

Nicholas Hammond, *The Powers of Sound and Song in Early Modern Paris*. University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2019. ix + 203 pp. Maps, tables, figures, appendix, notes, bibliography, and index. \$89.95 US (hb). ISBN: 978-0-271-08471-8; \$32.95 US (pb). ISBN: 978-0-271-08472-5.

Author's Response by Nicholas Hammond, University of Cambridge

Working in a domain where one is often lucky to receive four journal reviews in total for a book, I found it both humbling and exhilarating to read in one fell swoop four review essays of my new monograph by scholars whose own work I admire enormously. I am very grateful to them for reading—and listening—so attentively.

One of my earliest motivations when starting to write about sound and song was to make the practice—as opposed simply to the theory—of listening an essential component of the research. Past experience of reading monographs on seventeenth-century dramatists by scholars who gave no indication that they had ever set foot in a theater made me all the more determined to include musical performance in my book. I was therefore especially fortunate when a former student, Jonathan Rees, who had become a professional cellist, began tracking down the tunes of songs that I had included in my previous monograph on gossip.[1] Not only did he arrange many songs himself but he also brought into the project a group of very talented period musicians, Badinage, who gave sonic life to the street songs in concerts and music festivals. As we worked together, I was able to establish a website for both texts and performances, and the auditory fruits of my research began to feed into the early stages of a theatrical venture, “Voice of the Bridge,” written by Rees, which charted, amongst other themes, the story attached to the song that forms the core of part two of my study. I am therefore delighted that David Garrioch, Éva Guillorel, Una McIlvenna, and Lewis Seifert were asked to consider *The Powers of Sound and Song in Early Modern Paris* in tandem with the website <https://parisiansoundscapes.org>.

Una McIlvenna and David Garrioch both ask justifiable questions about my book's title, with McIlvenna offering the useful alternative, “Sound, Song and Same-Sex Desire in Early Modern Paris.” Although I did consider many possible titles, my decision not to refer to sodomy or sexuality in the title was indeed deliberate. First, as the publication had been chosen to open the new series, “Perspectives on Sensory History,” I wanted to give priority to the auditory. Second, although the expression and articulation of same-sex desire play an important part of my argument in part two, I did not want the work to be labelled as yet another study of gender and sexuality in the early modern world; so much excellent scholarship has been devoted to this field already. For me, the difference—and, I hope, the originality—of my research lie in the fact that it reassesses an overwhelmingly visual age from a sonic perspective. It was crucial to me that the starting point for the case study in part two was a short song that was in all likelihood heard and not noted down for publication. I hope it is of interest to the reader that it reveals a rich web of intrigue relating to same-sex desire, especially in its questioning of the double standards that condemned one man to a painful death and awarded another man the highest honor in the land for ostensibly the same sexual preference within a few days and only a few hundred meters of each other. However, the question of sexuality was to my mind secondary to the fact that all this information has

been gleaned from the simplest of pieces, sung to a popular tune of the day. To put it another way, if I had chosen one of the many songs about Louis XIV and his mistresses as my case study, I suspect that “Sound, Song and Heterosexual Desire in Early Modern Paris” might very well not have been deemed appropriate as a title for the book.

Éva Guillorel makes a valid observation about the difference in length between many French-language and English-language monographs. While it is tempting to quote the apology by Pascal’s speaker in the *Lettres provinciales* that “Je n’ai fait celle-ci plus longue que parce que je n’ai pas eu le loisir de la faire plus courte,” that would undermine the seriousness and high-mindedness of the French tradition for lengthy tomes. Yet, it is true that sometimes it is hard to discern a strong central thesis in a very long work that is packed with detail. I wanted to make a clear argument about the role played by sound in seventeenth-century Paris, both from the broader perspective of part one to the much more focused case study (the “Grands Dieux” song) in part two. The crucial years of 1661 and 1662, when Louis XIV was asserting his personal authority, coincide exactly with the song being sung on the cusp of the same time span. Perhaps this is where my literary background comes in handy. I preferred not to provide my reader with an array of statistics but rather to dwell upon a number of key sonic moments that nonetheless converge to argue strongly for a reassessment of the period. Having never written a conventional history book before, I certainly had no intention of presenting my monograph as one (to respond to Garrioch’s opening comment). Above all, my decision to attempt to write a readable and shorter study was largely dictated by the desire to make it accessible to scholars, graduates, undergraduates, and even general readers. If I have managed to convey the excitement of early modern sound worlds to readers who were previously unacquainted with the period, and if I have enabled experts in the field to reconsider previously held ocularcentric views, I will feel that I have done my job. Guillorel’s comment that *The Powers of Sound and Song* would now be her reading recommendation to her Masters student was, therefore, music to my ears.

I am grateful to David Garrioch for putting the “Règlement” of 1635 into context. It is clear that large gatherings of crowds did represent a threat to traffic flow, but to ban street singers from performing “en aucun lieu”—and not simply in busy thoroughfares—suggests to me an attempt to suppress the performance of street songs altogether. Interestingly, while sellers of treacle, teeth-pullers, and hurdy-gurdy players are included in the ban, other street performers are not. As I show in the book, the noting down by police of the words to songs in *gazetins*, the interrogation of crime suspects as to whether they had sung scurrilous songs, and the content of many songs where the dangers of singing are expounded upon do give a strong sense of the perils attached to performing.

Garrioch also directs me to Michèle Fogel’s *Les cérémonies de l’information*, which I have now read and enjoyed enormously.[2] Her analysis of the ways in which the French monarchy informed the public of its accomplishments, especially initially through town criers and then through the public ritual of the *Te Deum* is compellingly made, even though the fact that relatively little attention is paid to the auditory as opposed to printed documents can probably be explained by sound studies coming to the fore as a discipline since her work’s publication. Where Fogel considers such forms of information from the top down, my research, in the line of Arlette Farge’s work on the eighteenth century, tends to move from the bottom up.[3] With my interests dwelling upon those sounds or voices that trouble or destabilize the certainties of the status quo, whether it be a singer, preacher, lawyer, or condemned prisoner, I hope that my monograph acts as a useful counter-balance to Fogel’s approach.

The distinction that Lewis Seifert makes between sound worlds and oral cultures is an important one. He is correct that the human voices implicated within orality dominate my analysis, even though non-vocal sound worlds (such as the clattering of carriages and animal noises on the Pont Neuf, the tunes played by the carillon on the Samaritaine water pump, the chiming church bells, the sound of flames, fountains and fireworks) do play a significant part. I tried to address the question of orality in my previous study devoted to gossip, which itself drew much from Seifert's own work on masculinity, but here I chose to include sound and song under the umbrella-term "Sound Worlds."^[4]

Seifert also raises interesting issues relating to the complexity of early modern authorship, especially within oral cultures. It is a question that has preoccupied me for some time, and I hope that I conveyed some of the instability relating to the ownership of songs, especially in my discussion in chapter two of the ways in which songs were adapted to different circumstances and to different listeners. Garrioch wonders whether I could have written more fully about authorship as well as the place and circumstance of song-production. The fact is that, other than those pieces that were clearly produced for literate salon gatherings and those songs where authors are named in the manuscript or appear in the words of the songs themselves, the clues are few and far between. Similarly, songs that name the exact location of their likely first performances prove to be the exception rather than the rule. We can safely assume that most of the many bawdy drinking songs would have been sung in taverns on some occasions. Where the Pont Neuf is concerned, Philippot le Savoyard (who after all bestows the title, Orpheus of the Pont Neuf, upon himself) sings about standing at the foot of the statue of Henri IV on the bridge, and being heard by the king in the Louvre. Other songs refer to the Samaritaine pump. There exists also some evidence of location in engravings of singers from the time, including Philippot and Guillaume de Limoges. However, given the changing versions of songs that can be found in various manuscripts, the lack of specificity about place very probably enabled those songs to translate easily across different times and settings.

With the above comments in mind, the question may justifiably be asked why the "Grands Dieux" song that dominates my discussion in the second half of the book merits particular speculation about its authorship and the location of its first performance(s). To my mind, the very specific time frame in which one can place the song—the end of December 1661—and the fact that the two events described, Chausson's execution and Guitaut's investiture as a chevalier of the Ordre du Saint-Esprit, took place on either side of the Pont Neuf makes the bridge a plausible stage for its performance. Furthermore, the naming of two specific individuals and the open questioning of the hypocrisy of sentencing one man to death by fire and giving another man the highest honor in the land, ostensibly for the same sexual preference, strongly suggested to me a song penned by someone with a deep-seated reason to expose this disparity. This song, unlike many others, does not seem to be the result of multiple authorship, nor is it easily transferable geographically or temporally: it is urgently and heartbreakingly of its own time and place.

The positive response of all four reviewers to the accompanying website was especially appreciated, as I am all too aware of the ways in which it can be improved. Garrioch is correct in surmising that it is still in a state of development: the intention remains to make the site less song-centric and to include other aspects relating to sound. As Guillourel indicates in her essay, there are more sophisticated sites that have received the ample funding that is required for such ventures. Given that my site has been set up and maintained on a minimal

budget, I am pleased to have an array of textual, musical and video resources available, but the continuing development of the site will inevitably be dependent on the sponsorship that can be secured. If anybody with access to funding opportunities is interested in participating in or sharing this project, they would be very welcome to contact me.

As for the songs themselves on the site, I hope to provide more sustained musical and textual analysis in due course. The relative lack of musical analysis in the book itself, mentioned by both Garrioch and McIlvenna, resulted perhaps from the primary focus on the “Grands Dieux” song, the performance of which is examined in *The Powers of Sound and Song* and in the link to the song on the website. I have given more detailed textual and musical analysis of songs relating to Louis XIV’s death elsewhere, but it is certainly an aspect that I hope to develop in future projects.[5]

McIlvenna, who herself has lit up many a conference with her vocal rendition of ballads from the time, notes that the performances of the songs on the website are possibly too polished to reflect the rough-and-ready nature of much street singing. Guillorel, whose own research focuses on Breton oral traditions, makes a similar point, arguing that the film made of the musicians trying to make themselves heard on a medieval Durham bridge on a busy and baking hot Saturday morning feels more convincing than recordings made in a studio.[6] In this outdoor venture and in the various concerts we have staged, we tried to preserve a sense of the spontaneity and coarseness (in all its senses) of street singing. Perhaps one day we will have the opportunity to perform on the Pont Neuf itself: the noise of twenty-first-century traffic is sure to provide an equivalent aural accompaniment to the din of seventeenth-century carriages and street sellers.

It is true that we have relied mainly on the wonderful trained voice of Katie Bray, but there are a couple of pieces on the site where untrained voices have been used (for example, <https://soundcloud.com/eerw2/ce-grand-prelat-final-1>, and <https://soundcloud.com/eerw2/5-scavez?in=eerw2/sets/performances>), and certain sonic backdrops have been created to make the overall effect less sanitized. The musicians were careful only to use instruments that could easily be carried onto the Pont Neuf, such as a single violin, a viol, a theorbo, a recorder, or a hurdy-gurdy, and the inclusion of percussive wine bottles and oyster shells added a certain gallic authenticity to proceedings. That said, as Seifert mentions, all performances of the songs are interpretations and not exact reconstructions. From performer to performer and from location to location, the same songs could and would have sounded very different. Although I would find it hard to imagine a jaunty rendition of the “Grands Dieux” song, a wryly ironic version (rather than our sorrowful rendering at <https://soundcloud.com/eerw2/4-grands-dieux?in=eerw2/sets/performances>) is very possible. The observations by McIlvenna, Guillorel and Seifert have now inspired me to record more raucous voices in the future and to include diverging performances of the same song.

The responsiveness and insight of all four readers and the excellent suggestions they have made have enabled me to look forward to future sound-related endeavors with enthusiasm and greater knowledge. I remain indebted to them and to *H-France Forum* for having given me the opportunity to revisit and rethink a project that will continue to be heard both on the website and in future research.

NOTES

[1] Nicholas Hammond, *Gossip, Sexuality, and Scandal in France (1610-1715)* (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2011).

[2] Michèle Fogel, *Les cérémonies de l'information dans la France du XVI^e au milieu du XVIII^e siècle* (Paris: Fayard, 1989).

[3] Arlette Farge, *Vivre dans à Paris au XVIII^e siècle* (Paris: Folio, 1992); idem, *Dire et Mal Dire: L'opinion publique au XVIII^e siècle* (Paris: Seuil, 1992).

[4] Lewis C. Seifert, *Manning the Margins: Masculinity and Writing in Seventeenth-Century France* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2009).

[5] Nicholas Hammond, "Singing the King's Death: Voice and Sound in 1715," in "Soundscapes," ed. Tom Hamilton and Nicholas Hammond, special issue of *Early Modern French Studies* 41, no. 1 (July 2019): 74-87.

[6] Éva Guillorel, *La complainte et la plainte: Chanson, justice, cultures en Bretagne XVI^e-XVIII^e siècles* (Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2010).

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