Mapping Experiences of Inner Sounds

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Abstract

This practice-based research expands the sound art discourse by identifying, defining, and analysing what I have termed ‘inner sounds’— sounds we hear in both our conscious and unconscious minds, similar to but different from an inner voice. Rarely, if ever, is the way we experience sounds in our minds discussed in contemporary sound art discourse. This thesis defines ‘inner sounds’ and contributes to the field of sound art discourse by arguing that a deeper understanding of our relationship to inner sounds informs our wider understanding of sound, specifically our understanding of sound as a cultural phenomenon.

Identifying the lack of an adequate vocabulary in the English language with which to discuss sound and inner sound experiences, the thesis develops a taxonomy of inner sounds, which allows for a more nuanced and detailed analysis of inner sound experiences.

In addition to outlining a taxonomy for inner sound, the thesis analyses several art and performance works, including my own, further developing several theoretical considerations for inner sound and listening experiences. Chapter 4, ‘The danger of inner sound’, examines our relationship to auditory hallucinations, discussing why inner sounds are often perceived as dangerous. Chapter 5, ‘Collective inner listening’, asks whether collective inner listening is possible, and how that develops our understanding of inner sound experiences and sound art theory. Chapter 6, ‘Threshold listening’, draws on affect theory to argue that the properties of inner sound discussed in previous chapters situates inner listening and inner sound at the threshold, and evaluates how this changes our understanding and discourse of sound art.

CONTENTS

Introduction

Prelude — Scores for Silence

Scores for Silence (2011) was a work I created in response to a competition asking for inventive scores. The initial idea behind the piece was a score made from small objects, collected, and displayed to the orchestra, who would then interpret the objects as they saw fit. While presenting the work to an audience of non-musicians, a new idea started to take shape — could there be such a thing as a score for imagined music? Did this piece need an orchestra in order to be heard? The underlying idea of the original piece was the individual interpretation of the object-score, rather than the transmission of a set, finished piece of music. Could the orchestra be bypassed, and could the score be relied on to 'play' music in people's minds? Not long after, the possibility arose to exhibit the score as a gallery installation. The piece was further developed with a set of instructions for the audience and an attempted explanation of what kind of sounds it was expected to produce — 'inner sounds' appreciated through an inner listening. The exhibition was open for a week, and several visitors expressed positive views about the piece. No one denied the possibility of inner sounds or questioned the idea of a score that encouraged inward listening. After the close of the exhibition, the idea of an inner sound world and a desire to find out more remained with me. Within both art and literature, there were hints and traces of inner sound, but nothing solid. By contrast, my curiosity about and awareness of my own inner sound world took up more and more of my practice as an artist and became increasingly fascinating to me. I wanted to know — *What are 'inner sounds'? Can everyone hear them? Why have I not come across inner sounds before?*

What are 'inner sounds'?

Thinking is often believed to consist mainly of inner speech — the way we "talk to ourselves in our heads" (Beck, 2016*)* But as Charles Fernyhough, professor at Durham University and author of *The Voices Within* (2016), points out in an interview on the website *The Atlantic* (Beck, 2016), thinking is 'everything the mind does. A certain category of thinking that we call verbal thinking, and that's essentially inner speech, the stuff that we do in words. But I certainly think you can be intelligent and do lots of really clever stuff without language'. (Ibid).

Norbert Wiley, in his article *Inner Speech as a Language: A Saussurean Inquiry* (2006), makes the same point. He discusses how our inner experience consists not only of linguistic, but also of visual, olfactory, tactile, and sonic components. He illustrates this by describing how the act of thinking 'I want a hamburger' consists of many different components, none of them linguistic:

> For example, I say to myself 'I'd like a hamburger'. There are only a few ways we can say this in ordinary, outer language, but a large number of ways in inner language. To begin with I would drop the 'I,' since we always do this in inner speech. Then, instead of saying 'like' to myself I can handle this meaning with some emotional element. I allow myself the feeling of 'liking' or 'wanting, 'which substitutes for the word 'like'. This feeling can come with various nuances or degrees of urgency. Then instead of the word 'burger' I can just picture one. And this picture can have buns, condiments sticking out, etc, or it can even be sizzling in a frying pan—along with sounds and smells. So I can

> say I want a burger in inner speech without uttering a single linguistic word. And I can do so in a large number of individualized ways. (Wiley, 2006, pp. 321–322)

As these two examples show, our inner world contains modes of thinking/ feeling/experiencing other than just linguistic ones.

In this practice-based research, I explore the idea of 'inner sounds'. I am interested in the sounds we experience as part of our inner worlds—both the ones we use consciously while thinking (like in the example above—'sizzling in a frying pan'), and inner sound experiences that are less controlled and conscious. I am interested in exploring sounds we experience in our minds that are not linguistic sounds—i.e., not our inner voice, speech, or language. I call these **'inner sounds'—*sounds we hear in both our conscious and unconscious minds, similar to but different from an inner voice.***

Tinnitus and 'exploding head syndrome'

The nature of this research project means that there are many possible areas and topics that can act as starting points for further research. While I examine our relationship to and beliefs around auditory hallucinations in Chapter 3, I am not exploring conditions such as tinnitus or 'exploding head syndrome', among others. Tinnitus, which is the 'conscious perception of an auditory sensation in the absence of a corresponding external stimulus' (Baguley, McFerran, and Hall, 2013) and 'exploding head syndrome', a 'sudden, loud imagined noise or sense of a violent explosion in the head occurring as the patient is falling asleep' (ICSD-3, 2014), both have an aspect of 'inner' hearing. They are, however—along with various other conditions with 'ghostly' sonic experiences such as migraines (Sacks, 2021, p. 126), hypnagogic dreams (ibid, 2021, p. 203), and narcolepsy (ibid, 2021, p. 222) to mention a few—scientifically classified as physical disorders: tinnitus as a hearing disorder and exploding head syndrome as a sleeping disorder. They therefore—culturally at least—have a 'outer' explanation for their inner sounds, which is why I have deemed them to be outside the scope of this particular research project. I recognise that the explanations for these kinds of conditions and experiences are complex and changing, and I would argue that a future exploration of the intersection between inner hearing and the 'ghostly' sonic experiences of these conditions would be both interesting and important.

Research methodology

In her paper 'Inquiry through Practice: Developing Appropriate Research Strategies' (1996), Carole Gray defines practice-led research as:

> By 'practice-led' I mean, firstly, research which is initiated in practice, where questions, problems, challenges are identified and formed by the needs of practice and practitioners; and secondly, that the research strategy is carried out through practice, using predominantly methodologies and specific methods familiar to us as practitioners in the visual arts. (Gray, 1996, p. 3)

Both these aspects of practice-led research apply to this research project. The enquiry into inner sounds is firmly grounded in sound art practice and theory. My practice as part of this project has grown out of the initial investigation into a context for inner sound research, and the conclusions and insights I have gained from this. The practice acts as research itself,

working out—through planning, making, or performing—the ideas and concepts that are yet to form into critical articulations and questions. In turn, the subsequent reflection and analysis of my practice is an important part for moving the research forward. When I analyse the practice, ideas and angles emerge that I had previously not thought of or understood. Often, as is perhaps most evident in Chapter 3, writing about the practice and theory—a 'workshopping' of ideas—allows the ideas to come into focus and be analysed, and for new conclusions to emerge.

A note on the timeline of the research project

I began this part-time research project in 2014. The initial research was focused on defining a context within sound art for a discourse on inner sound. This proved difficult, as there was hardly anything (with a few exceptions, as I will discuss below) written about inner sounds in the then-existing literature on sound art. I was forced to look to other fields, such as philosophy and psychology, whose inclusion I will also explain in more detail below. The recent publications of books such as Dylan Robinson's *Hungry Listening* (2020), Brandon LaBelle's *Sonic Agency* (2020), and arguably also Cathy Lane and Angus Carlyle's *Sound Art Now* (2021), are evidence of the relevance of this research project. While they were not at my disposal at the outset of this project, they guide this research's future potential.

Chapter 1
Outlining a context for inner sound research

This first chapter considers where a critical context for inner sound research can be found, and, drawing on sound art theory as well as various other disciplines, defines its context. I start by discussing inner listening in the context of sound art and sound art theory, noting that very little has been written about the experience of inner sounds.

An exception to this is Angus Carlyle's text 'Earlids and Brainlids: On Thoughts and Sounds' (2007), which describes and discusses an instance of inner listening/hearing in detail. The text provides a starting point for discussing inner sounds and highlights the shortcomings of language in relation to sound and listening, which I will discuss further in Chapter 2. American sound artist and composer Pauline Oliveros is another exception—she has discussed, written about, and even composed with inner sounds. I will discuss her work further in Chapters 2 and 4, and her work remains an important influence throughout the entire research project.

To widen the research area, I will then discuss three works on the philosophy of listening: Don Ihde's *Listening and Voice* (1976), Anthony Storr's *Music and the Mind* (1992), and Jean-Luc Nancy's *Listening* (2007). Although none of these writers discusses inner sound experiences specifically, their writing highlights several interesting starting points for my research. Ihde briefly discusses the 'silent' sounds he senses while looking at a postcard; Storr discusses music as something we can internalise as part of our 'mental furniture'; and Nancy discusses the resonance between the body and its interior and the outer world. All these examples hint at the possibility of inner sounds but do not discuss them further. I will use them to articulate my ideas.
Additionally, Maurice Merleau-Ponty's writing on phenomenology allows me a space to focus on the *experience* of inner sounds, and to discuss the possibility of a 'hearing mind', challenging the Cartesian body-mind divide.

I consider several artists and writers whose work suggests a point of departure for identifying various kinds of inner sound. The writing and works of David Toop, Peter Cusack, and Jakob Kierkegaard suggest that inner sounds can be triggered by outside stimuli, while Jean-Paul Sartre hints at ways of thinking outside of language. Robert Bosnak's writing on dream spaces and Janet Cardiff's sound walks allows me to consider inner experiences that are only partly within our control, thus serving as a starting point to discuss uncontrolled inner sound experiences.

Although many of these artists, writers, and philosophers do not speak directly about inner sound experiences, or, in some cases even about sound in general, they provide several starting points and contexts for my research into inner sounds.

Chapter 2
Language and inner sounds

An important issue to deal with in this research project is the limitations of English language vocabulary when speaking about sound in general, and inner sounds in particular. In this chapter, I continue to sketch out a context for inner sound research, now with a focus on the relationship between language and sounds. Pauline Oliveros's writings on the need for the creation of a sonic language form the basis of this chapter. Salomé Voegelin's idea of the 'un-heard' and its influences on the heard, along with her considerations of what an (imagined) sonic language requires to be able to function, touches on the possibility of knowledge that exists outside of language, and the importance of being sensitive to this knowledge. I then discuss the work of several individual artists: Mark Rothko, Cornelius Cardew, Susan Hiller, Pauline Oliveros, Yoko Ono, and Christine Sun Kim, whose work suggests strategies for exploring and foregrounding knowledge and experiences 'outside' of language.

Chapter 3
A taxonomy of inner sounds

In this chapter I build on my initial definition of inner sounds to identify and define different inner sound experiences through the creation of a taxonomy of inner sounds. While such a taxonomy does not entirely solve the problem of language that I outlined in Chapter 2, it allows me to discuss different inner sound experiences with more nuance and enables a more detailed articulation and understanding of inner sound experiences. To create and define the taxonomy, I will draw on the writers, philosophers, and artist identified in Chapters 1 and 2, as well as my own practice, which will help me to outline four categories of inner sounds:

- **Created inner sounds**—sounds that are actively imagined or created
- **Conscious inner sounds**—inner sounds that are used as part of our thought processes
- **Triggered inner sounds**—inner sounds triggered by images, objects, events, thoughts, emotions, or other stimuli
- **Spontaneous inner sounds**—inner sounds we experience that are outside of our control.

While the taxonomy is useful for a better understanding of inner sounds, when analysing the categories, it is clear that many inner sound experiences do not fit comfortably into the rigid form of a taxonomy. In the following chapters I will discuss these inner sounds, exploring the

reasons why they do not fit into the taxonomy, and what this means for our understanding of inner sounds.

Chapter 4
The danger of inner sounds

In the fourth chapter I identify and discuss the connections and overlaps of experience of inner sounds and auditory hallucinations. I will take, as a starting point, my performance piece *Sonic Confessions* (2017), which explores some of the contradictions in our relationship to sound, particularly inner sound. I discuss where our attitude toward auditory hallucinations come from, and debate what makes them seem more dangerous than other hallucinations. I also discuss how these beliefs and attitudes toward auditory hallucinations influences our attitudes toward inner sounds and hearing/listening. Using Lawrence Abu Hamdan's work *Walled/Unwalled* (2018) as an example, I argue that widespread attitudes toward auditory hallucinations—believed to be scary or dangerous—not only influences our attitudes toward inner sounds, but also sound in general.

Chapter 5
Collective inner listening

In Chapter 5, I analyse my interactive performance piece *Aural Séance* (2018), to reflect on whether a collective inner listening experience is possible and what that means for our understanding of inner sounds. Using Merleau-Ponty's writing on the body and the body-subject allows me to define and discuss the 'hearing mind' that makes inner hearing and listening possible. I use Merleau-Ponty's ideas of the 'pre-personal', as well as affect theory, to explore how a collective inner listening experience raises questions around the 'porosity' of what is perceived to be our closed-off inner self. I examine how a collective inner listening highlights the transgressive nature of sounds themselves—not just inner sounds, but all sounds.

I also discuss and define how we think 'through' sound by examining further Jean-Paul Sartre's ideas of the 'image-schema' and the role images play in our thoughts. I use Sartre's ideas of 'image-schemas' as a jump off point to define and develop the idea of a 'sound-schema' to explore what role inner sounds play in our thinking and understanding of the world.

Chapter 6
Threshold listening

Drawing on the discussion and analysis of Chapters 4 and 5, in this final chapter I discuss the relationship between collective inner listening and what I will call threshold experiences: experiences that are situated on the threshold between self and other, outside, and inside. I use the idea of the mind–body–world entanglement to explore how sound is particularly suited to move with easy between these states—the mind, the body, and the world, revealing the porosity between what is considered to be our 'inner self' and the outer world. Using my performance work *Sonic Contagion* (2019) as a starting point, as well as texts by Anthony Nine and Eleni Ikoniadou, I argue that the properties of inner sounds, and sounds in general (which I discussed in Chapters 4 and 5), align sounds with ideas of the 'Other'.

I argue that these properties of sound—although inherent in all sound—become unavoidable in any discussions around inner sound experiences. Inner sounds, therefore, provide a unique context to discover and analyse these properties.

1. Outlining a context for inner sound research

1.1 Introduction

Having defined in the Introduction what I mean by 'inner sounds'— 'sounds we hear in both our conscious and unconscious minds, similar to but different from an inner voice'—the initial stages of the research project were focused on answering the question 'Does inner sound exist?' I conducted both face-to face interviews and online questionnaires to determine if inner sound was experienced, when it was experienced, and by whom. The answers from the face-to-face interviews that I conducted with a small number of volunteers, and the online questionnaires that I had another, larger set of volunteer's answer, often followed a similar pattern. At first, the idea of inner sound experiences was regarded as strange and unfamiliar. The first question was *'Do you hear sounds within your mind or thoughts?'*

> I don't think I do, no. I am very visual, so I think I tend to see images in my head rather than having a mental dialogue which involves sound in any meaningful way. (Ian)

> No, any thoughts are on their own, without any sounds.
> (Anonymous)

In both responses to the initial question about inner sounds, the participants deny having any sonic experiences within their thoughts or mind. In the first case, sound is equated with voice, and in the second case the participant seems to suggest that thoughts cannot have a sonic element— 'any thoughts are on their own' (Anonymous)—the 'on their own' suggests that sound would be something additional to the thought, not part of it.

Further into the questionnaires and interviews, however, inner sound experiences increasingly began to surface for many of the participants. It was as if by focusing their attention on the inner sounds that had been neglected, the participants discovered an inner sound world that had always existed, but had only been an undercurrent, until they re-tuned their inner hearing toward it.

> I'm pretty sure I had a ringing sound in my head after I had been tattooed. (Ian)

> Voice—mine, others—as in remembered dialogue. Music.
> (Anonymous)

Identifying a context and discourse for inner sound experiences followed a similar trajectory—it has taken a certain 're-tuning' and thinking of things from a 'sonic' perspective to find a context for inner sounds. With a few exceptions, there is barely any discussion of inner sound experience in existing sound art or listening discourse, philosophy, and practice. In defining a theoretical and practical context for inner sound experiences, I need to consider and draw on a broader context including sound art, theories of listening, psychology, and philosophy. From this, I need to re-tune, or re-focus, attention toward inner sound, and discover the undercurrents of inner sounds within these varying contexts, to establish a space where inner sound can be discussed.

As a natural starting point, I turned to several works by key writers in the literature of sound art practice, such as Christoph Cox's *Audio Culture—Readings in Modern Music* (2004), Brandon LaBelle's *Background Noise—Perspectives on Sound Art*, (2006) and *Acoustic Territories—Sound Culture and Everyday Life* (2010), Douglas Kahn's *Noise, Water, Meat—A History of Sound in the Arts* (1999), and Seth Kim-Cohen's *In the Blink of an Ear* (2009). Within this discourse, there is hardly any mention of anything that could be identified as 'inner sounds'. There are a few exceptions, which will discuss later in this chapter and in Chapter 2, such as David Toop's *Sinister Resonance—The Mediumship of the Listener* (2009), Salomé Voegelin's *Sonic Possible Worlds* (2014), and Pauline Oliveros's *Deep Listening—A Composers Sound Practice* (2005). These writers might not discuss inner sound directly, but they all suggest interesting points of departure for further investigation into inner sounds.

One of the very few texts within sound art literature to discuss inner sounds is Angus Carlyle's 'Earlids and Brainlids: On Thoughts and Sounds' (2007). Inner sounds are also addressed in the work and writing of Oliveros. I will discuss Carlyle and Oliveros in more detail, but it is clear, given the lack of writing within a sound art context on inner sounds, that I will need to broaden the context to include a wider range of texts on sound and listening. This will allow me to establish a broader, more nuanced framework for further discussion and exploration of inner sound experiences. To do this, I will investigate whether an inner sound context can be established within the philosophy of listening, by analysing three texts—Don Ihde's *Listening and Voice* (1976), Anthony Storr's *Music and the Mind* (1992), and Jean-Luc Nancy's *Listening* (2007). Even though these writers do not discuss inner sounds, the analysis of the texts suggests several starting points for a context and theory of inner sound and listening.

However, I will need to broaden my context into other areas, so I will then discuss several other texts, works, and artists that suggest useful ideas and strategies for exploring inner sounds. I will start by considering how the phenomenological philosophy of Maurice Merleau-Ponty allows us to think about how our minds could 'hear' inner sounds, through considering his ideas on the 'body-subject'. After that, I will consider several writers and artists that I have categorised based on the particular strategy or kind of inner sounds they suggest.

The first group focuses on outer stimuli as a trigger for inner sounds. For this category I will analyse Toop's *Sinister Resonance—The Mediumship of the Listener*, with a particular focus on his writing on the Dutch painter Mae, as well as the work of sound artists Peter Cusack and Jacob Kierkegaard. I will then discuss sounds in thoughts, by considering Jean-Paul Sartre's *The Imaginary* (1940). The final section will consider uncontrolled experiences of inner sounds, discussing the work of Jungian psychoanalyst Robert Bosnak, and the work of Janet Cardiff.

By discussing these various artists, texts, and writers, I will establish the outlines of a context for further discussion of inner sounds.

1.2 A context for inner sound experiences within the sound art literature

As I touched on in the introduction, there is a lack of discourse around inner sound within sound art literature. A few exceptions exist, and I will discuss two here—a text by Angus Carlyle, and the writing and practice of sound artist Pauline Oliveros.

In an essay entitled 'Earlids and Brainlids: On Thoughts and Sounds', an artist and writer, describes waking up during the night and the sounds he becomes aware of. At first, they are the sounds of the surrounding environment, but he soon moves on to 'the noise of our thoughts'. (Carlyle, 2007, p. 108)

He writes:

> Before I can capture the elusive drone, I become aware of another noise—this time one that is unambiguously internal—the noise of my thoughts. This is not just the sound of nouns and verbs shadowing in distinct then indistinct ways what might have been spoken aloud; that is what happens when we are thinking, as Wittgenstein might have said.
>
> My thoughts now, with the bike light back on and my wife's snoring much gentler. My thoughts, as I write then pause, write, then pause. My thoughts also consist of fuzzy renditions of associated ideas. Forms of what have once been heard but as might emerge from a turntable whose stylus has accumulated a little coat of fluff. The start of the match scrape; the wet ripple above the fish and a child's voice to the left; the thump of a snowball against my taxi in Berlin; the rush of water beneath a manhole cover and reverberation through a guttering pipe. (Ibid.)

The short text discusses both external and internal sounds experienced in the middle of a sleepless night. Carlyle's willingness to remain open and alert to both inner and outer sounds make this one of the very few explorations of inner sound experience in the literature of sound art. The text highlights the difficulties in trying to externalise, share and discuss inner sound experiences and the author immediately comes up against language's inability to capture and express sonic phenomena and experience. Even if Carlyle's language and descriptions are carefully chosen in an attempt to capture these sounds in their true nature, the descriptions still cannot escape the reference to the outside— 'the wet ripple above the fish, and a child's voice to the left'. The impossibility of speaking of sounds in any manner other than referring to their physical source means that speaking about what you hear in your mind becomes nearly impossible.

Inner sounds challenge the idea of an outer, physical source where sounds originate. In challenging this idea, a discourse of inner sounds highlights the failure of language to speak of sounds themselves, not their source. Through this research, I aim to investigate and discuss alternative strategies for communicating inner sounds, drawing on the communication strategies outside of language adopted by artists such as Mark Rothko, Susan Hiller, and Yoko Ono. Towards the end of the text, Carlyle hints at a different way of speaking of inner sounds—'The sounds of metaphor and association played through that dirty turntable I mentioned' (Ibid., p. 109) and 'Finally, in this clamour, there are those mysterious hums and whines of obscure origin that emerge, paradoxically, both in moments of relaxation and enervation' (Ibid.).

The sounds themselves are never discussed, as we lack a language for a discourse where sounds exist in themselves, without a dependence on objects to produce them. Carlyle suggests a first attempt at creating a language for sounds without a physical source. He is aware of language's failings in grasping and communicating sounds in themselves. I argue that both strategies explored by Carlyle highlight the limitations of language in communicating inner sounds. The first is too dependent on outer reference—the 'fish', the 'child's voice*'*. The second is too vague, losing the sounds themselves and focusing on their *origin*— 'metaphor and association, moments of relaxation and enervation*'*.

But despite these failings, Carlyle provides me a starting point for a discussion of inner sounds within a sound art context and highlights one of the most important difficulties in discussing inner sound experiences—the lack of an appropriate language for speaking about inner sounds. I will come back to this issue of language in Chapter 2.

I will now discuss sound artist Pauline Oliveros, whose work, and writings touch on inner sound experiences, even though she often does not name them as such.

Oliveros (1934–2016) was a sound artist, electronic composer, accordion player, and improvising musician who, in collaboration with IONE and Heloise Gold, developed 'Deep Listening'. This practice originated from Oliveros's recording with the Deep Listening Band. They recorded an improvisational session in an empty cistern, an experience Oliveros said changed her attitude to listening. The session and band were called Deep Listening, a moniker that started out as a joke. Over the years that followed, Oliveros continued to develop this practice through theory, scores, exercise, workshops, and Deep Listening retreats, and founded the Deep Listening Institute in 1985. Deep Listening promotes and explores what could be called 'sonic awareness'– comparable to John Berger's ideas of visual consciousness—a state of mind in which you strive to be 'always listening'. Oliveros makes a clear distinction between listening—which is actively paying attention to sounds, and hearing—something she defines as a more passive state. In her practice, Oliveros outlines two different states of listening: focal and global. The two states can be represented as a circle (global) and a dot (focal); the global states focus on 'all' sounds, while the focal states require you to focus on specific sounds with all your attention. Oliveros developed her theory further and named four different categories of sounds that are explored within her Deep Listening Practice—actively making sound, imagining sound, listening to the present sound, and remembering a past sound. Oliveros often mentions imaginary sounds and makes no real distinction between hearing and listening to 'internal' or 'external' sounds. Several of her exercises and scores—such as *Sound Fishes* (1992) and *Old Sound, New Sound, Borrowed Sound Blue (for voices)* (1994)—refer specifically to remembered or imagined sounds. I will discuss both in more detail below.

In the preface to her book *Deep Listening: A Composer's Sound Practice,* Oliveros talks about how she knew she wanted to become a composer at a young age:

> In high school I became acquainted with inner listening—an altered state of consciousness full of inner sounds that engaged my attention and eventually made me want to compose. (Oliveros, 1994, p. xv)

I read this as a clear description of inner sounds and inner listening. Oliveros goes on to describe sound as a 'waveform' (Ibid., p. xxii), and hearing as 'vibration or waveforms that are within the range of human hearing' (Ibid), which seems to contradict her experience of inner hearing. Oliveros's focus, in both her practice and writings, is on listening and the importance of remaining open. For her listening and hearing is not a set activity but

something that changes and evolves (Ibid., p. 13). She often references remembered sounds, as well as sounds that could be considered 'inaudible' (at least for humans), as in her essay *Some Sound Observations* (1960):

> As I penetrate the deep drone of the bulldozer with my ear, the mind opens and reveals the high-pitched whine of my nervous system. (Oliveros, 2004, p. 102)

And:

> My chair is creaking as restlessness grows. I wonder what God's chair sounds like? I would like to amplify it. I would like to amplify a spider spinning its web. (Ibid.)

These sounds—even though they might not be exactly inner sounds—still suggests the openness to sounds we cannot hear, and an attention toward imaginary hearing as well as physical hearing. One of her Sonic Meditations, called *Old Sound, New Sound, Borrowed Sound, Blue, for voices*, touches on inner listening:

> Old sound—A sound that you remember from a long time ago.
> New sound—A sound that you have never made before.
> Borrowed sound—A sound that you have borrowed from someone else.
> Blue sound—A sound that is blue for you.
>
> First listen inwardly to find your sound to be expressed vocally. Voice each kind of sound—old, new, borrowed, blue—from one to three times within a time frame of about five minutes. Pace yourself by listening to everyone and everything. Find a time for each of your sounds. Voice your sound just before, just after or together with some other person's sound. The piece is finished when everyone has used all his or her sounds not more than three times each.
>
> For Kingston Composers concert
> September 29, 1994
> Basel
>
> (Oliveros, 2005, p. 45)

In this score, there are two references to what could be considered inner sounds. First, Oliveros asks the participants to find an 'old sound—a sound that you remember from a long time ago'. This sound could, of course, only really be accessed and remembered within your mind. She also asks the participants to 'listen inwardly to find your sounds'—another clear reference to inner sounds.

In *Sound Fishes*, another Sonic Meditation, there is another reference to what could be considered 'non-physical' sounds:

> For an orchestra of any instruments.
>
> **Considerations**
>
> Listening is the basis of sound fishing
>
> Listening for what has not yet sounded—like a fisherman waiting for a nibble or a bite.

> Pull the sound out of the air like a fisherman catching fish, sensing its size and energy - when you hear the sound—play it.
>
> Move to another location if there are no nibbles or bites.
>
> There are sounds in the air like sounds in the water.
> When the water is clear you might see the fish.
>
> When the air is clear, you might see the sounds.
>
> November 1992
> Fairbanks, Alaska
>
> (Ibid., p. 50)

In this score, the connection to inner sounds is a little more ambiguous. The sounds in question are referred to as existing in the air, like fish in water. The participants need to 'catch' these sounds. In this regard, they are very much 'outer' sounds. However, in suggesting that these sounds 'have not yet sounded', as well as in the way a sound is 'caught'—by 'pulling' it 'out of the air....when you hear the sound—play it'—Oliveros also suggests the connection to inner sounds. The only way to pull the sounds (as yet unheard) out of the air, hear them and play them, would be to do so using your mind, your inner hearing.

In all these examples, Oliveros touches on inner sound experiences through her consistent openness to different listening experiences and sounds. She is very clear on the existence of an inner sound world as well as an outer one. Through her Deep Listening practice of scores, exercises, and workshops, she suggests a practical way of exploring and focusing on inner sound worlds, a useful starting point for further research and exploration of inner sounds. Oliveros's ideas are an important influence on this thesis and my inner sound research. I will consider her work further both in Chapter 2, as part of a discussion about language and sound, and as part of Chapter 5, where I consider collective inner listening experiences.

Carlyle and Oliveros offer starting points for a context for inner sound research within sound art. To widen this context, I will now turn to three texts concerning the philosophy of listening. These will help me to identify several starting points for establishing a broader context for a discussion of inner sound experiences

1.3 A context for inner sound experiences within the literature of listening

The philosophy of listening is a small field of investigation, often conducted within a phenomenological framework. In this next section, I will discuss whether a discourse for inner sound can be identified or teased out of the following three texts: Don Ihde's *Listening and Voice*, Anthony Storr's *Music and the Mind*, and Jean-Luc Nancy's *Listening*. I have chosen to discuss these three texts, as they focus on listening in a broader sense—not just as a function of language and human communication, nor exclusively in relation to music, but rather as an important component of everyday human existence. I will examine the theories of listening explored by these writers and identify themes and ideas that could be useful in defining a context and strategy for exploring inner sound experiences. Each text approaches the subject of listening from a different angle, and in different time periods. In *Listening and Voice*, American philosopher and writer Ihde, after explaining the process and ideas of a

phenomenological approach, explores various modes of listening and hearing. He starts with the 'shapes of things'—how we hear the world and the objects in it—then moves on to the voice; spoken word and language; imagination and inner voice; silence (briefly); music; and finally acoustic technologies.

Storr was a psychiatrist who worked both in hospitals and as a private practitioner during his life. He was fascinated by Jungian theories, and was a qualified psychoanalyst, although he refused to call himself a Jungian or claim any other label, instead saying he was 'an eclectic sceptic rather than a convert' (Stevens, 2001). Storr started writing in his 40s, exploring various aspects of psychoanalysis, mental illness, and the human condition. He was a lover of classical music, and throughout his life, he often remarked that if he had the talent and the training, he would have become a musician. *Music and the Mind,* therefore, was something of a labour of love for Storr. In it, he explores our relationship to music, discussing philosophical theories and ideas of music, from Nietzsche and Heidegger to Jung and Freud. Storr suggests the human brain is particularly pre-disposed to create, appreciate and *need* music, both as a creation of order out of chaos (noise), and as a way of experiencing, ordering, and making sense of time.

Nancy, a French philosopher influenced by Martin Heidegger, Immanuel Kant, and Jacques Derrida, explores a diverse range of subjects, such as ideas of community, freedom, the body, and the arts. In *Listening*, Nancy explores ideas of listening and the listener, mainly by focusing on two French verbs—'entendre' (to hear) and 'ecouter' (to listen). *Listening* explores the concept of listening from a philosophical point of view. Nancy's focus is, ultimately, the idea of the subject—the listener—and the difference between hearing, listening, and understanding.

Although none of the books discusses inner sounds in detail, they all contain several starting points for a further discussion of inner sound. Ihde writes about sound and the imagination. Although his sounds always have an 'outer' source, he makes interesting points about how we experience sounds in our mind. He also describes, briefly, the sounds he experiences while looking at a postcard, which is an important starting point for my discussion of triggered sound in Chapter 3.

Storr explores the idea of music acting as 'mental furniture', becoming part of our inner world of thoughts, and argues that these sounds are helpful for our well-being. Much as for Ihde, for Storr sounds originate outside of us, and become internalised; his focus is mainly on music. His discussion highlights how our inner worlds contain sounds, and this provides another point of departure for a discourse on inner sounds. Nancy considers the body as a resonating chamber, which offers yet another interesting starting point to discuss sounds that are experienced within.

1.4 Ihde's Listening and Voice

In *Listening and Voice*, Ihde firmly establishes the origin of sounds as situated in the outside world.

> We listen first to things. They capture our attention in their voices and are the 'naive' or first existential sources of the sounding which we hear. (Ihde, 2007, p. 73)

The idea of the physical world as the original source for all sounds remains central to his writing as he moves on to discuss imaginary sounds, and inner voice. Inner sounds, which he calls imagined sounds, start with the voice, which originates in the outside world, to become an inner voice.

> The second survey that begins its investigation of the polyphony of experience binds what is 'innermost,' the imaginative, with what is also the broadest in human experience, the intersubjective. It is the voices of language that assume a focal role in human imagination in its auditory dimension.....Language also lies in the interior. Inner speech as the hidden monologue of thinking-in-a-language accompanies the daily activities of humans even when they are not speaking to each other. (Ibid., p. 118)

For Ihde, our inner voice has a 'focal role*'* in our auditory imagination. Language 'penetrates' us—it originates in the outside world, and I internalise it. As he discusses other auditory imaginative experiences and examples, they remain firmly rooted in experiences of the outside world. Describing his memory of the voice of his German grandmother and her particular use of language and his grandfather saying grace, Ihde speaks of the sounds being called up and 'presentified*'*—heard—in his imagination (Ibid., p. 113.) An example of auditory imagination, it is discussed only as a memory of an event, firmly rooted in outside experience, and firmly rooted in language. It would be a small step to consider the other sounds of the scene Ihde describes—the location, the sounds of china, knives, and forks at the table, the sounds of other people. However, Ihde never notices or investigates these 'non-language 'sound experiences at all. Ihde explores 'the imaginative mode' (Ibid.) throughout the entire third section of *Listening and Voice*—giving several examples of sounds heard within the imagination. They all share the same origin in both memory and the outside world. Ihde explores how I can imagine what I have never experienced, but he does so only visually.

> I imagine a green bee buzzing before me. (Ibid., p. 124)

The sound Ihde imagines remain a sound rooted in the physical world—he has already identified what is being imagined, sonically, as a 'bee', which merely sounds like a bee. The imaginary experience Ihde describes is both visual and auditory, yet the imaginary *sound* of the bee is not explored, as he has already identified it and limited it to 'the sound of the [green] bee' (it is assumed that the green bee sounds like any other bee), tying the sound to an object in the outer world and defining the imaginary sound according to the object that produces it. It would have been a small step for Ihde to ask the question, 'What would a *green* bee sound like?' The thought experiment is designed to illustrate how I can imagine something I have never seen—a *green* bee—but Ihde does not extend the thought experiment to include the auditory—imagining a sound I have never heard. The experiment could easily be expanded to include the sonic: what would a green bee *sound* like? Focusing on the auditory imagination in this scenario—asking if I hear sounds in my mind that I have never heard before—suggests a line of enquiry I will develop further in future chapters.

Throughout *Listening and Voice*, Ihde consistently traces auditory experiences back to the outer world and remains focused on language as the main feature of inner auditory experience. Ihde never explores inner sounds that are not tied to an outer experience or object or that are identified purely as an *inner imaginative auditory* experience. Thus, the imagined green bee never gets its corresponding imagined 'green' sound.

Ihde divides the scope of his investigation into sound and phenomenology by outlining 'silence' as the horizon, the outer limit of his sphere of investigation. Despite this definition,

Ihde remains ambivalent toward silence, questioning whether silence is the absence of sound or just another experience of hearing. This leads to the most relevant paragraph in *Listening and Voice* for considering inner sound experiences:

> Even mute things may 'speak' in a silence that carries the adumbrated adherence of sound to presence. I look at the postcard that arrived recently from Japan....I detect the adherence of a certain auditory presence to the picture. I 'hear' the rain and 'listen' to the peasants running and to the rustling of the mats. The muteness of the picture sounds in its relative silence. (Ibid., p. 111)

This is one of the few places in *Listening and Voice* where Ihde touches on an inner auditory experience that is not voice, language, or sound related to a specific outer world experience. Even if the sounds Ihde refers to—rain, peasants running, the rustling of the mats—are sounds originating in the outside world, Ihde is experiencing them in an abstract way. It is not the rain remembered from yesterday on the way home from work, or the peasants seen and heard running last week. It is an unspecified, abstract, imagined 'sound of rain' that originates purely from Ihde's imagination, as do the other sounds referred to in this paragraph. The photograph, in its portrayal of the real, physical world, which Ihde believes is the only source of sounds, but a silent 'reality' that opens a space in oneself from which abstract inner sounds can emerge. It allows enough connection to the real for a sound to come to mind but leaves enough 'space' for it to be not a specific sound, but an abstraction of a sound ('sound of rain'), whose origin is the realm of the imaginary and not the real. I examine these sounds more closely in my discussion of triggered inner sounds in Chapter 3.

We can trace undercurrents and instances of inner sound through Ihde's writing in *Listening and Voice*— 'the imaginative mode', considerations about what silence is, remembering sounds and 'hearing' sounds in images (Ibid., p. 111).

But between the idea of all sounds belonging to the outside world, and the insistence of language as a main feature of inner (sound) experiences, other inner sounds are not explored in detail, if at all. There are moments in *Listening and Voice* where an investigation of inner sounds would be the next natural step—the green bee, the sound memory of his grandmother, or the chapter on the inner voice. But Ihde remains constricted by the concept of the sounds of 'things'—the firm belief that sounds of things 'are the "naive" or first existential sources of the sounding which we hear' (Ihde, 2007, p. 73). *Listening and Voice* offers glimpses suggesting the existence of inner sounds, though the idea of inner or imagined sound is not explored further. Ihde provides me with starting points for a discourse on inner sounds. The green bee suggests to me that further exploration into the creation of imaginary, new sounds is needed, and the sound memory of the grandmother opens the idea of exploration into sound triggered by memories. These starting points raises the question: what would happen if we allowed sounds to be freed from the 'real'?

1.5 Storr's Music and the Mind

In contrast to Ihde, Storr's *Music and the Mind* specifically focuses its attention on an inner space of listening, asking how music affects us, and influences our thinking processes. Throughout *Music and the Mind* there is a very clear division between the outside world (music), and the inside world (mind). Storr concurs with Ihde that any references to, or examples of, sounds that are heard in our inner worlds have a clear point of origin in the outside world. He describes the process of internalising music:

> When we get to know a particular piece of music after repeated hearings, it is incorporated as a schema. The music becomes stored in the long-term memory as a whole—both form and content. (Storr, 1997, p. 122)

The music here clearly originates within the outside world—we hear it (rather than imagining or creating it). If we hear it repeatedly, it could 'become part of our mental furniture' (Ibid.).

What Storr discusses here, I argue, are inner sounds: they are heard in our mind, with no outside influence, at least not at the time of 'hearing' them. However, he makes it clear that they originate in the outside world. He never makes any reference to or allowance for sounds or music we might create ourselves in our imagination. The music is always first heard in the outside world, then internalised, and only after that does it become an inner sound.

The focus of *Music and the Mind* is music, and Storr never moves away from music to explore other sounds. Storr is particularly interested in how the structure of music (both internalised and external) helps us 'order' our thoughts and improve our general mental processes. How 'music not only brings order to muscular movement, but also promotes order within the mind' (Ibid., p. 106). Music is helpful and useful, Storr suggests, because it is ordered and organised.

In contrast with music, Storr suggests, noise is unorganised and unhelpful sounds.[1] Storr does not explore noise, or any 'unorganised' sounds, in relation to internalised sounds. By defining music as 'good' sounds that organise and help the mind, while defining noise as 'bad', Storr misses the opportunity to take his exploration further, into sounds that are not considered musical, and how they can also be important in our thought process. In highlighting that music can be useful in conceptualising our understanding of time, Storr provides an example of how sounds can be used in our thought processes, in understanding complex ideas and how we *think through sound.* It follows that the sounds we use as part of our thoughts cannot only be musical sounds—any sounds can be internalised through the same process as music. If these sounds are used as part of our thought process, crucially, not all them can have a clear origin in the outside world. Just as we are able to think 'new' thoughts, based on more than simply what we have experienced or remember, we can also think 'new' sounds. Storr does not pursue this avenue of investigation. He argues instead that music is an important part of everyday inner life, but as an uncontrollable (albeit positive) occurrence rather than as a conscious thought process. Storr's writing provides me with an interesting starting point for considering inner sound experiences, and how sounds are part of our thought processes. Unlike Storr, however, I argue that musical sounds are not the only sounds that can be important to thoughts and inner experiences.[2] I believe other sounds—which Storr calls 'noise'—everyday sounds, imaginary sounds, unorganised sounds—are also part of our inner experiences in both positive and negative ways. Storr's clear division between musical and 'other' sounds will also act as a starting point for a further discussion in Chapter 3, about different kind of inner sound experiences and their potential uses.

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[1] As Marie Thompson notes in *Beyond Unwanted Sound* (2017), what is considered to be 'noise' and what is not is tied up in complex social belief systems. 'As have been demonstrated, cultural norms and contextual factors, as well as an individual's lifestyle, personal experiences and thresholds of tolerance influence the judgement. However, the variability in why, what and for whom sounds are judged to be negative means that noise remains resistant to further generalizations' (Thompson, 2017, p 23).

[2] In *Sonic Flux: Sound, Art, and Metaphysics* (2018), Christoph Cox discusses the idea of a auditory unconscious, drawing on ideas of philosopher G. W. Leibniz. The auditory unconscious, argues Liebniz, is comprised of those sounds we experience, but do not pay attention to— 'filing' them away, so to speak, into an auditory unconscious. These ideas of 'internalising' sounds discussed by both Storr, Cox and Leibniz, could be a fruitful and interesting area for further research.

> What purpose is served by music running in the head un-summoned and perhaps unwanted? What follows is subjective speculation, but it is unlikely that my experience is unique. If I am engaged in any occupation not requiring intense concentration, the music, which comes unbidden to my mind usually, has physical and emotional effects of a positive kind. It alleviates boredom. Makes my movements more rhythmical and reduces fatigue. (Ibid., p. 125)

Storr does not mention other inner sounds, and what their effects would be, if they were heard un-summoned. Would there be an equally positive effect in that case, or is it only music that produces this? Much like Ihde was restricted by his insistence that all sounds originate from at an outer source, Storr is restricted by his strict focus on music as an organising, positive, yet uncontrollable force. This hinders a broadening of the exploration of *Music and the Mind* into other inner sounds. Storr makes a compelling argument for the usefulness of organised sounds and their importance in thinking and reasoning—helping thought processes. In this way, he provides a starting point to further investigate inner sounds, building on the idea of musical sounds being important for our inner experiences, but broadens this idea to include other, non-musical sounds, as well as imagined sounds. Storr describes internalised music as 'mental furniture'—could I create my own sonic 'mental furniture', originating in my mind and not the outside world? Are there sounds in my mind that have been not internalised but created? Could inner sounds, just like as any other inner experiences, be both organised and unorganised? Does a focus on only organised or even 'useful' sounds restrict any real understanding of our inner sound world? I will discuss the idea of thinking through sounds more in depth in Chapter 5. Now, I turn to French philosopher Jean-Luc Nancy's book *Listening* where I discuss his idea of a hollow, sounding body as a space for inner listening.

1.6 Nancy's Listening

In *Listening*, Nancy asks, 'Isn't the philosopher someone who always hears...but who cannot listen...who neutralizes listening within himself, so that he can philosophize?' (Nancy, 2007, p. 1)

For a large part of *Listening*, Nancy is interested in pursuing the abstract idea of listening rather than actual listening experiences. In exploring the abstract idea of listening, it matters less whether the sound originates inside or outside. This would suggest openness to both inner and outer sound worlds. Despite this, Nancy locates sounds firmly in the outside world. Part of the reason is that Nancy's focus in most of *Listening* is on listening as an embodied experience, exploring our listening bodies in space and sound, and listening *through* our bodies.

> The womblike constitution of resonance, and the resonant constitution of the womb: What is the belly of the pregnant woman, if not the space or the antrum where a new instrument comes to resound, a new *organon*, which comes to fold in on itself, then to move, receiving from the outside only sounds, which, when the day comes, it will begin to echo through its cry? But, more generally, more womblike, it is always in the belly that we—man or woman—end up listening or start listening. The ear opens onto the sonorous cave that we then become. (Ibid., p. 37)

This metaphorical exploration of embodied listening starts in the womb, 'receiving from the outside only sounds' (Ibid.) and having a first experience of listening or hearing. Once one is born and, in the world, Nancy imagines the body—or more specifically, the belly—as a cave, a hollow space, which resonates with the sounds one experiences or hears. I start listening to the womb before I am born and end up listening *through* my own hollow body/belly. According to Nancy, as I listen *through* my body, as a hollow resonance chamber, I also, by necessity, listen *to* it. As my body resonates with the sounds in the world around it—as I experience these sounds—I also listen to my body, resonating with it.

For Nancy, even as my body resonates with sound 'in the belly' (Ibid.), I still only receive the sounds from the outside world. Nancy does not explore or allow for sounds that start from within, not even memories. Only when receiving sounds from the outside, can I listen to my own body resonating:

> Timbre can be represented as the resonance of a stretched skin...and as the expansion of this resonance in the hollowed column of a drum. Isn't the space of the listening body, in turn, just such a hollow column over which skin is stretched, but also from which the opening of a mouth can resume and revive resonance? A blow from outside, clamour from within, this sonorous, sonorized body undertakes a simultaneous listening to the 'self' and to the world that are both in resonance. (Ibid., p. 43)

According to Nancy, then, I can listen to myself, to the 'clamour from within', only through listening to the world. But this resonant, hollow body, could become a starting point for an exploration of an inner sound world. I can listen to the 'self' as mentioned by Nancy in the quote above, without the '...simultaneous listening...to the world'. The hollow body can then become the space for an inner listening, where the sounds resonating within the body, originating from within, are the only sounds I experience. Nancy's hollow body, I argue, suggests as a space where inner listening can happen, where outer sounds and inner sounds meet and co-exist. In Chapter 5, I will develop this argument further by discussing the work of Merleau-Ponty and ideas of collective inner listening.

Throughout these three works—those of Ihde, Storr, and Nancy—inner sound experiences are never fully explored. Each writer has his own set of restrictions. For Ihde, it is language, and the 'thing' that sounds: the real-world reference to sound that is always there. For Storr, it is the exclusive focus on music as the only inner sonic experience worthy of explanation. And for Nancy, the embodied experience—the resonating body—needs its sound source from outside to start resonating for one to be able to listen inward.

In all the texts, I can detect undercurrents of inner sound experiences. Ihde's thought experiments, memories of sounds and sounds heard in 'silence', hint at an unexplored inner sound world, with no obvious connection to the outside—no 'thing' that makes the sound. In the same way, Storr's internalisation of music, the creation of auditory 'mental furniture', suggests to me an interesting point of departure for further exploring different kinds of internalised sound experiences, and our thinking *through sound* as well as music. Nancy's resonating body provides a site for starting to locate a listening experience focusing on an inner sound world—the body resonating from the inside, as well as outside. All of this are only starting points for a discussion on inner sounds. There is no in-depth discussion or discourse of inner sounds in these texts. While these starting points allow me to sketch out the beginnings of a context for a discussion of inner sound experiences, I need to broaden my context to include writers and artists outside of a sound and listening context.

Ihde, Storr, and Nancy all rely on the outside world, the 'thing' that makes sounds, music, or the body, to discuss sounds and listening. Considering this approach to discussing sound and sound experiences, I suggest that there is no appropriate language for describing and discussing sounds that fall outside these criteria—the thing that makes the sound, the thing that hears the sound, or an abstract idea of organised sounds (music).

The sounds themselves are never discussed and perhaps can never be discussed. This reliance on an insufficient and constricting language means a real discourse of inner sounds will remain almost impossible. How do I discuss a sound experience where I have lost the connection to the outside—the only way language allows me to refer to sound? I argue that, if I remove what is perceived as the source of the sound, the 'real' object that makes sounds, I am left with the *experience* of inner sound. For a context in which to explore the *experiencing* of both the inner and the outer, I turn to French philosopher and phenomenologist writer Maurice Merleau-Ponty. His explorations of bodily experience as a starting point for our understanding of the world allows me to approach a discussion of inner listening from a different perspective, separate from the need to tie sounds to the 'real' to be able to speak of them.

1.7 Experiences of inner sound through the body/subject—can we hear without our ears?

At the core of Merleau-Ponty's philosophy is an examination of the body, embodied experience and perception, and the role this plays in our understanding of the world. Instead of the traditional division between 'the body' and 'the mind' found in Cartesian philosophy and science, Merleau-Ponty argues that consciousness, the body, and perception are always intertwined in our experience of the world. In *Phenomenology of Perception* (1945), his best-known work, Merleau-Ponty explores the idea of an embodied state, and what it means for our experience of the world. Merleau-Ponty argues that experience is always embodied, that our mind is inseparable from our bodily experiences and that our body is not simply perceiving but capable of both perceiving *and* thinking.

Merleau-Ponty speaks about perception as 'one unlocalized knowledge...there is no such difference between thinking and perceiving as between seeing and hearing' (2009, p. 247). In imagining and isolating the 'unlocalized knowledge' pinpointed by Merleau-Ponty in my experiences of listening, I need to shift my focus. I cannot simply think that I hear only through my ears, that I see only through my eyes. If I drop preconceived notions of perception as a physical experience and allow for experience as something that happens in an intertwining of body and mind as one being, I can no longer think of hearing as something I depend on my ears to do, a purely physical act. This shift in focus, to the intertwined body, opens up the idea of listening without ears, and being able to listen *with* and *to* our thoughts and our inner world. It suggests a different kind of listening, performed with a thinking body and a hearing mind—hearing as an action where body and mind are intertwined.

Merleau-Ponty goes on to observe that in the first instance of perceiving or experiencing, there is no division between us, and the world; the division between consciousness (inner space) and the physical world (outer space) is fluid and almost non-existent in the moment of perceiving and experiencing. My 'body is not only in space: it is of it' (Ibid., p. 171). In perceiving, my experience is not one where I am a clearly defined, self-contained entity, cut off from the world. It is one where the border between me and the world becomes shifting and *porous*, not clearly defined, or solid— 'the world and I are within one another' (Ibid., p. 123)

I could think of it as me, expanding outwards, or as the world seeping into me. I could think of my body/self as a 'space' where the inner and outer converge and meet. A 'pre-conscious and pre-objective' (Ibid., p. 281) space or place where inner and outer exist together. In my experience of listening, this fluid, porous boundary between the outer and inner means that listening inwards, and outwards is similarly fluid and shifting. In the first instance of perception/experience, *I simply listen.* There is not an outside or inside. They come afterwards, in reflection. Merleau-Ponty's thinking/perceiving body-subject lets me consider listening as something more than a physical activity performed by my ears. Listening, from the perspective of an intertwined body and consciousness, becomes both physical *and* mental. I contend that inner listening becomes possible in the body-subject, as our understanding of listening changes. Listening, for the body-subject, cannot remain a purely physical experience. It becomes instead a body-mind 'expanded' porous listening experience, employing not only my ears, but both body and consciousness, intertwined in a fluid, shifting space of inner and outer listening

Merleau-Ponty offers a theoretical and philosophical framework upon which to develop a discourse of inner experience, inner listening, with a focus on the experiencing and listening, cutting listening free from its ties to the real, the physical and *the object* that makes the sound. He allows me to focus only on the reality of the experience of listening, which suggests a strategy and starting point for developing a theoretical analysis of an inner listening free from the dependence on the physical ear as the only channel for our experiences of sounds. In Chapter 5, I will explore further how this opens possibilities of collective inner listening, and how this leads to a questioning of our perceived borders of self and other, inner, and outer.

To return to the three texts considered earlier on—Ihde, Storr, and Nancy each offer some tentative starting points for a context of inner sounds. Ihde's exploration of the imaginary allows us to consider what a sonic imaginary would be, and his writing on sonic memories and the 'silent sounds' triggered by a postcard hint at the existence of inner sounds. Storr's discussion of music as 'mental furniture' is another starting point for considering inner sounds and their function. Nancy's embodied listening—through and within the body—suggests a listening where inner and outer co-exist. Merleau-Ponty suggests a phenomenological method for exploring the *experience* of inner hearing and listening. I will now look at a wider context of artists and writers—both within the sound art context and outside it—to try to tease out any undercurrents or starting points for an inner sound practice and theory. I will discuss these in three different groupings—outer stimuli as a trigger for inner sounds, inner sounds in thoughts, and uncontrolled experiences of inner sounds—that suggests different 'kinds' of inner sounds and inner listening experiences. In Chapter 3, I discuss this further through the creation of a taxonomy of inner sounds.

1.8 Outer stimuli as a trigger for inner sounds

In this section I will explore David Toop's text *Sinister Resonance—The Mediumship of the Listener*, Peter Cusack's listening project *Favourite Sounds of Beijing* (1998), and Jacob Kierkegaard's installation *House of Mare* (2010)—which all suggest inner sound experiences that could be triggered by outside stimuli.

David Toop, professor of audio culture and improvisation at the University of the Arts London, is an English author and musician. He has written several books on music and sound art, including *Ocean of Sound: Aether Talk, Ambient Sound, and Imaginary Worlds* (1995) and *Haunted Weather: Music, Silence, and Memory* (2004).

In *Sinister Resonance*, Toop explores the history of listening, and of sound as something invisible, sometimes uncanny and mystical. Writing about the history of listening, Toop draws on various sources and creative disciplines, such as painting, writing, architecture, and nature. In exploring these 'silent' media from a sonic perspective, Toop locates a world of 'silent' or 'imagined' sounds.

One example of silent sound, which Toop returns to throughout the book, involves the work of Nicolaes Mae. Mae, a Dutch painter born in 1634 and a pupil of Rembrandt, produced several paintings of interiors with a common theme of eavesdropping. Toop explores the paintings and their 'silent' sound-worlds. He describes Mae's painting *Lovers with a Woman Listening* (1656):

> One of the lovers is a maid; her abandoned broom is propped against the door frame. The man is leaning into her. Pawning her breasts. She slumps into him, heavy and tired, somewhat reluctant. A baby basket is by her feet on the floor, and the maid holds a string in her left hand, presumably to rock the cradle. As for the woman who listens, she has left her work at a book that lies open, probably the household accounts, to eavesdrop. Duties have been neglected by all parties....Keys hang from the listener's dress; perhaps they clink faintly....The stairs will creak once her foot descends. Through the open door we hear the rocking of the cradle, though if the sound stopped in the preceding moments, then its silence will have alerted the listener to mischief. (Toop, 2011, p. 76–77)

In exploring the sound world of the painting, Toop introduces me to a sonic space halfway between the real world, and our imagination— 'perhaps they clink faintly'. James Parker and Joel Stern argue in *Eavesdropping: A Reader* (2019) that 'eavesdropping has always hovered between human and nonhuman, actor and actant' (Parker and Stern, 2019, p. 28). Through Toop's description, I am directed toward 'eavesdropping' on a world of sound that once existed or perhaps exists only in the imagination of the author. The only way I can do this is by accessing and using my own imaginary sound world. I become aware of my own inner sounds, triggered through Mae's paintings, or rather Toop's description of Mae's paintings. Toop's sonic discussion of Mae's paintings opens half-imagined sound worlds, hidden in sonic, visual, and written pieces of art. In drawing out of the works of art the undercurrents of sounds they hide*, Sinister Resonance* suggests a starting point for exploring inner sounds, not through words or a language that does not exist, but through paintings, photography, or writing.

In Peter Cusack's pieces *Favourite Sounds of Beijing* and *Favourite Sounds of London*, participants are asked to recall and retell memories of sounds of the city. The project explores an inner sound world of the participants, as they are asked to listen inwards and remember sounds that mean something to them, or just to recall a sound from another part of the city. Cusack uses the city as a spatial and emotional 'trigger' of remembered inner sounds. The project also asks us, as readers or listeners, to imagine the sounds being talked about. The sounds remembered by the participants, their descriptions of them, and their stories of why they remember those sounds become triggers for us in inward listening. I believe this act of imaginative hearing of other people's sound memories also has the possibility of acting as a trigger to our own memories of sound. The participants in *Favourite Sounds of Beijing* speak clearly and at length about their various sound memories of the city and what the sound memories means to them. The project makes it clear that we can, and do, listen inwards, when prompted. Cusack's work suggests to me a strategy for exploring inner sounds by using

the spaces of the city and personal histories to bring, if not the actual inner sound memories to the surface, the existence and importance of such inner sounds. My attempts to imagine and engage with the sounds and stories told acts as prompts to re-focus on and discover my own inner sound worlds.

Jacob Kierkegaard's *House of Mare* is a recording of a room, made while people are asleep in it. The piece's title suggests the idea of the 'mare' of old Norse folklore, which would come and ride people during the night, bringing nightmares. We listen to a quiet room, with sounds of people sleeping at night. The silent, unheard, sonic undercurrent of the work is very different—a sound world of dreams, demons, and nightmares. The piece uses a space (the room), a time (night), and states of consciousness (sleeping, dreams, and nightmares), as triggers for an inner, imaginary sound world. It uses a shared human experience to explore an undercurrent of inner sound. It asks that we go beyond the heard sounds of the recording and imagine a different, other world of dream sounds—both the recorded participants, and our own. For me the work, with its 'silent' sound of dreams and nightmares, suggests ways of using everyday experiences, re-staged, as a trigger for inner sound.

Even though neither Toop in *Sinister Resonance*, nor Cusack in *Favourite sounds of Beijing*, nor Kierkegaard in *House of Mare* specifically references or uses inner sounds, they all hint at the possibility of using outside stimuli—visual art, environments, memories, dreams—to access inner sounds experiences. Toop explores the imagined sounds of silent paintings, using the references to hearing and sound in the paintings as a gateway to imaginary sounds. Cusack uses the city as a focal point for memories of sounds, opening the possibility of us both imagining the sounds described and listening toward our own sound memories. Kierkegaard uses the mental state of sleeping to suggest we imagine an inner, silent sound world. These three works suggest to me that there are inner sounds that can be accessed or triggered by 'outer' events, objects, images, and environments. In Chapter 3, I will outline a taxonomy of inner sound and discuss various kind of inner sound experiences in more detail.

1.9 Inner sounds in thoughts

French writer Jean-Paul Sartre was one of the key figures in the development of the philosophy of existentialism and phenomenology. In *The Imaginary* (1940), Sartre explores ideas of the imagination and the imaginary. He draws a clear line between imagination and perception in general, and between imagination and memory. He argues that both perception and memory take the outside world as their starting points, but he also argues, the imagination comes from within, from me:

> If I recall an event if my past life, I do not imagine it, I remember it....I do not evoke it, I direct my consciousness towards the past where it awaits me as a real event in retirement. (Sartre, 2010, p. 181)

Here, Sartre compares memory—which is something he thinks of as a real event 'stored away' in your mind, to imagining. Imagination, for him, is a more complex process. He points out that to imagine something is less firmly connected to reality than a memory:

> ....the imaging consciousness of Pierre in Berlin...is much closer to that of the centaur (whose complete nonexistence I affirm) than to the memory of Pierre as he was on the day he left. (Ibid., p. 182)

In addition to making a clear distinction between the act of remembering and the act of imagining, he also shows in the above example how, even if what is being imagined is something real (a human, like Pierre), the act of imagining him is very similar to the act of imagining something that does not exist (like an imaginary creature, a centaur). Therefore, imagining is something that comes from within, and is not necessarily firmly rooted in the real. In his conclusion, Sartre discusses the concept of freedom and choice, which he later developed further in *Being and Nothingness* (1943)—because I can imagine, I am therefore in some sense free from being stuck in a world of only the real. I can imagine also what is not real, and in that sense I affect my experience and perception of the world around me, opening up possibilities of choice and ultimately, freedom.

> For consciousness to be able to imagine, it must be able to escape from the world by its very nature, it must be able to stand back from the world by its own efforts. In a word, it must be free. (Sartre, 2010, p. 184)

Sartre's clear definition of imagination as something that is not necessarily tied to the 'real' is useful for a discourse into inner sounds, as it frees inner sounds from the 'real' as well. Sartre's argument provides a starting point for considering inner sounds that are purely imaginary, and not necessarily originating in the outside physical world. I could, for example, imagine the sound of a centaur.

Throughout the text, Sartre discusses how images, and the imagination are used as important parts of the mental process, often to make sense of complex ideas and concepts, and even to solve problems. Of particular interest to the investigation of experiences of inner sounds is Sartre's discussion of the image-schema. In the chapter 'The Role of the Image in Psychic Life' (Sartre, 2010, p. 93), he discusses the idea that images are central to our thought process. The chapter opens with this statement:

> The image plays neither the role of illustration nor that of support for thought....An imaging consciousness includes knowledge, intentions, and can include words and judgements. (Ibid.)

Sartre refers to experiments conducted by German scientist Auguste Flach. Flach asked participants to describe complex concepts and what images—or image-schemas—they evoke. Both Flach and Sartre are careful to distinguish between image-schemas and what Flach calls 'illustrations of thought' (Ibid., p. 98).

Flach defines illustrations of thought as

> an illustration of thought of the object whose relations with thought are fortuitous, external, and of purely associative value. (Ibid., p. 94)

Image-schemas, Sartre argues, are different. They are representations of thoughts with only symbolic value, not inspired by the outside world or purely associations of a fully formed thought or concept. It is important to be clear on the difference between illustrations of thought and an image-schema. Sartre and Flach show that, far from being just an illustration of thoughts, image-schemas are integral to the thoughts themselves. They are not illustrations of thoughts; they are thoughts.

Sartre argues that images are central to our thought processes. Neither the image nor the concept in an image-schema exists on its own. They are one thing—the image and the meaning is one thought. The image is used to understand something; I think *through* the

image—it does not appear after the thought or as an illustration of the thought. The image *is* the thought. Sartre and Flach focus solely on the visual in *The Imaginary*; sound or other sensations are never discussed. Despite this, the image-schema does give me a context for thinking about how our thoughts are complex and multilayered, and do not consist solely of language or an inner voice.

When I consider a context for research on inner sound experiences, drawing on Sartre's writing in *The Imaginary* I can think about imaginary inner sound experiences, 'free' from the real, and what they could be. Sartre also provides a starting point, through his discussion of the function of the image-schema in thoughts, for considering how we think through inner sounds.

In Chapter 4, I will suggest and develop the idea that Flach's and Sartre's definition of an image-schema could be used to define a 'sound-schema'—*sounds* we use as part of our thought process. Like the image-schema, the 'sound-schema' would be part of the thought itself, not a soundtrack or illustration to the thought. Sartre's and Flach's explorations provide a strategy for expanding their visual experiments into an inner sonic universe. They suggest a strategy for exploring how sound functions in our thought processes.

1.10 Uncontrolled inner sound experiences

Jungian psychoanalyst and researcher Robert Bosnak specialises in dreams, and practises dream work therapy in the United States and Australia. In his book *Embodiment—Creative Imagination in Medicine, Art, and Travel* (2007), he explores dreams and dream theory, drawing on his group therapy work and Jungian ideas, such as symbolic archetypes and alchemical processes. The book is partly an investigation into Bosnak's work, and partly guidance on how to explore your own dreams and partly a recounting of Bosnak's own personal journey and experiences.

In the book, Bosnak explores the idea of a 'dream space'. He points out that everyone accepts the space we are in as a real space. Only on waking up do we realise it was in fact a 'dream space':

> It [the dream] instantaneously presents a total world, so real that you are convinced you are awake. You don't just think so, you know it in the same way you know you are awake reading this book. (Bosnak, 2007, p. 9)

Bosnak also observes that we seem to have very little control over the space we are in while dreaming. Things happen and we are surprised, scared, happy. The dream space is within us, in our inner world. But it is only partly controlled by us. Bosnak further illustrates this idea by pointing out that we meet 'entities' in our dreams. They must be part of our inner world, as they are part of our dreams. Yet they are their own entities—we have no control over them, and we cannot read their minds or predict their actions:

> There is the fact that images are the embodiments of their own intelligence. This is not immediately obvious. In fact, it has taken me decades to begin to grasp it. The independent intelligence of presences, not as sub-personalities of the dreamer, but as beings in their own right. (Ibid., p. 10)

Bosnak suggests that the dream space should be regarded as a space half within our consciousness and half without it—part of us but also separate from us. We should, Bosnak

suggests, consider that there might be several ‘parts’ to what we call our ‘self’—some that we do not know or understand, and have no control over—entities we sometimes come across in our dream worlds.

> What are these substantive images that embody their own active intelligence? They aren't figments, nor are they reconstructed memories, day residues, though sometimes they dress themselves in the events of the day. They are not sub-personalities, as I have already said. According to the visionaries studied by Henry Corbin, they are forms of intelligence which presents themselves as substantive bodies to the perceiving eye of the creative imagination. They consider this realm of substantive images to be as real as the physical world perceived by the senses, as the timeless transcendence experienced in the spirit of contemplation, and as the formal beauty of structure perceived by the mind of mathematics. (Ibid., p. 11)

Bosnak’s ‘perceiving eye of the creative imagination’ suggests that there could just as easily be a ‘perceiving ear’ within our creative imagination. This acts as another starting point for considering the idea that we can experience sounds in ways other than through our ears. Bosnak also suggests that, while we have some control of our inner world and our thoughts, there are also certain aspects we do not control. He links this to the entities we sometimes come across in our dreams, and suggests that Western civilisation in particular has lost, or chooses to ignore, this knowledge, contrary to the evidence.

> It is a real world between matter and sprit, between body and mind, a real world of creative imagination, which dropped out of western awareness around the thirteenth century, and in an eight-century long mental march turned into its opposite in the contemporary notion of the imaginary, imagination as the opposite of reality. This book is passionate to contribute to the restoration of an awareness of alien intelligences perceived by creative imagination—embodied images with a mind of their own—while comparing it to our current, what I consider to be impoverished, perspective, which views intelligence as singular. If I succeed in sensitizing you to the existence of an in-between reality—neither physical body nor mental allegory—of alien embodied intelligences, without expecting you to believe in flying saucers, you will catch a glimpse, as I did in my conversations with Corbin, of a place outside the body–mind conundrum. (Ibid.)

This ‘in-between reality’ discussed by Bosnak in this quote is interesting for an inner sound discourse as it allows us to, metaphorically, situate our listening experience within an inner ‘space’ which is imaginary, but not completely controlled by us. It allows us to imagine what sounds we could listen to in this ‘in-between space’. Bosnak’s ‘dream space’ suggests to me that there are parts of our mind that we are less in control of than we would like to think. This uncontrolled space opens the possibility of an equally uncontrolled inner sound experience—inner sounds that may appear unbidden and unexpected in my mind, with no clear purpose or origin.

The ‘in between’ space defined by Bosnak is, I argue, an important aspect of American sound and installation artist Janet Cardiff’s work. She creates sound, image, and video work, often in the forms of walks, as well as physical installations. She created a sound walk for the Whitechapel Gallery, titled *The Missing Voice (Case Study B)* (1999).

Accessing the work, you need to go to the gallery, which will provide you with a MP3 player and headphones. You then follow the instructions of the narrator—Cardiff herself—who guides you on a walk around Whitechapel, ending up at Liverpool Street station. Along the way, you are also told a fragmented, broken narrative of a missing girl. The voice on the headphones slowly becomes more and more like an inner voice, while the sounds on the headphones and the sounds of the surrounding streets become hard to tell apart, especially since you need to focus some of your attention on your walking and the world around you out of necessity, while also not losing track of the directions given over the headphones. *The Missing Voice (Case Study B)* creates a space halfway between the real and the imagined, the inner and the outer, suggestive of Merleau-Ponty's 'porous' body. The voices (there is more than one on the recording) intertwine with your inner voice—it is sometimes impossible to tell them apart. The sounds you hear might be real, they might be recorded, or they might just be imagined. Cardiff creates a space where your listening becomes heightened, more sensitive, a space where the experience of listening expands both inwards and outwards, where you are prepared to suspend your desire to know what is real and what is not. You can listen without necessarily needing to know where the sounds come from, but can instead focus on what they mean to you. By situating her work in a space that is both within and without, Cardiff opens up the possibility of an inner listening—, situated in a space that shifts, I would like to suggest, between Bosnak's dream space and Merleau-Ponty's 'porous' body, and between the real and the imagined. As I will discuss further in both Chapters 5 and 6, sound and its ability to traverse borders are particularly well suited to occupy these in-between space(s).

This experience of a shifting, 'in-between' space is something that allows me to consider inner listening experiences that are not entirely under my control—unbidden and unknown in origin and purpose. I will discuss this further in both Chapter 3, as part of defining a taxonomy of inner sounds, and in Chapter 5.

As Cardiff's work illustrates, sound and listening are particularly suited to explore these shifting in-between spaces and experiences. I will discuss the ability of sound to transgress borders further in Chapter 6.

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1.11 Conclusion

In this chapter I have outlined an initial context for my research into inner sounds. As I noted at the beginning of the chapter, I am undertaking this research within a sound art context, but I quickly realised that there are very few texts and artists to draw on within this context. This means I have had to broaden my scope to include writers and artists from other contexts, such as visual art, philosophy, and psychology.

I started by discussing Carlyle's text 'Earlids and Brainlids: On Thoughts and Sounds', and the work and writings of Oliveros. These two artists and writers both touch on and discuss what I would define as inner sounds—sounds experienced as part of one's inner world of thoughts, ideas, and emotions. I then discussed the philosophy of listening through analysing Ihde's *Listening and Voice,* Storr's *Music and the Mind*, and Nancy's *Listening*. Even though none of the writers explicitly discuss inner sound experiences, they all provide useful starting points for considering inner sounds.

French philosopher Merleau-Ponty suggested a way to think about inner hearing through the use of the 'body-subject', challenging the notion that the only way we can hear is by using our ears.

I then discussed several writers and artists and how they each highlighted varying aspects of inner sound experiences. Toop, Cusack, and Kierkegaard, all provided useful starting points to consider how inner sound experiences could be triggered by different stimuli. Sartre suggested ideas that are useful in considering sounds in thoughts. Finally, Bosnak and Cardiff both suggested ways of approaching the discussion of uncontrolled inner sounds—experiences of inner sounds that are not under our control. As I consider these writers and artists across various fields, a context for further discussion of inner sound experiences is starting to take shape.

Returning to the definition of inner sounds, I described them in the introduction as 'sounds we hear within our conscious and unconscious mind, similar to but different from an inner voice'. Does it still hold true? Carlyle and Oliveros in particular, but also Ihde, Storr, and Toop, touch on inner sounds—sounds in our minds—which are not an inner voice. Discussing artists such as Cusack and Cardiff, along with writers such as Sartre and Bosnak, highlights how there are different kinds of inner sounds—controlled and uncontrolled, conscious, and unconscious. From this, I conclude that inner sounds do exist, and that the definition is still relevant—including both conscious and unconscious inner sounds but excluding anything related to inner voice.

In the next chapter, I will discuss the difficulty in speaking about sounds—inner and outer. Considering inner sounds from the perspective of language, I will identify artists and writers who have analysed this problem or whose work suggests strategies for dealing with it. From this, I will further expand and refine the context for an inner sound discourse.

2. Inner sound and language

2.1 Introduction

It is difficult to speak about sound in general—the English language does not have a well-developed sonic vocabulary, so discussing and writing about inner sounds is also very difficult. In this chapter, I will first briefly outline the issues concerning using language are, when considering sound—both inner and outer. In her essay *Auralizing in the Sonosphere: A Vocabulary for Inner Sound and Sounding* (2011), Pauline Oliveros talks about this specific difficulty of language and sound and suggests, as a solution, the creation of a new sonic language. By analysing Oliveros's ideas for a new language, I will outline why a new sonic language—however exciting—will not solve the immediate problem of communicating inner sound experiences, as it will take a considerable time to define and make usable.

Salomé Voegelin also outlines the difficulty of language to express and communicate sound and listening experiences in her book *Sonic Possible Worlds* (2014). Voegelin discusses the idea of the 'un-heard' (Voegelin, 2014, p. 157), and explains what this idea means for our understanding of sound and language. She also suggests the qualities that language would need to properly express the complexities and nuances of sound and listening, which I will consider from the perspective of inner sounds.

Having examined the difficulty of language to communicate sound and sound experiences by discussing the writing of Oliveros and Voegelin, I will then consider several artists whose practice suggests different strategies to address and overcome the shortcomings of language in their work, and what that means for inner sounds.

I will consider the work of Mark Rothko, who talked about colour as a way of communicating with his audience: he believed this to be a more direct and superior method than language. I will discuss how his ideas highlight that communication outside of language is possible and important.

Installation artist Susan Hiller tackles subjects in her art that are thought of as existing on the periphery of society, often forgotten or ignored by scientific discourse, such as dreams or hallucinations. She has said about her work that it is about 'bringing into language' (Quaintance, 2013) things and experiences that were not there before. She does this by creating work concerning paranormal phenomena or experiences—such as alien abductions—but without providing any explanations. Her work manages to communicate that which lies outside of language and 'reason', and I will consider how this is relevant to a discourse on inner sounds and language.

Composer Cornelius Cardew wrote several text and graphic scores, the most famous one being his graphic score *Treatise* (1963–67). As this score is presented without any instructions for how to read it, it creates a state of openness and communication between the composer, players, and audience. I will discuss how Cardew's work suggests ways of communicating outside of language, utilising collaborative and communal networks. Composer Pauline Oliveros and Fluxus artist Yoko Ono both use text scores that share open-ended, fluid properties. This allows them to communicate both with and outside of language.

Sound artist Christine Sun Kim has created work that focuses both on the impossibility and the necessity of talking about and expressing sound and listening experiences. Her work touches on the deeply subjective experience of sound, as well as sounds' emotional properties. In the tension, she finds that in the impossible yet necessary communication of sound and listening experiences, a space might be found where connection is possible, despite all obstacles.

These artists all suggest ways of approaching connections and communications outside of language. In this chapter, I will explore their work and ideas to investigate what this means for inner sound experiences.

2.2 The lack of a sonic language

It often feels impossible to speak about inner sounds—where do I even start? How can I describe sound, any sound, using language? There is a lack of well-developed sonic vocabulary in the English language, especially when compared with visual vocabularies. A universal concept I often use for visual descriptions, colour, does not have an equivalent in sonic language. Considering sounds in general—not inner sounds alone, but any 'ordinary' or outer sound—how do I speak about them? I can speak about them onomatopoeically, trying to mimic the sound I want to express. Or I can speak about where the sound comes from, as in 'the sound of the car'. As Salomé Voegelin notes in her article 'The Possibility of Sound' (2017) on the website Wolf Notes: 'The name 'the sound of the car' is not the sound's name, it is the car's attribute' (Voegelin, 2017).

When I talk about sounds in this way, I am not really talking about the sound itself. Instead, I am talking about the source of the sound—in this case, the car:

> The sound itself has no function, and so my experience of it, once we disregard the signification of its source, is much harder to locate, and harder even to articulate in language. (Ibid.)

When I try to focus on the sound itself, not its source, language fails me. I can speak about where sounds come from, but I cannot speak about the sounds *in themselves*, free from their ties to an object and 'the real'—the physical world around us. As Voegelin points out, this also means that it is hard to talk about anything in relation to the actual sound, not its source, including my experience of it. This makes it difficult to speak about sounds in general and it makes it next to impossible to speak about inner sounds. If I hear a sound in my mind, and there is no identifiable source for it, I cannot talk of it as the 'sound of…'. How do I speak about these sounds when there is no easily identifiable source, no 'real' to attach them to?

Pierre Schaeffer, in his *musique concrète* compositions in the 1940s, used recorded sounds. Douglas Kahn notes in *Noise, Water, Meat* (2001) that he 'rejected his very first composition 'Étude aux Chemins de fer' (1948) soon after completion because the train station sounds remained too recognisable' (Kahn, 2001, p. 110). After that, Schaeffer 'employed a variety of manipulation techniques' (Ibid.) that made sure the sounds he used for his compositions could not be associated with their sources. Arguably, then, in Schaeffer's *musique concrète* I have sounds which have lost their connection with the 'real'. As Kahn notes and Schaeffer himself commented, however, *musique concrète* and its sounds—perhaps by virtue of them being severed from the real—are thought of and talked about in the context of music. 'Once such severance had taken place, music was inevitable' (Ibid.). Schaeffer even wrote a book in 1966, a sort of 'dictionary' of sonic terms. In it, he mainly develops a language to bring ideas

of the ‘sound object’ into the language, and therefore the realms, of music (Chion, 2009). *Musique concrète*, even with its deliberate removal of sounds from the ‘real’, does not give us a language for discussing sounds outside of musical discourse.

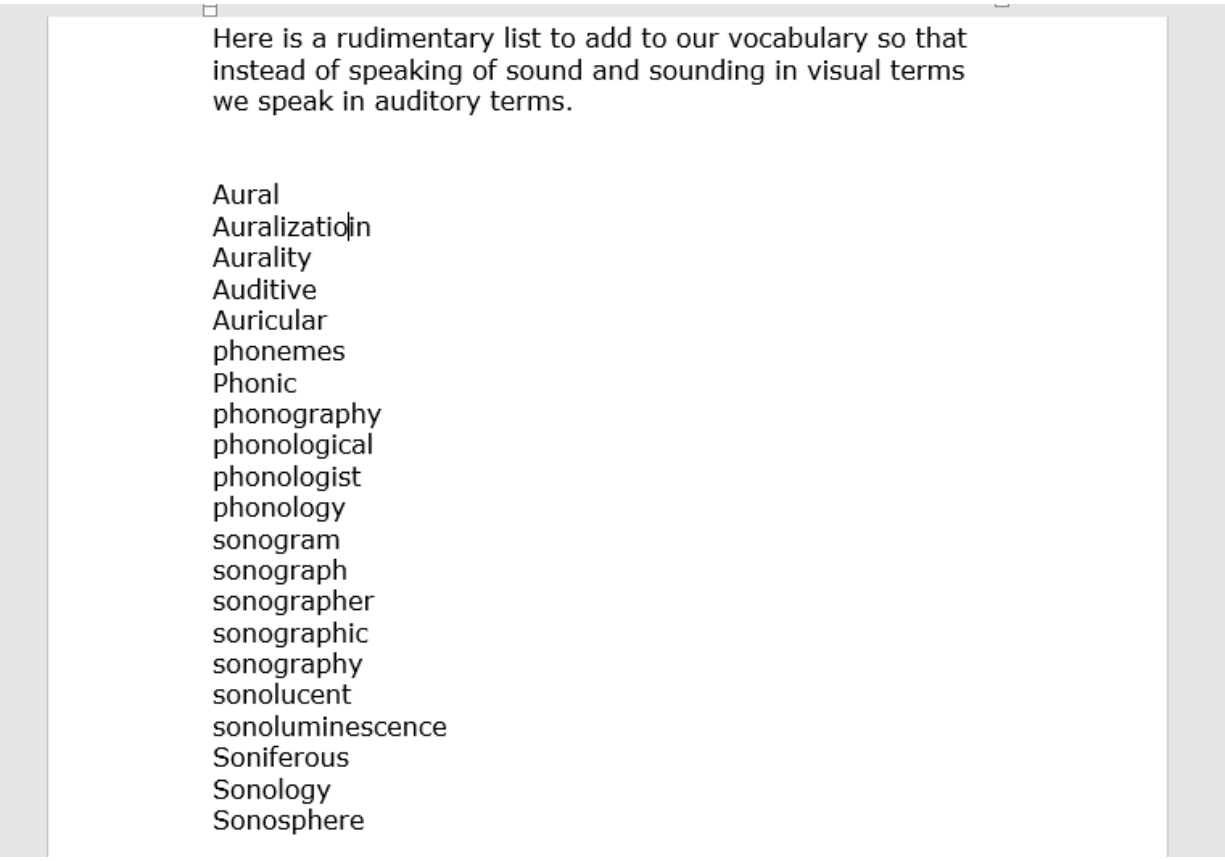
To discuss, share, and understand inner sound experiences, I need to consider strategies of communications that exist outside the limitations of language. In the next few sections, I will discuss in more detail several writers and artists who suggest different ways of approaching this lack of a sonic language, and what this means for the possibilities of communicating inner sound experiences.

2.3 Oliveros and the beginnings of a sonic vocabulary

I would like to explore further here not only the lack of a sonic language, but also the possibilities for language to change and evolve so it can speak about sounds themselves (and not just their source). For this I will return to the writing and work of Oliveros. She specifically discusses the lack of a language for speaking about sounds in her essay *Auralizing in the Sonosphere: A Vocabulary for Inner Sound and Sounding*. In it, she remarks: ‘The visual is favoured over the aural in our culture. Thus, we have fewer words in our vocabulary to express aurality’ (Oliveros, 2011, p. 162). She concludes: ‘We need more words to access the richness of auditory phenomena and to express the meaning of sound’ (Ibid., p.163).

Oliveros goes on to highlight several words that can be used to ‘speak in auditory terms’ such as ‘auricular, sonoluminescence and sonology’ (Ibid.). She identifies a range of words but does not provide any explanation as to what they mean, or how she sees them being used (Figure 1). Many of the words are difficult to understand, as they refer to scientific or technical phenomena, which are not familiar to most of us. Sonoluminescence, for example, is defined by the Oxford Dictionary (2020) as ‘luminescence excited in a substance by the passage of sound waves through it’.

In addition, the words Oliveros suggests are, for the most part, not about the actual sounds themselves, so they do not offer an adequate new language for discussing and sharing inner sounds. Oliveros points out at the end of her essay that there are more words to be ‘discovered and added’ (2011, p. 165).


Here is a rudimentary list to add to our vocabulary so that instead of speaking of sound and sounding in visual terms we speak in auditory terms.

Aural
Auralizatiolin
Aurality
Auditive
Auricular
phonemes
Phonic
phonography
phonological
phonologist
phonology
sonogram
sonograph
sonographer
sonographic
sonography
sonolucent
sonoluminescence
Soniferous
Sonology
Sonosphere

Figure 1. Screenshot of Oliveros's article referencing sonic words (Oliveros, 2011, p. 164)

Oliveros's discussion of a sonic language—in particular the idea that such a language will evolve and grow with time—is an exciting prospect. It points toward the possibility of creating and defining my own terms for a discourse on inner sounds.

2.4 The 'un-heard'

Artist, writer, and curator Salomé Voegelin is interested in 'listening as a socio-political practice' (Voegelin 2020). She is the author of *Listening to Noise and Silence: Towards a Philosophy of Sound Art* (2010) and *Sonic Possible Worlds—Hearing the Continuum of Sound* (2014) and is a professor in sound arts at the University of the Arts London. In her book *Sonic Possible Worlds,* Voegelin adapts and develops 'possible world theory' in relation to sound art. The book questions the way in which traditional music practices and sound art are approached and discussed within separate languages and contexts. Voegelin proposes a different contextual framework, in which both traditional musical compositions and sound artwork can be discussed and analysed, highlighting both common themes and differences. In the chapter 'Listening to the Inaudible—The Sound of Unicorns', Voegelin discusses 'the absent, the un-sound, and the as yet un-heard, the imagined and the ignored' (Voegelin, 2014, p. 157). The chapter explores what is not heard, how and if it can be discussed, and what that discussion means for our understanding and experience of sound. Voegelin makes it clear that there is always an 'un-heard' within the 'heard' (Voegelin, 2014, p. 158):

> This chapter tries to conjure up the unheard and the un-sound, the inaudible, not to solve their mystery but to add them to the repertoire of listening, and articulation. It explores how the inaudible changes what we see and hear, and how we inhabit an audio-visual world knowing that there are other slices,

> variants of the same world, that coexist but are seemingly inaccessible, because for various reasons we are not equipped or willing to reach and experience them. (Ibid.,)

In exploring the idea of the 'un-heard,' Voegelin sets listening free from the confines of the 'real', suggesting other ways of listening and sounds yet to be discovered. Voegelin's discussion of the 'un-heard' brings it to my attention, makes it a possibility to listen for. It suggests that once one starts listening for inner sounds, one will be able to hear them. Voegelin asks the question of how, and if, language can be used to communicate the un-heard. How can language capture something, that 'does not offer...a form, an entity, and does not work as a source, but is the commingling of all there is building a world not with objects and subjects against and on top of each other, but as the honeyed fabric of a timespace place?' (Ibid., p. 163). To discuss the unheard, and inner sounds, I need a language that does something other than name a 'thing'. I need a language that can 'name, dename and rename' (Ibid., p. 167) both the heard and the unheard. Instead of attempting to use language to pin down and restrict sounds, I need a language that 'accepts failures and misunderstandings as its most likely outcome' (Ibid., p. 162). Sounds, as Francois J. Bonnet argues in *The Order of Sounds*, 'have an impossible, unattainable nature' (Bonnet, 2016, p 324). With her definition of what language lacks to express sounds, and what a language of sounds needs to be, Voegelin opens both language and sounds themselves, attempting to free them from their constrictions. Her discussion of the 'un-heard' highlights how both in sound and within language, there are always endless new possibilities and shifts forward, into the previously unknown or un-heard. According to Voegelin, it is not just a matter of creating new words for a sonic language, as language itself is incapable of expressing the complexities of sounds. She also makes clear the existence and importance of knowledge outside of language.

How do we get to and express that knowledge if it exists outside of language? I will discuss several artists whose practice explores this. First, I will consider Rothko and his ideas of colour as a mode of communication, which suggests a possibility of sharing knowledge existing outside of language.

2.5 Mark Rothko and thinking through colour

Painter Mark Rothko was part of the abstract impressionist movement in American art in the 1940s and onwards. His style evolved from figurative painting, via surrealist experimentation, to his mature style of abstract expressionism, using only colours and block shapes. Rothko did not consider his mature style of painting to be dealing with any less complex human conditions or questions than his figurative work. He commented that he used 'colour as his primary vehicle because line would detract from the clarity of what I have to say' (Clearwater, 2006, p. 111).

Rothko spoke of the progression and development of painting as a process toward clarity and as attempting to remove obstacles of communication and connection between the painter and the observer:

> The progression of a painter's work, as it travels in time from point to point, will be toward clarity: toward the elimination of all obstacles between the painter and the idea, and between the painter and the observer (Rothko, 2004, p. 65).

For Rothko, painting and colour was a way of expressing and exploring complex ideas and concepts, such as 'tragedy, ecstasy, doom and so on' (Ibid., p. 119). He communicates these experiences to the viewer through colour and shape, sidestepping language in favour of what was for him a more direct connection. In his paintings Rothko did not use colour simply to suggest a mood or an atmosphere. Instead, colour and shape were used to express, communicate, and think about the same complex ideas as his earlier paintings dealt with—only, in Rothko's view, removing the obstacles and communicating more directly with the audience.

Rothko's ideas about colour as a way to communicate do not solve the problem of a non-existing sonic vocabulary. Creating a new language of colour for the communication and discussion of inner sound is not the solution to the issues of language I am facing. What Rothko's ideas and works do suggest, however, is the idea that not all communication is language-based. I might always need to return to language in the end, but Rothko's attitude to colour suggests other forms of communication is possible and perhaps even common. This is much like Sartre's discussion of the image-schema, which I believe could easily be developed into a 'sound-schema', something I will discuss further in Chapter 5. The idea that colour can be used for communication could easily be extended to the rest of our senses—touch, smell, and, most importantly for this research, sound—all of which could also be used to communicate that which may be outside of language. Next, I will discuss the work of Hiller, an artist whose work also explore concepts and ideas that exists outside language.

2.6 Susan Hiller

Susan Hiller (1940–2019) was an US-born artist, who lived and worked in London, UK. Through her practice, she often explored areas of human experience that have been forgotten or are regarded as being on the periphery of society, mostly ignored by science, such as dreams or hallucinations. Some of her works use pseudo-scientific methods of data-gathering and presentation, such as *Witness* (2000), where stories of alien abductions are collected, recorded, and presented to the public as a sound installation. The work presents many recordings, in various languages, but offers no (scientific) explanation. In fact, attempts to explain the recordings often show the scientific arguments as lacking, rather than effectively explaining the work. In other pieces, such as *Belshazzar's Feast* (1984) or *Magic Lantern* (1987), Hiller focuses on creating an experience or triggering a reaction in the audience. The hypnotic fire and the images we see in the flames shown on a TV in *Belshazzar's Feast* simply do not exist when the audience is not there. Similarly, the colours projected on the wall in *Magic Lantern* and the colour afterimages it creates, simply are not there without the human eye watching and reacting. Hiller's work, in exploring subjects, experiences and ideas that lie outside the 'accepted' boundaries of knowledge suggest different methods of creating knowledge outside of scientific contexts—and often outside of language.

Scientific and academic languages act as a framework, a defining structure, something that tells us what an accepted experience is and what it is not. It creates an authoritative voice, and what cannot be explained or explored within the framework defined by scientific language is simply deemed as not important, or not 'real'. In a 2013 interview with Morgan Quaintance for the Studio Visit radio programme, Hiller speaks of her work as 'bringing it into language' (Quaintance, 2013): 'it' refers to these ideas and experiences that science cannot explain—challenging the limits of language by pointing out what it cannot express, what it cannot explore and explain. Her work questions these limits, and often points out that what lies beyond them are also valid experiences. Many of her works use language—often spoken, not written—at the edges of breaking down. Hiller's use of language questions the truth of what

is said. In *An Entertainment* (1990), Hiller explores performances of the famous puppets Punch and Judy, through film and sound. She uses both images and sounds to draw the viewers' attention to the underlying violence and menace in what is commonly thought of as entertainment for children. The soundtrack of the work is a mix of crowd sounds, snippets of conversations, the dialogue of the Punch and Judy show we are watching, and at some points, 'interpretations' or 'explanations' of what we are experiencing. The breakdown of language all around them, however, and the impossibility of explaining both the fairy tale and the dark desires and urges it awakens, as well as the impossibility of explaining our personal experience of the work, opens the objective voices and their language to doubt and disbelief. Regarding the exploration of inner sound experiences, Hiller's work suggests a space of exploration outside of language and outside of scientific certainty, pointing us to the vast area of human experiences that defies easy categorisation or explanation. Her work suggests that some things can only be explored as an actual experience. You might try to explain the 'images' appearing in flames of *Belshazzar's Feast,* but they can only really be seen, only to be brought into existence by you as a viewer experiencing them.

I will discuss Hiller's work further in Chapter 5, in the context of my performance *Aural Séance* (2018), and the possibilities of art to communicate outside of language. I now move on to Cardew, to examine how his collective music making and graphic scores are relevant for a discussion on inner sounds, language, and communication.

2.7 Cornelius Cardew and graphic scores

British experimental composer and musician Cornelius Cardew (1936–1981) was influenced, during the early stages of his career, by serialist composers such as Pierre Boulez and Karl-Heinz Stockhausen. After witnessing several concerts featuring John Cage and David Tudor, Cardew abandoned serialist compositions and began developing experimental and indeterminate scores instead. One of Cardew's most important experimental scores is *Treatise* (1963–67), a 193-page graphic score. It allows for almost complete freedom of interpretation by the performer, as Cardew did not include any instructions for how to interpret the score, which consists only of graphic symbols, lines, and shapes. In 1966, Cardew joined the AMM, a free improvisation group, and in 1968, while teaching at Morley College London, Cardew formed the Scratch Orchestra with Howard Skempton and Michael Parsons. Cardew described the Scratch Orchestra as being 'halfway between composing and improvising' (Cardew, 1972, p. 9).

He describes a process in which the players in the Scratch Orchestra were encouraged to compose 'scratch music' both through improvising and creating their own graphic scores. The Scratch Orchestra suggests a strategy for creating systems or 'languages' of communicating sounds within a group of people, using the graphic score as a starting point. The experimental nature of the group*,* which featured improvisational aspects combined with several members writing alternative, graphic scores for playing within the group, suggests ways of experimenting with language and communication. The Scratch Orchestra and Cardew's *Treatise* along with other examples of graphic notation, suggest alternative ways of sharing and communicating sound, outside of language. Cardew's graphic score was an influence on my work *Score for Silence* and on the use of images and other prompts to 'trigger' inner sounds in the viewer. The collective sharing and communicating that Cardew and the Scratch Orchestra explored has influenced my work on collective listening, which I will discuss further in Chapter 5.

I will now discuss further the use of text and graphic score by, by considering the work of Oliveros and the Fluxus event scores, and how the openness and collaborative aspects of these scores open channels of communication outside of language.

2.8 Text and event scores

Many of Oliveros's scores use text instead of images or graphics. She describes the origin of her scores—or, as she sometimes refers to them, 'training exercises' (Oliveros, 2005, p. 1)—in her essay 'On Sonic Meditation' (1973) in the book *Software for People* (1984). The text score came out of her work with the ♀ Ensemble in 1970 (Oliveros, 2015, p. 148). She describes how the text scores were a natural development of the work in the group, which changed from a 'production of sound in a goal-oriented way' (ibid.,) to a practice where they instead 'allowed changes to occur involuntary, or without conscious effort' (ibid.,). This called for a different way of working, and lead to Oliveros's first 'instruction', or text score—*Teach Yourself to Fly—Sonic Meditation* (Ibid., p. 149). Like Cardew's graphic scores, these text scores/instructions had their origin in a collective, collaborative process. In this sense, they share several properties with the Fluxus artist groups 'event scores'—their fluidity, their openness to anyone to perform them, and, in some instances, their collaborative aspect.

Fluxus was a loosely organised group of artists including George Brecht, George Maciunas, Yoko Ono, Nam Yum Paik, and La Monte Young, among many others (Godfrey, 1998, p. 102). The group was formed in the early 1960s, and the closest thing to a definition of what Fluxus was, is George Maciunas's *Fluxus Manifesto* from 1963. In it, he states that, among many other things, Fluxus intended to 'PURGE the world of dead art' and that Fluxus should become 'a way of life, not a profession' (Phillpot, 2021). The artists involved kept the definition of Fluxus art intentionally vague, and the group itself was very fluid—many artists would come and go. There was a certain focus on performance and live art—one example being the infamous 'happenings' of the 1960s—from both composers like La Monte Young, and more conceptual artists like Yoko Ono or Alison Knowles.

In her essay *Origins of the Fluxus Score* (2002), Ana Dezeuze discusses the origins and development of the Fluxus 'event scores', taking as her starting point the publication of *An Anthology* (1963), assembled by composer La Monte Young in 1960 and published in 1963. Dezeuze notes how the interplay between new forms of notation and music and other fields such as poetry and performance (Dezeuze, 2002, p. 80) were crucial in developing the ideas and form of the Fluxus scores. Composers such as Earle Brown, Morton Feldman, and Christian Wolff (Ibid., p. 83) wanted to create works that introduced a certain element of chance, not just in the composing process but also in the performance of the work. Brown in particular wanted to use new forms of notation to encourage improvisation among the (often classically trained) musicians (Ibid., p. 84). He pointed out that 'performer choice could only occur when information was withdrawn from the score' (Ibid., p. 87). These ideas are explored in George Brecht's performance score *Two Vehicle Events* (Brecht, 1961), which consists of two dots, and two words: 'stop' and 'start' (Dezeuze, 2002, p. 78). The same concepts shape Alison Knowles famous performance score, which simply states, 'Make a salad' (Knowles, 1962).

The Fluxus event scores quickly developed to investigate the nature of performance as well—becoming as much about the process of the interpretation of the score and the various possible iterations of the performance (or in some cases the impossibility of the performance!) (Dezeuze, 2002, p. 86). Yoko Ono, who published several 'event scores' in her book *Grapefruit* (1964) certainly pushes the boundaries of the possible in her scores. In

Tape Piece I (1964), her instruction is to 'Take the sound of the stone aging''. (Ono, 1964, p. 7). In *Tape Piece II; Snow Piece* (Ono, 1964, p. 8), she asks:

> Take a tape of the sound of the
> snow
> falling.
> This should be done in the
> evening.
> Do not listen to the tape.
> Cut it and use it as strings to tie
> gifts with.
> Make a gift wrapper, if you wish,
> using
> the same process with a
> phonosheet.
> (Ibid.,)

Ono not only makes both scores open-ended and open to interpretation, but also plays with what is possible. To tape the sound of a stone aging or the snow falling might be possible in theory, but in practice it would be a struggle. Despite this, Ono's scores are very simple, they can be (and are intended to be) performed by anyone, anywhere.

Oliveros's text scores and meditations and Fluxus's event scores are as much about what is being communicated within the scores as what is left out. Similar to the work of Cardew and Hiller, they somehow manage to hint at what is *not* possible to speak about or communicate easily, as well as what is. This suggests interesting possibilities of using scores, instructions, and audience participation to communicate experiences of inner sounds, which are hard to convey through language. The scores and instructions of Oliveros and Ono, as well as Cardew, manage this 'impossible' communication through a certain openness and fluidity. This can, at least in some ways, be traced back to the purpose of the score or instruction—to communicate an action or performance for someone else to enact. I will go on to discuss this aspect—the score as a fluid, open form of communication or meeting between the artist and their audience—with the aim of considering how this could be used or theorised in the context of my research on inner sound.

2.9 Scores as fluid communications

In her thesis 'Scorescapes: On Sound, Environment and Sonic Consciousness' (2011) artist Yolande Harris discusses the possibility of musical scores:

> Rather than conveying precise instructions, I think of notation more in terms of facilitating and articulating relationship, actively negotiating the gaps between time and space, the visual and the sonic, one person to another (Harris 2011, p. 21).

She describes her scores as something that is 'fluid, system-like, interactive, interpretative, transductive and communicative,' (Ibid.)

The work of all the artists in this chapter using various forms of instructions or scores—Cardew, Oliveros, and Fluxus artists Ono and Knowles—all shares this 'fluid, system-like' (Ibid.) quality. I also understand Cardew's graphic scores as a sort of exercise in

collaboration and communication. Though *Treatise* lacks any sort of instructions for how it is to be performed or interpreted, Cardew made clear that it was not meant to be just an inspiration for improvisation: 'The score must govern the music. It must have authority, and not merely be an arbitrary jumping-off point for improvisation' (Rebelo, 2015, p. 2). Similarly, Oliveros's sonic meditations, as well as Ono's and Knowles's scores, require an ongoing interpretation and communication between performer and composer/artist. This aspect of their work suggests to me that scores and instructions are an interesting and useful way of approaching an alternative way of communicating inner sounds. This openness and agency from both performer/audience and artist/composer has the potential, I believe, to 'bridge the gap' (Harris, 2011, p. 21) created by the difficulties of communicating or describing inner sounds through language.

In *On Sonic Meditation*, Oliveros notes: 'Sonic meditations were intended for musicians of all levels; however, an important aspect of this work...is that non-musicians may participate as well, and often much better, than musicians who's training sometimes interfere' (Oliveros, 2015, p. 157). Oliveros's sonic meditations can be performed anywhere (although she suggests the setting of a Deep Listening group) (Ibid.) and, perhaps more importantly, by anyone—one does not need any pre-existing knowledge of music or notation. Equally, Cardew's work with graphic scores, as well as with AMM and the Scratch Orchestra, was a conscious effort to make music-making accessible to anyone—regardless of whether the performer had musical training. This is much like Ono's and Knowles's Fluxus scores, which can also be performed by anyone, anywhere, without any need to be a 'trained performer' or artist.

Ono's event scores, in *Grapefruit* and elsewhere, often demand the impossible:

> TUNAFISH SANDWICH PIECE
>
> Imagine one thousand suns in the
> sky at the same time.
> Let them shine for one hour.
> Then, let them gradually melt
> in to the sky.
> Make one tunafish sandwich and eat.
>
> 1964 spring
> (Ono, 1964, p 12)

In his essay in the *Fluxus Reader*, David T. Doris argues that Ono is trying to establish 'a space of unthinkable thought' (1998, p. 113). Oliveros also asks for what can seem impossible. For example, in *Ear Piece*, she asks, 'What will you hear in the near future?' (Oliveros, 2015, p. 34). These works all explore the imagined, the impossible, the unreal—the 'unthinkable thought'. The works manage to suggest something that is not communicable. I have already discussed the impossibility of language to describe sounds in a nuanced and relevant way to a discourse on inner sound in particular. This ability—to be able to communicate that which is perceived as not communicable, in a way accessible to as wide an audience as possible—is, I believe, an important way forward for both the practice and theory of this research.

All the artists I have discussed here—Cardew, Oliveros, and Ono—share the 'fluid, system-like' quality identified by Harris (2011, p. 21). The scores and works rely on a communal, co-operative element between the artist, any potential performers, and the audience. This fluidity

and openness allows the works to suggest that which is impossible, that which might exist outside of language, that which has no language (the sound of snow falling [Ono], the sound of the future [Oliveros], the communal effort of music making [Cardew]). Importantly, all the works are accessible, as they do not pre-suppose any knowledge of music or performance to be staged. In considering ways of communicating inner sound experiences outside of language, this is an important point, as a more 'specialised' communication might be inaccessible to many people.

The combination of accessibility and the fluidity that allows for communication outside of language is an important starting point for my own practical work. My performance works *Sonic Confessions*, *Aural Séance*, and *Sonic Contagion*, as well as works that use instructions or scores, such as *Sounds of Longing and Fear* and the use of images as a trigger for inner sounds, are all influenced by the idea of an exchange, a collective experience outside of language. These strategies can be traced back to the idea of the 'fluid' communication suggested by the works I have discussed here. The analysis of these works is central to this thesis and will be discussed further in Chapters 4, 5, and 6.

I will now turn to sound artist Christine Sun Kim's work *(LISTEN)* (2016), which suggest another, different approach to the communication of sounds.

2.10 Closed captioning, sound descriptions, and subjective listening

Musician and artist Max Neuhaus devised a sound work he called *LISTEN* in 1966. He would meet his audiences outside a concert hall, stamp LISTEN on their hands, and lead them on a listening walk in the local neighbourhood, which often ended in a percussive performance. (Cox, 2019, p. 53). Fifty years after the first staging of the piece, sound artist Christine Sun Kim readapted Neuhaus's work, naming her adaptation of it *(LISTEN)*. In it, Kim stamps LISTEN onto her audience's hands, and takes them on a listening walk around her local area, similar to the original work (Avant.org, 2016). Along the way, she stops at several sites, and explains to the audience why these sites are important to her. On an iPad, she then shows a description, or a prompt, for a sound specific to both the location and her experience of that location. With her prompts, she draws attention to the fact that sounds can be experienced in different, subjective ways. One example is vibration, demonstrated in her description of an exhibition at the Audio-Visual Art Gallery:

> She could not hear its audio component, but she pressed her hands against the room's yellow walls and through the strong vibrations, experienced the throbbing waves. (Voon, 2016)

Sun Kim also explores the emotional qualities of sound, with prompts such as 'the sound of uncertainty' (Ibid.) The audience is 'encouraged to consider their own listening in relation to Kim's memories' (Avant.org., 2016).

In her work *Caption America* (2019), Sun Kim explores how we describe sound in a different way. She uses phrases of closed captions—the captions used on movies, videos, and television—she has collected. In the performance of the work, she juxtaposes these captions with objects and images, creating new visual/sonic narratives. Sun Kim talks about the inadequacy of the sound descriptions in many closed captions. Sometimes, she remarks, there is just a note or a single word (violin music) to signify music—but she asks, what kind of music? What does it mean, how does it make you feel? (Sun Kim, 2020)

In all these works, Sun Kim speaks about not only the impossibility of adequately describing and talking about sound, but also the necessity for us to try. Her work highlights how sound and experiences of sound are often highly subjective and emotional. It is almost impossible for me to understand what your experience of the 'sound of uncertainty' is. In a way, the slightly forensic and uninformative 'violin music' tells me more. In my acceptance of the subjectivity of our sound and listening experiences, and the acceptance of the failures of language, however, perhaps there is still a place of communication and meeting. Even though I accept the impossibility of communicating appropriately and clearly about sound, I still *try*, and in this trying, this reaching out—like the audience in *(LISTEN)* trying to connect with someone else's sound experiences—and a space of communication, however flawed, might become possible.

Considering her work in connection to my own project, the idea of a communication about inner sounds that is flawed or impossible is an important factor in my piece entitled *pages* and in my performance work *Aural Séance*. This 'failure' of communication is also important for the research project as a whole. Accepting the impossibility of communicating inner sound experiences, yet still attempting a flawed, imperfect communication to be able to understand what that failure can tell me about inner sounds, drives a great deal of both the practice and theoretical discussion in this thesis. Regarding a language for inner sound experiences, I might need to accept the impossibility of language to adequately express inner sound experiences. Perhaps communication about inner sounds needs to bypass language altogether. Or perhaps a way forward would be to accept this impossibility, but somehow try anyway, and hope that in the mutual reaching out, a certain exchange and connection happens.

2.11 Strategies for exploring experiences outside language

In this chapter, I have discussed the lack of a specific sonic vocabulary, and the difficulty of sharing and discussing inner sound experiences. I understand that Rothko's belief that colour is a better way to communicate than language reminds us that other ways of communication are possible, sometimes even preferable. The difficulty of speaking about inner sounds, and inner listening experiences, suggests that there is a need to consider other ways of communicating.

Hiller's work has shown me that there are areas and ideas that are not easily covered by language. Her work is not an instruction or a score, but still asks for a certain level of participation from the audience. In her piece *Witness*, audience members cannot just look at the work. To experience it, they must pick up one or more of the small speakers and listen to the stories about alien abduction. The work provides no explanation for these experiences. These two artists suggest the importance of non-language-based modes of communication for inner sound experiences.

The difficulty of speaking about inner sounds, and inner listening, forces me to consider alternative strategies of communication. This difficulty, far from suggesting that inner sound and listening is unimportant, instead suggests that inner sound experiences are an example of the kind of knowledge Hiller explores in her work—knowledge that often falls outside of language and 'reason'.

Strategies of non-language-based communication, drawing on ideas explored by Rothko and Hiller among others, will play an important role in the practice-based part of my research, which I will analyse further in Chapters 4, 5, and 6.

Furthermore, Cardew's *Treatise*, as I have discussed, was composed in the context of collective music-making in the Scratch Orchestra and AMM (even though it was not made directly for either group). The fact that it was not composed as just an inspiration for improvisation and yet that there are almost no instructions for how it is to be interpreted, creates an ongoing, evolving communication between the composer/score and the performers. *Treatise* is therefore not only about what is actually communicated within the score, nor is it just about the finished performance. It is also about the communal experience of creating sound or music together. In this sense, Cardew manages to explore experiences that language often struggles to communicate. He sets up the conditions for this exchange or communication to happen through *Treatise*. In Chapter 5, I will explore the communal, shared experience similar to the one described here in my performance work *Aural Séance*.

And finally, in her score *Snow Piece* (1962), Ono asks that the performer 'Take a tape of the sound of the snow falling' (Ono, 1964, p. 8). There is nothing strange or unreal about snow falling, and of course there might be a sound made by the falling snow. But is this a sound a human can hear? It is certainly a sound that would be hard to record without specialised equipment, even if it exists. Despite this, in framing her score as an instruction to the performer/audience, Ono manages to open a space where I imagine the possibility of the sound of falling snow. She does this partly by the mere suggestion that the sound of falling snow exists—just by mentioning it. The way her scores get us thinking about the possibility of the sound of falling snow is through their instructional quality—just as Cardew's score becomes a communal exercise, encompassing the composer, performers, and the audience, Ono's scores, formulated as instruction, depend on my co-operation in enacting her score (if only as a thought experiment). Within this fluidity and open-ended communication, Ono manages to explore an impossible or imaginary sound. Similarly, when Oliveros asks us to listen to what we will hear in 'the near future' (Oliveros, 2015, p. 34), she manages not only to introduce the idea of a future sound, but also to get me to actually *listen* for it—if only in my imagination. Ono's and Oliveros's scores suggest ways of both using and by-passing language to explore inner, imaginary, and impossible sounds. I am interested in exploring not just inner sounds that can be traced back to an 'outer' source—but also imagined inner sounds and inner sounds with a less obvious connection to the outside world. Ono's and Oliveros's work indicate to me that these inner sounds exist. They also propose ways of not only suggesting them to others, but also, potentially, to share inner sound experiences by listening inwards, together, to a specific (imaginary) sound. This idea of a shared inner listening experience is an important aspect of my performance work *Aural Séance*, which I discuss in more detail in Chapter 5 of this thesis.

Sun Kim's work speaks to the impossibility of communicating sound and of listening experiences. But it also makes the case for a continued effort to try, nevertheless. Her work suggests that sound and listening are both deeply subjective and emotional, and accepting that idea opens a space for us to reach out and perhaps meet each other in a somewhat flawed communication about sound—inner or outer. Both my practical work and, to a certain extent this study as a whole, draw on accepting and analysing this failure in communication about inner sound. I would even suggest that many of the interesting and important aspects of inner sound explored in this thesis come from attempting to understand what this failure of communication tells me about inner sound experiences and our relationship to inner sound.

All of these artists and the work discussed here depend to a certain extent on the 'fluidity' identified by Harris—an open-ended, process-driven, accessible, almost collaborative attitude toward the audience who is experiencing the work. This particular strategy opens communication outside of language. I am using this 'fluidity' both in my practice and

throughout this thesis to explore several aspects of inner sound experiences. It acts as a starting point for thinking of ways of communicating inner sounds outside the confines of language. I would propose that many of the properties of inner sound experiences that are hard to capture within conventional language are what makes inner sound and listening important and relevant to explore. Situating inner listening within this 'fluid' context allows me to explore those aspects and our relationship to them, through both my practical work and this thesis.

2.12 Conclusion

In this chapter I discussed the difficulty of speaking about both sound and inner sound, as the English language currently lacks a nuanced sonic vocabulary. I first considered Oliveros's thoughts on the creation of a sonic language, and Voegelin's ideas about the idea of the 'un-heard' as well as what a sonic language should be, to adequately express the complexities and nuances of sound and listening.

I then discussed the work of six individual artists, all of whom suggested strategies or starting points for communication beyond or outside language. Rothko's belief in colour as a superior medium for communication highlighted how not all connections need language. Hiller's work presents complex and often overlooked experiences and phenomena to the audience, without feeling the need for lengthy explanations and justifications, exploring how some things need to be addressed outside language. Her work also shows that this knowledge, which may not be contained within writing, scientific discourse, or language, is still important and valid.

Cardew's graphic score *Treatise* shows how a collective approach to music making can forge possible connections and communication outside of conventional language.

Oliveros's and Ono's work with text scores explores an open-ended, process-based approach to work where the audience members are trusted to perform their part of the score. In this way, both of the artists manage to communicate what lies beyond the words used in their text scores and instructions.

Finally, Sun Kim's work shows both the impossibility of speaking about sounds, and the necessity of communicating them. In her acceptance of the highly subjective and often emotional personal experiences of sound and listening, and the attempt to communicate despite this, a space exists for the building of a connection and a flawed language of sound. The fluid, system-like quality discussed by Harris is to some extent present in all these works, and is something that I draw on in my practice.

There is still a need, however, to be able to discuss inner sounds and inner sound experiences using language (however flawed it may be), both to gain a greater understanding of inner sounds, and to be able to properly discuss and analyse my practice. Voegelin and Oliveros both explore the possibility of developing a sonic vocabulary. It might be too large and lengthy an undertaking for this thesis, but what would be possible is to make a start, by developing my definition of inner sound further, with the aim of creating a taxonomy of inner sound.

In the next chapter, I will draw on the texts and artists I have discussed in Chapters 1 and 2, as well as my own practice, to expand my definition of inner sounds into a taxonomy of inner

sounds. While this is not a new language, or a new vocabulary, it will allow me a more nuanced discussion and understanding of different kinds of inner sound experiences.

I will also draw on these strategies of communicating outside of language for my practice-based research, especially in *Sonic Confessions, Aural Séance,* and *Sonic Contagion*, which I will discuss in more detail in Chapter 4, 5, and 6.

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3. A taxonomy of inner sounds

3.1 Introduction

In the previous chapters I framed a context for a discourse about inner sounds. I also discussed the difficulty of speaking about sounds in general, and inner sounds in particular, as our language lacks a comprehensive and nuanced sonic vocabulary. As sound and inner sound is being investigated and discussed further, the possibility of a 'sonic' language developing over time is an exciting prospect. That language is not available to me now, however, so I need to find a different approach to have a more detailed and nuanced discussion regarding inner sounds. I have defined inner sounds in my introduction as 'sounds we hear within our conscious and unconscious mind, similar to but different from, an inner voice'.

I believe that a first step toward a better understanding of inner sounds is to develop this definition further. I am using the definition as a starting point to develop and define a taxonomy of inner sounds. While it will not solve the problem of a lack of a sonic vocabulary entirely, it will create a more comprehensive understanding of inner sound experiences, and act as a starting point for the further development of a sonic language. To outline a taxonomy of inner sounds, I will use a combination of practical works and texts to sketch out four categories of inner sounds:

- **Created inner sounds**—sounds that are actively imagined or created
- **Conscious inner sounds**—inner sounds that are used as part of our thought processes
- **Triggered inner sounds**—inner sounds triggered by images, objects, events, thoughts, emotions, or other stimuli
- **Spontaneous inner sounds**—inner sounds we experience that are outside our control.

Part of defining the four categories was creating artwork to better understand inner sounds. In this chapter, I use those works and analyse them along with other artworks and texts on sound, to arrive at the four categories of the taxonomy for inner sounds. This chapter details how the taxonomy was arrived at, defines the categories, and discusses the implication of the taxonomy for my research into inner sound experiences.

A taxonomy, defined as several groupings based on similarities, will proved a starting point for a more nuanced and detailed discussion of inner sounds. Through it, I will discuss a range of inner sound experiences, how they differ, and what that tells us about inner sounds. The taxonomy also provides a foundation for possible further development of a sonic vocabulary for inner sounds.

A taxonomy of inner sounds is not without issues and difficulties, however. In developing and defining the taxonomy, I found inner sounds that fall outside my main categories. The various inner sounds within the categories also sometimes overlap and bleed into each other. To discuss where the taxonomy necessarily fails and why, I will analyse a piece I created specifically to explore the category of 'spontaneous inner sounds'. The aim is not to dismiss the importance of a taxonomy and its categories, but rather to recognise that it has limits. It may be that what falls outside the taxonomy is as interesting and important as what falls

within it. However, working through the definitions allows me to discuss this with more nuance than before.

3.2 A note on the use of my own practice

As I have mentioned previously, in outlining and defining a taxonomy of inner sound, I draw on my own practice, alongside various other texts and artworks. My practice is an important part of the research process—it allows me to explore and clarify themes and ideas. Many of these ideas and questions become clear both through creating/performing/doing the work, and in the analysis afterwards.

This process—creating, 'doing', and analysing—becomes a 'workshopping' or working through of ideas, to crystallise and identify important themes, and bring together various texts, ideas, and artists. Even though there is an element of the auto-ethnographic research methodology in the use of my own practice, that is not my main reason for it. Far more important is the use of the practice as a space or process that brings together several different ideas and concepts, which are teased out and expanded on in the analysis. I have explained, in the previous chapters, the need for this research to draw on a wide range of areas, texts and artists, many outside the sound art context. The practice helps me to bring these different references together and helps me understand and explain their relevance to the research. Thus, in the writing of this thesis the practice is used to draw out and examine these convergences and intersections of ideas.

In outlining and defining the taxonomy, as well as in subsequent chapters, I am drawing on the process of 'workshopping' that I have described here—using an analysis of my practice as a way to draw together and make sense of what is a wide-ranging field of texts, writers, and artists, and tease out relevant questions and ideas.

3.3 Created inner sound

As a sound artist, I find that many ideas for work, specifically compositions, start in my imagination. In the installation/compositional piece titled *close* (2013) (Figure 2), I composed a soundscape as a part of the work. The piece was a collaboration with poet Joe McBride, so my starting point was the idea we had discussed between us: the experience of being just on the edge of falling asleep, between being awake and dreaming, as well as the poem we were working with. For the first few days, I would try to imagine what sounds I would like to use. Would it be the sound of your head moving against the pillow? I would 'play' this sound out in my mind, trying to determine if it sounded 'right'. I would then start composing, trying to recreate the sounds I had imagined. I would play it back to myself, listen and re-imagine how it would sound better, how to develop it, in my mind. Actively imagining inner sounds is an important part of this process.

Figure 2. Installation of 'close' *at Barbican Centre, 2013*

This way of engaging with inner sound might first appear to be specialised and unusual, but I would argue that we all engage in it now and then. If I read a book and it describes the roar of a lion or the din of a busy party, I consciously try to and imagine it. If I am trying to remember my favourite song, I try to think of how it goes first. When I am thinking of my favourite beach, I might consciously try to remember the sound of the waves crashing against the shore. This process of actively imagining sounds suggests our first category of inner sound, which I am calling *'created inner sound'*. Created inner sounds are sounds we actively imagine, whether for creative purposes, like composing, or in everyday life. They are clearly within our control, and we make a very conscious effort to imagine them.

3.4 Conscious inner sounds

pages (2015) is a work that incorporates several printed works of fiction. To prepare the work, I read the books, paying particular attention to when a word, sentence, or section contained a sonic component for me. I then marked such sections of words by underlining them and stitching tracing paper to the pages of the books (Figure 3). The work was created partly out of a frustration with the difficulty of speaking about and sharing my inner sound experiences. The books act as a sketchy map of the inner sound world I experienced during the reading. I will use one example from a passage I marked out as having a sonic component from *Women in Love* (1920) by D. H. Lawrence to think through what kind of inner sounds I experienced, if they have a particular function in the reading, and use this to define the second category of the taxonomy.

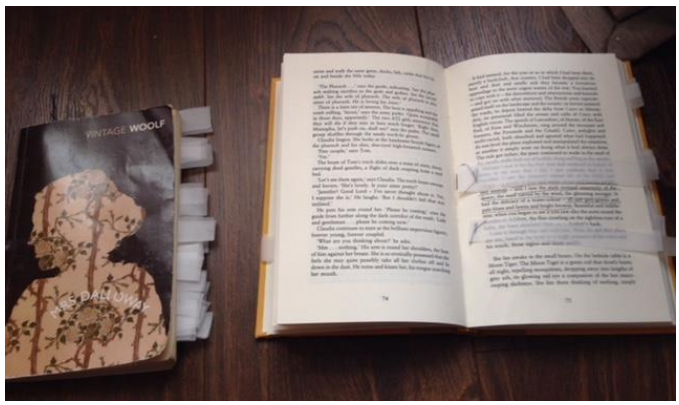
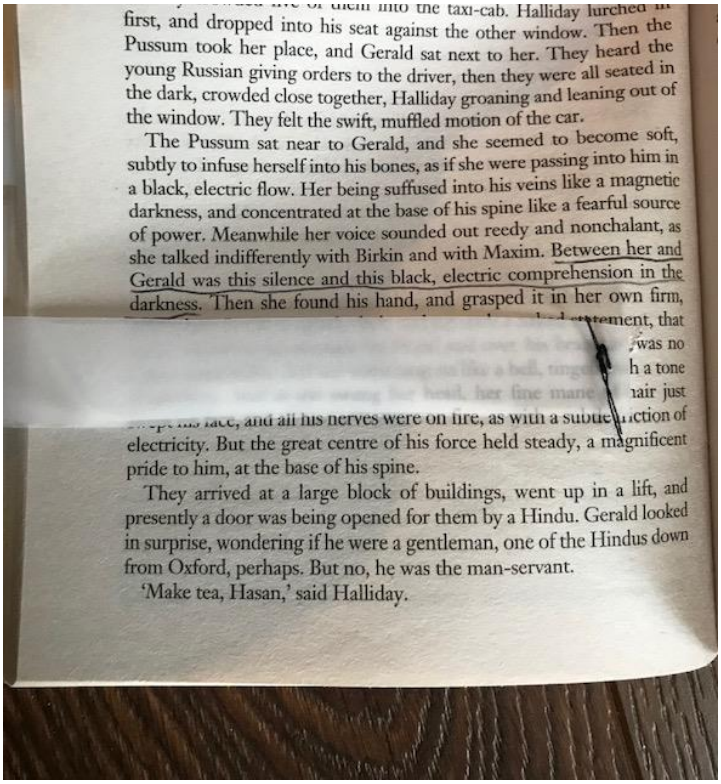


Figure 3. Book marked with tracing paper



first, and dropped into his seat against the other window. Then the Pussum took her place, and Gerald sat next to her. They heard the young Russian giving orders to the driver, then they were all seated in the dark, crowded close together, Halliday groaning and leaning out of the window. They felt the swift, muffled motion of the car.

The Pussum sat near to Gerald, and she seemed to become soft, subtly to infuse herself into his bones, as if she were passing into him in a black, electric flow. Her being suffused into his veins like a magnetic darkness, and concentrated at the base of his spine like a fearful source of power. Meanwhile her voice sounded out reedy and nonchalant, as she talked indifferently with Birkin and with Maxim. Between her and Gerald was this silence and this black, electric comprehension in the darkness. Then she found his hand, and grasped it in her own firm,

was no
h a tone
air just

electricity. But the great centre of his force held steady, a magnificent pride to him, at the base of his spine.

They arrived at a large block of buildings, went up in a lift, and presently a door was being opened for them by a Hindu. Gerald looked in surprise, wondering if he were a gentleman, one of the Hindus down from Oxford, perhaps. But no, he was the man-servant.

'Make tea, Hasan,' said Halliday.

Figure 4. Women in Love, *by D.H. Lawrence*

In D.H. Lawrence' *Women in Love*, I have highlighted the following sentence (Figure 4):

> Between her and Gerald was this silence, and this black, electric comprehension in the darkness. (Lawrence, 1992, p. 201)

It is important to note that the full sentence has been marked. What has a sonic component is not a particular word, but the whole sentence, and the inner sound I experience is part of making sense of or adding another layer of understanding to what is being expressed. It is a small quiet sound, existing all around—making understandable to me the silent, electrified darkness between the two characters in the sentence. It is hard to put into words, partly because it is so hard to extract the purely sonic element of the thought. To my project, this provides an interesting observation that it is not individual words but the whole sentence that, for me, contains sonic elements. It suggests there is complex relationship between inner sounds, language, and consciousness. I argue that the sounds we experience as part of our thoughts are not just 'sound effects' to illustrate words (such as, for example, the sound of the

phone ringing). Instead, I am proposing that these sounds are far more complex and have a more important function—that they have a central role in our thinking and understanding.

In Chapter 1, I briefly discussed how French philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre explored ideas of the imagination and the imaginary in his book *The Imaginary*. I am returning to his ideas here to explore how they help me outline and define the idea of *'conscious inner sounds'*. In the chapter *The Role of the Image in Psychic Life* (2010, p. 93), Sartre discusses images and their role in our thoughts and inner life. While he is speaking of images, and not sounds, it is still a relevant and interesting exploration of aspects of our inner life, imaginations, and thoughts, that are not purely based in language. Sartre draws on research done by German scientist Auguste Flach on the concept of 'image-schema'—images that we use in, or as part of, our thought process. Sartre is clear on the fact that an 'image-schema' is not simply a superficial visual memory, or an image associated with a thought or idea. Image-schemas are part of the way we think. As I mentioned in Chapter 1, he clearly distinguishes them from what he calls 'illustrations of thought' (Sartre, 2010, p. 98)—which are the aforementioned superficial images that carry a less complex meaning. 'The image plays neither the role of illustration nor that of support for thought....An imaging consciousness includes knowledge, intentions, and can include words and judgements' (Ibid., p. 93*).* It is clear here that the image-schema Sartre is speaking of is part of the thought. They are used, much like language and inner voice, to conceptualise ideas, solve problems, and to make sense of the world. Sartre, using the experiments done by Flach, uses two examples to demonstrate the difference between image-schema and 'illustrations of thought' (Ibid., p. 98):

> Experiment 53: The subject asked to give a short essential characterization of Zola has a representation of a horse race. The experimenter asks if the subject knows what relation this representation has with the characterization asked for, and the subject replies that he read one day a detailed description of a race in Nana and that, since then, the image regularly emerges at the name of Zola. (Ibid., p. 99)

The subject here is quite clear that the image he is thinking about (rather than with or through) is a visual association with the name Zola and nothing else. The image does not help him conceptualise or provide an understanding he did not have beforehand. It is an illustration of thought.

The second example Sartre gives us is of an image-schema:

> 27. Proletariat: I had a strange image, a flat and black area, and, below it, a sea vaguely rolling, an indeterminate wave, something like a dark and thick rolling of heavy waves. What did the mass signify? Extension in the entire world: something like a latent dynamism (Ibid., p. 100)

This is different—in this example, the image has a deeper and more complex purpose. It is used to think through and make sense of a concept. Neither Sartre or Flach mentions this, but one can almost sense a hesitation and difficulty for the person in the example, having to try to describe the image and what it means in words—the image is the thought, it is the concept, and it is in no way secondary to, or in addition to, language. The person uses an image-schema because this is the best way for them to make sense of and think through the concept of 'proletariat'. In *The Role of the Image in Psychic Life* (Ibid., p. 93), Sartre suggests two distinct ways the visual is used in our thoughts and inner life. The first is an associative, illustrative image—I think of a car, and I visualise a car. The second is a more complex way

of using images in thinking, reasoning, and understanding. Sartre demonstrates, if nothing else, that language and inner voice is not the only way one thinks.

In the above example from *Women in Love*, the inner sound I experience during the reading of the book is part of my thought process, part of my making sense of what I am reading. The inner sounds work in a similar way to Sartre's and Flach's image-schema. This kind of inner sound suggests the second category in the taxonomy of inner sounds—inner sounds we experience as part of our thought process, I am calling this second category *'conscious inner sounds'*. Unlike created inner sounds, they are not imagined with the specific purpose of composing or thinking of sounds specifically. Instead, while they are not unconscious—they are as much within my control as all my other thought processes—they are not actively imagined. Like our other thought processes, they are used consciously in daily life. I will discuss conscious inner sounds in more detail in Chapter 4.

3.5 Triggered inner sounds

Scores for Silence (2011) is a score for inner sounds, realised both as an exhibition and as a published book. The work has evolved into a loose strategy for both communicating inner sounds and 'explaining' inner sound experiences in talks and presentations. The piece uses a focus point or a trigger—often an image or a photograph, although it could be anything, such as objects, words, or colours—and asks that the viewer/audience look at the image and think of/ or listen to an inner sound the image suggests. (Figure 5)

Figure 5. Example of a photographic trigger for inner sounds

The images are used as a visual score for inner sounds, to trigger inner sounds in the viewers. The sounds triggered by the images can be as straightforward as the sound of a spoon against china, or perhaps a little more complex, like the general sound of a café. It is not uncommon, however, that the sounds triggered by the images are more personal and might, on the surface, not seem connected to the images at all. It could be the sound of an argument, or a sound that is harder to describe—scratching sounds, something sounding 'a bit like a heartbeat'. Triggered inner sounds might be thought of as straightforward sonic associations—see a car, and you hear the sound of a car; see a teacup, and you hear the sound of clinking china—but this piece reveals that they are often much more complex than that.

Discussing my work in *pages,* and how the photographs can be used as triggers for inner sounds brings me back to *Listening and Voice*. There Don Ihde observes the following while studying a photograph:

> I look at the postcard that arrived recently from Japan....I detect the adherence of a certain auditory presence to the picture. I 'hear' the rain and 'listen' to the peasants running and to the rustling of the mats. The muteness of the picture sounds in its relative silence. (Ihde, 2007, p. 111)

The image, for Ihde, works as a focus point of inner sounds. The image itself is silent—however, Ihde senses a 'certain auditory presence*'* in the image. He describes the picture itself as 'mute'—yet the sounds he describes somehow originate within the picture (the rain, the peasants running). The sounds Ihde refers to are not 'outer' sounds—they do not originate in the outside world in which he currently finds himself. To me, therefore, they are what I term 'inner sounds'—those experienced in his mind. Much like the sounds experienced in the first instance in *Scores for Silence*, the sounds Ihde is experiencing seem to be connected to the image he is looking at. He references the visual of the image as a way to identify the sounds he 'hears' within (peasants, rain). This example of an inner sound experience closely connected to a postcard, and the experiences of my work *Scores for Silence,* suggests to me that images could be potential triggers of inner or imaginary sound experiences.

I will also return to David Toop's *Sinister Resonance*, which is discussed briefly in Chapter 1. In *Sinister Resonance*, Toop explores the paintings of Dutch painter Nicolaes Mae. Mae's paintings of interiors often have a theme of eavesdropping and 'silent' sounds, which Toop explores in depth.

Let us remind ourselves of the quote again and examine it again from the perspective of 'triggered inner sounds'. Toop describes *Lovers with a Woman Listening* (1656*)*:

> One of the lovers is a maid; her abandoned broom is propped against the door frame. The man is leaning into her. Pawning her breasts. She slumps into him, heavy and tired, somewhat reluctant. A baby basket is by her feet on the floor, and the maid holds a string in her left hand, presumably to rock the cradle. As for the woman who listens, she has left her work at a book that lies open, probably the household accounts, to eavesdrop. Duties have been neglected by all parties....Keys hang from the listener's dress; perhaps they clink faintly. ....The stairs will creak once her foot descends. Through the open door we hear the rocking of the cradle, though if the sound stopped in the preceding moments, then its silence will have alerted the listener to mischief. (Toop, 2011, p. 76–77)

Toop uses Mae's painting to listen for inner sounds. The painting acts as a sort of doorway or starting point for inner sound. Unlike Ihde, Toop consciously listens for the 'auditory presence' (Ihde, 2007, p. 111) of the paintings. Like Ihde, as well as the images in *Scores for silence*, Toop allows the paintings to work as a starting point, a gateway, into inner listening. In his more careful and sustained listening, Toops' exploration of the paintings are more layered and detailed than Ihde's fleeting experience. Just as in *Scores for Silence,* even if the sounds start as merely a sonic representation of the image (a spoon against china, or the keys, which 'clink faintly') over time, the sounds start to become more varied and, in some cases, more loosely connected to the visual (the sound of an argument, for example). All these inner sounds use something external as a focal point, or trigger for inner sounds. A postcard for Ihde, photographs and text in *Scores for Silence,* and paintings for Toop.

Together, they suggest a category of inner sounds that are triggered by or influenced by other objects, images, or outside stimuli. I am calling this category '*triggered inner sound'*—inner sounds triggered by images, objects, and other stimuli.

This category of inner sounds introduces a degree of the uncontrolled into the inner sound experience. In Ihdes example with the postcard the inner sounds seem to be out of Ihde's control. He does not set out to use the image to help him imagine sounds—rather, his reference to a 'certain auditory presence' suggests that the sounds show up in his mind unbidden. The experience does not seem troubling to Ihde, and of course he could just walk away from the picture if he wanted to.

Toop, in contrast to Ihde, searches out and listens to the sounds the painting triggers. There is still a certain degree of the uncontrolled to the experience he describes. It is not that he sets out to actively imagine the sound of keys, but more that his close attention to/listening toward the painting reveals the sound of clinking keys.

Compared to both created and conscious inner sounds, triggered inner sounds have a much greater potential for being entirely unwanted. Something might trigger a sound that I find unpleasant and even disturbing. I will never be entirely sure what will trigger an inner sound, so I might find myself experiencing one without warning—pleasant or unpleasant.

3.6 Spontaneous inner sound

murmur (2017) was created as a protocol for inner listening. It is a listening exercise that asks you to spend some time listening toward your inner world of sounds (Figure 6). It has no prompts or triggers for inner sounds—the only purpose of the exercise is to pay attention to your inner sound world.

This work explores inner sounds that have no specific origin, and no obvious function.

Inner Listening Protocol

Preparation

- Set some time aside
- Set an alarm if you need to finish by a certain time
- Find a space where you are comfortable and will not be disturbed
- Prepare a notebook or something else to record the experience on/with

Listening

- Find a comfortable position
  - Standing
  - Sitting
  - Lying down
- (optional) Close your eyes
- Listen inwardly
- Try to relax and not force the listening experience
- Try to focus your hearing on the inner sounds, without shutting out the outside sounds
- Let the listening experience happen
- The inner listening experience might involve some/all/none of the following. Accept them as part of your inner listening
  - Emotions
  - Memories/
  - Associations

Recording

- Record your listening experience in any way you see fit. Possibilities include:
  - Writing
  - Speaking
  - Making sound
  - Drawing/visual aids
- Try to include the full experience (feelings emotions etc)

Figure 6. 'murmur'—*instructions*

The score does not suggest the use of triggers or any other way of *'making'* the inner sounds happen. The instruction simply asks that the participant stops and spends some time listening inward, toward whatever sound experiences might be there. These inner sounds are closely

connected to the sounds discussed by Angus Carlyle in his essay 'Earlids and Brainlids: On Thoughts and Sounds', which I discussed in Chapter 1.

In this essay, Carlyle describes waking up during the night and the sounds, he becomes aware of. Here, I will re-examine the quote I discussed in Chapter 1—what Carlyle describes as 'the noise of our thoughts' (Carlyle, 2007, p. 108) to find out what it tells us about 'spontaneous inner sounds':

> Before I can capture the elusive drone, I become aware of another noise—this time one that is unambiguously internal—the noise of my thoughts. This is not just the sound of nouns and verbs shadowing in distinct then indistinct ways what might have been spoken aloud; that is what happens when we are thinking, as Wittgenstein might have said....The start of the match scrape; the wet ripple above the fish and a child's voice to the left; the thump of a snowball against my taxi in Berlin; the rush of water beneath a drainpipe and reverberation through a guttering pipe. (Ibid.)

The sounds Carlyle describes are most definitely inner sounds—he is clear that they are experienced within his mind. They do not have a trigger, either external or internal. Some of them have their origin in memory ('the thump of a snowball against my taxi in Berlin') while others do not. The relative quiet of the night-time does perhaps make these sounds easier to discover, but it is not the night-time that triggers them. It is, in fact, impossible to tell where they come from and why. Like the sounds in *murmur* the origin of these sounds is unknown, as is their function. Both examples highlight our last category of inner sound, which I am calling *spontaneous inner sounds*. Spontaneous inner sounds are inner sound experiences that are almost completely outside our control.

These sounds are not consciously created or part of our thought processes, nor do they have an easily identifiable trigger. They seem to appear at the periphery of our mind. In some instances, we might not even be sure if they are in our mind or are outer, real sound. If this sounds improbable, like something most people would never experience, consider the fact that 75 percent of people have at some point heard their name called—only to realise it was only in their mind (Hearing Voices Network, 2020). Spontaneous inner sounds are often thought of as unpleasant and unwanted—they are so outside our control that we feel they might be dangerous. Are we not in control of our own mind anymore? However, as in the case described by Carlyle above, they can also be a normal part of everyday experiences. In listening meditations and exercises, they can be thought of as wanted and pleasurable, a useful insight into the hidden depths of ourselves.

3.7 Taxonomy of inner sounds—analysis

I have outlined the four categories for my taxonomy of inner sounds above. These are:

- **Created inner sounds**—sounds that are actively imagined or created
- **Conscious inner sounds**—inner sounds that are used as part of our thought processes
- **Triggered inner sounds**—inner sounds triggered by images, objects, events, thoughts, emotions, or other stimuli
- **Spontaneous inner sounds**—inner sounds we experience that are outside our control.

The taxonomy enables a broader, more diverse, and detailed definition of different kinds of inner sounds within the original definition of 'sounds we hear within our conscious and unconscious mind, similar to but different from, an inner voice'. Next, I will consider the taxonomy as a whole and discuss the similarities and differences between the categories, and what this can tell us about inner sound experiences. I will think through this by considering the categories and how they function as part of a whole. I am using as a starting point a visual, spatial layout of the categories. First, I will consider what is not within the taxonomy of inner sounds (Figure 7).

At one end of the continuum, of course, there are 'real' sounds—sounds that clearly originates in the 'outside' world, which falls outside the taxonomy. On the other end of the spectrum are experiences that falls into voice hearing, auditory hallucinations (defined as 'false perceptions of sound' (Waters, 2010) and other conditions categorised as 'pathological', which also fall outside the scope of this taxonomy. I have already defined inner sounds as sounds experienced within our minds, so the fact that the taxonomy ends where outer sounds start is not surprising. On the other end, the taxonomy does not include any inner sounds that fall into the category of auditory hallucinations and pathological experiences of inner sounds. This 'cut-off' point for inner sounds is more problematic and will need further unpacking and defining. I will touch on this difficulty later in this chapter and discuss it in more detail in Chapter 4.

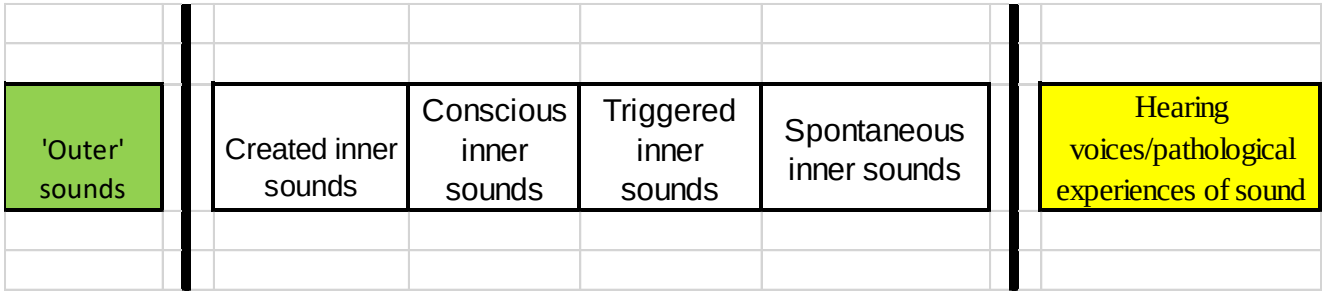


Figure 7. Inner sound categories

Considering the four categories that I have identified and focusing on the degree of control I feel I have within each; I would like to propose here that the farther to the right on the scale one moves, the less control of the inner sounds one feel one has (Figure 8). At one end of the scale, 'created inner sounds', I actively imagine sounds. At the other end, 'spontaneous inner sounds', I have almost no control over the sounds I experience. Created inner sounds, as they are actively imagined, are perceived to be completely within our own control. I would not unexpectedly start to imagine them; I am in control of them and decide when I want to listen to or imagine them. In the taxonomy, conscious inner sounds are also perceived to be within our control. They are part of my thoughts, reasoning and understanding of the world. Granted, we could debate to what extent we are really in control of our thoughts. For the most part, however, I feel I am in control of my own thoughts, and so I am also in control of the experience of conscious inner sounds. As with many aspects of cognitive functions, I often find it hard to separate the sonic aspect of thoughts and cognition from other aspects. However, as I have shown, they exist as part of our thoughts. They might be hard to locate and notice, but they are not, for the most part, unexpected or unwanted inner sound experiences. Triggered inner sounds are complex in a different way. They can be thought of as being within my control—I can consciously search out triggers to listen to the inner sounds they generate. An example of this is Toop's explorations of the sonic aspect of paintings—he searches out the triggers to explore the inner sound experiences. On the other hand, as I never

quite know what might trigger an inner sound: there is an aspect of triggered inner sounds that are felt to be outside of my control. Spontaneous inner sounds, finally, are the only inner sounds I experience as being completely outside of my control. I have no control over what they are, when I hear them, or where they come from. Sometimes I even question if they really are within my mind or come from the 'outside' world.

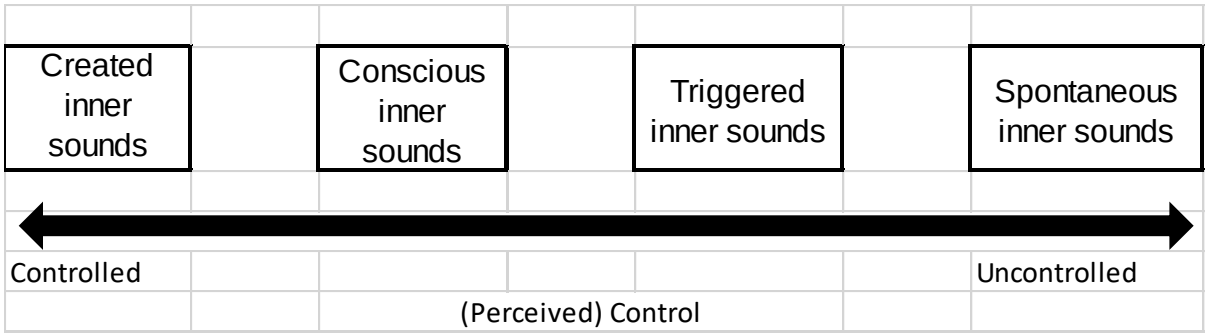


Figure 8. Perceived control of inner sound experiences

I would argue that there are different levels of control over my inner sound experiences, and this influences how I feel about them. The created inner sounds I experiences as pleasant and wanted (complete control), while at the other end, spontaneous inner sounds can be experienced as unwanted and unpleasant (uncontrolled). Considering how spontaneous inner sounds might make me question whether the sounds I hear comes from within or the from outside world, a more accurate chart or visual representation what lies outside the taxonomy would be the following:

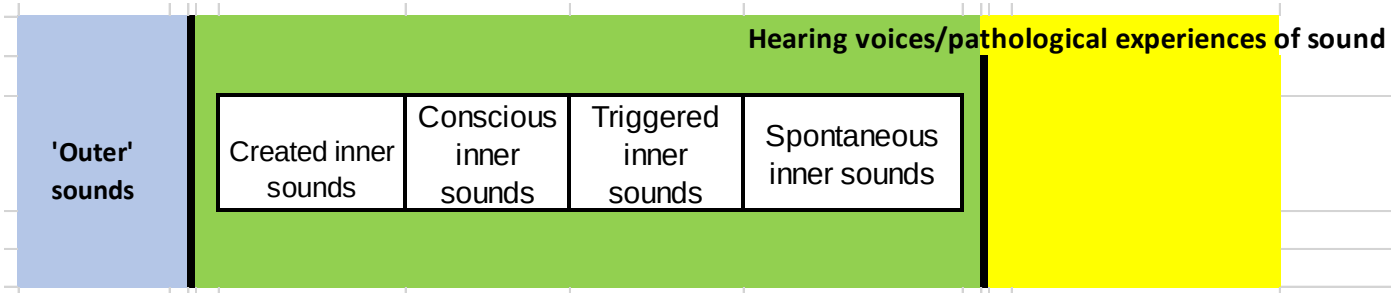


Figure 9. Visual representation of what is included and excluded in the taxonomy

The inner sounds in four different categories can be traced back to different points of origin.

(Perceived) Origin			
Created inner sounds	Conscious inner sounds	Triggered inner sounds	Spontaneous inner sounds
Actively imagined	Part of our thoughts/ reasoning/understanding	Outside objects/ events/stimuli	Unknown

Figure 10. Perceived origin of inner sound experiences

(Perceived) Purpose			
Created inner sounds	Conscious inner sounds	Triggered inner sounds	Spontaneous inner sounds
Specific need/want to imagine a sound	Thought process/understanding	As of yet unknown	As of yet unknown

Figure 11. Perceived purpose of inner sound experiences

Created inner sounds are actively imagined—I can locate a point of origin and a purpose—which is the desire or need to imagine inner sounds for a variety of reasons (Figure 10). Conscious inner sounds are part of my thoughts; I would argue that they advance understanding, reasoning, and other cognitive processes. It follows from this that I can identify their origin as being from within my thought processes. Triggered inner sounds have a clear origin in the sense that they are all triggered by some form of stimuli (images/events/etc.). These stimuli can vary considerably, however, so it follows that triggered inner sounds can also be thought of as having various origins. Unlike both created and conscious inner sounds, where I can identify a purpose or need, the purpose of triggered inner sounds seem more ambiguous. They can be used as a deliberate way to access inner sound experiences (as demonstrated in my work *Scores for Silence*), or they can be experienced in an unexpected way, as with Ihde and the postcard (Ihde, 2007, p. 111).

I experience spontaneous inner sounds at random, wanted or unwanted, and the purpose of these sounds is also unknown to me. Considering these different inner sound categories and their perceived origins, I notice that the different categories also have different perceived purposes.

For some of the inner sounds I can identify a purpose (created and conscious inner sounds), while for others, the purpose is not yet known to me (Figure 11). If I consider the degree of control I feel I have in each category of inner sound, alongside the perceived origin and purpose of the categories, there seems to be some correlation:

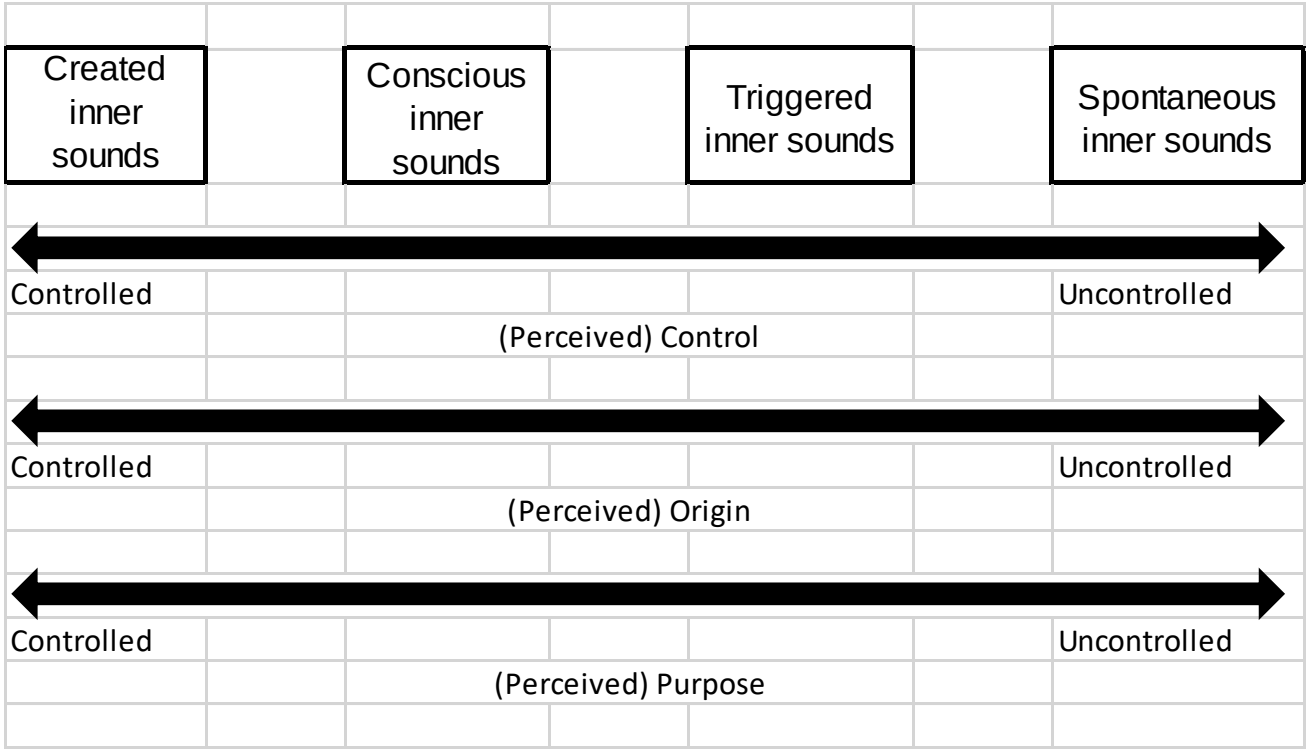


Figure 12. Possible relationship between perceived control, purpose, and origin of inner sound experiences

The inner sound categories move from controlled, with a known origin and purpose (created inner sounds) at one end, to uncontrolled inner sounds, where both the purpose and origin is as yet unknown (spontaneous inner sounds) at the other end (Figure 12). This is perhaps less

strange than it initially sounds. Many of the processes that make up my thoughts and consciousness are not clear or transparent to me. In his book *The Feeling of What Happens—Body, Emotions, and the Making of Consciousness* (2000), neuroscientist Antonio Damasio discusses the complex, multi-layered connections between emotions, feelings, and bodily sensations that make up our understanding of consciousness and our image of 'self'. As an example of a process of consciousness/being that I may be less aware of, he mentions 'background emotions' (Damasio, 2000, p. 66):

> When we sense that a person is 'tense' or 'edgy', 'discouraged' or 'enthusiastic', 'down' or 'cheerful', without a word having been spoken to translate any of those possible states, we are detecting background emotions. (Ibid.')

'Background emotions' are important to our overall mental functioning and consciousness. Anyone who has ever felt stressed or discouraged knows how it can impact their life. It is not necessarily clear to us, however, from where these emotional states originate—whether it is in our mind, our body, outside events, or a combination of these—or what their purpose is. It would be reasonable to expect the same for any discussion of inner experiences of sound. The fact that both triggered and spontaneous inner sounds do not have a function and origin that I can immediately identify is not that strange, if I consider inner sounds in the larger context of consciousness and the mental processes explored by Damasio. Much like dealing with the feeling of being 'down', but not knowing why, the first step is to identify the inner sounds, and then try to work out why they exist, what they mean, and how they relate to our life in general. These inner sound experiences are no less important because they do not have obvious specific functions, but instead need more careful examination to understand their usefulness (or lack thereof).

It is also possible to suggest that these inner sounds could all have their origin in memories. However, as with the origin and function of feelings, memory and its function in our cognitive lives is a complex and to some extent contested area (Squire, 2004; Collins, 1975). Concerning inner sounds, this study has already suggested several areas for further inquiry outside the scope of this research project; the relationship between memory and inner sound is another such possibility.[3]

3.8 Taxonomy of inner sounds—conclusions

A taxonomy of inner sounds allows me to expand and refine my understanding of what inner sound is. Inner sound, as demonstrated by the four categories I have defined, can be experienced and used in various ways. Inner sounds are not just one kind of experience, one kind of hearing/listening. Even though they are connected, there is a marked difference between actively imagined and created inner sound and experiencing a spontaneous inner sound without knowing its origin. The taxonomy allows me to consider these differences in greater detail and to consider the extent to which I have control over my inner sound experiences—from being fully in control to having next to no control. I am also able to consider the different origins of inner sounds, and the different purposes of inner sounds, as well as being able to acknowledge that some inner sounds have both origins and purposes which are not yet known. The taxonomy has made it clearer where the definition of inner

[3] In 'Reverberations and Post-War Trauma: The Sustained Aftermath of Aerial Strikes on Lebanon in 2006' Safa (2022), Mhamad Safa discusses how the sounds and reverberations of bombardment connects to the trauma and memories of the local residents. The study suggests, I would argue, an interesting intersection between inner and outer hearing, the internalising of 'outer' sounds and the possible long-term effects of such 'internalising' well worth further investigation.

sounds starts and ends— 'outer' sounds are not part of a taxonomy of inner sounds. The inner sound taxonomy also does not include auditory hallucinations or what is considered pathological experiences of (inner) sound.

I started this chapter by considering ways of expanding the vocabulary of sounds, and inner sounds. Creating a taxonomy of inner sounds is less about specific words and language, and more about defining larger sets or groups of inner sounds that share certain properties. The taxonomy is a pragmatic first step in expanding my understanding of inner sound, and in doing so, allowing me a way to speak about different inner sounds. The ability to name, speak about and identify different inner sound experiences means that I can learn more about them. This learning process will bring greater awareness and develop a better, more sensitive, and informed inner hearing/listening ability.

However, I am still faced with the limitations of language in expressing and sharing the inner sound experience. Creating a taxonomy of inner sounds, and defining its categories, has expanded my vocabulary on inner sound discourse. The taxonomy allows me to discuss and compare different inner sound experiences. Oliveros, in her Deep Listening practice, speaks of listening as something evolving, growing—something you can consciously develop through life: you are able to 'heighten and expand consciousness of sound'. The process of defining a taxonomy of inner sounds has expanded my own listening practice. I can now listen inward in a more carefully nuanced way, and I can discuss the different inner sounds I experience. A taxonomy of inner sounds will not automatically allow anyone else to listen differently. It does, however, provide a framework for the development of a more complex inner listening, as well as a starting point for thinking about and discussing inner listening. The development of the inner listening taxonomy highlights how my listening is not a set, stationary thing, but a changing, evolving practice. I will discuss this further in Chapter 4.

Taxonomies are set systems, with clear rules. The problem I faced with a taxonomy for inner sounds is that, while it is very useful, it is too inflexible to account for all inner sounds. What happens if categories overlap and blend into one another? I have already touched on the fact that the boundaries of the taxonomy might not be as clear cut as they first appear. To explore these questions further, I will discuss my work *Sounds of Longing and Fear* (2015). One of the aims of this work was to explore spontaneous inner sounds, which I had found challenging to express and analyse.

3.9 Karlsson's Sounds of Longing and Fear

Figure 13. Victoria Karlsson performing, with audience member, in Sounds of Longing and Fear

Sounds of Longing and Fear is a performance piece, created and performed as part of Foolish People's production of *The Woods Trapped at the Edge of Midnight* (Harrigan, 2015)–an immersive theatre production staged at the (Oxford, UK) Wilderness Festival in 2015 (Figure 13). In creating this piece, I was keen to explore spontaneous inner sounds—inner sounds we experience that are outside our control. I wanted to use the controlled environment of the theatre performance to suggest to the audience that there might be unnoticed, unwanted inner sounds they had perhaps just experienced but ignored. I do this in the work by using text scores as prompts, which refer to what the audience members had just experienced in the performance. The aim of the prompt is to draw attention to the possibility of spontaneous inner sounds existing at the edges of our consciousness. In 'Earlids and Brainlids: On Thoughts and Sounds', part of the reason Carlyle becomes aware of his inner, spontaneous sounds is the quiet of nighttime. The other reason is perhaps that being awake in the middle of the night allows your mind to wander aimlessly, as it is not constantly preoccupied with work, or life in general. But perhaps these spontaneous sounds are always present—we simply do not have time to listen to them. This is one of the aims of *Sounds of Longing and Fear*—to tap into the possibility of ideas, feelings, concepts, and fears that have an undercurrent of sounds that we are too busy to notice or perhaps just not tuned toward noticing. As part of my role in the theatre performance, I interacted with audience members one-on-one. I would perform a monologue to them, which was a recounting of my character's life story, and at the end I would hand them an inner sound prompt, in the form of a small handwritten note. As the interactions where completely controlled—I knew exactly what I was saying to them and how this would be delivered—I could use the prompts to refer to specific words or moments in what they had just experienced. The prompts suggest a sonic element to their experience—an element outside of their control, at the very edge of their consciousness—a sonic element they might not have thought of at the time, but thinking back, might still have a vague memory of. Even if that sonic memory is not there for the audience member to recall, the prompts still suggests that a sonic undercurrent of the experience is a possibility, and thus, that it is also is a possibility in other, everyday experiences.

As I have mentioned, one of the aims of the piece was to explore the category of spontaneous inner sounds. Reflecting on the piece after the performance, I realised it raised some challenges to the taxonomy of inner sounds and did not fit as neatly into the category of spontaneous inner sounds as I had thought. I will use an example of a sound prompt to discuss these challenges in more detail.
The sound prompts were created using one of my two monologues in the performance:

Script
Red
'The Woods trapped at the edge of midnight'

'I was once a silly happy little thing, skipping through the woods, weak, young and ignorant. This was long before the wolf initiated and conjured up my true purpose. The pathways flowered, opening for my passage into the darkest part of the forest.'

---> *Sound prompt:* ***'sound of the darkest part of the forest'***

Figure 14. Script and corresponing text prompt

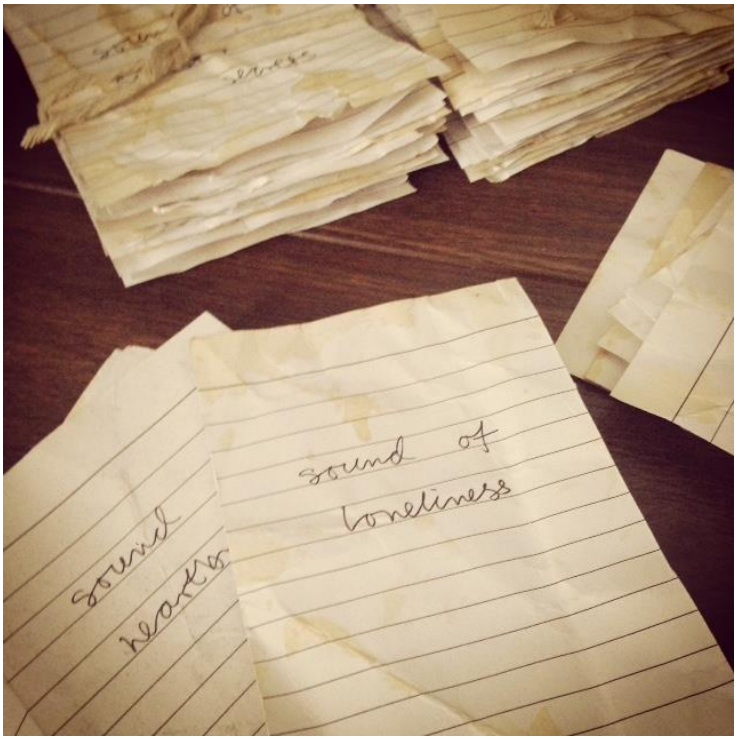


Figure 15. Example of inner sound trigger text cards

This prompt is of a sound that would not necessarily be a 'nice' or 'happy' sound— 'the darkest part of the forest' might not be an inner sound you would be pleased to hear (Figure 15). This was true of most of, the sound prompts— 'loneliness', 'heartbreak', and 'death'— these might be inner sound experiences you would rather shut out and try to ignore. I started to consider what the difference was between these sounds and what I had termed 'pathological' sounds—which had been excluded from the taxonomy.

In his book *Hallucinations* (2013), renowned neurologist Oliver Sacks defines a hallucination as 'precepts arising in the absence of any external reality' (Sacks, 2013, p. ix). Going by that definition, the sounds I explore in *Sounds of Longing and Fear* cannot be classified as hallucinations. However, Sacks also defines 'normal' mental images: 'You actively create such voluntary images....' (Ibid.). That does not quite fit the sounds I am exploring in *Sounds of Longing and Fear* either. The sounds I explore exist between the two above statements— not hallucinations, but not entirely within my control either. Sacks acknowledges that it is hard to define hallucinations, as no clear line can be drawn between hallucinations, misperceptions, and illusions (2013, p. x).

It is important to note here as well that hallucinations in themselves are not necessarily pathological. In *Hearing Voices—Embodiment and Experience* (2001), Lisa Blackman explains how hallucinations (especially auditory hallucinations) are an important element in diagnosing mental illness (2001, p. 152). She also discusses how many hallucinatory experiences are excluded from this diagnostic framework, highlighting the difficulty in labelling some inner sounds 'pathological' and others not.

Going back to the sounds explored in *Sounds of Longing and Fear*—they are unpleasant and unwanted, and you are trying to shut them out, but somehow they remain. So, are they really that different from auditory hallucinations, given that there is a certain level of loss of

control? This is not to say that all spontaneous inner sounds are the same as hearing voices or auditory hallucinations. However, as evidenced in the quotes from Sacks above, it is almost impossible to draw a clear line between 'non-pathological' and 'pathological' inner sounds. If it is not within our control, is it always a pathological experience? Or are there no inner sounds that are to be defined as pathological? Neither of these statements seemed true to me. The sounds in *Sounds of Longing and Fear* exist somewhere in between controlled and uncontrolled, between pathological, and non-pathological. These inner sounds did not fit as clearly into the taxonomy as I previously thought. They push against and leak out of the rigid 'end point' of the taxonomy, which clearly excludes any pathological experiences. Thus, I started to realise that there are several inner sounds which exist, at least partly, outside and between the categories in the taxonomy I had defined. It also made me question whether the 'end points'—that which is not included in inner sounds—are as clear-cut as I think they are.

Even though the taxonomy of inner sounds has given me a greater, more nuanced understanding and framework for inner sound experiences, it seems clear that some inner sounds does not fit neatly into any of the four categories.

3.10 The limits for a taxonomy of inner sounds

As I started to consider the limitations of my taxonomy for inner sounds, it seemed appropriate to consider where taxonomies came from and their uses. I wanted to understand how taxonomies worked, if the taxonomy for inner sounds could be developed further to encompass more, or all, inner sounds, and what the limitations for the uses of taxonomies were. The 'founding father' of taxonomy was Carl Linnaeus (1707–1778), a Swedish scientist and botanist, who is credited with creating the first workable taxonomy for naming and grouping plants according to scientific criteria. Taxonomies have since spread to fields as varied as philosophy, business, and the arts. Linnaeus work on biological taxonomies coincided with the height of Western colonialism and 'exploration' of the world. In fact, the urgent need for a coherent system of classification was driven by this:

> The need for a workable naming system was made even greater by the huge number of plants and animals that were being brought back to Europe from Asia, Africa, and the Americas. (University of California, Berkeley, 2010)

From its very beginning, taxonomy was used by colonial powers as a way of asserting dominance, to 'name' in the 'correct' scientific way plants, animals and sometimes even people, to define relationships, and to show cultural superiority. In his essay 'Rationality and Colonisation: A Discourse of the Use of Rationality as an Instrument of Oppression' (2014), architect and lecturer Tony Ward identifies 'naming' as a key way of exercising and maintaining colonial power. He also points out that what we often think of as objective, scientific thought is firmly rooted in our social, political, and cultural systems, and therefore in no way objective or universal. Taxonomies are a way of imposing a particular kind of order onto the world, an order that does not necessarily exist, and an order where things that do not easily fit into its predetermined category will be ignored or excluded. Even Linnaeus came up against this, his system based on male/female 'organs' failed to name and place entire groups of plants:

> 'Plants' without obvious sex organs were classified in the Class Cryptogamia, or 'plants with a hidden marriage,' which lumped together the algae, lichens, fungi, mosses and other bryophytes, and ferns. (University of California, Berkeley, 2010)

The attempt at classifying and sorting the world into neat categories was problematic, even in biology, even at its beginning. As taxonomies were used more to impose a structure onto the world, than to discover and define a pre-existing order, they are by their very nature flawed and—just like the inner sound taxonomy—too rigid and inflexible. They are motivated more by a desire for order and classification and are less concerned with recognising the diversities and contradictions inherent in life. When I consider examples of inner sounds, they do not always fit neatly into the taxonomy—the categories bleed and overlap and refuse to stay contained. Some inner sounds might not fit into the taxonomy at all.

I am speaking here of inner sounds in particular, but as I have previously discussed, sounds are hard to name and classify—that was the reason I created an inner sound taxonomy in the first place. In an interview on the website *Age of Artists*, sound artist and writer Salomé Voegelin comments that 'listening as experience and practice can promote a different and additional knowledge that includes the unexpected, what we do not know is there, and what we do not have words or a visualization for' (Stromberg, 2020). This 'different and additional knowledge' is what cannot fit onto a taxonomy, or possibly even language. Taxonomies, with their origins in colonialism and Western ideas of 'reason', cannot handle the complexities of sounds. Perhaps sounds—inner and outer sounds—instead of simply being something we have not yet classified and named—are something that actively challenges and evades these rigid systems of classification.

I propose that sounds—their fluidity and 'different and additional knowledge' (Stromberg, 2020) are precisely what resists the rigid categorisation of taxonomies and what we call 'reason'. I would argue that in a discourse on inner sound experiences in particular, these properties and our relationship to them becomes more prominent. I will explore this further throughout the remainder of the thesis.

From here, I will briefly consider again the two works I mentioned previously— *pages* and *Scores for Silence*. I previously used these two works to define two different categories of inner sounds—*pages* to consider 'created inner sound' and *Scores for Silence* to explore 'triggered inner sound'. If I reconsider them considering the limits of the taxonomy, do the inner sounds that the works explore push at the edges of the definitions? I will consider them again, to try to identify whether there is, at least in some part, always a sense that sounds escape fixed definitions and classifications.

pages explore conscious inner sounds—sounds we use as part of our thought process. I explained before how I highlighted in various books certain sentences or sections where I experienced inner sounds. I also noted that the sounds I experienced in these sentences and sections were not because a sound was described, instead I used inner sounds to further my understanding of what I was reading. As I was creating this work—reading the books, marking the sections where I experienced inner sounds—I had to focus my attention intently toward my inner sound world. I shifted my attention toward these inner sounds much more than I have ever done before. I did notice more inner sounds than I normally do. Normally, I would become aware of these inner sound experiences now and then, but not think that much about them and what they do. In creating this work, and reflecting on it, I wonder—were these inner sounds always there, but I simply did not notice them?

I have defined these inner sounds as conscious inner sounds—but before I paid attention to them, they also crossed over into the category of spontaneous inner sounds. If they exist and I am not aware of them at all, other than in my unconscious, they do not really fit into any category I have defined so far. They touch on several categories, and for the most part, can be

slotted neatly into conscious inner sounds. But they also have the potential to cross over, to exist between and outside categories.

Score for Silence explores triggered inner sounds—inner sounds triggered by images, objects, events, thoughts, emotions, or other stimuli, but the sounds triggered by the images are often personal and hard to predict. Expanded into everyday life, I can never be sure what will trigger an inner sound, or what inner sound it will trigger. In this sense, these sounds also have a clear connection to spontaneous inner sounds—especially as we do not necessarily know where these triggered sounds originate from.

If we look closer, the inner sounds in both works, each of which is used to define different categories of inner sounds, also challenges the taxonomy of inner sounds. The sounds they explore fit into two categories—conscious inner sounds and triggered inner sounds—but they also have the potential to transgress, to move between categories or exist in more than one category at a time.

The inner sound taxonomy is still useful: it has given me a more detailed and broader definition of inner sounds. It has allowed me to compare and discuss different inner sounds and consider whether they have a function and where they might originate. I must recognise, however, that the taxonomy has its limits. Some inner sounds, as discussed above, do not easily fit into the rigid and inflexible structure of a taxonomy. In the next chapter, I will focus on inner sounds that do not fit into the taxonomy, and what they mean for our understanding of inner sound experiences

3.11 Conclusion

At the start of this chapter, I tried to create a more nuanced way to discuss inner sounds, by expanding the initial definition of inner sounds into a taxonomy of inner sounds. To define the different categories of the taxonomy, I worked through several practice-based pieces, as well as text and other artworks, to define four categories of inner sounds. The taxonomy acted as a crucial first step in creating a more nuanced way to discuss inner sounds. It allows me to discuss inner sounds in more depth. The taxonomy highlighted and made it possible to discuss the fact that different inner sounds have different origins, as well as different uses. For some inner sounds, I was able to pinpoint an origin, or determine a particular use. For others, the use and origin are still unknown. It also became clear that the level of control I have over inner sound experiences varies—some experiences are entirely within my control, while others are completely uncontrolled. The taxonomy allowed me to discuss and analyse these different inner sound experiences and gave me a more nuanced and detailed understanding of inner sounds. It also highlighted that there are different kinds of inner sound experiences, and various uses for inner sounds within our understanding of the world—for example in our understanding of words and ideas, as I discussed when defining the category of ‘conscious inner sounds’.

The taxonomy provided me with a better understanding of different inner sound experiences and provided me with a lens through which to discuss them. However, by considering my performance work *Sounds of Longing and Fear* and the inner sounds the work brought to the surface, I realised that there are many inner sounds that do not fit into the taxonomy, or that transgress its categories. Taxonomies, with their history rooted in colonialism and the desire to name and organise everything, may not be able to handle inner (or outer) sounds, which are nameless and unruly by nature. Maybe the inner sounds that resist the categories of the

inner sound taxonomy can tell us other things, provide different knowledge and experiences—perhaps harder to categorise and tame, but no less valuable.

In the following chapters, I will focus on these inner sounds, or the qualities of inner sounds that resist easy and neat categorisation. I will explore in more depth what they mean for our experiences and understanding of inner sounds. Even though I recognise that certain inner sound experiences do not fit neatly into the taxonomy, I will still be able to build on the concepts the taxonomy has helped me identify, such as the level of control felt in inner sound experience, the uses and purpose of inner sounds and the different origins of inner sounds.

4. The danger of inner sounds

4.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, I defined and discussed a taxonomy of inner sounds. I also discussed the fact that, while a taxonomy can define and expand on several inner sound experiences, it leaves out a significant number of inner sound experiences that are more complex and harder to define. In this chapter I will use my performance work *Sonic Confessions* (2017) as a starting point to discuss more complex and harder-to-define inner sound experiences. *Sonic Confessions* explores the idea of a dangerous undercurrent to inner sound experiences, and I will use the work to discuss whether inner sounds are perceived as dangerous, and if so, why are they are seen this way.

I start by briefly examining auditory hallucinations and how they have come to be seen as more dangerous than other hallucinations and why. I will argue that one of the reasons auditory hallucinations are seen as dangerous is that they are harder to connect to the 'real' and therefore make it difficult to establish without a doubt that the hallucinator understands the difference between real and imagined sounds. This is, to a certain extent also true of inner sounds: because they do not have a clear origin in the 'outside', they make us confront our fears about 'hearing things' in a more direct way than 'outer' sounds do.

I will also consider whether this 'uncontrolled' nature of inner sounds is something that all sounds have in common. I will do this by analysing Lawrence Abu Hamdan's work *Walled/Unwalled* (2018) and discussing how the sounds he explores have an ability to transgress and move between inner and outer, much like inner sounds have.

I will use my performance piece *Sonic Confessions* to work through these ideas and questions within the context of inner sound.

4.2 Are inner sounds dangerous?

Sonic Confessions is a one-to-one performance exploring the audience experience of and reaction to inner sound experiences through a 'confession' with the Sound Doctor (the artist). The audience's attention is focused on inner sound experiences through the setup of a waiting space (Figure 16). There they are asked to fill in a questionnaire and are surrounded by various suggestions to listen as well as 'information' leaflets informing them of the dangers of inner sound (Figure 17).

Figure 16. Sonic Confessions *waiting room*

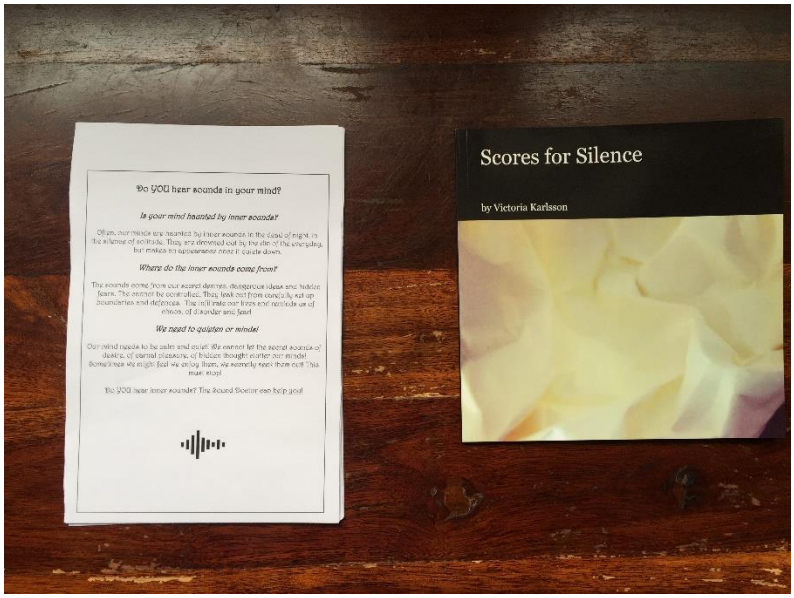


Figure 17. Sonic Confessions *waiting room materials*

Sonic Confessions started as a way to explore why inner sounds are often thought of as being dangerous and 'unhealthy' and are associated with mental illness and auditory hallucinations. The work aims to explore the participants possibly complex relationship to sound, and inner sound—how inner sound can be enjoyable and comforting, but also frightening and unpleasant. *Sonic Confessions* focuses on inner sounds the participant might find less pleasant by asking that they focus on 'secret' inner sounds. These could be sounds they do not like to talk about or to hear, or sounds they never mentioned to anyone else. The idea that there is such a thing as 'secret' inner sounds opens the idea of inner sounds as something that can be dangerous. The deliberate setting (or suggestion) of the work as a confessional with a doctor or a therapist, enforces the idea of inner sounds as something the participants should not want to hear, even something they should want to be cured of. This is reinforced by the writing used to advertise the work, the questionnaires the participants are asked to fill out, and in various signs and literature in the 'waiting area'. The work aims to bring to the surface our fear of inner sounds, drawing on experiences such as hearing voices, or hearing sounds in states of anxiety, as well as hypersensitivity to sounds during certain illnesses or states of mind. Interestingly, most of the participants I have spoken to in this performance do have a 'secret' sound to tell me about. Often it is something they have not previously shared with

other people, suggesting that there is a certain hesitation about admitting to 'hearing things'. It sometimes takes a bit of probing to get there, and more than once I have been told something like 'But I'm not crazy' or 'I know it's not real'. It may be half joking, but the need to say it at all hints at the participants' complex relationship with their inner sounds.

The 'Sound Doctor' persona embodies these conflicting feelings about inner sounds. On the one hand, she claims to be able to cure people of hearing inner sounds. On the other hand, she seems fascinated by, almost obsessed with, the inner sounds she is meant to help her patients get rid of.

I will use *Sonic Confessions* to discuss the themes I have hinted at above. Are inner sounds considered dangerous? If so, why? *Are* they really dangerous? And what does this circumstance mean for our experience and relationship to inner sounds? I will start by describing the work in more detail.

4.3 Sonic Confessions

Performance
Holborn Treatment Rooms
(Figure 18)

You arrive at the treatment centre. A sign asks you to ring the bell. You are let in and greeted by the Nurse. You are asked to wait in the empty reception area for the other participants to arrive. When they do, a group of four or five of you are taken upstairs to the Waiting Room.

Figure 18: Performance of Sonic Confession (2017)

*As you enter, there are five chairs arranged around the room. Each chair has a clipboard with a questionnaire on it, waiting to be completed. The Nurse asks you to take a seat and complete the questionnaire 'in your own time'. On the table in the room, you notice a pile of information leaflets on hearing inner sounds. On the small desk by the wall there are photographs, with the instruction 'Listen' printed underneath. There are also books titled '*Scores for Silence'. *You wonder if you should use or interact with the objects and leaflets? You notice that some participants do, while waiting for their appointment. Others soon follow. As the participants start to complete their questionnaires, the Nurse walks up to you, and tells you the Doctor is ready to see you. She takes you through to another room, opens the door and introduces you. This room is smaller, and the light is dimmed. There is a smell of disinfectant as you enter. The Doctor asks you to sit down in the empty chair across from her. She reads your questionnaire. She asks about your inner sounds—can you describe them? How do they make you feel?*

She leans closer and closer as you describe the sounds. The Doctor mentions that there is not enough time—people are waiting! You need to move on to the secret

sounds. What are they? Why are they secret sounds? How do they make you feel? As you tell her, the Doctor gets up and moves closer, her eyes never leaving your face. Too close. You instinctively want to move back. She tells you she might be able to help you. But to do so, you must promise to follow her instructions, and listen to what she gives you, every day. You nod. She hands you a prescription card, with a sound to listen to and a disclaimer on the back. She tells you the session is finished. You get up to leave and she opens the door. As you walk past her to leave, she grabs your arm and leans in, whispering something about how she loves listening to inner sounds, especially the secret ones. You can smell the disinfectant. You leave the room and are taken back to the waiting room by the Nurse. She tells you it might be advisable to take some time to reflect before you leave. You are left in the waiting room as the next person is taken through. You sit down for a little while, and hesitantly pick up one of the leaflets. Then you leave, with your prescription card in your pocket.

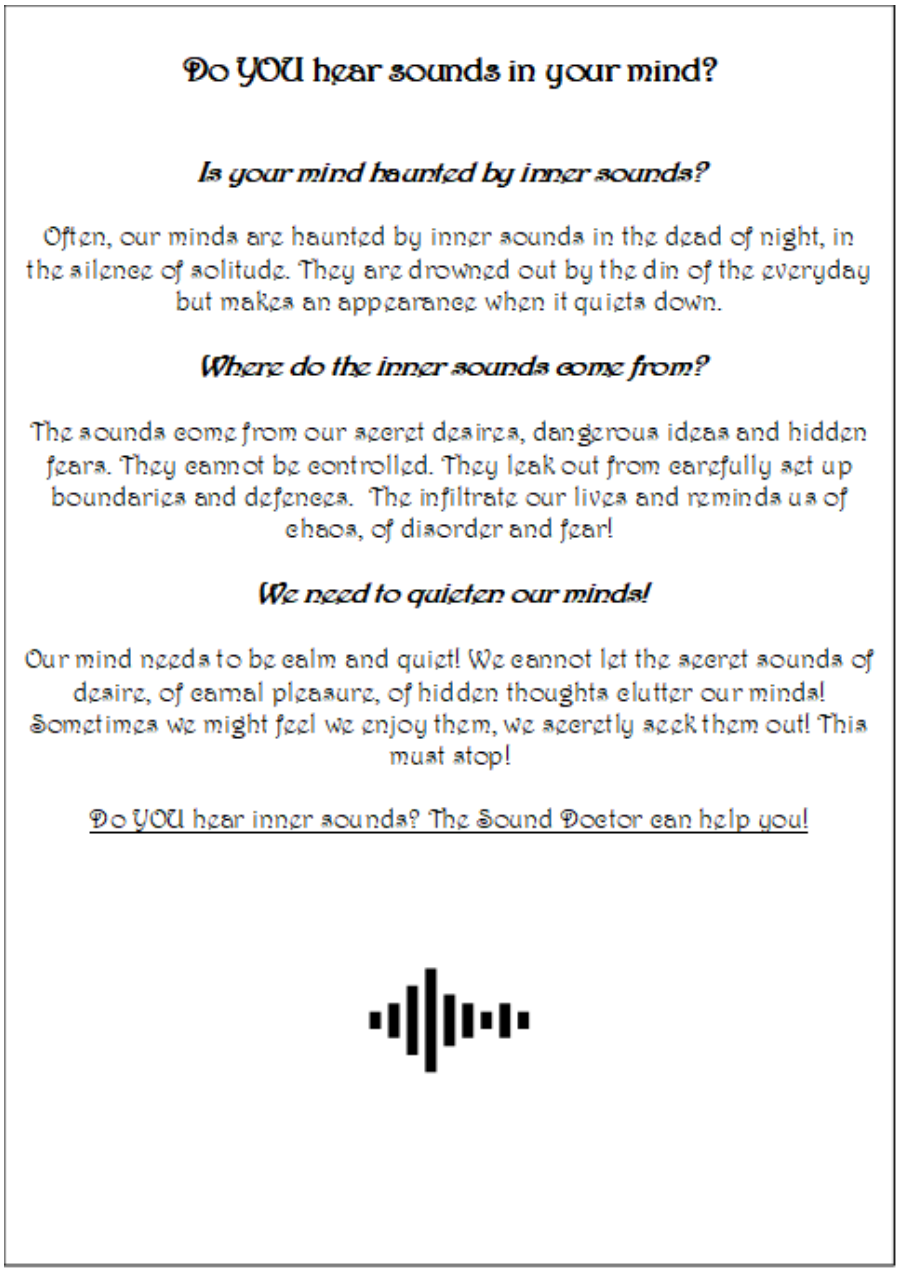


Figure 19. *Information leaflet*—Sonic Confessions

The language on the information leaflet is a deliberate play on old-fashioned, Victorian ideas of 'purity' (Figures 19 and 20). Here, secret inner sounds are linked to hidden desires and

'carnal' pleasures. Even though it is somewhat tongue in cheek, it also draws on ideas of hiding parts of yourself that may be interpreted as 'dangerous' by society at large.

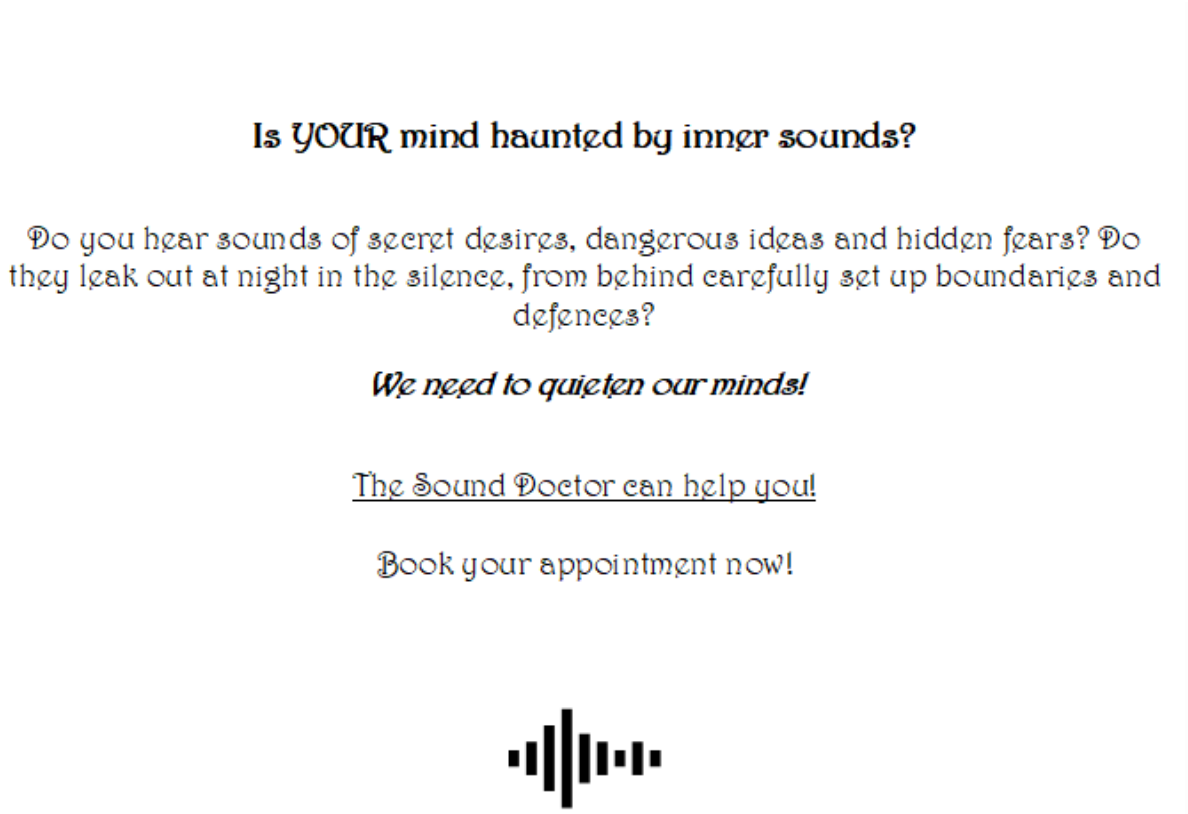
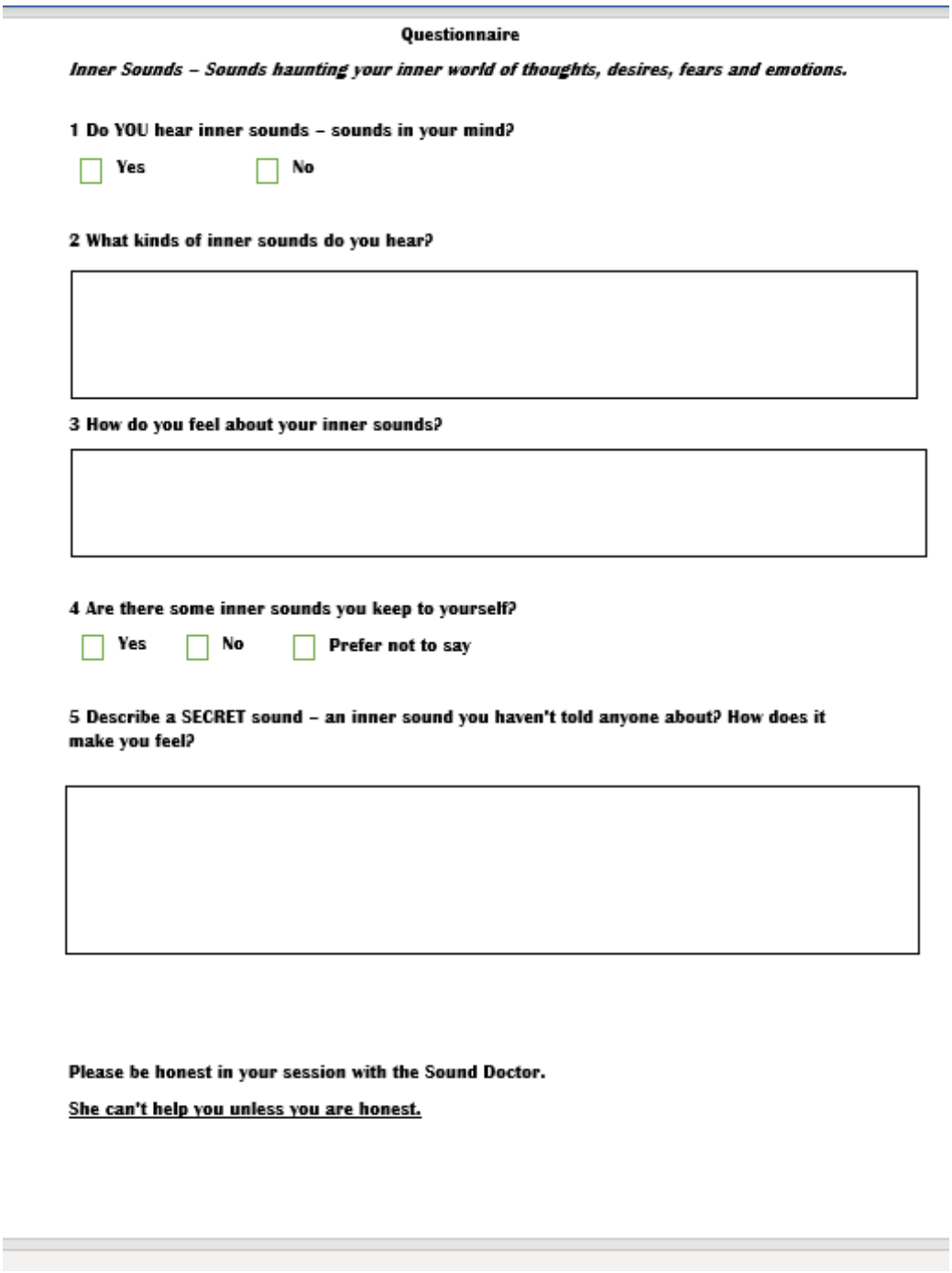


Figure 20. *Sign*—Sonic Confessions

The signage further plays on the idea that a quiet mind is a 'good' mind



Questionnaire

Inner Sounds – Sounds haunting your inner world of thoughts, desires, fears and emotions.

1 Do YOU hear inner sounds – sounds in your mind?

☐ Yes ☐ No

2 What kinds of inner sounds do you hear?

3 How do you feel about your inner sounds?

4 Are there some inner sounds you keep to yourself?

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Prefer not to say

5 Describe a SECRET sound – an inner sound you haven't told anyone about? How does it make you feel?

Please be honest in your session with the Sound Doctor.

She can't help you unless you are honest.

Figure 21. *Questionnaire*—Sonic Confessions

The questionnaire starts by introducing the idea of inner sounds, then prompts the participants to think about/write down a 'secret' inner sound, to be discussed or 'cured' by the Sound Doctor.

4.4 'Hearing things'

The setting of *Sonic Confessions* is inspired by a visit to a therapist, but instead of talking about mental well-being, the participants talk about, or confess, their inner sound experiences. The language used in the signs and material produced for the work deliberately plays on the idea that to hear things in your mind is dangerous: 'Is your mind haunted by inner sounds?'; 'We need to quieten our minds' (Figures 19–21). The participants are

encouraged to think about 'secret' inner sounds—sounds they either do not like or have not spoken to anyone about. The idea of 'secret' inner sounds is first introduced while the participants fill out the questionnaire (Figure 21), and they are questioned further on their 'secret' inner sounds in the one-to-one performance. I am not trying to suggest in this performance that all inner sounds are dangerous, or even that 'secret' inner sounds are dangerous. Instead, I am interested in exploring whether the participants sense danger or unease around speaking about inner hearing. I suggest to them the idea of 'secret' inner sounds not because I believe anything 'secret' is inherently bad or dangerous, but because I want them to think about why they keep these inner sounds secret. Is it just because we do not tend to speak about inner hearing? Because no one asked, before this? Or are the sounds kept secret because to admit to another human that they exist is thought of as unsafe?

The idea that inner hearing or inner sounds could be dangerous is often connected to a belief that to experience sounds that are not 'real'—have a source in the outside world—is close to, or the same as auditory hallucinations. These sounds are often believed to be a sign of mental illness and are often considered 'dangerous' (Sacks, 2012, p. 54). I will discuss the relationship between inner sounds, auditory hallucinations, and mental ill health in more detail further on in this chapter.

Most participants have a 'secret' sound to speak about—it may be something they never discussed with anyone before, or something they would rather not talk about, or something they struggle to speak about or explain. Even though the interpretation of 'secret' inner sounds might differ from participant to participant, the fact that most people do have a 'secret' sound they can speak about suggests that the idea that inner sounds, or inner hearing, is generally seen as something we rarely talk about.

Artist Vito Acconci, in a 2005 interview in *Arte e Critica*, remarked on the topic of sound that 'in Western culture we talk about a mystic seeing things, but an insane person hears things' (Balit, 2005). *Sonic Confessions* explores this underlying sense of danger and secrecy associated with inner sound experiences. In *Sonic Confessions* the inner sounds discussed are not auditory hallucinations or sounds exclusively experienced by people suffering from poor mental health. Yet the inner sound experiences in *Sonic Confessions* still invoke the feelings of fear and discomfort sometimes associated with these conditions. In the above quote, Acconci compares two similar experiences—visual hallucinations ('seeing things') and auditory hallucinations ('hearing things')—and suggest that we have different cultural interpretations of these experiences. I use *Sonic Confessions* as a starting point to investigate this perceived danger of inner sounds. Are all inner sounds dangerous? Why are they believed to be dangerous? How does this element of danger affect my experiences of inner sounds?

An experience that is related to inner sounds, and which can be both dangerous and unpleasant is auditory hallucinations. While inner sounds and auditory hallucinations are not the same thing, I will explore in the next section whether attitudes toward, and fears of, auditory hallucinations influence my relationship to inner hearing.

4.5 Inner sounds and auditory hallucinations

The taxonomy of inner sounds that I defined in Chapter 3 excluded auditory hallucinations and pathological experiences from all four categories of inner sound. I also noticed that to truly exclude these experiences or draw clear lines between what is and is not an auditory hallucination is next to impossible. This leads me to ask what extent my views and ideas of auditory hallucinations influences my views and experiences of inner sounds.

In his book *Hallucinations*, Oliver Sacks describes the following experiment:

> In 1973 the *Journal of Science* published an article that caused an immediate furore. It was entitled 'On Being Sane in Insane Places' and it describe how, as an experiment, eight 'pseudo patients' with no history of mental illness presented themselves at a variety of hospitals across the United States. Their single complaint was that they 'heard voices. (Sacks, 2013, p. 53)

Other than this one complaint, the pseudo-patients 'behaved normally and recounted their own (normal) past experiences' (Ibid.). Despite this, they were all diagnosed with schizophrenia and admitted to hospital. Once they were in the hospital, they never spoke about hearing voices again. They behaved as they normally would, and even wrote about their experiences, which was considered part of their 'treatment'. This one instance of 'hearing voices' was enough to convince doctors that the researchers suffered from serious mental illness. They were not released from hospital because the voices 'stopped'—they were only released once they admitted to lying about their voice-hearing experiences.

This experiment is an example of the fact that one single symptom or incident of hearing voices is enough to be diagnosed with a serious mental illness. Granted, the experiment was performed quite some time ago, and attitudes toward mental health and hearing voices have changed. However, in 2012 Sacks still makes the point that 'psychiatry, and society in general, had been subverted by the almost axiomatic belief that 'hearing voices' spelled madness and never occurred except in the context of mental illness' (Ibid., p. 54). The Hearing the Voice Networks website also has as a main headline: *'Does Everyone Who Hears Voices Get a Diagnosis of Schizophrenia or Psychosis?'* (Hearing Voices Network, 2020*).*

Both the example above and my experiences of interacting with participants in *Sonic Confessions* suggest that auditory hallucinations in particular are thought of as dangerous, or indicative only of serious mental illness. Is this true, and if not, why is this such a common assumption? To understand how auditory hallucinations influence my understanding of inner sounds, I first need to consider why they are thought of as being so dangerous. Are auditory hallucinations more dangerous than other hallucinations? What is it that makes auditory hallucinations more dangerous? And what does this mean for inner sounds?

4.5 The danger of auditory hallucinations

In *Hearing Voices—Embodiment and Experience*, Lisa Blackman explores the history of voice hearing and other auditory hallucinations, and how explanations for these phenomena have changed through history. She highlights how attitudes toward mental health at large, and specifically toward hearing voices, have changed over time. She shows how attitudes toward auditory hallucinations are closely related to and dependent on other social trends and cultural beliefs, as well as being tied up in structural relationships of power and oppression.

She argues that 'there is no simple, single lineage within which to trace and understand the constitution of hallucinatory experiences' (Blackman, 2001, p. 176). To understand why auditory hallucinations are viewed the way they are, Blackman argues, there is no logical, scientific path we can trace. Yet the 'fact' that auditory hallucinations are dangerous is agreed upon by a large portion of the scientific community. This, argues Blackman,

> has been made possible by a complex set of changing conceptions of 'man'; theories of the mind and madness; certain events such as the two world wars; the 'discovery of psychedelics'; changing sites where 'hearing voices' were problematised and specified and changing conceptions of biology and population statistics to name but a few of the disparate elements. (Ibid.)

The perceived 'danger' of auditory hallucinations, rather than being underpinned by scientific study, is tied up both in cultural ideas, and in structures of power and control.[4] It becomes very hard to pinpoint exactly why they are considered dangerous, given this complex set of strands and influences. Blackman highlights the conflicting ideas and beliefs about hearing voices in her book:

> Within the explanatory framework of the social sciences, to hear voices is largely seen as an aberrant phenomenon, a sign that a person has lost the capacities of social existence. In much popular discourse, to hear voices is to be feared, evidence that a person has lost control and can no longer distinguish between fantasy and reality. (Ibid., p 10)

This is the fear I have already touched on—a fear that if I hear auditory hallucinations or voices, I am mentally unwell and perhaps even dangerous (to both myself and others). However, this is not all there is to the understanding of auditory hallucinations. 'And yet, in another realm of popular discourse, voices are viewed as prophetic, to be listened to and heeded' (Ibid.). Blackman points out that clairvoyants use the 'voices' they hear and translate their messages to an attentive audience, as voices from 'the other side'. An inner voice can also be thought of as a guide, a way to find self-knowledge, and the idea of a muse—who appears with creative inspirations and ideas—is seen as divine inspiration. 'What all these discourses share is a notion that the voice is something to be listened to, rather than an experience to be tamed, controlled, and even denied' (Ibid.).

What is the difference between these two ideas of auditory hallucinations? Are the sounds experienced intrinsically different? There does not seem to be anything that particularly differentiate one from one another. They both seem to be experiences coming from the 'outside' of my mind—even the muse is talked about as 'visiting' from somewhere else. They are outside my control—I do not choose to imagine them; they just appear. On the other hand, they are not sounds that can be located in the outside world—they cannot be tied to the 'real' world. What, then is the reason that some of these auditory hallucinations are to be 'tamed, controlled and even denied. 'And others are safe, even desired? What makes a doctor decide that the sounds I hear are a reason for a diagnosis of schizophrenia, and not a muse that will inspire my creativity? It might be an assumption, perhaps, that a diagnosis of mental illness is only arrived at if the voices a person experiences are violent and dangerous. However, in the experiment by Rosenthal discussed at the start of the chapter, the pseudo-

[4] It is interesting to note here that other conditions where sounds are experiences without a 'outer' source—such as tinnitus, migraines, or 'exploding head syndrome'—does not carry the same association with danger as auditory hallucinations seems to. It is perhaps because the explanations for these conditions are not thought of as being related to mental ill health, but are rather defined as physical disorders (auditory, neurological, or sleep-related in these examples).

patients ‘could not really make out what the voices said but that they heard the worlds ‘empty’, ‘hollow’, and ‘thud’ (Sacks, 2013, p. 53)—none of which sounds particularly violent or threatening. Yet these sounds were still deemed enough to arrive at a diagnosis of schizophrenia and hospitalisation.

Sack’s notes in *Hallucinations*: ‘In the popular imagination, though, hallucinatory voices are almost synonymous with schizophrenia—a great misconception, for most people who do hear voices are not schizophrenic’ (Ibid., p. 56)

The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual (DSM-IIIR)—the American publication that defines mental illnesses and is used by the vast majority of psychiatrists[5] both in and outside the United States (Blackman, 2001, p. 19), goes into great detail in defining ‘pseudo-hallucinations’—that is, hallucinations that are not considered ‘real’ hallucinations and therefore do not act as a symptom of disease. They include experiences of auditory hallucinations in life-threatening situations, sleep deprivation, drug use, traumatic events, fasting, and so on (Ibid., p. 20). What is seen as a central, important concept for distinguishing ‘pseudo-hallucinations’ from ‘real’ (pathological) hallucinations is control. ‘They [hallucinations] are viewed as overwhelming the individuals’ normal psychological propensities, leaving them unable to control themselves’(Ibid., p. 23). The ‘test of insanity’ is about proving—*to others*—that I know what is real and what is not, and that I am still in control of myself. Auditory hallucinations in themselves are not dangerous— ‘hearing things’ because I have taken drugs or am sleep-deprived, might well be the same experience as hearing voices in my everyday life. However, one gives me a framework for passing the ‘test of insanity’: ‘It was only because I used drugs—I know it’s not real’, while the other becomes much harder to explain and is therefore considered much more dangerous and out of control. It is not about the sounds themselves—it is about my perceived control of them, and about if and how they can fit in to pre-conceived explanatory frameworks.

4.6 The ‘Hearing the Voices’ network

The Hearing the Voices network (HNV)—a charity that researches and supports voice-hearers—takes a very different view of auditory hallucinations. The Hearing the Voice network started with the meeting of Dutch psychiatrist Marius Romme and his patient and voice hearer, Patsy Hage. They both appeared on Dutch television to discuss the work they had been doing and appealing to other voice-hearers to contact them. To their surprise, they got an overwhelming response—more than 150 people contacted them, most of whom heard voices and most of whom had found ways of living contentedly with these voices—sometimes even liking and appreciating them. ‘As the movement grew, its basic tenets began to cohere: that hearing voices is a common aspect of human experience, which can be distressing, but is not inherently a symptom of illness...’ (Fernyhough, 2016, p. 202). Whether the voices are friendly or frightening, the HVN practice is built on the fact that what they say and how they ‘act’ is important. The key to living a healthy life with hearing voices (as many people do) lies, according to the HVN, in accepting and normalising the voices, in integrating them into daily life. The approach of the HVN does away with the idea of control and of the ‘test of insanity’ by taking the view that auditory hallucinations are ‘not merely a sign of disease, grounded in bio-chemical reactions of the brain’ (Blackman, 2001, p. 189).

[5] I refer here to *The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual (DSM-IIIR),* as I am referring to Blackman’s discussion, and she references *The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual (DSM-IIIR).* Currently, psychiatrists are using *The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual (DSM-V*) - the most current edition. However, as noted in ‘Hearing Voices Network England’s Position Statement on DSM 5 & Psychiatric Diagnoses’ on Hearing Voices Network website, (Hearing Voices Network, 2020*),* the argument Blackman makes is still relevant.

For the HVN, the sounds and auditory hallucinations are not dangerous. While we might experience them as frightening and unpleasant, the key to helping people lies in helping them to live with auditory hallucinations—*but not necessarily to control them.*

Thus, there are conflicting and complex strands that influence the understanding of, and sometimes fear of, auditory hallucinations. The idea of control and the 'test of insanity' is central to our relationship to auditory hallucinations.

In *Sonic Confessions*, this fear of losing control is quite openly hinted at in the associated materials. The information leaflets in the waiting area speak of inner sounds which 'cannot be controlled'. In *Sonic Confessions*, this is both a loss of control of the mind, the inner self, where sounds 'leak out from carefully set up boundaries' as well as a loss of control of what is let inside—they 'infiltrate our minds'.

The participants of *Sonic Confessions* are asked to speak not about auditory hallucinations, but about inner sounds. The questionnaire defines these at the top as 'sounds haunting your inner world of thoughts, desires, fears, and emotions'. This is a somewhat ambiguous definition (and deliberately so), but it does not suggest that inner sounds are hallucinations. Even though the participants are not asked to speak about auditory hallucinations, the fears I have identified that make auditory hallucinations particularly troubling—loss of control and an uncertain connection to the 'real'—are also present in our attitudes toward inner sounds. *Sonic Confessions* seeks to tease out these overlapping attitudes of auditory hallucinations and inner sounds, and to explore what they mean for our experience of inner sounds. I have discussed these fears in the context of auditory hallucinations. I will now consider what they mean for our understanding of inner sounds.

It should be noted that I am not arguing that inner sounds are the same as auditory hallucinations. I also do not dispute that auditory hallucinations are in many cases both frightening and serious potential symptoms of mental illness. What I am interested in thinking through is how attitudes and fears around auditory hallucinations influence how we think about inner sounds.

Blackman pinpoints as a key criterion for 'measuring' sanity and insanity in 'hearing voices' as 'a person's capacity to judge between internal and external reality. It was in relation to this capacity that hallucinations were to act as a 'test of insanity' (Blackman, 2001, p. 162). This 'test of insanity' is not specifically related to hearing voices, but to *any* hallucinations. Despite this, hearing voices or hearing things has become the one hallucination closely—almost exclusively—associated with mental illness. What is important is not the sounds themselves, what they are or what the voices say, or even how I feel about them. What matters is whether I am in control of my reaction to the sounds. Have I 'lost the capacities of social existence' (ibid., p. 10), or am I waiting for a muse, ready to 'tap into his or her potential' (Ibid., p. 10). The fear of me losing control, not knowing what sounds are real, being unable to 'tame and control' the inner sounds, the inner voices, is always there—even in the voice of the muse. I am constantly wary of failing the 'test of insanity'. The safest way would be to pinpoint a source of the sounds I hear in the 'real'. Then I know that I am in control, that I am in no danger of failing the 'test of insanity'. This irrefutable connection to the 'real' becomes difficult when I speak of inner sound experiences. I may be perfectly clear on the sounds in my mind being different from 'real' outer sounds. However, as I noted before, inner sounds make it hard to prove this *to others*. I cannot point to a definite source of the sound to prove I understand the difference between real and imagined. This becomes even trickier when the inner sounds are within categories where I have less control—triggered inner sounds or spontaneous inner sounds for example. Inner sounds, more than any other

sounds, make us confront this fear, influenced by our already complex attitudes and beliefs about auditory hallucinations—of sounds I hear whose source is not easily located in the 'real', sounds that do not easily pass the 'test of insanity'. In *Sonic Confessions* the expected 'confession' to the Sound Doctor plays on these fears—it is about you proving to someone else that you can pass the 'test of insanity' and understand the difference between real and imagined. The 'secret' sounds in *Sonic Confessions* are, through the language on the signs and information leaflets, associated with 'chaos, disorder, and fear'—all things that are also seen as uncontrollable. The Sound Doctor's unhealthy interest in the stories of 'secret' inner sounds, and her admission at the end of the performance, suggests that her ability to control herself in the presence of these dangerous inner sounds has gone. Auditory hallucinations are thought of as dangerous when I am unable to pass the 'test of insanity'—to prove that I understand the difference between what is real and what is imagined. Inner sounds make it much harder to convincingly make that case that I understand the difference, as they cannot easily be traced back to a 'real' source. Inner sounds and auditory hallucinations share this quality of having an unidentifiable source (at least in the 'real') and the danger we associate with auditory hallucinations is therefore also present in inner sounds. Inner sounds are thus hard to 'tame and control'. *Sonic Confessions* uses the uncontrollable aspect of inner sounds to hint at this fear— 'they cannot be controlled....They infiltrate our lives' (Figure 19).

If the 'test of insanity' becomes harder within a sonic context, does that mean that even 'outer' sounds can be drawn into this confusion about what is real and what is not? To further explore the connection of sounds with the uncontrolled and dangerous, I will discuss Lawrence Abu Hamdan's work *Walled/Unwalled* (2018), examining the ability of sounds to negate borders means for our understanding of inner sounds, and sounds in general.

4.7 Dangerous (inner) sounds

In the previous section I discussed how auditory hallucinations and inner sounds are both difficult to attribute to a source. With a visual hallucination, I can easily determine if it is 'real'—for example by picking up the apple I see on the table. Even if I experience visual hallucinations, I can still prove my understanding of the difference between internal and external reality relatively easily, thus passing the 'test of insanity'. With sounds, this is not as easy. If I hear a car and you do not, how do I verify the car I hear is real if I cannot identify its source? Just speaking about sounds that could possibly be auditory hallucinations brings into question of my understanding of the difference between real and imagined. Both inner sounds and auditory hallucinations challenges the idea of there being a clear line between real and imagined, inner and outer.

'Outer' sounds too often evade my need to pin them down securely to a 'real' object or source. David Toop writes in *Sinister Resonance* that sound is 'a presence whose location in space is ambiguous and whose existence in time is transitory. The intangibility of sound is uncanny—a phenomenal presence both in the head, at its point of source, and all around—so never entirely distinct from auditory hallucinations' (Toop, 2011, p. xv).

Sound—all sound, not just inner sound—is fluid, changing, and hard to pin down to a source, to the 'real'. Sounds cannot be seen or touched. Who knows, in fact, if the person next to me is really hearing the sound that I am hearing? Hearing any sound, not just inner sounds, carries with it the possibility that I have lost control, that I can no longer tell what is real and what is not. Sound does not respect the border between the outside and inside— 'a phenomenal presence both in the head, at its point of source, and all around'—it challenges my sense of control once again by moving between inner and outer, or existing in both at the

same time. How am I to know if the sounds I hear are real or imagined? How am I to retain control? I am once again dangerously close to failing the 'test of insanity'.

Abu Hamdan's work *Walled/Unwalled*, a video/sound installation, 'comprises of an interlinking series of narratives derived from legal cases that revolved around evidence that was heard or experienced through walls' (Abu Hamdan, 2018).

On screen, Abu Hamdan narrates several incidents where sound (and on one occasion, sight) travels through walls. There is the example of an arrest and subsequent trial of a drug dealer in the US (Kyllo v. United States), where the police used heat sensors to 'see' through the walls of a flat. He also discusses the Oscar Pistorius trial, and the debate in court of Reeva Steenkamp's screams being able to travel through the walls of the bathroom she was in. Additionally, there are the radio transmissions sent from both sides of the Iron Curtain during the cold war, which were all meant to penetrate both a symbolic and the real wall, dividing East from West. Lastly, there is Abu Hamdan's interviews with former prisoners in the Saydnaya prison in Syria, where, he argues, sound is used to deliberately travel through the many walls in the prison—sometimes even making the walls vibrate with resonance. He describes how the 'acoustic' architecture of the prion helps the sound to travel:

> the sound fires out of the cell, out into the column of air, and spirals round the central listening tower, where it becomes broadcast throughout the prison. From the group cells on the third floor, to the solitaries in the basement (Abu Hamdan, 2018)

The impossibility of walls to contain sounds are underscored in the work by the fact that on screen Abu Hamdan moves between 'rooms' in a Cold War-era recording studio in Berlin (used to record the radio transmissions he discusses, which were transmitted across the Berlin Wall, into West Berlin). The 'rooms' in the recording studio are missing their fourth wall, which is replaced by a window—visually reminding me that the walls around me are not as impenetrable as I might think.

In the Pistorius trial, an argument is put forward that the scream that ear-witnesses claim they could hear could not have come from within the bathroom (where Reeva Steenkamp was shot and killed by Pistorius through a closed door), as the walls would contain or muffle the sound. However, Abu Hamdan explains, the door to the bathroom let Steenkamp's scream 'escape' and leak out of the closed room—another example of the unruly and uncontainable nature of sound.

In the discussion about radio transmissions across the Iron Curtain, from both the East and the West, as well as in the Saydnaya prison, this particular property of sound to travel across walls and in and out of enclosed spaces is weaponised. In the radio transmissions during the Cold War, sound's ability to penetrate and move across physical barriers is used as propaganda—an unstoppable signal, aimed directly at the homes of the citizens on enemy territory.

In Saydnaya (the original design of the prison, Abu Hamdan points out, were developed in East Germany), silence and sound is used in an even more sinister way. The prisoners are forbidden from speaking or making any sounds—which means sounds in the prison (the guards' boots on a staircase, the beating of a prisoner in a different room) travels far throughout the prison, across walls and spaces. Abu Hamdan even points out that on occasion the walls in the cells will vibrate, resonating with the sounds.

In all the examples discussed by Abu Hamdan in *Walled/Unwalled* brings to the surface the uncontrollable and uncontainable nature of sound—all sounds, not just inner sounds.

In the example of the drug raid, and the subsequent trial in the United States, where the police used heat sensors to 'see' through the walls of a suspected drug dealer, the case ends with being thrown out of court because that the police had no warrant for 'looking' through the walls of the flat. If this evidence was to be allowed, as was stated in an excerpt from the press conference after the trial 'then our walls mean nothing' (Abu Hamdan, 2018).

In *Sonic Confessions*, inner sounds are described as something 'haunting' the mind. There is a danger that they can both 'leak out', like Steenkamp's scream from the bathroom walls, but also that they can 'infiltrate our minds', like the radio transmissions across the Iron Curtain. Much like the rooms in Abu Hamdan's work, my interior self is thought of as a closed-off inner space. My inner experiences and thoughts are separate from the outside and will remain secret and knowable only to me unless I choose to share them. As with the 'outer' sounds in *Walled/Unwalled*, the inner sounds in *Sonic Confessions* likewise refuse to be contained. Much like the fear expressed in the press conference about walls that 'means nothing', inner sounds bring to the surface a fear that our own 'walls'—in place to protect our own private inner thoughts—also mean nothing. Toop and Abu Hamdan both show how sounds—not inner sounds but sounds in general—have the ability to transgress borders, how sounds refuse to be contained, and to stay in one place:

> Hearing allows us access to a less stable world, omni-directional, always in a state of becoming and receding, known and unknown. This is the world that surrounds us and flows through us, in all its uncertainty. (Toop, 2011, p. 38)

Sounds move through physical walls, as well as our carefully maintained borders of 'self'. There is the fear that sounds will not only 'infiltrate' us but also potentially 'leak' out and then our inner, secret world would be as open to eavesdropping as the spaces in Abu Hamdan's *Walled/Unwalled*. By allowing for the existence of inner sounds, we also allow into ourselves and our thoughts the uncontainable, transgressive nature of sounds themselves. Who knows who might be listening in?

4.8 Conclusion

At the start of this chapter, I wanted to establish whether some inner sound experiences are believed to be dangerous, and if so, why they are seen that way. I used my performance piece *Sonic Confessions* to consider how certain properties of inner sounds overlap with properties of auditory hallucinations, and how this influences our attitudes to inner hearing. I concluded that in both auditory hallucinations and inner sounds, I struggle to convincingly pass the 'test of insanity'. The 'test of insanity' is based on medical beliefs around hallucinations, and the need for me to prove that I understand the difference between real and imagined. Inner sounds make this distinction potentially difficult to make, as I am not able to pinpoint an outer source for the sounds I hear. Unlike 'real' sounds, with inner sounds I cannot identify a point of origin in the 'real' world, and so I am dangerously close to failing the 'test of insanity'. This uncertainty of origin is something that is inherent in all sounds—inner or outer—but which becomes unavoidable when speaking about inner sound experiences.

I also used *Sonic Confessions* and Abu Hamdan's work *Walled/Unwalled* to discuss how sounds transgress boundaries and evade containment. This element of the uncontrolled within sounds becomes more dangerous in inner sounds—there are a danger that our border toward

the outer world will be breached. Sounds can intrude on and invade us, and our inner, secret sounds can leak out for all the world to know.

In the next chapter I will further explore how these transgressive properties of inner sounds allow us different ways of exploring a collective inner listening experience, and what that tells us about both our idea of self, and our experiences of inner sounds.

At the start of the chapter, I mentioned the taxonomy defined and discussed in Chapter 3, and how some inner sounds exist outside of this taxonomy. *Sonic Confessions* and the inner sound that the work brings to the surface—uncontrollable, dangerous, transgressive—do not fit easily into the taxonomy of inner sounds. Auditory hallucinations also challenge definitions and ideas of the real/the imaginary and assumptions around definitions of mental health. Both taxonomies and the ideas that informs the field of mental health originates in colonial/Victorian practices of categorising and thus controlling the world. Perhaps inner sounds help highlight the way all sounds challenge and evade this way of organising the world—hinting instead at a more unruly, altogether wilder medium and sense experience.

5. Collective inner listening

5.1 Introduction

The thesis has thus far, along with defining a context for and a definition of inner sounds, sketched out a taxonomy of inner sounds. By analysing the taxonomy, I found that there are several inner sound experiences that do not easily fit into the rigid framework of a taxonomy. In the previous chapter I examined why inner sounds can be considered 'dangerous' sounds and how this affects our relationship to them.

In this chapter, I relate to the anecdotal story of how I am often told that inner sound is 'impossible'. My goal is to understand why inner sounds are so seldom acknowledged or discussed. To this end, I will interrogate where this idea comes from. (Although it is only anecdotal, it does seem supported in some ways by the lack of writing and thinking about inner sound within the sound arts and in society as a whole.) I start by analysing Pauline Oliveros's writings on hearing and listening, which suggest that a mind-body dualism still exists to some extent in our cultural consciousness. Thereafter, I will consider how the focus of Cartesian dualism on the divide between our senses and our mind still influences experiences of sound today. In Cartesian dualism, the ear detects sound waves, while the mind interprets and makes sense of what the ear detects. With this division between the body and mind in place, inner hearing (sounds that are not detected by the ears) seems impossible.

Numerous challenges and developments to Cartesian dualism has arisen since the 17th century. I will consider, as an alternative context, the phenomenology of Maurice Merleau-Ponty. Merleau-Ponty, through phenomenology, approaches our relationship to the world not from a Cartesian mind-body split but instead through a focus on the experiences themselves. By analysing how we experience the world, Merleau-Ponty defines what he calls the 'body-subject', where mind and body are intertwined, challenging the Cartesian hard split of the two. His examination of experiences as one being allows for a more complex idea of how our senses and our mind intertwine. While not the only challenge to the idea of Cartesian dualism, nor even the most recent one, his writing and ideas—the body-subject, the pre-personal—are particularly relevant in opening a space where inner listening becomes possible. I will consider inner hearing through the body-subject, and how this opens the idea that our inner worlds, as well as our bodies, are capable of both thinking and feeling. Within the context of inner sound, this allows me to consider the concept of a hearing mind.

I will also introduce Merleau-Ponty's ideas of the pre-personal—a state before you are aware of the division between yourself and the world. Both the idea of the body-subject and the pre-personal, were central in the creation of my performance piece *Aural Séance* (2018). Using *Aural Séance* as a starting point, I will consider the different ideas of inner listening and sound that the work explores.

Drawing on Merleau-Ponty's ideas of how words and our understanding of them can be used to explore how our mind depends on sensory input as well as logical thinking, I will examine the sonic quality of our thoughts in understanding words with a clear connection to the sonic (such as the word 'shrill'). Developing these ideas, using Jean-Paul Sartre's writing on image-schema, I will consider what sonic components there are in our understanding of more complex ideas and concepts of thoughts and ideas.

Aural Séance is performed before a group of people who listen inwardly together. Influenced by Merleau-Ponty's ideas of the 'pre-personal'—a state where our border toward the outer world can be thought of as in flux—allows me to consider whether a collective inner listening experience is possible. Both the context of the pre-personal and the setting of a séance, as well as a collective listening experience, raises interesting questions around listening and threshold experiences. In relation to this, I will explore ideas of the threshold raised by Lisa Blackman (2014) in her work on affect theory and ask how this relates to inner listening.

5.2 Cartesian dualism and inner sound

When I speak of my research on inner sounds, the most common reaction is, in one form or another, 'That's impossible' or 'There is no such thing as sounds in our minds'. It is usually expressed less crudely, but the general gist remains the same. Although this is, of course, only anecdotal 'evidence', it hints at something deeper, which is a persistent cultural tendency to divide our experiences along the lines of Cartesian dualism. I often think of it as a different expression of the difficulty I have had in finding previous literature or research on inner sound, as discussed in detail in Chapter 1. I wanted to try to find the underlying cause of this disbelief I come across so often. Therefore, I will consider how Cartesian dualism still influences our thinking. I will also discuss alternative ways of approaching inner hearing and listening by considering how Cartesian dualism has been developed and challenged by other thinkers and philosophers.

One explanation for this disbelief in inner sounds is the idea that we can only experience sounds through our ears. Inner sounds—sounds experienced in your mind—therefore become an impossibility. The belief that sounds are something that can only be experienced through our ears is a possible explanation for the lack of theory and texts on inner sounds within sound art theory. I am not trying to suggest that sounds or hearing are thought of as a purely physical experience, that in no way involves our minds. I believe though that there is a belief that the mind gets involved in a more detached way, to make sense of what is heard, rather than in the actual hearing. Pauline Oliveros suggests something similar when she defines the difference between hearing and listening:

> To hear is the physical means that enables perception. To listen is to give attention to what is perceived, both acoustically and psychologically. (Oliveros, 2005, p. xxii)

This quote by Oliveros from her work *Deep Listening—A Composer's Sound Practice*, highlights one of the key concepts that influences our understanding of hearing, listening and sound: the division between body and mind. Oliveros highlights how the process of listening is thought of as having two stages. One is the physical perception of sound— 'to hear'—the way our body detects sounds, most commonly our ears. There is then a second process, by which the sounds are made sense of— 'to listen'—which involves the mind, the psychological understanding or perception of the sound. For Oliveros, 'hearing' is something the body does ('the physical means that enables perception') and 'listening' is something your mind does ('to give attention to what is heard'). 'Hearing turns a certain range of vibrations into perceptible sounds. Listening takes place in the auditory cortex and is based on the experience of the waveform 'transmitted from the ear to the brain' (Oliveros, 2005, p. xxii). In both these quotes, Oliveros highlights how hearing and listening are considered not as one unified whole, but as two interconnected spheres of self: the body (hearing) and the mind (listening). Evidence of this division of self, outside the context of hearing/listening, is evident in expressions such as 'mind over body' or in the way we divide our health or illness into 'mental' and 'physical'.

This division between body and mind, hinted at in the hearing/listening process described by Oliveros, can be traced back to 17th century philosopher René Descartes. In *The Meditations* (1641) he writes:

> Am I so dependent on body and senses that I cannot exist without them? But I had persuaded myself that there was nothing at all in the world: no sky, no earth, no minds, no bodies: was I not, therefore, persuaded that I did not exist? No; indeed, I existed and without a doubt, by the fact that I was persuaded, or indeed by the mere fact that I thought at all. (Descartes, 1968, p. 103)

For Descartes, existence is based on the fact that we think, and thinking, for Descartes, is something we do only with our mind. The body has no role in our thinking, and therefore has no real importance to our existence either. For Descartes, the division between the body and mind is clear and unambiguous.

> I am not this assemblage of limbs called the human body, I am not a thin and penetrating air spread through all these members....But what am I, then? A thing that thinks. (Ibid., pp. 105–106)

According to Descartes, our bodies are an unthinking and unfeeling spatial substance. Our bodies, he argues, perform purely physical functions—they alert us to hunger, cold, and pain; they see, hear and touch. They cannot understand or make sense of these sensations. Our bodies cannot exist, and will have no reason to exist, without our minds. Our minds, on the other hand, are not capable of feeling and sensations, as the body is. The mind 'receives' the sensations of the body and the mind is what makes sense of them (Bracken, 2002, p. 50).

There has been considerable development in both philosophy and other areas since Descartes wrote *The Meditations* and Cartesian dualism was born. In the context of listening/hearing and sound art, it is worth mentioning, for example, the writings of Herman Helmholtz on hearing and music theory. In *On the Sensations of Tone* (1885) he writes of the often complex and shifting connections between hearing, music, and emotions. He does not dispute Descartes's body-mind divide but speaks of how music can speak to and represent emotions complexifying the neat divide between the body and the mind.

Despite various disagreements with and developments of Cartesian dualism since the 17th century, the idea remains relevant today. It is still discussed in various fields such as sociology, feminist theory, and philosophy, where it is challenged, defended, and developed. In *The Social Body* (Crossley, 2001), the body is considered within a social context. Here, Cartesian dualism is both referenced and challenged through situating the body-mind within networks of social meanings. In *Feminist Perspectives on the Body* (1999), Cartesian dualism is both challanged and built on. Within the context of Cartesian dualism, the mind has come to mean 'male' (logical, strong, in control), and the body has become 'female' (emotional, weak, uncontrolled), and contemporary feminist writing challenges Cartesian dualism on this basis. The mind-body split is also defended in *Feminist Perspectives on the Body* through considering virtual bodies and the possibilities within dualism to escape the 'feminine' and sometimes disabled body. Philosopher Gilbert Ryle argues in his book *The Concept of the Mind* (1949) that the very idea of the existence of a 'mind' or 'inner world' is a mistake. This is by no means an exhaustive list, but illustrates how Cartesian dualism, although often challenged and complexified, still plays a role within our cultural consciousness today.

Going back to Oliveros's explanation of the process of hearing and listening, the idea of Cartesian dualism lingers in the way the process is divided into a physical and a psychological aspect. Oliveros points out that this dualism (the hard dualism of the mind and the body) creates a problem if we want to properly understand hearing and listening:

> Physicists then continue to study the nature of physical descriptions of sound and psychologists the perception of sound. Physicists can measure acoustics and pressure waves. Psychologists must measure the experience of the listener. Thus, neither discipline can solve auditory perception. (Oliveros, 2005, p. xxii)

As is evident from the above quote, Oliveros questions the hard division between body and mind that Descartes established. She recognises that there is a body and a mind—and that both are important in the listening/hearing process. To speak about 'inner sounds' is itself indebted to Cartesian dualism in the sense that it is based on the idea that we do have an interior life, a mind. Ryle argues in *The Concept of the Mind*, that the idea of an inner life belongs to 'the dogma of the Ghost in the Machine' (Ryle, 2000, p. 23)—that to think we have a mind is a mistake. Inner hearing seems impossible within the context of a hard Cartesian dualism, but it seems equally impossible within the extreme behaviourist context of Ryle. Oliveros, in her definition of the hearing/listening process, as well as the idea of 'inner hearing' shows that, even though a hard Cartesian dualism has long since been rejected, it is still relevant within our cultural consciousness, and in how we make sense of the world. Oliveros highlights how the hard division between mind and body is complicated by the experience of listening/hearing— 'neither discipline can solve auditory perception' (Oliveros, 2005, p. xxii).

To 'solve auditory perception', to understand hearing/listening, we need to think of listening as a coherent experience, not chopped up and divided into two. Hearing/listening, as well as inner sound, require a more complex view of the body and mind—not one where the idea of 'the mind' is discarded, as Ryle argues, but one where there are overlaps, entanglements, and connections.

5.3 The body-subject and the pre-personal in inner listening

There have been many challenges to and developments of Descartes's theories. I will look to French philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty's writing on experience and perception to discuss ways of conceptualising the body and the mind that will allow for an inner hearing experience. As noted in the introduction, Merleau-Ponty is not the only, nor the most contemporary, writer to discuss and challenge Cartesian dualism. I look to him as he introduces two concepts which have the potential to allow space for an inner listening experience—the 'body-subject', and the idea of the 'pre-personal'.

In *Phenomenology of Perception* (1945), Maurice Merleau-Ponty challenges the idea of a Cartesian divided self. He writes:

> The problem of the world, and to begin with, that of one's own body, is that it is all there. We have become accustomed, through the influence of the Cartesian tradition, to disengage from the object: the reflective attitude simultaneously purifies the common notions of the body and soul by defining the body as the sum of its parts with no interior and the soul as being wholly present to itself without distance. These definitions make matters perfectly clear both within and outside ourselves: we have the transparency of an object with no secret recesses,

> the transparency of a subject which is nothing but what it thinks it is. The object is an object through and through. There are two senses, and two only, of the word 'exist': one exists as a thing or else one exists as consciousness. The experience of our own body, on the other hand, reveals to us an ambiguous mode of existing. (Merleau-Ponty, 2009, p. 203)

With this quote, Merleau-Ponty starts to challenge the Cartesian mind-body divide. He does so by focusing on actual experience—in this case on the experience of his own body. He starts by stating 'it is all there'—which I read as saying that we experience ourselves not as two separate beings (mind and body) but as one— 'all there'. He the points out that our own existence, as a body in the world, is 'an ambiguous mode of existing'—again challenging the neat Cartesian division of mind-body.

Merleau-Ponty's starting point— 'the experience of our own body' (Ibid.)—offers a different, useful way of approaching inner sound experiences. Instead of focusing on a two-part process indebted to Cartesian dualism, Merleau-Ponty's approach allows us to start with our actual experience of the world, our 'ambiguous mode of existing' (Ibid.). Merleau-Ponty allows us to explore our experience of inner sound and otherwise as something far more complex and multi layered than what Cartesian dualism allows for.

In relation to this 'ambiguous mode of existing' (Ibid.), I notice my experience of inner sound, and I note that I experience it as one being. I do not, in the moment of experiencing, feel as if my experience is split in two—my body and my mind. I instead experience things as one being, body and mind together. I know that it is both an experience within my inner self, my mind, and a bodily experience: I am still there, in my body. There is no division of 'me' into two separate entities—Merleau-Ponty calls this the 'body-subject'—the thinking body, the embodied mind. It is, as he mentions above, 'all there' (Ibid.).

Merleau-Ponty demonstrates the idea of the body-subject by discussing our understanding and experience of words. Words as semiotic signs are dependent on abstract concepts, something that would arguably be interpreted and understood by my mind only, if I stuck to Cartesian philosophy. Merleau-Ponty writes:

> It is my body which gives significance not only to the natural object, but also to cultural objects, like words. If a word is shown to a subject for too short a time for him to be able to read it, the word 'warm' for example, induces a kind of experience of warmth. (Ibid., p. 273)

The understanding of the idea of 'warm' is not a bodily one in a Cartesian sense, it is not the body experiencing an *external* source of heat. It is also not just a conceptual understanding: I understand the concept of 'warmth' through my body as well as my mind. I can only make sense of it as the body-subject. These are bodily experiences—felt through the body—but generated from within, not from an outside, physical source.

> Before becoming an indication of a concept, it is first of all an event which grips my body...and it is only when its [the word/concept 'warm'] presence is prolonged that it appears in the guise of an external image and its meaning as a thought. (Ibid., 273-274)

If I pay attention to the moment of experiencing, I am not separating my mind and my body—even my experience and understanding of a concept is dependent on both body and mind, and it is impossible to know where (or if) one ends and the other begins.

If I reconsider hearing within the context of the body-subject, I am in a different position than when I consider it through Cartesian dualism. As I abolish the division of body and mind, I am no longer dependent only on my ears to hear. I experience the world as one being, and I hear as one being—I have both a thinking body and a *hearing mind*. To explore this from a sonic perspective, instead of 'warm', let us consider the word 'shrill'. When I think of it, I have the sensation of a high-pitched sound, somewhat unpleasant to my ears, my hearing. My body tenses as if I were startled. Yet there is no sound—only the concept, the idea, of a sound. Still, I experience it as a bodily aural event, as well as a thought, an idea. I do not need the physical sound for my experience to be aural: my ears are inseparably intertwined with my mind, and I can listen inwardly as easily as I can listen outwardly. Within the context of Cartesian dualism, inner hearing is an impossibility. You cannot hear without your ears, and your ears are not part of your mind—so how could you listen inwards? Merleau-Ponty's rejection of the body-mind divide and a hard Cartesian dualism allows for the possibility of inner listening and inner sounds.

In a dualistic mindset, I consider sound as only a physical phenomenon, one that can be experienced throughout my body, especially my ears. The body-subject challenges this idea that sounds can only be experienced through my ears. It also challenges the idea that to talk about inner sound is impossible—how would I even hear them, without my body? Merleau-Ponty's body-subject recognises that even words and ideas are 'events which grip my body' (Ibid.) as well as my mind. To grasp the meaning of the word 'warm' I am completely dependent on bodily sensations, not only a conceptual understanding. I would have no understanding of 'warm' without the 'event which grips my body'; the sensations are as important for my understanding of the word as the purely conceptual understanding of 'warm'. The bodily sensations do not function in addition to my understanding of the word, they are an essential part of it. Without them, there is no understanding of 'warm'. I used the word 'shrill' as an example of a word creating a sonic 'event' that grips me. The same is true of the sonic quality contained within my understanding of 'shrill'. It is not an afterthought or an addition. The inner sounds contained in the word are integral to my understanding of it—without it, there is no understanding. This sonic quality of the word is experienced by me, the body-subject, as a sound. Yet there is no physical sound for me to experience. I cannot hear these sounds through my ears; they are not experienced as waves through air by my body. Thinking of hearing from the perspective of Merleau-Ponty's body subject, I understand that hearing is more than just my ears reacting to soundwaves. Hearing, and sounds, can be experienced in my thoughts and my imagination as well as physically. Considering hearing through the body-subject, inner sound is not only possible, but also essential, for my understanding of the world.

Merleau-Ponty touches on another concept of his philosophy in the aforementioned quote—'and it is only when its [the words] presence is prolonged that it appears in the guise of an external image and its meaning as a thought' (Ibid., p. 274). In *Phenomenology of Perception* he develops further this idea of the porous border between me and the outer world. If I consider the moment of experiencing, my experience is not *'**I** see a tree'*, but rather *'there is a tree'* or even just *'tree'*: 'Perception is always in the mode of the impersonal One' (Ibid., p. 279). In the moment of experiencing—a state that Merleau-Ponty calls the *pre-personal*—I do not have a clearly defined and contained 'I' versus the outer world. This comes later, with reflection. In the moment of experiencing, the border between me and the world is fluid, porous, and fluctuating. Here, inner and outer bleed into each other, creating a space where experience is neither outer nor inner—or perhaps it is both. This openness creates a space where inner listening and outer listening can coexist.

For Merleau-Ponty, this experience of the pre-personal ultimately gets verified or confirmed by the 'real' world. Inner listening within the context of the pre-personal will not exist if we use the 'real' outer world to confirm its existence. I use the pre-personal and the body-subject as starting points, as they open a space and context where inner listening becomes possible. Inner listening challenges and expands these concepts. The inner listening experience does not depend on an outer reality to become relevant. Inner listening, unlike Merleau-Ponty's tree, exists and remains important and real without an obvious connection to the 'real' world. The 'pre-personal'—a state where the border between inner and outer is in flux—allows me to think about a space where inner and outer listening co-exist, merge, and overlap. Therefore, Merleau-Ponty's idea of the pre-personal lets me consider the question: what is the *inner* in 'inner sound'?

The fact that inner sounds are experiences that are accessible only to me, the person experiencing them, has created a problem of how to share them, how to talk about them using a language that is ill-equipped to describe and talk about sounds. The pre-personal, in its opening up of the 'inner', suggests that there might be a way to connect beyond, or outside of language.

Exploring inner listening within the context of Merleau-Ponty's body-subject and the pre-personal has opened several interesting questions and possibilities. The body-subject allows me to consider a 'hearing mind' and enables me to establish the possibility and actuality of inner listening. It also allows me to consider an expanded inner listening, that does not depend on sounds that originate only in the 'outside' physical world or purely physical sensations of sound.

Using the idea of the 'pre-personal' as a starting point, where the border between 'me'—what I consider my inner world—and the outside is porous and fluctuating, a more open inner listening becomes possible. I am proposing here that considering inner sound within the context of Merleau-Ponty's 'pre-personal' opens the possibility of a collective inner listening experience. To explore further this notion of a group or collective inner listening experience, I will discuss my performance piece *Aural Séance*—considering whether collective inner listening is possible and what the consequences of that possibility are for inner sound.

5.4 Aural Séance

In my performance work *Aural Séance*, I explore this 'openness' of experiences, listening, and our inner selves. The work takes the form of a séance, with the participants seated around a table in a darkened room (Figure 22). Some candles light the space. I stand at the head of the oval-shaped table, looking at the participants sitting around it, who are looking back at me. I am dressed in black, in an old-fashioned blouse and a wide skirt, with black high-heeled shoes. 'Thank you for joining me at this secret listening space' I say to them. 'I won't bore you with the details of the dangers of listening into the aural subliminal landscape—you all know those! I want you to take a deep breath'. My voice gets sharper, more authoritarian. 'And focus. Close your eyes. Take another deep breath. I need you to listen carefully'. I let another beat, a minute or so, pass, and look around the table to make sure everyone's eyes are closed. I start walking around the table, slowly. The participants cannot see me, but they can hear me, my shoes against the hard floor. I walk close enough that they can sense my presence even without my footsteps—the rustle of clothes, the odd brush of my skirt against them. I walk around the table twice, giving them time to really start listening. 'I want you to listen to the sound of darkness', I tell them. I keep walking around the table. I sometimes touch a shoulder, or someone's back, as I walk past. I stop next to one of the participants,

lean in toward them, close my eyes and listen (Figure 23). ‘Can you hear that?’ I say to them. They nod. ‘I can hear it too. It’s beautiful’. We listen together for a while, and I go back to moving around the table. I give them new instructions: ‘I want you to listen to the sound of loneliness’, I say. Again, I stop next to another participant, lean in close, and say, ‘You hear that too, don’t you?’. They remain still. We listen a while together. I continue this way, giving new prompts, to listen for ‘longing, kindness, nothing’, stopping to listen with a different participant each time. After I have completed the séance—which happens when all participants have had an opportunity to listen together with me to one of the sounds—I stop at the head of the table. ‘Take a deep breath’, I tell them, ‘and open your eyes’. I wait for the participants to open their eyes and look at me. ‘You might want to take a moment to make sure you leave here in this room any sounds you access’, I tell them, ‘or they might start haunting you in your daily life’. With this advice, the séance ends.

Figure 22. Performance of Aural Séance *at DinDins performance event. I am standing at the head of the table, starting the performance by instructing the participants as to what they need to do.*

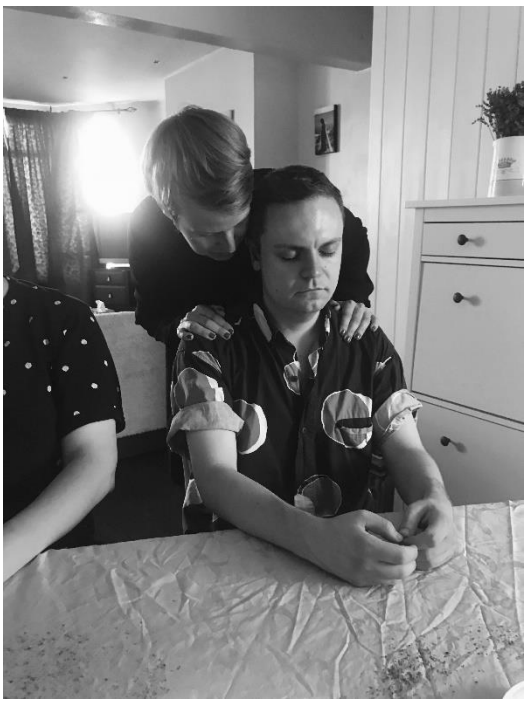


Figure 23. Throughout the performance I stop, speak directly to, and listen with the participants.

Aural Séance was created as a way to creatively explore the possibility of a collective listening experience. Reflecting on the work, it also brings up a few other interesting questions worth exploring. I will start by discussing how the inner listening prompts used in the séance raise questions around the difference between hearing and listening, and our agency within the listening process. I will then move on to how the use of language prompts within the work allows me to examine how inner sounds functions in relation to our thought process. Listening toward inner sounds together, taking as our starting point the idea of the pre-personal, allows me to consider the possibility of a collective listening experience. I will discuss the possibilities of this and what this means for our experience of inner sounds.

5.5 Hearing or listening?

Sound artist and composer Oliveros notes that there is a difference between hearing and listening in *Deep Listening—A Composers Sound Practice* this way:

> Listening is not the same as hearing and hearing is not the same as listening. The ear is constantly gathering and transmitting information—however attention to the auditory cortex can be tuned out. (Oliveros, 2005, p xxi)

She acknowledges the fact that listening is about more than just receiving information through your ears—there are elements of focus and attention at play as well. This idea is a central component of *Aural Séance*. The work does not claim to have 'invented' a new inner sound world within the participants. It instead suggests that this inner sound world is, and always has been, present. *Aural Séance* recognises that what I listen to is something I have control over, and I can choose to listen, as well as not to listen, to my inner sounds. *Aural Séance* asks that I recognise my agency in listening as well as not listening, and that I 'give attention' (Oliveros, 2005, p. xxii) to my inner sound world, to experience it fully.

Oliveros also distinguishes between 'focal' and 'global' listening:

> ‘Focal attention’, like a lens, produces clear detail limited to the object of attention. Global attention is diffuse and continually expanding to take in the whole of the space/time continuum of sound. Sensitivity is to the flow of sounds and details are not necessarily clear. (Oliveros, 2005, p. 13)

In *Aural Séance* the participants are asked to listen focally, toward their inner sound world. In a global listening mode, it would be easy to miss inner sounds, especially as the idea of inner sounds might be an unfamiliar one. The ‘focal’ and the ‘global’ are not two separate spheres of sounds, they are instead two different but interconnected modes of listening to the same soundscape. Through the focal listening exercise of *Aural Séance,* the participants’ global listening experiences might start to shift, and inner sounds, once they are focused on, will become more prominent and more noticed. Listening, Oliveros points out, is something we keep learning throughout our lifetime (Ibid., p. xxii):

> There are many ways of listening to be discovered and explored. (Ibid., p 13)

Aural Séance focuses on listening not as something static and removed from me and my agency, but, like Oliveros acknowledges, as something that changes and develops, and something that I have agency over. The work therefore highlights how exploring inner listening will develop and broaden our listening experience and ability. I might never have paid any attention to my inner sound world before taking part in *Aural Séance*. If I, as a participant, can take part in the guided listening meditation that is taking place in *Aural Séance* despite never having experienced inner sounds before, I can develop my inner listening to notice and explore more inner sounds. In this sense, it is irrelevant if the participants claim to never have heard inner sounds before—if they take the time, they can develop a new sensitivity toward them. It highlights how even if inner sounds are not something we often talk about, or something everyone would recognise, they exist, and we can expand our listening to be aware of them.

5.6 The hearing mind

The first aim of *Aural Séance* is to refocus the participants’ minds toward a state of inner listening. It does this by creating an environment where the focus is on listening, first by asking the participants to close their eyes. They are asked to listen carefully and are left to do so for an extended period. They are then asked to listen for the sound of (for example) ‘kindness’ or ‘loneliness’. The words/concepts used are chosen to deliberately be quite far removed from sounds we would normally listen to (the wind, water, etc) to encourage the participants to really focus on inward listening, to the sounds they might hear/imagine coming from the idea/concept of ‘kindness’ or ‘loneliness’. This, I argue, is similar to the exercise with ‘shrill’ or ‘warm’, where I explored how my understanding of the world as well as that of words themselves is always connected to my body in some way. *Aural Séance* broadens this idea and places it within a context of inner listening. The work suggests that there is a sonic element to words and concepts that I might not, at first, have thought of as having any connection to sound at all. The participants are encouraged to focus on their ‘hearing mind’ by the fact that the word prompts are far removed from any sounds they would think of as coming from the environment around them. To listen to the sounds of ‘loneliness’, I would at least have to consider the idea that some sounds I hear in ways other than through my ears.

I noted in Chapter 1 how the painter Mark Rothko thought of colours as a more efficient way of communication than words, and how Anthony Storr argued that sounds can become part of our 'mental furniture' (1997, p. 122). I also discussed Jean-Paul Sartre's idea of the 'image-schema'—how images are part of our thought process. All these examples suggest how our thought processes are dependent on more than just words or inner voice.

I will use the aforementioned aspect of *Aural Séance* to discuss these ideas from a perspective of inner sounds in more detail. Drawing mainly on the notion of the 'image-schema' developed by Jean-Paul Sartre, I will use *Aural Séance* to consider the possibility of a sonic equivalent.

As I briefly discussed in Chapter 2, in *The Imaginary*, Sartre explores the idea of an 'image-schema'—how images play an important role in the understanding of complex concepts and ideas, and even in problem-solving. In the chapter 'The Role of the Image in Psychic Life' he states, 'The image plays neither the role of illustration nor that of support for thought' (Sartre, 2010, p. 93). As an example, an 'illustration of thought' would be if I say 'apple' and I think of an apple, it is a mere illustration of the thought. An 'image-schema' is a more complex intertwining of a concept and image, or images. For example, an 'image-schema' could be essential in understanding ideas such as 'freedom' or 'loneliness'. Sartre argues that an image-schema is inseparable from the thought itself—neither the image nor the concept can be removed if we are to retain our understanding of it. Sartre draws on experiments done by German scientist Auguste Flach, who asked several people to describe image-schema, illustrating that they are indeed a part of our thought process. I have discussed Flach's and Sartre's research in Chapter 2, but here it is worth mentioning another example of an image-schema:

> 14. Compromise: It is the association of two men. I had the representation of two bodies which slide one towards the other, sideways. They had an indeterminate form, but they were two bodies—one on the right, the other on the left—which swallowed one another. The body was solid and had protuberances which it pushed ahead and which disappeared the one in the other. Then there was only one body....It was greeny-grey—it had a dirty greeny-grey colour. (Ibid., p. 99)

The image-schema above is not a mere illustration of the concept of 'compromise'—it is instead part of how the idea is understood and made sense of through the use of the image/the visual.

Drawing on the work by Flach and Sartre*, Aural Séance* suggests that the participants focus their attention toward what I call a 'sound-schema' of the concepts, (re)discovering how they think not only *of* sounds but also *through* sound. Like the image-schema, a sound-schema is defined as the complex way sounds are used within our thoughts processes. It could be one sound, or a combination of different sounds; what is important about them is their function as part of our thoughts.

Sartre's and Flach's image-schema give me a starting point for considering a sensory aspect of my thinking process. Their complexification of the thought process—where thoughts contain elements other than just language, such as images—allows me to consider what this means from a sonic perspective. A sound-schema and an image-schema are not the same thing, just as seeing and hearing are not the same thing. I am not claiming that sound-schemas are just like image-schemas, only with sound. I am using the idea and structure that Sartre and Flach use in exploring an image-schema, instead focusing on the sound-schema. In

the next section I will use the listening prompts in *Aural Séance* to explore sound-schemas, and their possible differences and similarities with image-schemas.

I explored the word 'shrill' and its sonic qualities in Section 5.3, 'The body-subject and the pre-personal in inner listening', and how I struggle to make sense of it without its sonic aspect. Sartre's image-schema is the next stage in the exploration of the part our senses—in this case hearing and sound—play in our thinking. Words such as 'warm' or 'shrill' contain an uncomplicated connection to a 'bodily' sensation. Sartre's and Flach's image-schemas dependence on the visual/sensory is less clear cut. An image-schema is something used to understand a more complex idea or concept, that, at first encounter, has little to do with any sensory input. Sartre argues that this is not true—we depend on our imagination and senses to understand complex ideas as well.

In *The Body in the Mind* (1987), Mark Johnson, professor of liberal arts and sciences at the University of Oregon, discusses how our bodily experiences inform and structure our understanding of what he terms 'abstract meaning' (Johnson, 1987, p. xix). He argues that there is a deeper way we use bodily experiences: 'What are often thought of as abstract meanings and inferential patterns actually depend on schemata derived from our bodily experience' (Ibid., p. xx). Johnson argues that we use bodily experiences to structure our general understanding. The concept of containment, the 'in-out' schema (Ibid., p. 22), for example, structures a wide range of experiences, not only obviously spatial ones, like 'I am in the room', but also more abstract ones like 'entering into conversation' (Ibid., p. 331).

Similar to Sartre's and Flach's image-schema, Johnson does not mention or discuss sounds—although he does point out he is only scratching the surface, and that there are many more schemas we can investigate. Much like Sartre and Flach, his exploration of the connection between our body and sensory input and our thoughts allows me to consider how hearing and listening would function within the context he has suggested.

Johnson, Sartre, and Flach do not touch on sounds at all—their focus is only on the visual or spatial. *Aural Séance* uses the structure of the image-schema they define but instead explores the idea of a 'sound-schema'. The listening prompts I use in *Aural Séance* have much less of an obvious connection to sound than my previous example of 'shrill'. Shrill is a word used to describe a kind of sound, so to make the connection to an inner sound is easier than when considering a word like 'loneliness' or 'darkness' I will use one of the prompts from *Aural Séance* to examine the aural properties I experience when thinking about it—my 'sound-schema' of the word.

I will use the word 'nothing' as an example. The dictionary definition of 'nothing':

> *pronoun*
> 1. no thing; not anything, as of an implied or specified class of things
> 2. no part or share
> 3. a matter of no importance or significance
> 4. indicating the absence of anything perceptible; nothingness
> 5. indicating the absence of meaning, value, worth, etc. (Collins Dictionary, 2019)

'Nothing' is a word/idea I would use in daily language—yet it is a word that is hard to understand properly. Instead of being defined as 'something'—a thing, a substance—'nothing' is instead an absence. Trying to properly understand what 'nothing' is, is a struggle. Anything I feel through my body would be 'something' rather than 'nothing'—how could I feel an absence? I try to imagine it visually, but it is impossible for me to visualise 'nothing'.

But could I perhaps understand it sonically? As I listen toward 'nothing', trying to make sense of it through sound, I hear an overwhelming sound of what could almost be called static, although it is more uniform. It drowns out all other sounds. It is monotone and oppressive—if you are within it, that would be all you are aware of. For me, the sonic element of 'nothing' I have just described—the 'sound-schema'—adds a deeper, more complex understanding of the idea for me. What I cannot understand or visualise becomes clearer through sound.

I considered the word 'shrill' earlier on to demonstrate how our understanding of words can have a sonic component, inseparable from our understanding of the word. *Aural Séance* explores the idea that concepts that have a less obvious connection to the sonic could also have an undercurrent of sound. I am not trying to claim that everyone would use sound to understand complex ideas all the time. However, I do believe that the possibility of doing so is something worth exploring. The work asks the participants to consider that their understanding of complex ideas and concepts may have a sonic aspect to them. I believe that in doing so, the participants would have a deeper understanding of these ideas. Instead of using words that describe a sound, I use words in the piece that suggest the possibility that every word, concept, and idea has a sonic component, inseparable from the thought or concept itself. *Aural Séance* explores how my understanding of the world is multilayered and complex, and how sounds play a part in this.

In exploring how I examine sounds, *Aural Séance* highlights the importance of sounds in my understanding of the world. It suggests that I consider the idea of inner sound to be something more than a curious event I experience now and then, something that is separate from my thoughts, feelings, or experiences. It suggests that inner sounds are an integral part of my inner world and asks me to consider what part sounds play in how I make sense of and experience the world. Johnson, Merleau-Ponty, and Sartre all highlight how sensory experiences are essential to our understanding of the world. Even something as abstract and conceptual as language depends on sensory input. *Aural Séance* places these ideas—the body-subject and the image-schema—in the specific context of sound. Using the idea of our thoughts relying on a sensory input suggested by Sartre and Johnson as a blueprint or jumping-off point for exploring sensory input specifically from a sonic perspective allows me to establish the existence of the sound-schema. I explored only one sound-schema above—'nothing'—but what would happen if we continued to explore different sound-schemas, what would we learn about the way we experience sounds?

Johnson argues that our imagination plays a crucial role in our understanding of the world (1987, p. 169), as it allows us to make new connections and evolve our thinking and understanding of the world. Situated in this context, the sound-schema and inner listening opens the possibility of numerous new connections and new understandings.

Our lingering attachment to Cartesian dualism suggests to us that the mind is much more important than the body; Merleau-Ponty's body-subject and Sartre's image-schema both challenges this, highlighting how important the senses are for our thinking as well as our feeling. This is particularly important when discussing concepts and ideas that language fails to properly articulate. Alternative ways are needed to focus on and think about things and experiences that struggle to 'fit' into language. Artistic practice allows us an alternative way of exploring ideas like these, as artist Susan Hiller, whose work I discussed in Chapter 2, has done.

Hiller described her practice as something that is 'bringing it into language' (Quaintance, 2013). By 'it' she means ideas, experiences, and stories that get pushed to the side, ignored,

often because they are seen as impossible to explain or do not fit with our current belief systems. In her installation *Witness* (2000), she presents hundreds of stories of alien abduction, recorded all over the world. The stories are presented to us as sound recordings, each played back on a tiny speaker, hanging from the ceiling. To hear a story, you pick up a speaker and listen. The work does not attempt to explain the stories of alien abduction; it just presents them, for us to judge and make sense of. However, the sheer number of speakers, each with their individual story, challenges us to rethink what we previously thought was true and real. One aspect of what *Aural Séance* seeks to do is exactly this, with inner sounds. I do not claim that inner sounds are something the participants experience for the first time. They are, instead, something that has always been there but has not previously been paid attention to. What *Aural Séance* does is to bring this thing—inner sound—first into consciousness, and then 'into language'. To this end, the work focuses our attention on inner sound experiences, and in doing so, brings to our attention the importance of inner sounds in both language and everyday life. Once I have sharpened and focused my inner hearing toward inner sounds, I can start to think about how they affect how I think about sounds, and how they affect my relationships to sounds in my everyday life.

5.7 Collective listening

In the idea of the pre-personal experience, Merleau-Ponty suggests that the border between the inner self and the outer world is not solid and fixed, but porous and shifting. *Aural Séance* explores the concept of the pre-personal within an inner listening experience, with a group of participants. The work acknowledges and brings to the forefront the participants subjectivity. It does this by asking them to close their eyes, an action that shuts out the visual outside world. In addition to this, they are asked to listen inwards, toward themselves, where no-one else can hear. This is contrasted with the awareness of other, equally subjective presences in the room—the other participants, and the artist. This tension comes partly from this being a collective of individuals—many whom have not met before—and not a 'community'. In 'What Is Community? An Evidence-Based Definition for Participatory Public Health', 'community' is defined as

> a group of people with diverse characteristics who are linked by social ties, share common perspectives, and engage in joint action in geographical locations or settings. (MacQueen et al., 2001, p. 33)

The group of individuals who have come together for *Aural Séance* cannot be defined as a community. Within the work there is the very interesting potential in future to explore further the possibilities of both building a 'collective listening' community and conducting this piece within an existing community group. What I am interested in exploring here is the particular tension that comes from being aware of both your own and others' subjective selves, and the potential for a collective experience with these 'un-known' others.

The participants are seated around a table—not close enough for them to be uncomfortable but close enough for them to be aware of the other people in the group, even with their eyes closed. I make sure my walking around the table is audible, as well as felt through the occasional touch. While the participants are aware of their own subjectivity in experiencing the piece, they are also aware of the group all engaging in this activity together, each participant bringing their own subjective self.

Throughout *Aural Séance*, I will stop and listen together with each of the participants, toward the sounds of kindness, darkness, sadness. I will lean in and talk to them about the sound we

are both listening for: *'Can you hear that—Isn't that beautiful? I know you can hear that'.* The aim is to suggest and draw attention to the shared group experience of the séance. *Aural Séance* introduces the idea of us all listening toward the 'aural subliminal landscape' *together,* all us listening for *the* sound of kindness—not just any sound that kindness reminds us of. Kindness already has a sound; it is not suggested by kindness, *it is part of kindness*, and that is what we are all trying to hear. The '*aural subliminal landscape*' (with 'subliminal' defined as 'below the threshold of consciousness or apprehension' [Collins Dictionary, 2021]) is used in the work as a reference to the idea of the 'spirit world'. Something that, if this were a traditional séance, the participants might be trying to access. It is a convenient way to suggest a theoretical shared space for an inner or 'ethereal' sharing, a joint experience. While I use it in the performance to suggest a certain openness of subjective experience, I do not want to suggest that there is just one valid inner listening experience or one valid 'aural landscape' we all must get to. It is interesting, as a thought experiment, to imagine a collective 'inner' meeting of all the participants of the performance, but in reality, I do not believe this 'ideal' inner listening place exist. What the suggestion of it does in the work is to challenge the idea of a 'contained' self. However, rather than suggesting that there is a 'self' that is completely 'open' and transparent, it suggests the porous self of the pre-personal. Instead of one specific 'shared' plane of inner listening, it suggests a certain overlap of inner and outer, of self and other. This 'in-between' space of overlapping suggests a sonic expression of the 'creative imagination' identified by Bosnak, discussed briefly in Chapter 1.

Aural Séance was, in part, a response to considering inner listening in the context of Merleau-Ponty's ideas of both the body-subject and the pre-personal. If I take the body subject—a thinking body, an embodied (hearing) mind, as well as the pre-personal—a state of experiencing in which the border between me and the outside world is fluid and permeable, what happens? I am used to thinking about myself—my inner self—as contained within my 'skin-envelope' (Blackman, 2014, p. 151), not extending beyond the (perceived) borders of my body. In the state of the pre-personal, this border is already shifting, full of the potential of penetrations and extensions of my 'self'. Listening, in itself, is an extension of my attention outwards, as well as an openness to the outside (to let sounds 'in'). Inner listening within the context of the pre-personal and the body-subject becomes a listening inward, but with the understanding that the 'inward' and inner' might stretch much further and be much harder to define than simply as something contained within 'me'—my body, my mind. Instead, the border by which I define 'inner' is in constant flux. I have considered this permeable, shifting border, thus far, concerning the relation of myself to the outer world (still unpopulated by other permeable 'selves' in flux). *Aural Séance* takes this openness, this border of self in flux, and asks what happens if we consider this in relation to other people—the person next to you, whose border of self is in similar flux—what overlaps and connections become possible in this meeting?

A séance is an activity you participate in as a group of people, together. It does not really matter if you believe a séance is fake or can truly be used to contact ghosts and spirits: a séance is a group of people experiencing *the same thing* regardless of whether the 'thing' is immaterial or imaginary. We might all somehow be able to access the immaterial sprit world and talk to *the same ghost at the same time*—an internal experience, as a by-stander would not see or hear the ghost. Or we might imagine the whole thing—the table shaking, even though it is not—*but even if it is imagined, the experience is a shared one.* The whole group would still experience the same thing.

In a séance, the participants are straining toward, reaching for, the immaterial world of spirits. The possibility of this rests on the belief that I can *open myself up* toward this 'other world'. The setting of a séance, with its focus on the group and their joint 'energy' as well as

joint experience, is all about a communal, group experience. A séance also means the participants can be open toward each other—it suggests an experience where myself is not contained and clearly defined against an outside world and against other's selves. A séance depends on the same idea that Merleau-Ponty explores in the pre-personal. Through the concept of the 'pre-personal', Merleau-Ponty explores the idea that in the moment of experiencing, there is no sense of a border between me and the world. This sense of enclosed self, he argues, comes later, with reflection (Merleau-Ponty, 2009, p. 279). In a séance, there is the same dependence on the openness of your 'self' in the moment of experiencing as Merleau-Ponty defines through the 'pre-personal'. In the case of a séance though, it is not only an openness toward the world—it is also an openness toward the other participants, as well as toward the 'otherworldly' (or imaginary).

The tension in *Aural Séance* between the awareness of yourself and your own subjective listening experience, the other participants, and *their* experience, suggests the idea of a collective listening experience. It creates a space where we are intensely aware of the porous border between us and the world, and between us and others.

Chapter 2 discussed the difficulty of speaking about and sharing sound in general, and inner sound experiences in particular. *Aural Séance* addresses this problem by attempting to create a collective inner listening experience. As a participant in *Aural Séance,* I ask that you take a leap of faith and believe that a collective inner listening experience is possible. I listen inwardly, but my *inner* is moving, shifting, and fluctuating. My inner overlaps and bleeds into your inner. In recognising this permeable, fluctuating state of the pre-personal, a collective inner listening experience becomes possible.

Rather than a romanticised collective connectivity, I suggest that situating the inner listening experience within the context of the pre-personal makes visible what in affect theory is called the 'brain-body-world entanglement' (Blackman, 2014, p. 1). Within the concept of the brain-body-mind entanglements, 'bodies are not considered stable things or entities, but rather are processes which extend into and are immersed in worlds' (Ibid.). Just as in the pre-personal, our borders of 'self' are open and porous, creating a space for a shared inner listening. I am suggesting that in the collective listening experience, there is a possibility to share inner listening experiences outside the limitations of language, which is ill equipped to speak about inner sounds. This shared listening is not exempt from the cultural power relationships we all negotiate. An undercurrent in *Aural Séance* is the imbalance between my role as an artist 'in charge' of the séance, and the participants surrendering themselves somewhat to my direction of their listening. Despite this, considering inner listening within the context of the pre-personal allows a space where inner listening can be shared (however tentatively) and where inner listening can move from a closed-in, subjective experience toward a more interconnected listening. *Aural Séance* also explores the 'fluidity' (Harris 2011, p. 21). I discussed in Chapter 2 about creating a dynamic, collaborative relationship between artists, participants, and the work. This fluidity, I believe, contributes to the openness and willingness of the participants to explore the idea of an interconnected inner listening experience. By making use of this 'fluidity', the work allows us—the participants and the artist—a way of communicating outside conventional language.

5.8 Conclusion

I started this chapter by trying to understand why inner sounds seemed like such an impossibility. I argued that some attitudes around our body and our mind, and around listening, could be traced back to Cartesian ideas around the body-mind divide. To try to find

a more fruitful philosophical context in which to consider inner sound and listening, I examined Merleau-Ponty's ideas of the body-subject and the pre-personal, and explored what these ideas could mean for inner listening.

By analysing my performance work *Aural Séance,* I was able to discuss two important ideas. First, drawing on the writing of Sartre, I discussed how sound is part of our thought process—not just as a separate 'soundtrack', but in the way we make sense of and understand ideas, concepts, and the world.

Secondly, drawing on Merleau-Ponty's body-subject and the idea of the 'pre-personal' situated within an inner listening exercise conducted together as a group in *Aural Séance* suggested the possibility of a collective listening experience. A collective inner listening suggests that listening to inner sounds does not have to be done in solitude, closed-off from others. It can instead be something that we use to open ourselves up toward others, and the world. A collective inner listening also suggests a way to share inner sounds outside of language. Collective inner listening hints at the possibility of inner sounds opening alternative ways of communication.

Both the idea of a sonic séance, and the idea of a collective listening experience suggests what Lisa Blackman terms 'threshold experiences' (Blackman, 2014, p. 20). In the next chapter I will consider what it means when we situate inner listening at the threshold, and if inner (and outer) listening shares traits with other threshold experiences.

6. Threshold listening

6.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, I considered how inner sound can suggest a collective inner listening experience, and what this means for our understanding of, and communication of, inner sounds. I did this by considering inner listening within the context of a séance. A séance is one of many experiences defined by Lisa Blackman in her book *Immaterial Bodies—Affect, Embodiment, Mediation* as a 'threshold experience'—a 'phenomena already suggest[ing] some kind of transport between the self and other, inside and outside, and immaterial and material' (Blackman, 2014, p. 20). In this chapter, I will consider further what listening situated at what could be considered a threshold might mean in relation to inner sounds. To do this, I will start discussing listening as something that is defined through cultural values, rather than something 'objective'. I will then discuss my performance work *Sonic Contagion* (2019*)*, and what the inner sounds I explore in this work tell me about sounds and listening at a threshold. I will do this by considering how sound and listening that is situated at what Blackman defines as a threshold could align with the 'brain-body-world' theory often explored in affect theory.

I will then consider the overlap of threshold experiences, inner sounds, and ideas around the Other, first by outlining why threshold experiences have been associated with the Other, and what properties they have in common with inner sounds and sounds in general. I will then consider two instances of sound as part of the Other by analysing two texts from the anthology *Unsound/Undead* (2019): Eleni Ikoniadou's *Falling* (2019) and Anthony Nine's *Blood and Fire* (2019). I will try to determine if sound can be considered as Other in Western culture, why that is, and what that means for our understanding of inner sound experiences. Drawing on the idea of a connection of sound and the Other. I will conclude this chapter by discussing three texts where the sonic Other is silenced. Karin Bijsterveld's *The Diabolical Symphony of the Mechanical Age* (2003) discusses connections between noise and class; Cathy Lane's *Women as Animal, Women as Alien—Reclaiming Women's Voices* (2018) considers the 'silencing' of female voices and sounds; and finally, I will discuss how this occurs in 'The Contours of the Sonic Color Line: Slavery, Segregation, and the Cultural Politics of Listening' (2007). Jennifer Lynn Stoever outlines the role sound and silence plays within racist power structures in the US.

This study has led me to several important intersections and conclusion about inner sound, threshold experiences, and affect theory. This final chapter is a concluding application of the arguments developed throughout the thesis, onto a discussion of sound, identity, and Otherness. I recognise that this is not a fully developed argument at this stage—it is instead a bringing together of the ideas and considerations brough to the surface through this research and suggests one of the any interesting areas of further research into inner sounds.

6.2 Cultural listening

In the previous chapter, I discussed the ideas of sound artist and composer Pauline Oliveros concerning sound as something we have agency over, something we can develop, a skill rather than just a passive 'receiving' of sound. Sound and hearing/listening is often thought of as something divorced from culture and beliefs—something objective. The agency that Oliveros pinpoints, however, suggests that there is no 'objective' way of thinking about hearing and listening: our ideas and experiences of it are instead cultural. In *The Sixth Sense*

Reader (2009), David Howes, professor of anthropology at Concordia University in Montreal, points out that there is simply no way of thinking about any of our senses outside of a cultural context:

> There is simply no Archimedean point—independent of culture and history—from which to observe the operation of the senses. The one thing that can be said is that it is essential to guard against essentialism. It means that recognising that the compartmentalization of the senses in and by the discipline of psychology is but one categorisation among others, it means recognising that there can be no 'natural history of the senses' only cultural histories. (Howes, 2009, p. 29)

Howes is saying that to think about our senses, including sound and hearing, as something objective—something starting from an 'Archimedean point'—is not possible. Sound and hearing, and our beliefs and ideas about them, are instead things that function within a larger context of culture and history. This means that our ideas and understanding of listening and hearing are not set, but are always changing and moving contextually, rather than being absolutely defined.

Howes also points out 'how uncommon the canonical five senses become in cultural practices' (Ibid., p. 33), and gives a few examples:

- The sense of temperature among the Tzotzil of Mexico, which provides the 'structural support' for the 'thermal dynamics' of their conceptualisation of the social and physical universe.
- The sense of balance among the Anlo-Ewe of Ghana, which 'moors' their understanding of existence as an unending balancing act in which flexibility of body and mind is key (Ibid.).

My senses and the way I think about them are neither fixed nor 'objective'. As the above quote from Howes illustrates, even the 'five senses' are not universal but are instead specific to Western cultural thinking. The senses and our understanding of them need to be situated within a broader context of culture and ideas.

Throughout the previous chapters of this thesis, I have been exploring how inner sounds and our experiences of them are tied to complex, sometimes conflicting cultural ideas. Through considering inner sound and how they remove my 'comfort blanket' of locating sounds safely within 'the outside', I have argued that inner sounds force me to try to think about the properties of sound, which often seems to be ignored. I have discussed how sounds, and inner sounds in particular, refuse to fit into rigid structures like taxonomies in Chapter 3. In Chapter 4, I explored the connection between attitudes toward inner sounds and auditory hallucinations. I also outlined how inner sounds highlights how sounds can transgress obstacles, walls, and minds, and how they resist both control and containment. In Chapter 5, I explored how inner listening challenges the idea of a contained, sealed-off inner self. These examples highlight how sound and inner sounds, and our relationship to them, are closely intertwined with broader cultural ideas and contexts.

I will use this last chapter to consider what these insights tells us about inner sound within a cultural context. Can our relationship to sound—inner and outer—tell us something about our cultural systems of ideas and beliefs? I will do this by building on the idea of the threshold and listening at the threshold identified in the last chapter, which will lead me to a discussion of my performance work *Sonic Contagion*.

6.3 Inner listening at the threshold

As mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, Lisa Blackman defines threshold experiences as 'phenomena already suggest[ing] some kind of transport between the self and other, inside, and outside, and immaterial and material' (Blackman, 2014, p. 20). As examples of threshold experiences, she mentions hypnosis, voice hearing, possession, and séances, among others.

Considering listening at the threshold, I am exploring a state of being or an idea of the body and the world that Lisa Blackman calls the 'brain-body-world entanglement' (Blackman, 2014, p. 1). She defines it thus: 'Bodies are not considered stable things or entities, but rather are processes which extend into and are immersed in worlds' (Ibid.). The 'brain-body-world entanglement' encompasses both Merleau-Ponty's 'body-subject' and the pre-personal state of being discussed in the previous chapter. The 'brain-body-world entanglement', like Merleau-Ponty's discussion of the body-subject, is a theory that recognises that I exist as a whole being. My experience is not split in two, in the division between mind and body. Instead, I exist as one being, but not in isolation from the world, or other beings. Affect theory also considers that I interact with the world in a more complex and intertwined way than a sealed-off, contained self would allow for, much as Merleau-Ponty hints at in the idea of the pre-personal. The 'brain-body-word' view of human existence in the world is one where I—my brain/body—exists in a complex set of connections and overlaps with the world. There are no clear borders, just as in the state of the pre-personal: a state of constant flux, change, and interaction.

Blackman argues that threshold experiences, such as séances, voice-hearing, and social contagions, are particularly interesting contexts for exploring the brain-body-world concept, as they challenge preconceived ideas of a contained self in various ways. She also argues that threshold experiences have been sidelined in modern science, not because they have proven to be wrong or non-existent, but rather because they do not fit with certain modern ideas of the self. As discussed in Chapter 2, in *Sonic Possible Worlds—Hearing the Continuum of Sound*, Salomé Voegelin discusses 'the absent, the un-sound, and the as yet un-heard, the imagined and the ignored' (Voegelin, 2014, p. 157). She discusses how the heard always carries within it the unheard (Ibid., p. 158). She goes on to say, 'We inhabit an audio-visual world knowing that there are other slices, variants of the same world, that co-exist but are seemingly un-accessible, because for various reasons we are not equipped or willing to reach and experience them'. Listening at the threshold allows me a context where I can open the 'other slices', the alternative spaces for listening. It allows me to re-imagine the paths of entanglement within the brain-body-world entanglement, discovering new paths and new spaces, where I am not necessarily restricted by my pre-conceived idea of a contained self. Listening at the threshold reimagines sound, frees it from its constraint of the 'real'. My work *Aural Séance*, discussed in detail in the previous chapter, suggests a perhaps' as yet un-heard' (Ibid., p. 157) sound world contained within concepts and ideas, within states of mind, emotions, and language. I might not hear the 'sound of loneliness' during the séance. But the idea that the 'sound of loneliness' or 'kindness' exists and is as real as the sound of the wind will open another world of sound, one I have yet to explore. By listening at the threshold, I allow for a shift in focus, which in turn allows me to redefine *how* I hear, *where* I hear, and what the '*I*' that hears really means.

Even in the traditional view of physical sound waves as the source of sound, it is a much more 'entangled' experience than for example the visual. While sounds I experience can

originate anywhere—far from me, or near to me—the experience of hearing is felt as being within the body. I am reminded of Nancy's 'sonorous, sonorized body' (2007, p. 43)—where the body resonates with sounds from within and without (Ibid.), both entering the body and escaping it, collapsing any distances of wherever they originated from. Of course, while the eye has eyelids, the ear does not have 'earlids'—thus leaving me always 'open' to any sounds around me. I am inside the sounds I hear—they are not contained and isolated, but are all around me, gaining access to me, to my mind, through my body. Sound itself seems to suggest the 'transport' (Blackman, 2014, p. 20). Blackman mentions as a principal component of threshold experiences—at the very least, a transport between *the inside and outside.* Listening, argues Blackman, implies 'transmission and dialogicity' (Ibid., p. 140). The directedness of listening is not simply about instilling and enacting the boundaries of a closed, singular psychological subject. Rather, listening implies 'communicational contact' (Ibid., p. 140). Listening, even if I consider it in its most traditional sense, is always a reaching out toward the world and an entering of the world into me. Considering listening in the brain-body-world context, listening is a reaching out along the entanglements that make up the brain-body-world network. I can listen inwardly as well as outwardly, and into the undefined space in between; sound moves freely between all those spaces. Considering inner listening and listening at the threshold reminds me that there is not one 'objective' way of listening. I will consider inner sounds, threshold listening experiences and the brain-body-world theory by analysing my performance piece *Sonic Contagion* (2019), performed at the Lead Performance Festival in 2019.

6.4 Sonic Contagion

The audience enters the room through a door that carries a warning sign (Figure 24):

'SONIC CONTAGIONS ARE PRESENT IN THIS BUILDING!...PLEASE DO NOT ENTER IF YOU HAVE NOT BEEN IMMUNISED'.

Once they enter the room, there are further notices, detailing what sonic contagions are and how they are dangerous (Figures 25 and 26). The audience walk around, reading, unsure what to do.

Suddenly a door at the far side of the room is pushed open, and a person runs into the room. She is dressed in a white gown—a hospital gown? —and has what looks like a gag covering her mouth, and what could be restraints tied to both her wrists (Figure 27). She looks around the room, taking in all the people in there. She has a notebook and a pen, and she starts to write manically, pulling the page out of the notebook when she is done. She grabs the nearest person to her by the arm. She starts to move, and makes the person move with her, as if she is making them dance to music only she can hear. She then hands them the page she tore from her notebook. She looks around once more, scribbles something down, tears the page out, grabs another person…and so it goes until she is moved through all the audience members, one by one. She then looks around, toward the door where she came in, as if she fears being followed. She runs out of the room through a different door and disappears. The audience leaves, each with an echo of a strange sound starting to sound in their mind, each a new carrier of the sonic contagion.

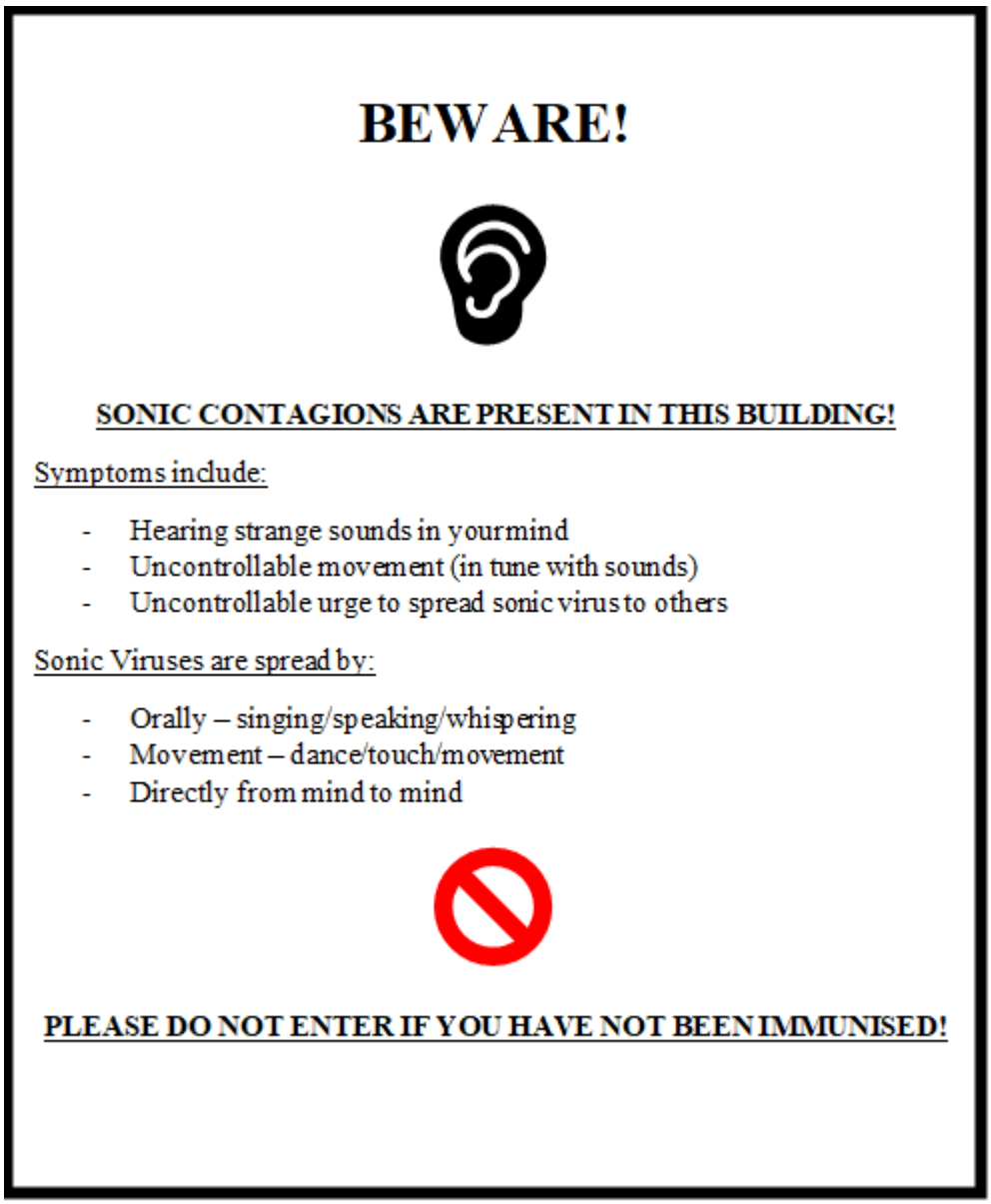


Figure 24. Warning on entering the room of the performance

SONIC CONTAGION

Sonic contagion, also called *Aural Virus* or *Aural Infection*, takes the form of sounds which affects the hosts body and mind. Like all viruses, its one purpose is to pass from human to human. As we restricted the aural virus's ability to travel orally (by restricting infected hosts ability to speak/sing) the virus started to spread via body movement.

As these have also become increasingly restricted in hosts, the virus now seems to be able to infect new hosts directly, mind to mind.

We, as of yet, do not understand how.

Example of Aural Virus sounds include:

- Music
- Screaming
- Metal against metal
- Humming
- 'Sound of fear'
- 'Sound of joy'
- Sounds from memory/childhood
- Voices of loved ones

Figure 25. Information leaflet 1

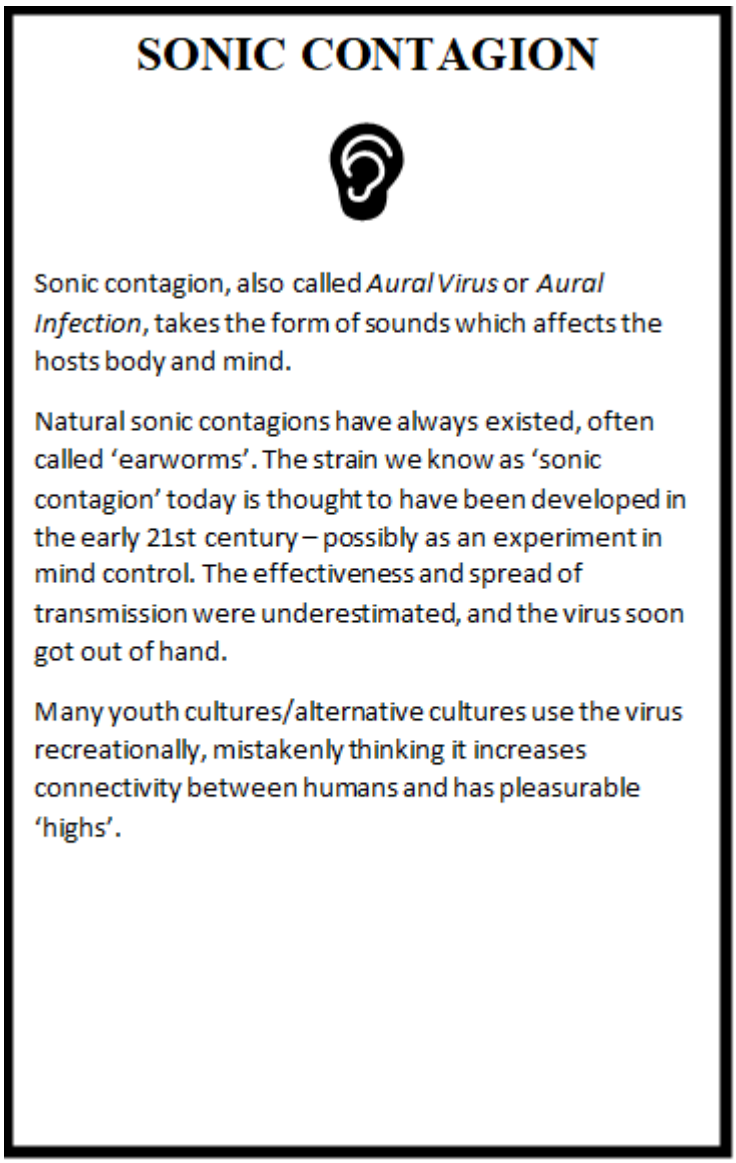


Figure 26. Information leaflet 2

Figure 27. Sonic Contagion *performance, Oxford*

In *Sonic Contagion*, I am exploring the idea of inner sounds that move freely between humans, untroubled by our attempts at controlling and containing them. This sounds like a farfetched idea, perhaps, but it is more common than we think. In *Sonic Warfare* (2010), Steve Goodman defines earworms as 'the effect of a seemingly innocuous piece of music lodging itself into the brain and refusing to leave' (Goodman, 2010, p. 146). He also points out that there are 'techniques for removal such as substitution, completion, donation, and extraction' (Ibid., p. 147). He goes on to list the techniques, such as replacing the earworm with other sounds, listening to the complete piece of music the earworm came from, or singing it out loud in the hope it gets passed on to another willing host. Earworms are, of course, annoying but not dangerous. The inner sound in *Sonic Contagion* suggests a scenario where the sonic virus is considered dangerous, and where attempts are made to stop its spread. *Sonic Contagion* imagines what would happen if the sonic virus were to evolve so that it could spread silently, via 'body movement or mind to mind' (Figure 25). Both the sonic virus in *Sonic Contagion* and an everyday earworm highlights how sounds can 'enter' me—my mind—without me being able to control it. 'An audio virology starts from the premise of a mode of audition that is 'always on'. As with all other continuously open network connections, the body becomes vulnerable to viral contagion' (Goodman, 2010, p. 145).

My body and mind as an 'open network' suggested by the workings of sonic viruses, is similar to the affect theory of the 'brain-body-world entanglement' discussed by Blackman. The sounds in *Sonic Contagion* highlight listening at the threshold at its most dangerous. The inner sounds explored in my previous works, discussed in previous chapters, were always to some extent searched out or listened for. The element of danger and the uncontrolled is there,

but not at the forefront, as it is here. The sounds in *Sonic Contagion* are inner sounds that invade—whether you want them to or not—and take over. We are just the hosts, to be used and discarded as needed. Oliveros speaks about our listening as something I have agency over. The inner sounds in *Sonic Contagion* have their own agency, independent of mine. It does not matter if I listen for them or not; it does not matter if I try to silence them or stop their movement. They are not bound by physical properties of sound, minds, bodies, or walls. All of this makes the sounds in *Sonic Contagion* a perfect sonic exploration of 'brain-body-world entanglement'.

6.5 'Sonic Contagion' and 'brain-body-world entanglement'

The 'brain-body-world' view challenges both the mind-body divide, and the idea that we are entirely closed-off subjects with clear boundaries between what is thought of as 'inside' and 'outside'.

> Rather than considering bodies as closed physiological and biological systems, bodies are open...characterised more by reciprocity and co-participation than boundary and constraint' (Blackman, 2014, p. 2).

The brain-body-world theory conceptualises humans as porous, open systems or networks, where body, mind, and environment are intertwined and connected. This entangled way of existing means that one is open to and have the possibility to be 'entangled' not only with the environment, but also with other beings—humans and non-humans alike. The 'brain-body-world' state has a minimum of three components, as is evident in the name: my mind, my body, and the world. I am suggesting that the inner sounds in *Sonic Contagion* freely travel across all these entities. They start as something I only hear in my mind; much like an earworm, it is a sound that is uncontrolled and 'strange'. Like any virus, the sonic virus wants to spread to other hosts. I propose, in this work, that the sonic virus does this, in part, by using the body of the host. It does so by either using my body to vocalise the sound, or to transmit it more directly from body to body—via movement or dance. The idea of movement, particularly rhythm, as something transmitted between or connecting people has been explored in various fields, such as psychology, biology (biorhythms) (Blackman, 2014, p. 101), and the social sciences (crowd behaviours, social contagions) (Ibid., p. 82). In *Sonic Contagion*, I suggest that the inner sonic virus moves with ease from my mind to controlling my body, and with the same ease uses my body to move, yet again, into the world, into other humans. It moves effortlessly across my mind and body and out into the world, allowing me to consider the entanglements discussed by Blackman in the brain-body-world theory as sonic pathways or connections. The inner sounds that I imagine in *Sonic Contagion* negate the idea of a clearly contained 'self' impenetrable to the outside world.

I have considered in previous chapters how thinking about inner sounds brings out certain qualities of sounds in general and also highlights our complex relationship with all sounds. In Chapter 3, I discussed how inner sounds do not easily fit into structures of classification and naming, such as taxonomies. In Chapter 4, I considered how our relationship to sounds is influenced by our fears around 'hearing things' and sound's ability to move easily between inner and outer, to put into question our ability to pass what Blackman terms the 'test of insanity'. In Chapter 5, I discussed the possibilities of a collective inner listening experience and how this starts to negate our closely guarded borders between ourselves and the outer world. The inner sounds in *Sonic Contagion* encompass all the qualities I have discussed previously: 1) the structural negating of categories discussed as part of the inner sound taxonomy and its limits; 2) the dangerous inner sounds in *Sonic Confessions* that challenge

sounds' connection to the 'real' and our ability to pass the 'test of insanity'; and 3) the transgressive inner sounds in *Aural Séance* exposing our porous border of 'self'. All these qualities of inner sounds point toward at least one of the entanglements in the 'brain-body-world theory. The inner sounds imagined as the aural virus in *Sonic Contagion* encompass all these states—the mind, the body, and the environment. By the nature of its effortless movement between them it also highlights how the properties of these sounds overlaps with the ideas that inform the 'entanglements' in the brain-body-world theory.

The inner sounds of *Sonic Contagion* and the collective listening experience of *Aural Séance* are both experiences of inner listening that are situated on the threshold: threshold experiences are experiences that 'operate across and between the self and other, material and immaterial, inside and outside' (Blackman, 2014, p. 145). The inner sounds explored in *Sonic Contagion* and also, to a certain extent, the inner sounds explored in *Aural Séance* and *Sonic Confessions*, are all situated on the threshold. The inner sounds in *Sonic Contagion* illustrate this the best, as already discussed, by how they move along the 'entanglements' of the brain-body-world, present in the inner sounds of both the other works as well. In her book, Blackman explores our relationship to threshold experiences, and how they are closely aligned with our cultural ideas of the Other. What does this mean for the inner sound experiences I have discussed that are situated on the threshold? Is there an overlap between properties of the threshold experience and inner sounds, or sounds in general? To pursue this question, I will, in the next section, discuss Blackman's ideas on how ideas of the threshold and the Other are connected, and how these overlaps with certain key qualities of sound and listening.

6.6 Sound and the 'Other'

In *Immaterial Bodies*, Blackman argues that certain ideas of selfhood which emerged in the 19th and early 20th century centred on the idea of suggestibility and will. Will and the ability to resist social 'suggestions' and influences became the definition of the 'normal' subject/person. Will and control became synonymous with civilisation, where susceptibility to suggestion became a sign of the primitive. This was mapped onto ideas of the feminine, the working classes, and colonial subjects. To be in control, to 'maintain clear and steadfast borders between self and other' (Blackman, 2014, p. 33) was to be civilised, a leader, male, white, sane, and wealthy. To be affected by suggestibility was to be Other and uncivilised—feminine, poor, working class, racialised, or insane. This, argues Blackman, meant that threshold experiences were explained away and ignored, as they brought into question the contained and controlled self. One of the areas where this is seen is in the attitudes to crowds, crowd behaviours, and social or emotional contagions thought to influence crowd behaviour. 'Crowd behaviour was seen to reveal the subject's openness to the other, human and non-human, and the cultural fears, fantasies, and desires which regulates this openness' (Ibid., p. 29).

The crowd and how it communicates, how 'many acts as one' is another context where the brain-body-world theory becomes hard to ignore. The people in the crowd, open to the suggestions of 'crowd behaviour' are seen as the opposite of the controlled, normal human. They become the Other by virtue of their openness, which signals their perceived lack of will and control. I have discussed how sounds situated on the threshold bring out the same qualities I previously identified as central to our relationship to inner sounds—they are perceived as uncontrolled and transgressive, revealing 'the subject's openness to the other' (Ibid.), among other things. However, as I discussed in previous chapters, these properties are inherent not only in inner sounds, but to some extent in all sounds:

> [Sounds'] relative lack of form creates perplexing relationships between the properties of states: inside and outside, material and immaterial, the way thoughts become sound through speech, and external sounds become sensory impressions that may be thoughts as they pass through the ears and outer membranes and into awareness. (Toop, 2011, p. 36)

Considering how these qualities overlap with the qualities identified by Blackman as marking out the Other in our cultural consciousness, is sound also sometimes considered as Other? What kind of sounds are aligned with the Other, if any, and what do they tell us about our relationship both to sound and inner sounds? In the next section I will explore a few instances when sound and ideas of the Other aligns and consider whether certain qualities inherent to our experiences of sound—inner and outer—contribute to this alignment.

In the last few sections of this final chapter, I outline what are the most important observations and ideas from the research undertaken throughout this project. In it, I am applying the arguments developed throughout this research to a discussion of sound and Otherness, which I believe is an important contribution to an understanding of sound and listening practices. I make no claim that this argument is fully developed; rather, I am outlining several intersections and observations that have the possibility of forming the basis for further research in to inner sounds, threshold listening, and Otherness.

6.7 The 'sonic Other'—sounding

One of the most famous examples of sound as a tool—or weapon—of the Other is the sound of the sirens in Homer's *Iliad*. Writer and artist Eleni Ikoniadou describes them in her essay *Falling* (2019) as 'female demons, beautiful, seductive, utterly dangerous, luring men to their death with the promise of pleasure that comes from singing "like Angels"' (Ikoniadou, 2019, p. 57). The sirens singing and the way Ulysses deals with the threat of their song goes right to the heart of why sounds are considered dangerous and Other. To escape the song of the sirens, Ulysses has his ship's crew use beeswax to plug their ears—the only defence against sound's ability to invade our bodies and minds. Ulysses knows that once he hears the song of the sirens, he will be unable to resist it, so he ties himself to the mast of the ship. He makes sure he *remains in control*—as Blackman observes, this resistance to suggestibility is essential in remaining both civilised and 'normal'. Ikoniadou notes that 'Ulysses is commonly viewed as the example par excellence of Western man; a cunning explorer, an adventurer, determined and witty enough to survive, even furthering his self-development along the way' (Ikoniadou, 2019, p. 57). Sound here is used by the Other—Woman—to threaten Man, his control of himself, and his mastery of the world. The only way for Ulysses to defend himself and his (male) crew against this Other sound is to shut it out: if it is allowed access, it will control him. Ulysses needs to tie himself to the mast to control himself. Ikoniadou concludes, 'In order to establish the ascendancy of reason over lust, and thus firmly install the patriarchy, man has to block his ears, enchain his body, and confine himself to a fixed and *deaf oculocentric existence'* (Ibid., my emphasis).

Ulysses— 'the example *par excellence* of Western man'—needs to protect himself from the feminine taking him over so that he and the patriarchy can remain in control. The fact that sound (singing, in this case) is the sirens' weapon of choice speaks directly to the qualities inherent in sound that I have discussed—its ability to transgress, to move from outer to inner, and our inability to control it. Those properties overlap here with the idea of the feminine, in particular: a feminine that is out of control, threatening the dominance of patriarchy. In this

sense the sirens can be thought of as embodying sounds of Otherness—uncontrolled, transgressive, and dangerous. Like the sounds in *Sonic Contagion*, these sonic weapons move with ease across inner and outer, me and the world, completely outside my control. Ulysses defends himself by making his border toward the world impenetrable—a 'deaf oculocentric existence' (Ikoniadou, 2019, p. 57).

There is no defence against the sounds themselves—no way to control or tame them. The only thing Ulysses can do is either block them out (by putting beeswax in his crew's ears) or physically restrain himself (by having himself tied to the mast). Like the sounds in *Sonic Contagion*, the sound of the sirens does not care about carefully constructed borders between you and the world. Like the sirens themselves, these sounds use you as they please. Ulysses is only safe by keeping these sounds on the outside, by keeping control of himself and his men (even though that control is achieved through artificial means). To be able to do this means that Ulysses demonstrates reason, wit, and most importantly, control to keep the sounds at bay. By keeping the sounds out, he also keeps the Other at bay.

The sound of drums provides a mechanism for spirit congress within African traditional religions and those of the African diaspora—a medium by which the Egun, or ancestors, may be brought forward into communion with the living. Far from superstition, this dynamic provokes lived remembrance of the foundations we are built upon—the mound of ancestral blood and bone from which we emerge into the contemporary moment (Nine, 2019, p. 221). In his essay 'Blood and Fire' (2019), artist and writer Anthony Nine traces the undercurrent of sounds in the rebellion and resistance of the African and Caribbean communities in the Americas and the United Kingdom. Despite violent and persistent attempts to eradicate and suppress African culture among the people who were brought as slaves to Europe and the Americas, traditions and beliefs still survived. Among these were drum patterns and music. Holding onto and remembering one's history and culture is an important strategy of both survival and resistance. Nine notes how cultural ceremonies played an important role in enslaved peoples' uprisings and revolts: 'In August 1971, a Vodou ceremony at Bois Caiman in the mountains of Haiti ignited the first successful slave revolt in modern history' (Nine, 2019, p. 222). To the ruling class of the colonial world, the drum seemed essential to the resistance. Not only were the slave revolts underpinned by traditional African spiritual traditions and ceremonies that included drumming, it was also feared that the drums were used to pass secret messages among the rebels. In Jamaica, which experienced its own violent slave rebellions, the drum was thought to be so dangerous that it was made illegal. Despite this, the sounds and rhythm survived underground, passed on through generations. Nine traces it in his essay through New Orleans Mardi Gras and brass bands, Jamaica's Rastafarians and dancehalls, to London's grime and dubstep. Sound within the African diaspora becomes something that will not be controlled or kept quiet. It is symbolic of the resistance and rebellion, always simmering under the surface. It is something that the dominant colonial culture is unable to understand and or control. It crosses borders of past and present, living and dead. It refuses to be contained in one space or place. It connects distant communities—connects the United Kingdom to Jamaica, connects the Americas to Africa.

> As in the fever dreams of paranoid slavers, rhythm encoded with meaning rang out far and wide, infecting the twentieth century with their viral message. Pot smoke and jump jazz. Sugar in my bowl and careless whisper. (Ibid., p. 224)

The sounds Nine is discussing also share key qualities with the inner sounds I discussed in *Sonic Contagion*—they are out of control, dangerous, uncontainable. A great deal of effort is made to stop these sounds, to silence them. Despite this, however, much like the sounds in

Sonic Contagion they 'adapt' and find new ways of moving and existing—'the underground resistance of natty dreadlock dems' (Nine, 2019, p. 225). The sounds of the sirens threaten 'Western man' and his reason and control by penetrating and controlling him. The sounds Nine discusses are even more insidious—unless they are silenced, they threaten everything. Like the revolutionary Haitian drums, they threaten the system. In both of these examples, the sounds discussed align, in different ways, with cultural fears and beliefs about the Other.

I am arguing that these two examples highlight sounds that are closely associated with groups commonly thought of as the Other in Western culture—women and black people. What makes these two 'Other-sounds' dangerous is that they are transgressive and uncontrollable. The sound of the sirens threatens to 'invade' Ulysses (man), with little respect for his reason, sanity, control, and closed-off inner 'self'. The sounds Nine describes, likewise resist control, and cross borders, space, and time, threatening the control of the current system. These properties are inherent in not only these particular sounds but in all sounds, as I have already discussed. I believe that in considering inner sounds, these properties are more prominent and harder to ignore. The inner sounds in *Sonic Confessions* have done away with any convenient ties to the real, which makes passing the 'test of insanity' tricky. The sounds in *Aural Séance* transgress and challenge what we like to think of as our contained inner self. In *Sonic Contagion*, any control I thought I might have had over inner sounds has disappeared—the sounds have their own agency, and they respect no boundaries or attempts at control. I am proposing that the qualities that align sounds so closely with the idea of the Other are easier to identify and discuss when we think about inner sounds, but they are always present in all sounds.

6.8 The 'sonic Other'—silenced

In her essay "The Diabolical Symphony of the Mechanical Age" (2003), published in *The Auditory Culture Reader* (2003), Karin Bijsterveld explores the ideas that inspired both European and American 'noise abatement' campaigns in 1900–1940. Bijsterveld notes that an important reason for the emergence of these campaigns was a changing sonic landscape, especially in the cities—new industry, the emergence of motor traffic, etc. Another important aspect of this aversion to 'noise' is the association of noise with the 'lower' classes. German philosopher Theodor Lessing, a key figure in the German noise abatement movement, claimed 'noise was the vengeance of the labourer working with his hands against the brainworker who laid down the law to the former. Silence, on the other hand, was the sign of wisdom and justice' (Bijsterveld, 2003, p. 167). This idea is central to almost all the noise abatement campaigns. In the UK, Dan McKenzie, James Sully, and Stanley Rowland all joined Lessing in producing various pamphlets claiming that 'the refined mind and cultivated self-control were now thought to be threatened by the mechanical and non-mechanical sounds of the lower classes' (Ibid., p. 168). Following on from this, the noise abatement campaigns were mainly about protecting the 'higher classes' from noise disturbances—no attention was paid, for example, to the dangers to workers in noisy factories (Ibid., p. 179). This view of noise as Other (working/lower class) connects to the way sound penetrates and 'invades' spaces, refusing to be contained. Leo Marx writes in 1964 on how the 'sounds of trains and factories...invaded the serene and secure 'peace of an enclosed space' (Ibid., p. 177). Sound (or noise) here, I believe, is considered as the Other, or as something that is associated with the Other due to properties I have already discussed—the uncontrollable, the refusal to be contained. There is also the attempt to control, shut out, or silence this 'sonic Other'.

Returning to women's voices/sounds as a 'sonic Other' in her essay 'Women as Animal, Women as Alien—Reclaiming Women's Voices' (2018) sound artist and writer Cathy Lane discusses cultural ideas about women's voices. She notes how women are often shut out of public life through the policing or silencing of their voices. Women need to learn how to speak with a lower pitch to be taken seriously—but not too low, as noted by Sally Feldman in her article "Why Do Women Screech When Men Shout?' (2008). Another way women's voices are made irrelevant or seen as lowly and unsophisticated is in the many ways they are compared to animals, such as hyenas, hens, or bitches (Ibid.). I am reminded of the beautiful, seductive, dangerous song of the sirens, and the male sailors' need to protect themselves. Lane's text also demonstrates how (male) society feels a need to protect itself from the female 'sonic Other' by silencing or making women's voices/sounds/songs irrelevant.

In her dissertation 'The Contours of the Sonic Color Line: Slavery, Segregation, and the Cultural Politics of Listening' (2007) and her book *The Sonic Color Line: Race and the Cultural Politics of Listening* (2016), Jennifer Lynn Stoever defines what she terms the 'sonic colour line'. She 'takes up the relationship between sound, race, and listening, examining the interpretive process through which racial difference has been made audible at crucial moments in American history' (Stoever, 2007, p. 4). Through sonic readings of texts—both factual and fictional—she identifies and discusses how sound plays an important role in how racism and slavery was established and enforced, and how sound, listening, and silence became a way to resist. She maps a complex sonic power structure, where sounds are used to 'identify' the Other through a 'shifting analytic boundary that renders certain sounds—and the bodies that produce and consume them—as 'Other': different, illegible, out of place, dangerous, unwanted, ignored' (Ibid., p. 20). Once identified, the 'sonic Other' is often silenced or remains unheard:

> Audible signs of black agency...must be physically squelched and/or recuperated through cultural narratives that accounted for it as meaningless, incomprehensible or even necessary 'noise'. (Ibid., p. 53)

Like the Jamaican slave drums referenced by Nine, whose perceived sonic threat to white supremacy led them to be outlawed, Stoever identifies how the 'sonic Other' is silenced within the context of race and slavery in the United States.

These three examples highlight the existence of a 'sonic Other'—class, gender, and race—and their silencing. I identified at the start of this chapter, by analysing inner listening as a threshold experience, certain qualities that align sound with our idea of the Other. These examples suggest to me that this overlapping of key qualities of sound, inner and outer, and key beliefs about the Other are important and worth exploring. While I would argue that any sound shares in these qualities—uncontrolled, uncontained, transgressive—it is my analysis and exploration of inner sounds that have brought these qualities to the forefront.

6.9 The 'sonic other' - conclusion

All the examples discussed here identify an intersection of groups which can be said to be considered as 'other' in western culture (women; black people; working class people) and sound. While all the authors in the examples I discuss touch on this overlap of the sonic and the 'other', what I have termed the 'sonic other', in analysing them together I bring out what I argue are interesting common threads. Firstly, an overlap of our relationships to certain sound qualities (unruly, uncontrollable, transgressive) with ideas of what sets the 'other' apart from 'us' ("the subject's openness to the other" (Blackman, 2014, p. 29)) and secondly the sounds

MADE BY the 'other' and how theses sounds are also often thought of as unruly and transgressive for example, the sirens songs; the drums of slave rebellions and the sound of working people.
The emergence in recent years of texts examining the area I have identified through analysing these examples, such as Stoever's *The Sonic Color Line: Race and the Cultural Politics of Listening* (2016*),* and Dylan Robinson's *Hungry Listening* (2020)*,* among others, point towards an emerging area of sound art and sound studies with a focus on sound and the 'other', and a conscious move away from the dominant Western/European perspective.
It is important to note here that it is my exploration of inner sounds, and the particular qualities and cultural beliefs towards sound and listening that a focus on inner sounds makes visible that have led me to the analysis and conclusion in this last part of my thesis. While this research does not have the scope to fully explore the ideas identified here – as I have acknowledged previously - I argue that it clearly demonstrates that my research into inner sound and hearing is not purely theoretical or of interest only to a small, specialised audience. Instead, this final argument of my thesis, identifying connections between inner sound, sound and the 'other' clearly shows how this, and future, research into inner sound and hearing is an important and fruitful area of sounds studies, which allows us to expand and develop our understanding of our relationships to sound, hearing and listening.

6.10 Conclusion

I started this chapter seeking to explore inner sound and listening at the threshold, and what that told me about inner sounds affinity to ideas of the Other. By exploring inner sounds as a sonic virus, as imagined in my performance work *Sonic Contagion*, I was able to map out how inner sound at the threshold overlapped with ideas of the 'brain-body-world' theory explored in affect theory. The overlap exists both because of sounds—particularly inner sounds—ability to transgress all the states of the brain-body-world, and because of the way this transgression confirmed listening as an experience that happens along the 'entanglements' in the brain-body-world state of being. This inner listening experience, which moves across the 'entanglements' is firmly situated on the threshold.

Blackman has identified the threshold and its properties as a place that holds considerable meaning with regards to ideas of the Other. Following on from her analysis, I discussed two instances where sound and the Other aligned, to try to discover when sound is Other, and if this connection to Otherness is something exclusive to inner sound alone. I also discussed three examples of silencing of the 'sonic Other'. To me, all the examples suggest in different ways the idea that sound can be aligned with cultural ideas of the Other, with varying consequences and outcomes.

This discussion of the overlap of sound and the Other is an outlining of ideas and conclusions that have come out of the argument I put forward through this research project. It is, in my opinion, an important contribution to our understanding of sound and listening practices. While I would argue that the properties of sound I am discussing in relation to ideas of the Other are present in all sounds, it is through an analysis of inner sounds that I can tease out these properties.

As I have already mentioned, I make no claims in this final chapter to have fully explored these ideas. Instead, I outline several interesting intersections, overlaps, and observations this study has brought to the surface, suggesting that they would make an important and interesting starting point for further research into inner sounds and inner hearing.

The properties of inner sounds that align it with threshold experiences—transgressive, uncontrolled—are clearly also, to some extent, present in all sound. Following on from this, the sense of danger of the Other is something that is central to all sounds. This realisation presents us with sounds that are dangerous, subversive, and transgressive, but also with sounds that are oppressed and silenced, as well as those that are part of the oppression and silencing of Others. What do we, as artists, do with this new understanding of what sound can be?

Conclusion

This research project started with a simple question: is there such a thing as ‘inner sounds’? When I started my research, there was a significant lack of any previous theory or discourse on inner sounds—sounds we experience as part of our inner worlds. I am surprised that even now, several years later, while recognising that sound art discourse has changed and developed in many ways, this gap in the field remains largely unchanged. The question I started with has remained throughout the research project, and has been joined by others: Does everyone hear inner sounds? How can we share and discuss our inner sound experiences? Are inner sounds dangerous? Can we listen inward, together? And most importantly: What does a deeper understanding of inner sounds mean for our understanding and relationship to sound in general?

By defining and analysing the particular properties of inner listening and sound, and their theoretical implications, I have gained a greater, more nuanced understanding of sound and our relationship to it.

I started this project by seeking to establish a context for researching inner sound experiences. It proved to be more difficult than I had anticipated, due to the lack of pre-existing writing and work on inner sound and listening. This lack forced me to expand my context outside sound art, to include listening theory, philosophy, psychology, and performance art. I then went on to discuss the difficulty of the English language to express and speak about sound—inner sound in particular. From that discussion, I identified both strategies for exploring and sharing inner sound experiences outside of conventional language, as well as the need to expand on my initial definition of inner sounds into a taxonomy of inner sounds. Through defining and analysing the taxonomy—understanding both what fit into it and what did not—lead me to consider a less rigid definition of inner sounds.

From here on, I focused on understanding the inner sound experiences that did not fit neatly into the taxonomy: what were they, and why did they resist categorisation? I started by considering the relationship between our attitude to inner sounds and auditory hallucinations. While I do not in any way suggest that inner sounds are the same thing as auditory hallucinations, I identified interesting overlaps between perceptions and beliefs of ‘hearing things’ and inner sounds.

Through considering Merleau-Ponty’s ideas of the ‘body-subject’ and the ‘pre-personal’ in the context of inner hearing, I was able to introduce and examine the idea of a collective inner listening experience. I also identify how a discussion of inner sounds and collective inner listening reveal interesting connections to affect theory, and the idea of the ‘brain-body-world’ entanglement.

In the final chapter of my thesis, I consider inner sounds, threshold listening, affect theory and the idea of a ‘sonic Other’. This chapter acts as the concluding argument of my research where I bring ideas I have discussed throughout the thesis—the perceived danger of inner sounds, collective inner listening and the porous self, inner listening, and threshold experiences—together into a discussion of sound and its relationship to cultural ideas of the Other.

It seems, looking back, that this research project has been an exercise in overcoming issues and problems. While this might be true, it is also true that leaning into and exploring these difficulties is where the study gains its most interesting insights and conclusions—a taxonomy of inner sounds, why inner sounds are perceived as 'dangerous', the techniques of collective inner listening and of inner listening at the threshold, and the relationship between sound, identity, and the Other.

I will now outline in more detail what I believe are important contributions to knowledge of this project.

Contributions to knowledge

1. Due to the limited vocabulary in the English language to express and discuss sounds in general, and inner sounds in particular, I identified the need to expand my initial definition of inner sounds. To address this, I outlined and defined a taxonomy of inner sounds. I identified four subcategories of inner sounds:

   - **Created inner sounds**—sounds that are actively imagined or created
   - **Conscious inner sounds**—inner sounds that are used as part of our thought processes
   - **Triggered inner sounds**—inner sounds triggered by images, objects, events, thoughts, emotions, or other stimuli
   - **Spontaneous inner sounds**—inner sounds we experience that are outside our control.

   I outlined the definition for each category, and also analysed the different categories relationship with each other, as well as pinpoint what made each category unique. While further development of the taxonomy and/or a vocabulary for inner sounds were not in the scope of this research project, the project establishes a foundation for further research in this area.

2. In discussing how we think *through* sound, I used Jean-Paul Sartre's ideas of the 'image-schema' to define and develop a corresponding 'sound-schema'. I show, using the structure of the sound-schema, that sounds are as integral to our thinking process and our understanding of the world as images or language.

3. An important claim to the contribution of knowledge for this research has been to define a theoretical discourse for inner sound and bring this into the general sound art discourse. Thinking about sound, listening, and sound art in relation to inner sounds and their particular qualities has raised several important perspectives and concepts:

   - Inner sound does not have a clear connection to the physical world and brings into focus the perceived dangers of 'hearing things', auditory hallucinations, and the way sounds penetrates and transgresses boundaries.

   - Considering a collective inner listening experience, in the context of Merleau-Ponty's pre-personal and affect theory, suggests the possibility of a 'hearing mind' as well as a negation of the closed-off, contained self.

- Following on from these arguments, inner listening can be theorised as a threshold experience, I argue that inner sounds, but also sounds in general, share several properties with what is traditionally considered properties of the Other.

I am not suggesting that any of these concepts are 'new' or original contributions to knowledge. I am arguing that a discourse of inner sounds, in highlighting these aspects of sound and listening and their connections, allows for a more nuanced and deeper understanding of sound, listening and sound art discourse.

Looking (listening?) forward

This research project has been concerned with defining and contextualising a discourse for inner sound and listening. In this process, the project has identified several interesting areas, that I was not able to fully explore. Looking toward the future therefore, there are several interesting points of departure for further investigations.

As I have already touched on, a discourse around inner sounds brings into focus how the English language lacks a nuanced vocabulary for sound. In response, in this study, I have created a taxonomy for inner sounds, as well as exploring other ways of communicating, outside or alongside language. The taxonomy is an interesting area for further analysis and development, presenting the possibility of a deeper understanding of our relationship to inner sounds. It also presents the opportunity to explore how language could develop to better express sound and listening experiences.

The intersection of affect theory and sound, both inner and outer, and listening, as I explore in both *Collective Listening* and *Threshold Listening* is an area that suggests interesting further research and experimentation. A discussion about inner sounds brings out particular properties inherent in sound and listening, which, when considered within the context of affect theory (ideas such as the brain-body-mind entanglements, social contagions, and rhythm, among others) suggest fascinating new insights and jump-off points.

I have not explored the aspect of memory and sounds, or what part memory plays in creating our inner sound world, as memory is a hugely complex area in itself. It would be interesting to look into the connection between memory and sound, from the perspective of inner sound and listening, in the future.

I concluded the thesis by discussing the idea of a 'sonic' Other, citing several fascinating contemporary texts on sound and listening. Identifying and discussing overlaps and connections between sound, affect theory and ideas of the Other is a fascinating area of exploration. Here, sounds—inner and outer—become dangerous, resilient, and rebellious, and also occasionally silenced. It suggests to me an area of research well worth exploring further in the future.

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Practice

Work created as part of the research project 'Mapping experiences of inner sounds'

Title	Year	Accessible at:
pages	*2015*	*https://www.victoriakarlsson.co.uk/pages.html*
Sounds of Longing and fear	*2015*	*https://www.victoriakarlsson.co.uk/sounds-of-longing-and-fear.html*
Undercurrents	*2016*	*https://www.victoriakarlsson.co.uk/undercurrent.html*
thresholds	*2017*	*https://www.victoriakarlsson.co.uk/thresholds.html*
murmur	*2017*	*https://www.victoriakarlsson.co.uk/murmur.html*
Sonic Margins	*2018*	*https://www.victoriakarlsson.co.uk/sonic-margins.html*
Sonic Confessions	*2017*	*https://www.victoriakarlsson.co.uk/sonic-confessions.html*
		https://www.victoriakarlsson.co.uk/sonic-confessions-a-score.html
		https://www.victoriakarlsson.co.uk/auralia-hum.html
Aural Séance	*2018*	*https://www.victoriakarlsson.co.uk/auralseance.html*
Wicked witch/you me	*2019*	*https://www.victoriakarlsson.co.uk/sonic-contagion.html*
Sonic Contagion	*2019*	*https://www.victoriakarlsson.co.uk/sonic-contagion.html*

APPENDIXES

Face-to-Face interviews (2013)—Review

These short interviews were conducted with the participants face to face, with the purpose of establishing if the participants experience sounds as part of their inner world, and if so, what kind of sounds and when/why they are heard.

All three participants answered yes to the question of hearing 'inner sounds'. They at first struggled to identify inner sounds or recall when they heard them. As they were asked to give examples of sounds, they all give examples of inner sounds.

'Say if I was thinking about….a particular, say a restaurant that we've been or wanted to go, then I'll relate to what sounds where there last time, busy, people, chatting and waiters.'.(Joanna)

'..if I'm thinking of an alarm, I know what an alarm sounds like, or a bee, I know it's going to buzz'.(Hope)

Mostly, inner sounds are thought to be as a sort of 'supplement' or addition to other thoughts, as in the examples above. The restaurant, or the bee, 'comes with' a sound, so to speak, that is part of thinking about a restaurant or a bee, but not the sole component.

When asked to imagine a sound, the participants relied on memory to think of an inner sound. (This is partly because of the structure of the question—which suggested thinking about a childhood memory of sound—should the question be phrased differently, the result might have been very different) One of the participants could only think of a recent memory,

'I'm thinking of the Christmas tree, all I can hear is when I chucked all the Christmas decorations on the table—all the ping, ping, pong, pong all the noises…'(Joanna)

and when probed could not think of any other examples.

One of the participants stood out from the rest as he only associated inner sounds with unpleasant experiences.

> *V—Is there a time when this* (the internal sounds) *happens more?*
> *J—When you're ill, and things. When things are wrong! For me. When things are weird. (Joe)*

After at first identifying that he was in control of the sounds and consciously had to think about them to 'hear' them, he later in the interview said

> *J—I think they come to me the most when I am freaking out about something. Not just like…when you are feeling overwhelmed by something those come to you anyway, probably because you are more aware of them at those times, probably also because where you are and you associate that in your memory maybe in some way. I mean like crowded horrible environments are the worst environments– (mimics crowd noise) Like when you are talking—on a night out and you are shouting at each-other but you can't hear what anyone is saying because of that noise. Might be that I have done that recently and it is in my memory.*
> *V—Are you in control of these sounds when you hear them—I mean in the sense that they are unpleasant and that you don't like them..?*
> *J—No, I don't think I am*

V—Can you stop them?
J—No. If it has got to that point that I am imagining a sound, then it must be some unpleasant sensation that I am experiencing, so if I'm feeling this, it is with sound…(Joe)

It is clear from the interviews that all three participants hear or experience 'inner' sounds of some sort. Where at the start of the interview they might struggle to understand or identify these sounds, the longer you speak about it, the more examples they can think of. Some of the experiences are within their control, where others, like the last example above, seems to be totally outside the control of the person experiencing the sound. Often, the sounds are part of more complex thoughts or inner experiences, involving images, inner speech etc.
There are also sounds that seem to be more conceptual, such as the 'sound of a restaurant'—even though this sound is connected to the 'real world' it is not the sound of a specific place or restaurant, it is a generic, conceptual sound that is felt to represent the idea of the sound of a restaurant. This suggests that sound is an important part of our inner world in a different way than just memories or the odd remembered piece of music. It suggests that it plays the same part as images or inner speech in thinking about and conceptualising ideas, emotions and the world.

Female, Originally Chinese, 25-35.
Interviewed by Victoria

Joanna—J
Victoria —V

V—Do you hear sounds in your thoughts?
J—Sometimes
V—What kind of sounds?
J—Relating to the subject I'm thinking of
V—Could you give me an example?
J—Say if I was thinking about….a particular, say a restaurant that we've been or wanted to go, then I'll relate to what sounds where there last time, busy, people, chatting and waiters
V—Do you ever hear sounds that are not related to what you are thinking about?
J—Yes and no. Because my mind jumps really quickly, so sometimes it might not be related but it's the topic I'm thinking ahead to..or behind, so…
V OK, Does that happen more at a particular time
J—Don't know….
V—OK
V—Do you feel like you are in control of the sounds, or do they just happen?
J—I'm in control as in I suppose I choose the sounds that I feel is relevant, consciously or sub-consciously, so no things just don't pop up.
V—So it's not like you think about a restaurant, you have to consciously think about the actual sound to hear it
J—yeah, I suppose in my head I must have thought about it, a particular song or something if we are going to a tapas place, or whatever, so it's all related to what I recognise, that are related to that place
V—Can you think about one now?
J—A restaurant?
V—Any sound
J—OK…….
V—Can you tell me what it is ?
J—I'm thinking of the Christmas tree, all I can hear is when I chucked all the Christmas decorations on the table—all the ping, ping, pong, pong all the noises, so it's more related to a particular time rather than….
V—Can you think about a sound from your childhood maybe, or from way back
J—Can't think of any……
V—OK, so mainly you hear these sounds where there is some sort of stimuli then, like the tree.
J—Mmmm…
V—Is there a particular place where you hear them more?
J—Suppose when it's quieter, when I focus more.
V—Thank you very much!

'Joe'
Male, British, 25-35

Joe—J
Victoria—V

V—Can you hear sounds in your mind?
J—I'm not sure. Because I can hear sounds when I'm having visual 'disturbances'…
V—And it is clear where they come from?
J—The flashes…(laughs)
V—From inside or from somewhere outside?
J—I can't quite say—it's like when you hear a high pitch whistle in your ear...you know, it's not from outside, but where is that actually coming from? Is it from the room?
V—From your body?
J—From your brain, isn't it!
V—If you where to locate it, does it come from your body?
J—from my ear!
V—From your body then?
J—I think so. Cause your eyes make this sound sometimes…if you ever had that…
V—No…
J—You can literally hear that happen—but in your eyes. And if it's a highpitched whistle it is in your ear, sometimes just one ear..you know? Everyone experiences that, right?
V—Yeah. So within your body, not in your mind.
J—I suppose that's every sensation isn't it? Like when you feel really sick, and you can't hear it, but that same, like, sensation of sound, that feels like a sense, that isn't from the outside. I'm trying to think of an example…
V—Is there a time when this happens more?
J—When you're ill, and things. When things are wrong! For me. When things are weird. Like when you are hungover! Not only are you plagued by whistles and bells and shit. And the room. And spinning! Actual sounds of spinning. And between sleep and waking, and you hear that sound, like when you are rushing up really quickly from something, what is that? Where is that located? Sometimes it's in your mouth as well! Maybe it's just the sound of your breath being drawn in, and you can just hear that and it sounds distant and weird.
V—So it's not located in the room then, but inside?
J—Physically, maybe, from inside your body, internally. But like you are coming up a tube really quickly.
V—Can you think of a sound, right now?
J—(makes whistling sound)
V—Why did you think of that sound?
J—Don't know. Probably because I have so many of those happen erratically in conversations, and things, and you have to go on with the conversation but all you can hear is this deafening squeal. And that happens quite often, and you are distracted by it. Alarm sounds!
V—Could you think of a memory of a sound, from way back?

J- I don't think I can…… I have to actually think….. They all feel really fraudulent, like I am creating them now, thinking of it now. Obviously I am, but from a memory point of view….

V—Why?

J—Because I am confusing lots of memories at once. I was trying to think of what do I significantly remember from childhood, and then I just think of fake key events, and then I thought about being on a holiday, and then I thought that's not even a memory, and then I could just hear like a dining room environment with lots of sounds at once, which is not even a thing…just the sound of generic—what is it called—'group' sound

V—So you can hear that?

J—Yeah, but that could be any time—like work last week—that kind of ambient noise

V—Do you hear that kind of sounds? Or do you have to actually think about them to hear them?

J—I think I have to think about them

V—Do you —think about them?
J—I think they come to me the most when I am freaking out about something. Not just like…when you are feeling overwhelmed by something those come to you anyway, probably because you are more aware of them a those times, probably also because where you are and you associate that in your memory maybe in some way . I mean like crowded horrible environments are the worst environments– (mimics crowd noise) Like when you are talking—on a night out and you are shouting at eachother but you can't hear what anyone is saying because of that noise. Might be that I have done that recently and it is in my memory.
V—Are you in control of these sounds when you hear them—I mean in the sense that they are unpleasant and that you don't like them..?
J—No, I don't think I am
V—Can you stop them?
J—No. If it has got to that point that I am imagining a sound, then it must be some unpleasant sensation that I am experiencing, so if I'm feeling this, it is with sound…
V—So just unpleasant sounds?
J—Yes I can't think of a sound like 'oh that's a nice sound that I create in my head' that I can't control. It's just the nasty ones that you can't make go away….

'Hope'
Female, British, 20-25

Hope—H
Victoria—V

V—Can you hear sounds in your thoughts?
H—Yeah, because I know what I'm thinking of and you create an association with a sound, like if I'm thinking of an alarm, I know what an alarm sounds like, or a bee, I know it's going to buzz
V—Do you hear them sometimes —so if you think of a bee you hear a buzz, but do you just sometimes hear a sound
H—Yeah I hear the timers from work! I think for people who work here it's a recurrent thing..
V—Does it happen often?
H—I hope not to often! No not very often… It happens in my sleep….
V—if it happens when you are awake, is it clear that it is in your head
H—it does happen when I'm awake! Yes it's clear that it is in my head…This makes me sound like I'm insane!
V—Does it happen at a specific time of day?
H—No. I think your subconscious mind might just set lose a timer in your head, unfortunately!
V—Could you think of a sound now—maybe a sound from when you where a child
H—OK…… I can hear people giggling, a childs giggle. Sounds like a horror film
V –Do you know why you think of that?
H—I think if you think of children—you think of giggling..or screaming
V—So it doesn't come from a specific time?
H—No. I know this sounds like a recurring theme—but the bees…They where chasing us once in the garden, and my brother shoved me behind him, to save himself—then I got in and slammed the door and they just sort of hit the door…that's the bees…
V—Does it ever happen that you hear sounds and you are not in control of them?

H—Yeah, in terms of the first question—do you hear sounds, I think everyone…you talk inside your head and then you get distracted, and you hear things. I constantly hear people say my name and they have NOT said my name….
V—Does that happen more during a certain time of day?
H—No, just generally.
V—Does it happen more at home, or away?
H—Not really , I think for most people you are just more likely to hear things when you are tired….
V—Thank you!

Survey Results (2014-2015)—Quantitative Analysis

Question	Reply	No of people
Do you hear sounds in your mind/thoughts?	Yes	30/32
	No	2/32
Is it clear to you these sounds are internal?	Yes	25/32
	No	7/32
What kind of sounds do you hear?	Phrases/language	7
	Chords/music/songs	8
	Buzzing/noise	3
	Body sounds	2
	Soundscapes	1
How do you feel when you hear these sounds?	Positive	5
	Negative	2
	Neither/Both	6
Is there a specific time where you hear these sounds?	No	11
	Yes	
	Pain/discomfort	1
	Quiet	6
	Sleep	4
	Praying	1
	White noise	1
	Creative mood	1
	Happy/unhappy mood	1
Is there a place where you hear these sounds more?	No	11
	Yes	
	Home	3
	Street	1
	Moods/inner trigger	8
	Car	2
	Bed	6
	Work	1
	Nature	1
	Public transport	1
If these sounds are outside your control how do they make you feel?	Positive	11
	Negative	5
	Neither/Both	12
Do you actively think of these inner sounds or do they happen outside of	Controlled	1

your control?		
	Uncontrolled	10
	Both	17
Do you know where these sounds originates?	No	11
	Yes	
	Pleasure	1
	Complex	8
	Dreams	2
	Anxiety	1
	Songs/Music	4
	TV	1
	People	2
	Memory	9
Is there anything specific that triggers these sounds?	No	6
	Yes	
	Mood	2
	Images	2
	Smells	1
	Exercise	2
	Nature	2
	Sounds	4
	Dreams	3
	Actions	1
	Reading/text	1
	Not sure	5
	Quietness	4

Survey Results (2014-2015)—Qualitative Analysis

The survey was conducted online, with the 32 participants asked to answer 15 questions relating to experiences of inner sounds.
In the introduction to the survey, the participants got this definition or explanation of 'inner sound'
'Her research investigates sounds in thoughts, asking if we hear sounds in our minds, what they mean to us and where they come from.
This survey is part of her research, where she is aiming to explore and understand our experiences of 'hearing' sounds within our mind'.

The majority of the participants (30/32) stated that they could hear or experience inner sounds in various forms. The sounds hear by the participants ranged from buzzing sounds to body sounds, phrases/speech, music and complex soundscapes. 7 of the participants heard language or speech and 8 heard music in various forms, making these categories the most common. Most of the participants felt the sounds where either a positive experience or both negative and positive depending on the situation and sounds heard. Only 2 participants identified the experience as negative.

When asked what triggered the inner sounds, the majority of the participants identified quietness as an important factor, while a few also connected the experience to emotional states, and one participant pinpointed painful experiences as the time when he experienced inner sounds. This theme carried through to answers on places where these sounds were heard more often—in bed before sleep being the most common place, followed by at home. The largest trigger of inner sounds was identified as emotional states or other inner experiences such as memories, other thoughts etc.

The majority of the participants felt that it was clear to them that the sounds they heard or experienced were internal and not 'real'. The majority of the participants agreed for the most part the sounds they heard where at least partly outside their control. This was not thought to be a negative experience for most of the participants however—it was either thought to be positive, or both negative and positive depending on the situation.
When asked if they could pinpoint where these sounds originated from, the answers ranged from dreams to anxiety, pleasure, TV and movies to memory. The majority of the participants felt the sounds they heard came from or had its origin in memory.

Although a small sample, the results above seem to suggest that the majority of people are familiar with hearing inner sounds or have at least in some point of their life experienced it. Although some trends can be identified in pinpointing specific environments where these sounds are heard, the most important factor is suggested to be other inner experiences, such as emotional states, thoughts, dreams and memories.

Sonic Confessions—completed questionnaires (examples)

Pre-appointment questionnaire

Is your mind haunted by inner sounds? Do YOU hear sounds as part of your thoughts, desires, fears and emotions? The Sound Doctor can help you!

1 Do YOU hear inner sounds – sounds in your mind?

☑ **Yes** ☐ **No**

2 What kinds of inner sounds do you hear?

Things that I don't want to hear...
They never stop. "Don't do this...", "Why did you do that?"

3 How do you feel about your inner sounds?

Scared, anxious, annoyed, tired, desperate

4 Are there some inner sounds you keep to yourself and never talk about?

☑ **Yes** ☐ **No** ☐ **Prefer not to say**

5 How does these SECRET inner sounds make you feel?

Scared of myself.

Please be honest in our session with the Sound Doctor.

She can't help you unless you are honest.

Jo 1:2-4-5

Pre-appointment questionnaire

Is your mind haunted by inner sounds? Do YOU hear sounds as part of your thoughts, desires, fears and emotions? The Sound Doctor can help you!

1 Do YOU hear inner sounds – sounds in your mind?

☒ **Yes** ☐ **No**

2 What kinds of inner sounds do you hear?

doubts, anxieties, ego, praise

3 How do you feel about your inner sounds?

SHUT UP.

4 Are there some inner sounds you keep to yourself and never talk about?

☒ **Yes** ☐ **No** ☐ **Prefer not to say**

5 How does these SECRET inner sounds make you feel?

Fearful

Please be honest in our session with the Sound Doctor.

She can't help you unless you are honest.

Pre-appointment questionnaire

Is your mind haunted by inner sounds? Do YOU hear sounds as part of your thoughts, desires, fears and emotions? The Sound Doctor can help you!

1 Do YOU hear inner sounds – sounds in your mind?

☑ **Yes** ☐ **No**

2 What kinds of inner sounds do you hear?

thoughts, single words,

3 How do you feel about your inner sounds?

I like them - they let me think in pictures.

4 Are there some inner sounds you keep to yourself and never talk about?

☑ **Yes** ☐ **No** ☐ **Prefer not to say**

5 How does these SECRET inner sounds make you feel?

sad and a long way from home.

Please be honest in our session with the Sound Doctor.

She can't help you unless you are honest.

JH 2:30pm

Pre-appointment questionnaire

Is your mind haunted by inner sounds? Do YOU hear sounds as part of your thoughts, desires, fears and emotions? The Sound Doctor can help you!

1 Do YOU hear inner sounds – sounds in your mind?

☑ **Yes** ☐ **No**

2 What kinds of inner sounds do you hear?

ringing - glooping - music - voices -

3 How do you feel about your inner sounds?

ambivalent

4 Are there some inner sounds you keep to yourself and never talk about?

☑ **Yes** ☐ **No** ☐ **Prefer not to say**

5 How does these SECRET inner sounds make you feel?

a bit creepy

Please be honest in our session with the Sound Doctor.

She can't help you unless you are honest.

Lily 0 2:15pm

Pre-appointment questionnaire

Is your mind haunted by inner sounds? Do YOU hear sounds as part of your thoughts, desires, fears and emotions? The Sound Doctor can help you!

1 Do YOU hear inner sounds – sounds in your mind?

☒ **Yes** ☐ **No**

2 What kinds of inner sounds do you hear?

white noise, screams, laughter, children's voice

3 How do you feel about your inner sounds?

sometimes calm sometimes not

4 Are there some inner sounds you keep to yourself and never talk about?

☒ **Yes** ☐ **No** ☐ **Prefer not to say**

5 How does these SECRET inner sounds make you feel?

distracted, frustrated, irritated

Please be honest in our session with the Sound Doctor.

She can't help you unless you are honest.

IRB 1:15 pm

Pre-appointment questionnaire

Is your mind haunted by inner sounds? Do YOU hear sounds as part of your thoughts, desires, fears and emotions? The Sound Doctor can help you!

1 Do YOU hear inner sounds – sounds in your mind?

☑ **Yes** ☐ **No**

2 What kinds of inner sounds do you hear?

INNER MONOLOGUE.
QUESTIONS, ADVICE; LITTLE BITS OF MUSIC.
SOUND EFFECTS; "CANNED LAUGHTER"

(AAARGH! SPLAT.)

(WHOOSH!)

3 How do you feel about your inner sounds?

THEY ARE A PART OF ME.
I COULDN'T LIVE WITHOUT THEM. (I ENJOY THEM ETC)

(PAP + 3 APPS)

4 Are there some inner sounds you keep to yourself and never talk about?

☐ **Yes** ☐ **No** ☐ **Prefer not to say**

NOT SURE. PROBABLY WITHOUTS THAT I DON'T WANT TO SAY

5 How does these SECRET inner sounds make you feel?

LIKE A UNIQUE VERY NORMAL GET NOTHING TO WORRY ABOUT SORT OF CHAP.

Please be honest in our session with the Sound Doctor.

She can't help you unless you are honest.

Andrew 2:45.

Pre-appointment questionnaire

Is your mind haunted by inner sounds? Do YOU hear sounds as part of your thoughts, desires, fears and emotions? The Sound Doctor can help you!

1 Do YOU hear inner sounds – sounds in your mind?

☑ **Yes** ☐ **No**

2 What kinds of inner sounds do you hear?

music → songs I like & don't like, often fragments repeated phrases like parts of plays, poems or jokes

3 How do you feel about your inner sounds?

they can get annoying. Especially when I try to change the record, but the old one keeps coming back.

4 Are there some inner sounds you keep to yourself and never talk about?

☐ **Yes** ☑ **No** ☐ **Prefer not to say**

5 How does these SECRET inner sounds make you feel?

Please be honest in our session with the Sound Doctor.

She can't help you unless you are honest.

Pre-appointment questionnaire

Is your mind haunted by inner sounds? Do YOU hear sounds as part of your thoughts, desires, fears and emotions? The Sound Doctor can help you!

1 Do YOU hear inner sounds – sounds in your mind?

☑ **Yes** ☐ **No**

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Scared, anxious, annoyed, tired, desperate

4 Are there some inner sounds you keep to yourself and never talk about?

☑ **Yes** ☐ **No** ☐ **Prefer not to say**

5 How does these SECRET inner sounds make you feel?

Scared of myself.

Please be honest in our session with the Sound Doctor.

She can't help you unless you are honest.

Robert 3:15pm

Pre-appointment questionnaire

Is your mind haunted by inner sounds? Do YOU hear sounds as part of your thoughts, desires, fears and emotions? The Sound Doctor can help you!

1 Do YOU hear inner sounds – sounds in your mind?

☑ **Yes** ☐ **No**

2 What kinds of inner sounds do you hear?

voices, presumably my own, mostly theirs (friends, people I've met)

3 How do you feel about your inner sounds?

fine

4 Are there some inner sounds you keep to yourself and never talk about?

☑ **Yes** ☐ **No** ☐ **Prefer not to say**

5 How does these SECRET inner sounds make you feel?

alive

Please be honest in our session with the Sound Doctor.

She can't help you unless you are honest.