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# Sonic Pleasure, Absence and the History of the Self: An Alternative Approach to the Criticism of Sound Art

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Historical, psychoanalytic and cinema criticism have characterised the history of Western modernity and the individual subject as founded upon an affective lack. Pleasure is solicited by the promise of fullness, but this is never fulfilled, fuelling further desire. Sound art however is more typically theorised as inherently present and immersive, as a form that offers direct experience, which literally touches the subject. I draw upon the work of Jonathan Sterne, Steven Connor, psychoanalysis and film criticism to rearticulate not just modernist media and subjectivity as characterised by lack and absence, but the perception of aestheticised sound. Starting with an analysis of influential seventeenth century audiovisual theorist Athanasius Kircher, I sketch a history of the self and media where pleasure is solicited and threatened by subjective absence and lack, in which the aesthetics of Romanticism, absolute music, Alvin Lucier, Noise artists (Justice Yeldham), feminist sound poets (Amanda Stewart), the New Music Ensemble Decibel (director Cat Hope) and others are implicated.

## Introduction: Acoustic Hierarchies and the Ideology of Sonic Presence

Authors who write on contemporary sound art employ the words “immersion” and “presence” with startling regularity as terms whose invocation guarantees a progressive political imperative or avant-garde aesthetic to any work exhibiting these characteristics. Within this poetics, the allegedly unidirectional, distancing and planar experience of visual media (painting, photography, cinema, print)

is typically implied as the degraded inverse of such valorised modes. I have argued elsewhere that the fact that sound can agitate the body from multiple directions is not necessarily a defining feature of sound art or acoustic experience as a whole, let alone experimental or avant-garde work.<sup>i</sup> Jonathan Sterne observes that much aural criticism is based on a putatively universal model of unmediated bodily experience.<sup>ii</sup> Walter Ong, for example, claims that: “Sound is immediate, temporal, and active,” whilst text and other forms of recorded cultural knowledge are “artificial” or technological, serving to alienate individuals from a previously direct manner of experiencing the world.<sup>iii</sup> Even historians such as Jacques Attali and Steven Connor suggest that sound is inherently related to “touching” and to other forms of immediate, embodied experience, whilst Theodor Adorno characterises “the tone as the threshold of mere existence, the pure medium of expression,” sound’s ultimate essence being seen as inimical to the mediating effects of language, culture and visualisation.<sup>iv</sup>

As Sterne points out, it is perception itself that is embodied and “direct,” not particular sensory apparatus. Rather than basing sonic criticism on the implicitly essentialist, biological models and prioritisation of a metaphysics of presence which underpins the work of Ong and Schafer, it is more productive to focus analysis upon the historical and discursive construction of acoustic experience and its relation to other modes such as vision. I contend that the rhetorical pairing of presence versus absence within Christianity, Platonic theory and

psychoanalytic models of desire offers ways of thinking about not just sonic history, but sonic pleasure, which have only been sparingly employed in the context of contemporary sound art. Such a model can usefully be applied to both visual and sonic media. This essay then represents an attempt to sketch a general theory of absence, lack and distanciation within audiovisual cultures in history and the present. Culture after modernism—broadly defined here as that set of social, cultural, economic and subjective modalities which first emerged in Europe at the close of the eighteenth century<sup>v</sup>—proved highly conducive to the pleasurable reception of sounds perceived around an aesthetics of lack; what Bethold Hoeckner has called “the aesthetics of sound dying away in the distance,” or Richard Kramer a “poetics of the remote.”<sup>vi</sup> Absence has a history, along with that of the human subject. I sketch the interaction of the two below. The electronic media employed by Pierre Schaeffer, Justice Yeldham, Amanda Stewart and the New Music Ensemble Decibel accentuate and capitalise on these distancing acoustic pleasures, but they are not necessary preconditions for the aesthetic distanciation of sound—as the example of Athanasius Kircher illustrates. The possibility of acoustic absence predates contemporary media, whilst nevertheless being closely tied to the potentialities such media activate.

In formulating such a model, alluring conceptions such as Marshall McLuhan’s and Schafer’s observation that humans do not have “earlids” should not deceive critics into imagining that a cultural or aesthetic account of sound (the physical materialization of acoustic phenomena) can be bracketed off from an analysis of listening (the perception of sound), since it is only the latter which the cultural critic has access to.<sup>vii</sup> Aesthetic and historical criticism cast considerable light on the epistemology of listening and seeing, but have little purchase on ontological questions such as what might constitute pre- or trans-cultural experience. In what follows I explicate a number of rhetorical constructs to determine what alternative forms of acoustic-cultural knowledge or pleasure might arise from treating sound not as inherently present and so different from vision, but rather as absent and therefore sharing some characteristics with visual media. In this, I build on the work of Sterne and Connor, placing their studies of the histories of modernist recording and listening into a wider aesthetic and cultural context, including the history of the subject, film theory and psychoanalysis.

Historians of media and sound recording observe that cultural modernity was facilitated by, and in turn encouraged, the collapsing of time, space and presence through the agency of new media institutions (telephony, phonography, photography, telegraphy, newsprint, and the international mass market in sheet music and player-piano rolls), as well as rapid travel and distribution networks (rail, modern roads, clippers, powered-shipping, and air travel). The speculative teleological accounts of this loss of “presence” through the proliferation of mediating technologies authored by Ong, McLuhan, Harold Innis and Friedrich Kittler have been tested and challenged by archival researchers.<sup>viii</sup> These insights from history are however rarely applied within contemporary sound aesthetics, partly because many artists such as Schafer and Barry Truax invoke a hierarchical, biological model of the subject to defend and promote sound art as a significant aesthetic tradition.

Debates regarding the nature of sound, transcription and vision are deeply implicated within the politics of the academy and the art market. Galleries remain resistant to treating acoustic objects on an equal footing with painting and sculpture, whilst the ideology of presence casts the manipulation of sound as being more in tune with the alleged ontological status of acoustic perception than the composition of notated harmonies. These institutional and aesthetic conflicts have caused commentators to overlook a major dialectic of contemporary sound arts between presence and absence—or more particularly, the possibility that aural pleasure might be generated in a manner akin to that often attributed to cinematic pleasure, which may be seen to depend on physical absence. It is this perplexing, fantasmatic play of subjective presence and absence within the acoustic figure that produces much of its ambivalent, dialogic appeal—be it in overtly musical forms, or through more abstract sonic manifestations and electronic media.

## A Prehistory of Meditation: Athanasius Kircher

Contrary to what many scholars and laypeople have postulated, the history of mediation does not begin with the invention of “indexical” forms of representation such as photography and phonography, such forms having often been attributed with a direct and non-arbitrary relation to the object to which they refer, like an imprint. Writing, musical notation, printing, and indeed the entire tradition of mnemo-techniques of recitation, repetition and bardic transmission all constitute ways

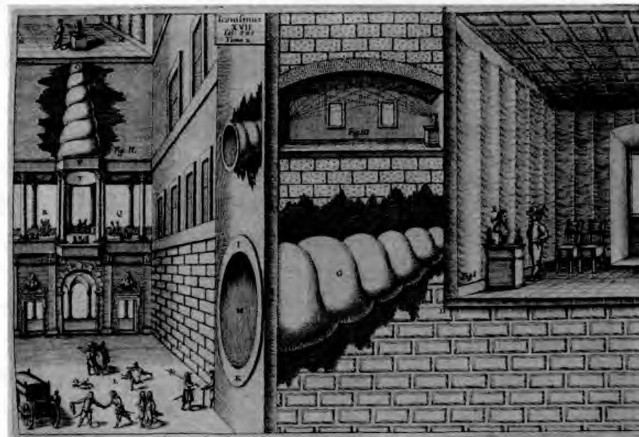
in which songs, sounds, voices and musical compositions moved beyond individual vocalizations or performances, and across time and space. It is indeed difficult to imagine any form of representation which would not serve to mediate experience.<sup>ix</sup> The repeatable transcription of acoustic phenomena is not in and of itself novel. Theodor Adorno denigrated twentieth century musical culture as much for the tendency of orchestras to act as machines for the reproduction of scored music, as for the emergence of the recording industry, highlighting how performance culture itself often acts as a form of recording and distancing.<sup>x</sup> Hector Berlioz attempted to mitigate this possibility by increasing the number of performers he could direct at one time by using a modified form of telegraphy.<sup>xi</sup> This expanded the simultaneity and reach of his live orchestrations. Even so, Berlioz concluded that the true author of such a mediated performance was not the individual who notated the score, nor the players, but rather the conductor of the orchestral machine itself. The most significant change over time has not therefore been the advent of distanciation, but rather in the form of media or institutions—orchestral and electronic—through which acoustic transcription, expansion and reification has been effected, together with the cultural status accorded to authorship and individualism.

Under Western modernity, the monadised self became the foundational element of the modern state and culture. It was this newly articulated model of the subject which made up the social polis and whose energies, allegiances and pleasures had to be channelled in order to construct social institutions, relations and forces. Under these conditions, presence and authorship took on an enhanced significance. It is no accident that copyright and patent law arose with the development of political and cultural modernity, under which the status of the individual was dependent upon his or her ability to control the products of his or her physical and intellectual labour. The boundary-skin and “sonorous envelope” separating one individual from another became an increasingly important site where negotiations between self and other, between the pleasurable acoustic reinforcement of the subject, versus threatening sonic assaults, were played out and articulated. I have written elsewhere on the persistence of the importance of the published lecture for the transmission of knowledge under modernity.<sup>xii</sup> The model of the transcribed lesson in promoting the work of physicians and others during the nineteenth century balanced the need to reproduce and communicate ideas beyond the physical realm occupied by authors themselves,

whilst nevertheless adhering to a rhetorical form whereby the spoken words of the author were said to be directly available to the reader as if he or she attended the lesson. Printed lectures, sermons, debates, and political orations were major nineteenth century publishing genres, helping to fashion forms of speech and listening.

Jacques Derrida has described the philosophical underpinnings of this concept of authorship as phonological, in which even written words are seen as fundamentally connected to the more highly prized aural speech of the author.<sup>xiii</sup> The latter serves as the standard against which other forms of presence and transcription are judged under modernity. It is therefore modernist culture that enables the possibility of “schizophrenia” (Schafer’s term for the alienation of sound from its source), rather than technology, recorded sound, industrialization or acoustics.

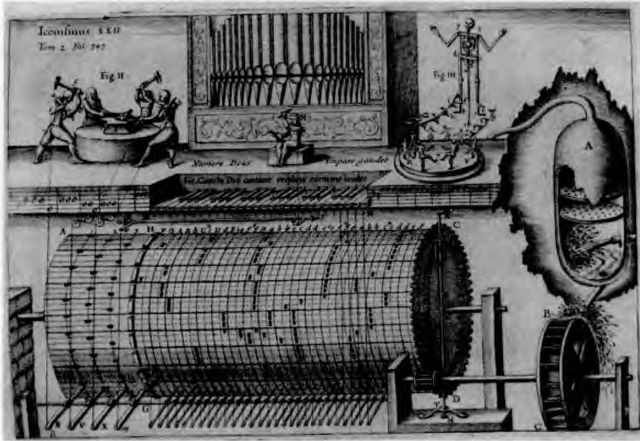
The possibility that sound could be removed from its origin predates the invention of both sound recording and movable type. The Neo-Platonist, Giambattista della Porta, postulated in 1584 that one might capture and preserve sounds within the curves of pipes or caverns, as in Plato’s earlier description of his eponymous cave of distorting shadows and echoes.<sup>xiv</sup> Indeed, Medieval manuscripts and illustrations depicted talking figures as standing below scrolls upon which their words were revealed as the text unfurled. Such coils of parchment, stone and metal cached these airy manifestations of noise.



**Figure 1: Ear of Dionysius, from Kircher, *Musurgia universalis* (1650).**

Athanasius Kircher produced perhaps the most famous depiction of such an echoic device for acoustic storage and transmission in his *Musurgia universalis* (1650). Kircher’s compendium drew upon diverse classical and scholarly sources, and was internationally distributed by Jesuit scholars, missionaries and others, influencing Sebastian Bach

and Ludwig van Beethoven. The *Musurgia* included an illustration of the “Ear of Dionysius” (Fig. 1): a conch-like hollow whose mouth opened onto a piazza, and whose point emptied into a listening orifice hidden in the mouth of a bust, located in a chamber beside the square.<sup>xv</sup> The aim of this classical device was to facilitate listening at a distance. Kircher allegedly had a similar structure built into the museum he curated at the College of Rome, which allowed him to communicate with the doorman without leaving his room.<sup>xvi</sup> Kircher also wrote on musical transcription (seeking a universal language of words and harmonies), and designed musical automata which played themselves, producing sound not through human presence, but via the mediated action of those physical laws which God, the Prime Mover, had instantiated (Fig. 2)—as well as computational devices which could generate novel musical motifs to accompany any passage of text which the operator might supply.

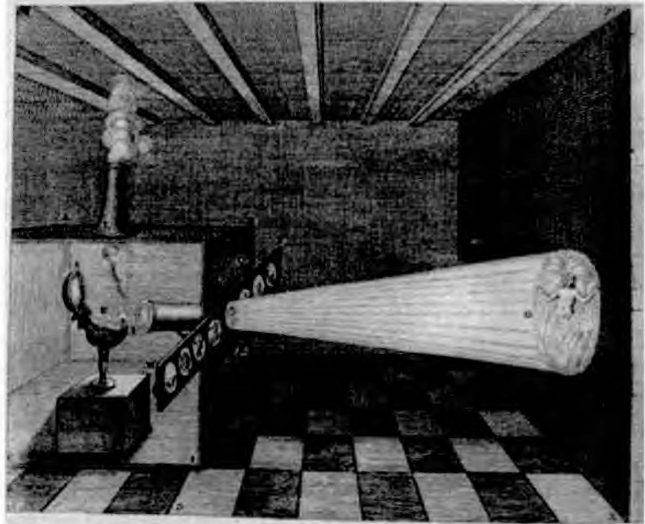


**Figure 2: Kircher's hydraulic musical automaton, at the Quirinal Palace, Rome; *Musurgia universalis* (1650).**

Kircher's Neo-Platonic description of sound, music and acoustics is significant in that it contradicts the models proffered by Ong, McLuhan, Schafer and their fellows. Kircher did not see sound and light as qualitatively different. He claimed “sound is the ape of light.” Just as all illumination was derived from a Divine point of origin, so too did all music and harmony represent a “refracted” echo of the generation of the universe in God's perfect playing of the cosmic, polyphonic musical organ.<sup>xvii</sup> Kircher followed earlier authors in seeing the Word of God itself, spoken at Creation through the Deity's perfect self-generation, as the ultimate linguistic, conceptual, spiritual and acoustic mystery; an archetypal sound whose presence and signification permeated all things, but which was never fully present within any single object, sound, or vision. The Word announced its presence everywhere and nowhere, present and

yet absent, always with us, yet simultaneously held at a distance, until the individual rose to the Heavenly plane after the last Trump had sounded.

This could have led Kircher to prefigure later theorists in ascribing music with a special facility to put the listener in touch with the presence of the Divine—and Kircher's interest in those musics which allegedly predated the Fall of the Tower of Babel and the Flood reflected a desire to identify a form of communication which could transcend the multiplicity of later terrestrial languages.



**Figure 3: Kircher's “Sorcerer's Lamp” showing a soul lost in the shadows & fires of Hell; *Ars magna lucis et umbrae* (1646).**

Even so, Kircher concluded that just as the material universe was one of shadows, in which the individual only had access to the dimly reflected glow of God's pure light, so too the universal harmony of spheres could only be indirectly heard murmuring within, under, and between the sounds of the cosmos itself—be these musical or not. All sounds could be deceptive, just as all sights could be. The aim then was to master “the great art of light and shadow” (the title of Kircher's 1646 book on optics), as well as the principles of Universal Music Making [*Musurgia universalis*]. In both of these, the authoring of sights and sounds acted at a distance through the media of optics and acoustics. Indeed, much recent scholarship on Kircher focuses on his position as the main disseminator of the then new, pre-cinematic medium of the “magic lantern,” which he used to demonstrate how light and darkness could be manipulated by God, the Devil and Man to produce wondrous visions of both a reliable and a deceptive nature (Fig. 3).<sup>xviii</sup> Kircher's publications are emblematic of this multimodal thinking, combining illustrations, designs for instrument which readers could build themselves or inspect in Rome (Fig. 2), various forms of musical

notation, and other materials, all of which appeared within Kircher's live presentations to patrons, courtiers and visitors.<sup>xix</sup>

## Subjective Listening and Seeing under Modernism

If mediation and distanciation were not novel characteristics of life under modernism, but rather wider phenomena which acquired an enhanced status within post-Enlightenment culture, one must also question the claims by McLuhan, Ong, Schafer, and Guy Debord that modernism is a markedly visual or spectacular culture. Although Ong's model of "primary" pre-modern orality and a later, supplementary "secondary" orality within print culture suggests that multiple modalities can coexist, the hierarchisation of these terms implies that the latter displaces the former. Ong, for example, felt print culture contained only a "residue" of primary orality. As Sterne observes, most commentators have taken these formulations to be played out as part of a "zero sum game, where the dominance of one sense by necessity leads to the decline of another" over time.<sup>xx</sup>

Kircher's example demonstrates that highly prized forms of Debordian spectacular displays of power and aesthetics were not unique to modernism or post-industrial capitalism. Medieval and Renaissance society featured a range of audiovisual spectacles, from the annual Eucharist procession,<sup>xxi</sup> through to carnival and the post-Lentian celebrations beloved of Attali and Mikhail Bakhtin. As with the magic lantern shows of the eighteenth and nineteenth century, these art forms were patronised by both elites and the general populace. Even with the rise of perspective and of the modernist belief that data gathered through empirical observation represented one of the most reliable forms of information, society did not become any less noisy. Rather than seeing such acoustic and oral phenomena as representing little more than a debased, secondary residue of an earlier, more authentic primary communication, Klaus Jensen has argued that later media served to amplify and extend such pre-modern modalities.<sup>xxii</sup>

Notwithstanding the assertions of Schafer et al that acoustic media are inherently resistive of such transformations, listening became an object of knowledge under modernity.<sup>xxiii</sup> Stern explains how auscultation and the use of the stethoscope represented one such instance where the focused interpretation of sonic information enabled physicians to construct a specialist body of knowledge which they, as privileged listeners, were

uniquely able to deploy.<sup>xxiv</sup> Similarly, psychiatrists like Philippe Pinel and William Tuke were amongst the first to attend to the words of their charges, thereby joining post-Tridentine confessors, telegraphers, telephonists, stenographers, secretaries, vocal coaches, musicologists, teachers of solfège, and others who developed forms of what Sterne has termed "audile" or selectively focused, rationalised, objectified and reflexive hearing.<sup>xxv</sup>

Building on the work of that quintessential modernist Sigmund Freud, Jacques Lacan proposes a model of identity formation in which sight plays a prominent role. Lacan argues that when a child first sees him or herself in a reflective surface, this elicits ambivalent feelings out of which the mature psyche is generated. Individuals project their ideal conceptions of themselves onto this visual doppelgänger, producing what is known as the "ego ideal." Nevertheless, this doubling is troubling, as it demonstrates not only the physical coherence of the embodied subject, but also the possibility that this coherence may be violated if aspects of the self—in this case the ego ideal and visual manifestations of oneself—are separated from the subject. The individual is both entranced by the possibility of fantasmic power that this enables, whilst threatened by the potential erosion, fragmentation and objectification of his or her self. For Lacan, this initial vision of psychic and subjective potency is associated with paternal power and authority (the Law of the Father) and the phallus. The mirror stage is therefore driven by the subject's recognition of the possibility of castration, or that the child does not in fact have the paternal phallus, and never will.<sup>xxvi</sup>

Psychoanalysts and their supporters do not always make clear that Lacan's model only applies to the subjects of the Western nuclear family, whose heightened affectivity produces what Freud described as "family romance." As such, these theories have descriptive (though not necessarily biological) force for post-Enlightenment individuals—and can only be used with caution outside the context of Western modernity and the spread of bourgeois values that accompanied this.<sup>xxvii</sup> Freud and Lacan do however offer a methodology through which one can describe the manner in which the modernist subject's anxieties were elicited and contained through the power of the gaze, as well as through those perspectival and quasi-perspectival modes of viewing which flourished under modernism.<sup>xxviii</sup> From the prosecution of colonialism, through to the classification of the body and of the criminal—as well as via the development of scientific knowledge more broadly—such "techniques of the observer" (to



use Jonathan Crary's phrase) permeated every aspect of modernist culture and its subjects.

Nevertheless, the elevated status of visual knowledge did not silence an acoustics of the self or Ong's prized "voice of God."<sup>xxxix</sup> From the individualized internal dialogue which came to define authorial style, to diarizing one's life experiences and the exchange of letters, a range of forms of subjective listening and vocalization became crucial to the generation and maintenance of the modernist self and those aesthetic, political and cultural tropes associated with it. As literary critics have noted, "the registers of orality and literacy remain so intricately tangled that no neat division between the two can hold"—as the close interweaving of print culture with sermonizing and political oratory demonstrates.<sup>xxx</sup> Joseph Meisel observes that "oral culture did not merely survive in the nineteenth century; it flourished."<sup>xxxi</sup> Similar relations developed between recorded musics and musical performances, where the aesthetics of "liveness" acted in tandem with a contradictory recognition of musical performance as highly mediated form of technology in its own right, in which transcription, amplification, recording and playback produced a comingling of direct and tangible registers within the reception of crafted sound.<sup>xxxii</sup> This complex interaction of dualities also informed the work of modernist writers such as the Romantics, James Joyce and Louis Ferdinand Céline, who attempted to harness the potency, musicality and abject poetics of music and noise to craft their own distinctive forms of written prose. Céline talked of "trombones" and "full orchestras" of squawking birds and unstoppable, internal sounds which menaced and propelled his writing throughout his life.<sup>xxxiii</sup> Here, unlocatable somatic noise became text, and vice versa.

Subjectivity and personal expression under modernity was frequently figured as a form of "silent reading" or internal listening,<sup>xxxiv</sup> whilst vocal accents, patterns of speech, and even the soundscape of the home, were read as markers of class and social mobility.<sup>xxxv</sup> Nor were these modes strictly separable, one early twentieth century French elocutionist arguing that language acquisition was based on "sonorité," or the feel of words in the mouth: "one memorizes thus by the organs of the voice."<sup>xxxvi</sup> Freud's modification of the confessional into the "talking cure" brought into literal acoustic space such forms of self-conscious, reflexive speech and listening.<sup>xxxvii</sup> Moreover, the cultivation of an affective subjectivity through vocalization, aesthetic consumption, concert-going, and listening—be this

attending to the musical accompaniment to popular melodramas by René Charles de Pixérécourt, or listening to recordings of operas by Christoph Willibald Gluck; visiting the local athenaeum to hear a respected orator, or reading a transcription of a militant speech presented at an outdoor workers' meeting; playing the piano within the domestic space, or competing at the Belfast Harp Festival of 1792—all became increasingly important for the generation and contestation of identities organized around class, race, gender, sexuality, nation, and ideology.<sup>xxxviii</sup>

These self-reflexive, subjectivising and mediated modes of intimate, proximate listening only became more important over time, particularly with the advent of radio. Many early commentators insisted that it was precisely the material absence of the speaker that enabled radiophonic sounds to stabilize and unite otherwise diverse audiences.<sup>xxxix</sup> Radio, like the vaporous images of silent cinema before it, was theorized as particularly able to transcend the physical distances and geographic variations otherwise separating individuals, so as to create a sense of shared subjectivity. When not attending to their own voices and to those of their peers, twentieth century citizens resonated with the broadcast speech of the Führer, the President of the French Republic, Charles Olson's recordings of "projective verse," recitations of Alfred Tennyson's dramatized monologues, or to the growing repertoires of national musics and those styles against which they were defined.<sup>xl</sup>

Psychoanalysts have also described a process of vocal subjectification paralleling Lacan's construction of the mirror phase. The infantile cry acts as a "sonorous envelope" or "skin-ego" with which the child recreates that sense of fullness and protection that it enjoyed when it experienced life as an undifferentiated part of the maternal body. As the infant begins to perceive distinctions between its self and the larger world—including the mother's body—its screams and vocalisations act as an enclosing, womb-like barrier against this threatening externality and the symbolic force of castration. The voice surrounds and bathes the child, before the infant gradually comes to realise that voice is a projection outwards from its own body, an object which is also separable from itself.<sup>xli</sup> As with the visualisation of the ego ideal, vocalicity is reaffirming, suggesting an aural potency with which the individual can dominate or negate the world, as well as being disturbing, since this very negation is dependent on a recognition of lack and of the fact that sound leaves the body once voiced.

The modern self is therefore a multimodal construct generated out of, and threatened by, a range of sensory inputs and outputs. Listening and the gaze conceal a sense of absence or lack at the heart of mature, socialised selfhood.<sup>xliii</sup> As with the Wizard of Oz and other apparently “present” aural identities, modernist sonification contains within it the possibility of an acousmatic non-coincidence of sound and presence, of a dissipation of the self and of the aural author, whereby sound fails to live up to its perceived stability, to its fullness, or to its referential legibility. Behind the curtain in the Wizard’s chamber at the Emerald City stands nothing but a confidence-man, pulling leavers and speaking into a microphone.<sup>xliii</sup> The voice of God and the Law of Father may be falsified, as well as reinforced. Just as the phallus and the vision of the ego ideal can never be attained, but only fantasmatically imagined, so the sonorous envelope exceeds the reach of the listener, creating the possibility of vocalic violation and possession. This is seen when Norman Bates is voiced by his mother in Alfred Hitchcock’s *Psycho* (1960), or the girls of Salem by the witches (1692-93), and the nuns of Loudon by Urbain Grandier and the Devil (1632-34). It is significant in this respect that the height of the Euro-American witch-trials and demonic possessions was not the Middle Ages, but the seventeenth century, as Europe and the colonies made the transition from Medieval to modern—the same period at which Kircher was writing.<sup>xliv</sup> Connor describes this trope of emergent modernist culture as “ventriloquisation,” noting the rise of performances during the nineteenth century by ventriloquists, scientists, inventors like Thomas Edison, physicians, illusionists, Spiritualists, and mediums, all of whom specialised in wondrous vocal transferrals.<sup>xlv</sup>

## The Pleasure of Absence

Filmic pleasure has been theorised as generated and sustained by a logic of lack and absence, entailing a contradictory dialectic of affirmation and denial. In this formulation, the cinematic image is seen to elicit similar feelings in the viewer to those active within the mirror stage. The viewer identifies with the filmic protagonist and/or the point of view offered by the movie camera (the “omnipotent narrator” of classical Hollywood cinema), and so fantasizes about possessing the power and totalising fullness represented by such a filmic subject and by the cinematic text. This is only possible however precisely because the filmic image is not literally present, thus allowing the viewer to disavow the more disturbing possibilities of castration,

fragmentation and dispersal of the self into the cinematic apparatus. Christian Metz characterises this fetishistic duality as:

*“I know, but nevertheless...”*

Like the phallus itself, the cinematic image represents an insubstantial phantasm whose absence continues to solicit the drive to attain it.<sup>xlvi</sup> The filmic image takes on the character of a fetish, standing between the spectator and the castrating presence of paternal authority.<sup>xlvii</sup> The film thereby stages and dramatises the desires and anxieties of the viewer. The pleasure of the filmic text is aroused through this interaction between an illusionary promise of fulfilment, of phallic potency, and of subjective coherence, versus a threatening denial and frustration of the desire for fullness, and the subsequent reanimation of these affects.

This model of cinematic pleasure has come under criticism since the 1980s, with debates over what subject positions might be possible within movie spectatorship (the feminine viewer versus the masculine viewer), the degree to which the gaze is normalising or disruptive, and other issues. Steven Shaviro has suggested that it is rhetorically insufficient to account for cinematic creativity through a poetics of absence and lack, whilst Elizabeth Bronfen makes the point that since there is no necessary coincidence between the male penis and the paternal phallus, one could just as easily focus one’s identification on the disappearing coils of the umbilicus as upon the phallic organ.<sup>xlviii</sup>

My intention here is not to reinscribe an unreconstructed, totalising theory of the sonic apparatus onto those subjective positions enabled by modern practices of audition. Rather, I wish to propose a more general principle, which however runs counter to dominant trends within criticism of contemporary sound art. A recognition of those distancing qualities of acoustic absence need not simply be read as characteristic of the degraded character of modernist experience, as is largely the case with Adorno and Attali.<sup>xlix</sup> On the contrary, the affective and aesthetic potentialities built into such a sense of acoustic absence may generate other pleasures (and other critiques) of Western modernity—as is also the case with cinema.

## Romantic Acousmatics, impossible Sounds and absolute Musics

The transformation of musical aesthetics inaugurated by the diffusion of Romanticism—and to a lesser extent Symbolism, which Romanticism and other



modernist forms built upon—helped to place acoustic absence and distancing at the heart of Western poetics.<sup>l</sup> As Novalis said: “Distant philosophy sounds like poetry,” or as Walter Pater put it in his study of the history of painting, all art came to aspire to “the condition of music.”<sup>li</sup> In a modification of the Pythagorean and Neo-Platonic idealisation of the Music of the Spheres, nineteenth century composers and dramaturgs constructed sound as the ultimate signifier of those mysterious forces that affected human destiny, from the overwhelming charge of human emotion, to the forces of Nature, as well as historical progress, fate, sexuality, and other threatening but seductive, sublime influences. Indeed, the very duality of this affective acoustics, the manner in which the Wagnerian leitmotif both spoke of the protagonist’s passionately affective body, as well as of the sublime vastness of such emotive constructs and the way in which their supreme manifestations exceeded the individual, echoed the dialectic play of threatening dispersal and omnipotent totality which animated modernist subjectivity.

Carolyn Abbate and Hoeckner provide a useful inventory of such modernist soundings, ranging from the faun’s flute which is alluded to but never heard in Claude Debussy’s ballet *Prelude de un après-midi d’une faune* (1894; Vaslav Nijinsky and Serge de Diaghilev, 1912), to the distant horn sounded by a “heavenly guest” which for Robert Schumann seemed to have descended from that “region we nowhere can remember having been before”; the perplexing “distant sound ... coming as if out of the sky, like the sound of a string snapping, slowly and sadly dying away” which signalled the fall of the Russian upper classes in Anton Chekhov’s *The Cherry Orchard* (1902); the disturbing and impossible to locate sounds which permeated Edgar Allan Poe’s *The Fall of the House of Usher* (1839); through to the perfect musical forms referenced but never made visible on stage in Richard Wagner’s operas from *Tannhäuser* (1845) to *Tristan und Isolde* (1865).<sup>lii</sup> Such “noises off” were indeed critical to Chekhovian and Wagnerian dramaturgy. Less respectable performances such as those at the *Théâtre du Grand Guignol* deployed similar uncanny effects, the venue being renowned for stage manager Paul Ratineau’s ingenious acoustic impressions. Ratineau produced noises in the adjacent vaulted chambers and other spaces, which seemed to come at audiences through the auditorium’s walls or floors, from under the stage, overhead, or from nowhere at all, adding an acousmatic indeterminacy and frisson to the ambivalent pleasures of *fin de siècle* horror theatre.<sup>liii</sup>

The perceived ability of sound to transgress material boundaries and locales, to occupy space, and to link disparate objects and subjects, is not an ontological characteristic of sound itself (as the language employed by Douglas Kahn at times implies), but rather represents an epistemological framing of sonification which came to the fore under modernism.<sup>liv</sup> Nor should the acousmatic dissonance between that which is heard, and that which is seen to be present, be read as a sign that the listener refuses to “interact” with his or her environment—as Michael Bull argues with regard to the use of portable playback devices ranging from Fitzcaraldo’s phonograph to the walkman.<sup>lv</sup> Kahn is more reliable here, describing the creative deployment of those sounds which exceed vision, presence, time and space in forms varying from Romantic orchestration through to Situationist strategies of re-reading, re-visioning and sonifying the city. Indeed, the schizophonic effects of an acoustic version of Lettrist “psychogeography” underpins the aesthetics of most audio-walks by artists such as Janet Cardiff, in which the play of presence and absence, of local resonances, as well as sonic distancing, animates the work.<sup>lvi</sup> My point here is that these are not merely latent qualities of sound as a medium, but rather represent kinds of pleasure which are particularly available to subjects after modernism.

It is indeed this potentiality for sound to exceed presence itself which enabled the idealisation of absolute music within the Western post-classical repertoire, and which thereafter served as a major factor in those pleasures associated with music framed in such absolutist terms.<sup>lvii</sup> For music to be read in an absolute, self-referential manner, it had to be perceived in an idealising manner, as occupying a non-place or other spatiotemporal realm which could not be fully located, identified, or isolated. The model of Dionysian perception and pleasure offered by Wagner and Friedrich Nietzsche articulated just such an idealised subjective space, where the perfect fusion of audience with the dispersed, multimodal totality of the *Gesamtkunstwerk* collapsed all structures of time, space and selfhood into an ecstatic realm in which dimensional concepts ceased to have subjective force.<sup>lviii</sup> Presence fell into absence, as the acoustic invitation drew the subject out of him or herself and into a shared, communal sphere beyond space and time. Total sublimity was however just as threatening as any other radical erasure of the individual subject, hence the insistence by Wagner and Nietzsche that some measure of Apollonian structuration and individualising distancing remain to balance such de-subjectivising effects. The anxious modernist subject, moving between the twin

poles of lack and presence, Apollo's rationalised distance versus the acoustic proximity allowed by Kircher's listening device and other Dionysian experiences, provided the ideal listener for such a type of music. This form of subjecthood was in turn generated by the growing cultural institutionalisation of these and other related audiovisual modes under modernism.

I would therefore suggest that many of the acoustic strategies found within music and sound art after 1900 oscillate between extending the pleasures offered by sonic distanciation and absence, or alternatively reinjecting somatic materialisation and presence ever more forcefully into performance. Some artists deploy both approaches. Alvin Lucier's sound experiments constitute such a dialectic, with works such as *I Am Sitting in a Room* (1969) and *Quasimodo the Great Lover* (1970) dependent on spatial indeterminacy and a diffusive character, which is nevertheless brought into play within specific sites and environments.<sup>lix</sup> John Cage's ambivalent construction of silence as a pregnant void out of which sound emanates even as it remains barely perceptible, activates a similar solicitation of present fullness, and of lack. By contrast, it was Schaeffer, the founder of *musique concrète*, who coined the term *acousmatics* to describe those sounds which exceeded space, time, vision and origin to act as absolute "sonic objects" in their own right. Only such intangible, self-referential sounds could generate the sublime effects which Schaeffer wished to elicit through a highly focused, "reduced" form of audile listening.<sup>lx</sup>

## Sonic Abjection, Noise and Beyond

These models of the self illustrate the crucial role embodiment has played in the construction of subject and its audiovisual pleasures and terrors. Whilst psychoanalysis has been applied to contemporary Noise art and Industrial music, the relation of these modes to the histories and pleasures of presence and absence sketched above has not been detailed. Csaba Toth and Howard Slater have characterised 1980s Noise and Industrial music as responses to the collapse of early twentieth century urban communities and models of the self, such that radical alienation is played out as a "war at the membrane."<sup>lxi</sup> When former industrial capitals fell into socioeconomic ruin, dreams of unity, excess, fullness and self-annihilation were enacted and expressed through the quasi-Dionysian aural assaults of artists such as *Einstürzende Neubauten*, *Throbbing Gristle* and *Merzbow*. Indeed, Slater goes so far as to see this as a complete renunciation of

conventional models of the self and sexuality, where the totalising, chaotic acoustic stimulation of the individual's sonic envelope radically disarticulates subjectivity into something closer to the Surrealist "desiring machines" described by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari.<sup>lxii</sup> The collapse of the listening self into a pre-phallic, abject form, where non-self elements (noise, shit, abjection, violation) return to the subject, is not necessarily a politically progressive formulation. Slater's description of the Noise listener as one whose identity is violently played out across his or her external boundaries, bears more than a passing resemblance to the fascist subject identified by Klaus Theweleit.<sup>lxiii</sup> Toth suggests that Noise aficionados' penchant for Nazi iconography is not incidental, whilst the tendency of the fascist subject to disavow his own alienation by projecting his self and his fear of abjection onto an externally manifest, psychic "body armour" might be seen in some contexts as paralleling the responses to Noise described above.

What has not been made clear in this context, however, is that such a "war at the membrane" is only possible if sound and acoustic pleasure acts in dialectic manner with respect to presence and absence. Noise does not replace lack, but rather negotiates it. Absence is not erased by presence, but instead the energetics of acoustic disruption stimulates a pleasurable, and at times violent reflection on presence and separation, on the sense of immediate fullness, versus the experience of abject lack—and hopefully finally erases any distinction between the two, thus allowing new forms of subjectivity to emerge.<sup>lxiv</sup>

see image  
<https://www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/archived/soundproof/amanda-stewart-image/5779970>

**Figure 4: Amanda Stewart (centre, forward) in collaboration with Natasha Anderson (left), NOW now Festival, Sydney, 2006. Image courtesy of Clare Cooper.**

Feminist authors have argued that the association of pre-phallic subjectivity with the maternal body and alinguistic vocalisation renders tropes of abjection and highly-embodied, materialised speech as conducive to the reclamation of feminine subjectivity.<sup>lxv</sup> Australian sound poet Amanda Stewart for example has drawn on Julia Kristeva's description of the undifferentiated psyche to construct a style of performative vocalisation in which sense (formal language) and sound (plosives, wet noises, breath, wind, clicks and so on) interact with and layer acoustic and semantic form.<sup>lxvi</sup> These aural techniques are deployed within Stewart's textual-poetic commentaries upon patriarchy, war and capitalism, such that feminine écriture (to use the terminology of Hélène Cixous and Catherine Clément) and maternal language erodes and deconstructs the rational, semantic bases of the dominant, repressive ideologies. Similar approaches can be detected in works such as Yoko Ono's "Voice Piece For Soprano" ("Scream against the wind / against the wall / against the sky"; 1961), Patti Smith's performances, and women's Punk bands like The Slits, and various Riot Grrrl acts.<sup>lxvii</sup> Stewart's work has however become increasingly abstract since 2003—verging even on absolutism—and listeners have compared recent performances to human electroacoustics, with Aaron Hull claiming "she is as much an electronic musician as any laptopper."<sup>lxviii</sup> Certainly, Stewart's precise use of paired stereophonic mic-ing cyberneticises a performance technique already dependent on close mic-ing and the amplification of oral anatomy (Fig. 4). Embodiment, like the sounds themselves, becomes dispersed and unlocatable in Stewart's performance, with the pleasures of acousmatic astonishment driving audience reception just as much as the evocation of somatic presence. Stewart even titled a 1995 piece "Absence," explicitly dramatising Kristeva's poetics through a series of infantile phonemic patterns, puns and other sono-linguistic traits distributed throughout the piece.<sup>lxix</sup>

Deeply embedded within representation, the pre-phallic maternal is no more accessible to the listener than the phallic power it is deployed to displace. Stewart describes her work in terms of an impossible desire to cathect with, and distance oneself, from language and the forms it produces in mouth and body:

The voice ... is urgently trying to understand and oppose the processes that cause 'IT' [the vocal subject] to be. But all the voice can do is intone clichés of IT, shouting staccato adjectives and high speed blocks of nouns until it finally breaks into an

IT incantation. Ironically, the voice makes IT BECOME again through ITself. Its sense of subjectivity, ITself, is still determined by the rhetoric [or sonic and linguistic structuration] of 'IT.'<sup>lxx</sup>

This ambivalent embrace of vocal presence and its distanciation is signalled by Stewart in the title of her 1998 combined release I/T as a CD and a book, where voice and the self are bifurcated yet bound together through the medium of the virgule ("I-slash-T"). Voicing up to four texts through pre-recorded aural materials and live performance (two written texts voiced alongside one minidisk recording in each speaker), Stewart describes the speaking subject in these works as "caught between ... texts ... subject to multiple fields of engagement" and "dimensions of inscription and notation."<sup>lxxi</sup> A subjective, acoustic dialectic of the solicitation of desire via a promised but unattainable presence motivates these vocal-textual performances as well, producing: "A subject in flux ... caught in a multi-causal simultaneity of the uttered and the unsounded." As with the deployment of Noise described above, the aim here is to deploy a dialectics of presence to destabilise any subjectivity which might be thought to comfortably rest at one or other of these poles.

See: <http://dualplover.com/EPK/YELDHAMd DaviesLR.jpg>

**Figure 5: Justice Yeldham [Luca Abela]; photo by Alex Davies. Image courtesy of Abela.**

The work of Lucas Abela, performing under the name Justice Yeldham, represents a masculine deployment of such aesthetic strategies. Yeldham crafts high volume, distorted tones and sustained plateaus of Noise by playing the "dynamic ribbon device." This is a sheet of glass attached to a contact microphone, which he presses to his drooling, bleeding face and mouth, blowing on it and vibrating it, before biting it and smashing it over his head (Fig. 5).<sup>lxxii</sup> The gross matter of the body, its inescapable materiality and connection with that which is projected outward from the self (blood, saliva, tears, food, vomit, excreta, noise, pain), comes forcefully back into the audience's consciousness through this

abject, audiovisual display. The fascist's sonic body armour is literally and metaphorically pierced and shattered in Yeldham's performance.

In short, the deployment of absence as a constitutive aspect of sonic practice and listening pleasure has underwritten various aesthetic tropes from at least the nineteenth century onwards. Within the examples given above, strategies of Noise, physicalised vocal performance, and feminist poetics are employed to re-cathect aestheticised sound with a sense of embodied presence or Dionysian fusion. I would like to close by identifying a site where such a sense of presence and absence generates listening pleasure without harnessing maternal language, abjection or sublime Noise—namely the new Australian music ensemble, Decibel. In this, I reference the historiographic findings outlined above, whilst drawing largely on my own subjective responses to the work.

## Decibel

Decibel is a recently formed New Music group based in Perth. Artistic director Cat Hope explains that the ensemble is devoted to exploring “the nexus” between “acoustic and electronic instruments” by featuring the two media “side by side” in performance.<sup>lxxiii</sup> At the first concert of *Tape It!* (2009), a diversity of acoustic instruments were combined with—and in some instances vied for attention with—assorted electromagnetic and digital sound reproduction technologies (laptops, reel-to-reel tape-players, guitar amplifiers, speakers, portable cassette-players, turntables). Hope and her collaborators (notably sound designer Rob Muir) positioned devices and performers about the auditorium, effectively installing the works. Flutes and strings came from beside and behind the audience, whilst groupings of amplifiers and other performers sat on the stage, producing a range of complex spatial effects which varied over the course of the concert.

See: <https://www.decibelnewmusic.com/tape-it.html>

**Fig. 6. Decibel, *Tape It!* (Perth: 2009). Photo © Ian Henderson. Image courtesy of Hope.**

This interplay of proximity and distance was particularly marked in the live realisation of William Burroughs' poetic instruction piece, *Electronic Revolution* (1971). Here, radiophonic sources were sampled live, recorded, played back, re-recorded, and filtered, using analogue tape-reels, analogue echo devices (in which the metal of springs contained within the set was clearly audible) and other mediating technologies. Burroughs characterised these strategies as representing a mutant, virally indeterminate symptom of modernity comparable to the Watergate tapes and alien visitation. With this in mind, the ambiguous deployment of presence with Decibel's use of live recording, and the visible and audible materiality of the long piece of electromagnetic tape coiling across the stage, together with the metallic sounds and a sense of ever more dispersed and mediated radiophonic outputs, all made for a particularly contradictory work whose pleasures derived from these dualistic oppositions (Fig. 6).<sup>lxxiv</sup> Compensating for the tendency in Burroughs' work towards radical dispersal, Hope followed this piece in the program with an interpretation of Mauricio Kagel's theatrical, instructional piece *Prima Vista* (1964). Kagel's desire to weld performance to the live, gesturing subject in a humanist manner was ameliorated by Hope's live projection of paired scores, which rendered the performers part of a larger musical tekno of interpretive gesticulation and sound.<sup>lxxv</sup> The players were themselves distanced and objectified through this audiovisual staging.

In works such as these, Decibel's program presented a range of indeterminate, “open works” (as Umberto Eco classed such compositions), varying from new pieces by Hope, Lindsay Vickery, and Warren Burt, through to adaptations of extant pieces by Kagel, Burroughs, Brian Eno (*Music For Airports*, 1978), Ernie Althoff, and others.<sup>lxxvi</sup> Hope's contention is that playback devices are best utilised in the realisation of rules-based compositions and performative pieces. I would contend that the reason this is true is because such an approach draws upon those forms of pleasure and exhilarating challenges to the self which absence and presence solicits within the subject after modernism. Compositional indeterminacy and sonic placelessness are mutually supportive terms in this respect.

Several of Decibel's realisations featured the live projection of graphic scores, suggesting an equivalence between these visual mode of notation, and the tape loops employed elsewhere. This was most evident in Althoff's *Front Row* (1991), where the looped sounds on cassette were literally intended

to act “as a kind of notation”—here scoring a combative duet of toys and their sounds.<sup>lxvii</sup>

Whilst the sonic palette which Decibel produced is unambiguously contemporary, the performative logic employed by Hope and her collaborators created a feeling of the present bleeding back into history. From concert performances to automata, the performative modes of Kircher and Edison through to those of Enrico Caruso, all acted as forms of metaphoric “background noise” for an event of this nature. Indeed, Althoff went so far as to quote Schaeffer’s *Étude aux chemins de fer* (1948) within his own contribution, driving home the historicist nature of a project such as this. It is worth noting that Stewart too generates much of her text from quotations and references, blurring the distinction between immediate presence and historical distanciation. Western notation and writing emerge in these projects as earlier forms of “recording” or “playback” technology, in which the raging, dispersed and absent sounds of the past come back to inform, supplement, haunt and agitate contemporary performance in the form of a placeless, mnemonic commentary.

In enacting this acoustic, electromechanical cyberneticisation of player and machine, Decibel’s program effects a curious form of displacement. Despite the spatialisations of Hope and Muir, the sounds seemed strangely unfixed and placeless when heard in performance. The instruments echoed and scratched (notably with Kagel), but did not “sing” or “voice,” enacting a hollow ventriloquisation. There was a materialism to these works which simultaneously rendered them as effervescent or impossible to locate metaphorically. Burroughs’ citation of the ever mobile mediascape, and Eno’s *Music For Airports*, were paradigmatic here in their articulation of a metaphoric, global or alien non-place which today serves as the audiovisual dream-space for the subject after modernism.

## Conclusion: Enjoying Absence

Programs such as Decibel’s *Tape It!* and the more recent performance *Somacoustica* (2009) demonstrate that the performance of absence is not a relic of earlier modernist modes or of Romanticism, and that other approaches to dealing with acoustic indeterminacy exist apart from trying to negate lack through the forceful deployment of sublime Noise and physicality. Decibel continues a tradition founded by Lucier and others where a more delicate response to sonic absence is elicited. Other approaches to musico-aesthetic absence doubtless exist, but until critics of contemporary sound art

abandon the dubious teleology of presence which has coloured contemporary writing, a fuller description of these modes will not be articulated. Far from seeing lack as that which music and sound art are other to, the history of the subject and of listening shows that lack has long been part of the musical experience, and that this is often a pleasurable, if ambivalent, way of attending to the Music of the Spheres and more recent derivatives.

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## Notes

- i Marshall, "Flatness," pp. 55-73.
- ii Sterne, pp. 1-24.
- iii Soukup, p. 5.
- iv There are many unsubstantiated dualisms which flow from this hierarchisation of proximate natural sound, versus distant mediated vision. Connor, for example, claims that the "auditory self ... takes part in the world rather than taking aim at it." Sound is also seen as an "event" whilst vision is not—though images and light must be temporally manifest to be seen. Other unjustified beliefs include Schafer's contention that "no" [sic] natural sound can ever be deafening, whilst Bull and Black suggest "you can't segregate the airwaves," when this is exactly what radio programmers did. Connor, "Edison's," pp. 153-172, "Modern," p. 219 and other articles; Attali; Soukup, esp. p. 10; Bull and Black, pp. 8-15; Levin, pp. 55-68; Adorno, "Music," p. 401, "On," p. 67.
- v A particularly good encapsulation of modernity as a broad yet historically specific category is offered by Lowe.
- vi Hoeckner, p. 56.
- vii Schafer's formulation is an unacknowledged quotation of McLuhan and Fiore, p. 142.

viii Kittler; Kroker; Soukup; Sterne; Connor, *Dumbstruck*; Kracauer; Benjamin.

ix Part of what is at stake here is whether sound can be considered a mimetic language—a debate also carried out with respect to photography and film. Adorno may be correct to claim that sound does not have a formal grammar, yet it constitutes a discourse in Foucault's terms: that is to say a relative, differential system from which knowledge and meaning is constructed. Butler; Derrida; Jensen, pp. 7-33; Kim-Cohen; Levin, pp. 55-58; Williams, pp. 51-66; Barthes, *Responsibility, Camera*; Foucault, *Order*; Adorno, "Music," pp. 401-414; Hoeckner, p. 57.

x Adorno, *Culture*, esp. pp. 43-47.

xi Winter, pp. 306-321; Berlioz, pp. 243-6, 259-261, 275-279.

xii Connor, "Modern," pp. 203-223.

xiii The full detail of Derrida's formulation is somewhat more complex in that he observes that the idea of phonological presence and authority is *itself* a fiction which conceals the absence of any firm locus for authorship. Authority is rather dispersed throughout language and discourse. Derrida; Morris, pp. 5-6; Forrest.

xiv Connor, "Edison's," p. 159, "Incidents"; Irigaray, pp. 63-86.

xv Attali mentions Kircher, but fails to note that Kircher's theories oppose his own. Godwin, p. 71.

xvi Schmidt.

xvii Goodwin, pp. 67-71; Vermeir, esp. pp. 380-1.

xviii Mannoni gives the title of Kircher's optical tome to his own critical study of magic lanterns and other pre-cinematic projection devices, whilst Marina Warner places Kircher's work in a line of late Renaissance and modern visual media which evolved not through the teleological ascent of realism, but via the cultivation of visual deception. Marshall, "Seeing"; Mannoni; Mannoni et al.

xix Vermeir, pp. 363-400.

xx Sterne, p. 16; Soukup, pp. 3-33.

xxi Rubin.

xxii Bevis notes that the word "voice" was first applied to a written text in 1850, whilst "audience" was first ascribed to someone reading a page in 1855. Jensen, p. 12; Bevis, p. 589.

xxiii Both Schafer and Adorno see sound and music as particularly resistant to objectification, and so in those instances where they concede sonic objectification has been achieved (Stockhausen's sonic objects, for example), the authors characterise such sounds as irredeemably alienated, inauthentic and definitively modern. Adorno, *Culture*, pp. 29-60; Schafer.

xxiv Sterne, esp. pp. 1-4, 23-25, 93-136.

xxv Foucault, *History*; de Marneffe, pp. 71-111; Sterne; Kittler; Damousi, *Freud*.

xxvi Lacan; Saper, esp. pp. 35-40.

xxvii Lowe; Ariès and Duby, eds; Greenblatt, pp. 210-224. Neuroscientific studies since the 1980s suggest there is no somatic basis for the psychic structures of Ego, Id, Superego, or even the Unconscious in its more rigorous formulations. Psychoanalysis nevertheless remains an invaluable heuristic for the cultural critique of Western modernity—if only because Freud and his successors drew on widely dispersed modernist cultural tropes before their methodology was institutionalised within society and psychiatric practice following WWI. See Ellenberger; Showalter.

xxviii Foucault, *Order*; Damisch; Crary; Friedberg; Ginzburg, pp. 81-118.

xxix The special value placed on immediacy by diverse scholars such as Ong, André Bazin and Innis derives from their religious convictions. Soukup, pp. 3-33; Kroker; Bazin.

xxx Morris, p. 3.

xxxi Bevis, p. 582.

xxxii Auslander, *Liveness*, "Looking," pp. 77-83, "Seeing," pp. 1-26; Adorno, *Culture*, pp. 43-47; Eshun; Meisel; Pattison.

xxxiii Hainge, pp. 77-83; Kristeva.

xxxiv Morris, ed., pp. 2-4.

xxxv Damousi, "'Filthy'"; Damousi and Deacon, eds.

xxxvi Matsuda, esp. pp. 73-76. Stewart echoes this language in her sound-poem "Absence" (1995), where she declares a "tasted cosmos rolls off the tongue." *I/T*, p. 66, track 21.

xxxvii Schafer notes the psychoanalytic application of listening, but places it outside of consideration since Freud was largely uninterested in the sounds

heard during dreams themselves. Damousi and Deacon, eds; de Marneffe, pp. 71-111; Damousi, *Freud*; Connor, "Modern," pp. 203-223; Sterne; Kittler; Schafer; Soukup, esp. p. 14; Foucault, *History*.

xxxviii Of the literature on the manner in which these different foci of identity were reinforced or challenged through listening, see: Gay; Ariès and Duby, eds; Steinberg; Johnson; Weber, "Did," pp. 678-691, *Music*; Fulcher, *Composer, French*; Messing; Rehding; Hobsbawm and Ranger, eds; McClary, "Narratives," pp. 65-98, *Feminine*; Dave Russell; Dunn and Jones, eds; Poizat; Salazar; Hall-Witt; Smith, ed., pp. ix-xxii; Comerford; Clear and Connolly, eds, pp. 267-284.

xxxix Marshall, "Archaeology," pp. 92-95; Kaplan, pp. 7-11, 125-53; Damousi and Deacon, eds, pp. 59-158.

xl Forrest; Morris, ed.; Bevis, pp. 577-91.

xli I leave aside the distinction between Lacan and Klein's slightly different theorisation in which voice is associated with a "part object" of psychic development. Connor, "Modern," pp. 214-5, *Dumbstruck*, esp. pp. 29-35; Dunn and Jones, esp. pp. 11-13; Silverman; Lawrence.

xlii Williams, pp. 51-66; Levin, pp. 55-68.

xliii Abbate, pp. 70-76.

xliv Marshall, "Seeing"; de Certeau; Godbeer; Ferber.

xlvi Connor, esp. *Dumbstruck*, "Incidents"; Beizer; Enns, pp. 11-26. Connor incorrectly argues that figures such as Pierre Janet saw such psychophysical dispersals as purely *acoustic*, rather than *audiovisual*. Marshall, "Archaeology," pp. 108-111.

xlvi Lapsley and Westlake, pp. 67-104; Nelmes, pp. 91-128; Mulvey, pp. 6-18; Metz, pp. 81-90.

xlvi I have elsewhere discussed the fetishistic character of contemporary composition and musical performance. Marshall, "Freezing," pp. 16-25.

xlvi Shavero; Bronfen. Contemporary psychoanalysis owes much to post-WWII Existentialist philosophy in this regard, echoing Blanchot's position that a void at the heart of language and representation drives poetic creativity. Although this presents historiographic problems, most critics follow Nietzsche in seeing post-



Enlightenment Humanism as based on a similar foundational absence.

xlix The full detail of Adorno's position is rather more complex, notably with respect to his simultaneous celebration and attack on Arnold Schoenberg's objectification of sound through atonality and Serialism. I draw on the dialectic conceptions of Adorno and the Frankfurt School, whilst rejecting the denunciation of fetishism underpinning Adorno's conceptualisations. In this I am guided by the work of Foucault and Apter in reclaiming fetishism and other "perverse" identifications for cultural critique.

l Dahlhaus; Chua.

li Hoeckner, pp. 55-56.

lii Chekhov, Acts III, IV, pp. 365, 398; Abbate, pp. 67-95; Hoeckner, pp. 55-132; Sterne, p. 15; Connor, "Modern," pp. 207. On the deployment of acoustic absence and acousmatics/schizophonía within Renaissance dramaturgy, see Tribble, pp. 161-4.

liii Bourgois, ed., p. 77.

liv Kahn; Connor, "Modern," p. 207; Smith, p. xiv.

lv Bull bases this claim on a selective use of anecdotal interviews with middle class American college students—the laboratory rats of much dubious, universalizing scholarship. Erlmann, ed., pp. 173-189.

lvi Home; Bigot; Ellis; Cardiff, Miller et al; Biagioli.

lvii Firsch, ed., pp. 19-54; Steinberg; Johnson; Weber, "Did," pp. 678-691.

lviii Wagner; Nietzsche; also Rehding.

lix Cameron et al.

lx Cage; Marshall, "Deathly"; Abbate, pp. 69, 75; Dyson, pp. 10-12; Cox and Warner, eds, pp. 76-81.

lxi Mattin, ed., pp. 25-37, 151-165.

lxii Phillipov, pp. 74-85.

lxiii Theweleit; Kristeva; Deleuze and Guattari; Sontag.

lxiv Phillipov, pp. 74-85.

lxv Kristeva; Dunn and Jones; Cixous and Clément.

lxvi Marshall, "Is It?" "Freeformance"; Stewart, "Amanda" (nd), "Amanda" (2004), *I/T*; Machine For Making Sense; Rose; de Quincey; Zurbrugg, pp. 26-49; O'Keefe; Stuart, ed.

lxvii Eileraas, pp. 122-139.

lxviii Hull. This passage came out of discussion with Cat Hope on performances by Stewart in Sydney and Perth.

lxix Stewart, *I/T*, pp. 63-67, track 21; email correspondence between the author and the artist, 19 Jan 2010.

lxx Zurbrugg, pp. 26-49; Stewart, *I/T*, esp. track 3, p. 12.

lxxi Stewart, *I/T*, CD liner notes, "Amanda" (2004). This echoes to some degree Hoeckner's characterisation of Schumann's compositions as mediating between registers derived from and referencing musical absolutism, written poetry, landscape and painting. Hoeckner, pp. 55-132.

lxxii Yeldham, *Cicatrix, Dualplover*; Roe; Bruce Russell; Priest, ed., pp. 65-66, 148-149.

lxxiii Hope et al [Decibel], various documents; Marshall, "Machine."

lxxiv Burroughs.

lxxv Heile, esp. pp. 33-68.

lxxvi Cox and Warner, eds, pp. 167-175; Hope; Jenkins; Mustard, pp. 33-41.

lxxvii Hope et al, *Tape It!*