



**LaBELLE, Brandon. *Sound and Emergent Forms of Resistance*. Sonic Agency.**

**Novembro 2020. London: Goldsmith Press, 2018.**

Epígrafe:

What you want to hear, you hear not. For, what finds its way out from the underground and the out there is spoken in rhythms and tones, in a language, that solicits a different hearing. (Trin T. Minh-ha, elsewhere, within here, LaBELLE, 2018).

Sound and discourses in dialogue with contemporary struggles. (ver LaBELLE, 2018, p. 1).

Reflecting upon what it is that sound does, how it behaves and performs, what it evokes, and the ways in which subjectivity and social formations are supported and agitated by the listening sense. In this regard, I follow from what Salomé Voegelin terms a "sonic Sensibility", which she theorizes in order to craft from the heard and the unheard a range of critical ideas and perspectives. In particular, she draws out a consideration of "sound's invisible formlessness" and its capacity to upset and reorient the politics of visibility. Sound and listening are subsequently put forward as a dynamic framework from which to interrogate "the surface of a visual world". (LaBELLE, 2018, p. 2).

Subsequently, the discourse that I work to develop is one tethered to experiences and productions that capture sound's agentive potentiality. In short, I attempt to construct a larger narrative about political life by staying close to sound and listening, underscored as an expansive relational means affording dialogical exchange, that plays of recognition and the affective processes intrinsic to finding place, as well as escape routes and new social formation beyond the strictly verbal and visible. (LaBELLE, 2018, p. 2).

A forceful movements – or rhythmic and resonant intensities, of vibrational and volumetric interruptions – sound works to unsettle and exceed arenas of visibility by relating us to the unseen, the non represented or the not-yet-apparent; alongside spaces of appearance, and the legible visibilities often defining open discourse, the flow and force of particular tonalities and musics, silence and noises may transgress certain partitions of borders, expanding the agentive possibilities of the uncounted and the underheard. Sound may carry those that struggle by way of reverberant intensities, the vibrations as well the echos that pass over or around structures of dominance to embolden the voices of the few, enabling strained articulations or actions to gather momentum and to take up residence within a multiplicity of territories and languages (LaBELLE, 2018, p. 3).

As hidden, infra-sonic energies, vibrations may also shudder the articulated and delineated forms of sociality, cohering instead around the deep matters and shared atmospheres often supporting more intimate relations. From such a view, vibratory models of alliance and sharing often interrupt the representational codings active on that “visual surface” of particular worlds, supporting instead constructs of togetherness that may carry great social and political potential.

Working through acoustic framework, I’m led to a deeper view onto the ways in which the life of the senses is equally a political question. (LaBELLE, 2018, p. 3).

For Dyson, sound forms a critical vocabulary by which to confront the complexity of today’s crises; from ecological to economic, social to political challenges, Dyson emphasizes the possibilities afforded by way of a sonic criticality to “move toward shared sensibility” form which to build “sense, the common, and common sense simultaneously”. From such a perspective, sound and listening from a supportive base form which to nurture a broader intelligence in approaching the pervasive realities of crisis. (LaBELLE, 2018, p. 3).

I focus on sound then less as a question of specific objects or case studies, and more as a set of support structures by which one garners capacities for acting in and amongst the world. I highlight this process through the notion of “sonic agency”. (LaBELLE, 2018, p. 4).

Specifically, I’m interested to consider how sonic agency may assist in the bridging of the spiritual and the political that Lorde argues for, and by extension, the intensely effective and wordly labors defining contemporary life. By drawing from experiences and conceptualizations of sound and listening and being conducive to empathy and compassion, as well the means to break the borders of particular regimes of violence with its interruptive potential, might sonic agency enable an intensification of emancipatory practices? A set of capacity derive from sound’s inherently relational force and therefore enabling of new formations of social solidarity, especially as weapons against a neoliberal logic of privatization?

In this way, I position sonic agency according to what Jacques Rancière describes as a “wrench of equality” – a social force that works to interrupt the dominant order, thereby “politicizing” power. For Rancière it is by way of the “political” that power is grounded, inserting a wrench of equality into its exercises through interventions of uncounted and underheard. (LaBELLE, 2018, p. 4).

Accordingly, conditions of visibility and appearance – what Glissant calls “clarity and transparency” – are embedded (and “dirtied” within a greater world of “opacities”; these are the dense strata of memories and histories, conflicts and imaginaries, and inter-lingualism found within the density of post-colonial relations and which inflect and shape productions of meaning. (LaBELLE, 2018, p. 6).

Jean Bénéti: energetics of ethics. (ver LaBELLE, 2018, p. 8).

Agency, as the capacity to affect the world around us, is thus interwoven into a complex assemblage of materials and forces which, Bennets suggest, requires that one “listen” – to perceive the nuances and ever-changing relations in which the self is always embedded. (LaBELLE, 2018, p. 8).

A world of animations and vibrations, echoes and agitations, that embeds us within the densities and opacities to which a sonic sensibility may afford deeper engagement, for it is “through sound, through the various refrains we invent, repeat, and catch from nonhumans, [that] we receive news of the cosmic energies to which we humans are always in close, molecular proximity”. (LaBELLE, 2018, p. 9).

Questions of contemporary social conditions, and what many constitute public life today, as well as how the “space between” people may open up to enable formations of not only public discourse but equally gestures of joying together, become central by reconstituting, the political realm. This is additionally shaped by understanding of “speech and action” as being grounded in sounded subjectivities, where speech and hearing, voice and listening, form the essential and enduring means by which to nurture spaces between, especially when such spaces must contend with contemporary systems that impose a “privatization” to our senses and politics. (LaBELLE, 2018, p. 11).

By delving into the listening sense and the potentialities of sounding practices – the refrains and the reverberations by which we latch onto the world and each other – might we ground the operations of power within an ethics of the transnational present? Might sonic agency lend to the culture of contemporary self-organizing and its concern for a common world, amplifying the suddering vibrancy of shared joys and political imagination? (LaBELLE, 2018, p. 12).

In the scene of encounter, instead, we are flushed with a particular intensity whereby “the noise of our throats that fills the time it takes to convey the message communicates the noise of the things or makes the things discernible in their empirical plurality” – an embodied intensity, a plurality that subsumes language within the roar of the world in which sonorities echo and resonate with deeper tonality of place, and the flow of noise that surrounds gives way to surprising communication and communion. As Lingis suggests, encountering each other within the fullness of worldly contact leads less to an ideal transparent reasonableness of modern individuality; rather, (mis)translations and trespasses emerge, are produced, punctuating the “chaos and opacity” of public life. (LaBELLE, 2018, p. 14).

Syntagma Square □ performances

[Figures] These are activated as bodies of knowledge as well as constructs from which to suggest potential tactics and ways of being political. Subsequently, the figures of the invisible, the overheard, the itinerant, and the weak are developed. Based on particular

ontological and material conditions of sound – its unseen and temporal qualities, its interruptive and ephemeral nature – these figures are mobilized through a set of historical accounts and theoretical reflections, brought together to reflect upon how communities of resistance cohere. (LaBELLE, 2018, p. 16-17).

The unseen quality of sound is mobilized in order to consider how invisibility may be utilized as the basis for a set of emancipatory practices. If understandings of public life and political agency are often based on making visible that which is hidden or refused entry, what formations of subjectivity and social empowerment might the disappeared, the missing, or the hidden take? Considering this question, I draw upon notion of acousmatic, referring a sound whose source we do not see (and central to the field of electro-acoustic music and related cinematic practices). From such conditions, the acousmatic is emphasized as a potent operation often working to unsettle relations between sound and image, between what we see and what we hear. The invisibility of sound may recondition the space of appearance by introducing a phantasmatic element (whose voice is that I hear?), while providing a means of vocabulary of agency by enabling one to skirt the logic of the visual capture. This is extended by considering the activist work of the militant sound collective Ultra-red, whose practice utilizes sound and listening as ways to address and support communication in conflict. Their work raises questions as how sound and listening, as the basis for critical engagement, may suggest an alternative understanding by which to constitute the public sphere, one deeply aligned with those who do not appear or appear peripheral to dominant structure. (LaBELLE, 2018, p. 17).

With the overhead, I'm interested to construct a theory of relations based on interruption and the noises that often impinge onto direct listening and conversations we have. The overheard introduces us, instead, to the stranger surroundings us. Accordingly, I use the overheard to suggest modalities of speaking and acting based on the intensities of disruptions: how one may find support, through the potential of volume and practices of interference. (LaBELLE, 2018, p. 18).

Strangers as bodies of noise. Sound moving after something.

In being out of place, the itinerant may create alien languages, an inter-lingualism setting into motion a poetics of echos – punctuated in reggae's mix of riddim and delay, along with lyrics of redemption – and that come to pass between colonial subjects, and those scattered far and wide. (LaBELLE, 2018, p. 18).

(...) The itinerant is also a vulnerable or weak figure. Weakness is posed as a final mode of sonic agency, for sound is never easy to hold or capture; as a material, and even as a field of study, sound is a weak object. I search for it, and yet, it is already gone; even if recorded, I must play this sound again and again in order to understand its shape and density. Its frequencies as well as psychoacoustical impact. (LaBELLE, 2018, p. 20).

Sonic agency is therefore posed as a support structure for emancipatory practices, inserting into the sphere of dominant power an acoustics of social becoming and according to the rhythms and resonance that listening and being heard evoke. (LaBELLE, 2018, p. 21).

Deborah Kapchan "spaces of discomfort".

Performance: reignitings in the political imaginations.

It's is my view that an auditory position of sounding practices and engaged listening may contribute to the new "ways of being and doing" by offering a critical route through contemporary realities. (LaBELLE, 2018, p. 25).

The agentive potentialities of invisibility and overhearing of itinerancy and that of the weak are thus given narrative and so as to lead us in and around appearance, allowing us to enter certain darkness and undergrounds, networks and communities in movement, as well as to share the vibrancy and interruption – the opacities and the chaos: the empirical – of which we are always part. In this regard, the sonic figures that I pose here are imagine as collaborators, which may suggest the means to listen in, toward, against, and with, so as to concert with the humming vitalities of others. In this way, listening is always a working through, in the moment, opening up to what may be apparent, but equally what may exist beyond the strictly seen, for "we have the capacity to hear something about the world differently through the sounding of another's perspective; we are able to be surprised by others and by our own selves". In this sense, sound operates as a generative medium for keeping open the project of a new social body. (LaBELLE, 2018, p. 25).

## Chapter 2: "The invisible"

Visibility is more than meets the eye. (...). I feel myself being seen. (LaBELLE, 2018, p. 30).

Might we appreciate sound as a material event that generates conditions or experience of non-visibility? A physical movement of pressures and molecular agitation that is fundamentally invisible, or beyond the threshold of sight – that hovers within this air, or across this skin – and that accordingly is materially between energy and event, transmission and reception? (...) It is truly possible to map a sound's restless propagations and subsequent reflections and absorptions – its effects? Sound, in this regard, puts bodies and things into motions by *extending* their reach; a literal *moving away* that, in doing so, shifts out perceptual frame from its material anchoring, its source, toward an evanescent becoming. (LaBELLE, 2018, p. 32).

(...) I want to engage these questions by engaging the notion of the acousmatic, the acousmatic being a sound whose source we do not see, and which is taken up within

electro-acoustic origin; instead, we enter an arena of “sonic objects” whose density, texture, and frequency appeal to the deep listener, and the formation of a space of sonic intensity, of darkness and limited sight.

The acousmatic is fundamentally based upon conditions of the unseen, of not looking or looking elsewhere, *into sound*, and locates us within spaces of shadows, dimness, a dim light, and at times, even total darkness – a listening in the dark. (LaBELLE, 2018, p. 33).

Ultra-red audio recording.

Listening is mobilized as a productive and organizational act. In this context, it becomes not only a question of making visible communities often marginalized by social norms or abusive power, but also of putting into question the power structures that force some to appear over others, and that require, through a type of ocular pressure, that one announce oneself into a space of appearance in order to gain access to rights and care, and to political life in general.

In other words, we move beyond the question of whether one is or is not permitted to “appear” within the public sphere to an investigation of the contestations and the contradictions that produce the social geographies constituted by the operations of both visibility and invisibility. (Ultra-red, “In/visibility and the Conditions of Collective Listening”, In *The invisible Seminar* (Bergen: Insitute of Art, University of Bergen, forthcoming).

(LaBELLE, 2018, p. 34).

How do voices find the courage and the wherewithal to speak, especially when appearance is dangerous? And how might we hear these voices in such a way as to move beyond the presumed assumptions, or the limits of dialogical arenas? Might listening enable a process of community work, especially in terms of bringing together highly contest issues and diverse subjects? (LaBELLE, 2018, p. 35).

Ultra-red take their cues from deep interest in the acousmatic, and the theories of Pierre Schaeffer who importantly “describes, how listening to the properties or material qualities of sound, such as volume, consistency, duration, placement in the binaural field, and texture, requires drawing the veil between the signifier of the sound object and its cause, the signified”. The acousmatic functions as a generative tool, a condition or operation by which to undo much of embedded or reactive impulses that mostly support normalizing structures and that return us to what we know. Defamiliarizing our perceptions, veiling the relation between signifier and signified. Asking us just to listen *again*, acousmatic listening becomes a base from which to build a new relations to the social and political realities that surround particular communities. (LaBELLE, 2018, p. 35).

(...) Chion characterizes the acousmatic as a “fluctuating zone” that moves in and around what we see. (LaBELLE, 2018, p. 36).

Chion suggest that these auditory experiences of intensity and rupture are replicated and employed to great effect within cinema, and are dramatically expressed through the acousmatic, or more precisely, by “talking and acting shadow he calls “the acousmètre”. The acousmètre is a vague figure whose presence is expressed by a voice whose body is “not yet seen” but which promises to appear. The acousmètre therefore stages the ambiguity of sound, especially through the voice off-screen, or the voice over, which is a voice whose image or body we do not see, or have yet to see, and that we hear as a type of phantom unsynchronized or dislocated from its image. It is a voice that we apply to the visual scene, and yet it holds an ambivalent relation: is this acousmètre a form of inner voice and is it a voice to be trusted? In short what kind of voice is this – who is really speaking? This ambivalence is, for Chion, a potent reminder of sound’s capacity to *haunt* the image and experiences of looking. The acousmètre, he suggests, is primarily “malevolent” – *it carries secret intentions*. In this regard, the uncanny oscillation between sound and image produce a state of unease, fixing our attention within the perceptual (and familial) structure that requires continual psychic labor, a working through.

The acousmatic, in requiring of us a type of psychic labor, a negotiation with what has gone missing, or what we may not have access to, incites our imagination as well fantasy. Returning the work of Ultra-red, listening becomes the means for deepening a view onto one’s surroundings: by asking one to listen and listen again to recorded sounds of certain environments or events, prompted by the question “what did you hear?” (LaBELLE, 2018, p. 35).

I would extend Chion’s acousmètre figure toward the largest field of sound and hearing in general, to suggest that the experience of auditory events do much to puncture our psychological constructs with continual intensity; in short, audition is lived as a process of constant agitation, a fluctuation by which we learn of the temporality and ephemerality of bodies and things. Sound is never permanent or immutable rather it carries the condition of ambiguity and fluctuation, as a force of oscillation that requires of us continual psychic labor: to find or construct meaningful points of support through the pleasures of hearing while navigating the ruptures and fragmentation the audible imparts or produces. (LaBELLE, 2018, p. 38).

From such a condition, the acousmatic produces a form of affective knowledge, one that acts as the basis for a “listening activism” – a listening that may intervene within the systems of visual capture. (LaBELLE, 2018, p. 39).

Invisibility leads to insights and revelations about bodies and embodiment, about agency and social action, and the traumas and ethics of disappearance. To be without a visual representation, while deeply undermining social and political engagement, is counter-balanced by what invisibility may also provide: the conditions for occupying the limits of the normative structures by which political subjectivity and social work are made meaningful. (LaBELLE, 2018, p. 42).

Invisibilities play out through practices that gain traction from alternative logics, those in which illumination and transparency converse with the unseen, and through intuitions, poetics, and magic (which may be called “madness” from the normalizing perspective of the rational). Magic is positioned here as a platform by which one gains insight onto the unseen from the acousmatic movements of sonic event, through spectral witnessing, and performances of what I term “the black arts”. *How else may I live with this phantom body. This body that occupies my own?* (LaBELLE, 2018, p. 43).

In what way can the acousmatic enable type of “reading” through a reorientation of the senses, one able to contend with silences of the withdrawn? (LaBELLE, 2018, p. 43).

Within such conditions, we may detect not only cultures that challenge the status quo, and that search for means to overcome the limits of visibility, but that also steer us towards epistemologies grounded in a negative aesthetics, a poetic of shadows and cuts, of occlusion and erasure, and which generate other forms of signification and ethics.

Might expressions and meaning of the black arts suggest emergent forms of resistance, as well as possibilities for an ethics based not so much on this face that I see, but those I do not? An ethics that enables one to engage those gone missing or that hide in the dark, listening to music late into the night, or that occupy peripheries as means for survival? I would emphasize such figures and gatherings as being public yet in the negative intensity – a public of the withdrawn and the underground, a second under the first, and form which expressions of social imagination and manifestations are to be found. (LaBELLE, 2018, p. 57).

It is my view that sound, as an intensity that moves objects and bodies into the world extending their reach and relation, is a force that works to link across singularities. (...)

In this regard, I’m keen to bring notions of vibrancy and their related matters into conversation with the issue of sonic agency, to consider how contemporary assemblages reformulate concepts of subjectivity by displacing its fixity and amplifying the vulnerabilities that make it open to capture and collaboration.

Suely Rolnik gives articulation to the vibrancy Bennet speaks of by concentrating it specifically into a notion of contemporary subjectivity, or what she terms a “vibratile body”:

Today’s subjectivity: grabbed from the soil, they have the gift of ubiquity – they fluctuate at the mercy of the mutable connections of desire with flows from all places and times that all pass simultaneously through electronic waves. A singular and fluid filter of this immense and also fluid ocean. With no name or permanent address, without identity: metamorphosing modulations in and endless process tirelessly managed day after day. (LaBELLE, 2018, p. 62).



Biopolitics of the cognitive subject. (LaBELLE, 2018, p. 64).

Overhearing is positioned as a narrative about the ways in which listening and being heard are transformed by the conditions of global culture. Drawing from theories of vibrancy, and further, to understandings of the stranger urban noise, I'm interested in how overhearing may describe the relational intensities of the vibrant and the virtual, and which may assist in critically engaging both the possibilities and pressures of digital networks. (LaBELLE, 2018, p. 65).

What we might overheard teach us? What kinds of lessons may we take from the force of interruption that is overheard – is there another form of listening to be considered, one tuned to intrusion, to the intruder itself? Might a sonic agency of overheard open up to the conditions of multiplicity as a thrust of continual differentiation? To operate as an interruption through which bodies confront bodies and by which networks are occupied? (LaBELLE, 2018, p. 65).

Jacques Attali, in his extensive analysis of noise, provides a dynamic understanding of alterity, which can be useful in considering questions of overhearing and social exchange. According to Attali, noise functions as force of interruption, one that announces, through its unmistakable agitation, a violence a violence that always takes its aim at the social order. In response, as Attali suggests, systems of law and control are at pains to monitor, capture, and manipulate the intrusiveness of noise. "A concern for maintaining tonalism, the primacy of melody, a distrust of new languages, codes, or instruments, a refusal of the abnormal" – these are common systems of law and control.

Noise, in this regard, is the force of the marginal and the different; a strange sound from a strange body which threatens the social order, as a primary trust of audible intensity through which marginalities are mobilized and the expressivity of new languages intervene. Their intervention delivers into the social order a force of desire and festivity, usurping the normative patterns and tonalities by which society performs. In response, the social order adjusts, capturing the rupture noise delivers through mechanism and rituals of production and consumption, which ultimately co-opt and regulate. Within such a system, music performs an essential role. For Attali, music captures noise within a particular ordering principle, giving it shape and form that locates noise back into the social order, into mechanism of cultural production and consumption. Yet, music is prone to erupt, degrade, and mutate – to deform – under noise's continual pressure.

A type of negotiation surrounds the relation between noise and structures of power, one that is equally useful in considering relations between people. Questions of noise open onto experiences of intrusion and interruption, which I'm keen to suggest inaugurate new social encounters and relations. By doing so, the vitality and vibrancy of bodies may be

seen as reliant upon the strangeness of the others as well as the basis for new forms of technological capture.

Richard Sennet, in *The Use of Disorder*, develops an important view onto questions of interruption by applying the notion of “disorder” as a productive tool for nurturing social life and the diverse experiences intrinsic to it. (LaBELLE, 2018, p. 69).

Noise are, in fact, expressive of disordering principles and resulting encounters; they are frictions that produce interruption onto the plane of audition, scratching the surfaces and agitating the depths. In this regard, what we hear is deeply enriched by the intrusiveness and punctuations of what we overhear. (LaBELLE, 2018, p. 75).

Within this field of squatting and disordering relations, of vibrant bodies, it is important to integrate and understanding of the overheard also based on forms of surveillance: that the intensities of the stranger in the city may also be expressed through eavesdropping and other forms of spying. (LaBELLE, 2018, p. 75).

Marshall McLuhan’s analysis of the “electronic age” in the early 1960s is prescient of the conditions of global subjectivity that shape contemporary experiences. As he states: “In this electric age we see ourselves being translated more and more into a form of information, moving toward the technological extension of consciousness”. (LaBELLE, 2018, p. 75).

What is striking about McLuhan’s analysis is the degree of which electricity and the electronic unfold the body and consciousness toward an externalization of sensuousness, feeling knowing, and sharing. His ultimate proposition that we know “wear all mankind as our skin” sets the stage for complex transformation, one that suggests a sensitizing of the global situation within which individual experience is always already implicated and determined by a vast web of alliance and interferences, ruptures and reparations, *nerves and currents*, leading to what McLuhan further calls “retribalization”. (LaBELLE, 2018, p. 76).

We never stop working or connecting there is no end to being involved. The decentralizing of relations, through electrical flows and networks, may perform to support sensations of being a free subject while forcefully capturing one within a biopolitical structure of vital signals and controls. (LaBELLE, 2018, p. 77).

(...) the media flows of images continually charge the vitality of social relations with a force of restlessness. In short, images not only pop up, they intervene directly into people’s lives to shape daily routines, triggering responses and galvanizing people; they work to charge the political economy of attention and the social groupings to which network culture is conducive. (LaBELLE, 2018, p. 78).

The circulation of image-flows delivers not so much particular meanings as forceful interruptions that ripple across the senses to assemble together the nerves of so many bodies, acting upon the world as “vibrations”; in this way they are, in effect, agents and actant, *life-forces*. Following the “vibrant” model of Bennett, image-flows produce not only semiotic relations, of visual cultures, they in turn affect the rhythms of breath and nerves, and the restless linking of networks assemblages. As Terranova enigmatically suggests, there exists an “invisible remainder” to the media flows of images, a remainder hovering around a particular image and by which sensibilities and cognitive labors are nurtured and directed.

What is the “invisible remainder” exactly, this addition that hovers in and around specific visualities? And to which the body is made responsive? I want to return to McLuhan, and in particular his additional proposal that electronic media locate us with an oral, and by extension, acoustical condition. As he states, “Because of its action in extending our central nervous systems, electronic technology seems to favor the inclusive and participational spoken word over the specialist written world”. Such a statement is based on a general demarcation between the written and spoken word, and by extension, between the ocular and the auditory. For McLuhan, literacy produces a subject defined by looking, and operations of an ocular knowledge, which steers us toward rational objectivity, a *looking upon* the world; a semiotics of visual meanings from which cultures are produced and shaped. In contrast, a society or community dominated by orality tends toward a process of interactions, entanglement, where listening generates an intensity of relations that requires continuous negotiation; in short, while the written word allows for a certain detachment capacity for “separateness, continuity and uniformity”, a linearity, the spoken heightens “pluralism and uniqueness”, and even “discontinuity” – in short, active sociality. The intensity of involvement – of vibrancy and vitality, of matter-energy assemblages – produced by network culture may be understood to displace the capacity of written word, as appearing from a position of continuity and uniformity, as a stable signifier. In contrast, the ceaseless flows of expressions and articulations, comments and commentaries, sharing and postings – translations – embedded within network culture operate precisely in support of pluralism – a *restlessness*; the soul at work to which the spoken and the acoustical are expressive – of mediated productions – contributes to the functioning of nano-operations, of subjectivities endlessly fragmenting and regrouping, whose nervous systems, cognitive labors, and cellular bodies perform connections. (LaBELLE, 2018, p. 79).

McLuhan’s acoustical descriptions support this questioning, suggesting instead that images take on the conditions of an electrical oscillation, a sonic intensity, as a pressure of the molecular. The remainder that Terranova identifies, invisibly at work in support of image-flows, is precisely that animating periphery that pulls at our senses, that is already closer than imagined, and that produces a political economy of desire and involvement, to capitalize upon one’s affective and restlessness activeness. (LaBELLE, 2018, p. 79).

In such a new state, the operations of network movements continuously introduce us to a plethora of currents, bodies, voices – expressivities fragmented and flashing across one’s

extended perceptual field. In doing so, network culture shifts from the imagistic to the affective, from the “alphabetical” to the “acoustical” (to use McLuhan’s vocabulary); animating, through hyper-connectivity, the territories of the not-yet apparent hovering in the background – this background that is always shifting, that is closer than imagined. (LaBELLE, 2018, p. 81).

Stranger sociability and technosemiotic. P. 81

Maria Miranda Unsitley Aesthetics, p. 82.

I’m interested to return to the figure of the overhead, which I’ve highlighted as the basis for listening today: that under the conditions of contemporary urban life, and according to the interruptiveness of network culture, one is situated within an ever-shifting set of coordinates, unsitley and vibrant, that requires radically new orientation. As such, listening and being heard are shaped through a political economy of attention and mediation. Accordingly, biocapitalism functions less through material structures and more through nano-operations, which conduct a certain bio-cognitive performance according to one’s willing participation in digital systems. Within such conditions, I’ve attempted to describe overhearing as a force of capture as well as potential alliance: from our unhomed subjectivity, this body always already defined by the logic of vibratility, which makes one available to an array of controls, one searches for friendship and collaborations, associations and coalitions. Overhearing and being overheard become new skills and new framework from which to gain resources, from which to align and assemble, and through which to also interrupt, as well as to contend with the interruptions that define one’s articulations and social exchanges.

Might overhearing suggest a model of listening that by steering one through conditions of interruption enables gestures of caring beyond the familiar? Is it possible to consider the overheard as the basis of uncertain practices, those that may defend the new state of vibrancy as one aligned with moral orientations and responsibility? (LaBELLE, 2018, p. 87).

Freedom of listening is a call for giving resonance to voices often unsited and unhomed by the political economies of attention and mediation. As indigenous movements remind, public arenas and discourses are greatly shaped according to communicational flows and stoppages, of not only having access, but also of contouring and regulating that access with particular content free of the potential intrusiveness of those who control the code and related apparatuses. On short, to secure one’s freedom of speech and listening through digital sovereignty and with respect to the digital commons.

It is my view that in overhearing one develops the needed skills for being attentive within this economy of attention; to enact one’s freedom of listening in order to contend with the new ontology of the social, which is one continual assemblage and interruption. (LaBELLE, 2018, p. 87).

#### 4. The itinerant

The bodies that rush by and that send vibrations across the floor, and that move like bundles of energy suddenly let loose, surging and flowing around each other, and whose voices puncture the air with their languages – *sound movement*, and the voice is essential to extending oneself into the world: one speaks, one vocalizes, and this sound moves from oneself into spaces and towards others, to nurture relations, and to announce, through such gestures, that *I am here*. And further, that I hear you. (LaBELLE, 2018, p. 95).

By negotiating the power that struggles over homeland, origin, and belonging, creolization and its literary culture shifts the terms of singularity towards those of multiplicity – a meandering and intersectional orality that sound out other constructs of subjectivity. (LaBELLE, 2018, p. 104).

Sound is always moving away from a source; it abandons origin, it longs and is perennially leaving. In travelling and migrating, in brushing up against numerous surfaces being absorbed or reflected as it moves, it is equally losing weight, shedding identity. It is thinned out as it goes. As it migrates, invading any number of territories, to sweep past and through the social field, brushing the skin and contouring the rhythms of places – sound does so according to a condition of weakness. It is, as a defining feature, a weak object – *how can I hold it, this sound?* Additionally it spreads such weakness. To listen one must pause, even stop what one's doing; we fix our ears to certain sounds, or we even block them in moments of invasive noise. We are touched or hit by sound as it brushes passed or burrows deep within, to send us to sleep, or to fluster and flush the cheeks; it makes us move, toward a point of exhaustion and exhilaration. We are pushed around by sound, and accordingly, we often weaken, losing our energy and tolerance, or our ability to sit still. How impatient we are when asked to listen. How vulnerable we are to force of sonic event, to comings and goings of sounds. We are both uplifted and annoyed by sound, by tonalities and the vibrations, the song and their repetitions.

One is nurtured by humming of certain melodies, sheltered by and ambient whirl of oscillations, all of which exist on an unsteady threshold that may give way to sleepless night on distressed conversations (LaBELLE, 2018, p. 127-128).

The weakening experience that sound may wield can be highlighted by considering the phenomenon known as Autonomous Sensory Meridian Responses (ASMR). ASMR is founded on inciting euphoric sensations by way of auditory stimulation or triggers, mostly based on quiet rustlings, soft whisperings, and textured scrapings. This had led to an active online community, particularly thorough the circulation of YouTube video produced by ASMR practioners. Often employing binaural microphone and headphones, which allows for an enhanced stereo image, these videos aim to induce a heightened state of euphoric

listening, one whose experience often leads to meditative states, “tingly” feelings, and sleep. (LaBELLE, 2018, p. 128).

As Susan Bickford suggest, practices of listening are not necessarily based on friendship, or even affisability; rather, within processes of deliberation and discourse, listening works to enrich dialogical argument and disagreement. (LaBELLE, 2018, p. 130).

This would give way to understandings how political subjectivity is expressed not solely in gestures of speaking up, or in rational collective assembly, but equally in “arational” formations of energetic attunement, ecstatic togetherness, and affective intervention – vibrational formations in which the personal is deeply political and the political is something to be lived and shared. (LaBELLE, 2018, p. 133).

As she suggests, listening requires patience, and the stillness of a body in order to foster processes of exchange, in which exposure and even vulnerability are supportive of dialogue. Yet listening is not without challenges. (LaBELLE, 2018, p. 145).

In this way, listening requires a condition of weak-strenght; within the dialogical moment I am always listening beyond myself, moving my own views in consideration of another’s, giving my attention to opinions different form my own while finding ways to resist and counter their power if need be. Listening is never purely passive, rather it performs as an affective and intelligent labor by which recognition is nurtured and relations are continually remodeled. For Bickford, the importance of listening is found in its capacity to potentially “break up linguistic conventions and create public realm, where a plurality of voices, faces, and languages can be heard and seen spoken”. (LaBELLE, 2018, p. 145).

The plurality of voices that may create a highly dynamic public realm though seems to suggest more than rational debate and reasoned deliberation; while I may sit patiently as another speaks, I am equally pressed and strained by what I hear; I fidget in my seat, I’m agitated by the slowness of the process – I may, in fact, hate what I hear. (LaBELLE, 2018, p. 145).

In developing the concept of sonic agency, I’ve attempted to elaborate how it may come to act in relation to contemporary social and political struggles. This is furthered by considering how people draw form experiences of sound and listening in order to join together against conditions of loss and powerlessness. From such a work, the figures of invisibility, overhearing, the itinerant, and the weak are posited as the basis of specific emancipatory practices. In particular, I’ve sought to mobilize these figures to lead us toward a rethinking of the political as being solely an arena of visibility and open public discourse. (LaBELLE, 2018, p. 154).

Through invisibility and overhearing I attempt to map the everyday yet complex ethics brought forward from encounters with strangers and the strange, the desapareard and the

hidden. (...) The invisible and interruptive technologies of surveillance and the related economies of attentions today, for example, reform subjectivity ad *unhomed*, captured and integrated into assemblages that are more vibratory than pictorial, more overheard than heard. (LaBELLE, 2018, p. 154).

The disappeared forces us into spectral territories of invisibility and the missing, which require another set of discursive and perceptual tools. Against and alongside the disappeared, I put forward the acousmatic as a powerful device or construct, one that specifically affords a route for contending with absence. The invisible quality of sounds that we hear without seeing their source (often utilized in cinema and electroacoustic music practices) provides the basis for probing how subjectivity is deeply entangled with visibility and the work of appearance. In contrast, the disappeared and the invisible demand a shift in understanding, as well as practice of communication and remembering, that give way to a potentiality found in the dark. (LaBELLE, 2018, p. 155).

Through problematizing and haunting the space of appearance, and what counts as a subject proper, and by interrupting the built environment and ourselves with strange sounds, invisibility and overhearing turn us toward the potential of acousmatic constructs and the interruptive operations of noise, this unfamiliar or muted voice that requests of me a greater consideration. (LaBELLE, 2018, p. 155).

Loving ethos, diasporic echos, non-violent resistance – within these fragile positions we find not only voices lifted up, but also powerful acts that sound out an acoustical force of social becoming.

In focusing on emancipatory practices through sonic agency, which is ultimately a set of narratives about emergent subjectivities – a queering of the limits that define bodies out of place – sound is captured as a mean by which to animate forms of resistance and unlikely publics. (LaBELLE, 2018, p. 156).

Speech and action are subsequently cast not only as openly verbal and visual, but equally as forces vibrancy, shaped and reshaped through the tonalities and resonance passing through bodies and places, inflected and flexed by modulations of silence and the volume always punctuating acts of joining together. (LaBELLE, 2018, p. 156).

In doing so, I'm interested to support the speech and actions that turn us toward not only those we may see, according to particular codings and decodings, or even those that may assemble in a public space, but equally those unlikely publics whose tactics unfold other pathways and powers drawn from the knowledge of displaced bodies floating subjects, and the sensuous materiality of creative and critical ideas. (LaBELLE, 2018, p. 157).

How to bring forward a critical listening within the increasingly complex arena of post-factual realities? From within the poor acoustics of the underheard and the unlikely, how might we nurture a particular aural attention in order to steer the project of

redemocratization toward understandings of global responsibility and compassion? To craft form the dissonance and consonances central to political life the basis of new states of social solidarity and imagination? A poor acoustic by which to tense the smooth of delivery of lies appearing as facts? (...)

As Jamie Heckert eloquently states, the ethics required to create more egalitarian systems is founded on “the dignity of listening to oneself, and the dignity of being listened to”.

From such perspectives and concerns, I am led to the questions of listening acting as a potential form of interruption. (...) Is it possible to cast listening as an activism that may give challenge to existing demarcations or structures of domination, or against those to seek to dominate others? As Kate Lacey suggest, what is needed within today’s environment is not only to secure the right to free speech, but also, to turn our attention to freedom of listening. Freedom of listening is posited as being essential for enabling a “plurality” of voices to be heard; in other words, freedom of listening produces an extremely active relational space within which voices may resound. Yet, the potentiality of freedom of listening may aid in discovering and nurturing the new formation of solidarity by also explicitly relating us to things beyond the voice. The silences of still bodies, the vibrational and rhythmical intensities of collective acts, the tonalities disturbed od distributed by cacophonous volumes, and the co-soundings and echos of earthly creatures and matters ‘ these are equally defining of the public sphere and expressions of political desire. To enact one’s freedom of listening is so necessarily aim for a broader and richer engagement with the range of voices and things to be heard and shared.

Listening activism, as I begin to understand it, gives elaborations to may forms of listening may take; deep as well as shallow listening, horizontal and vertical hearings; a listening that flexes itself, that surrenders as well as punctuates: a listening around or through towards or against others – *this listening that I give as well as through which I take*. Forms of listening are ultimately productions of subjects and sites, knowledges and relations, contouring and shaping the subjective and intersubjective, the energetic and the material features that greatly affects personal and political life. (LaBELLE, 2018, p. 161).

What may happen the in instances of collective listening? A listening together taking place not only within the spaces of music, for instance, but drawn out into the open? That may move us, as music often does, into states not only of euphoric dance, but also into other types of movement? This might be a listening activism directed at particular sites, for instance, around situations of conflict or within communities, applied to spaces of presence of emptiness, locating around that which is missing, In these situations, listening may express concerns as well as indignations by bringing attention to the said and unsaid – *this sound that relates us to the notyet-apparent*. A gathering of listeners, in the squares, or in the classrooms and market places, the backrooms and storefronts, may perform to create a gap, a duration drawn out, detouring the flows of normative actions, of declarations and decrees, with a persistent intensity – a nagging quietude, possibly: this act of doing listening, together; and by gathering attention it may also create an image: the image of the listener as one who *enacts* attention it may also create an image: the image of the listener as one who *enacts* attention or consideration and, in doing so, nurtures the



conditions for mindful engagement. The listening...that works...that interrupts, or...that beats back...to produce...in those gaps of...time and space...another pause: the...interval in which...something...someone, or...other force onto particular contexts... - the classroom, the hall of justice, the park...or the home – this attention...the listening that... ... demands... ... and that gives... and that may resonate...that may amplify...the potentiality of...being...side by side...

Freedom of listening, as I'm describing, sets the conditions for dwelling within the present with others – for this sound we hear is already the production of a shared world, however tensed or disjunctive, this sound that animates a space between, and that is always moving on and through and with. In doing so, listening is the expression of art of an "art of presence", crafting form the body and its place in the world and with others new formation of social becoming.

(...) The agitating and evanescent project of sound is fundamentally a disquieting presence, one nestled within the stability of the dominant and which may come to life under the force of a sudden breath, or a surprising voice, to counter the demarcations of the visible, of who or what counts, through practices of the invisible and not-yet-apparent; to interrupt the technocratic enclosures of the commons by extending assemblages of the social vitality through the overheard and the strangers found therein; to give challenge to all types of borders by supporting the migrations of the dispossessed, the floating, the *echo-subjects*, and those always already in search; and to nurture the means to stage our weaknesses as the basis for a greater strength, the strength found in erotic knowledge and shared vulnerability. (LaBELLE, 2018, p. 161-182).