silent shout February 2024 S McEvoy

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. And the other being Noise.

Noise and Silence are often Positioned in Opposition to each other And as Emerging out of each other

Noise and Silence, two intensities of Sonic Nothingness and Everythingness Through whose Relationality One can understand what Sound is and what Sound does.

Charley Pride sang, in his song called Silence. . . Silence is four walls that hold no laughter Silence is a phone that never rings Silence is a hall without her footsteps The Sound of Silence is destroying me

> Turn the Jukebox up loud, let there be laughter Talk to me no matter what you say Help me drown out the sound of silence The sound of silence that's destroying me

while Ralph Ellison wrote, in Living With Music. . .

"One desperate morning I decided that since I seemed doomed to live within shrieking chaos I might as well contribute my share; Perhaps if I fought Noise with Noise I'd attain some small Peace"

Silence (and the connected act of Silencing) Describes Processes of Erasure, Marginalisation, Censorship, Prohibition, and Suppression.

Yet in the field of Sound Studies,

Silence is not theorised in a way That can sufficiently describe or capture these Processes

To hear True Silence, you must truly be Disembodied.

If you were to stand in the Quietest kind of room in the World an Anechoic Chamber Usually located in research and testing facilities, You would still Hear the Sound of your own Body.

In this Quietest Room This Ideal Space The Body And its Sonic Emissions Persist. 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 Vogelin 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 Silence that creates the Listener.

The Listener The Person who Can listen with Attention

To all the Sounds that are Around

The Person afforded the chance to Listen Because of the Silence The Ideal Silence.

The person Who has Access to this Silence May become the Listener.

Who, indeed, has Access to Silence?

Silence arrived Again With a bang, In 1952,

When John Cage presented the piece *4 minutes 33 seconds* In Maverick Concert Hall, Woodstock, New York.

With pianist David Tudor sitting by the piano Not playing it For three movements.

And by doing so incorporated into this piece All the incidental Sounds That take place in and around a Large Concert Hall In New York Populated by the People Who would attend such a Show.

It is known as the Silent piece.

Through the Silence of the Musician the Composer folds what was once was Non-Music into Music.

Sound became Music through the use of Silence.

And Silence became SILENCE A privileged category in Sound Art and Art Music.

And through the use of Silence the Listener Again was created: 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.

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"

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

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

Why is Somewhere always the same place?

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"

Always Emerging Emerging from Somewhere Why is Somewhere always the same place?