Listening to Noise and Silence

TOWARDS A PHILOSOPHY OF SOUND ART

by

Salomé Voegelin
Contents

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS vii

INTRODUCTION ix

CHAPTER 1 Listening 1

CHAPTER 2 Noise 41

CHAPTER 3 Silence 77

CHAPTER 4 Time and Space 121

CHAPTER 5 Now 167

NOTES 191

BIBLIOGRAPHY 217

LIST OF WORKS 221

INDEX 223
Acknowledgments

This book has been inspired and guided by many informal chats and more formal discussions. It has been made possible through the help and trust of many people around me in my private life as well as in the field of Sound Art, its practice and research. I am grateful for every opportunity I was given to present and debate the concerns of this book with colleagues, family, friends and students, and hope that in return the ideas put forward here will help them to further their own research and practice of Sound Art.

Most of all I want to thank David Mollin who has supported me in so many ways through this endeavour. I also want to particularly thank David Toop who gave me the belief it could be done, and Angus Carlyle and Professor Nick deVille for their close reading and feedback on the text. I want to thank Cathy Lane for our ongoing discussions on sound, and Peter Cusack for his insights and suggestions. I would like to mention the lunches debating the pathetic and memory with Thomas Gardner, and the very useful exchanges on their work with Clare Gasson and Ed Osborn. J. Milo Taylor’s immersive database of Sound Art, ImMAp, became an invaluable tool to access work. Ed Baxter and Taigen Kawabe’s knowledge on Japanese noise music provided many important pointers, and Rahma Kazham’s invitation to speak gave me the opportunity to publicly audition my ideas.

I wish to express gratitude to my sister Dea Voegelin for her help with research, and also wish to thank all my colleagues at LCC (London College of Communication) and the whole of CRiSAP (Creative Research in Sound Arts Practice) as well as other artists who all, one way or another, encouraged and contributed to my ideas on Sound Art over the last few years: Chris Petter, John Wynne, David Cunningham,
Aki Pasoulas, Iris Garrels, Jörg Köppl, Helen Bendon, Michael Hiltbrunner, Nye Parry and many more.

Lastly I would also like to mention the Sound Arts students at LCC, whose own struggle with the notion of a critical discourse of Sound Art has in many ways instigated and motivated this project.
When philosophers, who are well known to have difficulty in keeping silent, engage in conversation, they should try always to lose the argument, but in such a way as to convict their opponent of untruth. The point should not be to have absolutely correct, irrefutable, watertight conditions – for they inevitably boil down to tautologies, but insights which cause the question of their justness to judge itself.¹

The way we think about the world is in no small way influenced by the senses we engage to appreciate this world, and in turn these senses have always already an ideological as well as a cultural function prior to us employing them. The judgement and understanding reached is inadvertently directed by that ideological functioning of the sense employed. If I look at something the information I will gain about that thing is influenced by the physiological mechanism of looking and the cultural interpretation and valuation of seeing. If I notice a concurrent sound, I most likely subsume that heard into the appreciation of the seen: sound fleshes out the visual and renders it real; it gives the image its spatial dimension and temporal dynamic. But these are attributes of the object seen, ignoring the event heard. This impulse to subsume sound into the visual is so ingrained as to blight music criticism and the discourse of sound art, whose focus is invariably on the score or the arrangement, on the orchestra or the performer, the sound source, the installation view or the documentation of the sonic event, in short the visual manifestation rather than the sounds heard.

Sound’s ephemeral invisibility obstructs critical engagement, while the apparent stability of the image invites criticism. Vision, by its very nature assumes a distance from the object, which it receives
in its monumentality. Seeing always happens in a meta-position, away from the seen, however close. And this distance enables a detachment and objectivity that presents itself as truth. Seeing is believing. The visual ‘gap’ nourishes the idea of structural certainty and the notion that we can truly understand things, give them names, and define ourselves in relation to those names as stable subjects, as identities. The score, the image track of the film, the stage set, the visual editing interface, and so on can make us believe in an objective hearing, but what we hear, guided by these images, is not sound but the realization of the visual. The sound itself is long gone, chased away by the certainty of the image.

By contrast, hearing is full of doubt: phenomenological doubt of the listener about the heard and himself hearing it. Hearing does not offer a meta-position; there is no place where I am not simultaneous with the heard. However far its source, the sound sits in my ear. I cannot hear it if I am not immersed in its auditory object, which is not its source but sound as sound itself. Consequently, a philosophy of sound art must have at its core the principle of sharing time and space with the object or event under consideration. It is a philosophical project that necessitates an involved participation, rather than enables a detached viewing position; and the object or event under consideration is by necessity considered not as an artefact but in its dynamic production. This is a continual production that involves the listener as intersubjectively constituted in perception, while producing the very thing he perceives, and both, the subject and the work, thus generated concomitantly, are as transitory as each other. In this way, this project involves the philosopher as listener and it involves the willingness of the reader to listen. A philosophy of sound art thus pursued, can, following Adorno’s advice, provide ‘insights which cause the question of their justness to judge itself’, rather than proposing a truth. This does not make this philosophy irrational or arbitrary, however, but clarifies its intention to embrace the experience of its object rather than replace it with ideas. In other words, it does not seek to mediate the sensorial experience of the artwork under consideration through theories, categories, hierarchies, histories, to eventually produce canons that release us from the doubt of hearing through the certainty and knowledge of its worth, which thus render our engagement tautological. Instead, this philosophy seeks to produce a critical engagement that witnesses, documents and narrates what is going on in sound art and thus is an aid to develop what is being practised and how it is being listened to. There will, then, be no real conclusions but only strategies for engagement and efforts of interpretation. In this sense this book is an essay rather than a conventional philosophical text. Again I borrow the term from Adorno to suggest that its formal enquiry produces experimentation rather than ideology and truth. The term essay proposes an open-ended enquiry that ‘does not begin with Adam and Eve but with what it wants to discuss’, and that does not produce an exhaustive and total report but a discontinuity of provisional ideas. In this sense this text writes an experiment and extends the invitation to read it as such.

Over the course of this experiment, this book comes to consider listening as an actual practice and as a conceptual sensibility that raises new questions for the philosophy of art in general and unsettles the perceived certainty of a visual aesthetic, without, however, proposing a dialectical position. Instead it suggests that a sonic sensibility would illuminate the unseen aspects of visuality, augmenting rather than opposing a visual philosophy. To achieve this, throughout this book, different sound works are discussed and this discussion is articulated in terms of related philosophical debates. It is through listening that the author gets to the philosophical questions that are being considered in this book, and it is the listened to sound, the sensorial material, that leads the investigation and makes those philosophical questions and debates concrete and relevant for the reader as listener. The sonic sensibility put forward in this process re-focuses philosophical problems around subjectivity and objectivity; it questions the notion of a transcendent a priori; and, via the notion of interpretative fantasies, connects the experience of sound with the notion of virtuality and possible worlds that are not linked to the logic
and rational of a visual reality but augment that reality through the blind sight of sound within its depth.

In this way, this text contributes to the debate of sound art as well as to that of philosophy. It is about sound art in that it focuses on sound as its 'object' of investigation; and it is philosophical in that it speculates and inquires into new ways to consider art, the world and our position within the production of art and the world through a sonic sensibility. However, the aim is not a philosophy of sound art that explains experience but a philosophy that experiences. Thus it can never be fixed but must constantly evolve with what there is to be played and heard. Any articulation proposed is only a passing theory. A philosophy of sound art must remain a strategy of listening rather than an instruction to hear, and thus its language itself is under scrutiny.

Critical discourse does badly in dealing with sound as it assumes and insists on the gap between that which it describes and its description – it is the very opposite of sound, which is always the heard, immersive and present. Its language relegates the sonic into a position of attribute: sound is loud, clear, silent or noisy, it is fast or slow, but never is it the noun under consideration. Instead it is sublimated to a visual referent, which mutes its particularity. To write about sound as this book endeavours to do is to be engaged in this problem and to practice its own contradiction. Consequently, a great challenge underlying this book is the fact that it is written in language while contesting, through a sonic sensibility, the very principle of language, its visuality. Any attempt to articulate a philosophy of sound art has this paradox at its core, and by revealing this paradox; sound reevaluates the very basis of discourse and philosophy itself. But in that it also draws out the most far-reaching consequences, beyond sound, for a general notion of philosophy, aesthetics and the sensorial engagement. And so sound reveals the constraints and limitations of the word in language while extending its use in sound. The methodology of investigation is intrinsically linked to its subject: one is investigated through the other.

The ideas of this book are developed in five chapters. The first three, Listening, Noise and Silence, debate the perceptual engagement with sound, while the last two, Time and Space and Now, examine the consequences of this discussion. The philosophical questions dealt with are wide-ranging but gain their specificity through the focus on sound. In turn the consequences of this investigation are worked out in the specificity of sound, but are far-reaching in terms of a more general aesthetic and cultural sensibility.

The first chapter debates Listening as an activity, an interactivity, that produces, invents and demands of the listener a complicity and commitment. It narrates listening to sound work and the acoustic environment and introduces the themes central to a philosophy of sound art: subjectivity, objectivity, communication, collective relations, meaning and sense making. The second chapter goes on to re-consider these issues by listening to sound that deafens my ears to anything but itself. And so Noise stretches Listening to an extreme and makes a tentative proposal for a philosophy of sound art as a signifying practice of listening that articulates the fragile relationship between experience and communication, and anticipates the meeting of the semiotic and the phenomenological in Silence.

In the quiet sounds of Silence the listener becomes audible to himself as a discrete member of an audience. Silence provides the condition to practise a signifying language that takes account of its sonic base: it embraces the body of the listener in its solitude, and invites him to listen to himself amidst the soundscape that he inhabits. In this sense chapter 3 articulates silence as the basic condition of a philosophy of sound art, and outlines the consequences for a sonic subjectivity and its relationship to the objective world. Thus the chapter discusses silent works and silence in the acoustic environment not as the absence of sound but as the beginning of listening as communication.

Time and Space discusses the sonic subject post Silence. The sonic sensibility that found critical language in Silence is generated in and manifests the listener's spatio-temporal circumstance. Hence
chapter 4 turns to social-geography and its discussion of global networking, to contextualize the listener and sound artworks in terms of their social position and connectivity. Issues of material and immaterial social relations are illuminated and debated via a sonic sensibility. In this way this chapter re-visits earlier issues of subjectivity and identity in relation to belonging and migration, and discovers that a sonic sensibility, since it makes thinkable complex connections and trajectories in time and space, offers a method of engagement and critical evaluation of installation and new media art.

The last chapter Now does not constitute a conclusion in the conventional sense but presents a reflection back on much listening. It is in keeping with the central tenet of this book that a philosophy of sound art must remain a passing theory rather than propose a conclusion, in order not to contradict its own methodology. But this constant present passing has a past and a future, and thus the last chapter looks at 'the other time' and 'the over there' of sound and the listening subject. It is through the emotional and personal engagement forged by the refrain of the past in the present, that the philosophy of sound art proposed so far, becomes useful for an engagement with other arts and in relation to the broader concerns of a socio-aesthetic consciousness and ethics. In this sense, the last chapter articulates how the 'pathetic' invites us into sound and expands the relevance of its philosophy beyond sound art.

The choice of works discussed in this book is unrelated to canon hierarchies. This is no attempt at forging an alternative history or canon of sound art. There are some known and some lesser-known works discussed here. The emphasis is on the experience of the work rather than its valuation or comparison. A major factor in choosing the pieces was my proximity to them, the possibility to encounter them, to share their time and space. The sonic sensibility proposed can be carried to any works available to the reader. Since, it is the listening engagement and the sonic sensibility thus produced, rather than the production of knowledge or judgement of any particular sound artwork, that motivates this text. Having said this, the works discussed are significant in that they lead to the philosophical issues considered here. It is their particularity that produces the general ideas of a philosophy of sound art that can be applied in the particularity of each reader's own listening practice.
1 LISTENING
This chapter explores listening, not as a physiological fact but as an act of engaging with the world. It is in the engagement with the world rather than in its perception that the world and myself within it are constituted, and it is the sensorial mode of that engagement that determines my constitution and that of the world.

Every sensory interaction relates back to us not the object/phenomenon perceived, but that object/phenomenon filtered, shaped and produced by the sense employed in its perception. At the same time this sense outlines and fills the perceiving body, which in its perception shapes and produces his sensory self. Whereby the senses employed are always already ideologically and aesthetically determined, bringing their own influence to perception, the perceptual object and the perceptual subject. It is a matter then of accepting the a priori influence while working towards a listening in spite rather than because of it. The task is to suspend, as much as possible, ideas of genre, category, purpose and art historical context, to achieve a hearing that is the material heard, now, contingently and individually. This suspension does not mean a disregard for the artistic context or intention, nor is it frivolous and lazy. Rather it means appreciating the artistic context and intention through the practice of listening rather than as a description and limitation of hearing. This practice follows Theodor W. Adorno's call for philosophical interpretations that,

\[\ldots\] answer the questions of a pre-given reality each time, through a fantasy which rearranges the elements of the question without going beyond the circumference of the elements, the exactitude of which has its control in the disappearance of the question.\[1\]
It is perception as interpretation that knows that to hear the work/the sound is to invent it in listening to the sensory material rather than to recognize its contemporary and historical context. Such listening will produce the artistic context of the work/the sound in its innovative perception rather than through the expectation of an *a priori* reality. This phantasmagoric practice does not make listening inexact or irrelevant since it is based on the rigour and responsibility of perception.\(^2\) To rely on the pre-given would in any event not make the perceived more valid. It would simply make it more certain within its own description. However, this also means that perception could only ever know the work to the degree to which it fulfils that certainty.

The ideology of a pragmatic visuality is the desire for the whole: to achieve the convenience of comprehension and knowledge through the distance and stability of the object. Such a visuality provides us with maps, traces, borders and certainties, whose consequence are communication and a sense of objectivity. The auditory engagement however, when it is not in the service of simply furnishing the pragmatic visual object, pursues a different engagement. Left in the dark, I need to explore what I hear. Listening discovers and generates the heard.

The difference lies, as Michel de Certeau points out, between the desire for the godlike view, the gnostic drive for total knowledge, satisfied from high above at a distance from the urban text, and the walking of the ‘Wandermänner’ down below, producing the city blindly through their temporal and individual trajectories.\(^3\) In this sense listening is not a receptive mode but a method of exploration, a mode of ‘walking’ through the soundscape/the sound work. What I hear is discovered not received, and this discovery is generative, a fantasy: always different and subjective and continually, presently now.

An aesthetic and philosophy of sound art is based on this discovering drive. This is not a gnostic drive, but a drive to knowing. Knowing as past participle, always now, unfolding in the present, bringing with it the uncertainty of a fleeting understanding. Such a listening does not pursue the question of meaning, as a collective, total comprehension, but that of interpretation in the sense of a phantasmagoric, individual and contingent practice. This practice remains necessarily incomplete in relation to an objective totality but complete in its subjective contingency. Sound narrates, outlines and fills, but it is always ephemeral and doubtful. Between my heard and the sonic object/phenomenon I will never know its truth but can only invent it, producing a knowing for me.

This knowing is the experience of sound as temporal relationship. This ‘relationship’ is not between things but is the thing, is sound itself. Listening cannot contemplate the object/phenomenon heard separate from its audition because the object does not precede listening. Rather, the auditory is generated in the listening practice: in listening I am in sound, there can be no gap between the heard and hearing, I either hear it or I don’t, and what I perceive is what I hear. I can perceive a distance but that is a heard distance. The distance is what I hear here, not over-there. It does not signal a separation of objects or events but is the separation as perceived phenomenon.

The aesthetic subject in sound is defined by this fact of interaction with the auditory world. He is placed in the midst of its materiality, complicit with its production. The sounds of his footsteps are part of the auditory city he produces in his movements through it. His subject position is different from the viewing self, whose body is at a distance from the seen. The listener is entwined with the heard. His sense of the world and of himself is constituted in this bond.

The understanding gained is a knowing of the moment as a sensory event that involves the listener and the sound in a reciprocal inventive production. This conception challenges both notions of objectivity and of subjectivity, and reconsiders the possibility and place of meaning, which situates the re-evaluation of all three at the centre of a philosophy of sound art.

This first chapter describes listening as an activity, an interactivity, that produces and invents and demands of the listener a complicity and commitment that rethinks existing philosophies of perception. By narrating listening to sound work and the acoustic environment
it introduces the themes central to a philosophy of sound art: subjectivity, objectivity, communication, collective relations, meaning and sense making.

**Being Honeyed**

In 1948 Maurice Merleau-Ponty was commissioned by the French National radio to give seven audio-lectures on 'The Development of Ideas' to be broadcast as part of 'The French Culture Hour', on each Saturday between the 9th of October and the 13th of November. His series, which focused on the World of Perception, is kept in the archives of the Institut National de L'Audiovisuel (INA) in Paris and has also been published first in French, and now in an English translation, as a small booklet by Routledge. Here I will consider both my experience of the spoken causeries, listening to it by appointment at the National Archive and the statements of the written texts. In these lectures Merleau-Ponty considers the perception of the world not as a passive gazing at its a priori attributes but instates visual perception via modern painting and everyday objects an active role. Merleau-Ponty talks about painting and the artistic demand to see beyond the intellectual expectation of a representational reality into the perception of 'a space in which we too are located'. Talking about painting since Cézanne he suggests:

The lazy viewer will see 'errors of perspective' here, while those who look closely will get the feel of a world in which no two objects are seen simultaneously, a world in which regions of space are separated by the time it takes to move our gaze from one to the other a world in which being is not given but rather emerges over time.

In his descriptions he outlines a phenomenology of perception, a world and art perceived rather than known. He understands conventional, representational and perspectival painting to be polite in that it facilitates a single perception of what is in reality multi-layered and complex. To him such painting kills 'their trembling life' that is perpetually unfolding. Instead he prefers those works that deal with the emergence of being over time.

What he means by this painterly emergence is clarified in his in 1945 written essay 'Cézanne's Doubt', where he articulates the doubt in the singular and habitual veracity of the seen as the prime motivator of the artist's production. He suggests that Cézanne paints incessantly, again and again the landscape before him from the doubt in the referential and prespectival reality of the visible world. This doubt is suspended in the motility of painting out of which the landscape emerges rather than is represented by. He understands such paintings as 'a drive to rediscover the world as we apprehend it in lived experience', and states that painters of that time refused the laws of perspective and instead struggled with the birth of the landscape, the thing, before them. They pushed the body into the mêlé of reality and it is through the bodily experience that that reality becomes real in all its complexity rather than as a detached and firm fact. However, in print his ideas retain the notion of a finished painting rather than the movement of unfolding that he attributes to the sensory material. It remains a description of a work that is the finished product of a complex, bodily engagement; it is not the bodily engagement itself.

What he writes about is the artist's body, his doubt, his need to perpetually rework, to remain fleetingly certain, which evokes in me the certainty of his painting, validated by the painter's struggle and hard work. Cézanne's individual and ceaseless struggle against one point of view is the modernist aura of the painting as a manual fact. The painting remains certain as a painting that I can view from a distance, hanging heavy on the wall. I empathize intellectually but not physically. This is not my doubt being worked through here. It remains the painter's. The multi-layered complexity becomes again one viewpoint in the perspective of the gallery. In the certainty of the museum's context I understand rather than experience doubt. By contrast, through the spoken words of the broadcast the painting unfolds,
refolds, from me, as an audio work. I hear and participate in the process of layers, distances, time and separations. The painting emerges over time in my ears. This is not to say that the written text or the painted image really represent a simple and certain unity. But their already-there-ness, their existence before my viewing them and the certainty of their published context, allows my vision to observe rather than participate in the complexity of their unfolding. The physical distance and autonomy of the work as image, as text, allows reading and shapes the interpretation of the read in its own image. This interpretation is the work in perception but this perception is spatial and brightly lit. By contrast, the dark serendipity of radio grants no room: its nearness and temporality is not that of my interpretation but that of its own unfolding, out of the dark into my ears, in the physical time of the broadcast. My ears perform the complexity of the work bodily and in some haste. The text as writing is the musical work, framed by convention; it allows entry to scrutinizing eyes that interpret it, while granting it the space for that interpretation. The issue here is not a distinction between music and sound art, but how both of them are listened to. This book includes the discussion of what conventionally could be termed musical works, but attempts to listen to them for the sound they make rather than their musical organization. Since, sound does not allow for an interpretation on top of its work-ness but is interpretation as all there is, temporal and contingent. It is the ‘unseen’ painting as it emerges from Merleau-Ponty’s voice that reveals the complex intersubjectivity of its experience. The text as voice is the bodily fragment of its sound, and the painting unfolding in that voice takes that body to meet mine in a dark and transient conduit. Here the painting is experienced in all its complexity rather than appreciated as a firm fact: trembling and in doubt it is the motility of being.

What I hear in Merleau-Ponty’s Causeries is not the body of the text but the body of Merleau-Ponty, whose complex unity, contingent, fragmented and doubtful, meets me in my listening. When, in another broadcast in the series, Merleau-Ponty explains the complex unity of perception through the yellow sourness of a lemon and the liquid stickiness of honey, it is from his voice, the bodily and transient sound of his appearance out of the darkness of the broadcast, that the lemon and honey get formed in my listening as uncertain and complex unities that reveal my own unsure intricacy.

This is the case with the quality of being-honeyed. Honey is a slow-moving liquid; while it undoubtedly has a certain consistency and allows itself to be grasped, it soon creeps slyly from the fingers and returns to where it started from. It comes apart as soon as it has been given a particular shape, and what is more, it reverses the roles, by grasping the hands of whoever would take hold of it.

Being honeyed expresses the reciprocity of his phenomenological intersubjectivity. The honey can only be felt through my stickiness. It cannot be grasped as a remote object but comes to being in my honeyed-hands as a complex phenomenon of no certain shape but a demanding nature. While the text describes the process, the voice produces it. His voice becomes the honey that drips into my ears and engages me without taking certain shape; it remains a roving complexity that grasps me.

The paintings, sour lemons and sticky honey that Merleau-Ponty talks about in his radio broadcasts are imagined by the listeners, produced in their imagination, invented and tasted through their ears. My cheeks pull together and my saliva starts flowing to the sound of yellow juicy lemon-ness. The image of a lemon sums it up, the sound adds up: adding ever more complex layers that are the object as auditory phenomenon. The adding never reaches a totality but only a contingent realization, which is never ideal but remains the fantasy of Adorno’s interpretative process.

While the modernist painter grapples with the multi-perspectuality of the world, in listening I imagine the world: it emerges between his words from my imagination in which I am located. This is not an act of interpretation as much as the fantasy of my audition: it is not the
modernist painting nor the golden honey but his voice, his body in his mouth meeting mine in my ears, that shapes the perceived in the sensory-motor action of my perception.

Merleau-Ponty talks about his world of perception in visual terms. The sensibility of his perception however is not that of vision. It is not vision that painting and philosophy has liberated from representation; it is sonic perception, which is free of the visual stranglehold on knowledge and experience. Sound does not describe but produces the object/phenomenon under consideration. It shares nothing of the totalizing ability of the visual. It does not deny visual reality but practices its own fleeting actuality, augmenting the seen through the heard. The sonic reality is intersubjective in that it does not exist without my being in it and I in turn only exist in my complicity with it; and it is generative in that it is the sensory-motor process of listening: presently producing one’s honeyed-ness from one’s position of listening centrifugally into the world.10

The listening subject invents, he practices an innovative listening that produces the world for him in a phenomenological sensory-motor action towards the heard, and his auditory self is part of the heard in reciprocal intersubjectivity. Listening as a critical motility practises Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenology as a process of doubt; the critical listener himself is full of doubt about the heard, and doubtful in his complicity he needs to hear and hear again, to know himself as an intersubjective being in a sonic life-world.11 The difficulty arises when this experiential, subjective world is measured and communicated in written language that pretends the objectivity and knowledge of the visual exchange. The transcript of the radio broadcasts gives me a description of the complexity of honey and lemons, the sounds of Merleau-Ponty’s voice binds me to honey’s sugary stickiness and the lemon’s sour flesh. This difference in my perceptual engagement highlights an aesthetic difference.

One intention of Listening is to unpack and articulate this distinction through listening to sound work and the everyday acoustic environment, to bring to light the consequences of a sonic perception and subjectivity as a philosophical experience. Another is to bring sounds’ particularity to bear on our notion of communication, language and shared meaning, and to celebrate experiential non-sense, Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenological sense that comes out of sensation rather than rationality and transgresses the collective through individual sense-making.

To Listen

Sounds constantly enter my ears, bounding around in there, declaring their interest even if I am not listening. As I walk through a busy urban street I try to ignore the incessant hum of thick traffic, the noisy commotion and vocal drone of people around me. However, the fact that I do not listen to them consciously or willingly does not mean that these sounds do not shape the reality as it presents itself to me. Sound renders the crowd massive and pervasive, becoming ever denser and more intimidating, encroaching on my physical space. Their stomping feet reverberate off the hard and shiny architecture. A stampede: emerging from behind my back and stretching ahead of me beyond my visual horizon. They are everywhere, coming closer and closer, engulfing me in their physical presence.

Switch off the drone of hammering footsteps and the aural hubbub of human activity, the crowd shrinks immediately, the frightful beast is tamed. All I see now are people bumbling along, minding their own businesses, nothing to do with me. However, such a visual autonomy does not exist.12 Listening produces a sonic life-world that we inhabit, with or against our will, generating its complex unity. Sound involves me closely in what I see; it pulls the seen towards me as it grasps me by my ears. Sound renders the object dynamic. It makes it ‘tremble with life’ and gives it a sense of process rather than a mute stability. Stability is mute, not silent but mute. Silence still involves listening and hearing as a generative action of perception. Muteness by contrast numbs the auditory engagement. It applies a local anaesthetic and disables the hearing process. Stability in this sense is the
object minus the action of perception, a state that does not exist but is assumed and pretended by a visual ideology. Sound by contrast negates stability through the force of sensory experience. Listening’s focus on the dynamic nature of things renders the perceptual object unstable, fluid and ephemeral: unsettling what is through a world of sonic phenomena and audible spirits. Sounds are like ghosts. They slink around the visual object, moving in on it from all directions, forming its contours and content in a formless breeze. The spectre of sound unsettles the idea of visual stability and involves us as listeners in the production of an invisible world. This sonic life-world might be silent but forceful, grasping us as we hear it, pulling us into an auditory imagination even if we mistake it for the thing seen.

Listening in the library draws me into the minutia of human sounds. Every hum, cough, whisper, every footstep, sneeze, paper turn, rasp and throat clearing is amplified. In sound the library becomes an awkward space of fraught physicality: full of bodies, rigid and tense, trying to be silent. Ever so often the restraint cracks under the expectation: a mobile phone goes off, a voice misses the whispering register. In response a reproaching chorus of sounds ensues that leads the offending noise back into the approved sphere. In its rising and falling the sounds of the library invite the imagination of a boundary-less mass of human flesh, heaving in its own rhythm, oozing sighs and whispers and grasping me in its breath: a fleshly monster of which I am part, enveloped, swallowed in its hush as in a faintly murmuring beast. As I look up, I know the people are sitting at a distance, heads in books; their purpose firmly roots them in their own visual world. But in sound they come closer. They become the people of my auditory imagination. They start to breath down my neck and if I do not stop listening I will only be able to hear them.

Listening as an aesthetic practice challenges how we see and how we participate in the production of the visual world. Listening allows fantasy to reassemble the visual fixtures and fittings, and repositions us as designers of our own environment. It challenges, augments and expands what we see, without presenting a negative illusion, by producing the reality of lived experience. Through this generative experience listening revisits those philosophical tenets that are bound to the sovereignty of the visual. Listening, in this sense, is an aesthetic activity that challenges the philosophical tradition of the West, which, according to film theorist Christian Metz, is based on a hierarchy between the senses which positions sound in the attributal location, sublimated to the visual and its linguistic structure. In that position sound is left to describe and enhance but never to do and become. It is a small adjective to the mighty visual noun, furnishing its objects and enhancing its perspective without being acknowledged in that position.

When we start to listen as a critical motility this position becomes untenable. Listening emancipated from the expectation to enhance does something else. It produces, it invents, it generates. It demands that the heard be more than a ghost of the visual, a flimsy figment of the imagination, soon dispelled. However, instead of denying the ephemeral quality of its object, it is the preference for the assumed substance of visibility that needs to be reassessed by focusing on the ephemeral exactly.

**Waterlow Park at Dawn (2008)**

To listen to Waterlow park at dawn is to generate its morning-park-ness and my morning-self from the midst of its sounds. I merge the city hum with the fresh bird song, the occasional dog walker’s call and a jogger’s panting breath with the sounds of my auditory imagination for which I cannot name a source. The birds’ song, the traffic hum, the runner’s breath and the master’s whistle recall a sonic objectivity as a residue of all my earlier subjective generative appreciations of such sounds. The objective brings with it the park as cultural notion, and all the parks I have ever visited. Intertwining in my ears this left-over objectivity with my present subjectivity the sounds are produced beyond what they are in a fantastic but plausible reality of what I have them be.

To listen is not to simply know where I am on the visual map that hangs outside the park gates. It is to experience where I am in the
park of my own listening. It makes the park real and present for me in the lived reality of my intersubjective self. This intersubjective self carries with it, always already, the relationship to an objective residue of past hearings, but that objectivity too is particular and experiential rather than universal and known. It produces the park as an invented space that is not unreal but phantasmagoric: born out of the reality of experience. Listening here does not enhance but produces the park. It clarifies sound as verb, accounting for its generative facility. But language does not meet it that way. Sound, when it is not heard as sublimated into the service of furnishing a visual reality, but listened to generatively, does not describe a place or an object, nor is it a place or an object, it is neither adjective nor noun. It is to be in motion, to produce. It is an invisible act, a dynamic of production that is not interested to linger and hear its outcome. It is perpetually on the move, making time and tenses rather than following them.

Listening to sound as verb invents places and things whose audience is their producer. In this appreciation of verb-ness the listener confirms the reciprocity of his active engagement and the trembling life of the world can be heard.

**Dynamic Things and Places**

Our relationship with things is not a distant one, each speaks to our body and the way we live. [. ..] Humanity is invested in the things of the world and these are invested in it.14

Sound invites the body into experience and reciprocally makes the object physical. Listening to sound is where objectivity and subjectivity meet: in the experience of our own generative perception we produce the objectivity from our subjective and particular position of listening, which in its turn is constituted by the objectivity of the object as a prior moment of hearing, subjective and particular. It is this particularity of the listening subject in the contingency of his experience that has to be kept in mind, in order, according to Adorno, not to turn the individual subject already into an (objective) universal; in order, in other words, to avoid ideology and hierarchy. It is neither the thing that dominates the being nor the being that dominates the thing. They are reciprocal and equivalent, but in their momentary meeting they are also distinct. They are produced on the spot, together in difference, any prior objectivity and prior subjectivity is invested in this momentary and complex production but does not subsume it.

The subject in sound is an empirical not a transcendental subject and so is its object. It is the lived and concrete experience that constitutes the world as a sonic life-world and the subject reciprocally generated within it. Objectivity and subjectivity are partners rather than adversaries in such a conception. They are concrete and causal, constituted through each other without abandoning their own purpose. And while, according to Adorno, transcendental subjects are more constitutive of a current (visual) society that emphasizes rationality and abstraction over what they are for themselves, they are in that reality always already deformed into the rationality of their surrounding structure. By contrast, empirical subjects are formless, in that they have no visibility or power in that social order, and exist but as beings for themselves, outside the social exchange.15

The sonic subject is this empirical subject understood as an experiential subject. Its determination, practised in listening, is formless but not powerless: the sonic object/phenomenon blasts the systemic and rational reality through its insistence on being heard, being experienced rather than abstracted. It challenges the rationality of abstracted relations and its acquiescent ideologies and values and instead insists on concrete experience. The experiential subjects are phenomenological intersubjective selves, who experience rather than abstract social relations. Their formlessness points to a generative (verbal) intersubjectivity rather than to their invisibility and powerlessness.

This emphasis on the concrete formlessness and the intersubjective transitoriness of sound, is the reason for suspending notions of category or genre when considering the following works lest we lose the individual subject in the category of objectivity, or let the subject dominate the contingency of the object. The associations
produced might recall things heard, but only through the particular ears of the subject rather than in relation to universal references. The objectivity is as fragile and ephemeral as the subjective moment of listening. The works considered here are discussed from my specific and contingent listening: my subjectivity passing my objectivity in formless but concrete moments. "For it is only as something definite that the object becomes anything at all."16

matières induites (1975)

Bernard Parmegiani’s matières induites builds the real object as a figment of my imagination. He attacks me with forceful shrill and insistent sounds that pierce my ears and grate their surface but soon give way to softer, glistening undulations that grasp my listening. Between synthesized sounds I can hear real, visual, attributes, but having lured me into recognition they swiftly move on and transform themselves into things that are experientially, fantastically, real for me, rather than existing as abstracted reality.

Parmegiani builds a whole forest of things, dark, multi-layered, precise, calculated, bursting forth, here, there and going. As a short 3:44 minutes sequence it brings to life and takes away a tiny thing of sound. It is but a snippet, sweet sized, rolling around in my ears. I sense it as a formless shape that fills me with my form. It is a sonic thing that is also a landscape and a narration of things that do not exist. It drums and tinkers, rings and scrapes, flickers and dances firmly around itself. It is a thing that moves through its own production rather than representing it. And yet it remains here and makes me move. We move against each other, in opposite direction circling on the same spot, while moving on. Its time and space is simultaneous and complex. Condensed. Its elements never sit beside each other but produce in four dimensions the sensory complexity of its hearing.

Away from its series, 12 pieces under the title De Natura Sonorum, it seems like a little being, lost and exposed to my interpreting ears. And yet it is in itself a pressing thing, with the authority and demand of its own materiality. The composition induces and brings forth its own object, whose objectivity is fragile and passing, but insistent, produced in its composition and generated again and again in my listening rather than as a firm track. It can take any form or shape in the process of listening, growing into what is around, into my ears, into what I hear. Listening means to tempt and encourage the complex object intended in composition but shaped by the listener’s subjectivity, bound to the objectivity of prior hearings.

Listening produces the matières induites as a subjective objectivity, since its object does not exist before its recording but is produced in its composition that my listening realizes, not as a positivist ideal, but as a contingent interpretation, a fantasy of its materiality. There is no habitual perception that guides this encounter but only a generative attitude that sounds itself into life and whose tones implicate me in its production. I am with the material at its birth, I am attacked by it and my only experience can be that of astonishment and doubt in the heard, because it is not the perception of the expected but the generation of the unexpected.

Was uns als natürlich vorkommt, ist vermutlich nur das Gewöhnliche einer langen Gewohnheit, die das Ungewohnte, dem sie entsprungen, vergessen hat. Jenes Ungewohnte hat jedoch einst als ein Befremdendes den Menschen angefallen und hat das Denken zum Erstaunen gebracht.17

It is the sensorial attack of Parmegiani’s matières induites and my astonishment which ignites the question about habits of perception that cloak the practice of listening and which motivates my enquiry into the Heideggerian Thing – das Ding – through which he grapples with the ontological notion of the Wesen der Dinge, the nature of the things, on his way to a philosophy of art.

Martin Heidegger’s focus on das Ding aims to bring back das Sein im Seienden, the being in the object, as it presents itself to dem Anwesenden: the human perceiver, who is in attendance. His interpretation of the Thing aims to reinstate experience as a closeness to the being of the things, which has, according to him gone lost since
the interpretation of Aristotle by the Romans at which moment, he suggests, begins the Bodenlosigkeit of occidental thinking.\(^{18}\)

By borrowing his philosophical focus I am acknowledging the ontological frame of the search for the nature of things, and understand that sound as Thing responds to that investigation. However, I do not intend to produce a faithful and comprehensive interpretation of Heidegger’s answers on the nature of the Thing, his investigation into the nature of objectivity, but want to engage in the question of thing-ness via sound.

For Heidegger everything that is not nothing is a Thing, and his consideration of the Dingheit (Dingsein) of those things starts with that thought. From there he pursues a discussion of the quality of this Dingheit: determining it as firstly das eigentliche Ding, just a Thing, in the negative and in the obvious sense of the word, secondly as the Dingheit of those initial things, and thirdly as the form and fabric thereof.\(^{19}\)

To get to the sonic object I make use of Heidegger’s Dingbegriff, his term of the Thing, and his suggestion of a Dingheit that is hidden by the substance of the actual, ‘des bloßen und eigentlichen Ding’, just a Thing, and its habitual perception. It is ‘das Insichruhende’ as Dinghaftes, the in itself resting thing-ness of the Thing that is, the formed fabric of the Thing as it is open to and perceived through an astonished sensorial engagement.\(^{20}\)

Heidegger invests a phenomenological approach to go beyond the naïve consideration of the substance towards the Thing as being in its Dinghaftigkeit, thing-ness. He asks, ‘als was zeigen sich die Dinge?’ and wants us to appreciate the Thing from its-showing-of-itself that which shows itself in the way that it shows itself in its present attendance.\(^{21}\) In this way he performs a phenomenological reduction from the naïvely grasped being (Seienden) of the Thing, to the being (Sein) of the Thing thinging: ‘Das Ding dingt.’\(^{22}\)

The differentiation of the actual Thing (Seienden) as Unterbau, foundation, of the artwork: just the Thing of stone, canvas, wood, etc. as it presents itself to naïve apperception; and the thinging (Sein) of the Oberbau: the built of the artwork as Werk, as work, as it is reached in a phenomenological engagement, allows for the critical consideration of the Thing heard rather than the Thing composed, performed or recorded, and acknowledges the perceptual process and the Anwesenheit, the close presence of the listener to produce its critical hearing.\(^{24}\)

I take Heidegger’s focus on the elemental notion of the Thing in its Dingheit, thinging, and foreground the generative possibility of such a thinging thing: not just to be, intransitive and transcendent, but to presently, in a current encounter, impress on the listener its own production. The sounding Thing is dinglich through its own sound track rather than in relation to other things. The phenomenological engagement produces the hearing of the material Unterbau as its sensorial Oberbau without the dialectical differentiation. Since in sound the material is what is heard already in its Dingheit, rather than as a secondary motion from a pre-conceived thing. The naïve apperception of the sonic material is not what precedes the phenomenological engagement of listening, but is its visual avoidance.

The Thing as sound is a verb, the thing is what ‘things’ in its contingent production. To thing, it is to do a thing rather than be a Thing. In fact any notion of being as a positive or transcendental existence, in and of itself, is negated in sonic thing-ness. The sonic thing is not perspectival, organized in relation to other things, social functions, or ordered in relation to a purpose. The sonic thing makes the organization and the purpose, contingently, in passing, and any purpose or social relations thus resounded is equally contingent and transitive. It is empirical, neither formed nor deformed, but formless unless it meets the hearing body. In that sense the thing is intersubjective and only starts to sound in the ears of the thing that is the body encountering it.

The sonic thing as a doing ‘substance’ is not sublimated to the noun in the sentence. Rather it abandons the hierarchy and becomes the noun as a thinging being. It asks of Metz’ critique not to focus on the subject–predicate structure of Indo-European languages and
object to its visual organization, but to consider its content: our consciousness of the words thus organized. When the sonic object does not precede its sounding, when the thing is only its thinging, the noun is the location of the verb. The thing is the doing of the individual perception of what it does. It involves the perceiver in the thinging and declares that the world at large is a complex thing generated in our individual and collective listening production of it as such and of us as thinging within it.

By sonic thing-ness we grasp the complexity of the object rather than list its attributes or purposes, and we grasp it in its particular and contingent doing not as a relational being. In other words, thingness is the presence (Anwesenheit) of every object and subject as honey: concrete and formless, grasping and slipping away, it is the moment of perception as a reciprocal sensory-motor action.

Parmegiani creates a sonic thing that is neither less nor more than the visual object; it does not negate nor sublimate visuality, but builds itself out of its own material to be itself as sound. Its thing-ness is formless but concrete. Its substantiality is the actuality of my fleeting perception, which produces the work as aesthetic moment. It is from this generative momentary-ness that any aesthetic discourse needs to start if it intends to discuss the sensorial attack of the material, rather than allay it with a habitual understanding. The sense produced in this aesthetic moment comes out of sensation. It is Merleau-Ponty’s non-sense, which is neither sense as rational meaning, nor is it its nonsensical opposite.25 Instead it describes a sense that comes out of an experiential sensing of the world as life-world. In this life-world the intersubjective subject produces sense through sensory-motor actions towards this world. This is not the pure sensation of an object’s attributes or positive determination, but the sensation of the honeyed thing, involved and complex.

This sense has no claim to generality and shared communication, but remains like the experience a solitary fiction. It involves a sensation of the sensorial thing as well as of the sensing perceiver and its sense cannot divorce the two nor step out of its sphere. The contingent sense of experience brings the object and the subject of perception together in the aesthetic moment that triggers and constitutes the thinging of the work. Our body hears the object as thing and travels the place as thing. Listening to its thinging it produces the place as a transitive location on his way through. The sense of the place is its sensation, which has to be brought to life in a sensory-motor action of listening.

On the Machair (2007)

In Cathy Lane’s work On the Machair the place too becomes a thing. The Island on the Outer Hebrides of Scotland that the recordings are from is, in its composition, not a place as a certain geographical location, a dwelling place, but a fictional place produced in my innovative listening. It ‘things’ in that it produces, it maps out, sketches, draws and models people, work and nature, past and present in the space of my imagination.

The place heard emerges from the gusty weather that marks its arrival. It does not stand on a certain site but rushes by. It is made of voices, cows, goats and the sea and encourages in its sonic persistence that you muck-in. The artist’s voice welcomes and guides you around the island, narrating stories of the past and commenting on the flora and fauna of the present. Her tentative report offers me a way in: to tune my listening into her production of the place and make it mine. This place is not composed with certainty. Rather there is a sense of a doubtful but intent fumbling in the dark with the microphone, trying to find out where we are at the same time as composing the landscape. This uncertainty is shared with, rather than communicated to, the listener. The artist composes the island, building it as she goes along, and so the listener too builds as he goes along. Memories are retold, plants described and statistics read while walking through them.

This does not mean that there are no artistic intentions nor that there really is equality between composer and listener, because, of
course, there is not. But there is an invitation to trust and to commit to the sonic process unfolding in the composition rather than be composed at.

Next to the artist's female voice there soon appears a louder confident male voice and some recorded old Gaelic voices from an archive, dusted down to be heard again. As she explains what it is she is recording, the archive voices are what is recorded, and the male voice meets the two in his confident presence. She is the visitor inviting the ghosts of the past that he retains alive in the factuality of the interview. Together they unfold the consequences of the past in the now.

The voices start to crowd the countryside, bringing facts and memories to the rhythm of the lived and laboured place. They overlap and make clearer in that way how things fit together here in mobile and undulating rhythms, intense and peaceful. The sounds are intimate, not in a feeble way but with great intention, they are tender but not faint, a bit like the gusty breeze that starts it all off.

The spatial rhythm of the island life meets the vocal rhythms of facts and fiction in the temporal space of my listening. At times I am left alone in the countryside with just a faint sound of voices as if in the distance still talking to each other, then I pass the site of music, an accordion and voices probably imagined rather than real, but I move on further into the wind. The artist meets me here again on the top of the blustery hill telling me of an earlier visit to this place.

The three voices meet again, compact on the same spot from different directions. That is the rhythm of the piece, places of solitude interspersed with directions and a sense of crowded observation. As a sound piece it stretches and contracts, condenses and expands, comes close and goes further away, leaving me to my own devices and taking me tightly by the hand. The rhythm of the accordion is the rhythm of the piece, it is its breath that I can hear in the overall composition. It is played by the ghosts of the archive that populate the island still. They are the sonic nature of the place, its thing-ness, hiding from where I have to tease them out in my listening. The land becomes renewed in this rhythm while acknowledging its age and history in its sounds.

The sense I make strides between this listening to the sonic material and the negotiation of the Island's existence as a known, historical and geographical fact. The notion of island, of Scotland, people, cows, goats and hard work, not realized as an immanent outcome but teased out and produced in my contingent and subjective listening. The objectivity of the place follows rather than precedes the sensorial encounter. It is informed and produced by it rather than informing it. This confirms my listening not as a naïve and habitual perception but stresses the astonishment and the doubt that motivates its sensory-motor action.

Although, or especially perhaps because, the piece carries the weight of the archive, the foremost symbol of the gnostic desire to store and catalogue information and truth for eternity, the piece does not produce the location or time as fact. Instead it invites a sense making which produces a practice, rather than an apprehension of knowledge, confirming that listening is a practice, a practice of hearing, inventing, imagining and knowing.26

On the Machair produces sense as a sonic knowing, complex, sticky and involved. It is a personal and individual knowing that struggles with language to share it. I would be very hard pressed to tell you an exact knowledge gained, but I could discuss a sense of knowing about myself in relation to the sonic material and the time and place produced in my listening. Listening as such a critical motility produces the statistics and narrations heard as sonic fantasy – as the sense of my sensation. This sense is lonely and isolated as is the island as well as the artist in her pursuit to build the place in a sonic composition. And from this lonely sense of experience, I go and visit the place and other places, and from this listening I find an aesthetic appreciation in relation to ideas of rhythm, category, genre, as well as in terms of political and social issues behind the heard rather than in
front of it. This is sense as an aesthetic sensibility of myself as an aesthetic subject and of the material in its aesthetic objectivity as sensorial fantasy.

This solitary, sensate sense meets the notion of artistic sense and its role within the field of practice. The composition reveals not only the thing-ness of the island but also the thing-ness of the work as artwork and as composition. It offers it up to an aesthetic discourse of sound that has as yet no words but lots to talk about. Since, listening as an aesthetic activity, re-evaluates the term art and its modes of philosophical valuation as such. It focuses and amplifies aesthetic issues of experience, identity and materiality, as well as the relationship between the subject and the object of perception.

Seeing is a dialectical act of comparison and differentiation: this chair is not that chair, blue is not black. It is transcendental because it assumes that the seen is there before my spotting it. It produces what Adorno terms a deformed view of the world in that it presents but the abstracted relations of society and reality rather than the groundswell of emotion, individuality and fragility that reality and society is, as an experiential fiction of contingent truths and precarious relations underneath the blanket of visual cohesion.

On the Machair does not support the actual things as they are as transcendental things before perception, in readiness but mute. The composition does not separate between the Unterbau of the thing, and the Oberbau of the artwork. The piece as artwork, as composition, is the actual thing contemplated as thinging its Dingheit in all its complexity. I cannot perceive of the sonic elements, the cows, the wind, the sea or the voices, as actual things before their perception, and in their perception they reveal to me their complex Dingheit and mine to me. Any naïve apperception of those things separate from their thing-ness is not listening as production but hearing as recognition, which betrays a visual sensibility. And even this visual recognition can only follow rather than precedes the heard and thus there is at least the opportunity for astonishment.

Listening as a concomitant sensory-motor act of production defies expectations and habitual perception. It builds, in the dark shapes with no form. It is neither formed nor deformed but forms. This process is emotional, binding and contingent. Its involved particularity pushes for the reconsideration not only of aesthetic judgment but also of the methodology of aesthetic investigation, and its resultant notion of valuation as well. It means to consider the aesthetic subject within the aesthetic judgement and to come to sense and valuation from there. It also means to reconsider the relationship between that individual aesthetic subject and a presumed mould of experience that is shared and shareable.

It is the subject who is in attendance at the birth of the artistic object as an aesthetic moment, who himself brings to being the aesthetic moment, who needs to find his way into discourse and bring the work with him.

**Critique of a Remote Critic**

In his essay ‘Freedom of Thought’ from 1944 printed in a collection of essays under the title *Minima Moralia*, Adorno laments art criticism’s lack of experiential engagement with the work. He talks about the distance of the aesthetic theorist from his object of theorization and blames the displacement of philosophy by science, which excludes experience andmocks the subjective in favour of objectivity that pretends to “know everything beforehand”.²⁷

This scientific objectivism finds in other essays in the same volume a resonance with the war, the war machine: the ideologies of fascism as well as its actual industrial machinery. He understands that it is the scientific and warring machinery of his time that makes a physical involvement in the work impossible and unwanted.

The Second War is as totally divorced from experience as is the functioning of a machine from the movements of the body, which only begins to resemble it in pathological states.²⁸

Adorno’s complaints have some currency in contemporary art discourse that often overwhelms the sensorial material with preconceived
theories and associations that leave no room for experience and only meet the work in its pathological state. Such criticism still inhabits the same modernity and the same machinery that Adorno laments, and invites our bodies to meet the work after its mediation through language and documentation, rather than before. Maybe our wars, Iraq and Afghanistan, are even more divorced from the body as they are for us but informational wars, fought at a distance, not really fought at all, just watched.

Total obliteration of the war by information, propaganda, commentaries, with camera-men in the first tanks and war reporters dying heroic deaths, the mish-mash of enlightened manipulation of public opinion and oblivious activity: all this is another expression of the withering of experience, the vacuum between men and their fate, wherein their fate lies.

Art reporters seek in the actual thing of the work relatable ideas from art history as well as from the extra-artistic discourses of cultural, political and social theory, which the lazy writer drags around like suitcases of prior meaning. Intent on their application, he ignores the opaque ambiguity of that which remains of the work: the thinging of its sensorial and physical encounter. Instead he foregoes experience in favour of understanding. However, to experience art is to experience its involved complexity, which is exactly what causes so much grief to the aim of writing. Much better to carry it off in 'oblivious activity' to an a priori theory. To categorize it within a canon of artistic creation, or to see in it nothing but a signifier of greater cultural, political and social tendencies and drown it in a sea of quasi socio-political commentary, than engage with its concrete formlessness, and build the work subjectively, intersubjectively, in one's contingent experience. The latter would force the critic towards a writing that is fragile and uncertain of its aim but emboldened by the force of its sensorial experience.

Sound emphasizes this point, which however applies to all art. It is muted in aesthetic description: listening is either replaced through historical or cultural references, or it is contextualized through the quasi visual conventions of the score, the performance set up, the installation shot, the (visual) instrument, the headphones, the concept, etc. The criticism that comes from these visual attributes and reference points of the sonic moment might stand solidly in language but does not convey the sonic phenomenon in its Dingheit.

Sound demands to be heard and urges a confrontation of the heard with critical language. Its ephemeral transitivity rebuffs attempts to flatten its immersive complexity from a (visual) distance. It keeps on being demanding and presses for a different criticism. Sound work hits the very core of the malaise of art criticism as Adorno sketches it then and I see it continued now, and issues a challenge to the relationship between the sensorial encounter and its critical analysis in language.

Listening is a subjective task that demands an attending engagement with the work for the time it plays rather than for the time I am prepared to listen, and grasps my being to understand that of the work. I am producing the work in my temporal presence, and that might take a while. This while is lonely and there is no guarantee that any judgement formed will be lasting or communicable.

Sound is the solitary edge of the relationship between phenomenology and semiotics, which are presumed to meet each other in the quarrel over meaning. It raises questions about their relationship, and how one can function through the other without abandoning itself. Does the latter inform and pre-set the experience of the first, or does the experience invite the latter for consolidation? – In sound they just might not meet at all.

Once I submit to the listening process I am alone On the Machair. The place produced is mine, the history assembled is mine too: the objectivity reached is constituted through my subjectivity. There are elements, glimpses of communicable sense, but there is the whole mass of sensation, placing, being there, understanding through knowing, where I remain alone in my own making and the place becomes more about me than it is about the geographical location I might find on the map once I am back home.
The art critic who deals with a sonic work needs to listen, which means he needs to spend time and commit to an engagement that is not one of recognition but of making the work in his own ears. He needs to be the generator of the work he critiques, and he needs to understand this double bind. Listening is intersubjective in that it produces the work and the self in the interaction between the subject listening and the object heard. The listener stumbles blindly in the darkness of sound, and is himself revealed in any light generated.

Durational work makes this bind abundantly clear. Sound works of long duration expand the aesthetic moment into potential infinity and thereby stress the question of the relationship between the aesthetic subject and its object and how their meeting might fare in critical discourse. It also articulates the problem of the after the work: The moment when critical discourse starts. It postpones, potentially into infinity, the moment when the sensorial encounter meets language and thus problematizes their relationship.

**microscopic trips (2006)**

Stini Arn’s *microscopic trips* take time to construct the places she is passing through. Between Los Angeles and Zürich, any place is imaginable. Snippets of conversation at the airport, Tannoy announcements, traffic in the road; incidental encounters meet the sonic infrastructure of place. The focus is on structure rather than content however. She uses sound to narrate not the story itself but the structure of the plot on which the individual narrations of the listeners are to be built. She makes the journey the parameter of the listening time and both are potentially endless.

The events on her journeys are odd enough and ordinary enough to make me hear my own trip. I know she had to have been there as her firm presence is the work, but I do not necessarily know where she is. It all seems rather incidental, the personal overheard, and I am not quite sure I am supposed to hear it. But its temporal insistence, playing on for hours and hours, persuades me that it is okay to listen on.

The work is durational; in fact it is potentially infinite. For all I know it might still go on, unheard but nevertheless recording. This produces not a sense of listening to, but of listening in. Listening in to the goings on elsewhere that mingle with the goings on over-here, and build the basis of my own journey. Over time it realizes Adorno’s demand for experience: The microphone stops being a distant reporter but becomes the present sound and makes itself available to my generative experience. If I refuse to listen the work becomes an archive rather than a sonic piece of work, catalogued and taken note of, but rarely heard. Its sounds never realized it remains mute and inanimate; its space gone, its thing-ness undone. As such a mute archive it meets language easily: chatting about its concepts and processes, its form and structure, but never about listening to it. When committing to its time however a personal sounding emerges that has a more difficult relationship to its own description and critical analysis.

Arn records real places and her trajectories through them, and I produce a sound walk in a space of my imagination, preserving the sounds of my own memory in my present listening: thin lines loosely coming together to produce sheer figments of a composition. No sooner have they arrived they dissipate. I can linger on some incidental stories, ignore others, and forge a relationship with other sounds heard in my own acoustic environment. There are highlights, staged moments, accidents embraced, as well as incidents where she withdraws and hurriedly switches off the microphone. But on the whole moments go by without recourse to the ‘exceptional’, and after a while her soundtrack is my formless sphere of listening. I do not think about Arn’s sources anymore as I am moving along her microscopic trips: the places passed are constructed in my imagination, and the duration of this journey is mine rather than hers.

This formless duration evokes the ‘endless mobility’ of Julia Kristeva’s fourth signifying practice and directs my enquiry towards her notion of the ‘text’, through which she implores the stability of signification. In the *Revolution of Poetic Language* written in 1974, Kristeva outlines our engagement with the world through four related
but distinct signifying practices: ‘narrative’, ‘metalanguage’, ‘contemplation’ and ‘text’. While the first three work on the basis of a collectively shareable experience, the fourth proposes a more complex, temporal and individual engagement. The text includes a consideration of the autonomy of the subject, working beyond the intention of the author and any stable registration of the artwork, producing the work continually in its perceptual moment.

This signifying practice involves combination: fitting together detaching, including, and building up “parts” into some kind of “totality”. Crucially, however, this totality is not a communicative totality, not an objective totality. ‘This practice has no addressee; no subject (. . .) can understand it.’ Signifying is a solitary practice, which does not function communicatively. Instead, between ‘detaching, including, and building up “parts”’ an arrangement is proposed which is realized in the composition of the listener working on the arrangement of the author. The ‘fragments’ that are being taken apart and rearranged are invested in this process. This heterogeneous formation is a continuous passing beyond systemic limits, assuming an infinity of process, which does not seek to overcome sensorial complexity in a higher order resolution of the work as synthetic unit nor does it try to reduce the work to language. Instead, the focus is on the practice of the fragment rather than on a sublimation of the fragments in totality.

Arn’s recordings and the fact that they go on for hours enable such an innovative arranging of the heard. It is my signifying listening that uses and transgresses her artistic intentions and generates what I hear on her time line; practising her auditory fragments I produce my sense for me. My listening practice activates her trips in my ears and makes me walk, when otherwise all that would be heard are souvenirs of places passed and moments lived.

This signifying practice of listening, instead of referring to the art historical context of the work, involves the contingent context of the listener. Listening is contextual but its context is fleeting. The time and space of my listening is permanently displaced by the sound heard. I cannot freeze sound, there is no room for contemplation, narration of meta-position, there is only the small sliver of now which is a powerful influence but hard to trace.

Listening to Arn’s work I am Kristeva’s ‘subject in process/on trial’; her notion of a generative subject whose sense and identity is produced in the continual trial of articulation that is the signifying practice of the text. In the signifying process the work and the subject are on trial: neither of them is pre-given, or in a meta-position, and both are produced in a ‘trial of meaning’, a ‘trial of sense’. I am on trial and so is the material Arn records and by listening our journey is generated intersubjectively.

On the ephemeral map of Arn’s journey, listening is practised as a continuous process of what Kristeva calls ‘appending territories’: an extensional process working the heard according to the listener’s ‘rhythm’ into his field of experience. As such a textual practice my listening is an extensional process. It appends the recorded world of Arn’s journey, centrifugally into the journey of my auditory imagination, which expands me. The signifying practice of listening appends the material into a generative meaning, which is the process of its expansion, and in turn the listener too is propelled into the process of his own expansion, appending his sense of self. The listener activates the sounds in his trial of his sense of them, giving them his own rhythm and expanding his listening territory, understood as his natural attitude or habit.

This notion of ‘appending territories’, valid for any sonic work, becomes particularly coherent in relation to soundscape composition, whose conservationist intentions practise a more direct relationship to listening habits and attitudes. Soundscape compositions work to make the listener aware of his acoustic environment, to extend auditory awareness, and stretch the processes of the listener’s own sonic engagement.

Listening to the Soundscape Recorded

In many ways Arn’s piece is an acoustic ecology, an environment heard. I can hear it in the context of work by the soundscape composer.

---

30 • Listening to Noise and Silence
Hildegard Westerkamp, whose compositions since the mid-1970s have focused on environmental sound, and who uses location sound to produce places that encourage a focused listening while enticing the production of a new place. Such compositions are torn between preservation and invention.

The issue between the two artists’ work is intention and the notion of the Real and what it is in relation to the environment recorded. Where is a soundscape produced, composing a fictional place between the intentions of the artist and the perception of the listener, and where is the emphasis on an authentic sense of place, for the purpose of preserving endangered sounds and fostering acoustic awareness? The latter producing a more didactic composing at the listener, to make him hear.

Soundscape composition evokes a listening somewhere in-between the aesthetic fantasy proposed by Arn and Lane’s work, and the aesthetico-political demand of sound lobbying for a world heard. The project of acoustic ecology pursues the subject directly, willing us to listen and to engage. Soundscape compositions are sonic works that pursue an investigative, research-driven tone, where to listen is a request rather than an ambiguous invitation.

Max Bruinsman in his Notes of a Listener from 1985 complains about the audience who does not want to listen... and needs to be made to.

*Kits Beach* (1989)

Westerkamp’s guiding voice tells us how the soundscape looks: inviting us to join her on a beach just outside Vancouver through its sounds. The coastline is constructed and scrutinized by her voice. The fragility and ephemerality of its sounds are at first explained rather than heard. She composes the perceptual aspect of the seashore’s sounds as she narrates them: she delves into the detail and directs my attention to the tiny sounds of seaweed and barnacles, and expands the work from there. From soundscape research into soundscape composition she starts with a phonographic earnestness and goes on to play with the recordings to make us hear their manipulation, while continually explaining these processes. This sonic shift through registers of reality brings to consciousness the organization of the real, hinting at systems and ideologies rather than facts and truths.

The material slowly unfolds away from her voice and develops the recorded reality into a composition. The work meanders from the apparently real into the real of my personal invention. Following the narrations of her dreams the listener is invited to develop his own fantasies. Now her voice does not guide but becomes itself part of the soundtrack: not narrating it but being it, heard in the same register as the manipulated natural rhythms, clicks and whistles, succulent and bouncy, like the crickety water tinkling that she merges with and makes of both rhythms rhymes.

Her reference to a composition by Iannis Xenakis takes the work out of soundscape composition into an arrangement of another kind: juxtaposing her landscape teased out of its sounds to a ‘landscape’ composed from granular synthesis. From the vast stretch of the shoreline to the smallest grain of its being and back again, she explores the intensity of the space heard in its all-embracing unfolding. However, *Kits Beach* remains very composed, very intentional. There is no room for the unplanned or coincidental overheard. It is a direct and directing guide of audiel material, that invites a fantastic engagement momentarily only to guide us back to the composed reality of the landscape’s sounds: the sheer force of the nearby city in all its sonic monstrosity, big, thundery, and brutal, overriding the little sounds of her dreams in a roaring wave.

By comparison, Arn’s construction of place is not a soundscape composition, lacking the poetic intention and educational drive. It is a far more incidental document, somewhat like a sonic diary: a sound walk blog. Oozing with the authenticity of the personal overheard, and the sense of real-time. What makes it sound authentic is its bareness, its lack of focus. Arn’s work makes a lot of room for the incidental and only builds a frame of place. The sounds always remain fleeting,
ephemeral and endangered by their very nature rather than in relation to an ecological idea. *microscopic trips* simply is what enters the microphone. There is no general undulation between poetry and reality; when the two occasionally converge, it is incidental and experienced only by the individual listener rather than composed intentionally by the author. This sense of the authentic, the trust it inspires, is heightened by the duration of the work. Westerkamp's pieces are short, poem-sized and to a point. Arn's work is potentially endless, unordered and lived.

Eyes work well as an ordering-tool: segregating according to differences and aligning references to build meaning within the field of vision. Even in motion the visual focuses on relationships and differences and derives its meaning from them. Images are dialectical, expressing themselves against each other. They are a chain of differences however mobile.

The ear, when it operates not in the service of such a visual organization, does not order things but produces its own ephemeral order. Sound can give an indication of left or right, high or low, etc. but this is not the orientation of objects and places but of itself. Sonic listening is not dialectical, it works not on differences and similarities but hears cumulatively: it builds from what ever comes at it in a haphazard way shaky buildings whose design is that of sound rather than of its source. It stacks things against each other indiscriminately, hearing whatever is at hand, and it can do so because it operates in the dark, unseen.

Pierre Schaeffer’s acousmatic project goes some way to practising such an invisible design: releasing the sounds from their visual association through their reduction to a sonic core.\(^{36}\) Comparable to Edmund Husserl's phenomenological reduction, Schaeffer's composing and listening performs an epoche, a reduction to the core of sonic experience.\(^{39}\) He brackets the sounds off from their visual context to hear them in all their sonicness as 'objets sonores', and to compose from these 'sonorous objects' acousmatic works.

A visual epoche is a stripping back to the core of visuality, a sonic epoche in Schaeffer’s terms, is a stripping away from the sonic anything that ties it down to visuality. However this is not reducing but freeing it and opening it up to a multitude of audible possibilities. Phenomenological listening as an intersubjective sensory-motor engagement is a reduction in order to get to the essence of the perceived, to critically experience and expand that essence; not to reduce the heard but to get to the wealth of the heard through a bracketed listening. The problem of the acousmatic project is the actual reduction after the fact: The re-organization, the structural ordering of the sounds thus heard. Schaeffer analyses the reduced concrete sound objects and illustrates them through a new set of visual symbols that do not relate to the source or to a traditional score but to the sounds heard. However, this visualizing of the auditory object nevertheless brings the bracketed sound back into a structural context. Schaeffer's 'objets sonores' are referenced as signs and symbols of his own devising, yet they are visual and by necessity reduce the heard to their design. Listening as an effort of epoche, in the sense of focusing rather than reducing, without the desire to bring its experience back into the context of language as a structural means of ordering, expands and generates the object as a sonic phenomenon; speechless but eternally resounding.

Westerkamp's work invites focused listening of a kind: a particular microphonic bracketing of the Vancouver shoreline. However, she takes away to make us hear the absent. She posits as lost but reinstates through her intention, and in this way allows the semiotic to enter the work and take over the more fragile sense of it as it is experienced in a discrete audition. In the ideological realm of soundscape research there is meaning that is bigger than the non-sense of the experienced work. There is an educational endeavour of induction and conservation that overrides the dream and leaves us with its aim.

Arn's sonic world expands in my listening from the fleeting context of the heard through my innovative listening, centrifugally into the
world, which I am passing. It appends territories. I travel with her and beyond. I jump over the visual referent into an endlessly mobile journey of my imagination. The emphasis is on the experience of the work rather than its classification in an extra-sonic catalogue. This is a phenomenological journey, but one whose essence might remain forever unspeakable hinted at only in the outline of its sonic concept. The phenomenological when it hits the semiotic project, at least in sound, bounces off into the signifying solitariness of the unspeakable.40

Focused listening produces this unspeakable, solitary signifying that concentrates as well as expands the material and the subject in a dual but not paradoxical move: it pursues a phenomenological epoché but instead of closing down what it found in a return to the semiotic it continues the endless mobility of listening in the practice of signifying. Sound arts criticism that comes out of such a focused listening confronts the futility of writing its sensorial practice into the text. That does not mean one ought not try though, as it is in the process of writing, as a quasi process of speaking, that sound will find a place when read back aloud, if we can only abandon the quest for a naïve substantiality and accept the read as passing reflections, fleeting and ephemeral, like the material it speaks of. On the face of it such sound arts’ discourse, given that it avoids certain meaning, might not have much critical value. But it does. When the solitary subjectivity is understood as part of the aesthetic sensibility produced through sound, and when, conversely, this subjectivity is appreciated in its emancipated and powerful generative autonomy, then we will come to understand the radical value of sound to shift not the meaning of things and subjects, but the process of meaning making and the status of any meaning thus made.

Focused listening is radical as it makes us ‘see’ a different world. The aesthetic materiality of sound insists on complicity and intersubjectivity and challenges not only the reality of the material object itself, but also the position of the subject involved in its generative production. The subject in sound shares the fluidity of its object. Sound is the world as dynamic, as process, rather than as outline of existence. The sonic subject belongs in this temporal flow.

Listening to the Radio

This temporal belonging is particularly apparent on the radio, where the stream of now comes at me out of the dark. Even if I know the radio schedule, the sensorial material heard as focused sound rather than as visual relay, still catches me unprepared. In relation to radiophonic material listening is utterly blind: a material on trial in darkness it tries my sightless subjectivity in its signifying practice. The sense gleaned comes directly from the heard as my focused non-sense.

The trial of sound on the radio is not different from that of other sound but it is more palpable. I can feel myself working my ears rather than leaning on the visual object provided. The only crutch I can find is the voice, where, at least on a semantic level, sound is temporarily redeemed into the transcendental order of the visual. But no voice is purely semantic. The body speaks in more ambiguous ways and my listening body answers this ambiguity.

If a Voice Like Then What? (1984) and Langue Etude (1985)

Gregory Whitehead’s radiophonic piece If a Voice Like Then What? leads us to the core of the body’s communication, its voice. Questioning its sonic materiality while speaking, it turns communication on its material head. ‘Do you want a voice like mine?’ he asks, while showing you a gaping dark hole that splutters, stutters and avoids cohesion. The voice as messenger is eroded of its semantic meaning as it speaks. It is rendered its own flesh, dissected, infested, rolled around on the listeners tongue. The sounds infect my ears and make me aware of my own mouth and its abeyance quite uncomfortably in the dark. The piece is short and intense, staying with you as you listen to more conventional broadcasts, which are dominated by radiophonic voices that are considered phonogenic: semantic voices without a body to speak of.

Whitehead’s sounds resonate with Susan Stone’s Langue Etude that talks and cuts the tongue apart as it speaks, extinguishing its own trace and constituting the now of radio through forceful and physical intervention.
A lot of experimental radio work is voice-based, playing with the foremost sound of commercial radio: the trusting voice standing in for the unified body that cushions meaning and explains sounds in order to guide you faithfully through the dark on a promise of objectivity, news and information. Instead, experimental work brings us a fleshly and subjective body: the voice visceral and slaughtered. It goads listening out of the heard into the production of the perceived.

The invisibility of radio-sound enables a multiplicity of perception. The listener becomes producer, inventing his own contingent reality between what is heard and the time-space of its perception. This innovative listening uses the darkness of radio as a cave, abundant with sound. Here, no image preserves the listener's hold on an authentic sense of reality, and thus no sense of non-reality limits his imagination.

Radio is a formless stream, emanating from a faceless, boundary-less place. The association of this fleeting stream with a concrete actuality is, accordingly, achieved through a momentary steadying by the individual listener. Sustaining this transitory fact, durationally, as the radio does, broadcasting into our homes and cars, night and day, exaggerates its fleetingness, producing quite categorically a constant stream of now. The sightless box of radio provides no distraction from the durational flow of sound. The demand is endless, and there is literally no end in sight.

This constant now does not produce a certain object, but incites figments of the individual imagination. It does not affirm the surety of a thing but produces its own reality as a reciprocal non-certainty. This is individual and momentary certainty as personal conviction, produced through a contingent and innovative listening to a shared broadcast. The listeners are a collective of individuals, listening all together alone, propelling the sonic materiality into a multitude of private imaginings. This is the paradox of radio: emphasizing the ideology of shared and synchronized sounds, streamed into the non-synchronic ears of a multiplicity of listeners.

To produce a constant flux of sonic pieces that invite individual imaginings, means to implode the parameters of commercial radio: conventional productions that aim to entertain and inform a collective audience, arranging time and aspiring to create a sense of listenership and a civic identity. Whitehead and Stone's voices at once support and shatter the collective through a visceral particularity. They produce a collective solitariness, a mass of equally but individually alienated people. Their work does not quite communicate but makes us aware of its fragility by showing us the dark chasm of its vile throat.

Instead of apparent, knowable radiophonic content, their work involves the structure behind its own medium: speaking and listening itself, the auditory space–time relationship between subjects, and the production of a transitory, invisible objectivity. They foreground the paradox between collectivity and solitude and invite a different engagement in sound production and listening.

**Conclusion: Sonic Solitude**

Going through the experience of this crucible exposes the subject to impossible dangers: relinquishing his identity in rhythm, dissolving the buffer of reality in a mobile discontinuity, leaving the shelter of the family, the state, or religion, the commotion the practice creates spares nothing; it destroys all constancy to produce another and then destroys that one as well. It is from the potential of this danger of the ever new and endlessly mobile, against the even greater danger of the illusion of a habitual and total meaning, that the motivation to listen as the motility of doubt and astonishment must start. This might well render all words written here non-sensical in the sense of simply sensate rather than rational, but it does not make them less critical or useful. Since, the engagement with the work, through a sceptical and astounded attitude, is what leads to a re-thinking of the philosophical and aesthetic methodology of enquiry, and therein lies its criticality. If the sense of such an
in affection, and that meeting is not dialectical, it does not progress towards an ideal community, but produces simultaneity and coincidence. The sonic meeting is agonistic rather than antagonistic: it generates the community, as contingency, in the playful chance of exchange.

Notes

Introduction


2 In the Primacy of Perception Merleau-Ponty describes the world as a 'life-world', which one creates through ones being in it, and which in turn creates one's self as an intersubjective subject continually at the moment of this interaction. Merleau-Ponty talks about the concrete and abstract, sensory-motor, movements and gestures with which we approach the world and through which we construct and are constructed in that world. In this 'life-world' we grasp space through our bodily, intersubjective, situation.

I grasp myself not as a constituting subject which is transparent to itself, and which constitutes the totality of every possible object of thought and experience, but as a particular thought, as a thought engaged with certain objects, as thought in act. Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Primacy of Perception, trans. James M. Edie, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1984, p. 22.

3 Adorno, Minima Moralia, Reflections on a Damaged Life, p. 71.


5 This term is loosely borrowed from Donald Davidson, who in his essay 'A Nice Derangement of Epitaphs' discusses the notion of a 'passing theory' of language, in which the meaning is created on the spot in the meeting of both interlocutors building their own contingent and transient ideas. He suggests that what

A passing theory really is like a theory at least in this, that it is derived by wit, luck and wisdom from a private vocabulary and grammar, knowledge of the ways people get their point across, and rules of thumb for figuring out what deviations from the dictionary are most likely. There is no more chance of regularizing, or teaching, this process than there is of regularizing or teaching the process of creating new theories to cope with new data in any field. Donald Davidson, 'A Nice Derangement of Epitaphs', in Truth and Interpretation, edited by Ernest LePore, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986, p. 446.

Listening

2 Vis-à-vis this practical fantasy of Adorno’s philosophical interpretation sits Maurice Merleau-Ponty’s explanation of the dream of science to absolute truth:

The physics of relativity confirms that absolute and final objectivity is a mere dream by showing how each particular observation is strictly linked to the location of the observer and cannot be abstracted from this particular situation; but also rejects the notion of an absolute observer. We can no longer flatter ourselves with the idea that, in science, the exercise of a pure and unsullied intellect can allow us to gain access to an object free of all human traces, just as God would see it. Maurice Merleau-Ponty, The World of Perception, trans. Oliver Davis, London and New York: Routledge, 2008, p. 36.

The dream is an unconscious longing, evoking passivity and the unattainable, whereas fantasy gives rise to itself. Paradoxically in the abandonment of the dream, its total and objective outcome, lies the discovery of its process: the concrete contingency of individual perception. 3 De Certeau’s essay ‘Walking in the City’ from The Practice of Everyday Life first published in French as L’invention du Quotidien in 1980, discusses New York from the top of the World Trade Centre and on street level. He juxtaposes the viewing of the total urban text from above with its production by the ‘Wandersmänner’ ‘down below’, ‘whose bodies follow the thick and thin of an urban “text” they write without being able to read it.’ Michel de Certeau, ‘Walking in the City’, in The Practice of Everyday Life, trans. Steven Randell, London: University of California Press, 1988, p. 93. De Certeau’s city on the ground level is created by these blind practitioners, who by association hear rather than see its text, ‘make use of space that cannot be seen’ and produce with their footsteps the city as a heard phenomenon. (Ibid., p. 93)

4 These radio broadcasts were first published in French as Cœurs à Saint in 1948 by Editions de Seuil in 2002. The first English translation of that text entitled The World of Perception was produced in 2004 by Routledge, the one I am referring to is the 2008 edition.


6 Ibid., p. 41.

7 Ibid., p. 39.

8 The modernist painter deals in doubt in order to present a more complex certainty to his viewer who remains apart from his questioning processes. Being motivated by the other hand the desire to avoid the subjectivism of the romantic era and on the other not to fall into the objectivist camp, both Cézanne and Merleau-Ponty rely on the authority of the painter to communicate doubt and the resultant complexity of appearance rather than make the audience doubt the work. By contrast, listening is to take part in the processes of doubt neither without trying to find a positivist explanation nor by succumbing to a simple subjectivism. Instead listening struggles with the singular position of hearing and the sensorial complexity of the material heard.

9 Ibid., p. 46.

10 Merleau-Ponty never overtly deals with sound, if at all then he mentions music and treats it within its conventions. It is only in his very last writing, collected together under the title The Visible and the Invisible, published posthumously in 1964 from his manuscripts, that he deals with silence and mentions sounds in the conclusion of the last chapter: ‘The Intertwining – The Chasm’. I can only assume that this silence would have brought him to a lot more noise had he lived longer, as I understand sound to realize Merleau-Ponty’s theoretical phenomenology in practice. We shall have to follow more closely this transition from the mute world to the speaking world.’ Maurice Merleau-Ponty, The Visible and the Invisible, trans. Alphonso Lingis, edited by Claude Lefort, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1968, p. 154.

11 This intersubjective ‘I’, is not known to itself as a rational subject, identified in reference to a pre-existing category, and hence cannot discover the other through his self-certainty. The ‘I’ in this intersubjective motor-operation produces the certainty of itself and its environment, the life-world, through continuous production in uncertainty. In the reciprocal relationship between the life-world and the ‘I’, doubt implies self doubt as well as doubt about the world.

The doubt that Merleau-Ponty understands to drive Cézanne to paint, is the doubt through which subjectivity as well as objectivity is produced provisionally and continually in an intersubjective life-world: ‘Only one emotion is possible for this painter – the feeling of strangeness – and only one lyricism – that of the continual rebirth of existence.’ Maurice Merleau-Ponty, ‘Cézanne’s Doubt’, in The Merleau-Ponty Aesthetic Reader, trans. Michael B. Smith, edited by Galen A. Johnson, 2nd edition, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1996, p. 68.

12 The closest we can get to divorcing the visual mass from its sonic stampede is by plugging ourselves into the sound bubble of our I-pod, and even then all we do is give the visual mass another sonic shape.

13 In his 1975 essay ‘Aural Objects’ [originally entitled ‘le perçu et le nommé’ (‘the perceived and the named’), Metz discusses the preference for the substantial, the visible and tactile, which he identifies as primary senses above smell and sound, which are thus qualified as secondary and attributal. Metz correlates this hierarchical order with a capitalist orientation in the West. He talks about a ‘primitive substantialism’, which according to him, reflects the Western philosophical tradition since Descartes and Spinoza. This tradition, to him, is apparent in the subject–predicate structure particular to Indo-European languages, where the noun of the sentence orientates and determines the predicate, which is thus sublimated to this noun. He comments on the identification of the visual as the stable and primary, the noun, while the sonic is its changing attribute.

The original title of this essay, ‘le perçu et le nommé’, foregrounds the distinction between a semiotic account of the visual and an experiential engagement stressed by sound. The differentiation between ‘the perceived’ and ‘the named’ clearly points to a distinction between a culturally coded, named, understanding of the (visual) thing as sign, and a contingent production (of the sonic) in a perceptual process.

14 Merleau-Ponty, The World of Perception, 49.

15 Adorno points out that the empirical subject who is more real in his being a living, concrete subject, is less real in a society in which an individual’s function is abstracted to rational social relations.

The more individuals are really degraded to functions of the social totality as it becomes more systematized, the more will man pure and simple, man as a principle with the attributes of creativit and absolute domination, be consoled by
exaltation of his mind. [. . .] They (the transcendental subjects) are deformed before hand (before even experiencing an empirical reality) by the mechanism that has been philosophically transfigured as transcendental. Adorno, 'Subject and Object', in The Adorno Reader, p. 141.

16 Adorno, 'Subject and Object', in The Adorno Reader, p. 143.

17 What appears to us as natural is probably only the habitual of a long-standing habit, which has forgotten the unfamiliar from which it came. That unfamiliar has once, however, attacked the human as an alienating thing, and had astonishment thinking. Martin Heidegger, Der Ursprung des Kunstwerkes, Stuttgart: Philip Reclam jun., 2008, p. 16. (own translation)

18 Ibid., p. 15.

In Sein und Zeit (1927), Heidegger specifies Bodenlosigkeit, groundlessness, as a lack of foundation of the felt and said. The idea that one 'sieht den Grund nicht mehr . . .' which, according to him, leads to a separation of experience from its originary senate moment, which is replaced by an inauthentic sense of reality. Martin Heidegger, Sein und Zeit, Max Niemeyer, Tübingen, 1986, p. 177. He tries to re-invest in this 'ground' with his existential phenomenology and the question of the Thing.


20 Ibid., p. 16.


22 'The thing is thinging.' Martin Heidegger, 'Das Ding', in Vorträge und Aufsätze, Prüllingen, Germany: Verlag Günther 1959, p. 172. (own translation)

23 Ibid., pp. 32-4.

24 'Das Kunstwerk öffnet auf seine Weise das Sein im Seienden.' (The artwork unfolds the thinging of the Thing.) Ibid., p. 34.

25 In a collection of his essays brought together in the book Sense and Non-Sense published in 1964, Merleau-Ponty articulates 'non-sense' not in reference to rational sense, as its nonsensical opposite, but rather describes it with a sense that comes out of 'sensation'. Non-sense, then, is sense produced by a phenomenalological subject, who exists in the world produced continually through his sensorial existence in it, outlining a 'life world' and 'intersubjectivity'. In this life-world the intersubjective subject produces sense as non-sense through sensory-motor actions towards this world. According to Merleau-Ponty, these motions are motivated by doubt, rather than certainty, sensation rather than rationality.

26 In the Phenomenology of Spirit, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel talks about the knowledge 'pure apprehension' as the knowledge of the immediate appearance of the thing. G. F. W. Hegel, Phenomenology of Spirit, trans. A. V. Miller, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977, p. 55. Hegel's apprehensional knowledge does not practice but meets the object, phenomenon as transcendental a priori, immediately. Sound, when it is not musical or subsumed to a visual source is not knowable in this way.


28 Ibid., p. 54.

29 These wars are visual wars, paradoxically set off or at least intensified with the destruction of de Certeau's location of the visual, gnostic drive for total knowledge; the World Trade Centres. The flight largely takes place at a distance, reported by travelling newsmen from their Baghdad and Kabul hotel rooms. After the embroiled experiment in the second gulf war, reporters are now kept well away from any fighting and report from their own distance.

30 Ibid., p. 55.

31 In the first signifying practice of the 'narrative', material discontinuity is reduced to correlations between opposites (high/low, good/bad, inside/outside) which delineate narrative's geography, temporality, plot, etc. Julia Kristeva, Revolution in Poetic Language, trans. Margaret Waller, New York: Columbia University Press, 1984, p. 90. This signifying practice may include various materialities and sensations, however, these are ultimately 'poured into the rigid molds of anodisjunctive structure' (Ibid., p. 90). Kristeva's 'narrative' is a weak signifying process as it centers on an axial position of the symbolic, and weakens the potential to roam in new meaning. Her second practice, 'metalanguage', is the guarantor for the symbolic system. It places the subject as a fixed subject outside the text: 'he hovers above it' and is 'absent from it' (Ibid., p. 95). This symbolic systematicity eliminates heterogeneity and forges omnivalence. Conversely, the fixed position of the subject is the only guarantee for the symbolic to work: The symbolic demands as well as constructs the subject as a fixed subject. This subject is confined to the socio-historical context of his symbolic register and reads the text from this 'meta'-position.

It is in relation to the third signifying practice, contemplation, that Kristeva employs Hegel's notion of Aufhebung, sublimation. The problem of sublimation lies in the very conception of the symbolic. Kristeva writes 'this Aufhebung of the inarticulate' that the chorus is always already inevitably and inseparably symbolic. The chorus's closure within contemplation condemns contemplation to meaning, disarticulating it, only to return to it, disenchanted' (Ibid., p. 96). This sketches contemplation as a dialectic activity; negation continually arriving at a positive, thesis and antithesis. Any particularity of expression is 'swallowed' continually in this circular dynamic, which she calls a 'ring'; 'eternally returning, perpetually trapped' (Ibid., p. 95). The material is secondary to this dynamic, sublimated by its symbolic totality. Contemplation, according to Kristeva, is responsible for producing and keeping the ideological, hierarchical status quo of the state, or any other ideological apparatus. She concedes that the signifying play within contemplation shifts and changes, drifting (dérive), without however, ever breaking the communicative function.


33 'It (the text) does not instigate the "process-of-becoming-a-subject" of the masses' (Ibid., p. 102). The text is a subjective/singular rather than an objective/collective process, producing a 'subjective ideality', which is realized in what I termed an innovative listening.

34 Ibid., p. 101.


36 Ibid., p. 102.

37 In the late 1960s, R. Murray Schafer, Canadian composer and founder of the World Soundscape Project, called for acoustic awareness and sought to
establish a pedagogy of listening to the soundscape. His 1977 written text, The Tuning of the World, outlines ideas on listening and the soundscape, which embody the foundation of a new international movement of acoustic ecology that seeks to preserve endangered sounds and to produce an awareness of our acoustic environment in order to fight sound pollution and to eventually get to design better soundscapes.

38 Pierre Schaeffer's acousmatic project outlined in his Traité des objets musicaux: essai interdisciplinaire written in 1966, seeks, to produce 'objets sonores' (sonic objects) whose source remains unheard. This technological reduction of recorded sound finds its equivalent in the idea of 'reduced listening': a listening that focuses on the sound as sound itself rather than as musical element or as referent of a visual phenomenon. It is with this acousmatic material and its reduced sensibility that Schaeffer produces acousmatic compositions or musique concrète. (Pierre Schaeffer and Schaeffer found the groupe de recherche de musique concrète in 1951).

39 In his inaugural lectures on pure phenomenology at the University of Freiburg in 1916, Edmund Husserl explains the strategy of bracketing, what he calls epoché, as a reduction that does not seek to diminish perception to the empirical data of things, but to suspend all assumptions of an external world in order to get to the pure phenomenon as it presents itself to consciousness. He brackets all knowledge of context and truth and simply describes the contents of consciousness in order to establish a theoretical insight into the essential nature of the phenomenon and of the perceiving ego. Edmund Husserl, Ideas: General Introduction to Pure Phenomenology, trans. W. R. B. Gibson, Australia: Allen and Unwin, 1931.

40 The intersubjective, bodily, being in the world as phenomenological life-world does not prevent solitariness. I am constituted intersubjectively through my interactions with the world and through my awareness of the existence of the other, without however presupposing an a priori communication between the self and that other. To the contrary, it is because of the knowledge of the existence of the other that the self struggles with his doubt of the perceived, and it is through this doubt that he might reach a passing understanding with the other rather than through an assumed communication. What we might share then is an understanding of our subjectivity as intersubjectively constituted, and the intention to communicate, not however the code of communication.

41 Kristeva, Revolution in Poetic Language, 104.


In this essay Kristeva describes and discusses a particular viewing of sculptures by Alain Kirili, which she views 'in the midst of the (first) Gulf War' at Commandement XI, in Paris. Rather than insisting on making her perception coincide with an art-historically verified reading, she understands the material 'lends its geometry to our projections, body and soul' (Ibid., pp. 29–30). I take measure on her method of viewing an artwork, and understand sonic material to demand just such a contingent projection, 'body and soul' as one move rather than a dualistic constellation. However, I am aware that this sensorial engagement is framed by and thus made 'sayable', in the sense of determined, within the rigour of the gallery context. It is corporeal but not floundering.

43 Adorno, 'Subject and Object', in The Adorno Reader, p. 140.

---

Noise

1 In 1913, Italian Futurist composer Luigi Russolo produced a manifesto on noise (L'arte dei rumori) and built a whole orchestra of noise machines (intonarumori) with which he performed his own noise music. His text and work celebrates the machine age and heralds the industrial revolution as symbol of progress: allowing man to assert himself over a 'silent' nature whose sounds he perceives as monotonous and unable to arouse any emotion. By contrast the power of machine noise he understands to usher in a time of greater sonic complexity: embracing dissonance and polyphony to expand musical conventions.

2 The term idealität is here used in the sense of the Hegelian notion of 'ideal objectivity'. In his Berlin Aesthetic Lectures of the 1820s Hegel sketches out the notion of an ideal state of beauty at the moment where art has overcome in sublimation (Aufhebung) the 'Widersprüchlichkeit' (the antagonistic contradiction) between inner necessity and outer appearance, and has resolved the Idea, the content and form, its configuration of sensuous material in one total expression. Hegel's aesthetic judgement outlines a progressive dialectic. According to him, art has to overcome inner necessity, our animal nature: eating, shitting, fornicating, etc., in a higher order manifestation: in ideal spirituality that leaves behind the bodily burden of want and need. Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, Vorlesungen über die Ästhetik I–III, Germany: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1980.

3 Masami Akita aka Merzbow is a 1979 initiated Japanese experimental music project recognized as one of the earliest elements of the Japanese noise scene. Here his name stands in for the variety of noise and noise-related work produced since the late 1970s.

4 In an article on 'Audio Sensitisation and Participation in the Soundscape' printed in the Journal of Electroacoustic Music in 1999, I considered the world as an interactive sound sculpture whose inhabitants, animate as well as inanimate, (following Aristotle’s notion of sound, as the potential and actual fourth dimension of objects [deAnima Book II]), were discussed in relation to their position within the sounding environment. The argument made considered the soundscape as a multilayered macrocosm of activity between subjects and objects and suggested that this sonorous macrocosm could be read as the composition of a society. This composition makes its economic, political, social, etc. dynamics audible and offers an opportunity to re-listen and re-sound those dynamics to understand and react to their ideologies and power structures beyond the picture offered by a visual anthropology. In many ways the article suggested to take Jacques Attali's Noise: the Political Economy of Music, first published in French as Bruits in 1977, and apply his method of enquiring after the economic causes of change in musical practice to the entire soundscape.

Noise is one element of this interactive soundsculpture. Its absolute insistence to be heard rather than remain a potential sound, renders it a great tool to assess and interact with issues of social, economic, political, etc., relations understood as dynamic qualities rather than fixed relationships.

5 Rave nights, despite their outward appearance, do not mimic Friedrich Kracauers Mass Ornament (a collection of essays from the 1920s first issued in Germany in 1963), the surface-level expression of mass movement in which people are not individuals but are sublimated as fractions of a figure. In that sense, despite being a frequent target of cultural critics, spotting the symptom of
Merieau-Ponty pursues a language that exists as a given, that experience uses rather than forms in its own formless transience. Yet it is exactly this formless transience that grants a phenomenology of sound art the phenomenon of its own language as speech, to embrace the dark ambiguity and passing coincidence of its material.

This does not mean that Merleau-Ponty's reflections are of no use for the articulation of a philosophy of sound art. To the contrary, they lead the way towards its thought, but due to its philosophical sensibility they do not reach its materiality.

19 Bergson, Matter and Memory, p. 34.
20 This is not the memory of intellectual contemplation, which reaches from the present into the past to retrieve from it mute moments that remain abstract. Rather, this memory is the action of perception, it is the body approaching the world through a past the produces the present and hints at a future.
21 Ibid., p. 244.
22 In this sense the duration of memory invites a reduced listening that brackets sound not only from its concurrent visual source but also takes care of the reference of a previous audition. A focused listening to the work as extensive now, gets to the sound as sound that does not deny references but appreciates them as the affective material that produces the moment of perception into which they fade to make room for a new and contingent production of the work, rather than substituting it through pre-existing meanings and opinions or their renewal.
23 Ibid., p. 228.
24 Ibid., p. 229.
26 Ibid., p. 158.

Bibliography

Heidegger, Martin. 'Warum bleiben wir in der Provinz?', in der Alemannie, 7 March 1934.

Bibliography

2002 from a radio series commissioned by the French national radio and broadcast on its National Programme at the end of 1948.


List of Works

Arn, Stini. microscopic trips, broadcast on Radio LoRa Zürich, February 2006.


Bochner, Mel. 8’ Measurements, 1969, Black ink on graph paper, 11” x 8.5”, in Richardson, Brenda, Mel Bochner, Number and Shape, Maryland: The Baltimore Museum of Art, 1976.

Cage, John. Silent Prayer, 1948, idea to produce silent piece to sell to the Muzak Co.

— 4'33", performance premiered by David Tudor August 29 1952 Woodstock New York.


Cusack, Peter. Chernobyl, 2008, This CD will be released shortly. Duchamp Marcel. Fountain, porcelain urinal, 1917, lost.

— Air de France, bottled Air, 1919.

— Anémic Cinéma, 35 mm Film, B&W, silent, 7 minutes, 1926.


Federer, Benjamin. Klang;Zeit;Klang, on Radio LoRa, 2006.


The Fog, written by John Carpenter and Debra Hill, directed by John Carpenter, 1979, MGM/United Artists Video, 2002, DVD.

Fontana, Bill. Harmonic Bridge, site-specific installation at Tate Modern, 2006.


221
Miller, Graeme. Linked, site-specific installation in East London since 2003, with
ArtsAdmin London.
Osborn, Ed. Parabolics, Installation at Centre for the Arts, at Yerca Buena Gardens,
San Francisco, CA, 1996.
Parmegiani, Bernard. ‘matières indultes’, composed 1975, on De Natura Sonorum,
Samakô, Erik. ‘Entre Chiens et Loups’, excerpt of installation at Crestet centre
d’art, Vaison la Romaine, 1995, on Murs du son – Murmures, France: Villa
Shaw, Jeffrey. The Legible City, Installation at ZKM Karlsruhe, 2006 (orig.
Stone, Susan. ‘Langue Etude’, composed 1985, on Tellus Casette #11 The Sound
Westerkamp, Hildegard. ‘Contours of Silence’, on Radio Rethink – Art Sound and
Transmission, CD and Book, Banff, Canada: Walter Phillips Gallery, The Banff
Centre for the Arts, 1994.
‘Kits Beach’, composed 1989, on Transformations, Montreal: Empreintes
Digitales IMED 9631, 1996.
Whitehead, Gregory. ‘If a Voice Like Then What?’, composed 1984, on Tellus
whitehead.html
Yoshitake, Antonio with Sachiko M. turntables, electronics, sine waves and empty

Index

4’33” (Cage) 80-1
8” Measurements (Bochner) 81
1930 (Merbow) 67-9, 176
acoustic
composition 196n. 38
listening 111
project 34-5, 196n. 38
reduction 127
acoustic ecology 31-2, 195n. 37,
209n. 28
Adorno, Theodor (philosophy) xii, xiii,
(interpretation) 3, 9, 164, 192n. 2,
(subjectivity) 14-15, 193n. 15,
211n. 19, 215n. 10,
(criticism) 25-7, 66, 99,
(experience) 29, (transcendental
world view) 24, 55, (music) 57-8,
164, 199n. 15, 200n. 24, 201n. 31
aesthetic moment 20-1, 164, 171, 180
and autonomy 67, 84, 204n. 43
and the body/the subject 90, 164
and discourse 20, 25, 63, 69, 108,
113, 117, 209n. 29
duration of 28, 182-4
aesthetic stoppage 104, 189, 208n. 25
affection 170, 171, 175-9, 185-7,
189-90
agency 93-4, 97, 99, 100, 200n. 7
anticipation and 178
of listening 94, 103, 108, 113
of memory 171, 186
of (my) perception 93, 103, 177
phenomenological 165
and spatialization 132, 140, 212n. 27
agonism; agonistic 190
of perception 181
playful 124, 140-3, 150, 151, 156,
209n. 3
relationship between listeners 165
and space/site 147-8
Air de France (Duchamp) 205n. 2
Anémic Cinéma (Duchamp) 207n. 13
antagonism; antagonistic 92, 95,
140-1, 156, 169, 190
Apollo – Atmospheres & Soundtracks
(Eno) 205n. 5
architecture 101, 127, 134, 151
semantic 160
sonic 144-5, 147-8
visual 135, 154, 156
archive 22-3, 29, 155, 162
Aristotle 18, 197n. 4
Arn, Stini 28-32, 33-5
Arnhem, Rudolph 201n. 29
Artaud, Antonin 91-2, 94, 109, 110,
187, 206n. 6
Attali, Jacques 195n. 4
authenticity; authentic 53, 80, 133,
210n. 8
sense of reality 33-4, 38, 194n. 18
symbolic authentication 138
of time and place 32, 126-7, 134-5,
137-8
authorship 81, 96
and graphic scores 200n. 27
autonomy 8
aesthetic 67, 74, 180, 204n. 43
of the aesthetic moment 84
of the artwork 58-9, 180
autonomy (Cont’d)
of category 56, 67
generative 36
professional 73
of the subject 30
visual 11

Bachelard, Gaston (space) 130–1
Barthes, Roland (écritain, écrivain) 96, 206n. 8
Beck, Julian 139–40
Bergson, Henri (sensation and perception) 175, 186,
(extensity) 183, (memory) 183, 215n. 18
Bochner, Mel 81
Bouriant, Nicholas (relational aesthetics) 203n. 38
Brice, Jeannin 134–6
bricolage; bricoler 113, 208n. 23
Bruinus, Max 32
Bures Miller, George 131–4, 136

Cage John (silence) 80–1, 205n. 1, 205n. 2, (anechoic chamber) 83, 205n. 4
canon xiii, 26, 53, 199n. 12
canon hierarchies xvi
Cardiff, Janet 131–4, 136
Carroll, Noël (emotions) 172,
(lexical emotions) 173–4,
(emotions and behaviour) 177,
(emotions and ethics) 180,
(cultural audience) 215n. 10
Castells, Manuel (alphabet) 206n. 11
Certeau, Michel de (The Practice of Everyday Life) 4, 56, 147, 151–2,
192n. 3, 195n. 29
Cézanne, Paul 6–7, 192n. 8, 193n. 11
Chernobyl (Cusack) 156–9, 174
Chion, Michel (clump of sensation) 47, 148, 185, 198n. 6, 213n. 37
clump of sensation 185, 198n. 6
conceptual 148–9, 164, 213n. 37
and noise 47, 49, 198n. 9
and silence 85
collage 203n. 39
composition 16–17, 21–2, 24, 30–1
acousmatic 196n. 38
agonistic 141
and graphic score 200n. 53
as object 53
and score 57–8, 200n. 21, 200n. 24
and silence 52, 81, 89, 95, 98, 117
soundscape 31–3, 197n. 4
concept
sensory 125, 146, 148
sonic 36, 148, 151–3
Conceptual art 81
concert hall 50, 198n. 10
and radio 160
silence 80–1
Contours of Silence
(Westerkamp) 95–7
conviction 38, 75
authority of 96, 172, 211n. 20
togetherness 108, 113, 138, 173, 181, 208n. 20, 208n. 22
ethical 182
crickets 54, 97–8, 102, 111
critic 25–6, 28, 66, 176
and language 92, 99, 108, 117,
207n. 16
modernist 55, 57
postmodern 64–3
and silence 98–9
of sound art 99–100
criticism 25–7, 66–7, 69, 104, 180
and language 108
modernist 55, 60, 202n. 32
postmodern 63–4
and silence 117
sound artists 36, 179
Curgenven, Robert 97–8, 111
Cusack, Peter 156–8, 174
Dark Pool, The (Cardiff & Bures Miller)
131–4, 136
Davidson, Donald 191n. 5
dematerialization 81
Derrida, Jacques 208n. 23
digital
(network) age 137
installations 150
interactivity 152
(sound as) proto- 153
radio 208n. 25
Ding see also Thing; thinging 17–19
Dingheit 18–19, 24, 27, 73, 200n. 24
doubt 144, 145, 152, 165
and language 72–3, 109, 118
listening and 17, 23, 39, 69, 103, 192n. 8
modernism and 55, 192n. 8
phenomenological xii–xiii, 7–8, 10,
194n. 25
postmodernism and 63–4
subjectivity and 92–3, 193n. 11,
196n. 40, 204n. 44
Duchamp, Marcel (ready-mades) 80,
200n. 24, 205n. 2, (anémic cinéma) 103
duration; durational 34
of the aesthetic moment 171, 182–4
of memory 186, 187–8, 216n. 22
of perception 182–5, 189
radio 38, 161, 163
silence 100–3
work 28–9, 100, 102, 149, 161–3
écoutant 96–9, 108, 146, 206n. 8
Eisenstein, Sergei (montage ensemble) 125, (montage) 203n. 39
emotions xvi, 24–5, 73, 159, 172
and cognition 173–5
as critical faculty of listening 166,
171
and ethics 180–2
and fallacy 214n. 8
and language 178
lexicon of 173, 178
and modernism 55, 57, 180
and perception 172–3
and sound arts criticism 179–80
Eno, Brian 205n. 5
Entre Chiens et Loups
(Samakh) 111–13
environment 12
acoustic 5, 31–2, 82, 97, 103, 112,
117, 195n. 37, 197n. 4, 210n. 9
sonic 124, 209n. 1
temporality of 135
temporalities 34–6, 175, 196n. 39
equal difference 125, 141
equivalence 83, 90, 124, 149
equality 36
ethical 182
affective 181–2
of the sonic subject 189
ethics 180–1, 189, 215n. 17
extensity 171–2, 183–9
فantasy 4, 9, 12, 192n. 2, 210n. 9
esthetic 32, 144, 150
bodily 70, 86–7, 97
generative 68, 70
interpretative 17, 45, 96, 103, 106, 133, 136, 146, 153, 157, 186, 188
sensorial 24
and sociality 118
sonic 23, 45
Federer, Benjamin 161–3, 184
Feldman, Morton 101–2, 107, 188–9
Fog, the (Carpenter) 116, 208n. 27
Fontana, Bill 145–8, 151–2, 183,
194–5, 213n. 37
formlessness 15, 75, 175, 211n. 17
concrete 15, 26, 46
and the subject 72, 215n. 10
Fountain (Duchamp) 80, 205n. 2
Gasson, Clare 128–9
geography
social-geography 137
sonic 96, 112, 136, 144
sonico-social-geography 137
of timespace 137, 211n. 20
graphic scores 200n. 27
Greenberg, Clement 56–7
Haino, Keiji 69–71, 72–3, 179, 204n. 46
Harmonic Bridge (Fontana) 145–6,
148, 151–2, 183, 213n. 37
Harvey, David 137, 211n. 21
Hegel, G. W. F. (pure apprehension) 53, 194n. 26, 199n. 11, (space and time) 137, 138, 209n. 3, 211n. 21, 211n. 24, (conflict) 141, (history) 169, (ideality) 189, 197n. 2, (sublimation) 195n. 31, (objectivity) 204n. 44

Heidegger, Martin (das Ding) 17–19, 99, 194n. 18, (Heim, home, hut) 126, 130, 134, 138, 209n. 1, 210n. 8, (place and time) 132, 137, 163, 212n. 27

high modernism 56, 59

history
art history 26
aural 95, 154–5
and language 107
visual 99, 154, 169–70

Husserl, Edmund (epoché, phenomenological reduction) 34, 196n. 39, (Abschattung) 211n. 15

I Am Sitting in a Room (Lucier) 127–8
If a Voice Like Then What? (Whitehead) 37–8
imagination 9, 36, 61, 96, 204n. 46
auditory 12–13, 31, 135, 146, 155, 211n. 20
beyond visual 86, 201n. 29
digital 152–3
listening and 89
radiophonic 38, 115–16, 160–1, 201n. 29
space of my 29, 157
immersivity 54, 183
improvisation
and graphic score 200n. 27
and rhythm 201n. 31
and score 58, 200n. 22, 200n. 24
installations 145, 152, 185
aesthetics of 66–7
digital/new media 148–50, 183
sound 130, 134, 136, 147, 164

Je n'ai pas le droit de voyager sans passport (Beck) 139–40

Kahn, Douglas 205n. 2
Kant, Immanuel (Critique of Judgment) 56, (morals) 215n. 17
King, Steven 85
Kits Beach (Westerkamp) 32–3
Klang; Zeit; Klang (Federer) 161–3, 184
knowing 4–5, 27, 95, 171
affective 213n. 42, 215n. 18
and phonography 213n. 42
practice of 23
sensate 178
sonic 5, 23, 52, 112, 147, 159–60, 213n. 43
and sonic subjects 72, 85, 89
knowledge xvi
as knowing 160, 178
legitimation of 62–4, 202n. 36
and listening 105, 158, 160, 187
musical 52–3
and sensory 213n. 42
practice of 23
of place 158–60
practice of 23
of pure apprehension 194n. 26, 199n. 11
and sound 10, 90, 184, 213n. 43
systemic 64
total/universal 4, 10, 54, 56, 195n. 29
Kracauer, Siegfried 197n. 5
Krauss, Rosalind (grid) 58–9
Kristeva, Julia (signifying practice) 29, 105, 195n. 31, (appending terrains) 31, (symbolic) 103–4, 207n. 14, (Alain Kirili) 196n. 42, (thetic) 207n. 15, (fetish) 207n. 16
Kronos Quartett 101
Lane, Cathy 21, 32
language xiv, 109, 177–8
and the body 94, 108, 110, 179, 186–7

of critical discourse 28–9, 73, 108, 117–19, 206n. 8, 207n. 16
musical 52–3, 200n. 24
noise and 65–9, 70–1, 74, 86–7
as ontology 126
and postmodernity 62–5, 73, 141–2, 213n. 43
signifying 72, 75
silence and 87, 112, 118, 178, 206n. 7
and sound 14, 27, 165–6
and speech 91–2, 186–7
(post-)structural 104, 107
and the symbolic 103–6
tendential 106–8, 113, 116, 118, 123, 178, 186, 212n. 33
and voice 73, 91–2, 187
written 10–11
Langue Etude (Stone) 37–8
Legible City, the (Shaw) 151–3
Lévi-Strauss, Claude (bricolage) 208n. 23
Lewis, David Kellog (possible worlds) 152–3
Linked (Miller) 154–6
listening
acousmatic 35, 111, 127
affective 159, 189
conceptual 149–50, 153, 164–5, 183, 185
durational 100, 102–3, 161–2
genenerative 11–14, 83, 102, 199n. 11
innovative 10, 21, 35, 38, 101, 195n. 33
musical 53, 81, 175, 211n. 17
practice of 3, 23, 87
reduced 163, 196n. 38, 200n. 24, 216n. 22
signifying practice of 30–1, 36, 94, 102, 141, 148, 162, 177, 180, 183, 200n. 21
Lucier, Alvin 127
Lyotard, Jean-François 55, 61, (postmodernism) 62–4, 203n. 41, 212n. 32, (agonistics) 140–1, 209n. 3, (narrative) 202n. 35, 202n. 36, (inventor’s paralogy) 201n. 29, (sublime) 201n. 32

Marclay, Christian 60–1, 203n. 39
Marinetti, F. T. 160
Masnata, Pino 160
Massay, Doreen 138–9, 140
matières induites (Parmeggiani) 16–17
Matrix, The (Wachowski brothers) 211n. 24
memory 29, 157, 215n. 18, 216n. 20
affective 183–189
bodily (physical) 130, 133, 150
duration of 216n. 22
of sound 170–1

Merleau-Ponty, Maurice (The World of Perception) 6–10, (non-sense) 20, 45, 194n. 25, (sensible sentient) 50, 198n. 9, 204n. 43, (speech) 108, 165, (space) 132–3, 145, 163, 212n. 27, 213n. 38, (intersubjectivity) 191n. 2, 193n. 11, 194n. 25, (dreams) 192n. 2, (doubt) 192n. 8, (sound) 192n. 10, 208n. 22, 210n. 12, 211n. 13, 211n. 17, (time) 211n. 14, 211n. 15, (memory) 215n. 18
Merzbow 43, 48, 67–8, 175–6, 197n. 3, 199n. 7
Merzbox (Merzbow) 196n. 7
Métz, Christian 13, 19, 100, 193n. 13
microscopic trips (Arn) 28–9, 34
Migone, Christof 88–90, 91, 111, 176–7
Miller, Graeme 154
modernism 55–6, 212n. 32
and morality 181
and noise 51–3
and postmodernism 62–5, 213n. 43
modernity 26, 91, 150, 159
and collage 203n. 39
and montage 203n. 39
semiotics (Cont'd)
and the symbolic 103–6, 107, 207n. 14, 207n. 15
sensate sense 24, 45, 46, 87, 113, 177, 185, 187–8
sensibility 10
aesthetic 24, 36, 56, 99, 182
aesthetico-political 94, 182
conceptual 171
network 137–9
political 94
socio-political 164
sonic 40, 52, 60, 69, 87, 114, 115, 117, 132, 137, 144, 147, 148, 149–52, 155, 165, 204n. 44
sonico-social 208n. 25
time/space 147
sentimentality 50–1
and modernism 56, 180
romantic 174
and sound 171
Shaw, Jeffrey 151–2
Shaw, Susan 37–9
Shaw, Jeffrey
Silent Landscapes No2
(Churgren) 97–8
Silent Landscapes No2
Silent Prayer (Cage) 205n. 2
simultaneity 97–8
aesthetic 74
of affection and perception 185–7
complex 101, 109, 183, 188
of sensate perception 178–9
sensory 125, 152
in silence 84, 91–2, 101, 109
of subject and object 113, 125, 152, 169, 175–6, 180, 186, 205n. 2
of time and space 169, 188
site-specificity 113, 160
sociality 107, 113, 204n. 44
contractual 187
radiophonic 113–14, 116
sonic 114, 118
tendential 107, 118, 123–4, 187, 208n. 25
sound arts discourse xi, 36, 109, 200n. 21
sound walk 29, 154
blog 33
soundscape 197n. 4, 198n. 10
city 85
composition 31–3
research 32, 35, 112, 117, 195n. 37
silent 83–4, 85, 89, 93, 205n. 5
speech 70–1, 74, 105
affective (action of) 179, 182, 186, 192
critical 99, 117–19, 172
as expression of experience 144, 178, 187, 189
and language 58, 91, 107–9, 113, 186, 208n. 23, 215n. 18
and moments of coincidence 110, 171, 178
practical 117, 123–4 165, 171, 178, 187, 212n. 33
and thought 103
Stone, Susan 37–9
subject
aesthetic 5, 24, 25, 59, 150
empirical 15, 164, 193n. 15
experiential 15, 133
fixed 190n. 31
formless 93, 136
intersubjective 20, 124, 152, 191n. 2, 193n. 11, 194n. 25
listening 10, 14, 210n. 9
in noise 59–60, 71
in silence 87, 92–5, 106, 210n. 9
sonic 72, 74, 84, 109, 170, 169, 204n. 44
subject–object relationship 21, 24, 28, 36, 46, 100
subject–subject relationship 70
transcendental 15, 211n. 19, 215n. 10
subjectivity 36, 109, 113
eaesthetic 66
affective 182
contingent 51
fixed 103, 105–6, 207n. 14
involved 99, 166
momentary 82
and objectivity 13–17, 46
romantic 174
sonic 67, 82–3, 92–5, 118, 147, 204n. 44
sublime 62, 202n. 32
substantialism 57, 193n. 13
synthesis
granular 33
higher order 64, 203n. 39
sine-wave 161
of space 132–3, 135, 183
transition– 211n. 14

Tarkovsky, Andrei 188
tendency
the practical tendency of speech 123
social 109, 182
to speak 105–7, 108, 119, 186
symbolic 105–7, 108, 111–13, 114, 118, 157, 208n. 23
theory 73–4, 199n. 12
aesthetic 67
critical 108, 172, 189, 202n. 32
modernist art 55
philosophical 64
political 26, 165
social 26
The Thing 17–21, 24, 93–4, 98–9, 126
body as 73, 84
language as 118–19
sensible 69, 84
sentient 50, 73, 198n. 9, 204n. 43
of space 123, 133, 134
of time 123, 134
thinging 18–21, 24, 26, 48, 73, 74, 84, 92, 93–4, 105, 117–19, 133, 209n. 30, 211n. 20
ting-ness 18–20, 22, 24, 29, 61, 71, 200n. 24
timespace 124–6, 147, 210n. 5, 211n. 20
digital 153
duration 149, 161–3
extensity of 171, 183–6, 188 (social-geography of 137–9, 140, 144
networked 148
place 135, 140, 146, 152, 154–5, 158, 164
of radio 160–3
sonic 127–8, 137, 147–8, 153, 164
and speech 165, 170, 187
time 188
To Have Done with the Judgement of God (Artaud) 91–2, 206n. 6

Washaway Rd. (Gasson) 128–30
Weiss, Alan S. 206n. 6
Westerkamp, Hildegard 32–5, 95–7, 98
Whitehead, Gregory 37–9
Xenakis, Iannis 33
Yoshii, Otomo 48–50, 176, 198n. 8, 204n. 43