well as moral, hygienic, or surveillance-control measures of the masses by the powerful. See Michel Foucault, "La vie des hommes infâmes", in *Dits et écrits, 1954–1988–Tome III: 1976–1979* (Gallimard: 1994). See also Jean Boutier and Dominique Julia (eds.), *Passés recomposés: Champs et chantiers de l'histoire* (Autrement: 1995), a historical overview which testifies to the growing interest in the historical account of the singular.

In *making history*, politics is always at stake. The division of speech, its demarcations, and its audience are all political concerns. In enabling the conditions for anyone and everyone's sonic inscription into a collective narrative—which is perpetually becoming what it is—there is an insistence on circumventing a logic of community representation and decision-making that is based in expertise, access to information and advantageous organisational structures. The logic of community representativeness (methodologies employed, for example, by the social sciences in conducting studies of "target groups" or "cohorts"[2]) is based on techniques of smoothing out, flattening, and selection: the expert polishes any surface irregularities in order to put forward a common denominator from an unruly data set, and the representative is given a voice that overrides the voices of those represented. This logic cannot function otherwise; hence the necessity to stake out spaces within which everyone can speak for themselves, be their own representative and make their speech heard, whatever it may be. The microphone can easily adapt to the incoherence, forgetfulness, and incomprehension that may arise during the narrations, and the technique guarantees the anonymity of those who wish for it. Methodological diversity (from the circulation of tape recorders to targeted thematic data collection) finds its consonance in the diversity of speech as it is practised and pronounced in the everyday. However, these recordings would remain vulnerable without a concerted effort to archive them properly. By ensuring that this marginal data set is accorded the highest-quality archival conditions, we open up the possibility that one day these recordings may vie with mainstream, traditional archival material.

Spectral Seriality

The voice, like the skin, constitutes a juncture between the interior and the exterior, between silence and locution. Intermediate, connective, intersectional: the voice both inhabits and harbours the world. The voice and its many

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2   See Jean-François Laé and Numa Murard, *Les récits du malheur* (Descartes et Cie: 1995). In this work, Laé and Murard take up the scraps and leftovers of the sociological studies they have undertaken, looking again at the words of the people who did not make it into the discipline's restrictive framework.

sounds constitute real practices. And like all practices, these voices impact their environments, animating them, generating movement. Recording and archiving the voice means to preserve the possibility of reactivating these effects, of remodelling the borders of that territory which time seals off from us: in re-hearing a voice or a sound, what is gone reappears, what is dead comes to life, and what was far away approaches us once again. Sound creates spectral space in anachronic time: arriving in our bodies "late", delayed from emission to perception, sound has the added capacity to stitch rifts in time. This is precisely its phenomenological power: its double presence, as present phenomenon and as the survival of that present. Of course, such persistence does not require recording technology: memory may suffice to recall the voice of another or, rather, for a voice to invoke our memories. But the recording and preservation of sound archives allows a more concrete disruption of the dialectic between presence and absence, between the survival and the oblivion of an individual's trace in its wider relation to society. Such archives allow this sonic data set to reappear on the collective stage. Archiving the present means inscribing tomorrow's history, widening the horizon of future historicisation, and cultivating its potential resources. The archive becomes a tool, multiplying the ways and the possibilities of making, telling, and understanding history. *The future is not always what comes after*; it is, on the contrary, what is at stake now, a concern for the present, an urgency. The systematic archival of these contemporary voices and sounds might result in a resonance, a pollination of the future, a reactivation of the past.

For all that, these sounds, vocal or otherwise—all these singularities—only make sense when their interrelations and their resonances are found. It is through the pattern, through the series, that, like a melody, history finds its form. Just as each sound, each fragment holds its own interest (which comes back to the intersectionality of sonic territory as a confluence of semantic, tonal, melodic, social, political, and historical aspects, among others), the number of possibilities for their interrelation is each time augmented. Repetition creates difference. Placed end to end, these sonic sequences constitute an unheard-of reservoir of micro-expertise and knowledge about the city produced by the city itself. This dynamic seriality lends an organic quality to history, a certain autonomy and capacity to produce a story without an author—a story by necessity epicyclic,

without beginning or end, coming solely from the movement of the series. History as an utterance without an author, or as a multitude of such utterances more powerful than their authors, as the murmur of collective intelligence: this is what the sonic fabric allows to be heard and understood.

Sound as Empowerment

Sound allows us to take into account the infra-visible, and perhaps to save it. It is the heartbeat translating the invisible into the audible. Sound here is taken up as a spatiotemporal backup, a safe space for the multitudinous stories at work in history. It is also mobilised as a stimulus for expression, a pretext for encounters, an apparatus for the creation of a shared world. For a large number of people unused to being given a voice and even less used to being heard, deciding to voice their opinions (*a fortiori* when destined to be preserved) is founded in certain basic concerns (self-image, self-confidence, recognition, etc.). We could imagine that the microphone is an obstacle to speaking publicly, a cause for suspicion, but this assumption is empirically unjustified. In creating the conditions for someone to take up the microphone, we give them a platform, in lending them our ears we empower them and extend their capacity to speak—that is, to act. To record a voice is to give it importance, to catch it before it slips away, to save it from inaudibility. The microphone opens up a dual space of rights: the right to speak and the right to be heard.

    The practise and the defence of sound as a vector for knowledge, for relation- and sense-making is, in effect, a practice of defending those singularities that are marginalised by the logic of power. The legitimacy, utility, and pertinence of speech are given over to the gesture of utterance, the production of sound itself. Sound both founds and inscribes, like a topographer, allowing what Foucault, in reference to history, calls "a differential knowledge of energies and failings, heights and degenerations, poisons and antidotes".[3] Sound is a safe harbour that we must allow to be inhabited by as many worlds as possible.

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3   Michel Foucault, *Dits et écrits, 1954–1988–Tome II: 1970–1975* (Gallimard: 1994), p. 148.

Magical stones, echoes, and music for animals and atmosphere: An interview with Akio Suzuki

Tomoko Sauvage [1]

Translated by Tomoko Sauvage

Tomoko Sauvage *Was it in the seventies that you started to construct Analapos?* [2]

Akio Suzuki It was actually in 1969. Before that I was playing [3] with echoes for many years and I had become a kind of echo-*otaku* ["echo-obsessive"]. I would visit buildings which had nice reverberations. I'm still doing it today. I call it *Oto-date* ["listening point"].

TS *I thought* Oto-date *was about listening at a determined point? Is it also about making sound?*

AS No, it's just about listening. I mean, you can also try to make sound. I decide on the places intuitively —they're the right ones most of the time. I clap my hands and it makes an awesome echo. But there are other places that are not like this—that are a kind of joke.

TS *A joke?*

AS Yeah. I get bored if I have to be serious all the time. I often become naughty, start making jokes. They called me *Böse Katze* ["Naughty Cat"] when I exhibited in Berlin—people like to find nicknames for me. When I first started with *Oto-date* I was in my twenties, doing it just for me. I called it *Echo Pointo wo Saguru* ["In Search of Echo Point"]. In 1996, I was invited to the Sonambiente sound art festival in Berlin, and I was at a loss as to what to do. All the other sound artists were picking their locations—at that time, after the fall of the Wall, there were many empty spaces in East Berlin. I thought to myself, "There won't be

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2 The Analapos is an echo instrument invented by Suzuki, consisting of two resonant chambers connected by a long spring.

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3 Trans: Akio Suzuki generally uses the Japanese verb *asobu*, meaning "to play", not an instrument, for which in Japanese the verb *ensuu suru* is used, but in the manner of a child. He uses this latter "to play" verb only once, when speaking of *De Koolmees*.

anywhere left for me to exhibit in if I'm too slow," and then I thought of doing *Echo Pointo wo Saguru* in public. There's this island on the Spree, the lower half is called Fischerinsel, "Fisherman Island", and the upper half, where there are museums, is called Museumsinsel. And I applied for the entire area. It took me one month to walk around and find locations, I chose twenty-five. That was my first *Oto-date* work.

TS   *So the locations had lots of echo?*

AS   Yes ... Well maybe five out of twenty-five. Those I chose seriously. The rest were almost jokes.

TS   *In my imagination you were travelling in nature like Basho did. Tell me about your trips in search of echo points.*

AS   I'm from Komaki, close to Nagoya and I know the surrounding area very well. There's Seto, famous for its ceramics—they've mined clay there for hundreds of years. In the Kanto region, they mine *oya* stone. There are lots of tunnels, lots of interesting spaces. Around the Mikawa region, there are places with great echoes, like Okazaki quarry.

TS   *Some quarries are really beautiful.*

AS   Yes. Fantastic landscapes. This kind of artificial space is also interesting in terms of echoes. I visited many such tunnels, walked around the valley of the Kiso River. After moving to Tokyo, I went to Gunma and Saitama, for example to *Yoshimi-Hyakketsu*, these caves dug out underneath an ancient mountain. It's like a maze. No one knows what they were used for in ancient times—maybe for prayer. I'd visit these places and play on my own.

TS   *You were doing it by yourself?*

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Yes. I could get in. You can't get into those kinds of places anymore, but it wasn't secured at that time. So I'd play there alone. There were stray dogs. Sometimes they'd bark, sometimes they'd listen to me. I was doing an event for myself. Once I was travelling in Shikoku, walking along the Oboke–Koboke gorge, and I came to a village—I forget its name—and an old woman invited me in for a cup of tea. It's a village where each family cultivates its own tea with its own scent. It's extraordinary. There I was, chatting with this lovely old woman about this tea. "It's very good," I said, and I heard another me repeat "It's good"! I was astonished, and then I noticed that there was a small hill in front of her house, an ordinarily-looking hill that was producing this echo. Of course, a normal-volume *yoo-hoo* echoed back, but also whispers, *sa-shi-su-se-so*… So if you speak ill of your neighbours there, they'll hear you. I wish I could visit that place again.

Now, after a lot of playing with echoes, a lot of travelling about searching for echo points, I was fully echo-*otaku*. I came back home to Tokyo, where I had collected lots of objects to make sound… At that time, American culture was being imported and a new American-style supermarket opened in Yotsuya. They were selling different sorts of juice, some in big cans, which I bought… I just wanted the cans. My studio was full of junk like this. I'd also picked up a piece of spring off a broken lamp. I was still single at that time so one evening I was alone playing with the empty juice cans and the spring. I put the spring onto the can, pulled it and it went *grrrrn!* I said "Wow! There's a wonderful echo here!" And that night I got all these ideas, and the next morning I walked around all over the place to find good springs. In the telephone book I found a company called Suzuki Spring, and I ran over there to ask them to make a special long spring for me. They made it and I played with it.

I thought of the tin-can telephones I used to play with when I was a child, and I wondered if you might get more feedback if you used a spring instead of a string to connect the cans. I did it and wow it sounded so good, I played it all night... All the techniques I use now I mastered just in that one night. And this was the first Analapos.

Then I made many versions of it, not only with cans but with many different receptacles—wood, plastic... I tried everything I found—junk off the street, like a celluloid Kewpie doll. But after many experiments, the steel can I used first was the best. So I ran to a can maker and I ordered many different shapes. Different lengths, thicknesses... I tried everything. In the end the steel one I'm still using now sounded best with my voice. But when other people try to play Analapos, it doesn't always work well with their voice—because their voice is different from mine. So they just give up.

TS   *The Analapos has such amazing tones. And your ways of singing are so unique...*

AS   When I was travelling alone in my twenties to play with echoes, I'd sing in the mountains. I taught myself.

TS   *About the echo points in your own body...*

AS   Yes. I tried to learn by myself how to resonate the cavity of my own body and the Analapos.

TS   *What was the name of your glass instrument?*

AS   *De Koolmees*. In Dutch it's the name of a small bird... a kind of tit. I did this artist residency at Het Apollohuis in Eindhoven, and I was practising playing this instrument there, before it had a name...

TS   *But you'd invented it a long time before the residency?*

AS Yes, in 1975. I called it the "Suzuki-type glass harmonica", after Benjamin Franklin's plate-type glass harmonica, the kind you see at musical instrument museums. So I was practising playing my glass harmonica at the residency in Eindhoven, hitting it with a stick, *tikkin-tikkin*—and then I heard the same sound—*tikkin-tikkin*—from outside! I opened the window and it was birds singing. I thought they were imitating my sound. Those birds were *koolmezen*—I named the instrument after them. I'd first created it when I got interested in the resonance of glass. It didn't come from a special idea, I found it kind of by chance, like how you discovered your porous ceramic sound in the water.[4]

TS *Yes, a coincidental discovery.*

AS When you're an *otaku*, your ears are developed in such a way that you don't miss a particular sound, a sound that others wouldn't notice. In my room at that time, there were lots of neon tubes and one day there was a dying one. When I tried to change it my hands happened to be wet, and it went *hyun*. That's how I got the idea of playing glass tubes by rubbing them. It was rare to do it at that time. After that moment, I started to visit companies specialising in science equipment to look for different sorts of crystal tubes, flasks you only use in scientific laboratories, in many different sizes. I tried many kinds and I found specific points that vibrated when rubbed, and produced harmonics.

TS *Do the harmonics change depending on the room's reverberation?*

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4   Suzuki had seen a concert at which Sauvage played with the amplified sound of porous terracotta pots emitting small bubbles in the water. Sauvage had later explained to Suzuki that she had found the material by chance.

AS   Yes. It's the room that sings. Most flutes are like that. As the room becomes an instrument, I can sometimes make my flutes sing, as if I had become a genius. But when I go outside to play the same flutes in a field, I'm not a genius anymore... In resonance, some sound, that normally doesn't sound, sounds.

TS   *So a room is an instrument, the space is an instrument?*

AS   That's the important thing. I think it's quite Eastern, as a way of thinking. In the West, auditoriums have developed as if people felt obliged to deliver the same music to everyone. In our world, we somehow make use of each moment...

TS   *The moment, the space, and the people in the space...*

AS   Yes. Making use of them is in the Eastern nature, I think. Flutes are made very accurately in Europe. The holes are made to have very precise pitches. However in Japan, even *shakuhachi*[5] are made approximately. By adjusting your fingering, you can play accurate pitches. But if you move your fingers slightly you can make unique interesting sounds. Each flute has its own character and I believe it's the Asian way to master these unique characteristics. It's the same with space.

▶◀▼

TS   *Tell me about stones.*

AS   Playing with stones is something I've been doing ever since my "self-study events". Where I live, in Tango, there's a cultural centre for archaeology, and a friend from this place showed me these *hekomi ishi*, a pair of concave–convex stones.

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4   Traditional Japanese end-blown bamboo flutes.

One is long and thin and the other is flat, and they are always found in pairs. Scholars don't know what these small stones were used for. One day I was walking through these Yayoi Period ruins, and to the side of a rice field I saw a pair of the same kind of stones. I was excited and kept them for myself.

TS *So were they real ancient stones?*

AS Yes, they were genuine. When farmers find things in rice fields while working, they just throw them aside. That's what had happened. I started to imagine what these stones could have been used for. For example to emit some kind of signal. One of the stones has a hollow, so people must have hit this part. Maybe they used them to crack open some kind of cereal, or nuts. I was having fun carrying these stones around with me and imagining different things. One day I was at the beach and I saw these small squids with their arms folded, having a nap in the water. I felt like teasing them so I put the stones in the water and tapped them together—and the squids turned and came towards me! Depending on what sounds I made, they came dancing to the sound. They loved it. By the way, squids have beaks. If we put a hydrophone in the water, we might hear them sending signals like this stone sound—that's just my imagination, but that's how I felt when I saw the squids responding to the sound. So it's my guess that this used to be a special fishing technique—they called the squids with the sound of the stones, and caught them with a fishing net or something. This knowledge must have been forgotten, replaced by more modern, more convenient methods.

TS *Do you ever play with other animals through sound?*

AS Very often. Around the same period that the *Space in the Sun* project came to an end, I was planning to go back to Tokyo. But I had become too

marginal to live there. I had spent two years in the countryside. The air was fresh, the food was good. I was subletting my studio in Tokyo to a friend of mine but I'd become unable to pay such expensive rent. That's why I decided to stay in Tango... I also wanted to learn from the fishermen and farmers there to recall and revive the senses that we modern people were losing.

TS *When was this?*

AS Around 1988. The first thing I did after deciding to stay in the area was to build a pit-dwelling on a hill which I was free to use. I made some research into ancient techniques: digging, mound-making, woodworking... I wanted to learn from nature, live with nature, that's why I wanted to make this pit-dwelling. Around that time, some local fishermen still knew how to make traditional straw skirts out of woven paddy rice. These woven sheets are up to fifty metres long, and they use them to make thatched roofs. I learned many things from local fishermen and farmers in making the house. It became a kind of community centre and we were having parties inside. From outside you could hear everything going on inside through the walls of the house. That made me understand that in ancient times people used to hear everything that was happening in their surroundings, so I guess they were living quiet lives.
Nearby we made a small pond. One day lots of small holes appeared in the wall of the pond, and I saw many small frogs in them, looking out from their holes! I would often play in the field, tapping bamboo sticks and stones. One day I was doing this, and I saw the frogs coming out from their holes. I carried on hitting the stones, and the frogs came up to me to watch me play! The same day my wife had bought a video camera, and she filmed it all.

There's another story about playing with stones from my trip to Bali. They have these big festivals called *Odolan*, and the musicologist Makoto Nakagawa brought me to see one. We stayed for about two weeks at the village chief's place in Singapadu. It was in the rainy season so I asked the village chief what they would do if it rained on the days of the festival. The chief very confidently replied that this festival is so sacred that it cannot rain. I always carry some stones with me and one day I was playing with them. The village chief's grandson came and we played with them together. Then lots of other kids came and joined in. We were playing with the stones, almost like *Kecak*,[5] and then it started to rain! The village chief got so angry at me! I was afraid he'd stop me staying at his house, so we stopped hitting the stones. Then it stopped raining.

TS   *Really?*

AS   Hitting stones called the rain… That phenomenon was so mysterious.

TS   *Wow, they can be a bit scary, stones… Do you think they have special frequencies?*

AS   Maybe they produce special vibrations that reach the atmosphere. People try to call rain in lots of different ways, but stones could be useful tools to make special vibrations for that.

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5   A form of Balinese Hindu drama featuring dance and music, developed in the 1930s.

From the Mechanism of Speech to the Mechanism of Meaning
Lila Athanasiadou

House [music] *isn't so much a sound*
as a situation.
— Terre Thaemlitz

I

Sound is information whose production, perception, and
consumption is deeply situated, embodied, and spatialised.
In *The Mechanism of Speech*—a book and a lecture series under
the same name, Alexander Graham Bell starts his meditation
on vocal hapticity with a spatial exploration of the vocal cavities.

> The thorax is the treasure-house of the human body,
> a veritable strong-room, girt about with walls of bone
> for the protection of those precious organs the heart
> and lungs. Let us imagine ourselves for a moment
> inside the thorax, but first, with your permission,
> let us empty this safe-deposit vault of its valuable
> contents, so that we may have space for exploration.
> We find ourselves in a dark room or vault with a door
> in the roof. The floor of this vault, instead of being firm
> and solid, is a soft membrane or muscle, not flat like
> an ordinary floor, but dome-shaped like the top of an
> open umbrella. The door above is a sort of double trap
> door set at an angle instead of being flat, and opening
> upwards. But the most extraordinary thing about this
> room is that the floor is in constant motion, heaving
> upwards and downwards in regular pulsations. The
> trap doors also are in motion; now they are opened
> so that a glimpse can be obtained of passages above,
> and now they come together with a quivering motion,
> opening and shutting with great rapidity and causing
> a vibration that makes the whole thorax tremble. The
> walls also are in motion, the whole room alternately
> increasing and diminishing in size.[1]

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1   Alexander Graham Bell, *The Mechanism of Speech* (Funk &
     Wagnalls: 1911), p. 1.

Bell's research on the mechanics of voice was preceded by the work of his father, Melville Bell, who developed *speech symbols* that were used to correct speech impediments. Bell utilised his father's alphabet, but organised it spatially in order that it could serve as a tool for teaching deaf children how to speak. The architectural qualities he assigned to the thorax and its diagrammatisation led Bell to conceive of a way of allowing deaf children to visualise the vibrations of the air that bounce off our eardrums as sound, perhaps anticipating his later invention of the telephone. Bell's desire to "make silence speak"[2] drew him to elaborate on this haptic language system as a spatial assemblage of four bodily systems—the nervous system, the respiratory system, the laryngeal system, and the articulatory system—for the production and not the mere simulation of voice. His writings position the body as the medium that materialises sound into voice by being an enclosure, an echoey cave. The body's resonant interiority, however, "does not entail detachment from the world"[3] rather the opposite, enclosures and interiorities hinge on the existence of an exterior.

 Throughout the history of phenomenology, bodies have always been considered interiorities; enclosed wholes with architecture as their exterior. The body here is not merely *positioned* in space, space becomes the body's container by enclosing and representing it. For Bell, the body is an interiority, a spatial "topography around which speech organizes itself".[4] Sound, then, is emitted, modulated, and directed outwards through the body's intricate openings to the world. Bell's conceptualisation of sound production is not only spatial, but also has an articulated directionality as he compared learning to speak with learning to shoot.[5]

2 Avital Ronell, *The Telephone Book* (University of Nebraska Press: 1989), p. 422.

3 Andrej Radman, "Involutionary Architecture: Unyoking Coherence from Congruence", in Rosi Braidotti and Simone Bignall (eds.), *Posthuman Ecologies: Complexity and Process after Deleuze* (Rowman & Littlefield International: 2019), p. 61.

4 Ronell, *The Telephone Book*, p. 373.

5 Graham Bell, *The Mechanism of Speech*, p. 76.

Theoretician Sarah Ahmed has delved extensively into the spatiality of perception; theorising how orientation, direction, and an ability to realise and perceive one's bodily limits within the world should not be taken as givens. Direction affects what comes into view and, together with the configuration of the ground, it produces a horizon for the body that perceives. Ahmed suggests that the repetition of a certain direction becomes engrained into bodies:

> [I]t is not, then, that bodies simply have a direction, or that they follow directions, in moving this way or that. Rather, in moving this way, rather than that, and moving in this way again and again, the surfaces of bodies in turn acquire their shape.[6]

Perception operates as an assemblage of our receptive organs, our intuited actions and our experiences, all of which allow certain things to come into view or recede into the background. As an agglomeration of our senses, perception gives us a direction, suggesting actions as responses to visual, aural, and spatial cues from our environment. If bodies are shaped by the repetition of certain directions, then our sense of perception can itself be conceived as a direction that becomes naturalised through repetition.

Merleau-Ponty argues that for a blind man, the white cane stops being an object and becomes an extension of the body, a perceiving organ in its own right. In her analysis of the moments in which Merleau-Ponty refers to technologies acting as perceiving organs, Ahmed argues that the "able body" is indeed "an effect of technologies" that allows us to move and navigate the world. To orient ourselves we do not just need to know our bodily limits, but to have the capacity to use our environment to our advantage. Perception, therefore, cannot be taken for granted, as it expands beyond what is inherently held within the body's limits. Perception becomes the ability to use one's devices, tools, and objects in order to enhance one's ability to orient oneself in the world. It thus queers the idea of the inherent, innate, and normative body.

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6   Sara Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others* (Duke University Press: 2006), pp. 15–16.

Objects, however, do not always extend one's ability to perceive and orient in the world but could also obstruct it, becoming a hindrance by acting against the body. Ahmed draws on Jean-Paul Sartre's novel *Nausea* to illustrate this point. For the protagonist of this novel, architecture begins to work in discordance with his body becoming "oblique" together with the horizon that forms from the environment and objects that surround him.[7] For Sartre's protagonist, disorientation is a condition which results both from a queer inhabitation of his own body and a distorted perception of the environment that surrounds it. Objects flood his perception, all at once appearing in the foreground as the background noise fails to be distinguished as such. The protagonist's "becoming oblique" is both "interior and exterior".[8] For the position of his own experience, the protagonist is completely unable to distinguish whether his nausea is the result of something external, or an inability to perceive his limits as a result of losing his mind: "The Nausea isn't inside me: I can feel it *over there* on the wall, on the braces, everywhere around me. It is one with the café, it is I who am inside *it*."[9]

The experience of disorientation dramatises perception by making it impossible to distinguish between internal and external stimuli, rendering perception as something not given but actively constructed through the interplay of one's bodily limits and one's environment.

III

In *The Mechanism of Speech*, Alexander Graham Bell dedicated the chapter "Please Imitate Helen Keller's Voice" to the figure of Helen Keller. He applauded her extraordinary ability to speak despite losing her senses of sight and hearing at a very young age before having learned to communicate using language. In spite of her aptitude for speaking, Keller was reported to have very "little sense of direction" or proprioception.[10]

Just like her communication skills, her navigational skills and perceptive organs had to be constructed, or rather improvised, in the absence of any reference that she could mimic or learn from.

Keller perceived all communication as vibration, bringing together the tactile with the auditory. Sound for her was haptic and therefore voice could not be separated from any other sound, making everything that vibrates resonate for her with a voice-like pulsation. In her autobiography, Keller describes a moment where, by placing her hand on the trunk of a tree, she was able hear the leaves speaking to each other.[11] Keller's ability to grasp the world, to understand the moment where sound and movement are interlinked, comes to her with no prior knowledge of its mechanics.

Elsewhere in her memoirs, Keller describes putting her fingers against her mother's mouth, against vibrating surfaces, feeling the cat purr or the dog bark.[12] She was able to appreciate music by touching the piano, or by feeling the airwaves in front of a singer's throat. One of Keller's teachers reminisces about her lying on the floor of a church experiencing the resonant notes of the church organ with her whole body. Keller's tactile perception of sound made her fingers and occasionally her whole body as sensitive as an eardrum, transforming different body parts into tactile, resonant sound-chambers. The mechanics of sound that occur internally become externalised and augmented. For Keller, everything had a texture and a vibration; everything had a character and could be read as a sound language experienced through the sense of touch.

As much of Western culture has long been predominantly visual, the sense of sight has come to override the other senses and to take on the status of the primary mode of perception. However, for Keller any spatial configuration was constructed only tentatively as her perception worked against the striating power of images that tend to domesticate it. Keller's orientation had to be built anew with every environmental cue and her auditory perception was augmented by its tactility, swelling up with meanings that

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11   Madeline Gins, *Helen Keller or Arakawa* (Burning Books: 1994), p. 159.

12   Keller, *The Story of My Life* (accessed 1 March 2019).

could not be articulated within language. Keller's perception might thus be said to come before reason or other established regimes of thought could lay any claim to her knowledge production, making her an ideal subject and inspiration for architects Arakawa and Gins some fifty years later.

IV

In *Helen Keller or Arakawa*, Madeline Gins dives into Keller's perceptive modalities through describing her processes, finding parallels between the intuitive use of language in Gins' own poems and in Arakawa's abstract painting practice. Keller's embodied experience of language caught the attention of Gins, as she herself was interested in unleashing the mechanisms of meaning from the structuralism of language. For Keller, the experience of language became a bodily affair as she described that "everything had a name and each name gave birth to a new thought […], every object which I touched seemed to quiver with life".[13]

Gins and Arakawa had been working for years with knowledge production and the mechanics of signification through the human faculties. For Keller, knowledge was a bodily affair, making language and meaning embodied and therefore divorced from the tyranny of representation. With their enormous painting series *The Mechanism of Meaning* (1963 – 71, 1978, 1996), Gins and Arakawa aimed to make visible the mechanics of perception. They carried out an archeology of the processes of meaning-making, attempting to raise awareness of the events that matter, the encounters that leave an imprint on our perception—trying to move it outside of its auto-pilot mode.

Arakawa and Gins studied the life and ways of Helen Keller as an exemplary figure that could effortlessly coordinate between person, body, and world. Her awareness was sited, and in her process of navigating the world she embodied what Arakawa and Gins would coin "landing sites". Landing sites affirm all awareness as both sited and spatial. Fingertips touching a cold metal surface, feet slightly submerged into wet sand, and vibrations felt from the skin to the spine as one

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13   Gins, *Helen Keller or Arakawa*, p. 159.

lies against the wall of a nightclub all constitute perceptual landing sites. They are coordinated, strategic assemblages of parts of bodies and their immediate environment. Landing sites can be understood as a strategic parsing of oneself into the encounters one has with their environment, and the perceptive signals produced by such encounters that are later interpreted as worldmaking. These are mental-physical constructions that "hold the architecture that holds them." [14]

Through this term, Gins an Arakawa wanted to privilege embodied perception over the zeitgeist of interpretation that was popular in their time. Through a process of *cleaving* —dividing and then bringing together—the duo understood the body and its environment as actively co-constructing one another. Keller's process of embodied perception and its sited spatial character, as well as the extension of what could be conceived as body-proper through encounters with her environment became the pillars of Arakawa and Gins' practice, moving from a series of artworks for museum exhibitions and culminating in several full-scale architectural constructions.

In their exhibition and book *The Mechanism of Meaning*, the duo deconstructed the ways in which meaning is created via a series of "how-to guides" that questions the primacy of vision and the dominance of the thinking faculties. In their later work, they created "tactically posed surrounds" [15] that would make explicit the dispersal of landing sites and thus affirm the sitedness of awareness. Gins and Arakawa believed that the totality of perception could be aproportioned in infinite "worlds" [16] and therefore always produce an excess of meaning attempting to follow Keller's advice, seeking to "construct the world anew each day".[17]

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14   Madeline Gins and Arakawa, *The Architectural Body* (University of Alabama Press: 2002), p. 82.

15   Ibid., p. 58.

16   Gins, *Helen Keller or Arakawa*, p. 177.

17   Ibid., p. 134.

Playing Guqin
Carolyn Chen

The *guqin* is seven-stringed Chinese zither. Its body is a single piece of wood, hollowed to resonate, with seven strings strung over the top. Most *guqin* repertoire is solo. It is a quiet instrument. In folklore, it is played on a mountaintop in the middle of the night, to bring the player into harmony with the self and with nature. The decade-plus that I have studied *guqin* has been a long meditation on this idea of music as a way to seek a harmonious relationship with our environment.

I first met the *guqin* by accident. I was born in the US to parents who immigrated from Taiwan. Growing up in New Jersey, I never really encountered opportunities for learning a Chinese instrument. Had I been offered a choice, I might have gravitated toward the conversational-sounding two-stringed fiddle, the *erhu*, or the mellow gourd-mounted free-reed pipe, the *hulusi*. In my last year at university, the Music department at Stanford started offering classes in *guzheng*, the larger, more extroverted and brilliant-sounding relative of the *guqin*. Then, in my first year of graduate school, I had the good fortune to be assigned to assist on the music of Asia course at the University of California, San Diego. One of the first guest lecturers was the neurocomputational ethnomusicologist Alex Khalil, then a graduate student, who had first gone to China to research stone bells, discovered the *guqin*, and then returned many times to deepen his study of the instrument. Alex was starting a *guqin* club as an elective course, and I enrolled. He led us in building practice instruments from wooden planks and guitar pegs, and taught us to decipher the instrument's unique notation system, play through the basic repertoire, and come to appreciate the particularly rich body of myth and folklore surrounding the instrument.

The *guqin* is also a zither like the *guzheng*, but its notation and technique are far more intricate. On a *guzheng*, each string mostly makes one note, sometimes ornamented with vibrato or sliding. Traditional *guqin* tablature notation delineates exactly which finger plucks each note, as well as the direction it moves. Left hand techniques are many. Not only is each depressed note assigned a particular finger placed at a given tenth of a division from a numbered harmonic node, but notation also often specifies the quality of approach to or departure from a note, with myriad varieties of glissando and vibrato. The density of information embedded in the 1,500-year-old notation system makes it difficult to sight-read.

Notation usually serves more as a memory aid, or a supplement to oral tradition. Most music is transmitted from teacher to student seated across one another, memorising one phrase at a time.

The *guqin* was not built for auditoriums or grand halls, but traditionally played in a small *yaji*, an "elegant gathering" of a few players or like-minded listeners. A beginner *guzheng* player can produce a brilliant sound immediately with tortoiseshell finger picks. An aspiring *guqin* player must practise to find the right combination of finger and nail to produce a sound with body and clear onset. The *guqin* is something of an expert at disappearing. Traditional silk strings never ring as brightly as modern steel and nylon. The sound retires. There is something private about how it hovers transparently for a moment and then evaporates like a trace of perfume, or the light of a firefly.

In part because of its quietness, the *guqin* has strong associations with a particular intimacy in listening. Frequently in traditional repertoire, a note plucked from a soft silk string will stop ringing before the hand has finished moving through the phrase. In this silence, the music continues in the mind of the educated listener, leaping from physical vibration into the resonance of the imagination. The *guqin* requires an attentive listener with a still mind, able to witness the brief instant of the sound's bloom, and then to hold the flavour of its lingering memory.

In one legend, Boya, the famous master player, meets the woodcutter Zhong Ziqi, his ideal listener, who, despite a lack of formal education, quasi-telepathically infers the player's every mental image through listening. When Boya plays thinking of high mountains, the woodcutter thinks of high mountains. When he thinks of flowing waters, so does the woodcutter. When the woodcutter dies, Boya breaks his instrument and never plays again. Thus the term 知音 (*zhiyin*, "to know the tone") describes a best friend or soulmate.

This storied listening has an undeniable appeal. It's the dream of being totally understood, of being completely connected to another mind in a way that transcends language. In some ways, it recalls the fantasy of music as a universal language, except that in this version, the connection is a singular phenomenon. Boya never plays again because after such an experience of oneness anything else could only disappoint.

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Could I aspire to this? I wouldn't know where to look for a woodcutter. In the genre of music-making that I have trained in, new music, this story might more likely start with an instrument broken before anyone might listen to its playing, confirming the negative possibility of understanding. The idea of a listener in complete unison with the musician's thoughts might seem anathema to a genre valuing a multiplicity of interpretations. The situation in my experience that might come closest to the communion of Boya and the woodcutter would be the kind of improvisation where everyone is listening closely enough to leave space for one another's intentions —where you can hear the quietest person in the room.

The *guqin* has a long history as a symbol of Chinese high culture. In Imperial China, *guqin*-playing was one of the four arts of the scholar class, along with calligraphy, painting, and the board game Go. It is considered an instrument of philosophers and sages. Practising the instrument can be seen as a kind of self-cultivation, with the Confucian aim of nurturing one's mind, and the Taoist aim of seeking harmony with nature. Playing is said to calm the heart, centre the mind, and nurture the character through meditation. The recent revival of interest in *guqin* might be due to its symbolism as a refuge from the speed and stress of contemporary life.

When I was studying *guqin* in Hangzhou, I joined a tai chi group that practised every morning in front of West Lake. An artist friend asked me why my interests were all so geriatric. She found the slowness and stillness of tai chi and *guqin* music both elegant and excruciating. She said she aspired to learn the arts in her twilight years, and not sooner.

Traditional Chinese paintings including the *guqin* show mostly solitary players in natural landscapes, surrounded by craggy mountains, gnarled pines, and mist. They might call to mind Caspar David Friedrich's iconic *Wanderer above the Sea of Fog* with the solitary figure looking out over a rugged mountain landscape. Friedrich's Romantic explorer, with his wind-tousled hair and bent knee, looks somewhat more athletic and exultant, though, than the *guqin* sages, who are more faintly delineated and in humbler proportion to the landscape. Oftentimes, the eye might need to wander the mountains for a while before setting sight on a tiny figure with a long instrument.

In 2016, I went to Beijing with the electronic musician Amble Skuse with the aim of developing music for electronically enabled *guqin* to be performed in environments

urban and natural: outside a metro stop in Beijing, on the outdoor steps of a commercial amphitheatre, over a reservoir, and at a deserted section of the Great Wall outside the city. Actually sitting outside trying to play *guqin* was not as harmonious as the paintings suggested. When we set up to play we did hear the chirping of birds, the sighing wind, or the rush of traffic. But each new location also required negotiating a way to sit on uneven ground balancing the *guqin* without muting it, and carrying the instrument around without whacking it into foliage or damaging it with damp or heat. In the mountains atop the Great Wall at Gubeikou at dusk, our meditation included ignoring the mosquitos hovering over their fresh buffet, and creating a suitable recording before sunset obscured both camera function and the path back to civilisation. But then again these are all essential elements of the environment that we were encountering. Why wouldn't an experience of nature include both inspiration and obstruction?

In the city, passers-by sometimes paused, but more often walked past our performance. We were like invisible buskers, too quiet to compete with the environment. *Guqin* tradition stipulates that the instrument should only be played for a worthy person. Amongst the picturesque prohibitions catalogued in Robert van Gulik's classic *Lore of the Chinese Lute* [1]: one should not play *guqin* when sweaty; after having recently eaten, drunk, or had sex; when in a court room or near a prison; or for a merchant, barbarian, or vulgar person. The idiom 對牛彈琴, "playing *qin* to a cow", describes the wasted effort of talking to someone who cannot understand. But the drifting attention and disinterest of passers-by—or even the chatter of people sitting next to us, talking over our playing—deepened the performance in other ways. To be gently ignored, or dismissed from the centre of attention, releases music-making from the pressure of proving competence, or of crafting a master-trajectory of audience interest. The persisting continuity of these other everyday tasks and intentions brought the music closer to the status of wind-blown leaves and rushing water. After all, nature is what does not ask to be listened to.

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1   R.H. van Gulik, *The Lore of the Chinese Lute: An Essay in the Ideology of the Ch'in* (Orchid Press: 2010).

In some ways, playing *guqin* has made me notice the ways in which practising anything can become a kind of self-cultivation. I once asked my mother why she put me in piano lessons as a child. She remembered Yamaha ads in Taiwan with the slogan that children who play piano won't be bad. She had the somewhat Confucian idea that learning piano would make me a good person, or at least an obedient child. I took a piano lesson roughly every week for almost two decades. Regardless of the musical results, the sheer quantity of time I spent sitting at the keyboard did shape my personality. Practising piano taught me to sit still, to be solitary, to make peace with the act of practising—breaking down difficult things into smaller physical actions re-enacted over and over until the thinking and resistance was washed out of them. The Western ideal of a virtuoso refers to a performer of extraordinary technical ability—but also submits the virtue of erasing the self through physical feats. This ironing out of the ego might align with the Taoist ideal of taking refuge from the ills of society and human politics by retreating into nature, perhaps with a musical instrument. In some ways, sitting at a living-room piano might be its own kind of midnight-mountaintop meditation.
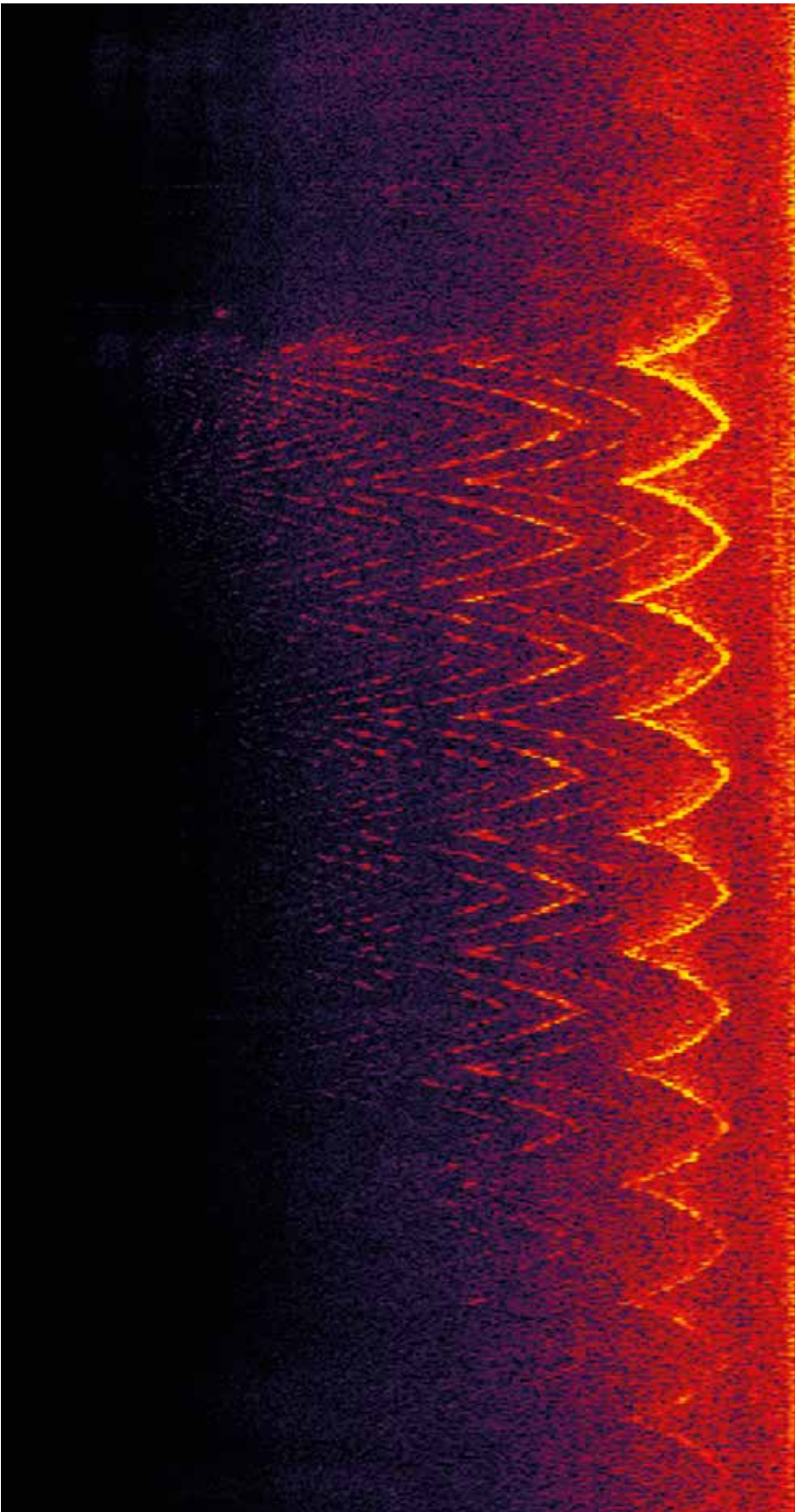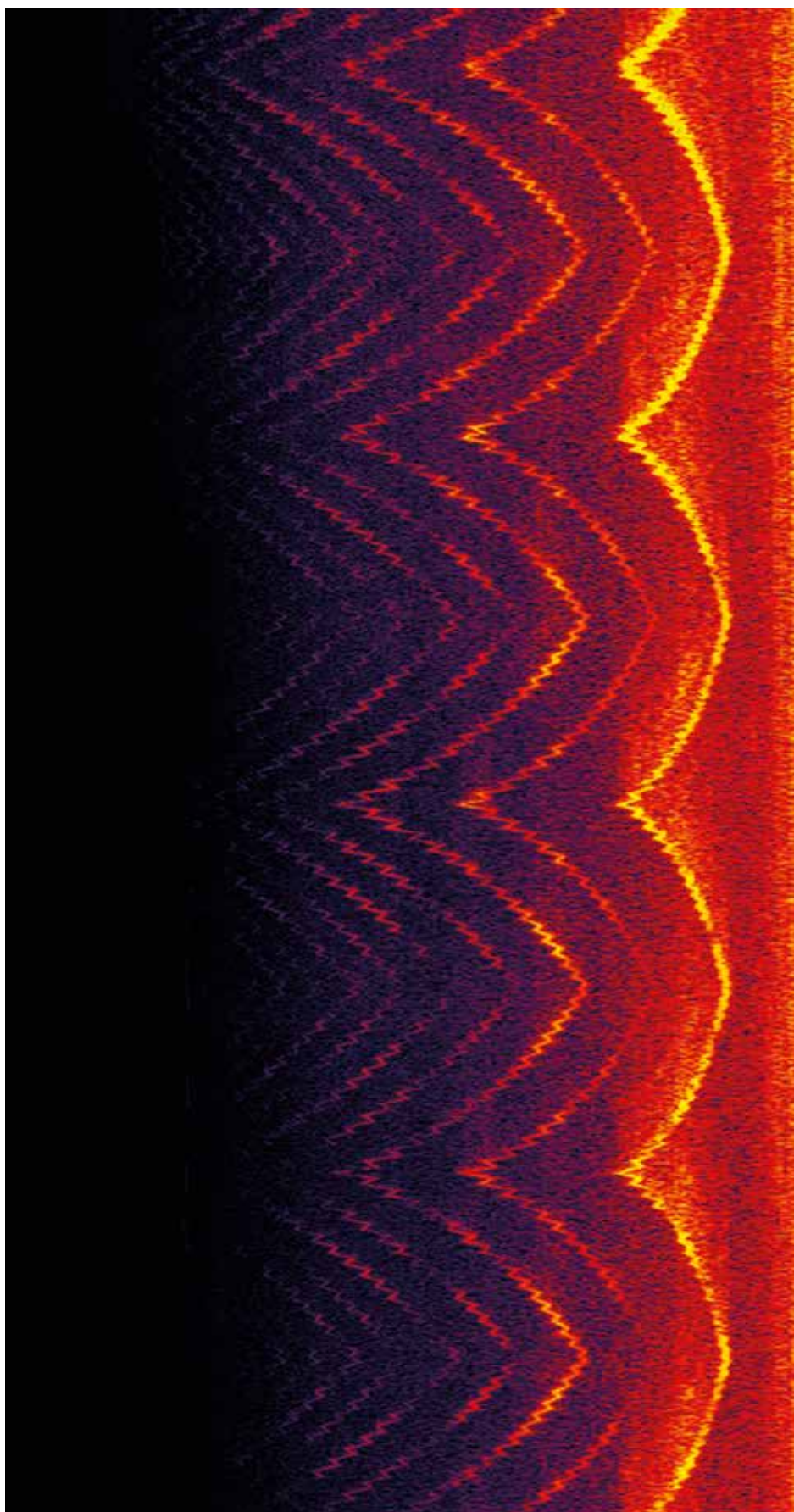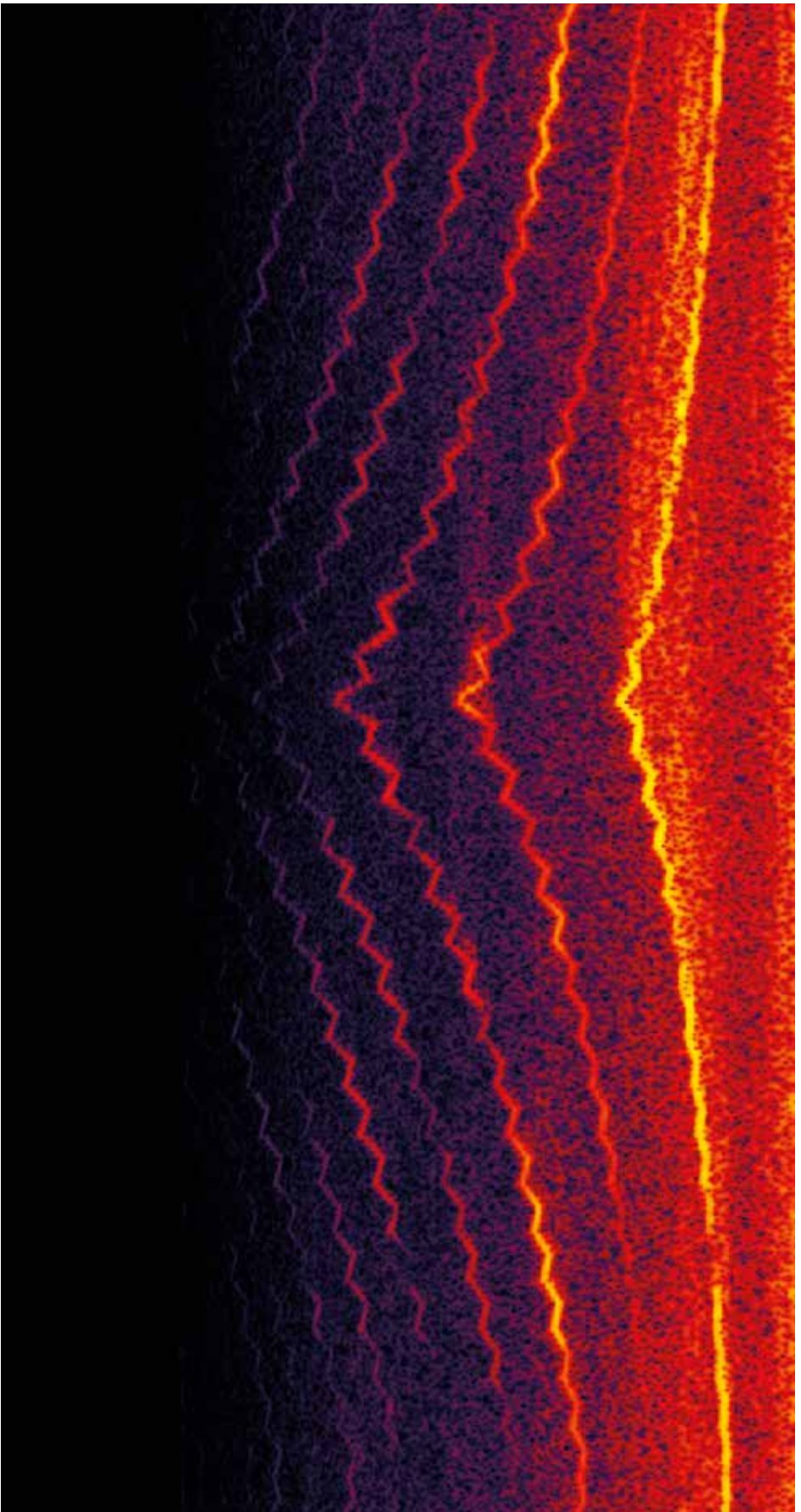
Siren Song
Justin Bennett

The sirens fitted to the emergency vehicles in Brussels have always been clearly present in the sonic environment, but since the terrorist attacks of 2016 their presence has become almost ubiquitous.

Like the calls of a bird or other territorial animal the sirens proclaim: "I am here. This (street) is mine." Of course this is exactly the intention—a proclamation of the ownership of, or the right to use, the roadway above any other user. In claiming the street though, they perform a double territorialisation by also dominating a large portion of the sonic spectrum.

The sirens, especially those that sweep up and down in frequency, cover a large part of our functional hearing range, particularly that which we use for listening to speech. The sweeps start usually at about 500–600Hz in order for them to be heard clearly above the rumble of traffic. The upper fundamental frequency is usually about 1500Hz, but the harmonics or overtones, audible when in line-of-sight of the vehicle, go up to about 8000Hz. The volume that the sirens produce—110dB (measured at 3.5 metres in front of the vehicle)—is apparently necessary to allow them to be heard over in-car sound systems.
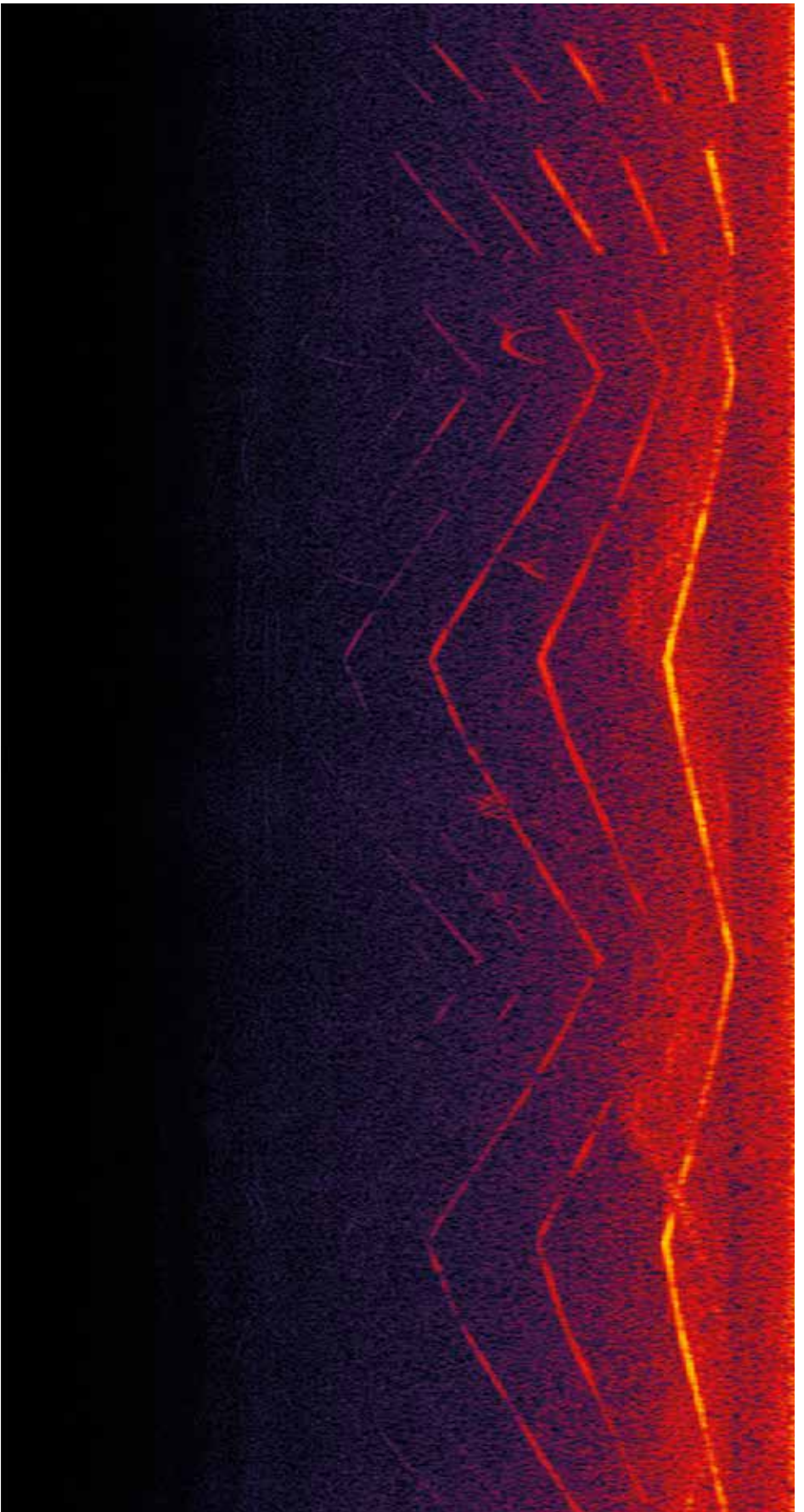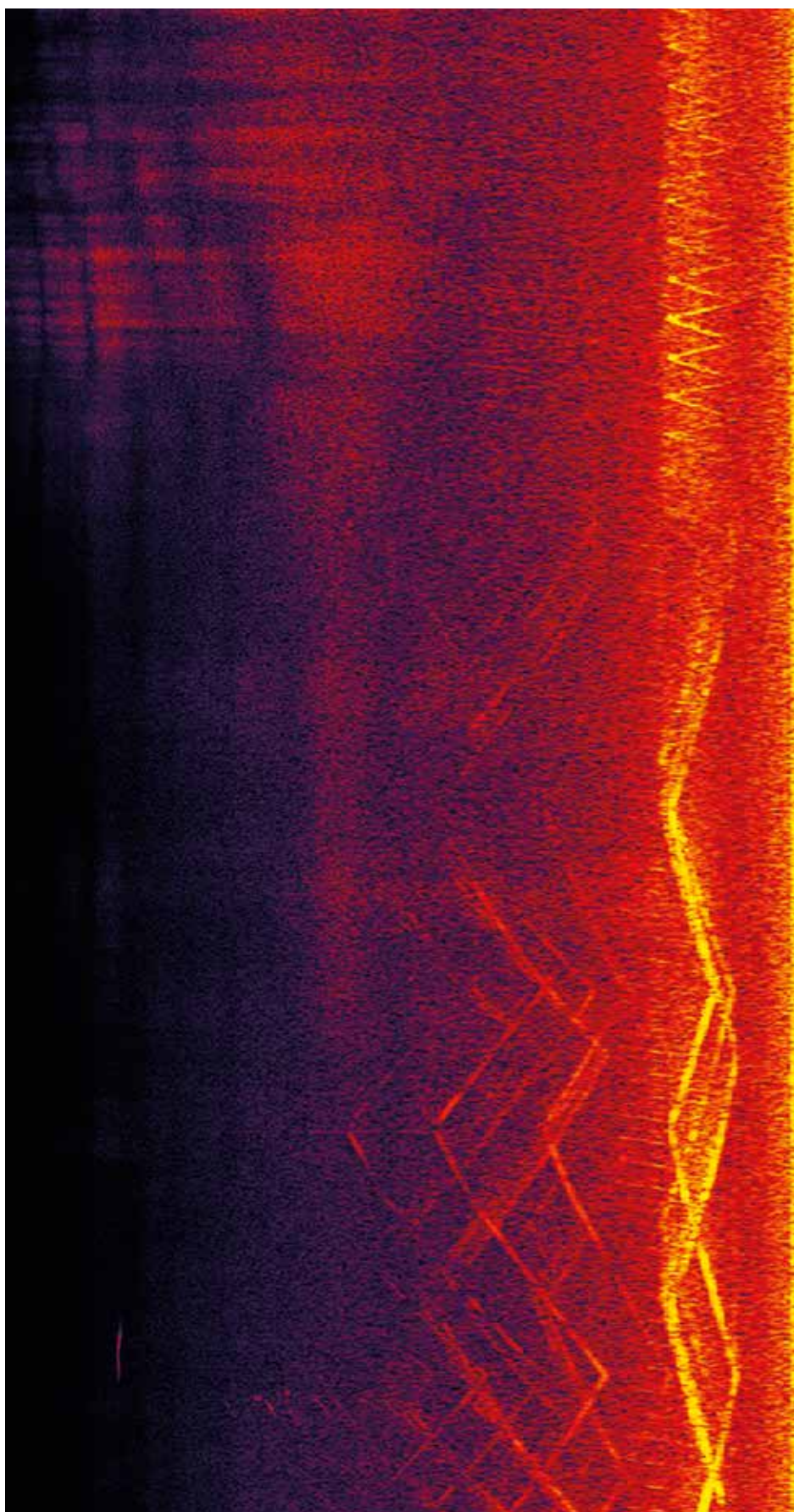
The Middle Matter

When a siren passes us, especially when it turns a corner, the higher harmonics are suppressed and diffused. There is also a slight Doppler shift (a change in pitch) more noticeable with the two-tone "fire engine" siren.

The large glass façades of the office buildings reflect the sirens almost perfectly. When heard from a distance this has the effect of multiplying the sirens, shifting them in time and pitch to create the perception of a number of emergency vehicles instead of just one.

These images are "sonograms" made from audio recordings of sirens in Brussels. The different types of siren are clearly visible, as are the effects of the sound's interaction with the urban fabric.
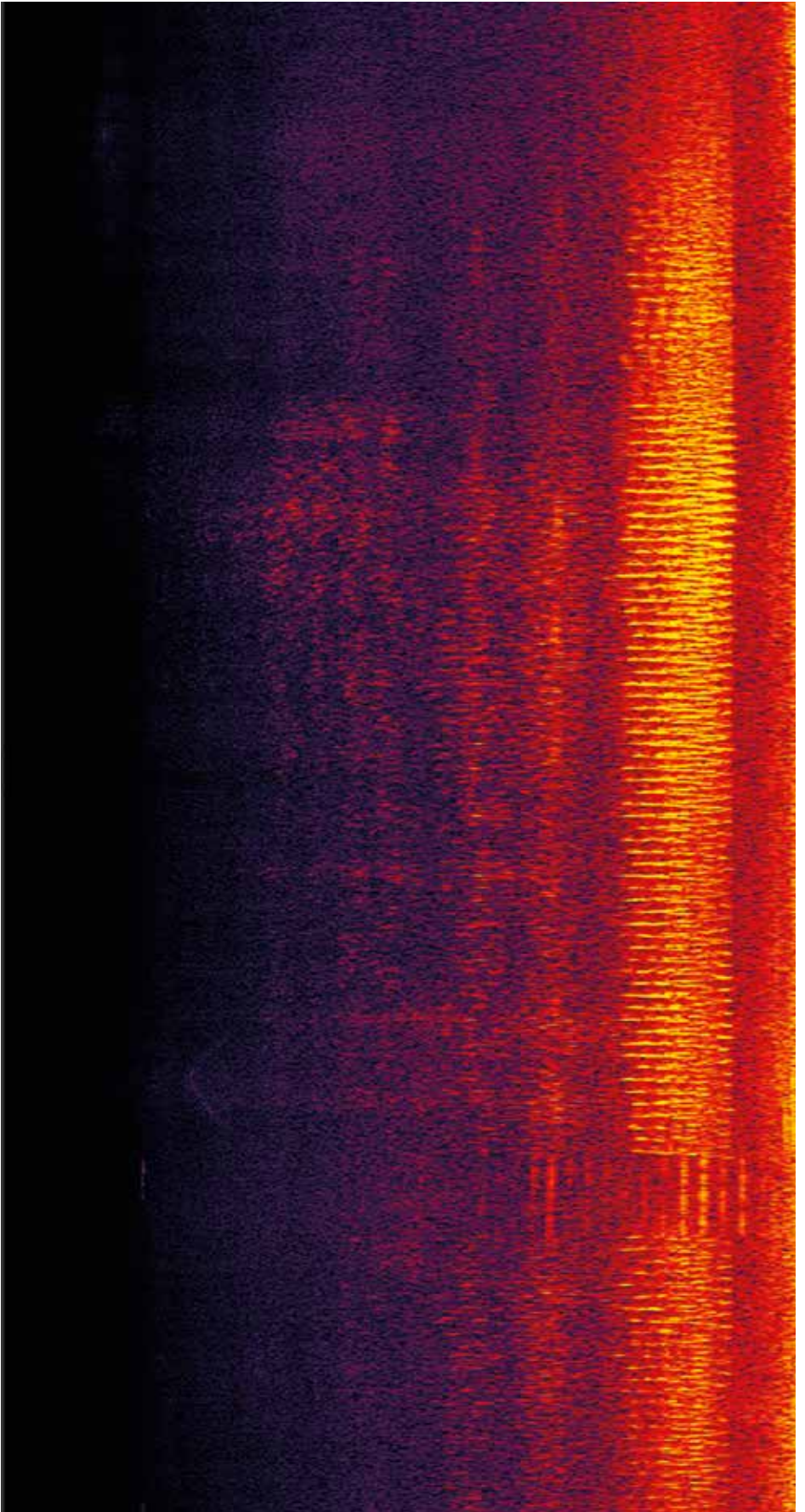
The gliding sound of the siren relates to the sine-wave sweep of the "impulse response"—a measurement procedure to reveal the acoustic truths of spaces. In moving through the city using their sirens, the emergency services constantly scan the surrounding architecture, revealing echoes, reverberations, resonances and other effects.

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The Middle Matter

As the sirens recede into the distance, we hear less and less of the direct sounds and more reflections. This overlaying of copies of the "sweep" creates a layer of broadband noise. Indeed, the resulting sound is complex enough to be termed "noise" in a technical sense. This noise fades gradually into the other background sounds, but of course it never dies away completely—it is only gradually masked by the other sound sources. AAs there are a number of sirens being used in the city at any one time, the resulting sonic "siren fog" is a constant integral part of the soundscape.

The song of the siren is the song of the city.
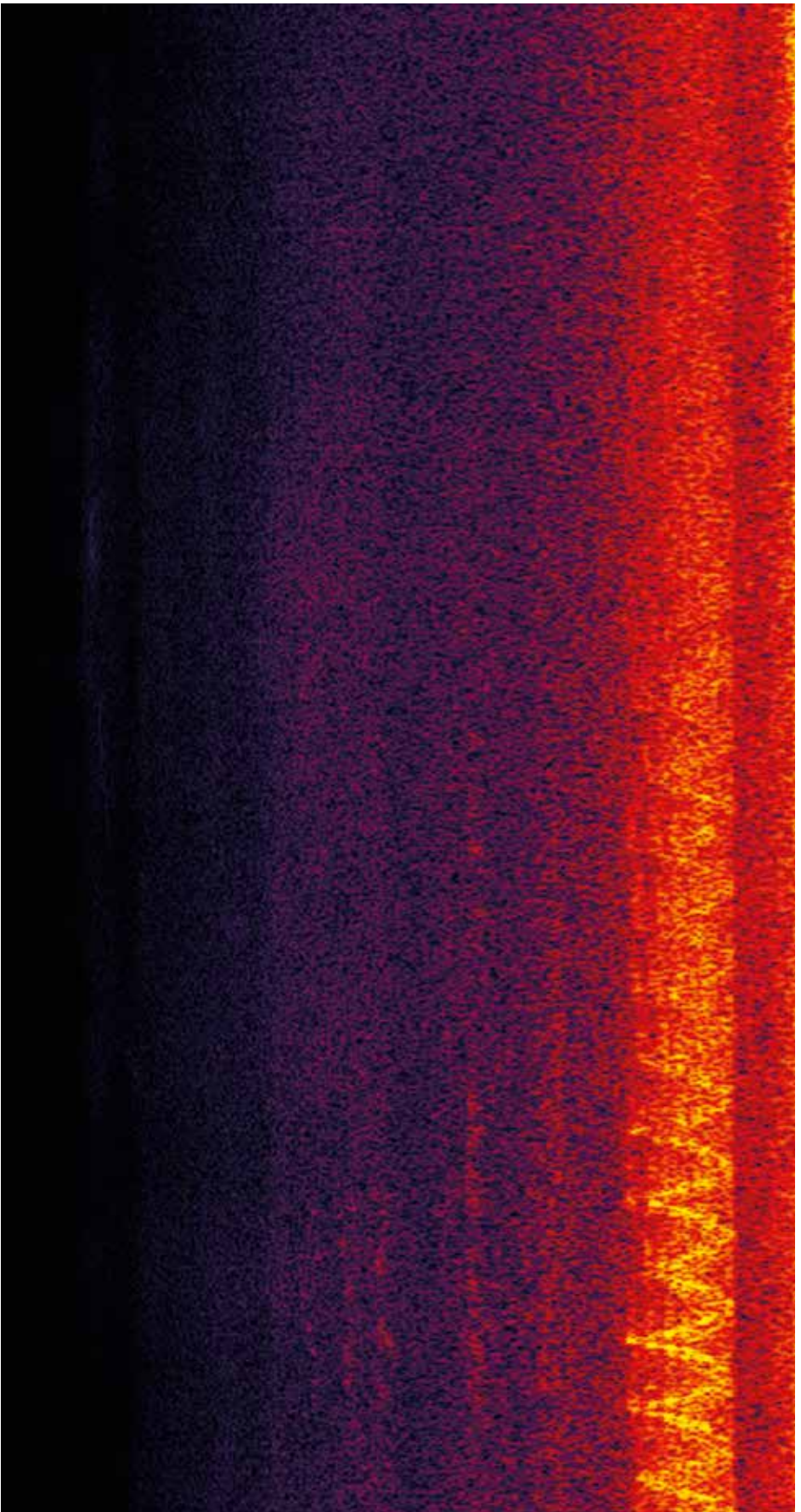
Togethering, of the Open Body

Brandon LaBelle

I want to reflect on the ways in which sounds work to destabilise the fixity of form, opening up to experiences of fragmentation and disturbance, as well as modes of celebration and togetherness. From the ephemeral currents of surrounding life to the noise of others, one may draw from sound a particular knowledge of the emergent, the interrupted, and the permeable. I want to highlight such knoweldges as a framework through which to turn vulnerability into a position of critical engagement and sharing—a being with and for each other.

We may find an expression of such conditions in the literary work of Monique Wittig, in particular her book *The Lesbian Body.* In this text one encounters a body and a writing overcome with permeability:

> You turn m/e inside out, *I* am a glove in your hands, gently firmly inexorably holding m/y throat in your palm, *I* struggle, *I* am frantic, *I* enjoy fear, you count the veins and the arteries, you retract them to one side, you reach the vital organs, you breathe into m/y lungs through m/y mouth, *I* stifle, you hold the long tubes of the viscera, you unfold them, you uncoil them, you slide them round your neck [...] *I* cannot speak, your teeth biting m/y cheeks your lips unscathed at the edge of m/y lips you [...][1]

Wittig leads us into the unworking of borders and barriers, of language and identity—a rending and a violation of subjectivity through the erotic intensities of a radical *con-*sensuality. This forceful coming together both interrupts and supports the articulation of a feminist self, amplifying oneself as never only one.

We may pose permeability as that which assists in reconsitituting a notion of oneself that exceeds the body, which may lead to new states of togetherness: I want to propose this process (which I call *togethering*) as the basis for an ethics of radical openness, poised around interruption and rebellion. For Wittig, the lesbian body is a type of weapon aimed at the abolition of the construct of "woman", saturating the field of meaning with a body of thresholds, abrasions, interruptions, and generosities.

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1   Monique Wittig, *The Lesbian Body*, trans. David Le Vay (Beacon Press: 1986), p. 86.

While Wittig captures the sheer physicality of togethering as the undoing of bodily containment—as bitten cheeks and a composition of viscera—I want to move toward sound and listening as the basis for an equally permeable event and knowledge path, a sound that interrupts subjectivity and draws one into an arena of contact and shared space.
Is sound not a type of passage from one to another, a tactile vibratory touch that comes from somewhere, a distance that presses the skin and penetrates the body, making it ache with the pain of the intrusion of the other? We may call this erotic intensity the joy of permeability.

Although listening may deepen relations with others, it does so by exposing the self. Sound is not so much a presentation of self, but an exposition, an opening up and a coming out, and this listening carries one forward while driving others back into oneself, back and forth. Such listening—following the suggestion of Wittig's lesbian assemblage—gives way to a *listening-ecstasy* that rehinges language around an altogether different axis.

In light of this we must ask: How can I remain myself as I listen? Am I not always already displaced, unworked, and reconstituted according to hearing and the acoustical figuring of intersubjectivity? And might a feminist listening draw out the interruptions inherent to auditory experience in pursuit of a radical transformation of this life lived, this body-form?

The conceptual framework I'm working through here locates us within the tossing and turning of the ephemeral —the beating force and flow of life with others—as that which is always already tensed by discontinuity, pain, and comingling. By way of hearing and the inherent ambiguity of sound, the ephemeral here finds a certain exacerbation as well as a potential, what Paul Carter underscores as sound's erotic potential.[2] From such conditions, we might suggest a possible reconfiguration of this body and those surrounding it—a reconfiguation nurtured by the interacoustic of togethering.

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2   Paul Carter, "Ambiguous Traces, Mishearing, and Auditory Space", in Veit Erlmann (ed.), *Hearing Cultures: Essays on Sound, Listening and Modernity* (Berg: 2004), pp. 43–64.

The Interrupted Subject

I'm interested in how sound and acoustic understanding may position subjectivity not as contained or self-determining, but rather as always already linked and tensed. Might such conditions suggest other forms of social movement action, other forms of articulating the work of community as that form of life-harnessing agency? I'm interested too in the figuring of the open body, which threads its way in and around the work of community, giving way to the becoming of meaning, the overflow of form, the excitations of encounter that upset representation and semantics. The open body as that which tends towards rapture and syncope and leads us into an intensity of relations, a "being in the field" [3]—the open body as the body that hears.

As Judith Butler outlines, the performativity of the subject is predicated on a structure of power and discourse that precedes appearance, that gives me a name through which I then search for the means to inhabit the social arena of meaning. In other words, subjectivity is determined by an exteriority, a social order that enables one to appear while regulating one's entrance according to particular systems of meaning. I am brought into language through a repetition. To speak the words properly, I move my mouth as others do. Language is put into my mouth, shaping its structure and movements, its voicing. In this way, I am called into being by this social order, and in this way I am held by constructs of power and discourse, what they may allow as well as foreclose.

From the call into being and the languages that are put into one's mouth, to the echo one performs, subjectivity is fundamentally vulnerable to an exteriority. It is, in fact,

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3   In fact, the acoustic dimension is often called upon precisely to overturn language, to thwart representational capture, to provide a path around situations of oppression. In his book *The Undercommons*, Fred Moten talks through questions of homelessness, and a general notion of "black fugitivity" which he begins to articulate as a base for undermining "possessive individualism". This leads Moten to Malcolm X's claim for the "possibility of location" and the drive towards "being in the field" as opposed to being in the "master's house". Being in the field holds the possibility of something else, the possibility of transforming the conditions of one's location. See Stefano Harvey and Fred Moten, *The Undercommons: Fugitive Planning and Black Study* (Minor Compositions: 2013), pp. 139–41.

constituted by such relationality. To be a subject is therefore to seek out the means and possibilities of reworking the significations of the name one is given. Such relational intensities, such performativity, can be seen as a bond that makes us vulnerable to and for each other. In other words, subjectivity is always already interrupted, staggered, *permeable,* reminding of our reliance on others—on what may sustain as well as harm one's living.[4]

This bond to an exteriority, this interrupted state that defers my ever taking possession of myself fully, is further captured in what Jean-Luc Nancy terms "community".[5] For Nancy, subjectivity is tensed by relations to the social, to the project of society, and is put to work by the forms of life that often require a certain legibility. In contrast, Nancy emphasises a notion of "singularity" that is not a container of interiority and self-consciousness, but rather an exposure to others, a finitude, a limit; less a self-sufficient holder of power and more a state of assemblage: *community*.

For Nancy, community is not a form of work but of passion and ecstasy. It is a sharing of singularity. Community, in other words, is not a project, but the unworking of being. From such a framework, self and community emerge as fundamentally linked. This linkage ultimately unsettles and interrupts subjectivity: this "I" that is always fragmented.

For Monique Wittig, the "I" is never only one, but is always already linked; the *I* is italicised, making of it a movement, here, slanted, as if leaning toward another, or pushed by what precedes it. Further, the word "my" is broken, written with a slash between the "m" and the "y" ("m/y") thereby cutting it in two, as if one never fully owns or possesses what it claims for itself. Instead, possession is staggered, interrupted by the perennial intrusion and complementarity of an exterior—by the force of community.

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4   For more on notions of performativity in her work, see Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (Routledge: 1999), as well as Judith Butler, *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of Sex* (Routledge: 2011).

5   Jean-Luc Nancy, *The Inoperative Community*, trans. Peter Connor, Lisa Garbus, Michael Holland, and Simona Sawhney (University of Minnesota Press: 1991).

How might we think further about sound and listening in relation to questions of subjectivity and community? In what way does the performativity of the subject include or incite an auditory question, an unsteady relation to hearing as well as naming?

In acoustic experience we may find a model for how to intensify the interrupted subject as the basis for contending with others. While borders and boundaries are necessary in the preservation of the self and in the struggles over identity and the politics of capture, I'm keen to approach such struggles less through acts of fortification and self-determination (less through the project of society) and more through understanding permeability, and the suffering we partake in through the encounter with others, as a type of erotic strength—a "being in the field" which may support the possibility for shifting the terms of social movement action and the making of other worlds.

Accordingly, I'm interested in reflecting upon sound and listening as the basis for rethinking the project of agency, and how one may find support through conditions of permeability. Might sound and listening enable the formation of particular practices that explicitly unwork the limits of the body, and if so, might such practices suggest a specific knowledge of the permeable and the constructs of the potentially linked—a (non)community of the ecstatic?

Following this line of thinking, I want to propose that sound may act as a path for the expression of passion and ecstasy, that as a vibrating and echoing matter, sound threads dynamically in and out of bodies, traversing spaces and borders to align and link, to interrupt and fragment, to force together. As such, sound touches a deep nerve; shivering us with the pleasure of suffering, of being broken apart by this other.

In his lectures on living together, Roland Barthes considers what he terms "small social formations": the assembly not of mass demonstrations, urban strikes, societies, or states, but small groupings of individuals. Taken from cultures of monastic life and their communal orientation, he poses "idiorrhythmy" as a way to probe the relation between individuality and community. Idiorrhythmy is mobilised to capture how personal rhythms inflect or brush against a greater order of living together, tensing this order with its syncopations, elations, and depressions. In short, Barthes

proposed idiorrhythmy as a way to imagine models for being alone *and* being a part of life with others at the same time. In her preface to the English publication of Barthes' lectures, translator Kate Briggs emphasises how idiorrhythmy "names any attempt to reconcile collective life with individual life, the independence of the subject with the sociability of the group."[6]

Idiorrhythmy is a type of pulse held between the life of the body and the order of a social form, whose beat registers this relation as a performative temporality, an unstable pattern. As such, it grants room and flexibility to the regimentation of social ordering, to society as a group formation and as a project. Idiorrhythmy cuts against identification as a dominant timing, giving life to the stringent capture of productive behaviour by figuring for improvisations, lapses, intervals—in short, an erotic inter-play that gives way to drift and pleasure and the wandering of inter-rhythms. As Barthes suggests: "Before anything else, the first thing that power imposes is a rhythm (to everything: a rhythm of life, of time, of thought, of speech). The demand for idiorrhythmy is always made in opposition to power."[7]

Idiorrhythmy describes a formation of living together which is tensed with gaps and intervals, excitations and withdrawals—ultimately defining "a flexible, free, mobile rhythm; a transitory, fleeting form, but a form nonetheless".[8] In this sense, idiorrhythmy may be appreciated as a commotion: a type of joining together, yet one that communicates a disturbance.

Commotion generates alignments and alliances between oneself and others, producing a type of unidentifiable crowd, a movement across bodies and matters: the making of life lived. As such, the idiorrhythmy of commotion—of being in the throng—may function as a framework through which one begins to learn how to live with others, not as an expression of social cohesion or identification, but rather, as a community in movement—not as a project, but as a passion.

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6   Kate Briggs, "Preface", in Roland Barthes, *How To Live Together: Novelistic Simulations of Some Everyday Spaces*, trans. Kate Briggs (Columbia University Press: 2013), p. xxii.

7   Roland Barthes, *How To Live Together: Novelistic Simulations of Some Everyday Spaces*, trans. Kate Briggs (Columbia University Press: 2013), p. 35.

8   Ibid.

The Incomplete, Open

I've been attempting to capture the ways in which we might understand the formation, or deformation, of subjectivity according to an acoustic understanding and the conditions of sound and listening. The state of *being permeable* instigated by sound is one of exposure, of opening toward others and the intensities of worldly experience; of being one within and through many. As such, permeability figures one not as stable and secure, but as prone to fragmentation, rupture, and linking. From such conditions, one learns of the contingent and the ephemeral, the joy and the suffering of sharing, finding the skills and resources for how to navigate the inherently unsettled quality of worldly life, of being in the field. Further, one learns how to practise community, a practice which must be highlighted as the basis for dispersal, and dispossession—a giving away, a being taken—that undermines the mechanisms of accumulation, ownership, and the possessiveness of the male horde.

      Might the processes of listening and being heard provide a model for practices not only of self-organisation, but togethering? Not only of self-determination, but the unworking of collective-determination? From the inoperative (non)community of the permeable and the passionate to the idiorrhythms of transient formations, what I'm searching for is a type of *motion-form* of the incomplete: the body that is only ever in possession of itself as a *co*-motion. Such a body enables not a being *with* others, but a *being in and through others, even those I do not love.* All of this further emphasises the generative and rebellious potentiality found in what it means to be touched by sound as the unworking of oneself, and in the passions of *togethering*; a movement of ecstasy—of hearing oneself hearing oneself as another. A togethering which Monique Wittig, once again, gives narrative:

> M/y fingers sink into the orifices in your back your loins, your fingers are inserted into the holes in m/y neck m/y cranium. In the end a tempest arrives, it rushes right through us, scattering the muscles. First *I* hear your cries, then *I* hear myself cry out as you do, there is a bellowing of sirens, they reverberate

within the gaping tunnels on either side of our two bodies which constitute a single organism pervaded by vibrations quivering full of its own currents, is it not so m/y dearest? [9]

9   Wittig, *The Lesbian Body*, p. 109.

Towards a Vaginal Listening
Anna Raimondo
& Edyta Jarząb

*In the polyphony of identities we believe
that we have to invent new forms of political
and inclusive actions within feminisms.
Nevertheless, in this case, we embody Foucault's
question: "Where do we speak from?"
Anna from Brussels proposed to Edyta
from Warsaw to think and reflect with
their ears and vaginas, distant but resonant.*

Anna In one of the last interviews I conducted for *New Boundaries of the Well-Being of the Vaginal Ecosystem #4 Lucena* (2019) —the project I am running about gender perspectives and urban geography— a trans woman told me

"Even the smallest toe of my foot is feminine, there are women with a vagina, women without. Men with a vagina, men without!"

And I feel she is completely right.

"So all this attention to the vagina? I don't see the point", she added. I do agree that having a vagina is definitely not what determines a gender, being a woman. But I cannot avoid thinking about all the vaginas in the world, the ones which still suffer mutilations and violences. I cannot avoid thinking about the ones which strike for their rights, about the lost orgasms and the pleasure yet to come.

I cannot avoid thinking how, still nowadays, it is difficult to say the word out loud in public.

Edyta I led a workshop for a group of activists / artists in Vienna. Creating a safe space, I asked them to walk around the room like a cat, checking out all the corners. It was dark and warm there. I also asked them to lay down on the floor and try to imagine peeling an apricot with their inner muscles, with their vaginas. Just at the end I discovered that one person was transsexual. But I didn't know what to say. What should I have asked? "Excuse me, do you have a vagina, is this exercise excluding you?" What if it was inclusive by the level of abstraction? I later asked by email, "how did you feel?" And she said, "great!"

In the context of *New Boundaries of the Well-Being of the Vaginal Ecosystem #4 Lucena*, the local city council made a special meeting to speak about why this title for a public project in urban space.

I am wondering if they would have spent half an hour speaking about it if there was not the word "vaginal" in the title.

How does it feel to pronounce the word "vagina" on the telephone in a loud voice, while sitting in a bar or on public transport? When I did so several times during my performance in public space, *Encouragements* (2014), people felt uncomfortable and sat elsewhere or asked me to go away. But why?

I focus on all the "in-between" I have:
my voice,
my skin,
and, yes, my vagina.
Vagina, *vagine*, *vagina* sounds so nice, no matter the accent you have...

What do you call your vagina? Do you?

Monica from the TV series *Friends* calls it "Flower". They weren't really friends in this show, they all had sex. This is not clear: to call a person you have sex with a friend, to call a vagina a flower.

Vagina is a place. Erotic. Mystical. Political. Here she comes and who knows how much noise she will make. *Vagina, Valkyria!*

The ears cannot be closed and the vagina cannot be closed either...

"We don't come from your ribs but you do come from the vagina" scream Italian feminists during the demonstrations in the 1970s while making the symbol of the triangle with their hands.

And I would add that listening is the first sense we develop in the womb of our mothers.

So what could be meant and implied by listening via the vagina?

Coming back to the first connectivity / connection we have with the external world?

The vagina is there to give and receive. The ears are there to receive.
But could there be any hidden activations through the process of reception?

Reception might not be passive.

Reception is never passive.

This openness and availability of ears invites torture. Strangers in the street accost you and fill your ears with filthy stuff, wisdom, and unprompted advice.

In my city, we go to protests with banners on which a vagina gives the middle finger. The slogan reads: "hands off our vag!"Since the right-wing populists have been in power, the vagina has become a public space, a kindergarten, owned by a future unborn citizen.

What we can hear with a vagina?

...faint echoes of the Platonic fear of becoming woman, becoming animal. Pauline Oliveros wrote this famous image: if sound is phallic like researchers claim, why don't women have banana shaped ears? (Pauline Oliveros, *Softward for People: Collected Writings 1963–80* (Smith Publications: 1984), p. 113.)

To counter the stereotype that music and sound is penetrative, Oliveros offers active listening—in a way, a penetrating of sound itself. The ear can create sound as well, a kind of echo.

Yes, I believe that listening always implies an activity, so it is never passive.
I also believe that vaginas are never passive.

There is not vaginal passivity, but a lot of ignorance about the way its forms of expression should be recognised. But how to be aware and recognise its language made of vibrations? How to learn to listen to it and through it? What does it mean to listen through the vagina?

I created a platform: Pinku Room. This name refers to a wave in Japanese erotic cinema, *pinku eiga*. This should be a safe space. I wanted to engage girls to play music at parties, and what makes a difference is a selected playlist, songs mainly from female MCs. Like this you will not hear any sexist lyrics, so you will not feel inadequate while dancing and having fun.

Listening through the vagina could be intended as a generative action of silences within which to invent new languages and scenarios. Spaces in which to voice pleasure, fear, the instinct; beyond language. To the unspeakable yet present. Silences to resist the patriarchal discourses and given frames of interpretation.

I can imagine a vagina creating an echo. I can imagine a tiny microphone to measure its range.

Listening through the vagina could create a space to recognise minimal sounds and invisible and ephemeral rhythms. Nothing would be furtive anymore.

Listening through the vagina could imply "the beginning of listening". (Salomé Voegelin, *Sonic Possible Worlds: Hearing the Continuum of Sound* (Bloomsbury: 2014).)

For a vaginal state of mind.

For a vaginal state of mind:

Let's think about a closing exercise, not opening, and we will move to a state of hypnosis or meditation.

Imagine that your ears are overgrown with a thick, impermeable membrane. How does it feel to have virgin ears with hymen?

Can you imagine how slowly all the channels of your body—soft, warm holes— could change into mineral, stone grooves? The air plays a melody on your body, whistling in the crevices of the bones. You are like an openwork stone monument. Nothing is coming directly at you, rather you are standing in the way of a sound wave that is washing over you like a rock near the shore.

Sometimes it flows in with
great power and flows out.
Do you enjoy being a rock?

This is an important skill,
abandoning your body,
the ability to somehow
separate yourself from it,
a characteristic that connects
people experiencing
violence, a superpower.

For a vaginal state of mind!

But also a mystical quality,
you can find it in Meister
Eckhart's writings, growing
space to receive. A mystical
experience starts with
listening, opening for the
grace that can enter. The
emphasis is put not on the
penetration itself, but on
feeling, embracing the
inner space and the other,
or the voice.

Imagine it again: inhale
from the very bottom,
from the place that is most
sensitive in your body. Look
at the stream of air coming
up to your lungs. Do not
rush. Let it caress you inside
your nose, in your throat,
into your forehead and
the top of your skull.

Exhale, release, dissolve,
come again.

For a vaginal state of mind.

Voice controlled pleasure:

Sit in the cafe, or another public space. Take a deep breath, directing it into your back, as if your kidneys are filling with air. Slowly begin to murmur, almost inaudibly. Focus on the vibrating, throbbing places. Making sound as a completely internal affair. Feel your voice rooted inside and free to roam.
From this vibrating body start singing a song for a person with virgin ears. Optionally, in a place with a sound system, use the microphone, create an erotophonic soundscape.

A body map:

Think about the city you live in. Try to assign every part of your body to a district, to a place.
Which neighbourhood will be your vagina?

Now.

Exercises to improve your vaginal listening:

First of all find a warm place, ideally with another or with a small group of confident people.

Your vagina should feel free and you should feel exactly the same.

1.   In a standing position receive the energy from the ground. Start focusing on how your vagina breaths.

2.   Choose a spot you like the sound of, then lie down on a comfortable bed or on the ground. Put earplugs in your ears and begin to focus on your vagina as if it was your third ear.

Open your legs and listen.

Are the sounds dry ones? Or do you find them more liquid?

3.   Through this process focus on unlearning the ways you define the sounds you hear and open yourself to other forms of experiencing listening. Feel the sound elsewhere, otherwise. Find the adjective you prefer or invent new ones...

4. Try to imitate the sounds you hear from your vagina with your mouth.

5. Now gently place an earplug at the opening of your vagina. Try to listen to this new form of silence.

Between 2018 and 2019, via an open call, Q-O2 hosted ten international artists for thematic residencies related to sound's potential to create shared spaces. In order to integrate these artistic projects into the city, we worked with a number of partner institutions, each time connecting residents to other partners on a project-by-project basis, according to the interests and needs of each artistic research. These partners were: Nadine, Constant, w-o-l-k-e, MAAC, La Maison des Cultures / Huis van Culturen Molenbeek, Bronks, RoSa, bna-bbot, FMDO, and AB Salon.

85   *In seeking new audiences, or new relations to existing publics, the residents explored an incredibly diverse array of formats: sound walks, open labs, performances, narrational scores, installations, radio works, sculpture, home repairs, guided improvisations, video, a conference. These experimental formats often brought the artists and projects into situations where the stakes of legibility were still hazy and unsure, where the modes of articulation were not given but had to be freshly established in each context.*

These short extracts from longer interviews mostly don't account for the final form of each project but try to focus on the artists' research and methodology. They are both accounts of particular moments in each artist's thinking, and blue-prints for further articulations.

Jonathan Frigeri

Interviewed by Caroline Profanter

Caroline Profanter You are fascinated by the intermediate world, by the radio waves that surround us, and by other hidden frequencies. Where does this interest come from?

Jonathan Frigeri I'm not sure, but I think it's a curiosity about things that are not normal, a fascination with another parallel reality. A curiosity also about the altered states of human beings—states in which we don't see things through our everyday eyes, when something changes, when we get a look at what is behind reality. Or behind the reality that we are supposed to perceive in a normal state in our society. I think this kind of reality is the tip of a big iceberg. There could be more beneath, it could be bigger.

It's a kind of exploration, like speleology, going deep into the cave, to try to discover what is the source of the human being.

CP You say that radio is situated between two infinities, ghostland and dreamland.

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JF Dreamland is really related to the human, to the nervous system, related to our imagination, to our memory, to us as a device. And ghostland is the deep space, is all the rest that surrounds us: space, the cosmos. Maybe there is another existence that doesn't have a body anymore.

And it's true that radio is also a voice that you don't see, that comes to your ear. This voice is speaking to you, to the conscious or subconscious, telling you things, and you build an image by yourself. And in some way, it's like a sorcerer in a village who takes plants, or meditates, or drums, or sings: he goes into a state of trance in which his mind in some way can be channelled by something that is external, from where we could have access to some information, or something, or nothing.

CP You perform using radio as a medium in what you call a "ritual-performance". How do you approach this?

JF The real ritual is related to a liminal experience. It is an experience that usually happens at the border of two worlds, two dimensions, two spaces. You are living something that brings you outside of your normal existence and changes your status or your beliefs forever. This is one of the paradigms to create a real ritual. And I think radio is already such a thing.

You are already in a liminal state. You are between here and there, between the voice that is speaking to you from elsewhere, and the place where you are as you listen. You already have a connection with something that is elsewhere. This is a heterotopic space, a suspended space, where the normal laws of our society are changed. So I believe that radio is already a ritual.

CP   Radio is the medium through which you can create an imaginary space. We have a range of audible frequencies which are becoming more and more dense today. And there are also the political aspects of radio…

JF   Of course radio is not free at all. You don't have free access to FM radio in every country. We have several community radios that have an antenna and broadcast in FM, but the antenna is weak, it's of lower power than those of the commercial radio stations. Radio is also something extremely powerful. As Gaston Bachelard or Gregory Whitehead try to elucidate, radio's voice really enters inside people's subconscious. So for the radio-maker there is a big responsibility when it comes to what we say on the radio. And Marshall McLuhan theorises that all media are an extension of our nervous system. From the speaking voice, from writing, to radio, television, the car, everything that is a medium—that we use—changes the perception of our existence. And radio is the most performative and adapted medium, just after the voice, to connect with the human nervous system. So that means that we can really go inside someone's personality. This is also why radio is not free. Because the people in charge of a country don't want to give this power to everybody. Free access to the radio is always limited by power, by time allowances, or by geographical location.

And I also believe that radio today needs to reopen itself to imagination, because it's really become something pedestrian, a flat state, where we listen to the news, where we listen to some music, some documentary, but the magic is really hidden—it is really on the border of what radio is today. And I think we have to reveal the magic of radio, to try to give some keys to the audience. What is radio, and what could radio be?

CP   Another relevant topic that you address is the importance of knowing how this medium works.

JF   I tried to build the most simple radio receiver. The kind that was used at the beginning of the nineteenth century, for receiving radio waves, called a "crystal radio". Made out of a coil of wire, connected to a mineral, galena, and finally to a loudspeaker. With this device you can already listen to some shortwave radio. There is some algebra to do, the number of coils, the size of coils, etc., and it doesn't focus precisely on

one frequency, but it works. Yes, we are surrounded today by a lot of objects and we don't know any more how they work, their essence. We have lost some control over how things work, and that also means losing some connection to the roots of the things, to their existence. Today everybody uses a mobile phone, but there are very few people who know exactly how this machine works, and if we explore what a mobile phone is made of, we discover that it is composed of mineral and stone. It is something at once magic and primitive.

Today we have quite a bizarre relationship with things. Because what we *are* is also related to what we *use* and how we use it. And when we lose control of what we use, maybe we also lose some control of ourselves. That's why I wanted to really go back to the roots, using a mineral. I am not a technician, I am not an engineer. I do these experiments with a lot of trial and error. For me it's also a kind of discovery every day, of how these things work; but it is also a need.

Interviewed by Henry Andersen

Henry Andersen   I thought maybe we could start by talking about ooooo as a construction. What does it offer you?

ooooo   ooooo is a sort of a fiction that I can organise a practice around. It comes from this idea of "being with" and later from Karen Barad and the idea of "intra-action": when you start to understand that there is no interaction. Because in speaking I constitute you and you constitute me and there is something in between. With intra-action it's all just there and everything relies on the properties of the relationship itself. A collective body doesn't need a body (or a body as we know it). A body becomes a metaphor. There is this sort of collective disembodiment.

I never author things under my own name. This is sometimes tricky in the art world which is still mostly built around the idea of the singular genius. I'm more interested in the mobilisation of people and collective identities. ooooo is not a collective, which should have a common goal, but a group of people who gather around a common question. You and I are talking now, but it would be better that I weren't here alone because it's better to have a multiplicity of voices. Everybody who takes part in a certain project has a different background, and a different vision. It doesn't need to be streamlined.

HA   A constellation often has quite loosely defined edges.

ooooo   Yes, it's often quite hard to define. And sometimes also to credit. I try to credit all the people who take part in what is coming out. We can also criticise this idea of the informal network. It's always very much affected by who you meet, because of the circles you move in, because of the kind of content that you activate, what you actively look for.

HA   This was part of what was really interesting for me — the way you worked with all of the different institutions; the moments that works and the moments it doesn't.

ooooo   Finally it's also about human relations. There is a question of what people mean by "supporting" or how much they want to embody their involvement in the constellation. It's so peripheral. Sometimes stretching out in this way produces too much diffusion to really feel like the constellation is actualised. That is sometimes a struggle, but it's also the core of what ooooo is doing. The difficulty is assessing this entity in all its complexitiy.

Especially when you mix partners that are more institutional, or more DIY or whatever. Different infrastructures. There is a high level of responsibility in constituting this collective body. It's not that we are dependent on them, or that they are dependent on us, but that we work together to make something happen.

HA   Your piece used the format of an open lab. Could you say what you mean by that?

ooooo   I've been involved in different laboratory formats—always DIY, citizen's science formats—where people are actively trying to develop a research together, without the pressure of a result. I wanted to continue this kind of practice in my own "home base".

Most laboratories are in highly academic, very inaccessible environments. That means that if you want to educate yourself you have to create your own environments. By "open" laboratory, we mean the access is open. Oftentimes we are maybe re-inventing the wheel but we are learning how to do it in the process. Often we are even developing our own equipment to then be able to perform the research. This kind of DIY science is a lot about access to different tools and resources needed to be able to perform the research.

A lot of academic laboratories are also very specific and narrow in their research, so much so that they can lose a level of thinking about what they are doing. It's so narrow. It's much nicer if there are a multiplicity of practices and a multiplicity of knowledges. It's interesting when there are intersections between these knowledges and between these referential frameworks. I like these sorts of hybrids. It's more alchemical, and more metaphysical.

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HA   I wanted to ask a bit more about the idea of openness and self-education and how it relates to your thinking around the electromagnetic spectrum.

o   "Educate" seems like such a heavy word. I come from a feminist practice, so it would more be "emancipate yourself" but in order to do that it's often necessary to educate yourself first, or at least to get informed. I think with the open lab you become that body—the body of the lab. It seems legitimate because you have the environment.

The electromagnetic spectrum is a territory finally, even if it's not a visible one. Visibility is just a part of that spectrum. It's huge. We constantly use the electromagnetic sphere as a service but we don't really realise the extent to which it is militarised and commercialised. The signalling that exists in the technology around us is very active in this territory. To be present there with a disembodied collective voice is part of the emancipatory struggle now at stake. It's an urgency. It means first to develop an awareness, then access, then to take a stance.

It's super important to open this spectrum up—and this is the hacking part—to open it up and see how it works. We are hacking it now on the level of the minerals. That's a quite low level already. Trying to understand what these devices are.

We set up several open, biochemical labs, in quite different climatological conditions, and experimented with making crystals that could be used in radios. We had three quite different zones. With the first space, via Constant, we were in an office space—very high up in the Brussels World Trade Centre. After that we worked in Buratinas [a small boat owned by Nadine vzw] in the harbour and on the water. Then finally in w-o-l-k-e who have a space in an old radio studio in the suburbs of Brussels.

HA   All these spaces are also social environments you enter, not just infrastructures or climatological conditions.

ooooo   Especially the yacht club. The boating world is very male, very heteronormative. Even having a different body in that environment is already important. It's the twenty-first century now but many structures and environments are still incredibly patriarchal. And a big part of how knowledge is disseminated is very patriarchal. It was interesting that even on an economical level the harbour started to support us financially. Making these interfaces is a major part of what ooooo is doing.

HA   It's again a question of access.

ooooo   It's also about semantics. You cannot talk to everyone about the project in the same way. Some people need to go into a discourse on art and science but some people, like the others we encountered on the dock, just needed a basic story of why we were there and that was enough. This is how the interface works.

HA   These residencies are somehow also a way for us to really think through and problematise what we mean when we say "audience". It's not about outreach, but about developing *with* an audience. What is an audience beyond just a public that comes to see a show?

ooooo   If you make a crystal you can't hear it with ten people. But the information spreads around. The people who see it are all implicated, they become antennas. I think when you talk about audiences, people need to know that something is happening. With each institution there are different networks, different crowds. This audience is also mixed and activated by trading between these different environments. What becomes most interesting for me is when a practice (even an institutional practice) has an ecology, when it intertwines with what is around it. That's I think something very important for ooooo always.

Paulo Dantas

Interviewed by Caroline Profanter

Caroline Profanter   You experienced your body as a memory device. Could you describe this?

Paulo Dantas   People are always commenting on how I memorise things. I can remember things with a lot of detail and this gives me a certain freedom to speak about them. But memory is always unfaithful too. You are always recombining and creating new meaning from things that happened. There are some exercises that I do in order to think about myself as a memory device or as a memory card. For instance, I think about language as a microphone as well as a loudspeaker. Language is like a transducer.

   I had several exercises. For instance, I tried not to use my cell phone when I was on the streets, so I made myself ask people for directions, rather than rely on Google Maps or stuff like that. I wanted to communicate in the local languages. People often tried to speak with me in English, but I refused. I would just say "*Je ne parle pas d'anglais, je ne comprends pas d'anglais!*", "*Geen Engels! Ik kan niet Engels*".

CP   What do you learn from a place through language?

PD   I think that by trying to communicate in the local languages, I can incorporate certain traces, certain aspects of a specific place, of the processes of a city, or the specific circumstances of a conversation. I want to engrave them. I want to carry them with me. And I believe this is the most adequate method: respecting the means of communication of a place. There is this movement from me toward the place, but there is also a movement from the place toward me, to be trespassed by the place, through language, through conversation, through confusion, through trying to understand. It felt sometimes like watching a movie with English subtitles, but as if I had sworn never to look at the subtitles. They were there all the time but I was making the effort not to look.

CP   In that way, you had to go more into the movie, rather than standing outside as an observer.

PD   I feel that I became more sensitive to other stuff as well. The way that people look at you, the way their body moves, certain alterations of intensity in what people are saying, the way they are dressed. You know, there is a whole bunch of information which is there. I could see in the eyes of people

whether they were interested in this exchange or not. This was one of the most difficult aspects of the whole project; receiving lots of information. People are saying something, but their body is not there, and you can tell. It's strange. I wonder how many people feel this every day, in this foreigner condition.

CP   You also recorded the process. What do you do with those documents?

PD   The recordings are central. I didn't listen to them on the same day I made them, but days later, weeks later. And a lot of things came back. A certain sense of the place, a certain sense of temperature, of atmosphere, of how I was feeling that day, the words that I chose, and why. The recorder helps me to reconstruct a place through sound.

CP   Do you integrate the field recordings in your artistic work?

PD   For me, field recording is a door to areas that are not strictly musical in a traditional sense. By that I mean sounds with specific characteristics, relating only to themselves. This is what I am coarsely calling "strictly musical": creating these structures of self-referencing. For me, field recording opened up a door to another area, another means.
          There is a character from Marvel-Comics called the Daredevil, who was a very important reference for me as a child. He's completely blind and he's called "the man without fear". He is able to retrace the origins of sound, or the feelings of people who are talking. This is a kind of anti-Schaeffer figure. In a way it's the reverse of Schaeffer's thinking, which tried to rebuild musical thinking with recorded material by considering sounds as abstract objects detached from their origin. The Daredevil is the man without fear, because he does not see but he rebuilds the environment with his other senses, and especially with hearing.
          Field recording gives me this power to open sound work up to meaning as well: this *is* a car, this *is* the sound of someone walking on a staircase, this *is* a quality of a space, this *is* a story, this *is* a conversation, this *is* someone telling me something.

CP   Your project turned out to be a real life challenge…

PD   Originally the idea was that this would be an exercice in breaking my identity. And this was, or this still is, a project that I somehow intend to keep pursuing. But I have to say that through this process it actually intensified my perception of certain aspects of my personality. So it's ambiguous. Trying to destroy identity, but at the same time creating memory,

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which I think is probably a big part of what an identity is: who I was, compared to what I am doing now, you know? Originally, I imagined it would help me to expand and slash my identity but at the end of the day it's kind of the opposite.

CP   Breaking your identity as a way to extend your view, or change your perception?

PD   Yes. Because I believe that with a new language you can say things about yourself that you are not able to say in another language. You have access a certain way of writing, a certain way of structuring thought. Time works very differently from one language to another. The way you write, the directions, the forces behind this. So I believe I could say things, discover new things, or even *create* new things in me, through these other languages. I could not escape myself. And at the beginning it was really hard.

Melissa E. Logan

Interviewed by Julia Eckhardt

Julia Eckhardt Upon our call for projects related to participation and sharing, you proposed to work around intellectual property and copyright. In what way did this come out of a personal urgency?

Melissa E. Logan The personal urgency of music copyright, distribution, and ownership crept into my mind while writing music, recording and thinking about releasing work. I was not satisfied with the structures that the music business provided. The distribution seemed either too low key or too exploitative. With my band Chicks on Speed we tried to solve the problem by developing apps and releasing music through an app, but this keeps one very bound to updates. We still think a music platform is good with an archive quality. A site to present music and have it available with curated playlists and extensive information about the work and artists. In this way my thinking of copyright starts in the sparks of beginning new work; the end structure is already a part of the piece. I think of the molecule in relation to planetary systems.

JE Could you explain in more detail precisely how music distribution over the internet, which by now has become the most important path between maker and audience, is linked to copyright and intellectual property? I guess it has a lot to do with monetary streams, but I feel that your frustration lies somewhere else.

ML The digital dictatorship is a fleet with many interests and for a few years I felt like I was aimlessly feeding the monster. With one foot we are a circus animal being nudged, judged, watched over, and with the other we are shaping what works online, what we support and demand and the endless advantages that are given to us with info, maps, a share culture and international cosiness, tutorials for the many talents and capabilities necessary to be an artist today, news and live streams, e-books for all.
　　I keep on thinking of Susan Sontag's *On Photography*, a book that my first painting professor Marjorie Salzillo had us read. She wanted us to understand how media frees art, how photography had a freeing effect on painting as a tool to depict our environment.
　　Right now I'm trying out AI-generated music and thinking about how to bring in variation. Music is partially repetition, but new elements are needed to keep attention flow; emotional aspects of the music come through with originality.

With illustrative music the spectrum between repetition and elements mixed in and fading out is definitely narrower than in a composition to be heard on its own, as a piece, as a song to dance to, a song to fall in love to, a song to cry to.

JE   During the symposium we organised during your residency we invited six participants, for a day-long debate ("From Split Sheets to the Streets"): Femke Snelting, ooooo, Yoni Van Den Eede, Prodromos Tsiavos, Matthias Hornschuh, Christian von Borries, and moderator Tamar Shafrir. The participants took very different positions on the autonomy of the author, from "save the rights of the single author", through "acknowledge that shared authorship equals more authors", to "let go of authorship altogether—no more authors". In that last stance anything can be done with anyone's music, but it's clear also that copyright can't be a commodity, as it now more and more appears to be. What is your own position in this?

ML   I was glad that the symposium was emotional and on the brink of exploding. This rightly reflects the lifeblood one expends on work. Music / writing / art is laborious and it is great in its few moments of glory, but it can also be painful. It is very time-consuming, and it is hurtful and depressing when payments do not arrive, especially when one can watch at the same time the profits rise in a company which is selling, distributing, or publishing the work. It is important for the issue of ownership, copyright, share culture, that while artists try to make a living, representatives of copyright associations are in safe financial positions, and also engineers, technicians, media people are often paid better then the composers, writers, and authors.

The topic is regularly being dissected, the parts examined, but with "From Split Sheets to the Streets" we did not lose sight of the whole. And yes, we can embrace or reject structures, but we are part of it no matter which stance we have.

I am for the rights of the artists. I am aiming for culture and makers to be protected and valued and for this we need good infrastructure. Though, of course we artists get on riding corrupt systems and record labels, the tradition of selling records with sex appeal, credibility through association and other methods, goes back a long way.

Death Grips leak their album on the darknet on the eve of its Universal release. The last rock 'n' roll swindle.

An interesting letter I recently saw is for the Whitney Biennale—how the budget is spent, transparency. I think this is a good method of cultural dissection, making sure the artists are included in the $-billion budgets.[1]

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The discussions at the symposium represented quite well the wide span between the quite new philosophical field of authorship in the technological age, and the down-to-earth question of how artists are supposed to make a living. But we also saw that the legal framework is too complex for anybody not specialised in it to understand. If in this legal system the rights belong to the artists, which makes it possible to sell and buy them just as commodities, how can artistic creativity still persist? Isn't using parts of other people's music in your music simply a natural part of the electronic musical technology which is omnipresent today? Would control not also be a creative poverty?

ML   When we started Chicks on Speed we built an early blueprint of working in music, just making remixes and having various producers remix these remixes. On stage we would only have backing track and vocals. With a model of authenticity we were working against virtuosity and authorship. This model was partially ready-made, partially from the practice of the produced girl band. Chicks as puppets but simultaneously being the manager / producer of the project.

My experience in a few pop music castings, and a few pop manuals, like the great work by Bill Drummond, *The Manual: How to Have a Number One the Easy Way*, with a splash of Situationist International, *NME* and *The Face*, helped us construct the girl group. So *not* delivering the performance of playing instruments, but sound from our small MP3 player or laptop, with repetitive motions like mechanical dolls being electrified, awkward outfits of leather hide gaffer-taped to our bodies or paper dresses which ripped off eventually. It was a way to escape the burden of authorship and delivering something original. Remixing the remixes.

I am experienced with working with other artists' work and recirculating it—artists always use each other's work. That is not a problem because we always change it a bit—either make a remix and the authorship remains with the writer or one writes one's own lyrics and makes new beats. But I do have a problem when work is taken and used as clickbait on sites. I think that artists always find ways to change the work enough to make it theirs. I am not for a tightly controlled rights / authorship system, but I am not for free sharing for all culture to exploit any work in any way either. I do not see a model that excites me, and this is at the heart of "From Split Sheets".

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Research Diary: Meditation / Sound / City

2–31 July 2018

Isabelle Stragliati

Meditation is often connected to silence. But we know that silence doesn't exist. So how can we use the constant sound stream we have to deal with every day as a means to be more connected to ourselves and to our environment?
　　I have been making field recordings for several years, and practising meditation for eighteen, and I'm longing to spend more time connecting these two practices. Being in a capital city like Brussels with its problematic noise levels is crucial for this project: it's able to embrace all kinds of city sounds by being fully present. I'd like to experiment with ways of connecting to the city through soundwalks, and eventually share the experiences with groups of people.

> Now I will do nothing but listen […]
> I hear all sounds running together, combined,
> 　　fused or following,
> Sounds of the city and sounds out of the city,
> 　　sounds of the day and night […]
> 　　　—Walt Whitman[1]

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Notes from *The Buddha, The Brain and the Science of Happiness*[2] by Yongey Mingyur Rinpoche and "A Treasury of Wisdom"[3], a compilation of teachings edited by Rigpa:
　　There are countless methods of meditation, but the purpose of each of them is to help the mind rest, be undistracted. Meditation on sounds is simply being aware of whatever sounds we hear, without labeling them or thinking in any way: "Where does it come from?" "What is it?" or "It disturbs me!" "What an awful sound!" The aim is to learn how to gradually detach from the meaning we attribute to what we hear, and to listen to the sounds without necessarily having to emotionally respond to their content.

> I am here and self aware. […]
> The little sound of my breath
> is part of how I am present,
> contributing, permeable, not only
> absorbing the light and sound
> waves acting here,
> but also adding to them.
> 　　—Felicity Ford[4]

1　Walt Whitman, "Song of Myself" (1855) in *Leaves of Grass: The Original 1855 Edition* (Dover Press: 2007) p. 26.

2　Yongey Mingyur Rinpoche *The Buddha, The Brain, and the Science of Hapiness: A practical guide for transforming your Life* (Harmony Books: 2007)

3　Rigpa, "A Treasury of Wisdom" online at http://www.treasuryofwisdom.rigpa.org/ (accessed: March 28, 2019)

4　Felicity Ford in Patrick Farmer (ed.), Listening and Its Not (Compost and Height: 2016), pp. 16–18.

2 JULY

These first days in Brussels have been odd, almost unreal. I feel like I'm in a dream. I feel the need to sit, to meditate, to refocus. It's the first time I have had so much time ahead to work on a project. I have a kind of writer's block, and at the same time the anguish of not having enough time to accomplish everything I planned.

I meditate for twenty minutes. It's not much, but it helps.

Talking about the first steps of my residency, one of which is to search for locations in the city for my research, the word "noise" comes up often. I print a noise map from Bruxelles Environnement. But that term "noise" disturbs me. It is already a judgement.

I begin to read Caroline Claus's *Urban Sound Design Process*:

> Design Process — Take an urban space. Any contemporary urban setting can serve as a field of investigation. Don't take the entire city. Look for one or more urban units that you can handle. A smaller terrain is more appropriate because it allows you to work on a richer and more coherent givenness about lived experience.[5]

The "small terrain" approach makes sense.

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3 JULY

Looking at the noise map, I can see that Place de l'Yser / Boulevard d'Anvers junction is quite noisy (between 65 and 75+ dB). I go there in the morning and make a few field recordings. But I don't really know what I'm looking for. What is my posture when I'm recording? Noise? Yes there is plenty. And then what? I use the boom pole and the Oktava stereo pair, but the whole setup is very visible. Some guys pass by and one pokes at one of my furry mics.

I come across a quote from Hildegard Westerkamp, who defines soundwalks as follows:

> A soundwalk is any excursion whose main purpose is listening to the environment [...] Soundwalks can take place in the mall, at the doctor's office, down a neighbourhood street or at the bus stop. The focus on listening can make this a meditative activity, sometimes shared in silence with others.[6]

And another quote, from Andra McCartney, also mentions the meditative aspect:

5 Caroline Claus, *Urban Sound Design Process* (Ujazdowski Castle Centre for Contemporary Art: 2015), p. 6.

6 Hildegard Westerkamp, "Soundwalking", *Sound Heritage*, 3:4 (1974), pp. 18–19.

> The practice of listening while walking has a long history in philosophies of walking […] as well as practices of walking meditation, in which attention to listening figures prominently.[7]

It's very inspiring to read that the meditative aspect of walking has been present for a very long time. Obviously, meditation was first taught by the Buddha, who was walking a lot and had plenty of time to listen to nature. But how and why did this aspect get lost, or at least forgotten, in modern soundwalk practices?

4 JULY

During my errands in the city, I slowly start to set my mind to practising meditative soundwalks. First observation: it's not at all natural for me! When I walk fast, with a purpose in mind, I constantly drift away from observing the sounds. I'm distracted by my thoughts, by what I see, what I smell… I have to come back to mindfulness over and over again.

5 JULY

I meet Stéphane Vandezande, an architect, musician and meditation teacher. We meet in his studio in Anderlecht and end up recording an interview in Parc de la Rosée. It's peaceful and cool and very pleasant. He talks about "entering in resonance, being receptive. If we cultivate a more neutral state of mind, without labelling the sounds, there's less separation between the perceived object and the self which perceives". The atmosphere in the park and what he says have a very soothing effect on me. It's a relief after what I've been feeling these first few days. I have a feeling of refocusing, of coming back to a place that suits me, a familiar place. On my way back, I start to think that this park could be a nice place for the soundwalks.

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6 JULY

Back to Anderlecht to practise walking meditation, while sitting on a bench in Place Lemmens, and then in Parc de la Rosée.
    I make a recording at the same time.
    I read Thich Nhat Hanh's guide to walking meditation, *The Long Road Turns to Joy*. It gives me insights on how to include walking meditation and conscious breathing in the soundwalks.

Conscious breathing
The core practice taught by the Buddha was mindfulness, including mindfulness of breathing: breathing in, I know I am breathing in. Breathing

7   Andra McCartney, "Soundwalking: creating moving environmental sound narratives" in Sumanth Gopinath and Jason Stanyek (eds.) *The Oxford Handbook of Mobile Music Studies Vol 2.* (Oxford University Press: 2014) pp. 212–37.

out, I know I am breathing out […] In sitting meditation and in walking meditation we practice like this, paying close attention to each breath and each step.
[…]
Breath naturally
Don't try to control your breathing […] Don't try to control your breathing or your walking. Just observe them deeply.[8]

It becomes clear that if I propose a soundwalk to other people, the process should be gradual. I can't directly plunge the participants into the midst of a noisy crossroads and summon them to meditate on noise.
⠀⠀⠀⠀At my studio, I hear the clamour from the people watching the World Cup match in the streets nearby. I go out and record, trying to focus on the sound itself and not on naming it... Not easy.

7 JULY

I read Pauline Oliveros' *Deep Listening Pieces*, but although I feel close to her approach, there are also differences in what I'm experiencing. Meditation on sounds as I intend to practise it is not about listening to one's own thoughts. It's not rejecting them either, but it's not holding onto them. "Deep listening is listening in every possible way to every thing possible to hear no matter what you are doing. Such intense listening includes the sounds of daily life, of nature, of one's own thoughts as well as musical sounds."[9]

8 JULY

Second walk in Anderlecht. The streets are peaceful. In Rue Heyvaert, with many African garages and warehouses, sound streams come and go when I pass by. At the market, I enter a buzzing cloud of noise. It's not easy to not get distracted by all that there is to see and smell.

9 JULY

I have arrived.
I am home
In the here,
In the now.
I am solid.
I am free.
In the ultimate
I dwell.
— Thich Nhat Hanh[10]

8⠀Thich Nhat Hanh, *The Long Road Turns to Joy: A Guide To Walking Meditations* (Parallax Press: 2011), pp. 22–4.

9⠀Pauline Oliveros, *The Roots of the Moment* (Drogue Press: 1998), p. 3.

10⠀Thich Nhat Hanh, *The Long Road Turns to Joy: A Guide To Walking Meditations* (Parallax Press: 2011), p. 9

10 JULY

I prepare the route of the first soundwalk, planned for the day after tomorrow. It is limited to ten participants and the meeting point is Place Lemmens, at 11 a.m. I have identified a few places where we can pause, from the rather quiet Place Lemmens, to the park, which could be lively, passing by some busy shops and restaurant entrances, to the more urban area of Place Bara and the Tour du Midi.

11 JULY

I test the soundwalk route and it works very well. A nice progression and dynamics as I expected, and an interesting variety of soundscapes.

12 JULY

11 a.m.: Soundwalk #1
Nine persons

15 JULY

I do a meditative soundwalk at Altitude 100. It's the highest point in Brussels. It's nice, but somehow I must have had expectations, because I'm kind of disappointed. I think it's because I was "looking" for that humming coming up from the city that somebody told me about.

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23 JULY

Meeting with Flavien Gillié, field recordist, musician: "Listening is paying attention to the passing of time. I am here and I am present and I let emerge what will happen. I am here as a listener of this landscape, I am not in an active search, to create, to provoke something. I like to let things emerge."

29 JULY

I go to Quai du Commerce to make field recordings with a meditative approach near the African shops. In the midst of what I feel was an interesting recording, a young man asks me what I'm doing. When I don't answer he asks again, a bit aggressively. I make him a sign to stay silent but somehow it isn't the right move. His girlfriend says: "She's recording."

Alice Pamuk

Interviewed by Henry Andersen

Henry Andersen I wanted to start very basically. Could you describe what your research was when going into this?

Alice Pamuk The research was on music, on singing… It comes from listening to different kinds of pop music. It comes from my experience as a listener. I read and I listened a lot to pop music because of previous projects. I wanted to make myself some song phrases based on the idea of pop hooks and then to try these out in the space. The idea of putting them into the space was present from the beginning as a sort of challenge, something I wanted to try out. But in order to make this trial, I needed to have some phrases and this is where the difficulty started. It got me started with a process that I did not realise would be so intense.

HA What was the process?

AP In reading, I came across an American "topliner" called Ester Dean—she goes into the booth to create the songs for different pop singers like Rihanna or Britney Spears or whoever. I'm not sure whether there is a beat playing or if she just sings, but she just starts to improvise on words that she finds in magazines, in *Vogue* or *Elle*.

I decided to take this way of making as a method for myself. I never saw a video so I don't know exactly how she does it. I simply transposed what I understood of what she was doing and I did it myself, but in different temporalities. The first part of the process was quite cool—it was a bit of a lazy way to work. I read a lot of *Vogue* and *Elle* magazines and picked short sentences, three or four words—occasionally more—that I thought would suit what I was looking for.

HA And what is it that you were looking for?

AP I'm looking for a kind of generality. It's difficult to express, but I'm looking for something that is neither too *this* nor too *that*. I don't want to be too specific or too evocative, or too metaphorical. I want to be quite prosaic. But not funny.

HA What is a topliner exactly?

AP A topliner is someone who creates the songs. It can be done in different ways but in certain industries—music industries—it's someone who has a sort of groove or a sort of

vibe and can create a very catchy hook or a catchy phrase. It's someone who is very skilled at inventing these. She comes up with the words—I don't know which words are hers, but something like "Baby baby come!" or something. Then there are some producers who watch her in the booth and when they hear something they like they say "Yeah! It's that!" [*laughs*].

HA   And what did you do once you'd found all these short sentences?

AP   I started singing them, and recording myself. I was trying to extract moments that could be developed into something. I think it's a bit impossible what I was looking for. It took a long time and I was never happy with the results. Because I was singing, because I was the interpreter, I had to cope with my own voice in the recordings and it sounded very different from what I wanted to achieve. At this stage it was both my melodies and my voice.

HA   You weren't satisfied with the sound of your own voice?

AP   It's not that I wasn't satisfied. It's a tool. But I wondered to what extent the same voice can be made to sound different, at many different stages; emission, recording, production. I had always planned to work with other singers but I wanted to first explore the limits of my own voice before I translated it to other singers. I didn't do this exhaustively so I still don't know all the possibilities of how to render a voice differently but I didn't want an extreme effect. It was more about slightly changing the nature of my voice, its timbre, qualities and so on. My voice is very light, so for example I wanted to see how it would sound if it were more grounded.

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        I like to work in terms of processes. What interested me in working with my own voice is that it allowed me a way to work with other voices. I wanted to become very aware of my own limitations and to describe them so they could become a material that I could give to somebody who had less limitations but who could interpret my own limitations.

HA   The installation was a multi-speaker setup, with four speakers.

AP   That was a bit of a given. I wanted to distribute the sound in the space. I have not had so many opportunities to experiment with distributing sound in space. One thing I knew is that I didn't want it to be surround sound. I wanted the sound to be in the space but not to be perceptible in all parts of the room necessarily.
        When I'm at home I experiment with playing things just out of two speakers at the same time to see what they do.

There are also words, there is linguistic information in the material, so I want to experiment with how you can deal with two pieces of linguistic information on top of each other. The project for Q-O2 was... well I had this idea and it was not even conceptual, it was...

HA   Aspirational?

AP   Yes, I had something that I wanted to do and I wanted to stick to it.

HA   You also worked with the arranger before you worked with the singers?

AP   Yes. Actually I did this whole project twice. It was quite absurd. I worked with a first arranger and I was not really happy so I worked with a second arranger, and in the end I realised they didn't give anything to the project. They are trained musicians and so they translated what I said into their knowledge and in this translation process I lost control. It was always too little what they did. It was so little that the singers just erased what the arrangers had done.
      Working with people is very different from how I normally work. I tried to work the same way I do when I work alone. I am trying to go somewhere but I don't really understand exactly where, so I invent a kind of process to get there but I don't know where it goes. The process is experimental. When I work with people it's a bit the same. I have to say *something*, to give some instruction, but I don't know what they will have to do for me to be satisfied.

HA   And now that the process is closer to finished, do you understand what you are looking for?

AP   Hmm... I think I am happy to make a sound installation out of voices. I wanted to make it in my own way, and I had an intuition that I wanted to make something in a way that didn't exist yet and see how it would be. I am looking for something, and I'm very curious about what the space is for it to exist. It's something very close to commercial music, but it exists in another sphere entirely. I want something close because I see a lot of artistic potential in it, but I want it to be a sound installation. Something that is quite wide in reach that ends up being quite narrow.

Klaas Hübner

Interviewed by Caroline Profanter

Caroline Profanter You created a kind of alter ego whose name is Mr Tuttle. What's the story behind this character?

Klaas Hübner This is a long story and there are two sides of the story. Mr Tuttle is a character in this motion picture called *Brazil* from Terry Gilliam. He is considered to be a terrorist, because he is fixing things. He is a heating engineer and he doesn't like to work inside the system because he got tired of all the paperwork he had to do. So he decided to just do his job, as a kind of "ninja heating engineer" who comes through the balcony door and fixes the things and then he's out.

  I like Mr Tuttle as a character because I have the feeling that even in art we have a certain kind of system, that is established, that goes certain ways. And I wanted to try something that is not considered really to be art, or to go into these usual terms. And I wanted to do something useful. So I thought, why not repair something for people? Which is obviously in the first place not really an artistic project. But then I thought maybe something else could come out of it. And this is why I chose Mr Tuttle. I didn't want to come as Klaas Hübner, the artist, because even if people don't know me I was thinking that maybe they will look me up and see what I do, and then I already have an identity. This Mr Tuttle allowed me to be free, and not be identified with what I usually do.

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CP Repairing stuff with recycled material requires you to be innovative and leads to very original solutions… It's transforming the objects and giving them a new life. So in some way your artistic practice plays a role as well.

KH Yes, I think so. You can see an artistic idea, for example if you see it as a social sculpture, but you can also just say I repaired stuff. You can say this is a social project, that involves recycling ideas, and it's about making proper use of resources, and it's about people meeting. And it's all this. Artists often label their work too much, to make it appear special. But similar things happen in other parts of life that are not considered to be art. People have the same endeavours. Someone who works on a construction site, a cook, a mother, a programmer, also need to improvise and there can be a beauty in it. Improvising is not something only for improvising artists. The idea that life is art and vice versa has always been close to me.

CP   It's also an act against a factor of our system that you would like to change: consumerism and throw-away culture. But you don't necessarily have to name it as some kind of concept.

KH   I like to leave things open. What I find interesting is all these discussions that came through the project and how I did it. Because when you leave it open, and it's not very defined, people have these questions, and this starts conversations. I don't know if I was really intending to have these conversations. I find it very interesting that you can do something like repairs, and then it leads to discussions about politics, about basic income, about how art is perceived, or in which kind of bubble art is existing, or communicated. And then I think, okay, I can surely understand that maybe the repairing itself is not perceived by some as a very artistic project, but when I think about the discussions you have with people afterwards... and I think I did projects that were maybe more artistic on the first sight, but maybe didn't leave space for talks and interpretation. They were not stirring up the brain so much. For me that's something very positive, or an outcome of a project, when you make people think, or when you make people perceive the world a little bit different. Or you put a finger on something. I think this is what art can do and is doing. If it's visual art or whatever kind of art. And there I see parallels again. I am very happy about all those aspects of it.

CP   You offered your repair service without asking any money. This kind of exchange creates more space for communication, for mutual understanding.

KH   Yes and then you come to the talks, which are very critical about how our monetary system works, or how value is created. Some people said that what I did is very radical.

CP   Why?

KH   I think it is just something that is unusual in this kind of context, and that is most interesting, because it brings up questions. And I think this is what this project did, and I am very surprised at how many directions the questions went. For example when you talk about basic income. If you like to meet with people, and you like to make yourself useful and repair things, you would do this more often in a society where your fundamental needs would be cared for. You would be much more open to helping people and creating a society where there is more space for things like that.

Also, what I find interesting is the question: if I would be an artist, and I would organise a system or create a society, which would make people repair things for other people,

maybe it would be considered as an artistic-social project. But as soon as me, the so-called "artist", is repairing by himself, it seems it's not art anymore, because I am actually getting active in a practical sense. So this "artistic thing" is very often about a certain mode of abstraction. And if it gets straight to the point, it is not artistic anymore. And that's kind of funny. I don't know why there is this kind of barrier that creates this situation, but it seems I like to play with it.

Wederik De Backer

Interviewed by Julia Eckhardt

Julia Eckhardt   You proposed to work with youngsters on the topic of fear, based on writings by Walter Benjamin. It sounded like a great project, but to our and your big surprise it was practically impossible to find such a group of teenagers between fourteen and eighteen years old. What do you think was the reason?

Wederik De Backer   That is a good question. If I knew the answer I would sleep a lot better. I really don't know. I was fascinated by the radio texts that Walter Benjamin wrote for young people in the 1920s and 1930s. In some of the texts, he wanted to prepare the youth for major disasters that were about to happen. I thought it would be interesting to retell these stories in a contemporary context, with young people from and around Molenbeek. Everything seemed to go well. There was a concept, there was a nice theatre that wanted to connect, but… young people apparently didn't feel like participating. There were almost no interested parties. It's a pity because I still believe in the design. For me it remains a concept with interesting material.

I made a promo image with a royalty-free photograph of Benjamin and added a fluorescent cap. Perhaps this wasn't the best decision. Somehow, I think I addressed two target groups wrongly: the young people and their parents. A double losing bet. But if you never try anything, then very little happens. When I write all this down it may seem painful but that's how it went. Fortunately, I can handle rejection quite well.

JE   In the end you decided to do the project anyway, but differently—how did you proceed?

WDB   I "pivoted". This is what it's called in hip San Francisco startup language.

You encouraged me to continue working on the theme. I decided to stick with the idea of "fear". Molenbeek has such a bad reputation internationally that it seemed interesting to me to get started with the fear that surrounds this beautiful municipality, and to make a crossover between fiction and documentary on this theme. Residents from around Q-O2 take the listener on a walk around the canal, describing their greatest fears. From strange abandoned buildings, to people without a roof over their heads, to girlfriends that ignore them. By definition, fear is irrational, but I noticed in the stories of the interviewees that their fears were often very concrete.

JE   Who were the people you met for the recordings, and how will you plan the soundwalk?

WDB   I would walk about the neighbourhood around Q-O2 to meet people, and then ask them to identify their fears in that neighbourhood. Children pointed to a begging person on the other side of the canal, others pointed to the Klein Kasteeltje and talked about the invasion of immigrants. I determined the walk by using these places that people identified as linked to their fears and then plotting them on a map. While I was editing those documentary recordings, I started writing a monologue for a male character that seemed quite close to my own frustrations at the time. Eventually, I used this to give the listener a line to follow. It became a crossover between fact and fiction.

JE   Anything else that you'd like to mention?

WDB   Although this was one of the most complicated, difficult productions that I've tried, where nothing really seemed to go well in the beginning, I am nevertheless happy to have finished this. A creation process is always a learning opportunity, sometimes technical, sometimes in story structure, but the project's beginning is rarely so difficult. This time it was, which struck me as quite instructive.

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Benny Nemerofsky Ramsay

Interviewed by Henry Andersen

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Henry Andersen I thought we could maybe start with how you came to your current practice. You told me your artistic life began as a choir boy?

Benny Nemerofsky Ramsay Wow, we really want to go back that far? I was a choir boy as a child and a classical singer as a teenager, and when I started to seek out my voice as an adult within a contemporary art setting it was performance-based video that first made sense to me. A number of my earlier works are videos in which I am singing—multi-track singing, choral singing, pop-music singing—all sorts of experiments with vocal music and my voice that was clearly an evolution of having had a childhood and an adolescence of singing. I don't really work with video anymore but what stays consistent is working with the voice—my voice and other voices.

From videos, I started working with sound installations. I've often been underwhelmed or unexcited by the installation technology of a lot of sound works—for example where you just put on headphones or something is coming out of a speaker and that's it. I experimented with different ways to exhibit sound once I stopped making videos but when I experimented with museum audio guides as a way of disseminating sound in an exhibition space that made the most sense to me somehow. I've more or less worked only with the audio guide since then. My artistic evolution working with the voice has been for a few years rather concentrated on the museum audio guide.

HA Could you talk a little about those museum audio-guide pieces?

BNR A series of circumstances lead to me working on an audio guide for a sixteenth-century tapestry at a museum in Vienna—a piece that is permanently installed in the museum. So I proposed a kind of alternative audio tour, or alternative encounter with the tapestry that would be played on the museum's official audio guide. Working on that piece brought me into contact with a lot of new questions artistically and conceptually. I become very quickly aware of the particularities of the voice of the audio guide, its authoritative voice, its form of address, the way that it mixes didactic elements, entertainment, choreographic cues. It has its own aesthetic: one that I feel is generally underemployed by museums. They typically just use it to tell dominant histories, canonising histories.

And so I sort of went about identifying the different qualities and aspects of the audio guide voice and trying

to repurpose them. To use them to say, "Okay, we are telling history, what kind of histories can be told? We are choreographing bodies through space, telling people where to look, how do we play with that?" Every part of it had potential for artistic intervention. With each new project, I deepen my own understanding of how to tell history, how to work with the voice which is spoken into your ear. It's a form for one person at a time. There is an intimacy—addressing one person at a time, but in the second person.

HA   A lot of your work is concerned with the question of address. This is maybe where a lot of the intimacy and the erotics come in. Who do you think of as your audience?

BNR   I think for any of my work prior to the audio guide I would make work for some kind of abstract, imagined art audience. You sort of don't really know. You make videos: it's shown at a film festival, maybe on TV, on Vimeo. It's quite vague who is watching and so to tailor it to an imagined spectator is not so obvious… or maybe I just didn't care. I just made the work and sent it out into the world.

With the audio guide though, you are aware of speaking to somebody who is first of all a spectator of a primary artwork. The audio guide is secondary to the painting on the wall so as an artist you are an accompaniment to *another* artwork or visual experience. You are also aware of the fact that you are speaking to a single person. Even if a bunch of people listen to the audio guide at once, it's heard on headphones so it has this one-to-one address which creates the sense of intimacy—or, as you say, a sort of erotics. These concerns about the form of address, about *who* my listener is, are all by products of working with the audio guide and starting to think through this unique format.

I think many museums address a kind of mass-population spectator. Mostly my friends, my community, don't feel that the audio guide is addressed to them. They feel that it is addressed to some mass public without much cultural background, without much experience, who don't really know how to look at art critically. A series of assumptions are made in the way that the museum audio guide addresses its public. Not only am I trying to make more interesting, more intimate, more critical encounters with artworks, I'm trying to challenge my own assumptions about who the listener is.

Audio guides are part of this whole subset of things that museums call "mediation". It's a lovely word. It's even better in German: *Vermittlung*. I love that word. It's this interface between the spectator and the artwork. Of course spectator and artwork are not these discrete polarities, but I think of making audio guides as being a secondary artwork, or being a companion to the artwork. I like "in between" as a state.

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HA   Yes, this question of address also involves questions of power. On what grounds does one build their authority to speak?

BNR   Who can mediate for who? The politics and the problematics in general of speaking for another. I think I'm at an interesting moment now in my research. We talked before about the balance of trying to make a navigational score that is not too open ended—where it becomes just "do anything"— and not too prescriptive. I don't want to reproduce these very closed experiences. I'm very interested in finding the balance.

HA   Could you explain what the narrative scores are? I think they follow on clearly from the audio-guide practice, but they have a different kind of focus.

BNR   The scores emerged from the research I have been doing into the libraries of gay community elders: individuals who have dedicated their entire life to gay and lesbian thought, culture, activism, and who have large, significant libraries that are reflections of this life dedication. Because I'm committed to the audio guide as a form, the works I'm trying to create in response to these libraries is in the form of an audio guide. But because we are not looking at individual artworks, and because we are not in a museum with all of its history and problematics of looking, it has allowed me to expand what kinds of encounters, what kinds of experiences I mediate.

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I think of these pieces as portraits, or based on some kind of portraiture of the collector. These are encounters with much more intimate and personal material but maybe the goals for these pieces are not that different from the goals I have when I make something for a museum. I want people to feel things. I want people to have deep encounters with artworks that are transformative, that produce meaning. The same thing is happening, but instead of artworks it's books, and the histories and lives that envelop these books or the histories that envelop these artworks.

*Interviewed by Henry Andersen
and Caroline Profanter*

Henry Andersen Could you talk a bit about your project
Portraying the Cityscape?

Lucie Vítková I tried to portray the environment of Brussels through
music, dance, and poetry. This project was a little all over the
place, and that's exactly what I wanted. The project was not
planned to be in one direction, but was really meant to expand
in a lot of different directions at once—to sort of hoard materials
to see if I'm able to capture the moment.

HA How did you go about taking skills you'd
developed in composition education and applying
them to a studio environment?

LV It is the first time in my life that I have had a studio
outside of my house. That was a really important experience for
me. When you are at home you work differently. At home I felt
like I couldn't really expand materials because I need to live in
my apartment too. In the studio I could use a lot of materials
and spread them around to have an overview.

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  Having the studio meant that I could spread out and
materialise my thinking. It's nice that you can stretch everything
out and leave it overnight, and when you come back the next
day you can see it again. This is new, because at home, usually
you don't leave the materials there for a week. You need to live.
So when you have the opportunity to come back every day and
look at it each day it's a fresh perspective.

Caroline Profanter You were talking about hoarding. What
importance does this have for you? To be collecting
so much material?

LV I wanted to explore this, because I was interested in
the book of Jane Bennett, *Vibrant Matter*. She is talking about
the relationships between humans and objects, and on trying to
find a non-human perspective on these relationships. That was
really interesting for me. And she sees a potential in hoarders
—as maybe having some clues in how to access that relationship
from a non-human perspective. So I tried to hoard as well, and
I actually realised that through my life I'm already hoarding
audio recordings. I have huge archives of recordings. And now
I tried to materialise this a bit in the drawings. I started to make
these drawings and graphic scores that were later interpreted.

I made about sixty of these and arranged them on the floor so that people can just step into that environment.

CP   The space you worked in was a gallery space in the centre of Brussels with a kind of showcase that connected you with the street and the public space. How did this affect your working process?

LV   It was really ideal for my project because I was immediately connecting with people on the street. I would see them walking around and they would look in to see what I was doing and I would invite them in and sometimes they would sing with me. People would come into my studio and participate. That was amazing.

It meant also that I had a practice of showing myself. When I entered the studio for the first time there was a sheet of paper over the window so people couldn't see what I was doing. At the beginning I kept it and I had the feeling of being protected, but about halfway through the residency I put it away and I was just making the graphic scores in front of people. Sometimes they would just stand at the window and watch me.

Like this I also let them into the process, because depending on their actions I would maybe change what I was doing. It was also a way of kind of coming out toward the street. It was really easy to just go outside the gallery and put a chair there and play an instrument. So the music I was practising in the gallery, sometimes I would take it outside and play it for the people in the street. There was a door across the street that had a very distinctive high-pitch sound that would happen every time it would open and close, so there were all these kinds of inputs that were provided to me inside of the gallery but also outside of the gallery.

HA   Could you talk more about the scores themselves? In some ways they are a tool for working with participants, but they are also a sort of registration of the city right?

LV   I started to make my scores with make-up. The scores are very based on the interaction of the make-up and the paper. I was using really different sorts of paper—calligraphic paper, map paper... I was asking people if they had old make-up or if their friends did, so I was getting objects that had already been owned. This made an immediate impact. If you one day get bright-green eye shadow from someone it's a totally new energy entering your scores.

It was a combination of inheriting the make-up from local people. But I would also go out to the city and take photos, close-ups of a detail from a building or something. I would usually go for details that were structural, that I would then draw

back. So the Brussels streets would also come into the scores, either in their geometry, or their structure, or their texture. In run-down buildings there was a lot of geometric patterns I would include.

I was going very often to the city and I was getting to know people and just inviting them to participate. I brought fourteen or fifteen people in to interpret the scores, to have also a social element to the scores. It was not just to have a portrait of the city—I was interested also in the scene. And not just musicians, but also dancers and poets. To try to involve as many people as possible. Because the scores are open and I think the interpretations can be in many different disciplines. Usually if you do a project for a residency it's about dividing yourself from everything and about thinking about what you want to say but with this project I felt like I was prepared to just be very open and invite everyone into the project.

HA   How do you perceive the audience in your work? Or the role the audience plays in your thinking?

LV   I wrote a paper on audience lately. It's called "Composing Expectations". So I am kind of working with people's expectations, on the performer, and how it shapes the work, and to which extent the audience shapes our work. You need to give some space to their expectations, so they can find themselves in your music, as well, and engage with it. And you have to open yourself and trust them, engage with them, in a way. So sometimes it is sensitive, because when you open yourself to so many people, you might make yourself vulnerable. Because on the stage we are supposed to be confident, right? But we are not always confident, we sometimes make a border, through which it is not possible to connect, which divides us from people. How to stay confident and at the same time to engage with the influences of the audience?

Ghosts of
the Hidden Layer
Jennifer Walshe

This text is an edited version of a talk given at the Internationale Ferienkurse für Neue Musik, *Darmstadt, on 25 July 2018.*

I don't have a voice. I have many voices. My voice—this biological structure located in my body—is the staging area for everything I've ever heard and everywhere I've ever lived. We all grapple with the plethora of voices that have made their mark on ours. We're told the goal is to find "our" voice, but this polyphony, this confusion, is what interests me. I don't want to choose.

The voice provides an aperture through which the world comes rushing in. The Thai artist Larry Achiampong states that "Our lives are political because our bodies are." I would extend this by saying: "Our lives are political because our voices are." Gender, sexuality, ability, class, ethnicity, nationality—we read them all in the voice. The voice is a node where culture, politics, history, and technology can be unpacked.

And because I love voices, I love language. I view language as a subset of what a voice does. I am fascinated by how language functions off—and online. I love slang and argot technical language; I love newly-invented words. Through language, voices give a vivid snapshot of the times we live in. Times filled with collarbone strobing, meta predators and procrastibaking. Hate-watching, nootropics, and dumpster fires. Manbabies, co-sleepers, and e-liquids. I read these words on the page and they bounce into life in my head as voices.

The concept of the "Uncanny Valley" was first described by Japanese robotics professor Masahiro Mori in the journal *Energy* in 1970. In a paper dealing with the challenges facing designers of prosthetic limbs and robots, Mori describes a graph with two axes; affinity and human likeness. His model describes how we feel little affinity with industrial robots which in no way resemble people, versus feeling huge affinity with healthy humans.

Between these two extremes we find the uncanny valley. As robots, or any other representations of humans such as dolls or puppets, come to more closely resemble humans, we feel increasing levels of affinity, until we come to the uncanny valley, at which point humans become completely freaked out. The uncanny valley is inhabited by corpses,

zombies, prosthetic limbs, and robots who are "almost human" or "barely human". For Mori, as we enter the uncanny valley there is an abrupt shift from empathy to revulsion.

Mori theorises that the sense of eeriness we feel in the uncanny valley is without a doubt "an integral part of our instinct for self-preservation." He encourages the building of "an accurate map of the uncanny valley, so through robotics research we can come to understand what makes us human." His goal is a compassionate one—by understanding the uncanny valley, designers can make better prosthetic limbs which will put their users and the people around them at ease.

<u>3</u>

The virtual digital assistant market is projected to be worth $15.8 billion by 2021. As voice interaction is central to virtual digital assistants, all of the major tech companies are currently investing huge sums in voice technology. Voice assistants like Siri or Cortana use concatenative text to speech—they sew together fragments from pre-existing recordings of human speech. This method relies on huge databases. Each individual voice is the result of one person spending days recording thousands of words. It sounds somewhat natural, but has its limits; the database will not contain recordings of every word in current use, and switching to a new voice means recording an entirely new database.

In 2017, a group of researchers from MILA, the machine learning lab at the University of Montreal, launched a company called Lyrebird. Lyrebird creates artificial voices. Using recordings of a person's voice, the program generates a "vocal avatar" of that person. The recordings are not sampled, they are analysed by neural networks. Lyrebird's system learns to generate entirely new words—words that a person may never have spoken in real life.

As soon as Lyrebird releases a beta version, I make a wide range of vocal avatars. I pump in text I've collected over the years. Ultimately though, my feeling is of frustration. The rhythmic patterns of the voices are always the same. When I try to create a vocal avatar with radically different vocal cadence it crashes the system. I can hear a soft buzz whirring through every recording.

Lyrebird named their company after the Australian lyrebird, a creature known for its stunning ability to mimic sounds. Lyrebirds have been heard making the sounds of not only other birds and animals, but also human voices, camera shutters, and car engines. They do this extremely convincingly. Why do lyrebirds make these sounds? What do they think they're communicating when they reproduce the sound of a chainsaw? What do I think I'm communicating when I make animal sounds with my voice in so many of my pieces? I find the uncanny more readily in the biological lyrebird than the digital one, in the tragedy of a wild creature imitating the sound of machinery that's cutting down trees in the forest it inhabits.

4

Between 1988 and 1994 the British government under Margaret Thatcher banned the broadcast of the voices of members of Sinn Féin and other Irish republican and loyalist groups. This meant that broadcasters could show footage of someone like Gerry Adams speaking but could not broadcast the sound of his voice.

Broadcasters got around the restrictions by hiring Irish actors to "re-voice" the original voices. Some over-acted in an attempt to get political points across; others attempted to be neutral; some journalists asked the actors to deliberately speak out of sync, to highlight the absurdity of the restriction. In his own role re-voicing these interviews, Irish actor Stephen Rea has described how he tried to make Adams and McGuinness' messages as clear as possible by eliminating the hesitations, *umms*, and *aahs* of the original. The irony is stunning—by choosing to literally silence the voices of republican and loyalist groups, the British Government enabled a situation where world-class actors had the power to polish extremist voices and make them more eloquent.

What was happening, in cognitive terms, when we watched Martin McGuinness on TV? Whose voice was speaking when we saw his lips move? The uncanny valley explodes into the political realm.

If, as Donna Haraway says, "Grammar is politics by other means", why not take the opportunity to interfere?

In recent years I've been using the web to produce scores, trying to witness how the ecosystems of different social media platforms affects how a score is made and the sounds it might produce. I've made text score projects on Snapchat, YikYak, and numerous projects on Twitter, by feeding pre-existing scores into Markov Chain Generators, by crossbreeding text scores and weird Twitter accounts.

Syntax and grammar are disrupted here and that is the point. These formats push past what has often frustrated me as text scores' aping of the linguistic styles of the Fluxus period. I've done multiple performances of these scores and both the experience of engaging with the score and the results produced are different to other text scores I've worked with.

When we work with AI, we must decide what corpus we feed the network to get it to understand what language is. Many of the researchers I've talked to making networks to generate text use the Bible as their corpus. I can understand. The Bible is in the public domain, it is easily available as an appropriately-formatted file. But think about it lads, just for a second.

I spend hours making a corpus comprised of books by early feminists and Gothic writers. Mary Wollstonecraft. Mary Shelley. Edgar Allan Poe. Ann Radcliffe. It runs for several hours and then crashes the system.

In 2016, Deep Mind, the artificial intelligence division of Google, released WaveNet, a generative model for raw audio. WaveNet is a convolutional neural network that can model any type of audio. It does this on a sample by sample basis. Given that audio recordings typically have at least 16,000 samples per second, the computation involved is significant.

Machine learning borrows the concept of the neural network from biology. The neural networks in our brains have hidden layers. For example, the networks relating to sight contain layers of neurons that receive direct input from the world in the form of photons hitting our eyeballs.

This input then travels through a series of hidden layers which identify the most salient aspects of what we're seeing, before rendering it into a 3D whole.

The physicist Frank Wilczek describes how "[h]idden layers embody [...] the idea of emergence. Each hidden layer neuron has a template. It becomes activated and sends signals of its own to the next layer, precisely when the pattern of information it's receiving from the preceding layer matches (within some tolerance) that template [...] the neuron defines, and thus creates, a new emergent concept".

My role as an artist is to pay very close attention to the output of AI, trying to understand and interpret this output as a document from the future, blueprints for a piece which I try to reverse engineer in the present. I'm interested in AI because I would like to experience not just artificial intelligence but also alien intelligence. Brand new artistic vocabularies, systems of logic and syntax, completely fresh structures and dramaturgies.

7

In his essay "The Grain of the Voice" Roland Barthes writes how "the grain is the body in the voice as it sings, the hand as it writes, the limb as it performs [...] I shall not judge a performance according to the rules of interpretation [...] but according to the image of the body given me." Where is the grain in these recordings? Who does it belong to? How are we to judge something that has no body.

I can hear in the WaveNet samples evidence of a biology the machine will never possess and I know that regardless of its lack of biology, the voice will be read as having gender, ethnicity, class, ability, sexuality. The voice will be judged.

In *The Voice in Cinema*, film theorist Michel Chion describes how when we hear a voice in a film soundtrack and "cannot yet connect it to a face—we get a special being, a kind of talking and acting shadow to which we attach the name *acousmêtre*." He compares the *acousmêtre* to the voice of God, to the voices of our mothers heard in the womb before we were born.

The voices that emerge from machine learning systems, voices that will never be seen, voices without bodies or homes—Chion's theory of the *acousmêtre* suggests one way

to think about them. And, as after a prolonged voiceover in a film, I start to wonder when the voice's body will appear, and what it will look like.

8

As a performer, my own voice operates in close collaboration with technology. It has been this way ever since I was seven years old and used my First Holy Communion money to buy a tape recorder. It's rare for me to perform without a microphone, and I'm used to the idea that when I'm performing my voice exists as multiple overlapping voices, some of which the sound engineer has more control over than me. I'm used to my voice being sampled, vocoded, autotuned, layered with effects. There are the resonating chambers inside my head; there is my monitor; and there is the PA.

When I was a student I was taught neat narratives about the development of Western music. The historical inevitability of serialism, the emancipation of dissonance, the liberation of noise. In terms of the larger picture, we are about to leave all of this in the dust. I am convinced that not only the development of music, but life in the twenty-first century will be primarily marked by how we engage with, respond to, and think about AI. If we care about the world, if we're curious about human and non-human beings, art, and consciousness, we need to be thinking about AI. We can see glimpses of the future already in the world around us—autonomous vehicles, machine-learning-aided cancer diagnoses, neural networks making accurate predictions of schizophrenia onset, high frequency trading, gene editing.

We are all involved / enmeshed / implicated in the development of AI. Every second of every day, our behaviour provides the data for machine learning systems to train on. Our interactions with our phones provides training data for neural chips on our devices which drives the creation of AI at the corporate level. And of course, the AI that develops at the corporate level will be the intellectual property of the corporation. And thus, AI at the corporate level will define the structure of all of our futures.

Over the next fourty years, AI will completely change the way music is made and who it's made by. AI will change the reasons that music is made, and will make us question what

the function of music and music-making is. Let me be clear, I don't think humans will ever stop making music, and I think a great deal of music in the future will be made without AI. The challenge of the future will be deciding what it means to make music when, in many cases, machines will be able to make music of a far higher standard than many humans can.

I am not a computer scientist. I'm a composer who is living in the twenty-first century and trying to think it through. I'm both sublimely excited and blackly horrified about what is coming. I'm trying to give you a sense of how I view the world, and where I think things are going, because that psychological space is where my art comes from. It's a magical space that is by turns speculative, uncanny, and hidden, but most of all deeply embedded in the here and now of the world.

Where do we go from here? AI. What is coming next? AI.

What is Performative Distribution?

Gary Schultz

Introduction

In his essay "From Reproduction to Performance: Media-Specific Music for Compact Disc", musicologist Volker Straebel looks at how recording media can disappear from the listener's awareness.[1] In the case of CDs, he identifies twin vanishing points. When the compact disc was introduced in 1982, it had overcome limitations in terms of sound quality and duration that would otherwise remind the listener of the medium, e.g. frequently needing to flip a disc, or hearing ground noise, rumble, flutter, distortion, etc. By clearing away these interruptions from the listening experience, the CD was considered "the first recording medium to vanish behind the audio information" it carried.[2]

Straebel's focus, however, is on where the CD vanishes in the context of performance. He gives numerous examples of artists and musicians working with CDs and vinyl records who discovered these media as sculptural objects or who incorporated them as instruments in their music. Others would appropriate the medium's intended functions and redirect them into performative situations, sometimes inviting listeners to participate or to consider the potential of a performance.

In the liner notes to his 1994 release *Music for CD-Player,* Ios Smolders draws attention to this tendency among listeners. "The 'consumers' of music regard the music that comes out of the stereo equipment as the actual thing. They are not aware of, or ignore the fact that what they hear is a deformed, bent, filtered, scrambled, rescrambled version of the original thing."[3] Smolders interrupts the listening experience only to reconnect listeners with performative qualities elsewhere in the listening situation:

> The CD contains a digitally encoded score. Your CD Player is the performer. You are the conductor.

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1   Volker Straebel, "From Reproduction to Performance: Media-Specific Music for Compact Disc", *Leonardo Music Journal*, 19 (2009), pp. 23–30.

2   Ibid., p. 23.

3   Ios Smolders. *Music for CD-Player*, Staaltape ST CD 077 (1995), liner notes.

The playing of this CD, just like any live performance of a classical work[,] is a unique event. Each time you play this CD you start a performance. In order to give you and the performer maximum flexibility[,] the work has been divided into as many parts as is technically possible [i.e. 99 tracks].

There are several ways of performing the score:
1. Take a distance and just have the performer [i.e. the CD player] work itself through the score from beginning to end.
2. Decide what parts of the score are to be played, either by programming or remote control.
3. Let the performer improvise, by pushing shuffle or random mode.
4. Adapt the score by physical treatment of the CD.[4]

Pivoting from liner notes to score, Smolders draws on a range of concepts and experiences in order to address what became a grey area in the era of CDs. Digital recording gave artists a means of writing and mass-producing an original artwork. The medium's ability to accurately capture an artist's intention meant that the space between representation and presentation was no longer tangible. Meanwhile, the collapse between original and copy is often echoed by medium-specific works for CD. Where artists appropriate the ability to rearrange track orders, they also make it difficult to differentiate between listening to a recording and performing a recording.[5] In contrast to these blurring effects, Smolders gives legibility and clarity to newly reconfigured relationships between score, performer, performance, instrument, conductor, listener, etc.[6]
  The grey area addressed by Smolders seems to be only the ground level of a much larger ambiguity which continues to unfold. The CD was a pivot into the streaming paradigm. As a carrier of digital audio, the CD proved to be the last sound recording medium.[7] Digital audio would soon be *distributed*

4   Ibid.

5   Volker Straebel, "From Reproduction to Performance", p. 28.

6   Ibid., p. 27.

7   Ibid., p. 24.

digitally instead of being tied to a physical object. Where the CD helped transform the notion of the "album" into playlists, digital distribution services have since developed the playlist along with many other types of *mixes*, a now ubiquitous form of presenting, distributing, and arranging music and other digital audio. It may be said that the world of music, in so far as it exists, exists to become a mix.

Distribution as Medium and Object

In the poetry of Stéphane Mallarmé, we see the relationship between the trivial and the monumental played out in his collapsing of poetry onto its forms of distribution. One of the most succinct examples comes from a correction he made to his famous line, *Tout au monde est fait pour aboutir dans un beau livre* ["The whole world is made to end up in a beautiful book"]. Mallarmé envisioned the book as a sculptural object and revolutionised the use of space across the page, but he never intended to turn the book into a monument. He had apparently been misquoted by a journalist and later issued his own version which downplayed both the totality of the world and the beauty associated with a book: *Tout, au monde, existe pour aboutir à un livre* ["What there is of the world exists in order to become a book"].[8]

 A more sustained example comes from Mallarmé's exploration of poetry dealing with worldly events. Following the death of this son, Mallarmé had completely stopped writing for around seven years, and for a total of eighteen years (1866–84), he wrote only three new poems. Following his return to the form, Mallarmé focused almost entirely on poetry that was considered marginal (because it dealt with the world and with specific occasions).[9] *Vers de circonstance* ("Occasional Verse") is a collection of 450 poems dealing with memorials, toasts, greetings, gifts, advice to his student and, other occasions. He often inscribed these poems onto photographs, visiting cards, glazed fruits, bonbons,

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8 Roger Pearson, *Mallarmé and Circumstance: The Translation of Silence* (Oxford University Press: 2004), p. 255.

9 Marian Zwerling Sugano, *The Poetics of the Occasion: Mallarmé and the Poetry of Circumstance*, (Stanford University Press: 1992), pp. 107–8.

Easter eggs, empty jugs of brandy, fans, copies of his own poems, handkerchiefs, reed pipes, skipping stones, etc. Not only did the objects become carriers that distributed his poems, the poems were also a means of distributing these objects.[10] Illustrating the latter scenario, *Les loisirs de la poste* ("The Leisures of the Post") is a subset of his occasional verse written on envelopes and sent through the mail. Mallarmé wrote the addresses in verse so they not only performed the function of giving directions, they enlisted postal workers into a performance where they needed to interpret the destination. Mallarmé seems to explore all the possible structural and relational combinations by addressing a range of potential readers.[11] Among them are the recipient, himself (the sender), his personified thoughts and desires, the postal service, the postal worker, the letter, the address, the verse written on the envelope, and more.[12]

> *Que la Dame aux doux airs vainqueurs*
> *Qui songe 9 Boulevard Lannes*
> *T'ouvre, mon billet, comme un cœur*
> *Avec ses ongles diaphanes.*[13]

Surprisingly, none of the letters were lost in the mail.[14] Nonetheless, as described by the author Marian Sugano in *The Poetics of the Occasion: Mallarmé and the Poetry of Circumstance,* the "Loisirs" are derivative in "the term's original sense of turning the stream away from its channel".[15]

Poems that perform social functions are often taken less seriously by the critical establishment than those baring little relation to the world. Even when occasional literature

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10   Ibid., pp. 162, 210.

11   Ibid., p. 173.

12   Ibid., pp. 169–70.

13   "May the lady with the sweet conquering air/Who daydreams at 9 Boulevard Lannes/Open you, my letter, like a heart/With her diaphanous nails": Stephane Mallarmé, *Œuvres complètes*, ed. Henri Mondor and G. Jean-Aubry (Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, Gallimard: 1945), p. 98.

14   "This little publication, all in honour of the Postal Service. None of the addresses in verse collected here have missed their addressees": ibid., p. 1,503.

15   Ibid., p. 168.

is accepted, it is usually kept within a functional role: e.g. as a footnote that support insights into the major works. *Vers de circonstance* is no exception. It is typically glossed over or, more often, ignored.[16] Without suggesting that a bonbon should be read through the same lens as a monument, Mallarmé problematises its marginalisation. In sheer volume, *Vers de circonstance* outnumbers his main body of work by two to one.[17] However, instead of pushing for a reversal of hierarchy, his occasional verse seems to operate with the death of the monument as a precondition.[18] In this sense, these poems can be seen as distant forerunners to many of the curatorial and derivative forms being enacted in the field of music distribution.

Situating Performative Distribution

What holds together the field of performative distribution is neither a set of experiences nor methods used to produce them. Instead, performative distribution seems to be based on a realisation that performance is what distribution is made of.

We may look, for example, at composer James Tenney's *Postal Pieces,* a set of compositions inscribed on postcards and sent through the mail.[19] Though Tenney uses the same tools as Mallarmé's *Loisirs,* almost none of Tenney's pieces can be considered works of performative distribution proper. Sending something through the mail may have performative qualities, but these do not automatically generate a performance. That is, the innate potential does not, by itself, enact the pivot from reproduction to performance. Even though postcards can easily be read by postal workers, Tenney's compositions have no direct impact on their being delivered. Only one of the pieces, *For Percussion Perhaps, Or* (1971) suggests that Tenney may have considered the delivery of the score to be itself a performance of that score (see figs 1–2).

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16   Marian Zwerling Sugano, *The Poetics of the Occasion*, pp. 180–81.

17   Ibid., p. 152.

18   Ibid., p. 153.

19   The author was given a PDF of the *Postal Pieces* during a fundraising campaign in 2018.

Scorecard No. 3: (night)

Produced by Marie McRoy at the California Institute of the Arts

Postal Pieces 1954-71
James Tenney
School of Music
California Institute of the Arts

For Percussion Perhaps, Or . . . .

(night)

for Harold Budd

very soft

very long

nearly white

James Tenney
8/6/71

[figs 1–2]

Examples of performative distribution need not be closely
connected in time, but when they are, they can help build a
library of resources and languages that lead to new experiences
as well as understandings that were previously unavailable.
In other words, if our provisional definition is an exception to
specific methods and experiences common to performative
distribution, it is also an exception *within* them. The materials
and phenomena that support performative distribution and
carry it into the world are what give performative distribution
legibility, and as this legibility changes, so can the concept.

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By looking at clusters of performative distribution since the introduction of CD, and perhaps more significantly, since the appearance of file-sharing platforms such as Napster (1999),[20] we can start to see the unfolding of a grammar, even in a concept that has barely begun to emerge.

Future Ambiguities

Playback devices have become much more hands-free and invisible since the shuffle function was first introduced. Opening an audio file now often means automatically queuing up a playlist in the same instance, and wherever the process of mix-making becomes automatic, small details help soften the edges. Services like YouTube, Spotify, Soundcloud, etc. generate curated playlists tailored to a user's history. Not only can they create a continuum within one's taste profile, they make suggestions that are slightly outside the periphery in order to prevent the need to look elsewhere. Their model doubles that of Las Vegas: casinos that suggest an infinite expanse of time and space through lighting design, masking the outside world, and providing every amenity one might want.[21]

Further potential to dissolve the formal qualities of a mix is shown in the phenomenon of microstreams that broadcast (for example) lo-fi hip-hop for studying or relaxing[22] paired with looped animations.[23] These animations tend toward extreme "eventless-ness"—a young woman is sitting near a rainy window wearing headphones while writing or studying. She takes a look at her cat as it slowly brushes its tail back and forth. The overall effect is like a fireplace.

20   "File sharing", Wikipedia (2019); online at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File_sharing (accessed 8 February 2019).

21   Robert Venturi, Denise Scott Brown, and Steven Izenour, *Learning from Las Vegas: Revised Edition* (MIT Press: 1977), p. 49.

22   Luke Winkie, "How 'Lofi Hip Hop Radio to Relax/Study to' Became a YouTube Phenomenon." Vice (2018); online at https://www.vice.com/en_us/article/594b3z/how-lofi-hip-hop-radio-to-relaxstudy-to-became-a-youtube-phenomenon (accessed 3 February 2019).

23   "ChilledCow", Youtube channel; online at https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCSJ4gkVC6NrvII8umztf0Ow (accessed 3 February 2019).

Through screensavers and background noise, the site of presentation is being reshaped, giving an early indication of how internet radio may become more than just a continuation of terrestrial radio.

Microstreams have a rich history in experimental music. Annea Lockwood's *A Sound Map of the Hudson River* is a continuous sequence of rushing water captured through field recordings made along the Hudson.[24] For *Jamaica Heinekens in Brooklyn*, Charlemagne Palestine stays in one location and records the passing flow of a multicultural parade.[25] His addition of drones creates a soothing bed for the listener. In *Maps of Parallels 41°N and 49°N*, Helen Mirra and Ernst Karel sonify the terrain being travelled as these two lines span the earth.[26] Land, railroads, deep water, winds and rivers become the sounds of guitar, a film rewinder, bass guitar, filtered noise, and silences.

Composer Tom Johnson published *The Chord Catalogue* in 1986.[27] Scored for piano, this piece lists all 8,178 chords possible within a single octave, as a means of exhausting the tonal grammar of Western music.[28] The order of these chords is organised according to a pattern that both helps the performer remember the sequence and allows listeners to locate themselves within the whole. The specific *content* of each chord is thus less important than its place within the overall pattern. Such a strategy anticipates the digital era where the "uniqueness" of a digital object is only defined by the uniqueness of its location.

Might we consider *The Chord Catalogue* a playlist of chords? Web-programming languages have now reached a point where they can fulfil the most widely-used functions of audio programs. This opens the possibility of the internet

24   Annea Lockwood, *A Sound Map of the Hudson River*, Lovely Music LCD 2081 (1989), CD.

25   Charlemagne Palestine, *Jamaica Heinekens in Brooklyn*, Barooni BAR 021 (1999), CD.

26   Helen Mirra and Ernst Karel, *Maps of Parallels 41°N and 49°N*, Shhpuma SHH013CD (2014), CD.

27   Tom Johnson, *The Chord Catalogue* (Editions 75: 1986); online at http://www.editions75.com/FreeScores/TheChordCatalogue.pdf (accessed 14 March 2019).

28   Twelve-tone equal temperament "was widely adopted in France and Germany by the late 18th century and in England by the 19th": "Equal temperament", *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (2009); online at https://www.britannica.com/art/equal-temperament (accessed 8 February 2019).

functioning as a common language for both distributing *and* producing music. It also means that a range of open-ended musics (whether old or new) can now be published in their original forms—as a stream rather than as a recorded excerpt. This includes generative music, algorithmic compositions, long-durational or on-going installations, etc. In the same moment, however, such forms become no longer exceptional. The majority of online listening is through hybrid compositions that use algorithms to navigate enormous catalogues and generate open-ended mixes personalised for each listener. As these algorithms become more sophisticated, so do handmade mixes, which have already internalised the compositional self-awareness of albums. We might expect online streaming to soon incorporate some of the open-ended techniques of generative mixes as well—e.g. web crawlers that can keep informing the mix well beyond its publication.

But how do we keep informing the concept of performative distribution?

As I see it, performative distribution would simply become a genre and eventually fizzle out (like all genres) if we tied it to a specific medium (i.e. distribution). On the other hand, the concept falls flat if the unique potential of streaming is overshadowed by the recording paradigm—e.g. by streaming platforms that steer us away from freely sharing content or copyright laws that prohibit derivative forms (two of the most innate approaches to digital media). So the heart of performative distribution is not the medium of distribution but a constant tug of war between its appearance and its disappearance.

The example of Mallarmé illustrates two approaches for counteracting an ephemeral balance such as this. One is through his sustained efforts to continually redefine the relationship between the trivial and the monumental. The other is to work at the speed of an image in order to freeze a turning point—in his case, the nonexistent space between the outcomes of a gamble. One of his most famous symbols is an ever-suspended roll of the dice,[29] another is the perennial toast, saluting all the would-be gamblers.[30]

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29   Quentin Meillassoux, *The Number and the Siren: A Decipherment of Mallarmé's* Coup de des, (Urbanomic: 2012), p. 17.

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30   Jacques Rancière, *Mallarmé: The Politics of the Siren* (Contiuum: 2011), pp. 4–5.

Having sketched a short history of performative distribution, we can also treat the site of its vanishing symbolically by looking at the most popular remix that seemed to go unnoticed. In many ways, I see Ariel Pink's remix of the aptly titled Grizzly Bear song "Disappearing", as a transparent carrier for the idea of performative distribution. Remarkably, no one mentioned how little of Ariel Pink we can hear on this remix: no vocals, no mouth drumming, no additional instruments, just a slightly warmer, hissier touch. Did he just record himself listening to it? Label head Jason Grier was happy to decipher its twin surfaces: "With this Grizzly Bear remix, Ariel felt it sufficient to simply bounce the stems they provided through his signature 8-track Tascam machine, thus giving it the "Haunted Graffiti" sheen. Brilliant, simple, and lazy as fuck."[31]

Though such a gesture clearly relies on analogue equipment, its operations are digital in their thinking. The uniqueness of the digital object is not interesting in itself. It is through the operations of rerouting, repackaging, and relistening that it takes on meaning in the sphere of performative distribution.

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31   Jason Grier, director of Human Ear Music, email message to author, 6 February 2019.

The Sound Is Breathing: An interview with Beatriz Ferreyra
Caroline Profanter

Translated by Céline Amendola

Caroline Profanter   *What interests you about sound?*

Beatriz Ferreyra   What I learned from Pierre Schaeffer in the
                        1960s was to listen to all sounds in a different
                        way. He called this practice *l'écoute réduite*
                        ("reduced listening"). We didn't consider the
                        origin of the sound, or its narrative aspect
                        (if it's a car, a horse, or a piano note)—but
                        we had to listen to the internal and external
                        morphology of the sound, as well as to its
                        other qualities. Schaeffer pushed us to change
                        our point of view in relation to the sounds,
                        and thus opened up infinite possibilities
                        for approaching this new music.

CP   *Can you talk about the composing process?*

BF   The composing process is different for everyone.
                Myself, I don't really know what is happening
                when I compose. Each time it is a new adventure.
                Often, I would hear something, see some
                images, images that move, images that
                sound, and I would start to search and try to
                understand them. The research is based on
                this relation between what I hear and what
                I see, but nothing is fixed. These images change
                constantly, as do the sounds. It's impossible
                for me to have a defined project that is well
                formulated from the outset.
        What does composing mean? The word *com-poser*
                means "to pose with". What are you going to pose
                with? How and why? For me, composing is not
                only about putting sounds together. It acts much
                more. It's a process that is very individual which
                makes it difficult to talk about.

CP   *Are all the sounds at the same level? Is there no
        hierarchy?*

BF   Not for me. A hierarchy is created when you start to
        compose. Before this, there is no sound better than
        another. Everything depends on the music that I am
        about to make. Any source sound is valid for composing.

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There are four primary sources: the voice, musical instruments, noises (everything that produces sound in our environment), and electronic sounds. Personally, I'm not into electronic sounds. I tried to use them in two pieces, but I didn't manage to make them sound alive, because they are fabricated by a program, a machine, an engineer.

CP *What do you think about the notion of "writing" in electroacoustic music?*

BF Since writing has existed, it has been an intermediate object between the composer and the instrumentalists (interpreter, orchestra, etc.). The composer cannot play many acoustic instruments at the same time but that's different in electroacoustic music, and you don't need any kind of intermediate object. We are in another world. Talking about "writing" always seemed to me like intellectual laziness. One day we will find new words for this music and not use the words from past ways of doing things.

Pierre Schaeffer was quite clever when he changed the nomenclature of the instrumental music in his *Solfège de l'objet sonore* ("Musical Theory of the Sound Object"). A *staccato* (of the piano, for example), became an *iterative* (referring to the gallop of a horse, footsteps, or a motobike), a *vibrato* became an *allure*, etc. It was a way to not fall into the trap of the past, by using notions borrowed from instrumental music. In that way he could open up perception to sound in its most general sense.

CP *What role does space play in your music?*

BF It is as important as the sound itself. It is part of the composition. In a stereo piece, between left and right, there is an infinity of points where you can put your sound. The same thing goes for the depth of a sound, whether it is close or far. These are the principal axes. Some sounds are in movement, and they can move naturally

from one point to another. Some sounds are static. The nature of the sound defines how I place it in space.

CP *The transition from analogue to digital changed our perception in relation to sound …*

BF You cannot see anything on magnetic tape, you had to be able to hear it. We had a very different approach. With tape we were able to *touch* the sound, we felt it through our fingers. The computer alienated me from this physical sensation of sound.

On the other hand, however, all the tedious work of editing, synchronising, and mixing became much easier. This was a relief but having this *ersatz* of the sound as an image on the screen does not represent the sound itself at all. That's why I always close my eyes, when I introduce a new sound, to hear if the timing between the sounds is good—if the sequence *breathes*—otherwise I run the risk just doing whatever.

In the beginning we didn't have any teachers. I learned in five minutes how to cut the tape, and later the other techniques. There was not a million things you could do. You could cut, edit, mix, filter, and transpose. Those were the essentials.

And then from there you could invent some very personal manipulations.

Every one of us had their secrets, but no one taught us how to compose.

Hearing is the Only Thing that Works: An interview with Annette Vande Gorne
Caroline Profanter

Translated by Céline Amendola

Caroline Profanter	*Can you define a sound phenomenon?*

Annette Vande Gorne	For a sound phenomenon to occur, there must be an initial energy, something that produces whatever noise. From there, the sound evolves according to its spectrum, its duration, its envelope, to the sound body which it emits. The characteristics that we hear in a sound—what acoustically *makes* a sound—is what synthesis systems tend to either find or simulate.

CP   *How did you come to electroacoustic music?*

AVG   It was a real shock. I was on a choir directing internship in Vichy with the *Jeunesse musicale de France* and down the hall there was this sound emanating from behind a door. What was that sound? What type of instrument? I didn't even know the *word* electroacoustic existed. Even though I was quite shy, I went in and sat down like everyone else. There were two speakers. The thing I always say, because it was important to me, is that I was closing my eyes. There was a whole universe with images in black and white that came to me all at once —the physical sensation of floating rather than being seated. There was some kind of shock —not only aesthetic but almost physical— that happened in the fifteen minutes I was listening. Well, after those fifteen minutes I thought, "Okay this is what I want to be doing". What I heard at that moment was *Espaces inhabitables* from François Bayle and *Le voyage* from Pierre Henry.

CP   *That was almost a revelation…*

AVG   Yes, exactly it was a real road of Damascus. In that shock, what was crucial was that for the first time I heard a piece of music that made me see abstract images that gave me a spatial sensation. The music not only gave me the feeling of being in another, imaginary

universe, but the possibility to both see and hear another spatial dimension at once. This is something I didn't know from the culture of classical music, that space is a parameter of sound like any other. So it's not just sound, it is sound and space.

CP   *And how did you begin your path?*

AVG   What interested me as a musician was starting from a game, those famous *séquences-jeu* that serve as a base for going further in the studio. These were invented by Guy Reibel, who was my teacher. They involve extracting all the possible sounds from a single sound body in a way that is intuitive. It begins from this singular moment of pure musicality.

This part really interested me—especially as someone coming from a piano practice—the idea of a musicality that goes through the body and not the intellect, process, or mathematical systems. It's abstraction, but mainly through the body. This instantaneous and improvised musicality forms a base for what is to come, even before all of the electroacoustic processing, transformation, cuts, and rearranging that allow for writing by editing. Even despite these transformations, the human and musical soul which was originally present remains.

CP   *Can you tell me about the way these parameters are categorised?*

AVG   We speak about energy-movements to describe physical models that can be found in a sound, like friction, rebound, oscillation, sway, flux, rotation, spiral, flexion. For each model, there are different parameters to play with based on universal archetypes specific to the human being. These archetypes have been described by Carl Gustav Jung. When we speak of archetypes, we speak about the acousmatic.

But with acousmatic music we only focus on hearing. There is nothing closer to music than this. Hearing is the only thing that works.

And because that's all there is, you need to give people something to hang on to, like the physical archetypes I mentioned, or like images. By "images", I mean things we recognise in hearing, things that we already know. Perception is not only auditive, it is also imaginative.

CP *What role does the listener play for you?*

AVG They are essential! The person in the studio is just the guinea pig. The main difference when we compare electroacoustic music to written music is that the person making it can hear everything right away and ask, "Does it speak to me or not?" So they tend to choose listening and perception strategies and not production strategies. Each listener will have their own internal film, but their hearing is also guided. So in electroacoustic music the composing strategies are actually listening strategies.

CP *To what point can you direct the listening of the other?*

AVG It's a game of memory, the way the memory retains a form; short, medium, or long. This is what Pierre Schaeffer called an "appropriate" duration. The human memory is more or less exercised, of course. Its duration varies from one person to another, but we still have things in common. A "short memory" for example is one which is always in the moment and doesn't stretch beyond it. A composed piece doesn't work on the short memory, it works on either medium or long memory.

CP *What impact has digital technology had on your work with recorded sound?*

AVG We lost the aspect of manipulation, in the original sense of working with our hands.

There is something offered by the analogue that
disappears in the digital. With analogue, there
is nothing to see. Everything happens in the
ear and in the memory. Working with analogue
systems, I developed my memory far more
than during all my years of piano practice,
where I would play everything by heart.
In the studio is where I developed a memory
based on time, which is very different than
one based on gesture. I notice now that I slowly
lose a relatively global sense of time passing.
On the screen, time is so subdivided that you
can have twenty milliseconds, and you can have
the feeling of doing something amazing but
lose the global perception because you focus too
much on the detail.

CP   *You sometimes talk about the "trap of the sound".*
      What do you mean by that?

AVG   I mean making a piece in which the be all and end all
is the production and the perception of sound
itself without any other perspective or desire
to communicate anything beyond that. It's not
a question of whether that sound is abstract
or not. The quality of a composition is not the
sound itself. It can be a sound that speaks to
everyone, but this is aside from the point of the
composition. For me, the point of a composition
is the added value of creating a different kind of
universe for the listener, each their own.
The question is, what is the world that preoccupies you
and that you want to communicate? In that
sense, sound can become a trap, and this trap
is much larger now than it was, because before
it was harder to make sound than it is today.
The technologies of today lock people into
considerations of production. That's the ease
of the tools, but for me it's not enough. If I am
making a composition, for example, by taking
nature as a model, then this decision is not
by chance. Nature is chosen as a way to reach
everyone. It's not just for the singing birds,

it is the imaginary which these sounds evoke and again not only the sound itself!

Unstable Contacts
Salomé Voegelin

Toshiya Tsunoda's track "Unstable Contact" on the 2004 album *Scenery of Decalcomania* is as much a conceptual work as it is a sonic composition. It is a sonic thought that makes us think about what a contact is, about its experience and consequence, about what it is connecting, what is touching and what is being touched. It makes us rethink the stability of these contacts, their purpose and direction, and allows us also to contemplate whether their misses and happenstance might provide a useful way to think about how things are.

Made with glass bottles, vibration plates, and sine waves, the piece sounds them through their connecting along a thread of diffuse lines and conceptualises the idea of interaction by sounding its instability. It is the wavering intermittence of their touching and missing that generates the work and sounds the idea of contact as an unreliable event. Always wavering, the work intones fragile meeting points, the failure of a sustained grip. Thus it sounds an unsecured connection that delineates not "this" or "that", produces not a consolidated whole but generates the in-between. Here the bottle, the vibration plate, and the sine wave are not instruments or devices that produce a composition. Instead they sound themselves in the reality of their unstable connection, which generates their existence as interbeing: as being-together and of-each-other in the in-between of a wavering thread of sound.

This sonic contact is entirely ephemeral and yet very physical. It is the place from which we experience all three: the bottle, the vibration plate, and the sine wave, described in their simultaneity and co-dependence, in being in contact and just missing it, rather than as separate things or determined by a compositional whole. Here they are in the encounter, performing collectively and contingently the "negative" form of their in-between. This non-form does not delimit what each of them is, but is the possibility of their being—beyond their named description—a being-with-each-other, creating reality together on a wavering thread of sound. This co-constituted reality is invisible, experienced in the ephemeral volume of shared sounds. Listening brings our bodies into this volume. To also not be "this" or "that", me or you, but what we are together in the indivisible expanse of a sonic in-between of sine wave, vibration plate, and bottle.

Sound is always an unstable contact. It is an insecure and unsecured connection that generates the world from the in-between or the "negative" space, where things are not,

but where their sound meets that of other things and generates their interbeing. Listening to this unsecured connection, hearing the in-between, we can reassess the reality of a "positive" space, where things appear to be in their separate actuality, certain and stable, and query its truth and reality from the possibility of an unreliable sound.

In sound we inhabit the in-between and gain access to the indivisible sphere of a connected world. Here the bottle, the vibration plates, the sine wave, and myself are generated together in the ephemeral volume of our sounds that make our interbeing thinkable, without denying what we are individually, by revealing instead how this individual identity is created in the in-between, the non-form that defines how things are formed.

Beating eggs

sounds the motion of hitting a liquid into a firm shape. It sounds not the beating nor the egg but the chiming of metal hitting metal through nothingness until the nothingness offers some resistance: the sonic resistance of viscous foam cushioning itself. Vigorously sounding what it beats, it slowly changes sound, producing a sonic tautology, the materiality of ephemeral fluff.

http://www.soundwords.tumblr.com, 14 December 2012, 3.50 p.m.

The materiality of this ephemeral fluff is sound's sonority. And it is this sonority that gives access to the viscid connection between things that do not touch but produce an indivisible volume that sounds what they are contingently and with each other. This volume is not the measure of decibels but is the ephemeral expanse of things sounding together, without semantic meaning or lexical referents, in the in-between of their own making. This voluminous expanse is not contained by ceilings, walls and floors, skin and borders as an architectural and geographical sense of space or as a linguistic sense of things. Instead its viscidity challenges lexical descriptions and the ability to separate, categorise, and ultimately hierarchise what things are, where they belong, their direction and purpose.

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Thus, from this volume of sound we can rethink the connections and separations we make to conceive of the normative, "positive" space of certain things and a certain world, and we can engage in the possibilities of the indivisible sphere of viscous foam as a shared cosmos, to access the uncertain world of unstable contacts and missed connections.

The sonic materiality of this ephemeral fluff binds us into its airy froth. Listening we hear the being-together of egg white, whisk, and air in their unstable contact. Thus the sound of whisking initiates us into a world that contains things in their interbeing, their relational existence rather than as separate things. The frothy egg white does not exist before the sonic charge of metal on nothingness, which sounds the co-dependence of its reality. It exists only in its agitation as a thing of and with things. And we too, as voice and as sound, inhabit this ephemeral sphere and exist in agitation as a thing among things, identified not by our outline and certain form that separates us from others, but by our being with other things and other subjects as things, in the non-form of the in-between. Our sonority defines us contingently as an interbeing that inhabits the voluminous sphere of sound and that agitates in in-betweens with human and non-human things.

This is the sonic cosmopolitanism of beating eggs created by the agency of what is aptly called a balloon whisk, a tool for agitating the air between things to generate them in their in-contact with other things. This activity is witnessed by the sound of beating the airy nothingness of its in-between, and is accessed by our ears that draw us into its frothy sphere. This acoustic experience gives rise to the imagination of an interbeing world: a place of indivisible in-betweens, where subject and things are not separate but defined contingently in their being-together and from each other in a shared and co-inhabited cosmos. This cosmos of unstable in-betweens and wavering contacts foregrounds the exchange, its insecure process, ahead of what is being exchanged: the message, its content and aim. And it enables a consideration of the message's condition and legitimacy, instigating a discussion on its singularity and truth, and opening the imagination towards other possibilities, even including the possibility of the impossible: that which remains inaudible or is not heard but whose sonority nevertheless resonates in the non-form of the in-between.

The message as semantic sound is linked to a quasi-visual description and definition. It sounds a certain referent with a lexical name. In other words, it presents something that is there before the encounter; something that is justified by its congruence with lexical criteria and recognised in its certain form. Thus we encounter it through an *a priori* description and formed certainty instead of what it sounds now in a contingent connection, and we recognise rather than hear its call and listen for its visual outline rather than meet it in an invisible in-between. By contrast, the sonorous of sound is not before its contact with other things, but generates itself in the encounter, anew all the time, as an unstable connection, formless and contingent, reciprocal in its unsecured state. It does not fulfil lexical givens but calls itself, on the spot, that which it is with and from others. Listening, I too am part of its sonic expanse and lose my *a priori* to enter the identity of the in-between, to be in transition, stretched out in the voluminous expanse of a sonic world not this or that but whatever I am contingently with you.

This ephemeral in-between is what makes sound aesthetically intriguing and challenging as well as politically potent and relevant. Its voluminous indivisibility rethinks a reality of certain shapes and forms, referenced by lexica and drawn on maps with black and red lines. Instead it provides a view on what lies between, at invisible intersections and in contingent encounters that define what each is without giving them a name but allowing them to call themselves contingently, while listening out also for those that cannot call themselves and those that remain unheard despite their sound. In this way we find in wavering contacts an unstable but more relevant source for a reality and identity that are fluid and voluminous, that have the capacity to show the conditions of a current normative being in the world, and offer the possibility for its resistance and transformation.

The Economy of a Sonic Cosmos

Sound, a sonic thinking and materiality, presents a sensorial cosmopolitanism that is not concerned with institutions and initiatives that might enable a cosmopolitan politics and governance. Instead it provides the condition to think about how we live together with other human and non-human

things, in a world that is not created from this or that but from their in-between: contingent, fragile, and unstable; a frothy mass of air that we share. This is a sonic world whose political, social, and economic co-dependencies are not a matter of numbers and statistics, but are the flesh of a shared cosmos, feeding backwards and forwards in its indivisible expanse, to reveal causes and consequences that remain hidden when we only look, and that enable a new imaginary based on invisible volumes and a shared space.

I experience this shared space in Áine O'Dwyer's *Music for Church Cleaners*, an album that was recorded in St Mark's Church in Islington, London in 2011 and released in 2015 by MIE. I listen to it on vinyl, two volumes, four sides—A, B, C, and D—of organ music. Eighteen tracks in total, whose main protagonist is not the church organ or the organist but the space between the sound of the organ as musical instrument, the idea of organ music, the body of the instrumentalist and that of the cleaners at work during the recording session, their cleaning equipment, brushes, and hoovers working as instruments into the tracks. All these elements and events work together, generating a sonic space from their unstable contacts that rethink the lexical definition of music, organ, instrument, cleaning, hoover, brush and church by sounding their sonorous in-between which in turn gives access to their co-dependence, normally hidden by a night-time cleaning schedule, the separation of the recording process, and the estimation of musical value against everyday sounds.

However, these co-sounding elements do not become components of a whole but remain contingent agitators, interrupting each other's rhythm, claiming space and making space on the tracks, to contemplate what either is and what they are together, and what other things they inter-are with and could bring into the mix. The economy of cleaning work meets that of art and music as well as of religion and the church. And once the focus is not on music as a cultural artefact, boundaried off by its disciplinary evaluation, all sorts of relationships begin to sound. This relational in-between does not subsume the individual source, its identity and particularity, however. Instead, the sounding thing is revealed and realised in its contingent contact and exchange with others. Its particularity is generated in the expanse of a collective sound. Thus its identity is not erased but reconceptualised, not in isolation but with other sounds, in the in-between of a collective world.

And so as I listen to the clunking of brooms, the humming of the hoover, and the undulating tones of the organ pipes, I also hear the trees being cut outside my window and the squawking of parakeets pressing into the track. Listening to the album as to a voluminous expanse, I hear connections and unstable contacts rather than music, and inhabit a shared sphere of indivisible sounds, in which I practise being according to listening as an interbeing in a connected world.

Trams

sound the contact between wheels and track. Metal intimacy of stop and start, one clamping around the other to push itself away again and again. I don't hear the wheels and track separately but hear their relationship, the necessity of their coming together in the purpose and aim of the tram to move, to stop and start, to go forward in order to halt again. They sound what they do together, alone they are mute, not silent but mute, removed from the communication of their purpose. However they do not sound accord, but make audible the complexity of their togetherness, both materials separately providing one service: an incongruous congruity that is burdened by the task at hand.
http://www.soundwords.tumblr.com, 18 August 2012, 12.12 a.m.

100 Questions about Sound and Language
Marc Matter

1   *What connections are there between the sound of a word and its meaning?*

2   *What do you think about the idea that all words have onomatopoeic roots?* [1]

3   *Can you make up a sentence containing as many onomatopoeic words as possible?*

4   *Does the concept of* extended *onomatopoeia (a word like "sharp" seems itself to sound sharp) make any sense to you?*

5   *Are you able to estimate how many words you have heard in your life so far?*

6   *How many of them have been directed to you and how many did you overhear?*

7   *Can you imagine how the cluster of all voices around the world asking "What?" in this specific moment would sound like?*

8   *Are you able to auralise (that is, to "visualise" in hearing) the "rustle of language" (Roland Barthes): the sound of many voices emerging as indistinct chatter to your inner-ear?*

9   *Can you imagine a space that could store all speech ever spoken as infinite echos, adding up to a sound-cluster of past / passed speech?*

10   *Would that sound different to the indistinct chatter from question eight?*

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1   Onomatopoeic words are those which imitate rather than describe a sound: e.g. "splash", "click", "meow".

11   *Do you think that it is possible to put words together using noises only—to imitate the sound-shape of human speech by carefully editing snippets of everyday noises?* [2]

12   *Have you ever heard of* Gerald McBoing Boing, *the cartoon character that talks only in noises rather than words?*

13   *Do you like the sound of your own voice?*

14   *Are there any specific dialects that you dislike?*

15   *Do you speak a dialect yourself?*

16   *Are you able to mimic other dialects?*

17   *Can–you–speak–this–sen–tence–out–loud–rhyth–mi–ci–sing–it–by–its–syl–la–ble–struc–ture,–stres–sing–each–sin–gle–syl–la–ble–eq–ual–ly?*

18   *Can you imagine a long sentence consisting only of monosyllabic words?*

19   *Can you verbally express a statement, for example "I am happy", in a way that contradicts its meaning?*

20   *Are you able to imagine the sound of an alien-language?*

21   *What would an opera in the Klingon language sound like?* [3]

22   *Can you imagine a parallel universe where people talk in morse code?*

2   "Acoustic Cabaret", in Peter Weibel (ed.), *The Vienna Group, A Moment in Modernity 1954–1960: The Visual Works and the Actions* (Springer Verlag: 1997), p. 426.

3   There will be a record coming out in the near future which will contain exactly this.

23   *How would a cocktail-party sound in that parallel universe?*

24   *Do you enjoy the sound of languages that you do not understand at all?*

25   *Which are your favourite ones to listen to?*

26   *Can you try to listen to your native language in the same way, ignoring its meaning and just concentrating on the sound?*

27   *Have you ever listened to language imitators who train themselves to talk in invented utterances that sound like a specific language?*

28   *Do you agree that the structure of music sounds like slowed-down speech?* [4]

29   *Have you ever tried to immitate the melodies of speech with a musical instrument, or at least by whistling or humming?*

30   *How would it sound if stones could speak?*

31   *What is your feeling about things / objects / machines speaking to you?*

32   *What do you think of the way synthetic voices are designed?*

33   *Why are synthetic voices (Text-to-Speech synthesis) gendered at all?*

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4   I have a memory of a quotation like "Music is just slow speaking" but I could not verify by whom—maybe you remember?

34　*How would a synthetic speech sound that no longer imitates human voice and speech patterns, but would rather be designed for maximum intelligibility —something like printed text as compared to handwriting?*

35　*What would your own personal synthetic voice sound like?*

36　*Have you ever used the online software* Pink Trombone*?*

37　*Do you remember the most monotonous speaking voice—synthetic or human—that you ever heard?*

38　*Would you try to talk as monotonously as possible for a minute, an hour, a day?*

39　*How would your monotonous way of speaking affect the meaning of what you say?*

40　*When you whisper, does it usually sound monotonous?*

41　*If so, can you try to whisper in a non-monotonous way?*

42　*Is a breath already a speech sound?*

43　*Have you ever listened to ASMR videos on YouTube that contain indistinct whispering?*

44　*Did you enjoy it or did it make you feel uncomfortable?*

45　*Can you imagine an aural Rorschach-Test using vocal expressions instead of visual ink-patterns?* [5]

5　　In the 1930s, the psychologist B.F. Skinner invented the "verbal summator" test. He had records pressed containing indistinct vocal expressions which he then asked patients to identify, similar to a Rorschach test in which patients are asked to detect meaningful structures in abstract ink-blots.

46   *How do you think it would sound?*

47   *Do vowel sounds contain meaningful connotations
        to you?*

48   *Are you able to change the speed of your speech
        deliberately?*

49   *If so, do you use different speeds of speaking in
        everyday situations?*

50   *Are you aware of how your speech (speed, accentuation,
        prosodics) changes due to your mood or the time of day?*

51   *Are you able to convince others in discussions by the
        way you speak instead of what you say?*

52   *Can you imagine a world in which all conversation
        was to be sung?*

53   *Have you ever read the essay "On Composition" by
        Edgar Allen Poe in which he describes the way he
        composes his texts according to the sound of the words?*

54   *Do you consider expressions like sighing, coughing,
        and grumbling as a part of language?*

55   *Do you think that those expressions contain meanings
        in themselves?*

56   *Are you familiar with the* New Lettrist Alphabet
        *by Isidore Isou which defines those expressions as
        poetic material?*

57   *How many rhyming words can you come up with spontaneously?*

58   *Can you speak them out loud?*

59   *Are you familiar with Cockney rhyming slang?*

60   *Can you think of equivalent everyday wordplay in other languages?*

61   *Could the practice of* verlan *in French be considered an equivalent?*

62   *To what extent do you think rhyming and the prosodic structure of a text helps to memorise it?*

63   *Why do magic incantations rhyme?*

64   *How many homophonic words (different words that sound the same when spoken like "world" and "whirled") can you come up with spontaneously?*

65   *Can you imagine a sentence consisting solely of homophonic words?*

66   *Which languages do you think are especially rich in homophones?*

67   *Can you imagine a sentence consisting of one-syllable words only?*

68   *Are you able to speak this sentence out loud while emphasising each syllable in a techno-like pulse?*

69   *Can you imagine a dialogue consisting only of interjections like "ouch", "wow", "huh", and "err"?*

70   *How does the repetitive uttering of a specific word (e.g. 100 times) change the word itself? Does it mostly affect the sound of it, the meaning of it, or the general <u>feel</u> of the word?*

71   *Can you spontaneously speak a specific word backwards? How about a short sentence?*

72   *Do you think that that sentence would be understandable again when recorded and played back backwards (backwards + backwards = forwards)?*

73   *Was it a car or a cat I saw?*

74   *Were you aware othat this technique (backwards + backwards = forwards) is used in the Lodge scenes of the TV-series* Twin Peaks*?*

75   *How does your mood change after repeating "Ho-Ho, Hee-Hee-Hee" for one minute?*

76   *Have you ever fallen in love with a voice?*

77   *Have you ever experienced distrust or other negative feelings towards a person just because of a voice which you found uncomfortable to listen to?*

78   *Have you ever experienced distrust or other negative feelings towards a person just because of an unusual way of pronouncing a word, or a specific way of speaking?*

79   *Do you hear people talk in your dreams?*

80   *If yes, how do they sound?*

81   *Are you able to read lips?*

82   *Do you remember the lip-reading (and speaking) computer HAL9000 in the movie* 2001: A Space Odyssey*?*

83   *In what ways do you think that modes of speaking have changed throughout history?*

84   *Can you imagine the way people spoke a hundred years ago, a thousand years ago, ten-thousand years ago?*

85   *What connection is there between a strong voice and power?*

86   *Were you aware that some powerful historic figures (e.g. Stalin) had a weak voice?*[6]

87   *Does this come as a surprise?*

88   *How long can you hold the last syllable of a spoken word with one breath, e.g.* Sunnnnnnn… *?*

89   *What do you think about W.B. Yeats's declaration that a poem is made out of a mouthful of air?*

90   *To what extent do you consider laughter a part of language?*

91   *Do you enjoy the pre-recorded laughter tracks used in sit-coms?*

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6   See Paul Demarinis, The Lecture of Comrade Stalin…, artwork (1999).

92   *Did you know that the comedy-group Monty Python only agreed to use pre-recorded laughter tracks in their* Flying Circus *TV-series if allowed to direct it by themselves?*

93   *Have you ever been disappointed because an explicit word has <u>not</u> been bleeped out on a radio-program or a TV-show?*

94   *Would you agree that the bleeping of strong language on radio and TV further emphasises its effect instead of hiding something, maybe even <u>because</u> you do not understand the specific word but just the bleep?*

95   *Do you feel comfortable when hearing your own voice on a recording?*

96   *How would you describe your own voice in three words?*

97   *How would you describe your own way of speaking in three words?*

98   *In what way would you change your voice if you could?*

99   *In what way would you change your way of speaking if you could?*

100   *Do you hear your mute inner-voice while reading these lines? What does it sound like?*

Peripheries
Franziska Windisch

The sounds of a busy street entered through the vast openings that were once windows. I remember standing there, in the city of Valparaiso in Chile, and listening, in the middle of a roofless ruin, a *palacio*. Located not far from the port, the building must have been a storage house. Inside grass and bushes were growing on a sandy floor, a niche populated by birds and visited regularly by street dogs. Fences, locks, bottles, some chairs and the tracks of tyres on the floor indicated that it might have also served as an occasional meeting point and at night as a parking lot for neighbours' cars.

A porous space, neither inside nor outside, neither exactly public space nor private property. A dynamic in-between that changes its form according to the times of the day and to the beings that enter and leave it. Standing there has been a beginning of some sort of ongoing reflection about the relation between sound and space and how this relation constantly challenges our understanding of interiority and exteriority.

This was some time ago but the ruin is still with me, surrounding me at all times. Even now, as I sit in a closed space that I might call my home. Some cars on the street, a distant siren, the neighbours' footsteps in the corridor, faint TV voices from below—all that is present in the room I am in, whose front door I have just locked. Acoustic space is a shared zone in which we are always many.

On an experiential level we can't examine sound and space as separate entities. Interrelated as they are, they constantly rework and transform each other. Sound is able to transgress spatial boundaries, revealing activities and presences that take place sometimes far beyond the visual reach. Spatial configurations on the other hand are able to filter, amplify, or mute the audible and influence the ways in which we listen and therefore relate and respond to each other and to our common environment.

If we ask ourselves how the entangled perception of sound and space facilitates or inhibits exchange and communication, how it establishes or undermines hierarchies and power structures, how it provides shelter, hides or exposes, could this questioning lead to a shift in the understanding of coexistence?

In my view those questions can't be answered from the detached point of view of the observer, but only from within listening itself. And of course here it becomes complicated

and epistemologically challenging. Because first of all I can't but listen from a specific position in a given space. My fully situated listening is embedded into a sonic environment that I can perceive only by being part of it. In addition to the complex interplay of acoustic components such as the physical properties of the sound source, materiality of reflecting surfaces, temperatures, distances etc., the process of listening itself has multiple facets too: I'm listening simultaneously to rhythms, memories, proximities, meanings, timbres. And while becoming aware of this, at the very moment I want to make sense of it, my listening gets inevitably fractured. I am surrounded by a sonic ambience that changes its width, depth, and resolution with my auditive awareness. There's no objective listening, but rather an "intra-active"[1] relation between listening subjectivities, sounds, and the enclosing space.

What happens if we conceptually engage with the open-ended and contradictory in-between, that unfolds within listening? Jean-Luc Nancy who provides an insightful approach into how to think about sound, sense and meaning, not as separated, but as contiguous and intertwined. Listening creates a space of referral "where sound and sense mix together and resonate in each other, or through each other. Which signifies that [...] if, on the one hand, sense is sought in sound, on the other hand, sound, resonance, is also looked for in sense".[2]

From listening we learn that perceptual phenomena can be understood only in relational terms. But we are confronted with a referentiality that surpasses the circulation of signs, that includes atmospheres and affects. Our access to sound opens up a structure that associates material, affective, symbolic, and discursive elements with each other and makes these relationships audible and tangible. Sound becomes a means that is able to reveal aspects of our involvement in the world that lie beyond the realm of visualisation and language.

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1   Karen Barad's notion of intra-action describes "a mutual constitution of entangled agencies" within processes that can involve material components, discourses and meaning-generating activities, human and non-human agencies, technical apparatuses. See Karen Barad, *Meeting the Universe Halfway: Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning* (Duke University Press: 2007).

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2   Jean-Luc Nancy, *Listening*, trans. Charlotte Mandell (Fordham University Press: 2007), p. 7.

In reference to Nancy, Frances Dyson states that

> The aural opens avenues toward an understanding that is arational, that evokes a grain (or rather tone) of thought and an aesthetics of listening that, I would argue, offers some entry into the dilemma of how to hear the world and in hearing, also be able to act, with the aim and existential condition of the "in-common." From here, it might be possible to move toward a shared sensibility, a "communism of the senses" that builds sense, the common, and common sense simultaneously.[3]

How to build sense through listening? Within hearing distances collapse strangely. All one hears happened at a given distance, but subtle pressure waves propagate through the air until they strike hypersensitive skins. All sensing involves (physical) contact. It is exactly this paradoxical state of being in touch but also at a certain distance that creates a tension. This is eventually what a thinking that is grounded in listening can offer: holding and encompassing this tension of being in touch and at a distance. A reasoning that breaks away from mere observation and analysis and transitions into a form that is aware of being in touch, that responds and shows responsibility.

This means that listening may no longer be understood as merely receptive, comprehensive (and therefore innocent), but rather as a differentiating, interpreting process that co-creates the social structures we live in, and enacts power.[4] If we acknowledge that this process plays a significant role in the construction of public spheres and their boundaries, we have far more possibilities for what "public" or "common" as a space for coexistence could be. The notion of the public and political agency have been theorised prominently in terms of appearance and speech. But regardless of how we look at communities and their engagement in the public, from a global perspective or from within our closest surroundings, we always encounter

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3   Frances Dyson, *The Tone of Our Times: Sound, Sense, Economy, and Ecology* (Massachusetts Institute of Technology: 2014), p. 149.

4   Michael Gallagher, *Listening, Meaning and Power in Listening* (Unifirmbooks: 2013), p. 43.

social processes that fall short within the categories of speech and appearance. In order to take account of and become accountable for the dynamics of hidden, voiceless, unlikely publics,[5] sound and listening have to be considered as constitutive elements within the vast network of sociopolitical relations.

A thinking that is grounded in listening is a process that actively seeks contact, that fully engages with the place and environment in which it takes place. It reaches out and moves into the peripheries, as a change of perspective, challenging the traditional, static point of view with fractured, multimodal listenings.

The term periphery is often used to describe an attitude of critical opposition towards a centre or the mainstream. But I am interested more in in the etymological sense of the Ancient Greek word *peripherés*, "revolving around", which points to a movement or an activity. It makes me think of walking around in suburbs, at the fringes of a city, wandering through messy or neglected areas, stepping into roofless ruins.

This comes of course with a risk, it means to leave the safe ground, to get involved with a zone that transmits affects, that is contagious and responsive. It means to become peripheral from inside, conceptually permeable and marginal. But it holds also the possibility to acknowledge the marginality of others and of our shared environment. And it can eventually lead to an understanding that being in the world together means thinking-with and acting-with as an *in-common*, for, as Nancy writes, "all space of sense is common space".[6]

5   Brandon LaBelle, *Sonic Agency* (Goldsmiths Press: 2018), p. 29 ff.

6   Jean-Luc Nancy, *The Sense of the World*, trans. Jeffrey S. Librett (University of Minnesota Press: 1997), p. 89.

Flutter Echoes
David Toop

This text is an edited extract from David Toop, Flutter Echo: Living within Sound *(Ecstatic Peace Library: 2019).*

If every listening experience of our lives could be recollected, the world would be transformed into an infinite space of sounds so layered in time, so thickly textured as to be a second nature. Our minds would be continually defending themselves from a waterfall of auditory impressions. Sound slips away from the memory in the same way that water dries on a rock, its stain gradually disappearing. Some rocks remain wet; moss grows, soft to the touch, vivid green and pungent.

So it is with memories of listening—significant moments sitting in memory like deeply embedded rocks, their place in our personal narratives changing shape over time. Maybe the rock moves a little as we come to understand ourselves better with age. At the end, all the rocks are dislodged, washed downstream. Others may find and collect them, examine them, take them into their own minds.

The past is always now, chronology and continuity broken into pieces, scattered by the pressure of living within depths of time. Images appear, flashes in darkness. Hearing is more elusive. My first memory of a listening experience comes from a walk, a regular journey during my early childhood. To visit my grandparents my mother and I would take the bus from the suburb where we lived to Enfield, just north of London, then walk from the centre of the town to their house in an area called Bush Hill Park. The walk took us close to the railway lines. This was the early 1950s, so prefabricated housing had been built there, homes for those who had been bombed out of their houses by German planes and rockets aimed at the nearby munitions factory. I was fascinated by these small buildings with their gardens of vegetables. There was a sense of privation and disaster but also the optimism of starting life again.

Shortly before the railway bridge that took us over the tracks into my grandparents' road, the path was bordered on both sides by a concrete wall. The narrowness of this path meant that the walls reflected echoes from our footsteps very rapidly, an effect described as flutter echo by acousticians. Like the fluttering of a moth's wings, sound bounces back and forth rapidly between the two parallel walls to create a "zing", the illusion of a pitched note with a metallic quality. Sound came into focus as a phenomenon that could change according to physical laws (not that I understood this as a child, particularly since I had no aptitude for science). Then there was the complex relationship between sound, its causation,

its environment, and the active role of the listener. By "active role" I mean not just the realisation that listening is going on but the emotional connections to its circumstances, in this case family, the consequences of war, notions of home, and the way in which something habitual—the walk from one destination to another—may reveal the unexpected. A lifetime later the same effect of flutter echo resonates within deep memory as a flutter of the heart.

I heard the same effect again during my fifth trip to Japan; first of all in Nikko, in the famous *Naki-ryu* "dragon voice" of the Yakushi-do temple: a monk hits a wood block to demonstrate the strange flutter-echo "crying dragon" transformation of its sharp sound bouncing between floor and ceiling; then in Tango, where Akio Suzuki built the *Hinatabokko no kukan*, his *Space in the Sun*, back in 1988, two parallel mud-brick walls constructed on a high hill on which cows now roam. I have spoken to Akio-*san* many times about the significance to him of what he learned by building the walls, then sitting and listening within their space. Elsewhere, he has written:

> On the day of the solstice I sat by the centre of the northern wall and was immediately bitten on the neck by several mosquitoes—it was an unexpected way to begin. In order to make my many supporters proud, I applied my entire body and soul into this moment— an irreplaceable experience in my life. Just when this point of all intersections felt like it was on the verge of breaking down, I heard the autumn insects call to each other and heard the cries of the mountain birds. It was then that I was enlightened to the idea that "When humans listen to these cries, they replace them with words." After this point, I acquired through this bodily experience, the skill to become one with nature like the trees that surrounded me.

Both of these experiences felt to me like stepping stones in water, as if my first memory of being a conscious listener had created the rock from which my present life began. Then as I grew older I came across reminders, places on which I could step to give myself continuity across lengthy spans of time. Somehow it seems symbolic that my first memory of consciously listening to sound was so similar to Akio Suzuki's

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epiphany in Tango. What I have learned from him, and from my own listening practice, is that hearing can take place without sounds being replaced by words. This is very difficult to achieve—a life-changing moment, in fact. To compound the problem for me as a writer there was the question of how to listen without replacing the sounds with words, but then to use words to describe the experience of listening without words. This is almost impossible—my life's work, you could say—yet it comes from the humble experience of walking with my mother along a nondescript alley between two grey walls.

Touching Sound
Pierre Berthet &
Rie Nakajima

*These drawings by Pierre Berthet
and Rie Nakajima present studies for
self-built instruments used by the duo in
their performances. The drawings themselves
are often mounted on the walls in places they
play or else compiled into "Dead Plants and
Living Objects Sound Boxes", small-edition boxes
filled with small instruments, objects, photos,
drawings, postcards, and colourful paper.*

Touching sound

Listening, while touching

Touching, while sounding

Kneading then grasping

Then bring the sound to the mouth

Drawing as tasting

Ingredients: butterfly pea tea, hibiscus tea, buddleja davidii flowers, Viper's bugloss, Spanish red earth, Burgundy brown earth, lemon juice, wine vinegar, soda powder, citric acid, Chinese ink, coal, ashes, fire.

Boxing sound or sounding box: handmade instruments, drawings, postcards, recipes, music etcetera

We deliver you, so you deliver us.

Things own time are objects. They own space. They own time

We walk with sounds in our hands / on our head / in our mouth

Moving tongue while singing

Moving lips while blowing

Blow, blow, blow
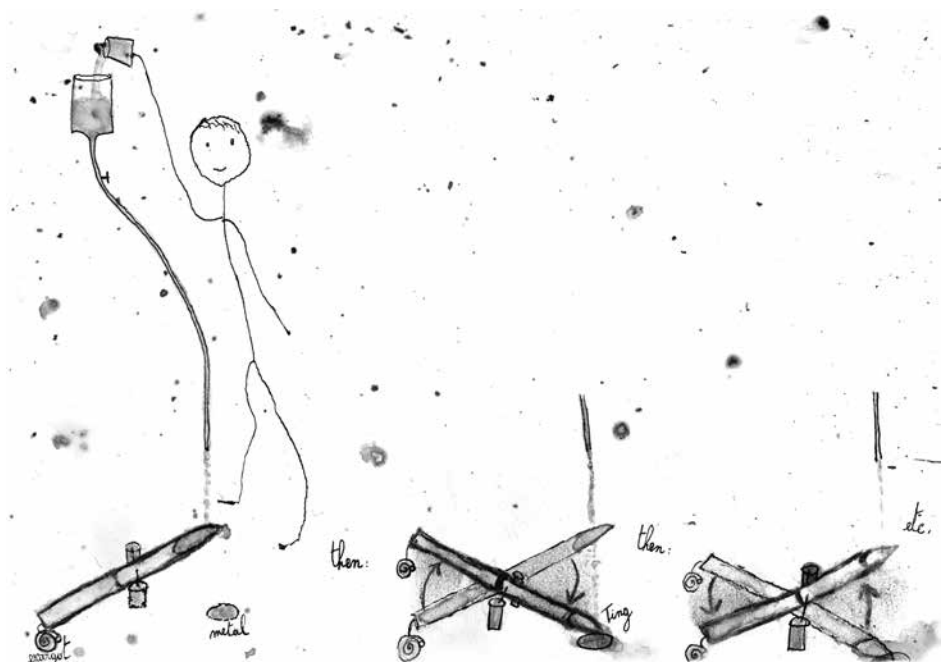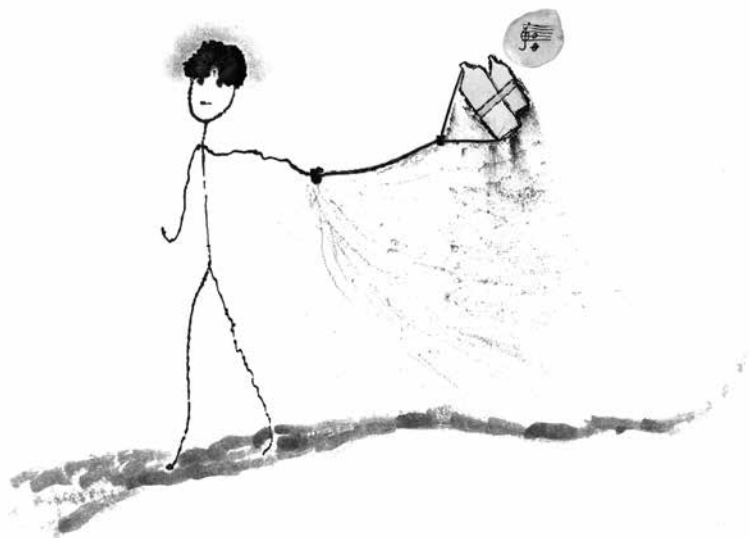
スポンジの音.
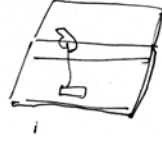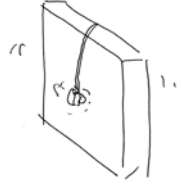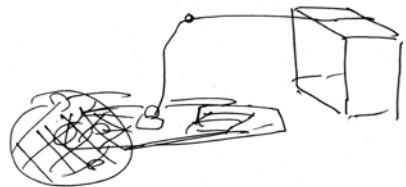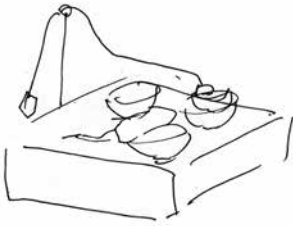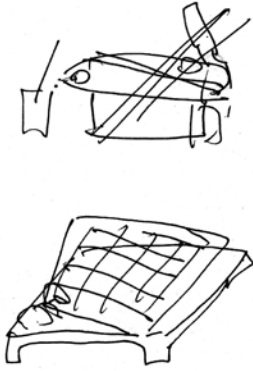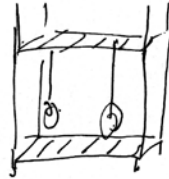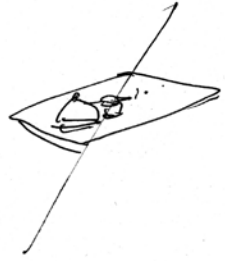
NINARU — だ 13

2枚お皿を重ね
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Motor in metal can

Helium

WIND

water → air

wind

Flute Pipe

BRUSH + MOTOR
SPRING
Rubber SLID
Nail
Dc
TIMER
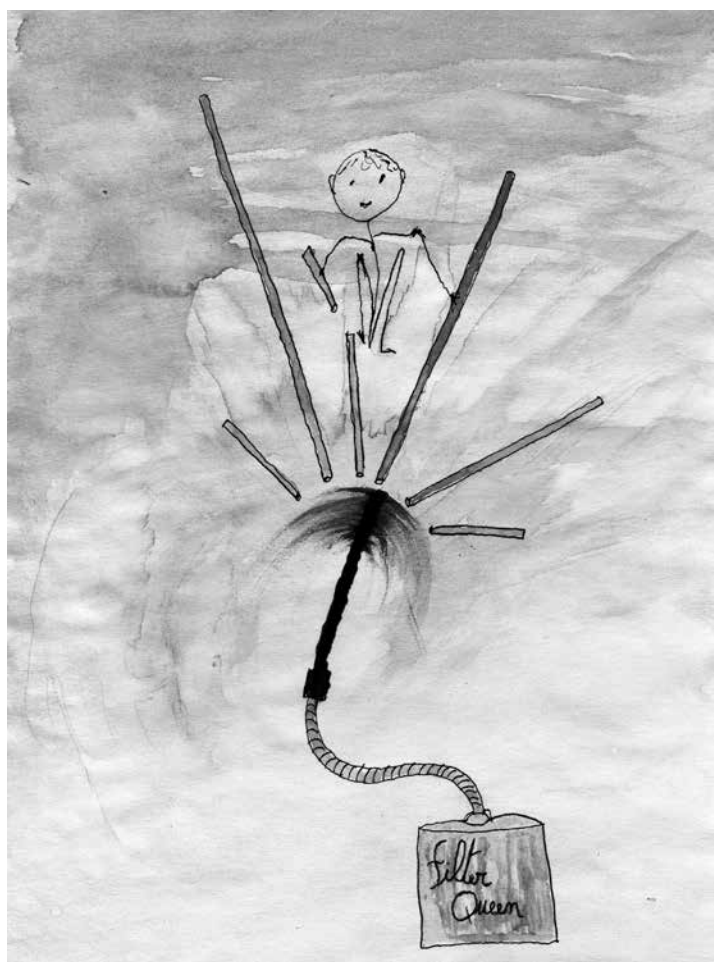BATTERY

Breathing Bag
without flute

log → Timer

The Middle Matter

The Middle Matter
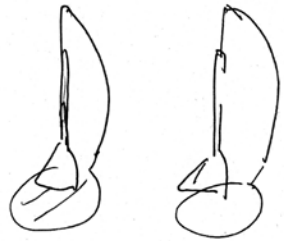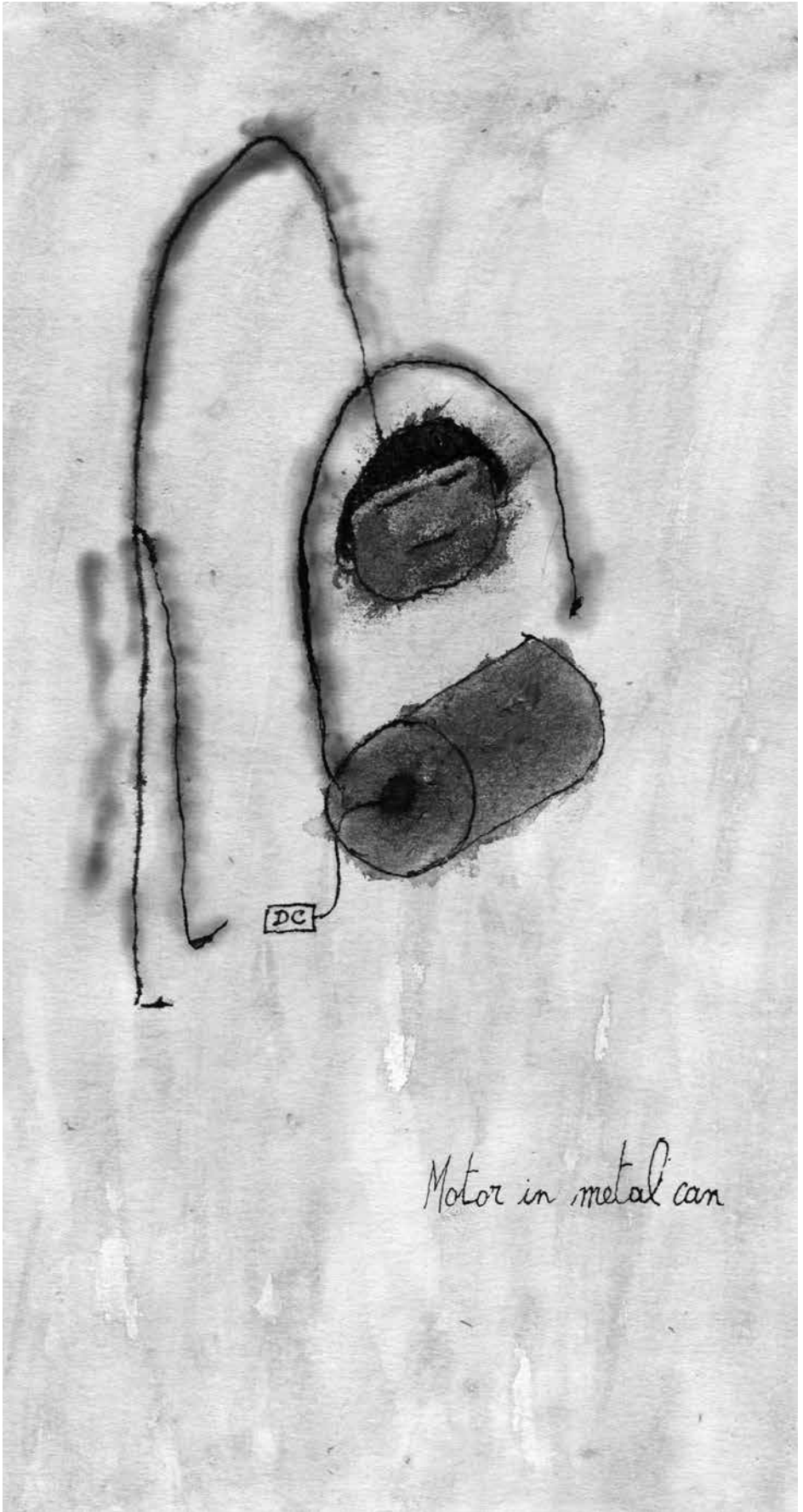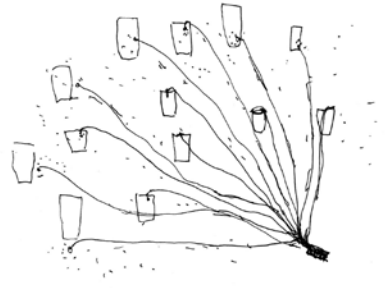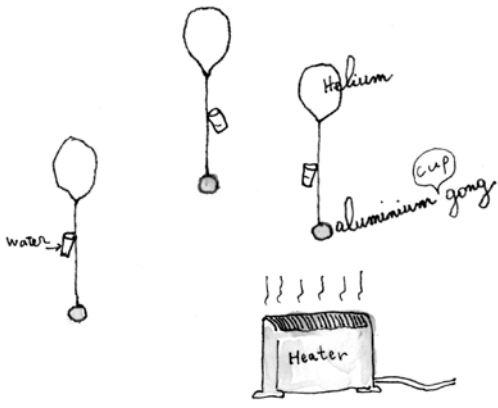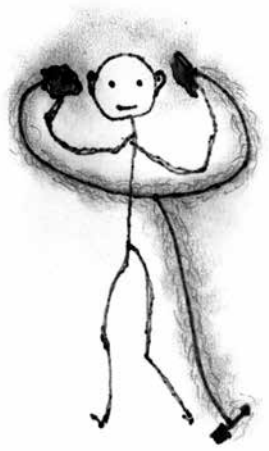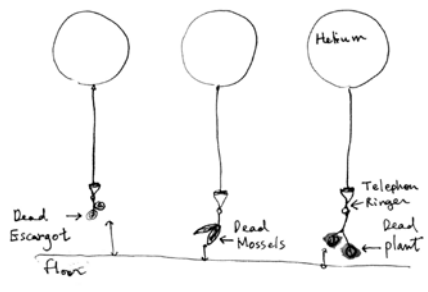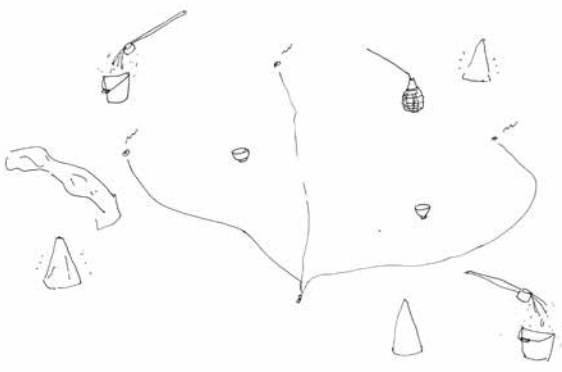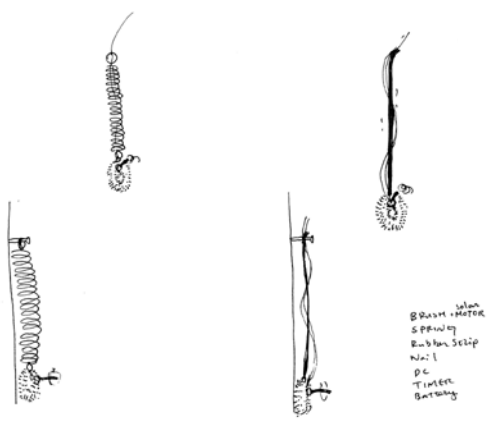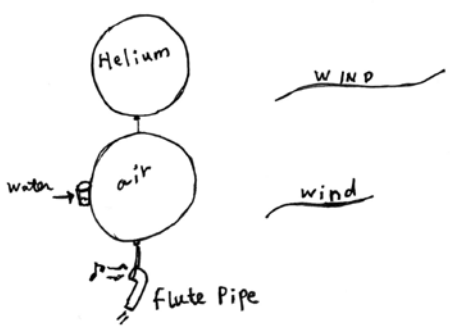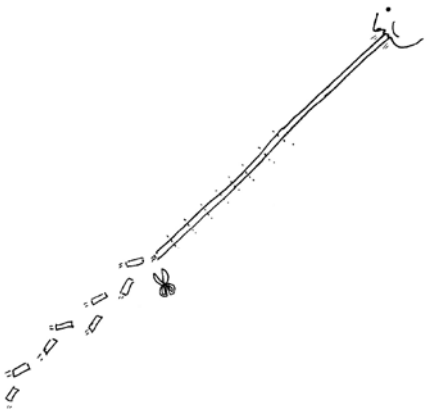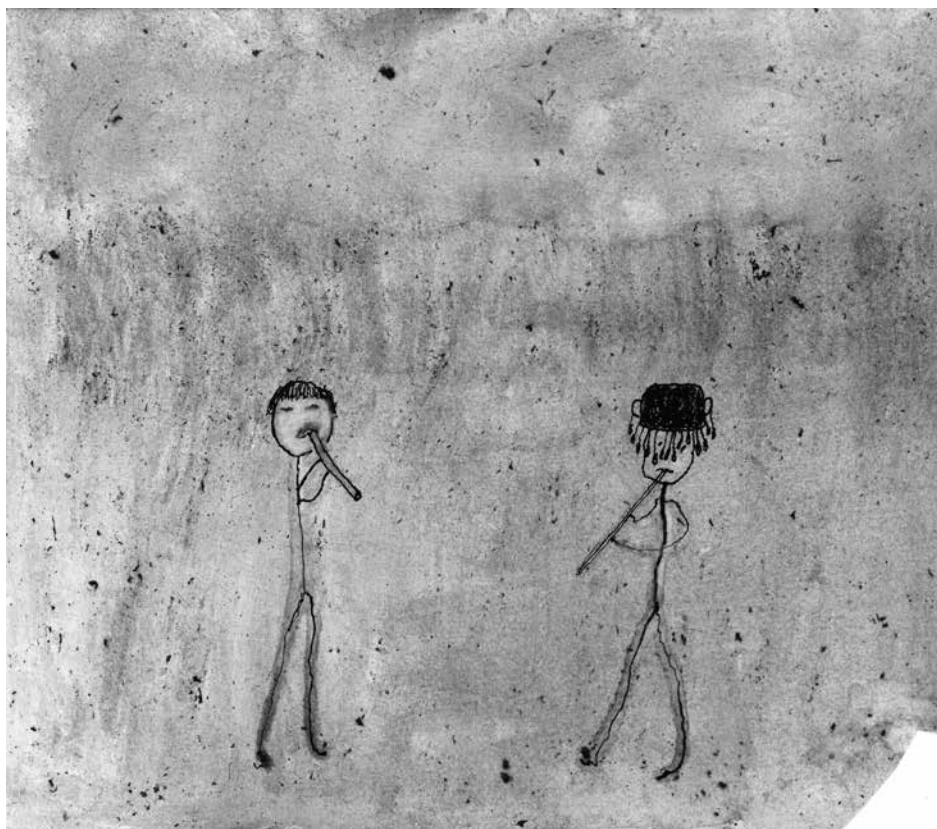
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division "viewer-canvas" this takes latouR ."thought-point

extensionless" the called has sloterdijK peteR what ;are we who
of *centre* irrefutable the as—viewing of act the and—eye the of
importance central the underline also but ,canvas the to
"observer-relation" static and singular a in viewer the place
only not picture the of contents the ,sense this iN .point
vanishing the :extension zero of point a into contracts space all
where ,infinity into converge lines all where point the mirrors
exactly that position a—canvas the outside position specific
a adopt to eye viewer's the coerces perspective point single
of use the how shows demonstration hiS .formed are views
different as ,below or above ,another to object the of side one
from shifting—depicted object the to relationship different
a in observer the places reading each how also but ,readings
conflicting several have images "multistable" how only
not demonstrates carefully ihdE doN post-phenomenologist
the (find can't I that) clip youtube a iN

.distance safe a from controlled and observed
be to ,outside the from understood best is that something
is world the ,world the from detachment perpetual of state
a in exist we :world the and ourselves between division a of idea
the reinforce forms cultural such that essentially was analysis
hiS .depicts it that objects and events the to relation particular
a in them places canvas the outside position viewer's the
how consider to us asked hE .on so and ,wall the on picture a of
positioning the ,frame a of use the ,perspective linear point single
as such techniques representational discussed latouR ,herE
.world the to relate we how and are we who about beliefs sustain
objects and forms cultural how describing to given was emphasis
particulaR .address to aimed exhibition the that themes
the explained he ,walkthrough curator's his durinG .2016 in
,karlsruhE ,(MKZ) medientechnologiE und kunsT für zentruM
at curated had he which *Modernity Reset* exhibition the around
latouR brunO theorist the followed I ,ago years few A

?understanding and ,progress ,breakthrough
,creation revolutionary of acts describe to used are (etc. ,light
the seeing ,insight) vision and seeing with associated terms
that it is whY ."hearing-ary art sound" like something say to
appropriate more be would it surelY .smile me made it more the
,it read I more thE .practice sound-based a to applied metaphor
sight-based a of interplay ironic somewhat the by struck
was I ,(petition permit work latest my in it include to happy
and) this by flattered was I althougH ."visionary art sound"
a as me to referred headline the ,album latest my of review a iN

felL marK

?reversE in thinkinG—sounD

Q-O2　inter‖faces

Co funded by the
Creative Europe Programme
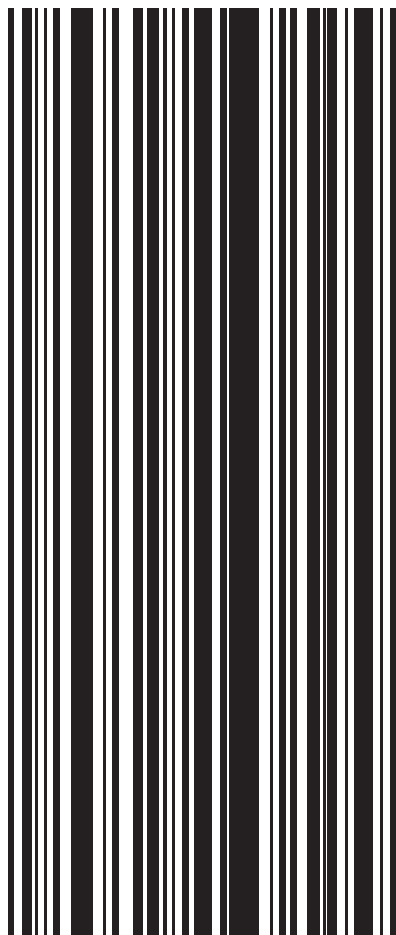of the European Union

umland　Vlaanderen verbeelding werkt　brussel

Through a number of artistic and theoretical
contributions observations are made around the
notion of audience and the attendant questions of
format, on the effects of old and new technologies,
of communal working processes, and the complexity
of language, the contributors reveal sound to be
a material particualrly apt at negotiating these
zones of and between contact.

It is a large field of in-betweenness. Sound travels,
hops borders, passes through walls, its messages
for a large part being transported involuntarily and
even unconsciously. In this sense sound is extensively
participative, entangled in the complicated gaps
between bodies, minds and objects through and
against which it resonates.