Hearing With: Researching the Histories of Sonic Encounter

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I
sit on
this hill
beneath the
shade of this
gnarled, tall,
wise, old oak
looking out
around me at the
amazing beauty that
surrounds me. As far as
the horizon everything brilliant-
ly magnificent. Suddenly, there is a
hush, is it me? Am I imagining it? No, not
even an undertone, utter silence. The birds are
mute, the animals dumb, the wind has ceased in soft sibil-
ation, the clatter and grind of the tractor has been stifled, the
chuckle of the stream is frozen, the world seems to be quiescent, waiting
with bated breath. In this silent paradise I think of what I have to
return to, compared with this it seems like aural purgatory, the noises that
pollute our envir-
onment, the pandem-
onium and hullabaloo
of our modern word.
The rasping and
grating of our
labour saving devices
the instant chatter
of the television,
raucous pop music
played too loud,
the drone of jets
as they pass over
head, the tinny
sound of car
engines rushing everywhere
Even as I think this, heaven is
pierced by the squeal of children
at play, the yelp of a dog, the dis-
tant peal of a church bell and the irritat-
ing rasp of a saw. The world is revived. Gone are
the Angels of Silence and back is the
demon
NOISE

Katherine Londesbrough Age 14 Years

This poem was published in a collection entitled *Children on Noise* following a literary competition held in the schools of Darlington, North-East England, in 1978. Prizes of £100, as well as consolation T-Shirts, were available to the children who produced the best stories and poems about noise in their town. The competition was part of the Darlington

Quiet Town Experiment of 1976-78 run by the UK Government's Noise Advisory Council. The Experiment sought to "determine if noise levels can be reduced by creating an 'awareness' of noise by publicity and education" (Darlington Borough Council: 45). The literary competition was one of many activities undertaken in the town over the two years of the experiment designed to encourage residents – adults and children alike – to listen to their town, and to themselves. The Royal Automobile Club (RAC) erected road signs that read: "Darlington is a Quiet Town. Please drive quietly" (Figure 1). Posters, leaflets, and social activities (such as quiet bingo) were circulated and organized. The people of Darlington were trained to hear noise and to enact quietness. Though unusual in its format, the Darlington Quiet Town Experiment is typical of the strategic work that goes on around and through everyday sound. How we hear is socially shaped. It has a history.

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Figure 1: Photo of an RAC "Quiet" road sign in Darlington, from Noise Advisory Council, *The Darlington Quiet Town Experiment: September 1976-September 1978* (London: Her Majesty's Stationary Office, 1981), p.23.

At midday on 21 August 2017, a crowd gathered on the streets of Westminster, central London, to hear to the final bongs of "Big Ben" - the 13-ton bell atop what is now known as the Elizabeth Tower at the UK Houses of Parliament – before a four-year cessation to allow restoration work to take place. Newspapers

reported that some in the crowd fought back tears, including at least one Member of Parliament who had assembled there with colleagues, heads bowed to reverently mark the occasion. A row had earlier erupted in the British media about why it was necessary to silence Big Ben for so long. Critics, including some MPs, pointed out that the bell had tolled through most of the Second World War and that stopping it for an extended period was an indictment of national ingenuity and a threat to Britain's place in the world. The sound of Big Ben was presented by these critics as inextricably bound up with Britain, a heartbeat almost. For some it was auditorily symbolic of national self-determination in the context of negotiations to leave the European Union in 2019. Even academic commentators were drawn into the frenzy, with one writing that the silencing of "an essential component of the landscape of London, and of the pantheon of national icons that present 'Britishness' to the rest of the world" was the result of "a failure of management in the heart of Westminster" (Clapson 2017). The British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), which ritually broadcasts the live sounds of Big Ben on national radio in the UK, faced a decision about whether to maintain a live relay of an alternative bell (Nottingham's Council House bell was considered) or use a non-live recording of Big Ben. It eventually opted for the latter.

How did the sound of Big Ben become such a powerful symbol of the British nation? Was it by sheer virtue of the bell's geography, placed as it was in 1858 at the heart of imperial political power? The answer is that Big Ben's affective power to bind hearers together is not innate to its stature, geography, or even a straightforward result of its place in broadcasting schedules, but was, rather, actively produced more deliberately than that by campaigns to direct how it was heard. Prominent among these was the "Big Ben Silent Minute," sometimes known just as the "Big Ben Minute," a campaign launched in 1940 by an organization known as the Big Ben Council with close ties to the Conservative Party and the Church of England which promoted a daily minute of silence and silent prayer throughout the British Empire during and in time with the chimes of Big Ben broadcast on BBC radio in the run up to the news at 9pm. The full 9pm chimes of Big Ben were broadcasted live, taking around a minute from beginning to end (Dakers 1943). The minute was originally intended to provide a daily moment of hopefulness about Britain's prospects in the Second World War and to reconnect separated loved ones in a minute of synchronized remembrance. Books of prayer and positive thoughts, written specifically with the rhythm of Big Ben in mind, were published (such as the "Golden Thoughts" booklet shown in Figure 2). The Big Ben Minute remained a feature of BBC radio until 1960, when the 9pm news bulletin was moved to 10pm and the minute cut amid angry controversy (Briggs 1995: 325-340).

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Like the Darlington Quiet Town Experiment, the Big Ben Silent Minute was designed to direct hearing attention and to produce an affective and meaningful relationship between sound and hearer, in this instance, among other things, providing an auditory focal point for the nation and its empire and the sonic conditions needed for it to be sanctified as such. This is the stuff of sound history. Research in this field seeks to establish not only what was audible in the past but also how and why that audibility was produced: how and why sounds – from the chirp of a bird to the roar of a motorbike, from recorded music to the tone and accent of voice in daily speech – were shaped and given meaning, made valuable or denigrated, and brought to attention or left in the background. Sound historians do this not simply for the sake of adding sensory context to our understanding of the past, but because they argue that what and how we hear shapes subjectivity and community in important ways. Sounds are socially active, producing us as subjects and drawing us together as sensing collectives and, to use Tom Western's phrase, "securing the aural border" (Western 2015: 77-97).

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Figure 2: Front cover of a booklet of positive thoughts to be recited silently in time with the chimes of Big Ben at 9pm. Allan Junior, *As Big Ben Strikes: Some Thoughts for "The Big Ben Minute"* (Dundee: Valentine & Sons, 1941), front cover.

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This chapter sets out a sonic-historical methodology drawing on existing work in the field of historical sound studies that is attentive to the conscious shaping of auditory perception

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in the past.[1] It proposes two central principles. The first is that historians could think of what they do as *hearing with* rather than *listening to* the past. This is an approach to historical source material which would seek to historicize sound's role in shaping subjects and naturalizing relations of power, remain alert to a range of auditory subject positions in the past, and acknowledge the listening ear of the historian in the act of hearing with. I use the term hearing rather than listening deliberately to emphasize that, beyond moments of listening and campaigns to direct listening attention in the past, historical ways of hearing have evolved over time in which sounds have gained common-sense meanings and associations for which listening is no longer consciously required and which have unequal social effects (see also Mansell 2018: 343-352). A way of hearing is more than an act of listening: it takes shape in text, image, and social discourse as much as in sound. It impacts beyond the auditory in the ways that subjects think, feel and manage their bodies. Ways of hearing produce the possibility of listening. The second methodological principle is a focus on what I term here the production of *sonic encounter*, a socially shaped and culturally specific affective relationship between hearer and heard. The sonic encounter is the meeting point of "soundscapes" (for my purposes, a useful shorthand for the sounds that surround us in everyday life) and "soundselves" (as theorized by Tom Rice [2003], listening subjects whose sense of self is shaped by sound): it is the affective field of feeling and sense-making which those who wish to produce ways of hearing seek to shape.[2]

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Hearing with

When I tell fellow historians what I research, they usually say something to the effect of: that must be interesting, but aren't you reliant on sound recordings being available,

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[1] The chapter focusses on modern sound cultures because the methodologies needed to research ancient, medieval and early modern sound are somewhat different to those needed for the post-1800 period. It should nevertheless be noted that there is a flourishing field of study on pre-1800 sound history. Foundational texts are Richard Cullen Rath, *How Early America Sounded* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003) and Bruce R. Smith, *The Acoustic World of Early Modern England: Attending to the O-Factor* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999). Recent works include: Shane Butler and Sarah Nooter (eds.), *Sound and the Ancient Senses* (New York: Routledge, 2019) and Niall Atkinson, *The Noisy Renaissance: Sound, Architecture and Florentine Urban Life* (University Park, Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2016).

[2] The concept of the soundscape is most closely associated in sound studies with R. Murray Schafer, *The Soundscape: Our Sonic Environment and the Tuning of the World* (Rochester: Destiny Books, 1994).

doesn't that mean you can only write about the recent past, there probably *aren't* many historical sound recordings around, *are there*? Because of a deeply ingrained tendency to privilege reading and writing in historical scholarship, when they hear the word "sound" most historians think, probably *media studies*, definitely *somebody else's* business. The assumption is that listening to the past is a distinctively poor relation to reading from its surviving textual source materials. Matthew Rubery describes a similar response to his research on the history of audio books: listening to rather than reading a book is considered by many to be distinctly second rate (Rubery 2016). These kinds of prejudices help to explain why relatively little of the historical work in sound studies is undertaken by historians working in university history departments. Many, like myself, are based in other disciplines, including media, cultural, and communications studies. This is an unfortunate misunderstanding, since the methodological premise of most scholarship in historical sound studies is textual rather than auditory, and deliberately so.

Mark M. Smith, an early exponent of sound history with his *Listening to Nineteenth-Century America* (2001), argues that by re-reading historical source material for evidence of encounters with sound we can understand both the acoustic environments of the past and how those environments were perceived and made meaningful in cultural-historical contexts.[3] Drawing on a sensorially-attuned social history tradition with origins in the *Annales* school and culminating in Alain Corbin's *Village Bells: Sound and Meaning in the Nineteenth-Century French Countryside* (1994), Smith helped to establish a new sub-field of sound history.[4] But the "Listening to" in the title of Smith's book refers primarily to the listening done by historical subjects rather than by the historian. Smith, like others who have attended to past sounds, is rightly skeptical about the historian's ability to gain direct and uncomplicated access to how the past sounded precisely because we do not hear in the same way today, culturally, as those in the past did. Smith's realist-constructivist approach is typical of sound historical scholarship. In her history of architectural acoustics in early twentieth-century America, Emily Thompson defines the "soundscape of modernity" as "simultaneously a physical environment and a way of perceiving that environment; it is both a world and a culture constructed to make sense of that world" (Thompson 2004: 1). In textual sources, Smith argues, we find written record of how sounds were experienced and interpreted, as well as the sound environments themselves. Even where we have access to recorded sound in the form of radio broadcasts, field

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[3] Smith's argument on the necessity of textual sources in historical sound studies can be found in Mark M. Smith, "Echo," in David Novak and Matt Sakakeeny (eds.) *Keywords in Sound* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2015), pp.55-64.

[4] Smith's edited essay collection *Hearing History: A Reader* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2004) helped cement the sense of a field in the making.

recordings, or film and television soundtracks, Smith and others argue that we need a wider body of source material to understand the historicity of these sounds. This approach is put to good use, for example, in Carolyn Birdsall's research on Nazi soundscapes (2012), which uses radio archive materials alongside oral history and written archives to understand historical hearers as "earwitnesses" to fascism. Smith has written of his hope that, rather than a self-contained field of sound history, listening through the ears of historical subjects will become more of a "habit" for historical scholarship as a whole, "a methodological, epistemological, and even ontological embeddedness – a way of examining the past that becomes second nature so that evidence is read, consciously and even subconsciously, for tidbits of the acoustic, smatterings of the auditory, gestures of silence, noise, listening, and sound" (Smith 2016: 13-14).

The listening involved in historical sound studies is a reconstructed listening, then, an excavation of how past subjects paid attention to sound. As Daniel Morat has noted, however, "listening to" is far from a settled historical methodology: "You can find," as Morat observes, "different notions of 'sound history,' 'aural history,' 'auditory history,' 'history of hearing,' and 'history of listening,'" deployed across the field (Morat 2014: 3). Here, I wish to propose that in order to avoid the misunderstandings to which the "listening to" label gives rise, as well as some of its limitations, we might more usefully describe what the sound historian does, or could do, as *hearing with*. Listening has been closely associated with the production of knowledge in historical sound studies. Emily Thompson focuses her attention on the expert culture of listening developed by architectural acousticians. Jonathan Sterne's research (2003) on the history of sound recording and reproduction technologies identifies a range of expert listening practices evolving over the course of the nineteenth century as the basis of an "Ensoniment" (an auditory equivalent of the Enlightenment) in which expert auditory ways of knowing, from telegraphy to phonography, formed the basis for modern knowledge culture. Though not experts in the same sense, Kassandra Hartford argues that soldiers developed "attentive listening practices typically associated with music and musicians" on the Western Front during the Great War because, "in a war fought largely in trenches and tunnels, in the dark or in a dugout, visual observation was limited" (Hartford 2017: 98). This focus on the historical listener has tended to privilege a particular kind of audition, that done by a conscious listener, seeking knowledge, with the ability to make their listening matter in the historical record. It has limited, in other words, the range of auditory subject positions that historians have attended to. "Listening to" has been a very particular kind of "listening with."

A *hearing-with* approach would focuses not so much on records of this conscious listening as a route to insight into the historical soundscape, but rather on the production and sustaining of ways of hearing which operated through atmospheres of everyday

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sounds and had different kinds of auditory impact on hearers. These ways of hearing were produced in the past by the organization of audibility and the directing of hearing. The organizing and directing was undertaken consciously, as in the case of the Darlington Quiet Town Experiment and the Big Ben Silent Minute. However, those involved in such campaigns were not necessarily aware of the ways in which their attempts to shape everyday hearing gave audible form to cultures of class and gender (as in the case of quiet) or of an imperial Britain (in the case of the Big Ben Minute) because those cultural dispositions were not always recognized as such by those who intervened in sound. The historian's role, then, is to return to these historical ways of hearing, to understand how they were assembled, and to assess what effects they had in the shaping of social life. The organizing and directing that goes into producing a way of hearing can be found in the historical record, even if it was not consciously listened to in the past.

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Western's approach to the analysis of "audio nationalism" illustrates the hearing-with approach I have in mind. He shows, in the context of the BBC's post-war broadcasting of folk music and ethnographic field recordings, "how sound was at once nationalized and nationalizing" on the radio. He argues that "certain sounds were selected to represent national qualities, used to construct national character, and delimit the nation" (Western 2015: 88). There was listening work involved here, since the field recordists who gathered materials for the radio programs analyzed by Western were the ones selecting appropriate music and sound to embody the nation and its bordered distinctiveness. Yet there was also the bringing into being of an aural truth of the nation, the production of a way of hearing music and sound as British that happened in the presentation of these sounds on the radio and their framing in print contexts such as the *Radio Times*: the BBC was "training people how to listen," according to Western (2015 :89). A hearing-with approach hears with this training. Western's analysis can be extended to the Big Ben Silent Minute whose aim was similarly to enter into the daily routines of radio listeners and produce an active auditory engagement with the national community.

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A hearing-with approach does not adopt the listening position of the powerful but rather hears through it what only a historian can hear – the historicity of truths as they have taken sonic form. But a hearing-with approach also demands that the historian hears with both those who shaped ways of hearing and with those who were subject to their influence. Take the example of the sonic category of quiet. Historians have now dedicated a good deal of attention to noise, understanding why and how past societies made sense

of which sounds to exclude as meaningless or harmful.[5] This work has focused on what Jennifer Lynn Stoever describes as the "listening ear" of the noise abatement campaigner – a close historical attention to the way in which noise was defined and its eradication justified (Stoever 2016: 7). The same attention has not been given to quiet, even though most anti-noise campaigns, such as the Darlington Quiet Town Experiment, have been designed to produce it. In the 1930s, the Anti-Noise League published a magazine called *Quiet* and in the 1950s the successor Noise Abatement Society published one called *Quiet, Please*, underscoring the kind of sound they wished to produce. In twentieth-century anti-noise campaigns, noise was listened to critically, ~~[~~but quiet was quietly produced as~~] check~~ a category of good sonic conduct~~way of hearing in everyday life~~. Far from the neutral category it may seem, quiet contains and activates social relations of power. In the absence of noise there is not silence, but a kind of sound that contains the normative values of the society that produced it. In the 1930s, quiet was described by the Anti-Noise League's leader, Lord Horder, as "acoustic--civilization."[6] As the other to noise, "acoustic-civilization" was assumed to be readily understood; it was comfort, peace, and privacy. It was auditory common sense. Yet upon close inspection of the surviving historical source materials it is clear that this "civilized" quiet was not the public good it was made out to be: it was based on a middle-class auditory habitus and was specifically *for* those whose work required concentration, mainly professional men. Still, it was promoted *to everyone* as universally good behavior.

The noise abatement advocates of the Anti-Noise League did not listen to the acoustics of gendered difference, but their way of hearing produced it. The close-up from a 1935 advert for the Underwood Noiseless Typewriter in Figure 3 which was advertised in an Anti-Noise League exhibition handbook shows quiet in the context of the 1930s office: a male office worker leans forward and listens to his visitor without distraction from his nearby female typist. Quiet here was an atmosphere that reproduced patriarchal "civilization" in sound. The female typist is identified as a source of noise. The male office worker is an active listener. His female visitor, that to which he listens, conforms to the ideal of the softly-spoken woman (or else the quiet afforded by the typewriter might not be needed). As Marie Thompson has argued, "women have often been represented as 'naturally' noisy in comparison to their male counterparts; within popular consciousness," she goes on, "they are imagined to be more talkative, choosing to discuss the trivialities of life and surrounding themselves with a noisy, meaningless babble" (Thompson 2013:

[5] The key text on the history of noise is Karin Bijsterveld, *Mechanical Sound: Technology, Culture and Public Problems of Noise in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2008).

[6] Lord Horder papers, Wellcome Library, GP/31/B.4/4; GP/31/B2/23.

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300). The field of quiet was gendered, with women burdened with greater responsibility for producing quiet than men. ~~[and m~~Men's capacity to listen was simultaneously re-produced in such contexts.~~] check~~ Cadbury's silent theatre box (Figure 4), introduced in 1930~~xx~~, was a box of chocolates designed to offer quiet refreshment at the theatre and provides further evidence of this gendering of quiet. Cadbury said that it was intended to "enable the rapt or bored playgoer to take her nourishment without distracting the actors by rustling the packing material." A further note beside the advert added that the silent theatre box would also allow the playgoer to avoid "arousing the indignation of one's neighbours" in the theatre. A closer inspection of noise abatement archives therefore reveals the coming into being of a field of quiet produced by anti-noise campaigning or everyday antipathy to noise which shaped everyday behaviors and gave sonic form to time-bound ideas of "civilization." Quietness is a way of hearing. Of course, it produced not only class and gendered subjectivities, but, as other kinds of source material would show more clearly, the sonic contours of race, ethnicity, religion, and sexuality. The colonial archive, for example, might help us to understand the quietness in Figure 3 as a dimension of whiteness.[7] ~~Make reference to Annette Hoffmann here!~~

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Figure 3: Section of an advert for the Underwood Noiseless Typewriter from Anti-Noise League, *Noise Abatement Exhibition: Science Museum, South Kensington, 31st May-30th June 1935* (London: Anti-Noise League, 1935), p.75.

[7] Anette Hoffman and Phindezua Mnyaka's research on the colonial sound archive points to the importance of further work in this area. See Anette Hoffman and Phindezua Mnyaka (2014). "Hearing Voices in the Archive," *Social Dynamics: A Journal of African Studies* 41, pp.140-165.

Figure 4: Cadbury "Silent Theatre Box" advert from *Advertiser's Weekly*, 12 December 1930, p.423.

The way we hear quiet also changes historically. From "acoustic civilization" in the 1930s quiet has become financialized "natural capital" in the twenty-first century. A 2011 report produced for the UK Government explained that:

> Quiet and 'quiet areas' contribute to economic welfare through the generation of human well-being and prevention of illness and ecosystem decline that inflict costs on society. However, many of the benefits of quiet are not directly priced in the market and therefore risk being under-valued with resulting degradation or total loss of 'quiet' or 'relatively quiet' areas. (Wilson)

Promoting its Quiet Mark consumer goods, such as the quiet Magimix kettle and noise-cancelling Sennheiser headphones available at the upmarket department store John Lewis, or even holidays on which hotels guarantee quiet to the discerning holidaymaker in search of creative recuperation, today's Noise Abatement Society explains that "recognizing that ultimately all wealth derives from natural systems, we need to find practical ways of expressing the value of ecosystem services in all decisions which risk reducing natural

capital. This includes soundscape quality" (see www.quietmark.com). What might be described as a neoliberal way of hearing is at work here which will one day be the subject of historical research.

The Sonic Encounter

Any restatement of sonic-historical methodology must consider its position in relation to the methodological debate currently taking place in sound studies on the question of what has been called the ontological challenge. This challenge has been usefully set out by Brian Kane as a questioning of "the relevance of research into auditory culture, audile techniques, and the technological mediation of sound in favor of universals concerning the nature of sound, the body, and media" (Kane 2015: 3). Spearheaded by philosopher of music, Christoph Cox (2011), and cultural theorist of sound, Steve Goodman (2009), the ontological turn in sound studies has sought to shift attention away from meaning and cultural experience and toward the materiality of sound and its pre-cognitive power to affect the human body. In Goodman's case, which is closer than Cox's to the interests of most historians, the argument is that during times of war, in particular, what sound means matters much less than what sound does in terms of its vibrational impact on bodies. Rather than cultural ways of hearing, Goodman argues that we should be concentrating our attention on what he calls the "politics of frequency" (by which he means specifically the bodily impact of low frequency sounds in war) or as Cox puts it, ask of our evidence "not what it means or represents, but what it does, how it operates, what changes it effectuates" (Goodman 2009: xv; Cox 2011: 157). Connected to a wider turn to materiality, object-oriented ontology, and affective atmospheres in the humanities and social sciences, Cox and Goodman's critique of auditory culture approaches, such as the one I have set out in the previous section, demands a reply.

It has readily found one in several powerful rebuttals. Marie Thompson and Annie Goh, most notably, have put forward persuasive critiques of the "origin myth" of sonic nature operating in Cox's work. Thompson argues that, while Cox claims to have found evidence of the nature of sonic flux within the best sound art works, "his pursuit of the 'nature of sound' risks uncritically naturalizing what is ultimately a specific onto-epistemology of sound" (Thompson 2017a: 270). This onto-epistemology draws on a lineage of sound art extending from John Cage which Thompson identifies as being "entangled with, amongst other things, histories of whiteness and coloniality." She argues that, "ontologies bear the traces of their historical moment even when those ontologies 'withdraw' from mediation" (Thompson 2017a: 266-282). Thompson does not reject sonic ontologies, indeed her book *Beyond Unwanted Sound* (2017b) is an argument in favor of understanding noise as an active, affective force rather than a moral category of bad sound. She suggests, instead, that, "situating rather than

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simply dismissing sonic ontologies enables us to ask how 'the nature of the sonic' is determined, – what grounds the sonic ground – while remaining open to how it might be heard otherwise" (Thompson 2017a: 278). Thompson's is thus an approach that advocates for the necessity of sound history. It is via attention to what I have called here ways of hearing that claims to the "nature" of sound can be unmasked as culturally specific invested in politics and society. Goh's argument is even more explicit in its advocacy of an historical approach to sound. Critiquing what she terms a dominant "sonic naturalism" in sound studies' preoccupation with auditory knowledge, she proposes instead a principle of "sounding situated knowledges" in the past as a way of interrogating the conditions of sonic knowing (Goh 2017: 283-304). In this section, I intend to develop an approach equal to the challenge of researching what Jim Sykes has described as "culturally-constituted ontologies of sound and listening that structure social relations" (Sykes 2018: 56).

The ontological challenge of Cox and Goodman raises the question of whether historians of sound can credibly adopt the concept of affect or affective atmosphere to explain what sound did and meant in the past. Above, I have hinted, though not yet explicitly claimed, that ways of hearing are in part affective: they harness sound's power to affect the body and produce feeling as a way of actualizing gender and national belonging. If affect and the atmospheres that it produces is pre-cultural as Goodman and other affect theorists maintain, can there be a history of sonic affect? If, as Kane explains, "Goodman discourages accounts of the sonic in terms of conscious hearing or listening in favor of an unconscious, affective, intensive account of sound as material impact," where does that leave the historian of sound? Kane's answer is that studies in auditory culture have never in fact been "simply studies in 'representation' or 'signification' without consideration of the body. Rather," he goes on, "scholars in auditory culture seek to demonstrate the successions and relays between cognition and affect, or, speaking broadly, between the mind and the body. As listeners acquire new skills," he argues, "much of the cognitive effort involved in the initial training is offloaded onto the body. At the same time, bodily capacities constitute both the basis upon which training occurs and the ground for potential future cultivation" (Kane 2015: 8). Kane's theory of auditory training is precisely what is at stake in the production of ways of hearing.

Others have mounted similar defenses of a method for researching sonic affect that retains a place for cultural analysis. Marie Thompson argues in *Beyond Unwanted Sound* that noise should be thought of as characterized by affectivity rather than negativity, "a perturbing force-relation that, for better or worse, induces a change." But, she goes on, this is "*a signifying force-relation*' since 'noise (and affect) is frequently entangled with signifying registers" (Thompson 2017b: 42-48). Anahid Kassabian proposes a theory of "distributed subjectivity" to explain the role that the affective encounter with sound plays in generating identity. Distributed subjectivity is "a nonindividual subjectivity, a field, but

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a field over which power is distributed unevenly and unpredictably, over which differences are not only possible but required, and across which information flows, leading to affective responses" (Kassabian 2013: xxv ~~– Give exact reference~~). The kind of information that produces the most powerful affective response, for Kassabian, is sound. She notes that "identity is one of the formations that are left behind after affect does its work~~.~~" (Kassabian 2013: xxvii).~~Give reference'~~ She goes on to argue that although "identities seem static and positional, they are anything but, and they are constituted microsecond by microsecond according to affects that are in motion." She uses the example of the singing of a national anthem to illustrate her point.

> For many people – though certainly not all – their national anthem invokes pride and community, a warm feeling of belonging. Each singing is an affective event, creating a wave of feeling that flows across a group of any size, from one to thousands. Affect like that leaves behind residue that appears to produce a static identity. But the very fact that it needs to be done over and over suggests that something rather different is happening. (Kassabian 2013: xxviii)

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Sound, in the example of national anthem singing, is maintaining individual and collective identity via its ritual performance, according to Kassabian. Sound's power to affect is being deployed in the project of nation-building. Kane, Thompson, and Kassabian's theorization of the affective *and* meaningful power of sound lays the ground for my suggestion that historians might go in search of the production of *sonic encounter* in the past.

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Affect can sometimes appear to be a rather abstract notion. Certainly, a lot of historians would perceive it this way. However, under other names, it has been active in historical understandings of what sound is and does. Late nineteenth and early twentieth-century discussions of noise's tendency to produce nervousness or neurasthenia was the language of its day to describe the bodily impact of sound and its ability to generate bad feelings. During the Second World War, government health authorities were alert to the extent to which bomb sounds could produce fear responses in civilian populations and embarked on propaganda campaigns to encourage people to hear bombs without fear or not to hear them at all (by using ear plugs).[8] Sound's atmospheric materiality is what makes it such an effective medium for the circulation of values and production of behaviors. The Big Ben Silent Minute is an example of the production of sonic encounter. The sound of Big Ben tolling is not in any sense intrinsically British~~,~~ but was produced as such by interventions in the affective field, what might otherwise be described as everyday

[8] For a discussion on noise and neurasthenia and the management of civilian hearing in the Second World War, see Mansell (2017).

atmospheres of sound. The feeling of national pride or sense of collective endeavor that is associated with Big Ben is an affective response produced culturally. It is produced by broadcasting, pamphlets, and ritual, materials which produce the auditory "training" that Kane identifies.

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The Darlington Quiet Town Experiment is an example of the kind of work that goes into producing sonic encounter, in this instance, with everyday urban sounds. This two-year experiment was designed to solve the "human factor" in what was now firmly established as the "noise problem" in public policy planning. While other areas of the Noise Advisory Council's work in the 1960s and 1970s focused on scientific investigation of the technological sources and medical effects of noise, the Darlington experiment was primarily an educational mission to re-shape everyday auditory behavior in urban space. It aimed to help the residents of the town realize that "much unnecessary noise was made by people who did not realise that they were causing a nuisance to others" (Noise Advisory Council 1981: 4). Children were targeted for involvement not because they were perceived as the primary creators of noise, but because it was thought that, through education, they could be transformed into a noise-sensitive generation. The posters, pamphlets, and social activities undertaken as part of the Darlington experiment were designed to generate a specific kind of encounter between hearers and specific kinds of sounds, heard as noise.

In the background of the Darlington experiment was an assumption that noise was a symptom of anti-social behavior and that fixing the noise problem was a route to producing a better-behaved and more socially harmonious town. Although some familiar technological culprits were identified in publicity materials as especially noisy, such as motorbikes, in general noise was defined as time and context dependent, such as playing the radio too loudly in the morning or leaving too noisily from the pub late at night. The experiment was designed to protect domestic, private life in the face of intrusions from the public realm, but what was being produced was very much a privatized quietness, a quiet to be enjoyed from the comforts of one's home. As in the context of the 1930s, gendered labor underpinned the production of this quietness. In promotional materials circulated as part of the Darlington experiment, the creators of noise are largely identified as men who do not appreciate the acoustic needs of women and children for domestic and educational life. In these publicity materials, it was women who urged their fellow townsfolk to be quiet (as in the cover of the leaflet announcing the experiment in Figure 5 and the logo used on promotional materials in Figure 6). In a leaflet which asked, "Do you have a noisy gnome in your home?" (Figure 7), women were asked to reflect on whether the man of their house "does odd jobs at odd times," "likes music too loud," "never closes doors quietly," or "leaves his dog uncontrolled." This leaflet had its desired effect in the story submitted by one 15-year-old girl to the literary competition. The girl in her story complained of her father's "rendering of Pomp and Circumstance … blasted

around the house at full volume … I don't think he is actually quiet for five minutes each day," she wrote. "When he wakes up in the morning, he starts his day off by switching on the radio, full blast." The story concludes:

> So if Darlington wants to make a success of its Quiet Town Campaign, I think they had better get rid of my father, while they finish the experiment. He often talks about going back to the places he went to during the war, such as Iceland, Norway and France. I don't mind which country you decide to send him to, just somewhere, where he can be as noisy as he likes. (Darlington Borough Council: 39)

Figure 5: Cover of leaflet announcing the Darlington Quiet Town Experiment from Noise Advisory Council, *The Darlington Quiet Town Experiment: September 1976-September 1978* (London: Her Majesty's Stationary Office, 1981), back cover materials.

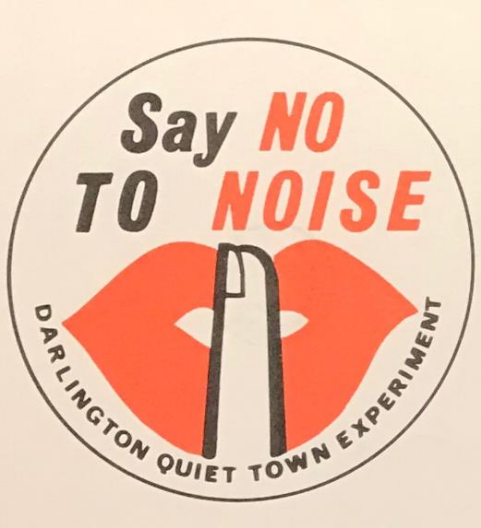

Figure 6. Logo of the Darlington Quiet Town Experiment from Noise Advisory Council, *The Darlington Quiet Town Experiment: September 1976-September 1978* (London: Her Majesty's Stationary Office, 1981), back cover materials.

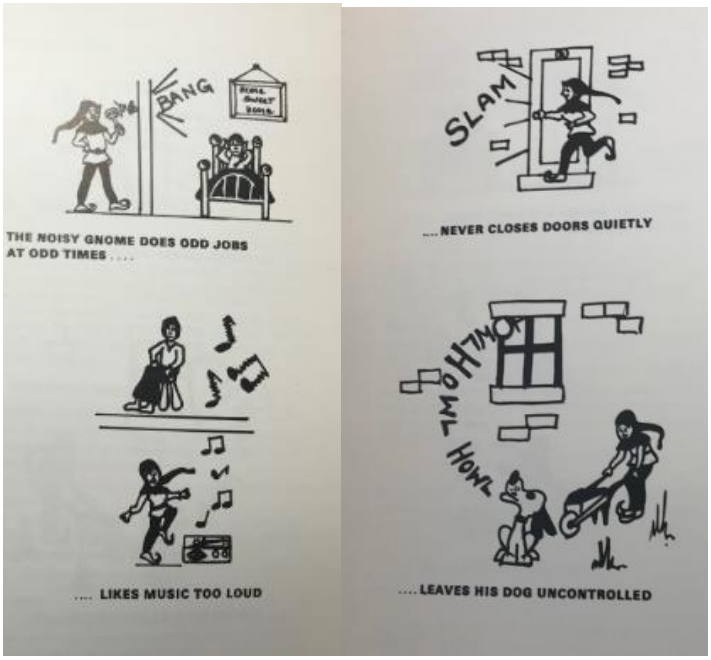

Figure 7: Detail from 'Do you have a noisy gnome in your home?' leaflet from Noise Advisory Council, *The Darlington Quiet Town Experiment: September 1976-September 1978* (London: Her Majesty's Stationary Office, 1981), back cover materials.

The Darlington Quiet Town Experiment produced a sonic encounter that naturalized noise as social disruption. It did so primarily for a female hearer who was constructed as an agent of quiet in her town. It did so for sounds that threatened the integrity of the private family home. There *was* an active listener in the experiment: he is pictured frequently in reports wielding noise-measuring equipment (for example in Figure 8) and represented the knowledge-gathering Noise Advisory Council. However, by hearing-with the female hearer promoted in the experiment's publicity, the historian might gain a different perspective on quiet, a perspective framed by gendered ways of hearing. That is not all there is to hear with in historical instances where sonic encounter has been produced. The example of gendered ways of hearing that I have set out here is intended only to illustrate the necessity of hearing beyond the listening-to and of attending to the effects of ways of hearing in the past.

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Figure 8: Image entitled "Noise reading being taken on a building site" from Noise Advisory Council, *The Darlington Quiet Town Experiment: September 1976-September 1978* (London: Her Majesty's Stationary Office, 1981), p.15.

Sonic encounters also take place out of the immediate context of their production. The Darlington Quiet Town and Big Ben Silent Minute examples used here have been intended only to draw attention to the most obvious forms of auditory attention shaping. The sonic encounter between a Western colonizing ear and, say, the traditional musical tradition of a colonized people, of the kind that finds form in ethnographic field recordings now held in institutions such as the British Library, has not been stage-managed in the sense of the Darlington Quiet Town Experiment, but is nonetheless still the product of a Western, colonial, way of hearing. In hearing with these ways of hearing, we must reflect carefully on the role of the historian's listening ear. There remains further work to be done to theorize the ways in which historians might realize Goh's aim (2017) of sounding situated knowledges, but reflexivity about what makes historical knowledge of the auditory past possible is a necessary first step.

Commented [29]:

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