
H-France Review Vol. 18 (April 2018), No. 82

Ian Biddle and Kirsten Gibson, eds. *Cultural Histories of Noise, Sound and Listening in Europe, 1300-1918*. Abingdon and New York: Routledge, 2017. xi + 280 pp. 17 figures, bibliography and index. \$149.95 U.S. (hb). ISBN 978-1-409-44439-8.

Review by Aimée Boutin, Florida State University.

Cultural Histories of Noise, Sound and Listening in Europe, 1300-1918 comprises essays on soundscapes and listening practices by twelve international scholars, mostly musicologists, as are the volume's editors, Ian Biddle and Kirsten Gibson. As such, the volume attests to a current move within the field of musicology toward sound studies and the history of the senses with a focus on sound and listening. The editors' stated goal in their introduction, however, is to historicize sound, not music. They aim to investigate the nature of sound production and reception in the pre-phonographic era, to recover "narratives of how sound has shaped past lives: how it has carried meaning for individuals and institutions; how it has intervened in and reflected individual and corporate identities; and how, in various ways, it has been manipulated, or has inadvertently acted, as a mechanism of power (both hegemonic and subversive); how, in turn, such sonic articulations of power and its subversion have been manipulated and controlled" (p. 1).

The editors explicitly claim an historicist orientation, in keeping with other seminal works in the field of historical sound studies by Alain Corbin, Mark M. Smith, John Picker, Bruce R Smith, Veit Erlmann, Penelope Gouk, and Jonathan Sterne, to name only a few.[1] In contrast to some of these titles, Biddle and Gibson opt for a *longue durée* approach that spans the Middle Ages through industrial modernity and ending with World War I. Such a temporal range supports the claim that "the early modern moment is sonically a period of rationalization, of rural/urban bifurcation and a period of far-reaching change: the old sonic worlds of the court and church are uprooted with remarkable efficiency and the new sonic order announces other new orders ahead of their arrival" (p. 7). I appreciated the historical specificity of each of the case studies, which makes clear that "sound regimes change at what seems like a glacial pace" (p.11) and transformations overlap in time "according to different models of causality and agency" (p. 11). Constant over time are the tenets that sound is power and fosters social ordering and distinction. In addition, the volume as a whole shows the significance of sonic experience in the history of embodied perception and of religious identity.

In contrast to its temporal range, the volume is centered on European history. There are four contributions specifically on France, but Europe is defined with attention to the continent's geographic range and diversity, to the extent possible with twelve chapters. The broad range is

especially visible in the second section, as shown in the discussion of colonial and multicultural regions of Habsburg Bosnia and British Ceylon. The editors, conscious of the possibility of being charged with Eurocentrism, ward off this criticism in a subsection of their general introduction titled “Why Europe?”. It seems clear to me that one coherent cultural focus is necessary if, as Biddle and Gibson state, one of the aims of the volume is to contribute to an understanding of the role of sound in the production of European “affective regimes” which embed listeners in “discourses of inclusion and exclusion” (p. 4). Biddle has examined affect in an earlier volume, *Sound, Music, Affect: Theorizing Sonic Experience*.^[2]

In addition to a cogent introduction, the edited volume is divided into three sections, each prefaced by Biddle and Gibson. Section one, titled “Historicizing Aurality,” includes microhistories by Lisa Colton, Veit Erlmann, Emily Laurance, and Alexander Bonus that help readers understand what sound meant to people living in previous eras. Colton’s chapter draws on texts by English mystics and religious commentators, whose writings were considered unorthodox, to examine how sound was understood in relation to faith, God, and prayer (p. 19). Analyses of Richard Rolle, Margery Kempe, and John Wycliffe suggest the importance of sound over text. Spiritual identity was a bodily experience rooted in sound (p. 28) either through meditation or vocalization (crying, tears, silent singing).

In the only contribution that highlights scientific inquiry, Erlmann restores prominence to Claude Perrault (a seventeenth-century French intellectual, architect, and physician, and brother to the better known author of fairy tales, Charles Perrault) for his contribution to the history of modern aurality. His early modern treatise on otology titled *Du bruit* outlines an animist (as opposed to mechanical and Cartesian) conception of the body and “grants subjective, sensory experience an unprecedented primacy” (p. 35). Perrault also developed an original musical aesthetics emphasizing subjectivism and aural pleasure in his writings on early French opera.

Taking France again as a case study, Laurance examines Georges Kastner’s musical treatise on Parisian street cries titled *Les Voix de Paris* as a study in musical flânerie and postrevolutionary historiography. This historical treatise mixes ethnographic inquiry, panegyric, and musical composition as befits Kastner’s own complex profile as a flâneur, scientific observer, ethnographer, aesthetic connoisseur, and writer. Kastner’s taxonomy of street criers draws on both fieldwork and history to capture the collective genius of the people’s (past) voices and reframe narratives of French prerevolutionary national identity. Kastner’s composition falls within a musical practice of incorporating street sounds into music, a tradition that would also include the seventeenth-century English composer Richard Dering’s *City Cries* mentioned by Adam Hansen in the third part of the volume, as well as Gustave Charpentier’s *Louise* (1900) referenced here and discussed by Laurance elsewhere.^[3]

In a fascinating chapter, Bonus examines the “metronomic turn” in the early twentieth century, a “pivotal moment in the understanding of musical time” (p. 77) when precision-oriented, mechanically-regulated rhythm supplanted the embodied or intuitive experience of rhythm as a positive ideal. Bonus argues that the ideal of mechanical precision and accuracy spread from experimental psychologists to musicians, music educators, and composers. The metronome was patented in 1815 by Johann Maelzel but nineteenth-century composers and musicians such as Berlioz only occasionally used the instrument. It was the psychologist Wilhelm Wundt who first adopted the metronome to research the variables of human perception and attention in late nineteenth-century Leipzig. Other psychologists such as E. W. Scripture and Emile Jaques-

Dalcroze followed Wundt's lead in institutionalizing a laboratory standard that meant that "divergence from such scientific sound-boundaries constituted human error, regardless of the cultural or historical circumstances" (p. 90). The only contributor who might be said to romanticize the past (justifiably so?) concludes that "[u]nbeknownst to those musicians today who subscribe to daily practice routines dictating that every printed note must synchronize to a metronomic sound (driving an unstoppable 'motor unit' of musical time), their training methods mirror a nineteenth-century laboratory experiment first devised to measure attention span" (p. 97).

The second section on the politics of sound and silence, including contributions by Hedy Law, Jim Sykes, and Risto Pekka Pennanen, explores how sounds "articulate, intervene in and shape the political sphere" (p. 12) furthering many questions raised in the pioneering work of Jacques Attali.^[4] Law analyses the lost sound world of the *forain*, namely the theaters of the fairgrounds of Saint Laurent and Saint Germain in Old Regime France. The chapter discerns a precedent to the period of silence identified by James Johnson (during the second half of the eighteenth century when opera theaters fell silent), when at the request of the Comédie Française, first all dialogue at the *forain*, then all monologue, was censored.^[5] Suppression of speech at the *forain* and the concomitant introduction of forms of "politicized" noise or silence (booing, roaring, sing-along, mocking, child pantomime, gesturing, using placards, etc.) had the effect of promoting "advanced listening and hermeneutic skills" (p. 113) and "audience participation" (p. 117) as a "reaction against censorship" (p. 115). Various adaptations of the Orpheus myth that emphasized Orpheus's speechlessness are used to show how "politicized silence" was dramatized.

Sykes studies how native musical traditions, notably the sounds of religious festivities, became a problem for colonial authorities when they appeared to threaten public order. Scrutinizing the context of a riot in 1883 between Catholics and Buddhists in Kotahena, a Christian-majority ward of Colombo (in Ceylon, modern Sri Lanka), Sykes reveals how European colonial law did not acknowledge cultural differences in the meaning and function of musical rituals (what musicologists refer to as the ideology of autonomous music, that music's value lies in its expressive or reflective quality and its autonomy from society). Specifically, British authorities in Ceylon failed to recognize that sacred sounds were not considered amusements but actions in South/Southeast Asia, and that failure to perform these musical offerings to the gods had potentially harmful consequences in the minds of local religious communities. This multilayered chapter also aims to show the limits of European liberalism (especially the idea that one's culture should not intrude on someone else's) by examining how both Buddhists and Catholics used legal channels to negotiate sonic spaces of ritual, use sound to instigate violence, and enforce silence on each other.

Like Sykes' discussion of religion, sound, and colonial power, Pennanen's contribution investigates the sociopolitical impact of sound cultures in cross-cultural contexts. The soundscape of Bosnia-Herzegovina under Austro-Hungarian military rule was distinctive in late nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century Europe owing to its *mélange* of Ottoman and Central European practices. Characterized by neo-traditions created by the emperor, military brass bands, salutes, cannon signals, Islamic calls to prayer, and Christian church bell ringing, the Bosnian soundscape evinced the power of bureaucratic control to advance Habsburg colonial policy, including its policy of religious equality and cultural integration. Pennanen's cross-cultural European perspective contrasts with Alain Corbin's *Village Bells*,^[6] while tracing how the soundscape changed from the Battle of Sarajevo of 1878 to the start of World War I (which

of course began in Sarajevo, on June 28, 1914 with the assassination of Archduke Ferdinand and his wife Duchess Sophie) (p. 163).

With contributions by Helen Coffrey, Daniele V. Filippi, Adam Hansen, Olivier Balaÿ, and João Silva, section three is focused on “Urban Soundscapes of Europe’s Past” in geographically and historically dispersed contexts. Developing further the relationship between sound and power, the section ascertains what it means to call a sound urban, and how that helps us understand the formation of European modernity. Coffrey travels to the end of fifteenth-century Germany to listen to instrumentalists at court and at civic institutions who “sounded the hour, or raised any alarms on a brass or wind instrument, bell or drum, from one of the many towers within the cities, when the threat of fire, or indeed an enemy, arose” (p. 173). To better understand secular musical patronage during the reign of Maximilian I, Coffrey compares large and small cities’ respective ability to subsidize musicians employed in times of war or in the service of everyday civic life. She shows how the soundscape was controlled by oligarchic civic councils who organized weddings, dances, carnivals in ways that reflected social divisions and hierarchies. Music demarcated the social structure (p. 180).

Conveying the interrelation between earthly and heavenly cities, Filippi’s chapter on Renaissance Italy, based on the writings of Luis de Granada and Jeremias Drexel, maps the heavenly soundscape characterized by the unspeakable delight of perpetual liturgical song, in contrast to the disorderly, loud, and blaspheming sounds of the infernal soundscape. There are suggestive parallels between Filippi’s broad treatment of what Jeffrey Burton Russell called the “singing silence” of heaven^[7] and the discussion of medieval speechlessness and spirituality in Colton’s contribution. Early-modern churches were decorated with images of heaven to best convey heavenly musical experiences, sustained by an ideal of angelic singers and by polyphony in imitation of the arrangement of the heavens (scoring into nine parts could reflect the Ptolemaic system). The soundscape of the early modern Italian city, with its ceremonies and soaring voices filling the streets, thus echoed the Heavenly Jerusalem.

Hansen focuses on the ways in which Everard Guilpin’s 1598 collection of satiric poems, *Skialetheia, Or A Shadowe of Truth in Certain Epigrams and Satyres*, though modeled on the Latin satirist Juvenal, attends to the sonic power dynamics of early-modern London. Following Bruce R. Smith,^[8] Hansen emphasizes how “sound made the early modern city comprehensible and intelligible” (p. 207) but, at the same time, he shows how Guilpin deployed “satiric noise” (p. 217) to render London’s assault on the senses. Betraying his repugnance, Guilpin satirizes the multilingual cacophony, indiscriminate and deplorable sounds, bestial people, and foul smells (farts) using literary devices to “disturb acoustic power.” “If Guilpin seeks to criticize the soundscapes of his city,” writes Hansen, “he has to reproduce them” (p. 213). “This perhaps is the final irony. The satire may condemn the city but it couldn’t exist without it” (p. 217).

Building on his book-length study *L’espace sonore de la ville au XIXe siècle*,^[9] Balaÿ studies how changes to architectural space and urban design alter “the conditions under which sounds were produced and propagated” (p. 221). Like Paris under Baron Haussmann, the central districts of Lyon underwent renewal during the nineteenth century. When streets were widened and straightened, and overhangs removed, these material changes altered the area’s acoustic properties (such as the ratio of high and low frequency sounds, reverberation, or masking, cutting, and mixing sound effects). Balaÿ’s expert analysis, complete with architectural sketches, suggests “how to approximate the past properties of a street and gain a better understanding of

how city dwellers of the past” experienced their soundscape (p. 230).

Like Balaý, Silva is interested in the role of sound in organizing urbanscapes, but instead of Paris—“a key site for the rehearsal of new sonic regimes” in the words of the editors (p. 13)—or Lyon, he focuses on Lisbon’s auditory landscape from 1864 to 1908. The author of *Entertaining Lisbon* [10], Silva argues that the widening of boulevards, the expansion of Lisbon’s urban center, and changes in the entertainment market contributed to the emergence of modern sociabilities. Contra Walter Benjamin’s claim that modernity separated public and private spaces, Silva’s analysis emphasizes instead the interpenetration or porosity between urban spaces and times—a layering of ancient (pedlars’ cries, buskers, church bells) and modern soundscapes, and of public (traffic, taverns, theaters) and domestic (dwellings) spaces.

In short, this diachronic volume delivers what it promises, that is to construct a historiography of sound intent on describing salient aspects of the sonic past (bells, religious processions, songs, cannon fire, civic festivities, city noises) and reflect on what we can learn about its cultural and sociopolitical significance. Ending with World War I and the emergence of modernity suggests that the twentieth and twenty-first centuries marked a radical break with the sonic past. Present-day audition and aurality, based on science and technology, mass consumer culture, democratization, urbanization, colonialism, and globalism sound very different. Biddle and Gibson’s edited volume can help us hear these differences, leaving other scholars opportunities to join the conversation about modern and contemporary European soundscapes.

LIST OF ESSAYS

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Ian Biddle and Kirsten Gibson, “Historicizing Aurality: Introduction”

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Emily Laurance, “Georges Kastner’s *Les Voix de Paris* (1857): A Study in Musical *Flânerie*”

Alexander Bonus, “Refashioning Rhythm: Hearing, Acting and Reacting to Metronomic Sound in Experimental Psychology and Beyond, c.1875-1920”

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Hedy Law, “Orphée at the Forains: Silencing and Silences in Old Regime France”

Jim Sykes, "Sound as Promise and Threat: Drumming, Collective Violence and Colonial Law in British Ceylon"

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Daniele V. Filippi, "Sonic Afterworld: Mapping the Soundscape of Heaven and Hell in Early Modern Cities"

Adam Hansen, "The Sounds of the City, 1598: Everard Guilpin's London in *Skialetheid*"

Olivier Balaÿ, "The Soundscape of the City in the Nineteenth Century"

João Silva, "Porosity and Modernity: Lisbon's Soundscape from 1864-1908"

NOTES

[1] Alain Corbin, *Village Bells: Sound and Meaning in the Nineteenth-Century French Countryside* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998); Mark M. Smith, *Listening to Nineteenth-Century America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001); Mark M. Smith, *Sensory History* (New York: Berg, 2007); John Picker, *Victorian Soundscapes* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003); Bruce R. Smith, *The Acoustic World of Early Modern England: Attending to the O-Factor* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1999); Veit Erlmann, *Reason and Resonance: A History of Modern Aurality* (New York: Zone Books, 2010); Penelope Gouk, *Music, Science, and Natural Magic in Seventeenth-Century England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999); and Jonathan Sterne, *The Audible Past: Cultural Origins of Sound Reproduction* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003).

[2] Ian Biddle and Marie Thompson, eds., *Sound, Music, Affect: Theorizing Sonic Experience*, (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013).

[3] Emily Laurance, "Varieties of Operatic Realism in Nineteenth-Century France: The Case of Gustave Charpentier's 'Louise' (1900)." PhD diss., University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2003.

[4] Jacques Attali, *Noise: The Political Economy of Music* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1985).

[5] James H. Johnson, *Listening in Paris: A Cultural History* (University of California Press, 1995).

[6] Corbin, *Village Bells*.

[7] Jeffrey Burton Russell, *A History of Heaven: The Singing Silence* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997).

[8] Smith, *The Acoustic World of Early Modern England*.

[9] Olivier Balaÿ, *L'espace sonore de la ville au XIXe siècle* (Bernin: À la Croisée, 2003)

[10] João Silva, *Entertaining Lisbon: Music, Theater, and Modern Life in the Late 19th Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016).

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ISSN 1553-9172