



# Introduction: Into Sound

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For twenty-five centuries Western knowledge has tried to look upon the world. It has failed to understand that the world is not for beholding. It is for hearing . . . Now we must learn to judge a society by its noise.

(Jacques Attali)

What are the senses of sense? Jacques Attali points out that the dominant mode of apprehending and understanding society has been through staring at its spectacle. Scopic metaphors are routinely invoked when thinking about how and what it is we know. In these terms knowledge is a quest for 'enlightenment' or 'illumination' and understanding is identified with *seeing*. Yet the experience of everyday life is increasingly mediated by a multitude of mechanically reproduced sounds. Waking, walking, driving, working and even falling asleep are all done to music, or some other acoustic accompaniment. In parallel to this, cities are noisier than they ever were in the past and more people complain about levels of noise than ever before. Noise tests our sense of the social to the limit. Sound thus has both utopian and dystopian associations: it enables individuals to create intimate, manageable and aestheticized spaces to inhabit but it can also become an unwanted and deafening roar threatening the body politic of the subject.

In the hierarchy of the senses, the epistemological status of hearing has come a poor second to that of vision. In this volume Bruce Smith argues that 'knowing the world through sound is fundamentally different from knowing the world through vision'. The dominance of the visual has often meant that the experience of the other senses –

touch, taste, smell and listening – has been filtered through a visualist framework. The reduction of knowledge to the visual has placed serious limitations on our ability to grasp the meanings attached to much social behaviour, be it contemporary, historical or comparative. Joachim-Ernst Berendt in his extraordinary book, *The Third Ear*, argues that the dominance of ‘The Eye’ limits our imagination and he suggests that human experience can only be accounted for through what he calls a ‘a democracy of the senses’ (Berendt 1985: 32). This volume is dedicated to a similar aspiration – toward broadening the senses of sense. Thinking with our ears offers an opportunity to augment our critical imaginations, to comprehend our world and our encounters with it according to multiple registers of feeling.

Thinking within a ‘democracy of the senses’ means that no sense is privileged in relation to its counterparts. Indeed, the kind of sensory democracy that we are proposing enables traces of the past to be registered in the present beyond what might be thought on first sight. The attack on the World Trade Centre on 11 September 2001 was experienced as a global event in real time. What is significant is that the attacks were witnessed visually and endlessly replayed on camera via television and in cyberspace. It was something that was *seen*. Now the date itself has come to signify the quality of what happened on that bright New York morning as well as signalling the start of an epoch. Clifford Geertz wrote:

It is always very difficult to determine just when it was that ‘now’ began. Virginia Woolf thought it was ‘on or about December 1, 1910,’ for W. H. Auden it was ‘September 1, 1939,’ for many of us who worried our way through the balance of terror, it was 1989 and the Fall of the Wall. And now, having survived all that, there is September 11, 2001. (Geertz 2002: 13)

The mediated forms of visual witness facilitated through Sky and CNN filtered the human cost and devastation: TV screens acted like a sensory prophylactic.

Pilgrimages to the wreckage at ground zero invariably involved the taking of photographs, snapped like souvenirs reminiscent of the plucking of pieces of the Berlin Wall after its fall. The vulgar exhibitionism of Ground Zero tourism reached such proportions that, a month after the attacks, photography was prohibited at the site. Darryl Pinckney wrote ‘So many were bearing witness on camera. . . But we couldn’t know the smell. People downtown were still saying weeks later

that the dogs made it impossible to forget the dead were a presence, that the waste remained’ (Pinckney 2001: 12). This is a solemn reminder of the limits of visual, and for that matter, auditory forms of representation.

This book is primarily concerned with sound but we do not want to supplant one ‘primary sense’ with another. Rather, our book is about moving into sound and the opportunities provided by thinking with our ears. As Richard Sennett points out in this volume, it is difficult to separate out our senses, so the sounds produced through the musician’s art are products of his or her sense of touch and feel – ‘lips applied to reed, fingers pushing down on keys or strings’. The volume presents twenty-nine different takes on what it is to know the world through sound.

We have taken the disparate threads of an ever-expanding field of writing on the social nature and meaning of sound and brought them together to produce this *Auditory Culture Reader*. Contributors come from the fields of sociology, cultural studies, media studies, anthropology, cultural history, philosophy, urban geography and musicology. The aim of the volume is to put the study of the auditory soundly on the agenda of these academic disciplines and at the same time provide an integrated picture of what sound studies should ‘look’ like; just as sound is no respecter of space, so sound studies transgress academic divisions. Furthermore, the volume aims to counter the assumed supremacy of the ‘visual’ in accounts of the social. In doing so we do not try to displace the visual but rather point to the equally crucial role that sound plays in our experience and understanding of the world. In short, we claim that a visually based epistemology is both insufficient and often erroneous in its description, analysis and thus understanding of the social world.

The volume provides a comparative template for, in Steven Feld’s words, the production of an acoustemology by investigating ‘the primacy of sound as a modality of knowing and being in the world’. In this introduction we propose a set of concerns through which to filter ‘sound’ studies. This is neither a literature review in the conventional sense nor a manifesto. Rather, we would like the following to be read as a series of provocations towards *deep listening*. The kind of listening we envision is not straightforward, not self-evident – it is not easy listening. Rather, we have to work toward what might be called agile listening and this involves attuning our ears to listen again to the multiple layers of meaning potentially embedded in the same sound. More than this, deep listening involves practices of dialogue and

procedures for investigation, transposition and interpretation. Echoing these methodological concerns, the ensuing account of the contours of 'sound' studies is presented in the form of a series of aphoristic reflections on how the world presents itself when we listen to rather than look upon it.

### What is at Stake in Deep Listening?

- Sound makes us re-think the meaning, nature and significance of our social experience.
- Sound makes us re-think our relation to community.
- Sound makes us re-think our relational experiences, how we relate to others, ourselves and the spaces and places we inhabit.
- Sound makes us re-think our relationship to power.

### Unsound Objectivity

The philosopher Thomas Nagel (1986) defined objectivity as 'the view from nowhere'. Pure objectivity forgets the subjective mechanisms through which we experience the world. For Nagel this implied that the 'looker' takes no account of the eyes through which the look operated. To adopt an objective point of view is to look upon the world as if one wasn't there. The effort to clear away the subjective in the pursuit of pure, disembodied knowledge has a long heritage in visually based epistemologies ranging from Plato through Descartes down to the present. Bourdieu was thinking of the dangers leading from this objectivist illusion when commenting:

How can one avoid succumbing to this dream of omnipotence? I think it important above all to reflect not only on the limits of thought and of the powers of thought, but also on the conditions in which it is exercised, which lead so many thinkers to overstep the limits of a social experience that is necessarily partial and local, both geographically and socially. (Bourdieu 2000: 2)

Bourdieu is not merely criticizing the proclivity of academics to universalize from particular experiences; he is talking about the failure to recognize the particular in social investigation. Both the impetuses to objectify and to universalize appear to be rooted in the historical ascendancy of visual epistemologies in Western culture. Of the five senses, vision is the most 'distancing' one. In vision, subject and object 'appear' as transparent. Implied in the objectification of the world

through sight is the control of that world. Yet if, as Bishop Berkeley notes, 'sounds are as close to us as our thoughts' then by listening we may be able to perceive the relationship between subject and object, inside and outside, and the public and private altogether differently. In its engulfing multi-directionality sound blurs the above distinctions and enables us to re-think our relationship to them.

### Walls have Ears

Accounts of surveillance often begin with Foucault's description of Bentham's panopticon. Bentham designed his perfect prison as one in which the inmates were always visible to the guardians of the institution. The panopticon becomes a metaphor for the transparency of vision. However, Foucault's description presents only part of the picture, the uncritical embracing of which represents the reading of the past through the epistemological lens of the present. We tend to see what we want to see! Bentham's prison was also a listening prison in which, through a series of tubes, the inmates could be heard at all times. Just as God is supposed to hear our prayers (Schafer, in this volume), so the state may now hear our mobile phone calls. Indeed, there is an element of everyday surveillance associated with both domestic and business use of the mobile phone. The history of surveillance is as much a sound history as a history of vision.

Just as we need a sound history of surveillance, so we need to recognize that the senses cannot be 'looked' at in abstraction or isolation. Parents invariably felt more secure in observing the wellbeing of their children without the intrusion of their 'spontaneous' noises of pleasure. The noise of children playing might well destroy the illusion of parental supremacy: who's in charge anyway? Yet the notion that 'children should be seen and not heard' has now been largely superseded by the ever-attentive 'child monitor' left as closely to the child as possible whilst the parent is free to roam the house at will. Parents now wish to hear their child at all times – the sound of breathing ensuring their security. So today it might be more accurate to say that 'children shall be heard and not seen!'

### Sound Structures

We regulate space and time through our use of sound. In this volume Corbin describes the daily regulation of life through the ringing of the village bell in French communes in the nineteenth century. Moore

investigates the structuring of the year through the seasonal marching of Protestants in Northern Ireland. Tacchi describes the privatized 'affective rhythms of the home' through radio listening in Britain. Thibault describes the stepping out to music through Walkman use in urban France. The polyphony of sounds increasingly regulates and is regulated by us as we move through daily life. The historical and comparative significance of this structuring process has yet to be adequately investigated.

Sound connects us in ways that vision does not. Music has been described as a 'mutual tuning in relationship' (Schutz in Filmer in this volume). Paul Gilroy in this volume cites Bloch's observation that 'a note of music comes with us and is "we" unlike the visual, which is primarily, an "I" divorced from the "other"'. Elsewhere in this volume Susan McClary quotes John Coltrane as saying, 'the audience heard "we" even if the singer said "I"'. .

This we-ness in music is also central in Adorno's analysis of the reception of music in the twentieth century. For Adorno, states of 'we-ness' or 'being with', refer to the eclipse of direct experience by technologically mediated forms of experience in the twentieth century. For Adorno, we are alone together through sound reception. The nature and meaning of being tuned in needs further investigation in cultures that possess mobile phones, Walkmans, radios and the ubiquitous sound system of the automobile.

### Passive Ears

Historically the ears have often been portrayed as helpless, they let every noise in indiscriminately, but Schwartz in this volume makes a good case for the intentionality of listening and forms of auditory discrimination. Recently technology has come to the aid of the ears. Walkman users can now filter out the random sounds of the street to be replaced by the chosen sounds of the user. Power to the ear?

What do we listen to? Schafer argues in this volume that we increasingly fail to listen to the natural sounds of the world and that this inattention could have dire consequences. The assumed decline in listening has a long intellectual history. Sometimes it is taken to mean that we don't know how to listen, as in Adorno's prognosis of music reception in the twentieth century. Alternatively, notions of decline fit in with assumptions about the rise of the visual in culture. In essence it means, as we look more, we hear less. Schmidt, in this volume, traces the development of visually based theories deriving from the European

Enlightenment and furthered in the work of Walter Ong and Marshall McLuhan. Within this schema, orally based cultures were progressively supplanted by print-based cultures, and the world became increasingly 'silent' as sight (reading) replaced speech. Yet Hillel Schwartz argues persuasively that the aural rather than the visual was most significant between 1870–1914 with the invention and development of loud artillery, telephone, gramophone, the radio, loudspeaker, subway, elevator and so forth. Beware of listening to the past through contemporary eyes.

### Dangerous Sounds

The allurements of the Sirens remains superior; no one who hears their song can escape.

(Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno)

Sound and its reception are infused with cultural values. Just as sight is understood in terms of scopophilia, so sound has its own narrative of desire. In the *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, Horkheimer and Adorno analyse the passage from Homer's *Odyssey* in which Odysseus pits his wits against the Sirens whose song evokes 'the recent past, with the irresistible promise of pleasure as which their song is heard'. Even though the Sirens know all that has happened, they demand the future as the price of that knowledge (Horkheimer and Adorno 1972). All who hear the song perish. Odysseus' aim is to outwit the Sirens by having himself tied to the mast of his ship thereby enabling him to listen to the enticements of the Sirens' song without being destroyed on the rocks as all others had who sought to have their desires fulfilled. For his strategy to succeed the oarsmen of his ship have their ears blocked with wax, rendering them deaf. The oarsmen are unable to hear both the Sirens' song and Odysseus' increasingly desperate orders to steer the ship onto the rocks. Horkheimer and Adorno discuss this passage in terms of a dialectic in which myth, domination and work are intertwined. Odysseus' desire for pleasure is sublimated into aesthetic experience; he can hear but do nothing about it. If Odysseus experiences the Sirens' song, he gains knowledge of all that can be known. The Sirens' song literally enters Odysseus. As Odysseus listens, tied safely to the mast of his ship, the Sirens' song transforms the distance between his ship and the rocks from which they sing their beguiling song. Their song colonizes him whilst he uses this experience to fulfil his own desires. Aesthetic reflection is a price worth paying for gaining the seductive

experience of song. Only Odysseus hears, the oarsmen continue to row in silence. It is the Sirens who construct Odysseus' soundscape. Yet through his cunning he transforms the nature of this soundscape by having the oarsmen's ears blocked with wax. The soundscape now encompasses only Odysseus and the Sirens; it exists only between him and them. Socially speaking, Odysseus is in his very own soundworld. This passage from Homer becomes the first description of the privatization of experience through sound.

Odysseus is also a traveller who makes himself through his journey. He outwits the Sirens and in doing so furthers his self-development. Odysseus becomes an early tourist of experience whose experience becomes aestheticized. The Sirens form an aesthetic presence in his biography, representing, in part, the draw of the 'exotic' and the forbidden as encountered in his travels and mastered through his intellect. Odysseus becomes an early 'tourist' of experiences (Todorov 1993). Western narratives of sound are associated with dominance, exoticism and Orientalism.

### Sound Progress

New technologies of sound give us as much sound as we want. Sound consumerables of the home permit us to recreate the cinema in our living rooms with the advent of digital wrap-around sound for our television sets. Home hi-fi units had already achieved this for our favourite sounds. Privatization and individualism have increasingly divided the home into multiple listening (and watching) nodules. We sit contentedly in our pulsating homes as sound becomes more like the 'real thing'. Domestic architecture has not yet caught up with this acoustic explosion. As our living spaces become smaller and flimsier so we make more noise! Over 80 per cent of complaints in Britain concerning noise are about neighbours' music. Sound is no respecter of space!

Schafer points out that no natural sound is deafening. In the past the loudest thing most people heard was the sound of thunder. People used to go out of their way to hear more noise – noise was an event! Yet industrialized sounds were always ambivalently received. Bijsterveld's fascinating study of early responses to the sounds of industrialization point to the fact that sound 'progress' is always a contested field. Ironically, she points to the fact that the noisiest people often complain about the noise of others. The upper classes' response to the automobile was invariably negative in the early years of the twentieth century, yet they were the only people who could afford to drive. Paradoxically, it

was the driver, not the machine, which took the blame, thus consigning sound to class values. Not in my backyard!

### Sound Values and Sonic Bridges

Sensitivity to noise is often class and culturally based. Cultures with strong notions of 'private space' as a form of entitlement are more prone to complaints about noise. The production of noise is often perceived as 'uncivilized' within a bourgeois ethic (Mark Smith in this volume) in which silence was truly 'golden' – yet this begs the question as to who defines the nature of noise, sound and music (Julian Henriques in this volume). Smith points to the positive reception of the noise of the crowd in the north of antebellum America as symbolizing democracy whilst Kahn points to the debate concerning the distinction between noise and music in avant-garde musical circles in the twentieth century. Your noise, my music!

Walkmans are the iconic urban technology of privatization, permitting users to construct their own individualized sound world wherever they go. Experience is aestheticized and the world becomes what the user wants it to be. Sound manages the user's mood, feelings and sense of time and place. Public space is transformed as users move through city spaces. Tonkiss, in this volume, discusses the forms of 'social deafness' that arise when individuals become lost in their own personal sonic universe. These individuals are not like Walter Benjamin or Joseph Roth – urban flaneurs – but rather preoccupied, narcissus-like, with the management of their own experience. Similarly, automobile users engage in multiple sound-technology use. The car becomes a perfectible mobile acoustic chamber in which individuals invariably prefer to listen in solitude (Putnam 2000). Thibaud uses the term 'sonic bridge' to describe the way in which music links the insides and outsides of social experience into a seamless web. Meanwhile mobile phone use provides the sounds of intimacy wherever the user may be. Sound transforms public space into private property. Home is where my sounds are!

### Sounds of the Wind and Silence

Sounds are embedded with both cultural and personal meanings; sounds do not come at us merely raw. Adorno makes this point when he says:

We can tell whether we are happy by the sound of the wind. It warns the unhappy man of the fragility of his house, hounding him from

shallow sleep and violent dreams. To the happy man it is the song of his protectedness: its furious howling concedes that it has power over him no longer. (Adorno 1974: 49)

Adorno wrote the above whilst living in exile in Hollywood during World War Two. Adorno's lament is of one who senses the fragility of home. The wind is a variable upon which cultural specificity is written. One senses that Adorno felt the roof was falling in on him many times. Moore in his piece on Northern Ireland describes the sound of Chinook helicopters hovering over North Belfast: for Protestants this was security, for Catholics a threat. For the rest of us it is *Apocalypse Now*.

John Cage commented: 'There is no such thing as an empty space or an empty time. There is always something to see something to hear. In fact, try as we may to make a silence, we cannot.' Our notions of peaceful silence are mediated through culture. Rousseau describes in his journals escaping from the city to walk in the countryside so that he could be alone with his thoughts. The sounds of nature were no hindrance to him, only the sounds of people and technology. Gustav Mahler, whilst writing in the sounds of nature to his Third Symphony on the shores of Lake Geneva, found the sounds of birds singing intolerable. Glenn Gould, the eccentric Canadian pianist, found the sound of the vacuum cleaner an aid to his memorizing and playing the music of Bach. Mark Smith, in this volume, describes how southern slaveholder families in antebellum America feared the silence of slaves whilst today in urban culture many of us switch on the television set as soon as we enter home and many of us put music on to lull ourselves to sleep at night. Silence becomes something to banish. Silence is illusive. Fran Tonkiss writes in this volume on the difficulty of finding silence in urban life. It is precarious and full of a silent presence – 'Empty space that doesn't talk back is as evocative as the hush that falls over the crowd, the telephone that doesn't ring, the dog that doesn't bark.'

### Living with Music and Keeping Time

Ralph Ellison, the renowned African American writer and one-time musician, stated the choice starkly. In his early days as a writer he lived in a black neighbourhood surrounded by a cacophony of sounds from assorted drunks in the street to the flat melodies of an aspiring singer who lived in the apartment above. The streets of sound unsettled him and he struggled in vain to write sentences that would sing, or even to find his own voice. One day he turned on the radio to hear Kathleen

Ferrier singing Handel's *Rodelinda*. She reached out to him from the speaker: *Art thou troubled? Music will calm thee . . .* From then on Ellison resolved to block out the metropolitan clamour. He acquired and assembled audio equipment and filled his room with the melodies of Mozart and Duke Ellington and waged war with noisy neighbours through the Hi-Fi volume control. Remembering this hostile aural terrain and the refuge he found in music, he wrote in 1955: 'In those days it was either live with music or die with noise, and we chose rather desperately to live' (Ellison 1972: 187).

Ralph Ellison's parable alerts us to think about one's neighbourhood as an acoustic landscape. In this sense he anticipated what Murray Shafer calls a *soundscape*, or the auditory terrain in its entirety of overlapping noises, sounds and human melodies (Shafer 1977). Susan J. Smith has pointed out the usefulness of examining cultures of sound and music as a means to move beyond geography's concern with visible worlds (Smith 1994; 1997; 2000). Indeed, if we listen to it the landscape is not so much a static topography that can be mapped and drawn, as a fluid and changing surface that is transformed as it is enveloped by different sounds. Fran Tonkiss in this volume comments that the modern city it is not just spectacular but sonic – 'the heat of July is there in the murmur of electric fans'. Indeed, thinking with our ears directs us to the temporal aspect of social life. Ellison reached the same conclusion close to half a century ago: 'Perhaps in the swift change of American society in which the meanings of one's origin are so quickly lost, one of the chief values of living with music lies in its power to give us an orientation in time' (Ellison 1972: 198).

The history of marching songs is also the history of keeping in time, in step. Music regulates where bodies meet sound. The history of dancing is also the history of keeping in time. To keep in time manifests itself in Cora Bender's analysis of 'pow wow' drumming ceremonies and equally in Paul Filmer's discussion of amateur choral singers. Together we move in time to sound. It can involve moving outside the time signatures of dominant social forces. Yet, sound regulation can also be coercive, the enforced marching of the prisoner, the enforced singing of the southern slave described by Mark Smith in this volume.

### Vibrant Melody to Lifeless Corpse?

Roland Barthes pointed out the written language is the only semiotic system capable of interpreting another semiotic system. He asked, 'How, then, does language manage when it has to interpret music? Alas, it

seems very badly' (Barthes 1977: 179). Confronted with music there is a poverty of language; we simply don't have the words to transpose the alchemy of sound. Barthes concluded that in describing music we have to rely on 'the poorest of linguistic categories: the adjective' (Barthes 1977: 179). The best one can hope for in writing about music is better kinds of failure: the least that should be insisted on is to avoid prose that strangles the life in music.

The types of deep listening proposed here involve adopting forms of representations – including musical notation – that are beyond The Word. This, in many respects, is the territory of musicologists and there are dangers inherent within this approach, such as viewing musical form as a closed system. As Sebastian Chan warns, 'Musicological analysis [can] reduce vibrant musics to lifeless corpses fit for autopsy' (Chan 1998: 93). The dangers identified by Chan are important but, equally, it is important to reach for a way of representing the qualities of sound without merely resorting to adjectives following Roland Barthes' warning. David Brackett's analysis of the music of James Brown is the kind of 'brilliant failure' to be recommended (Brackett 1995). In this study Brackett develops aural inventory of Brown's tune *Superbad* identifying its 'double voiced' quality and notating meticulously the singer's screams and vocal timbre. In the end, he fails but the result is a better kind of failure because Brackett takes the form of the music seriously and offers a way to name some of its elements and structures.

### Sounding Places and Acoustic Maps

Paul Gilroy has written extensively about the relationship between music, place and time. His book *There Ain't No Black in the Union Jack*, published in 1987, included an extended discussion of black music as containing opposition frameworks, a critique of capitalism and registers of memory. The traces of the past and present of the African diaspora are rendered and recovered through the analysis of music ranging from Bobby Womack to Jah Shaka. The relationship between the aesthetics and form of the music and the contexts of its consumption and where it is enjoyed is central to Gilroy's analysis. His contribution to this volume situates the music of Jimi Hendrix at the crossroads between a kind of 'non tradition' and futuristic modernist experimentation.

Particularly important, here, is the role that the technology of sound reproduction plays in giving the music a unique quality in the dance hall. Henriques' and Henry's contributions in different ways point to

the transformation of space and time achieved through the massive purpose-built reggae sound systems that endow the music with a new sonic quality. The bass registers of the sound systems also transform the inhospitable concrete metropolitan architecture in which they find an itinerant home:

The town halls and municipal buildings of the inner-city in which dances are sometimes held are transformed by the power of these musics to disperse and suspend the temporal and spatial order of the dominant culture. As the sound system wires are strung up and the lights go down, dancers could be transported anywhere in the diaspora without altering the quality of their pleasures. (Gilroy 2002: 284)

Through this process, *outernational* forms of culture, music and expression flourish despite the inhospitalities of racism.

Comparable conclusions might be drawn about the way in which the urban (and sometimes suburban and rural) landscapes are transformed albeit in different ways by a host of dance music cultures from soul and funk warehouse parties to the unofficial raves of the 1980s and including the kaleidoscopic cultures of dance found in contemporary club culture. In each case a subterranean cartography is drawn through sound and the night-time consumption of music. More than this, each of these scenes – be it R&B or Techno – have deeper connections with cognate scenes elsewhere in New York or Berlin than they do with the next club night and the music that brings local space and its physical structure to life in a new way (Straw 1997).

David Hesmondhalgh and Keith Negus suggest that within the studies of popular music there has been:

a move from the nation as the prime focus for understanding the relationship of popular music to places, and a growing emphasis on the minutiae of locality, and on international musical movements. This has been accompanied by a growing realization that popular music forms are no longer integrally tied to specific ethnic groups (assumptions that link white American males to rock music, Latin identities to salsa and African-Americans to rhythm and blues). Instead, musical forms are increasingly being theorized as the result of a series of transforming stylistic practices and transnational human musical interactions. (Hesmondhalgh and Negus 2002: 8)

Listening to music offers new opportunities to address issues of globalization, place, identity, belonging, history and memory. Think about the way in which hearing a particular piece of music can invoke a vivid memory, or how a record collection can act as a kind of jukebox of remembrance, each piece of music associated with a particular time and place.

The kind of listening we want to argue for in approaching musical cultures consists of three main elements. First, a commitment to taking musical form seriously, to search for ways to represent and transpose sound and music. Second, engaging in dialogue with the people who produce and create music as well as those who consume it. This is not a matter of just listening to people tell of how it 'really is'; rather, it involves engaging in a critical and reflective dialogue that examines the status of each account as well as the terms and frameworks of interpretation. Finally, deep listening also involves participation in the spaces where music is made, felt and enjoyed.

### Natural Voices, Sound Identities

Racism is a discourse of power that thinks with its eyes. The idea of race, itself a product of history rather than nature, is a categorical mode of thinking that anchors human difference in *The Visible*. Variations in humankind are organized into colour-coded containers of identity. The power of racial thinking lay in its capacity to shroud its social construction in a seeming 'matter of fact' natural authority. It would be impossible to think about the history of racism without its scopic component. You can't hear race in the same way that you see it or recognize its mirage. Sound may offer many confusions. A young woman who learned to speak within multi-racial peer groups in London is constantly told 'you don't sound white on the telephone?' as her clients walk through the door of the Citizen's Advice Bureau. A racist employer is appalled to see a black person turn up for a job interview – 'he sounded white on the phone'. The violence exacted by racism is that it places the life world of people into what Imre Kertese called 'identity enclosures' wrapped in systems of 'collective labelling' (Kertese 2002: 34).

This is also true for whole genres of music. In the MTV age, music is something to be seen animated through visual presentation in music videos. The effects of this has been to code genres of music racially. In America this means consigning R&B and hip-hop to ghetto blackness and rock and country-and-western to the vanilla suburbs and white rural interiors respectively. But, the music sings another song for those

who listen to it with respect. African American singer Charley Pride learned to love country music through listening to the Grand Ole Opry that his father tuned into on an old Philco radio. Even in the segregated world of his youth in Sledge, Mississippi, sounds escaped. But Pride's career illustrates how profoundly a world coloured by racism listens with its eyes.

In his autobiography he recounts the story of how he came to Nashville and auditioned for Jack Johnson the man who would eventually manage him. 'Well, they tell me you sing country music,' said Johnson. 'So sing some country music for me.' Pride ran through a couple of songs finishing with a Hank Williams's number. He remembered:

When I finished, Johnson said, 'Pretty good. Pretty good. Now sing one in your natural voice.'

'What do you mean' I said. 'This is my natural voice.'

He shrugged. 'Sing another one'. (Pride and Henderson 1994: 135)

Racialized logic confines some sounds to particular colour-coded bodies but music offers what Berendt calls a kind of 'crossing place'. Put simply, you can't segregate the airwaves – sounds move, they escape, they carry. The sound proofing around culture is always incomplete even in the face of those who forbid it to be so.

'Auditory space has no point of favored focus', wrote D. C. Williams in 1955. It is a space in which multiple registers can co-exist simultaneously – the hum of the computer, the rattle of the keypad, the sound of the television in the next room, a child laughing in the street. There is no focus all are there at the same time with definition and clarity. Thinking with sound and music may offer the opportunity for thinking through issues of inclusion, coexistence and multicultural in a more humane way and allow us to think through what a multicultural landscape might sound like in the age of information and global interdependency. But there are no guarantees.

Sanjay Sharma writes in this volume about the ways in which exoticism and Orientalism may process the sounds of alterity. Through this cultural hybridity may 'enter into the smorgasbord of contemporary urban culture'. Following others, he argues that there may be things within the sounds that remain untranslatable within the regimes of hegemonic representation. He concludes: 'A subaltern musical politics of transfiguration isn't an unrealizable utopia, but a register for concrete, site-specific minitorian becomings. Untranslatable Asian sounds operate on a sonic plane which evade capture and yet their alterity is at work all around us.'



It is the fact that sound provides a place in which these traces can be present and sometimes latent that makes it so important. It may be that within the registers of aural culture that memories are carried regardless of whether the bearers of such embodied traditions are aware of them. Vic Seidler concludes his contribution on diaspora sounds with the reflection that certain sounds call us at different moments in our lives: 'In my twenties I never thought that a time might come when I would need to explore my Jewish identities and that music and sound might be an important part of these explorations.' It is this sense that sound and music can call us by turns toward the past and the future. With a different but not unrelated emphasis Ralph Ellison concluded in 1955:

Those who know their native culture and love it unchauvinistically are never lost when encountering the unfamiliar. Living with music today we find Mozart and Ellington, Kirsten Flagstad and Chippie Hill, William L. Dawson and Carl Orff all forming part of our regular fare; all add to its significance . . . In so doing, it gives significance to all those indefinable aspects of experience which nevertheless help to make us what we are. In the swift whirl of time music is a constant, reminding us of what we were and of that toward which we aspired. Are thou troubled? Music will not only calm, it will ennoble thee. (Ellison 1972: 198)

It is not only a matter of choosing to 'live with music' but also embracing the invitation to listen to the social world actively with depth and humility. Moving away from these opening comments we want to briefly introduce the extraordinary writing contained in the pages that follow. We have collected here a combination of specially commissions new writing and previously published articles. All of them address the project of thinking with and through sound.

*The Auditory Cultures Reader* is divided into five major sections each prefaced with a short introduction. Here we have tried to group literatures thematically while featuring writers from a wide range of traditions and academic disciplines. The book's main thematic threads include theoretical and epistemological questions (thinking about sound); historical studies (histories of sound), cross cultural examples (anthropologies of sound), accounts of urban life and popular culture (sounds in the city: arenas, rituals, pathways) and finally an account of the place and significance of music (narratives of sound: music, voice and identity). We hope the invitation to move *into sound* will open up new ways of thinking about the 'senses of sense' and the rich insights offered by the writers represented in this book will invite fresh appreciation of the quality of social experience, memory, time and place.

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