

DIRTY EAR REPORT #2

sound, multiplicity, and radical listening

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the issue of space — or what surrounds us — the continual appearance of passers-by, the thin sheet of glass separating interior from exterior, what lies behind the wall, or just overhead, on the floor above — such differences provide an extended situation for connecting ideas and practices, singularities — to hold them in a fragile construction of dialogue, imagination, attunement — and then relating to a public, to what we think of as a social acoustics — the tonalities that lead to certain actions, and their document — an assemblage of sonic gestures — toward — with — against



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OPEN MEMORY OF A SUSPENDED, ONGOING AND
UNFINISHED MOMENT OF ACTIVATION /
MOMENT THAT IS OR WAS NOT YET TO BECOME,
YET NOT TO BE FORGOTTEN /

TAO G. VRHOVEC SAMBOLEC

It is difficult to say, difficult to write, to think of what it was, or of what it still continues to be.

(Perhaps it hasn't happened yet, and what was lived through is a pre-echo of that, which is still to happen: this suspended moment of a vibrating charge in-between the spoken words, the activation of the reciprocal acts of listening, attention, thought and action).

Not unlike in free improvised music, where a band – individuals forming a group, are each finding their place through sound by initiating, listening and reacting to what is going on, establishing passing relations to all the others and to the common whole that is in perpetual becoming. The articulated sound is being made by, and it is making the players simultaneously. It is vibrating their singular bodies and minds, while sounding outwards and filling the space with presence. Direct and in constant becoming, emerging out of (sweating) bodies that establish and inhabit a moment between “not yet” and “already”. Its fleeting articulations briefly inscribed only in the passing moments of fading memories.

Just that in our case, everything had a much slower pace, being contemplative, reflexive even. Thoughts said, thoughts unsaid, sounds, concepts, objects, images, actions, questions, words, suggestions. A situation proposing passing relations based on attentive forms of listening to each other and to the space around us. A slow and multidimensional improv, prolonging the moment between “not yet” and “already” into a duration of its own temporality.

Paying attention to the invisible and unrepresentable in-betweenness that we all suspect we might already share.

I remember:

Sitting on the edge of the chair, sheer listening to the others speaking, thinking or doing, is triggering the inner stream of overwhelming thoughts, intentions and desires. Some of them already reside in me and have grown roots, others are unknown and seducing.

Is this an affect, a resonance, a transmission, a transduction?

Familiarity and closeness: I know this, yet I hear it coming from somebody else's mouth – with different words, intentions, enunciations – from another body occupying another space. This experience of foreign familiarity dissolves the notion of a single origin, giving way for acknowledging the notion of distributed origin instead, unbound by territory, personality, time or culture. What does this situation suggest regarding identity and commonality?

Finding oneself in hearing the other, Aby Warburg comes to mind.

What do I hear? What do you hear when listening to me?

Where is this sound coming from?

Does it sound from within or from the exterior?

Is it mine, is it yours, is it ours, or is it a foreign intrusion?

Is it active or passive?

Does it really matter?

I feel like we are resonating spheres touching each other and forming a foam-like structure, where parts of our demarcating membranes are merging into one vibrating surface – a shared membrane that is both hearing and sounding at the same time.

Listening that makes sound – sympathetic vibration, empathy, resonance, interference?

The activity of productive listening that is creating an overall atmosphere which is in turn activating the space – a transformative charge of the emptiness in-between, generating purposeless excitement with suspended orientation that makes space and time for movement and transgression, for dance between the self and the unself, between passivity and activity.

Our individualities become suspended, as thoughts and actions transcended them, gaining independence and becoming formative elements of the space they occupy. The activities, words, sounds and objects float and vibrate within this space, traversing from one mouth to another, from one ear to another, in-between and through our bodies, bouncing off the walls and vibrating (in) the liquid materiality of the windows. The gravities of territorial positions, historical origins and destinations of our bodies, thoughts and activities are temporarily suspended through their movement, generating densities of vibrations, occasionally manifesting as a form, a sentence, a signal or an image. This resulting in a space of continuous present, pulsating in the rhythms of our dance-like listening.

We are losing ourselves listening in order to find ourselves dancing.

We are moving ourselves as much as we are being moved.

Each move hollowing a void that is bringing into presence the space in-between. A void that enables the rustle of distributed origins to resonate, to be heard and perhaps to be recognized.

As long as we listen, there is a space.

As long as we pay attention there is presence.

It happened, it is happening, it is perhaps yet to happen.

A moment when the mode of listening materializes into a productive activity – forming each individual and the passing relations between us. Forming atmospheres, spaces, territories and intentions. The modes of listening that are resonating (in) our singular bodies and minds, while sounding outwards and filling the space with presence.

The state of activation, where activity and passivity dissolve into each other.

It was not clear to me when a thought became an action, when an action became a thought or when a thought became a sound that was being listened to.

When an observation materialized into a thing, and when an action of somebody became somebody else's. The distinctions between the self, the other and space were dissolving in the intensity of productive listening that was generating movement, nearness, activity and more attention.

More attention:

Listening to the listenings of the others – how do they sound, how are they being heard?

Can we share our listenings?

Can we share listening to each other's listening?

Lend me your ear, I lend you mine.

Inclusive silence, silence as an invitation – a pause, a gap, a rest, a crack, a rupture. The time in-between, the time of potentiality, the shadow time, the pregnant time, the time of expectation.

An effort to pause a monologue in order to find another way of establishing presence and subjectivity.

The time of the other?

Ricarda said: "Listening is queer"

What did she mean by that?

The thought is ringing in my mind ever since she said it.

Doing, thinking and speaking as a mode of productive listening that sounds – not a monologue, not a claim, not a solid fortress of ideology and beliefs, not a form, not an act of exhibitionism, not a confirmation of identity; a void is always carved into something – into history, into a set of beliefs, into culture, into identity, into desire.

How much do these hollowed entities characterize the carved voids they are giving space to?

How much do spoken words before and after silence inscribe its tone?

What are the differences between the silences of male, female, white, of color, queer, homeless, rich, child, immigrant, straight, stranger, friend?

What about a silence of a crowd – still or moving?

From another point of reference:

A tent as a sail, rather than a tent as a house, suggests Vilem Flusser.

A home as a vibrating membrane being excited by the external forces, producing sound by resisting and at the same time resonating with those forces.

Listening that sounds, resistance that moves, empathy that voices.

A home that is being moved, a home that moves, a home as a sail.

...

The moment that happened, it is difficult to write it down, yet, it stays with me, asking to be articulated, transferred. I can sense it and I think about it often. I can feel its enthusiastic and fragile power, but when asked to say something about it, there is not much I can say.

Perhaps later.

(Even these words here are/were hand written in darkness. I can't see them while writing them. Perhaps this is the closest to the time which was, is, or perhaps will be – resisting to be written down in its entirety, defined, reflected and reproduced. I hear my thoughts and I remember them, I am moving my hand and I feel my hand moving, I hear the sound of pen on paper. And I know that these written words are floating in-between you and me in this uncertain darkness.)

What makes you listen?