

Can you hear me?

I can feel your ears on me.

Can you see me?

I can feel your eyes on me.

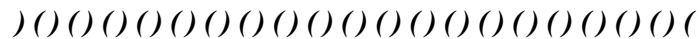
Are you Listening?

I want to speak with you,

About Sound

And Noise

And Silence



Sound Studies

Is what describes

The Study of Sound and “the Sonic”

In Western Academia

In 2005, Michele Hilmes wrote that the study of sound,  
*“hailed as an emerging field for the last hundred years,  
exhibits a strong tendency to remain that way,  
always emerging, never emerged”*

By 2023, the belief among Sound Studies scholars  
Is that the field has not only emerged  
But has actually matured,  
With innumerable Readers, books, articles,  
Available to be Read and Studied.

This maturity is claimed also in the wake of a “sonic turn” in the Humanities  
And the many so-called New Materialisms  
Which have a tendency to use metaphors of sonic resonance in their composition.

The “Diffraction” of Karen Barad

The “Vibration” of Jane Bennett

The “Music” of Elizabeth Grosz

Understandings of Sound

Have tended to develop along certain Axes

With one primary axis being that of Silence.



Your Feet, your Head, your Ass, your Mouth

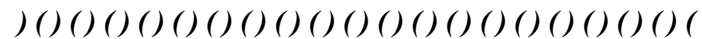
*They all make Sound, all the Time.*

Your Guts, your Blood, your Joints, your Nervous System, your Brain, your Interstitial Fluid

*They all make Sound, all the Time.*

Your Bacteria, your Parasites, your Flora and Fauna

*They all make Sound, all the Time.*



For many sound theorists  
Silence is a place  
Where sonic subjectivity is born

Salome Vogelín  
Writes in her book entitled "Listening to Noise and Silence"  
About her experience of being alone in a cabin in the Swiss Alps:

*"I am sitting in the mountains with snow all around  
It is dead quiet, pressing down on me, heavy and dark, but not unpleasant or exclusive  
This weight is inclusive, all encompassing and abundant  
All that could sound has been quietened under a blanket of snow  
But vibrates gently in its possibility*

*The dynamic of life appears less fast here,  
Unhurried, just trembling quietly*

*The movements are slowed down by the landscape and the weather  
The sounds are muffled and contained  
Even the murmur of the river has been suffocated under the heavy sheet of ice*

*Leaving no sonic hint of its former vitality*

*The house itself, covered in a thick layer of snow  
Surrounded by snowed in trees  
Feels dense and compact like a thick carpet  
I am inside this carpet, Listening*

*When there is nothing to hear, so much begins to Sound.  
Silence is not the absence of Sound but the Beginning of Listening."*

This text, by this well known scholar  
Worries me.

With its Idealised description of Silence  
At the Alpine Artist Retreat



The one who Knows  
That the Wind blowing Outside  
The Creaking of the Floorboards  
The Raindrops Tapping on the Roof Tiles  
The Muffled Stifled Coughs  
And the last fly of autumn Buzzing on the Windowsill  
Are also Music.

Silence is what made Music self-aware.

And for John Cage  
To Not play a Note  
To Not Compose  
To Reduce the Composer to Nothing

Was a founding act  
Of becoming A Legendary Composer.

Because to Become Nothing, you first have to be Something.

Reducing the Composer to Nothing  
Was A Magic Trick  
That could only be performed by a White Man.

Because to Become Nothing, you first have to be Something.

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In Western Sound Studies  
From what I can make out,

Hearing is unconscious  
While Listening is conscious.

The Listening Self  
Emerges from Silence,  
While in Cacophony  
There is only Hearing.

The Masses Hear  
While the Individual Listens.

The first Prescribed Collective Silence  
Happened after World War 1,

When The King of England called for a complete suspension of normal activities  
For two minutes,  
On 11am on November 11

During which  
*“In perfect stillness, the thoughts of everyone may be concentrated on reverent remembrance of the glorious dead”*

**One Silence, Coming Down From The Top.**

Preceding this by five months, 10.000 African-Americans  
Walked down Fifth Avenue  
New York City  
In Silence  
To protest lynchings in Waco and Memphis  
And the East St Louis Riots  
Where at least 40 Black people were murdered by White mobs.

As they walked, Black Boy Scouts handed out fliers describing why they marched. They said;  
*"We march because by the Grace of God and the Force of Truth, the dangerous, hampering walls of  
prejudice and inhuman injustices must fall.*

*We march because we deem it a crime to be silent in the face of such barbaric acts."*

**Another Silence, Coming Up From The Bottom.**

One week ago,  
in an article for the Institute of Palestine Studies,  
Dr Nadine Naber wrote:

*"There are no silent vigils during genocide . . .  
In the belly of the beast, there are no quiet spaces in our hearts"*

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A Cabin in the Swiss Alps  
And A New York City Concert Hall

Some would say  
*"Well ..... You have to start somewhere"*

**Why is Somewhere always the same place?**

In the Routledge *Sound Studies* anthology  
Containing 72 chapters and more than 1.500 pages  
There is not a single chapter on Africa or Asia

Some would say  
*"Well ..... You have to start somewhere"*

**Why is Somewhere always the same place?**

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Always Emerging  
Emerging from Somewhere

**Why is Somewhere always the same place?**