

## **Acousmania**

**Steven Connor**

A lecture given at *Sound Studies: Art, Experience, Politics*, CRASSH, Cambridge, 10<sup>th</sup> July 2015.

What do sound studies do? What can it (or is it they?) continue to do and we continue to do with them (unless they are an it).

Throughout what I have to say the question of whether sound studies is as yet any kind of singular it or still a plural them will be a continuing irritant. In fact a pretty good way of understanding how any field of study develops is to see it as precisely a question of number – as a plurality of activities, dispersed across different fields, and pursued by different kinds of people for different kinds of purpose, is first of all factorised and then finally cancelled down to its lowest common denominator. Sound studies is frequently represented as an interdisciplinary venture, and it is true that its canonical documents and formulations are drawn from fields as seemingly different as history, law, literary criticism, psychology, psychoanalysis, architecture, ethology, anthropology, philosophy, usually of a distinctly phenomenological cast, and media and technology (in other words, let's be honest, fields that are not really all that different from each other at all). We might, I think, take account of the odd fact that interdisciplinary ventures are often less rather than more adventurous than intradisciplinary ones, precisely because they may be too sure of what they are looking for from the various areas on which they draw. Drawing together so many different kinds of argument, devised to deal with different kinds of phenomena, can give a sense that one is building up a three-dimensional hologram of the phenomenon of sound, that is really sustained by the force of fixation and fantasy.

One might imagine that sound studies ought simply and straightforwardly to be concerned with the investigation of sound phenomena and experiences. There seems little either to object to or wonder about in that. But it is also plain that sound studies is no neutral pursuit, any more perhaps than any other area of study. Sound studies have not been pursued simply because there is sound, or because sound is just there. For many of those who pursue it, and who are pursued by it, the study of sound is part of a larger project or programme, which is aimed, not just at expanding what we know about sound, but changing the nature of knowledge about everything and the manner we have of acquiring it. Many of those who have made the most decisive contributions to the understanding of sound have done so on the basis of an intense idealisation of sound experience, and a kind of onerous dream, mad as it may seem,

Sound studies did not begin as a branch of sensory studies, but they have increasingly been conceived and configured as such. In particular, sound and hearing have been construed as locked in a sibling rivalry with vision. If sound studies has been strongly impelled by the horizon of a kind of sonorous utopia, it is because of the antiocularcentric squint documented by Martin Jay (1994), which attributes every kind of ill to the hypertrophy of vision. These various psychosocial maladies include: the fixation on the idea of the centred self, as static 'point of view', the subordination of women (through the 'male gaze'), the depredation of nature in the age of the world-picture, and the reduction of processes to objects and qualities to quantities. Jonathan Sterne has set out in *The Audible Past* vision the 11 items of

faith that constitute what he stirringly, and stingingly, calls the ‘audiovisual litany’: that hearing is immersive, where sound puts us in front of the world, that hearing is subjective while vision is objective, that hearing is emotive while vision is intellectual, that hearing is temporal event, while vision operates in a world of spatialised objects (Sterne 2003, 15). The sting sings a little in me, because I have sometimes been guilty of borrowing the force of such claims for sonorous utopia, though without necessarily, say I, wholly depending on them.

My aim is to try to understand the cohering force of certain fantasies of sound for sound studies; though if you stick it out, you will hear me acknowledge towards the end that that fantasy is generative as well as constraining, and so is probably, for comfortable, if not for intellectually spick and span reasons, ineradicable. This is the point at which it is conventional among sound studies persons to apologise for using a word like *fantasy*, locked as may seem to be into visualist ways of thinking, as though we knew what they meant. *Fantasy* derives from φαντάζειν, to make visible, and φαίνειν, to show, themselves from the stem φαν-, to bring to light, show or make appear, which shares an Indo-European base with Sanskrit *bhā-* to shine, to be bright, to appear. The fact that this stem also fans out into a feathery phonic ensemble that includes *sycophant*, *epiphany*, *diaphanous*, *phenobarbitone*, *defenestrate*, *emphasis*, *phase*, *cellophane* and *phenomenology* is an indication of how tall an order it can be to extirpate entirely the idea of visual appearing from our thinking and speaking, in order to secure, safe, as the saying is, and sound, the domain of sound. But the idea that there could be a way of imagining sound that would be wholly purged of visualist understanding is actually part of the fantasy that I am venturing to appraise.

Ultimately – and this is in fact the internal allegory that animates many disciplines – sound studies likes to think of what it does as being on the side of life against death, offering rescue and resurrection, sensory, philosophical, aesthetic and political, from a world seared and blistered by vision. Sound seems to belong to a world of reciprocal and dynamic energies, of oceanic mutuality, of rippling, yet regulated affect, of unceasing, yet nondominative becoming. In the work of many sound theorists, sound promises in other words a life lived as year-round libidinous festival, in which art, experience and politics flow deliciously and undemandingly into each other. There is a dark twin to this sonorous utopia in the paranoid fantasy of a world surrendered to the Gothic powers of persecutory sound, the world conjured, it is not quite clear how parodically, by Steve Goodman and Toby Heys in their *Delusions of the Living Dead*. What they call the ‘black ecstasy’ of this vision of sound as ultimate power is perhaps to be read as the nocebo obverse of the placebo dream of sonorous utopia. What their ‘century of zombie sound’, in which sound rends and maims rather than healing and transforming, has in common with the more festive and estival kind of sonorous utopia, is the quality of hyperbole, the understanding of sound as a kind of magical omnipotence, whether for bliss or bale, powered as this may be by the willed omnipotence of magical thinking itself. To all of this, one might imagine a variant of Freud’s response, when told of Kant’s assertion that the two things which must inspire the sense of wonder are the starry heavens above and the moral life within: ‘the stars are undoubtedly superb’. Some of the more exorbitant claims for the experience of sound might prompt the similarly decathecting rejoinder: ‘how lovely music can be’. (I have, by the way, so far been unable to locate in Freud’s work the phrase attributed to him by Beckett in his *Three Dialogues With Georges Duthuit* (Beckett 1983, 141). The closest I can find is a remark that the

juxtaposition of celestial magnificence and moral law is strange, ‘for what have the heavenly bodies to do with the question of whether one human creature loves another or kills him?’ (Freud 1964, 162-3.)

It is this exorbitance within sound studies to which I allude with the somewhat unfriendly term ‘acousmania’. *Mania* originally signified madness, most famously the mania attributed by Plato to poets. Later it is used, as the OED definition succinctly tells us, in ‘forming nouns referring to kinds of mental illness, desires, and passions marked by wild excess or delusion, enthusiastic (and often fashionable) participation in certain activities, or enthusiastic admiration for certain things or persons’. There is a telling wrinkle in the way in which this definition conjoins the wild and the fashionable. Mania can signify a kind of formalised or fashioned wildness, an immoderacy moderated by familiarity and predictability. If sound studies involves this kind of regulated mania, it does not exist wholly unaware of the fact that mania itself may tend to express itself through sound, as though there were something manic, a touch of sacred craziness, about sound as such.

## Subjects

The most powerful accusation levelled against the eye, in a world in which there is nothing more morally puissant than impotence, is that it is on the side of power. It seems to be widely accepted that we are more easily subjected to sound than we are the governing subject of it. Nowhere is this dramatised more clearly than in the history of ventriloquism, a topic which marked my own, pretty much unwitting entry in 2000 into the still inexistent, or at least unformalised field of sound studies. The dread attaching to ventriloquism, for the Enlightenment thinkers who became so bizarrely preoccupied with its powers and effects, was precisely that it could evade or slip beneath the rational supervision of the eye. For an era less suspicious than ours of the values of light and perspicacity, it seemed that something you could not see could induce mania and produce mayhem, as in Charles Brockden Brown’s novel *Wieland*. But writing my book *Dumbstruck* (2000) intimated to me – and at first this was a glum disappointment, and not at all where I hoped to end up – that the effects of pure sound, disjoined from understanding and calculation, always in fact turn out to be produced by and for the subjects held to be subject to them. I have begun to wonder whether subjects must be understood as those entities who know how to subject themselves. Ventriloquism works by producing willing subjects of ventriloquism, who delightedly collude in their delusion, or co-illusion. What is more, and despite what people continue to want to believe about it, ventriloquism is almost entirely a visual rather than auditory phenomenon, which depends upon the fact that we will always prefer a plausible source for a sound (a doll flapping its lips as though it were capable of speech) over one derived purely from what we are pleased to call our senses.

Nevertheless, we may see the belief in the possibility of ventriloquism as an important vehicle for the idea of a utopian realm of pure sound, operating independently of source, structure and meaning, and therefore, perhaps, promising some kind of escape from them. But there is no pure sound or sound in itself. What we call auditory culture is nearly always the name for an artificial autonomisation and overestimation of the powers of sound. To be sure, there is a long and varied history of this kind of autonomisation and overestimation, in the many different uses

of music, prayer and formalised sound production to be found in most of the human cultures we know about. But this is a history not of sound, but of the production of sound; a production, that is, that takes place on both the emitting and the receiving side, both in the making of sounds and the making out of the significance of those sounds. We need only think of all the protocols associated with every form of attentive listening or 'listening practice', from schoolroom to concert-hall, to understand how carefully auditory receptivity has to be produced. Sound studies, we may say, can never be the neutral study of sound: it can only ever honestly be the study of the ways in which the idea of sound has been staged or studied.

The most deeply unfortunate feature of sound studies, which, for all that it has been frequently regretted and even denounced, has a stubborn tendency to reassert itself, is its tendency to claim that cultivation of sound and hearing is a way of getting closer to experience, where experience is understood as the adversary or victim of knowledge. Don Ihde is only the most explicit and influential of those who have identified the study of sound as both dependent on and itself a deepening the claims of phenomenological philosophy, the philosophy that offers to give us not knowledge but the experience that precedes and preconditions knowledge. But in fact, phenomenology itself is always subject to a complex duality, in which we are given the knowledge of an experience at the same time as we encounter something like the experience of a knowledge. Sound may seem to offer itself to us as immediate, elementary or primal; but this primacy can never in fact be primal, because it must nevertheless always come late on the scene, precisely as an after-effect. A great deal of exacting and complex cognitive work has always to be done to subtract the experience of sound from all the things with which it must almost always be compounded in human existence. Since the givenness of sound is never *datum* but *factum*, the sense of the firstness of sound must always in fact come late in the day.

### **Acoustemology**

The syllabus to Emily Thompson's *Introduction to Sound Studies* at Princeton in 2008 promises that it will help students in 'tuning our ears to history, as we consider how best to utilize recorded sounds as historical sources and how to intuit sonic culture from traditional historical documents' (Thompson 2008). Sound studies has often made this kind of claim, that it will not only subject a particular class of phenomena to analysis, but will, in the process, evolve a different mode of attention, even a new way of knowing. Indeed, this claim is often carried by the word 'attention' itself: though there is no reason in itself why 'attending' should be thought of as listening rather than looking, the force of French 'entendre' seems often to be humming away in it. In particular, it has involved the claim that we might in some way conduct academic work through listening rather than inspection, observation or analysis. It takes only a moment or two to recognise what an improbable, even outlandish claim this in fact is. You can under some circumstances do something like 'listen to' the past, or listen to a culture, but only if there are items from that past or that culture that exist in recorded or aurally performable forms. But listening to such material need be no different from what historians have done every time they imagine the words of a speaker, or a sound described in a text. Perhaps, it may be said, when one listens for the way in which things operate as sound, rather than simply listening through the sound to what they may mean, one is doing something different – but it is really no more or less sonorous, or 'intuitive' than the action of

listening for meaning. Jean-Luc Nancy distinguishes sense from sensation in listening, asking us to hear the primary resonance that he believes lies underneath or comes before reference:

*Entendre*, “to hear,” also means *comprendre*, “to understand,” as if “hearing” were above all “hearing say” (rather than “hearing sound”), or, rather, as if in all “hearing” there had to be a “hearing say,” regardless of whether the sound perceived was a word or not. But even that might be reversible: in all sense (and I mean in all discourse, in the whole chain of meaning) there is hearing, and in hearing itself, at the very bottom of it, a listening. Which means: perhaps it is necessary that sense not be content to make sense (or to be *logos*), but that it will want also to resound. My whole proposal will revolve around such a fundamental resonance, even around a resonance as a foundation, as a first or last profundity of “sense” itself (or of truth). (Nancy 2007, 6)

But once one is listening for the specifically sonorous dimensions of sound, one definitely is listening, or on the lookout for, meaning, because in such circumstances sound has become significant, has in fact become the sign of itself, rather than merely operative. Not only that, the fact that the majority of what we think of as thinking, and communication of that thinking, is formed and channelled through acts of audible speech – in lectures, speeches, seminars, conversations, and oral-audible exchanges of many kinds – implies that it is hard to construe listening as a new and more intimately attentive way of apprehending.

Nevertheless, the offer is persistently made that the study of sound might not just provide a new object but also might induce a new kind of method. Steven Feld characterises the kind of anthropological investigation he conducts as an ‘acoustemology’ (1994), the word suggesting not just the knowledge of sound, but a peculiarly aural way of knowing. The principal reason that we might be sceptical of the idea that there is a specific way of knowing that would live up to the name of an acoustemology or acoustic epistemology is perhaps a surprising one. It is not because one cannot conjoin sound and epistemology, it is actually because sound is all and always epistemology, and not ontology. There is no *is*, no being-in-itself of sound. Sound is always known as sound knowingly, since what we know as sound is what we make of it, what we make out in it. It is just on account of the fact that all apprehension of sound is in fact already acoustemology, that the offer of a specifically sonic epistemology, attainable through some special effort of reorientation or retuned attention, is so unintelligible.

## **Sound-Worlds**

One of the frequent accompaniments to the idea of the specificity of sound experience as such is the idea that there could be something we might call a ‘sound-world’. It is certainly the case that, largely because of the huge amount of information that may be gathered by the ear and, in the case of humans, conveyed by the voice, it is possible for sound to be extremely prominent in certain kinds of experience – listening for prey in the forest, for example, or having a conversation, or listening to a story or radio play, indeed all the kinds of thing we tend to characterise with the word ‘listening’. But the move from this experience to the idea that sound might

constitute a wholly distinct world-within-a-world, or world-beside-a-world, with its own self-sufficient rules and conditions, is not justified. The sound world is always in the world, which is to say within a larger set of overlapping and interlocking conditions. Even, and perhaps especially under conditions in which sound might seem to have an autonomy, it constitutes a particular kind of suspension of ordinary conditions, which may be held at a distance, but always have a kind of proximal at-handness. When I don my headphones, the awareness of what I am thereby excluding shadows and selvedges the sound which appears to occupy the whole of my field of attention, precisely to the degree that it may appear to be 'whole', since wholeness as completeness is not the same as wholeness as indivisibility. To experience something as a unitary whole is always to have set it off from a larger, less accountable totality that that it must exclude to be a unity.

At the heart of sound studies is the belief in the existence of something called the soundscape. This concept is probably the most important carrier of the idea of the pure and autonomous order of sound. What is a soundscape? It is a set of sounds: or, perhaps more accurately, it is a 'set' of 'sounds'. For what is 'a sound'? A sound is some auditory signal, some hearable perturbation of the air or some other transmissive medium, where 'hearable' means apprehensible by some entity capable of hearing. A tree that falls in the forest will certainly make sound, in the sense that it will cause the kind of auditory effect that might be processed as sound by hearing agencies, but quite what sound it makes will depend upon how it will have been heard by whoever or whatever hears it. A sound is a relational entity, not any kind of thing in itself.

This is doubly or triply true when it comes to the sort of thing that we call a soundscape, which is a set of these determinable sounds. Sometimes, we may say, a soundscape has internal sonorous relations – in the case of a collection of sounds made by particular organisms like birds, frogs or insects who constitute the soundscape by communicating sonically with each other. But these internal relations are never enough to constitute a soundscape, for a soundscape must always to be understood as a set of sounds constituted as a set by and for a particular listener or act of hearing, which is to say a particular selection from a background. The set is never, as we may say, a mere setting, even though the point of the idea of soundscape is to constitute such a setting. A soundscape may often be described as a background or sonic milieu, but it is always nevertheless made to stand out, pulled into some kind of foreground, or made into an object of listening, for some listening entity. This kind of attention operates through listening or modes of auditory attention, but does not and cannot consist of the auditory alone, because nothing ever can. An auditory experience, we may say, is only ever the first half of a sentence which must be completed in some other modality. The set of relations that constitutes a soundscape is certainly a relation between auditory elements, but the relations themselves are not auditory. Nor, let us hasten to add, are they necessarily visual, so this is not a question of the auditory being subsumed under or reduced to the dominative order of the eye, as audiomanes like to insist. For relations belong to the intelligible rather than the sensible, and are therefore as anoptic as they are anaural; we may see a relation between visual items, but we can no more 'see' the relation than we can 'hear' the relation between a major chord and a diminished seventh.

We might wonder whether the tendency to think in terms of an autonomous domain of sound or a self-sufficient sound-world might not be the counterfactual reflex of the

fact that sound experience is so constitutively incomplete. We dream that sound can be everything precisely because sound in fact can never give us enough information and must always leave us wanting more. Nowhere is this more the case than in the fantasy of sound-space – the idea that sonorous information alone might be sufficient to build a sense of space, or locate us in it (Blessner and Salter 2007). To be sure, the blind can develop remarkably acute ways of modelling their spatial environments, for example through training themselves to read the reverberations of tongue clicks. But these examples are striking precisely because they highlight the importance of long, hard training, given that the spatial information given by sound is as a general rule so abstract and impoverished. The idea of sound space is in fact always an ideal, a what-if, a let's-pretend. It is an imaginary excess that provides a precise index of the deficit under which sound and hearing operate when it comes to the apprehension of space.

### **Acousmatics**

Sound studies comes close to acousmania whenever a) it asserts the possibility of identifying or experiencing sound in a raw or pure condition and b) when it affirms some particular value in such a condition. Acousmania, this is to say, is often twinned with, and perhaps often depends on what has been called the idea of the acousmatic.

Acousmatic sound is defined as sound without an apparent source. Sound in such a condition is often held to be in some sense elementary or unmixed. This is a powerful, but exceedingly odd prejudice. To be sure, knowing, or being able to see the source of a sound may change one's experience of that sound, but it is hard to see why it would make it somehow less *sonorous*, as though it were somehow in the nature of sound to be mysterious in origin. We don't seem have any such prejudice with regard to smell for example: a bad smell may be more troubling when I cannot identify its source, but it not essentially more or less odorous when I eventually locate the deliquescent cauliflower at the bottom of the fridge.

The acousmatic has a history of being set against the analytic. In Latin, hearing signifies obedience, while 'acousmatics' was the name given to the followers of Pythagoras who accepted his doctrines, the *acousmata*, or 'things heard', on hearing alone, since, so tradition has it, the followers of Pythagoras were not allowed to see him. The acousmatici were those prepared to accept the acousmata without further investigation, as opposed to the mathematici, who demanded argument and demonstration. The long and rather confused history of the idea of the acousmatic has been worked through in detail in Brian Kane's *Sound Unseen* (2014), with the ultimate aim of complicating what he calls the 'acousmatic reduction'. He means by this the claim made by Pierre Schaeffer that sounds could be detached from the reality of their production and experienced as pure phenomena, in something of the same way that Husserl effected a phenomenological reduction to produce a field of allegedly immediate perceptions and experiences. The notion of the acousmatic is a sonorous epoché (Kane 2014, 23).

It is tempting to see something of the same division between acousmatici and mathematici among practitioners of sound studies. The acousmatici subscribe to the eleven articles of and more of audiovisual litany, and proclaim the sacralising,

preservative or enlarging qualities of sound in itself, along with the enlivening powers of listening over the deadening dominance of abstract visualism. The mathematici recoil from this kind of credulity, asserting that sound and hearing are not events of ontology, but rather precipitations of historical practice. Where the acousmatics are immoderate, excitable and unhistorically absolute in their judgements, the mathematici are sternly, patiently reasonable in their balloon-pricking demonstrations of historical situatedness. Jonathan Sterne may be regarded as a leader of the mathematici. Alongside him stands Seth Kim-Cohen, who begins his book *In the Blink of An Ear* (2009) with an epigraph from Heraclitus: ‘Those unmindful when they hear, for all they make of their intelligence, may be regarded as the walking dead’. Brian Kane himself proposes that we move away from the idea of acousmatic sound to the study of practices of acousmatic listening, which are historical and cultural responses to particular conditions of sound (Kane 2014, 7).

The word ‘practice’ is indeed a key differentiator between acousmatici and mathematici: it signifies a sceptical unwillingness to collapse into uncritical and reactionary celebrations of false or fantasised immediacy. And yet the magic word ‘practice’ does not always guarantee immunity from the acousmatic or from the states of more or less mild acousmania it may encourage. Curiously enough, some of the most active practitioners of sound are also some of the most convinced and startlingly credulous acousmatists. I was once publically dressed down at a music conference at which a speaker insisted on a complete blackout while she spoke about a sound project of hers for writing notes by the light of my mobile phone. I took comfort amid my blushes in remembering that Brecht thought that keeping the lights on was an essential weapon against narcosis in the theatre. I used to keep timidly under wraps my baffled incapacity to get anything much out of poetry readings, especially, God help us, readings by the almost universally tone-deaf, or at least tongue-deaf authors of said poems. Just as I can’t see plants or cathedrals or digestive systems properly unless I know the names for the parts of which they consist, so I can only come close to hearing poems when I can I also see them on the page or, failing that, in the mind’s eye, or the eye’s mind. It’s no good telling me that I have to experience the unfolding of meaning in the event of sound, I can’t get any sense at all of any kind of unfolding unless I know what is coming and can look back on what has just been and gone. This means that it’s not actually seeing the poem that I need, because knowing it by heart gives me the same advantage. It’s not that I get nothing from just listening, it’s that I don’t get enough, not even enough of what I am supposed to be hearing. Practice is no answer to fantasy when what is practised in the aural reading of poetry is itself an acousmatic fantasy.

And this is just why there is something that is lost when one submits the acousmatic reduction to critical reduction, when one substitutes what seem like the hardnosed facts of ‘practice’ or ‘historical production’ for the wide-eyed, my-oh-my fantasies of the audiomanes. What may be lost in the substitution of fact for fantasy is the force of fantasy, and the fact of this force. What people believe about ventriloquism is largely nonsense, but not more nonsensical than the claim that they don’t actually believe it. I doubt that sound studies will be simply to dispense with the workings of fantasy, or to get its story about sound straight once and for all.

Another reason that it is not easy to get oneself securely on the other side of the veil from the acousmatics – the primal scene of ventriloquial disclosure, played out, not just in the story of Pythagoras’s followers, but in *Singing in the Rain*, *The Wizard of*



Oz and other stories of the unveiling of sonic illusions – is that fantasy is at work on the side of the mathematici too, not least in the form of the fantasy they might entertain of what the credulous believe.

And there is a deeper and more pervasive difficulty with the idea of a kind of sound studies that would eschew every kind of acousmania, every kind of idealisation, reification or sentimental jargon of authenticity in relation to sound. It is that our whole relation to sound may essentially be a hallucinatory relation, a relation to hallucination. All heard sound, which is to say all sound as such, is hearing-as, that is, it involves identification and attribution, which is to say selective mishearing. Mishearings are not accidental and eccentric remissions of attention; all hearing, insofar as it involves a tuning to particular sources of sound, is mishearing, subject to different kinds of encoding and compression. Perhaps even more than the other senses, hearing would be impossible without a dramatic filtering of sound events, in which we hear only within a narrow range of frequencies, and hear only what we are prepared to hear within that frequency range. We are actively passive in our listening, in that we voluntarily subject ourselves to the sound that we consent to apprehend. But we are also passively active, in that what we hear and overhear is chosen for us by the fantasy and desire that are at work to shape our modes of hearing. One cannot hope to expunge fantasy from sound studies, because to do so would be to ignore the fact that so much of hearing is formed and governed by fantasy. The time I have spent thinking about the nature of the voice has convinced me that there is no way of short-circuiting the operations of fantasy in relation to it, not least the kinds of fantasy developed in psychoanalytic readings of fantasy like those of Mladen Dolar (2006). If *Dumbstruck* (2000) was an attempt to track through the workings of something like a ventriloquial tendency in all hearing and speaking, my *Beyond Words* (2014) concerned itself with broader forms of magical thinking in relation to the production and apprehension of vocal sounds in what may be called the dream theatre of the mouth. It is not a phonology, but a vernacular phonophenomenology, which tries to articulate some of the work of bodily fantasy involved in thinking about the act of articulation, or, more precisely, the different acts, many of them imaginary, of which articulation appears to be made. So part of a rational understanding of sound must be that we develop a sense of its magical powers, that magic that our own magical thinking allows it to work on us.

I have wanted to persuade you that sound studies is driven by powerful forms of magical thinking, that cause us to imagine and believe improbable, contradictory and frankly absurd things about the nature and power of sound. But if sound studies are conducted in the projective or voluntarist mode of the what-if, or the if-only, this is perhaps a revealing reflex of the fact that that the human experience of sound is itself so intensely phantasmogenic. To expunge the dreamwork conducted through sound altogether would be to set aside what may in fact be the most important and defining feature of our relation to sound. So the very thing that might threaten the integrity of sound studies, the fact that it depends so much upon magical thinking, may also be the thing that holds sound studies together, in the shared fantasy of what sound is and can do. In either case, sound studies could do with paying much more attention to the everyday acousmania that seems ineliminable from the understanding and experience of sound.

## References

- Beckett, Samuel (1980). *Disjecta: Miscellaneous Writings and a Dramatic Fragment*. Ed. Ruby Cohn. London: John Calder.
- Blessner, Barry and Linda-Ruth Salter (2007). *Spaces Speak, Are You Listening? Experiencing Aural Architecture*. Cambridge MA: MIT Press.
- Connor, Steven (2000). *Dumbstruck: A Cultural History of Ventriloquism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- (2014). *Beyond Words: Sobs, Hums, Stutters and other Vocalizations*. London: Reaktion.
- Dolar, Mladen (2006). *A Voice and Nothing More*. Cambridge MA: MIT Press.
- Feld, Steven (1994). 'Waterfalls of Song: An Acoustemology of Place Resounding in Bossavi, Papua New Guinea.' In *Senses of Place*, ed. Steven Feld and Keith H. Basso (Santa Fe NM: School of American Research Press), pp. 91-135.
- Freud, Sigmund (1964). *New Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis. The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, Volume XXII (1932-1936): New Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis and Other Works*. Trans James Strachey et al. (London: Hogarth), pp. 1-182
- Jay, Martin (1994). *Downcast Eyes: The Denigration of Vision in Twentieth-Century French Thought*. Berkeley and London: University of California Press.
- Kane, Brian (2014). *Sound Unseen: Acousmatic Sound in Theory and Practice*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Kim-Cohen, Seth (2009). *In the Blink of an Ear: Toward a Non-Cochlear Sonic Art*. New York and London: Continuum.
- Nancy, Jean-Luc (2007). *Listening*. Trans. Charlotte Mandell. New York: Fordham University Press.
- Sterne, Jonathan (2003). *The Audible Past: Cultural Origins of Sound Reproduction*. Durham NC: Duke University Press.
- Thompson, Emily (2008). 'Introduction to Sound Studies' syllabus. Online at <http://www.princeton.edu/history/people/data/e/emilyt/profile/599.FO8.sound.SYL.pdf>