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Spectral Soundscapes: Exploring Spaces of Remembrance through Sound

By *Iain Foreman*

Abstract

In this article I discuss the relationship between landscapes, sounds and remembrance. While acknowledging the importance of bodily presence in processes of emplacement, I also consider the ways in which this presence is disrupted by absence and hauntings. Reflecting on sound walks around the abandoned and ruined villages of the Ara Valley in Northern Spain I explore methodological approaches that unsettle the immersive relationship between self and place and consider ways in which place is shaped through haunting rather than dwelling. This perspective shatters both linear temporality and accounts of embodied emplacement. In relation to this perspective, I consider the work of W.G. Sebald, in whom I discover an exemplary 'poetics of suspension', and explore the translatability of this poetics into the methodology and interpretation of audio practices and finally consider their potential role as 'sonic memorials'.

Keywords

Memory, remembrance, loss, soundscape, spectral geography, Sebald.

Introduction

The greater the distance, the clearer the view: one sees the tiniest details with the utmost clarity (Sebald *The Rings of Saturn* p. 19).

One of the overwhelming conclusions reached following a sustained interest in sound over the last thirty or so years concerns the intimate connections between sound and place. This intimacy can even be described, as Steven Feld (1996) suggests, as a 'way of knowing', an 'acoustemology' or, as John Drever observes, a kind of 'love of place', topophonophilia: the rapport, or affective bond between place, space, sentiment and sound (2007). The emphasis on *presence* that concepts such as these underline is useful when accounting for the rich phenomenological experiences that these researchers and many others have had, but when confronted with places that have been abandoned and whose distinctive soundscapes have disappeared, what becomes present is, in fact, absence and loss. As this absence and loss resonates, spatial horizons recede, and in their place emerges a different temporality in which the spectral disrupts our embodied presence and we become affected by *distance*.

By exploring the ways in which remembrance is expressed in a soundscape, in this article I shall suggest that an insistence on our immersive relationship with sounds has been at the expense of a distancing perspective in which the phenomenological connection of self and world is severed. While prevailing arguments suggest that remembering is an active process of being-present in the world (Casey 2000) there is also a concern that we recognise an articulation of presence as "the tangled exchange of noisy silences and seething absences" (Gordon cited in Thrift 1999 p. 316–7). Thus, as Thrift acknowledges, an 'ecology of place' must take into account that "places are 'passings' that 'haunt' us" and are, ultimately, always out of reach (Thrift 1999 p. 310). Our sense of place then, rather than simply expressing embodied intimacy, also demands a recognition and acceptance of 'hauntings'.

Audio culture can, and has, taken central stage in the on-going reflections on this demand especially keeping in mind that sound is, itself, as David Toop recognises,

a haunting, a ghost, a presence whose location in space is ambiguous and whose existence in

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time is transitory. The intangibility of time is uncanny – a phenomenal presence both in the head, at its point of source and all around – so never entirely distinct from auditory hallucinations. The close listener is like a medium who draws out substance from that which is not entirely there. (2010 p. xv)

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Abandoned village soundscapes

While so-called spectral geographies have strongly emerged as a contemporary challenge to our phenomenological conceptions of landscape¹, in this article I attempt to develop the notion of spectral beyond an ontological, or hauntological 'unearthing of ghosts' towards a perspective in which absence itself resides at the centre. I was faced with this experience during a period of time spent among the hundreds of abandoned villages that can be found in the Aragonese Pyrenees in Northern Spain and, upon returning, it has forced me to think about different ways of recording sound: ways of documenting or representing this fragmented, dislocated, uncanny, haunted experience. It has led me to question non-representational forms of writing and research that devalue the representational in favour of an immersive liveliness which, I hope to illustrate, leaves little space to account for loss and distance.

One of the first steps I took in trying to make sense of sound's role in these processes was via an exploration into the nature of the nostalgic impulses I encountered particularly with regards to sound.² One of the most striking episodes during my time spent in Aragon occurred when I attended a meeting at the regional town hall in Fiscal, in the province of Huesca, in which plans were underway to restore a trio of abandoned villages, Jánovas, Lavelilla and Lacourt, after the inhabitants had finally won a battle to reclaim their villages following the decision that a dam, to be built back in 1945, would, in fact, never be erected. The history of expropriation the former villagers endured is long and traumatic but the meetings held in the town hall provided occasion to remember with the purpose of restoring aspects of a once thriving community. A set of 'Special Plans' drawn up by a team of architects and town-planners were developed for this meeting to talk explicitly about the symbolic aspects that the former inhabitants associated with their villages. Chief among these were memories that were defined and distinguished by their sonic or aural attributes. As I later accompanied some of the former villagers to their old homes, the ruined village became a portal into a past soundscape with children running along the cobbled streets, the treasured chime of the church bell, the *acequias* (irrigation channels), the well, the spring, the old blacksmith and the mill.

I later identified this 'nostalgic' portal with Svetlana Boym's (2001) description of the first of two etymological roots of the word: *nostos*, a restorative impulse which attempts to reconstruct the lost home and the sense of *presence* that such aural memories evoke. However, I clearly sensed another dimension in which the place itself was haunted. Rather than being filled with memory it was defined by absence and emptiness. Thus, I came to realise that the former residents were suspended between the restorative impulse and Boym's other etymological root of nostalgia: *algia*, a longing that has no place of dwelling and presence. This is a longing that "lingers on ruins, on the patina of time and history, on uncanny silences and absences and on dreams" (Boym 2001 p. 23).

In order to flesh out this reflective impulse, I turned towards recent work in the geography of landscape that has attempted to challenge a phenomenological worldview with its relational ontology and exploring landscape and memory in terms of "absence, distance, displacement and the non-coincidence of self and world" (Wylie 2009 p. 279). What these geographies have precipitated in my mind are a concern to 'record' not merely within the temporal horizons of being-there, being-present, but also the presence of absence and, more importantly, a wider, telescoped temporality in which past, future and present co-exist. Thus, for example, Edensor's work on the industrial ruins of factories and warehouses has shown the ways in which absence is made present in the spaces of industrial ruins, with objects "annouc[ing] their presence by the hole or shape or silhouette they leave behind" (2005 p. 118). In short, absence can be understood as having some kind of materiality: ... absence can have agency (it 'acts' or 'does things')" (Meyer and Woodthorpe 2008 p. 10).

With this in mind, I began to consider the ways in which affective intensities normally associated with the materiality of remembered sounds can be reframed according to the haunting aspects of a soundscape: the simultaneity of absence and presence, of a community and a way of life that is missing and cannot be nostalgically restored. This suggests that remembrance, commemoration and memorialising is not only about embodied engagements with and by the world, but also, and perhaps even more so, about the distances, loss, and absences constitutive of the entire experience (Wylie 2009).

One of the ways in which to question this link between an embodied sense of place and sound is to

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consider the role of the soundwalk in remembrance. In their chapter exploring the importance of walking in field research Ingold and Lee observe that

[w]e cannot simply walk into other people's worlds, and expect thereby to participate with them. To participate is not to walk into but to walk with — where 'with' implies not a face-to-face confrontation, but heading the same way, sharing the same vistas, and perhaps retreating from the same threats behind (Lee & Ingold 2006 p. 69).

But what struck me most as I walked with the former inhabitants of Jánovas, Lavelilla and Lacourt was that our aural horizons were far from shared. Soundscape, recollection and perception did not fuse or coincide with each other. Neither was "singly present and replete in themselves, but all held tense and tangled nonetheless" (Wylie 2009 p. 277). I wasn't walking with but walking alone. All I heard was absence and loss.

Poetics of suspension

Reflecting on these perspectives led me to reconsider the work of W.G. Sebald in light of his literary approach and consider how such a methodology could be translated into audio culture, phonography and soundscape studies. The unique significance of Sebald's prose, as Amir Eshel argues, lies in "its *formal characteristics* rather than simply in its thematic domains" (2003 p. 74 my emphasis). Moreover, rather than simply thematising remembrance, Sebald initiates a "poetics of suspension": a poetics which "suspends notions of chronology, succession, comprehension, and closure" (ibid.).

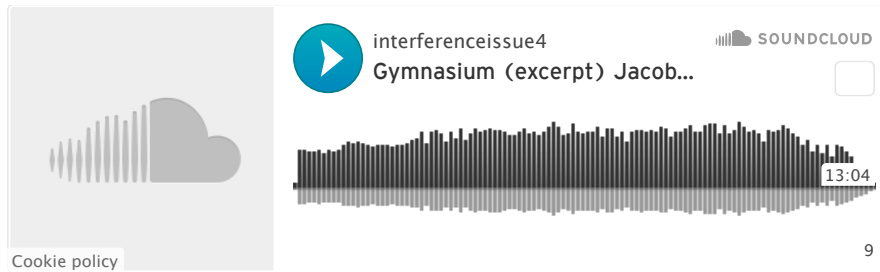
How can we translate this poetics of suspension into audio culture? Contrary to the intimate relationship between sound and place discussed at the opening of this article, the phonography severs sound from place. It distances us from what is present. For some, this is cause for concern. The process of listening to a place is so bound up with notions of presence that a recording suggests belatedness, an absence of being-there, and an absence of presence. Among those concerned is, of course, Murray Schafer whose critical reflections on this process lead him to describe a certain schizophonia. He writes, "[w]e have split the sound from the maker of the sound. Sounds have been torn from their natural sockets and given an amplified and independent existence" (Schafer 1994 [1977] p. 90). In a related way, Tim Ingold is critical of the conceptual idea of isolating different scapes, in particular soundscapes, since they separate the aural from our "immersion in, and commingling with, the world in which we find ourselves" (2007 p. 11). A soundscape as such, he argues, can only exist once it is rendered by a technique of sound art or recording "such that it can be played back within an environment (such as a darkened room) in which we are otherwise deprived of sensory stimulus" (ibid. p. 10).

Thinking about soundscapes this way, in terms of the absence of presence urges us to think about their uncanny nature. Writing about landscapes more generally, Jean-Luc Nancy suggests that as a concept they are less about 'location' as 'dis-location', "void of presence and giving no access to any elsewhere that is not itself" (2005 p. 59). As a depth of absence, a place of strangeness or estrangement in which presence is withdrawn, a soundscape in itself is perfectly suited to the task of responding to the impasse I confronted following my explorations of the abandoned Aragon villages.

With this in mind, turning to back to Sebald's poetics, what I found most affecting in his work -beyond a shared interest in exploring seemingly irretrievable aspects of the past – is his creation of a 'melancholic archive': a "repository of depletion and loss ... a kind of inexhaustible loss, depletion without end" (Sheehan 2012 p. 12). The melancholic archive telescopes notions of time, converting the scientific measurement of time into non-linear melancholic time "a time only measurable through loss and absence and their affective correlatives of grief, anguish, desolation, and so on. It is a negative time that cannot be recovered in the way that, say, Proust's lost time can be" (ibid. p. 13).

Four rooms

I would like to suggest that one of the most effective aural 'melancholic archives', a representation that is itself haunted, is Jacob Kirkegaard's sound instalments set in four abandoned spaces inside the Zone of Exclusion in Chernobyl. He labels these four rooms 'empty memorials'. Church village, auditorium, gymnasium and swimming pool, these rooms were once socially active meeting points but Kirkegaard chooses to listen to and record the silence in each room in order to "unlock a fragment of the time existing inside the zone" (Kirkegaard 2006).



AUDIO SAMPLE 1: *GYMNASIUM*: JACOB KIRKEGAARD: FROM *FOUR ROOMS*: TOUCH 2006. WITH PERMISSION FROM THE ARTIST

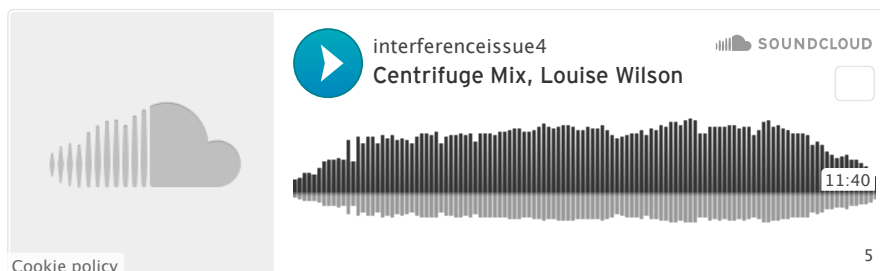
The sound of each room was evoked by sonic time layering: In each room, he recorded 10 minutes of it and then played the recording back into the room, while at the same time recording it again. This process was repeated up to ten times. As the layers got denser, each room slowly began to unfold a drone with various overtones (ibid.).

Kirkegaard's method works with "the deserted layers of our time which bury our own phantoms ... the lacunary layers which we juxtapose according to variable orientations and connections" (Deleuze 1989 p. 244). Walter Benjamin refers to ruins as allegories (1977 p. 178); both point beyond themselves; both comprise of layers, like a palimpsest. In this work there is a tension between listener and listened to, between the audible and the inaudible, the living presence of the ruin with absence its point of focus. More crucially, perhaps, in the ruin and the palimpsest – and in both Sebald's and Kirkegaard's vision – the past has physically merged into the setting. The ruin is an allegory of history.

A record of fear

In contrast to phenomenological ontologies of practice and performance, the metaphor of the palimpsest (from the Greek *palimpsestos*, from *palin* 'again' + *psēstos* 'rubbed smooth') is appropriate in describing this methodology. It suggests coming and going, erasing, fading away into permanence, creating traces, rubbing smooth. This monumental topography of the past finds its audio equivalent in the notion of 'sites' developed by Schrimshaw (2011, 2012b). Contrasting the place and place-based or site-specific soundscape compositions typical of Acoustic Ecology with the idea of 'sites of sound' Schrimshaw writes that "the notion of site is not rigidly fixed to the specific, but rather invokes a spatial capacity for mutability, a notion of space as being in flux, as unfinished, as proto-place being composed or decomposing" (2011). Again contemplating ruins and abandoned spaces, Louise K. Wilson captures these qualities and capacities in her sound installations in Orfordness entitled *A Record of Fear* (2006).

I was struck by the conspicuous range of sounds and prevalence of anecdotes involving sound. ... I started to listen in on these extra-ordinary sounds that travel around the now-derelict military buildings. The wind animates the site, producing noises like oddly tuned musical or percussive instruments. Flute-like harmonics on top of the Bomb Ballistic building hit me first – a breathy presence in the steel railings of the external staircase that provides a soundtrack to a landscape that encourages just standing and staring. Elsewhere, in the Control Room, the wind intermittently enters the building through discrete wall holes to produce symphonic "voices" (2006 p. 29).



AUDIO SAMPLE 2: *CENTRIFUGE MIX*: RECORDINGS OF THE WORKING CENTRIFUGE AT AWE ALDERMASTON (PREVIOUSLY IN USE AT AWRE ORFORDNESS), TEMPORARILY INSTALLED IN LAB 2; LOUISE WILSON: FROM *RECORD OF FEAR* THE NATIONAL TRUST/ ENGLISH HERITAGE 2006. WITH PERMISSION FROM THE ARTIST

Wilson explains that her work was created "to make audible what is absent or intangible" (Woodward 2011 p. 36). In this way, as Toop notes, "a residue is collected from a ruin, suggestive of its secret past

as an eavesdropper listening on a global scale, yet constructing a future from the relevance of the site for contemporary concerns" (Toop 2010 p. 229). In this example, by drawing attention in particular to the sounds and silences of this "any-space-whatever" the palimpsest in which the future emerges is revealed.

Dreams of presence?³

While clearly articulating the link between soundscape and remembering and offering a spectral account of our relationship between listening and place, to what extent do these recordings still attempt to animate empty spaces? And to what extent does this animation depend on the co-presence of self and soundscape? Do they continue to be dependent on the phenomenological tropes of immersion and presence? Wilson's desire to make audible what is absent or intangible and Kirkegaard's unlocking a fragment of time suggests a bringing-to-presence, an unearthing, re-presenting. But sound is dissipating. Its coming and going quality distinguishes the sonorous from the quality of presence of the visual (Nancy 2007).⁴

To what extent, then, can an account of the sonorous, a 'soundscape' or an installation record the non-coincidence of self and world? My attention was drawn to this way of thinking about, seeing or listening to landscapes thanks, in part, to John Wylie's article about the memorial benches at Mullion Cove (2009). What Wylie's approach manages to do is illustrate that the loving memory that the benches connote is also tied up with other affects, namely loss, loneliness and distance. Thus the kind of 'love of place' or topophilia that is so often fortified by soundscape compositions, sound walking and Acoustic Ecology and its concomitant strengthening of the affective bonds between the listener, place and 'acoustic community' (Truax 2001) can be enervated by 'negative' affects. This echoes the complexity of nostalgia itself split between restorative and reflective impulses.⁵ In a similar way, Paul Harrison, reflecting on Ingold's immersive phenomenological landscapes that represent a paradigmatic perspective on our aural engagement with the world, observes that:

There is no exit and no outside to the rhythmic flows and immanent forces which compose Ingold's landscape and, as such, there can be no taking leave, no comings or goings, worthy of the name . . . Under the anonymous vigilance of Ingold's lens, things flow into each other without bleeding; there is exchange and transformation without expenditure or loss (2009 p. 1003).

To begin to think about ways in which soundscapes are not only understood in terms of their iconographic or representational nature – the sound marks, sound symbols, sonic horizons and sound romances of the practice-based ontologies that inform the World Soundscape Project,⁶ or the immanent forces and flows that emerge through Wilson's spectral recordings – but rather emerge through estrangement, exile and non-belonging in which place and 'home' are often in conflict with distance, loss and absence, demands a different form of presentation. However, as I have already mentioned, the schizophonic nature of sound recording, or the scaping process that is such an anathema to scholars such as Ingold already provides us with the very means through which to find an exit from the rhythmic flows and immanent forces that have been traditionally sought through the evocation of soundscape.

But how can phonography itself form a mode of critical reflection on this process? How can it respond to the demand of finding different, oblique ways to think about the process of remembering? To address this, I would like to turn, once again, to Sebald to find appropriate methods and forms which can help to trace out a process of distance and absencing, of loss and vanishing. In his fourth and final portrait of the lives of Jewish émigrés in *The Emigrants* (2002), the author reflects on the methodology of the fictional artist Max Ferber: a methodology of erasure, a palimpsest in reverse:

Since he applied the paint thickly, and then repeatedly scratched it off the canvas as his work proceeded, the floor was covered with a largely hardened and encrusted deposit of droppings, mixed with coal dust . . . and that process of drawing and shading on the thick, leathery paper, as well as the concomitant business of constantly erasing what he had drawn with a woollen rag already heavy with charcoal, really amounted to nothing but a steady production of dust... (2002 p. 162).

This process of destruction is simultaneously one of creation. Max Ferber, like Sebald himself, works at the "Roche Limit" (Gray 2010 p. 42), that point at which the fragments of Saturn's satellites remain suspended and form rings, operating at the liminal border between dispersion and coalescence, disorder and order, entropy and rigid system (ibid.). This limit enables the restorative and reflective

impulses of nostalgia to remain in suspension. It enables both presence and absence to remain connected in a poetics of suspension.

Austerlitz duplicate

It is also a limit that points to a certain vulnerability and withdrawal, a distance that stands in contrast to an engaged, practical, embodied stance towards the world. In *Austerlitz* (2001), Sebald's eponymous central character succeeds in organising a private viewing of the propaganda film 'representing' the Theresienstadt concentration camp staged by the Nazis to deceive visitors from the Red Cross. In the hope that he can recover repressed memories, and in the hope that a momentary or partial view may be revealed of his mother, who he believed had been in the camp, he had a slow-motion copy of a particular fragment from the Theresienstadt film made, one which would last a whole hour. "Once the scant document was extended to four times its original length", Austerlitz recalled "it did reveal previously hidden objects and people, creating, by default as it were, a different sort of film altogether, which he since watched over and over again."

Strangest of all, however, said Austerlitz, was the transformation of sounds in this slow-motion version. In the brief sequence at the very beginning, showing red-hot iron being worked in a smithy to shoe a draught ox, the merry polka by some Austrian operetta composer on the soundtrack of the Berlin copy had become a funeral march dragging along at a grotesquely sluggish pace, and the rest of the musical pieces accompanying the film, among which I could identify only the can-can from *La Vie Parisienne* and the scherzo from Mendelssohn's *Midsummer Night's Dream*, also moved in a kind of subterranean world, through the most nightmarish depths, said Austerlitz, to which no human voice has ever descended (Sebald, 2001 p. 345-348).

The vulnerability Austerlitz feels on account of the slowed-down sounds was not a recovery of lost time. In fact the soundtrack suspends this search for hidden memories: it renders the listener passive. Rather than emplacing or locating him it is *dislocating*, it opens up a void and a great loss.

Video artist Christoph Korn reflected on Austerlitz's discovery and decided to take it a few steps further. His video piece *Austerlitz Duplicate*, installed at the Museum of Modern Art, Serralves, in Porto, Portugal, (2011) slows down the film by a factor of 30, resulting in a duration of 12 hours. In a commentary Korn writes:

On account of this [slowing down], the temporal structure of the pictures begins to stutter. The sound is modulated down into a deep frequency spectrum that can hardly be accurately reproduced by a sound system. The sound is thus separated from the image and placed in an area inaccessible [sic] by the language of images.

AUSTERLITZ DUPLICATE (EXCERPT) CHRISTOPH KORN: 2011. WITH PERMISSION FROM THE ARTIST

Low extremities such as those heard in the slowed-down recording make it, according to Schrimshaw, “increasingly difficult to locate sounds in space due the absence of significant inter-aural time differences: sound is heard as non-localised exteriority or, with sufficient amplitude, extimacy” (2012a, n. page.). This distortion induces a paralysing vertigo that shares characterises with Eisenman’s Holocaust-Mahnmal, a memorial designed to induce the oppressiveness, disorientation and claustrophobia of traumatic experiences. Eisenman commented that he had “heard people say [after visiting the monument] they were in awe and felt a sense of speechlessness” (Wise 2005 p. 133, see also Bennett 2005).

Another of Korn’s works *Waldstueck* (2008) also involves processes of deletion and withdrawal in which absence resounds. The public listens to the deletion process of an unedited, 24-hour field recording made in a section of a forest near the former concentration camp at Dachau. The recording was transferred to a web server and successively deleted, randomly and automatically, over a period of three years. What remained were 24 hours of duration.

While also contributing to a spectral ontology, in this work, in contrast to Kirkegaard and Wilson’s recordings, there is no ‘dream of presence’. In this project distancing is that which comes to the fore. Listeners who engaged with the project at its completion were left with silence, but this was not a Cagean silence filled with the promise of immersive relations with the world, but, instead, an articulation of loss. Writing about Sebald’s work in terms of a negative phenomenology of landscape, Dubow, drawing on Jean-Luc Nancy, asserts that Sebald’s places do not so much confirm loss but absorb and dissolve all presences into itself (2011). While Sebald’s work is a document of catastrophe the question is not whether representation of this trauma is possible, or ethical. Rather representation is:

precisely what results when one insists on the present weight of all that is irrecoverable and anonymous, that the real force of the image has less to do with what is available to be seen in it, than with the way it insists on the fact of absence. Moreover, it is in the representation of landscape ... that the force of loss is exemplary (2011 p. 192).

In short, Dubow writes, “Sebald’s landscape representations are not merely compatible with loss – they demand it” (ibid.).

Sonic memorials

In contrast to the traditional memorial which, as Iain Sinclair observes, have become a “way of forgetting, reducing generational guilt to a grid of albino chess pieces, bloodless stalagmites ... [that] stand in for the trauma of remembrance” (Sinclair 1998 p. 21), sonic memorials open up the possibility of providing powerful commemorations of a time and a place. This power, it is argued, derives from an understanding that “senses make place” (Feld 2005 p. 179) and that memory and the senses are densely intertwined. However, to what extent does the insistence of a notion of being-present preclude a truly ethical encounter with the past? Does a non-representational focus on the liveliness and immersive aspect of being and dwelling lead us, ultimately, to forget? Place is also fleeting, incomplete, non-linear and contested. An account of place must also be attuned to its hauntings. During a defining episode in *Austerlitz*, Sebald’s eponymous character recounts an experience he had at Liverpool Street Station. Austerlitz is unnerved by the thought that the station is built on the site of Bedlam. He felt

as if the dead were returning from their exile and filling the twilight around me with their strangely slow but incessant to-ing and fro-ing and wondered whether the pain and suffering that had accumulated on this site over the centuries had ever really ebbed away, or whether they might not still, as I sometimes thought when I felt a cold breath of air on my forehead, be sensed as we passed through them on our way through the station halls and up and down the flights of steps (2001 p. 183).

Conclusion

With these kinds of haunted perspectives in mind, we can contrast a preservative or restorative sonic memorial such as that developed in response to the 2001 terrorist attacks on the World Trade Centre – in which the public were invited to share “shards of sound that capture the expressions, exchanges, and humanity that defined the buildings” (Lappin, 2001) in the making of an online audio installation. This is an interactive soundscape that also precipitated guided Ground Zero sound walks – an impulse

that implicitly draws on the notions of ‘acoustic communities’ and ‘sound romances’ associated with the World Soundscape Project and the restorative incentives of acoustic ecology, with more reflective ‘memorial’ recordings such as Wilson’s and Kirkegaard’s which, parallel to a spectral geography, attempt, through phonography, to “bring to light things previously hidden or lost” (Wylie 2009 p. 279).

While distinct in their approaches, each type of ‘memorial’, however, shares an ontological concern for ‘presenting’, for *making* present, in the case of Kirkegaard to unlock “a fragment of the time existing inside the zone” (Kirkegaard op. cit.) and in the case of Wilson to make “audible what is absent or intangible” (Woodward 2011 p. 34). Yet, in reality, such ‘presencing’ achieved through recording actually serves to render encounters *more* spectral. By virtue of their prosthetic nature, they serve to distance and disconnect rather than emplace. They are, themselves, supplemental. Thus, rather than making absence audible, ‘unearthing’ what is lost, the recordings ‘represent’ absence in itself. Schafer, of course, had already acknowledged this, through his aforementioned reservations about the schizophrenic splitting of sound from its source (1994). So too, Ingold (2007) battles against the proliferation of -scapes. But I have argued that we can extract a positive function of this disconnection in its ability to attest for absence itself. Soundscapes are spectral. Writing about the spectre, Derrida suggests that “it appears, but ‘there is something disappeared, departed in the apparition itself as reappearance of the departed” (cited in Wylie 2007 p. 172). Thus, the recording is a document of absence. It is itself a ‘memorial’ which is itself haunted.

In another article, Wylie (2007) draws parallels between Sebald’s work and the later writings of Derrida whose ‘hauntological’ approach challenges the phenomenological notions of dwelling that have come to characterise much work that explores the relationship between sound, place and memory. Derrida argues that in order to be able to understand that place, and placing is constituted as much by haunting than by dwelling, we must acquire a “vertiginous asymmetry: the technique for having visions, for seeing ghosts ... a technique to make oneself seen by ghosts.” (Derrida cited in Wylie 2007 p. 172) Spectrality, Wylie writes, is an “irreducible condition that demands new, themselves haunted, ways of writing about place, memory and self” (ibid. p. 173). Sebald is a paragon of this way of writing. In Sebald’s work distancing and dislocation occasion the appearance of ghosts. The slowing down of the soundtrack found in Theresienstadt is a choice example of this process, and one that Korn in his own work seemed to understand. In both *Austerlitz Duplicate* and *Waldstueck*, for example, the temporal and spatial distances that phonography affords, separating us from ‘being-there’, immersed in the soundscape, in turn reveal ghosts and repressed memories: a taking place that is paralysing.

Non-representational thinking suggests that representations are incapable of addressing the “energies, attunements, arrangements and intensities of differing texture, temporality, velocity and spatiality, that act on bodies, are produced through bodies and transmitted by bodies” (Lorimer, 2008 p. 552). However, contemplating the abandoned villages, it is precisely a ‘no-longer there’ that no longer refers to a presence – a liveliness – but instead opens up ethical questions surrounding distance, the disembodied and the temporality of the spectral return which can be addressed and articulated through the *representational* form of phonography. In *Camera Lucida* (2000) Roland Barthes reflects on the photograph suggesting that it involves a process of becoming spectral. Contemplating this proposition, Derrida (2001) suggests that photography suspends its dependence on a visible ‘lively’ referent. What becomes referent is, in fact, the revenant, ‘the return of the dead’. Phonography too is intrinsically about loss and absence but, like Sebald’s dead characters, their ‘referents’ are always returning, displacing and haunting us, *ungrounding*, and ultimately undermining the present.

Footnotes

1. For an overview see, for example, De Silvey and Edensor [1]
2. Schafer terms this nostalgic relationship with sound a ‘sound romance’ (1994). Truax asks: “When does a sound become a ‘sound romance’? And moreover, how do these types of reactions which are based on habitual ways of understanding sound, affect individual and community behaviour?” (Truax 2001). [2]
3. Rose (2006) argues that landscapes are always moving towards presence, they are performative “dreams of presence” that connect self and world. While acknowledging these dreams and this connection, in this paper I am also trying to complicate the relationship between self, world, time and memory from the representational (non-phenomenological) point of view of absence and distance. [3]
4. O’Dwyer also recognises that “[a]udio spatial practices ... implicitly challenge the concept that a terrain is somehow comprised of elements that are straightforwardly empirical, objective and mappable” (O’Dwyer 2012 p. 1). [4]

5. To illustrate my argument, this 'love of place' can be contrasted with Derrida's 'love of ruins' sketched out in *Memoirs of the Blind: The Self Portrait and Other Ruins* (1993). Derrida identifies the destruction at the heart of representation as a ruin that does not come after the work but is its very source: "In the beginning there was the ruin ... with no promise of restoration" (p. 69). [↗]
6. The World Soundscape Project was a research project in which the aims and objectives of Acoustic Ecology were born. It outlines its goal as finding "solutions for an ecologically balanced soundscape where the relationship between the human community and its sonic environment is in harmony" (The Canadian Encyclopedia). [↗]

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Bio

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