Sound Thought 2017
Conference Proceedings and Documentation
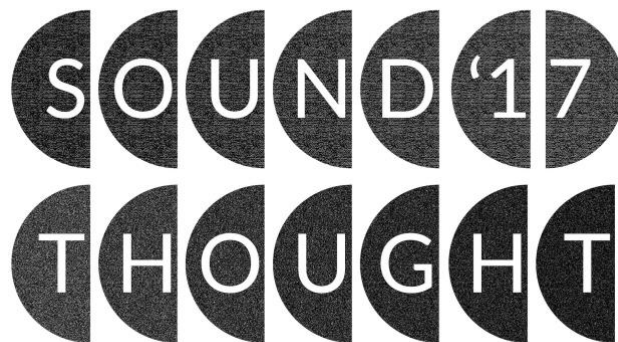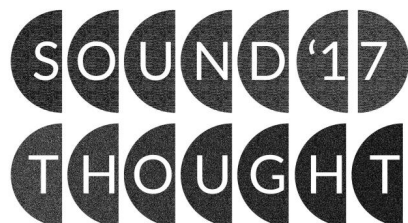
eSharp

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SOUND '17
THOUGHT

Contents

Editors' Introduction

On the 1st of June this year, two weeks after the Sound Thought festival, the 25th issue of the University of Glasgow's postgraduate journal, *eSharp,* and the sister publication *The Kelvingrove Review* were launched at an event at the university.

    eSharp is an international online journal for postgraduate research in the arts, humanities, social sciences and education, and it is run entirely by students, as is the Sound Thought festival. Therefore, the editorial team of *eSharp* and the organising committee of Sound Thought, decided to join forces in the creation of this special issue of documentation and proceedings from the festival (which included both artistic works and academic papers). Three contributors from the Sound Thought festival came and presented their works at the eSharp launch.

    First, we heard Julien Lonchamp's acousmatic piece 'Hologram (augmented)', which was based on a recording of his previous piece 'Hologram'. Next, we heard and watched Richy Carey's essay film 'Camphill' and last, Ollie Hawker performed an improvisational piece for solo performer and electronics. The sonic and visual touch that the contributions added to the launch was truly appreciated after months of writing, reading, editing and fine-tuning the *eSharp* and *The Kelvingrove Review* publications.

    The theme for the twenty-fifth issue of *eSharp* was 'Rise and Fall'. While the editorial team chose this theme in response to a year noted for loss, conflict, antagonism and resistance, it also covers the rise of and change in aesthetic epistemes, including the rise of sound art which has been evident over the last decades, and which Sound Thought is one of the main proponents of here in Glasgow. It has therefore been a great joy for both the *eSharp*/*The Kelvingrove Review* editorial team and the Sound Thought organising committee to cooperate on this special issue documenting the Sound Thought festival 2017, which we hope you will enjoy. We have compiled visual documentation from the festival along with two full-length articles which were presented as papers during the festival.

<div align="center">Pernille Ravn (on behalf of eSharp), Lina Tobler & Kevin Leomo (on behalf of Sound Thought)</div>

About Sound Thought 2017

Sound Thought has been a regular event in Glasgow since 2007, when current lecturer in music at the University of Glasgow, Dr. Drew Hammond, established Sound Thought as a means to promote the practice and research of music postgraduates. Since its inception, students from the University of Glasgow have endeavoured to establish Sound Thought as a forum for showcasing the work of postgraduates and artists in a collaborative and interdisciplinary environment, comprising a variety of music and sound research, composition, and performance.

Held in Glasgow's foremost hub for the arts, the Centre for Contemporary Arts, Sound Thought 2017 featured the work of a record eighty delegates from fifteen countries during the three-day festival (10th-12th of May). This included fifteen current students and recent alumni from the University of Glasgow's music department. There was an extensive array of work exhibited, including paper presentations, lecture-recitals, installations, audiovisual and electroacoustic compositions, and live performances. This year saw our most ambitious programme yet in an effort to mark the tenth anniversary of Sound Thought. The event was open and free to the public; we attracted an audience number of approximately seven-hundred people over the three days.

Sessions were organised by themes pertinent to the creative process:

Collaborate: Exploring spaces and engagement – connections over time and distance
Articulate: Finding a unique voice within the creative arts – perspectives
Integrate: Formulating aesthetic strategies through technological developments

Sound Thought 2017 had several key aims. The first was to facilitate dialogue and collaboration amongst participants. We endeavoured to provide a forum for, and to raise the profile of, postgraduate work by ensuring the entirety of the event was free and open to the public. Also, we wanted to address issues relevant to contemporary arts practice and research. Our last aim was to strengthen links between Glasgow-based practitioners and the wider international arts community.

There was a vast wealth of practice and research presented, as well as musical discussion, at Sound Thought 2017. The occasion of the tenth anniversary of the festival demonstrated the necessity for such an event.

It is vital for postgraduate work to be showcased outwith the university context; Sound Thought provides this platform. Once again, the festival has demonstrated the very high standard of music and sound research and practice taking place in Glasgow and throughout the UK and further afield.

Wenxin Cui, Kevin Leomo, Hannah McGrath, Hannah Newham, Ela Orleans, Andrew Rae and Lina Tobler
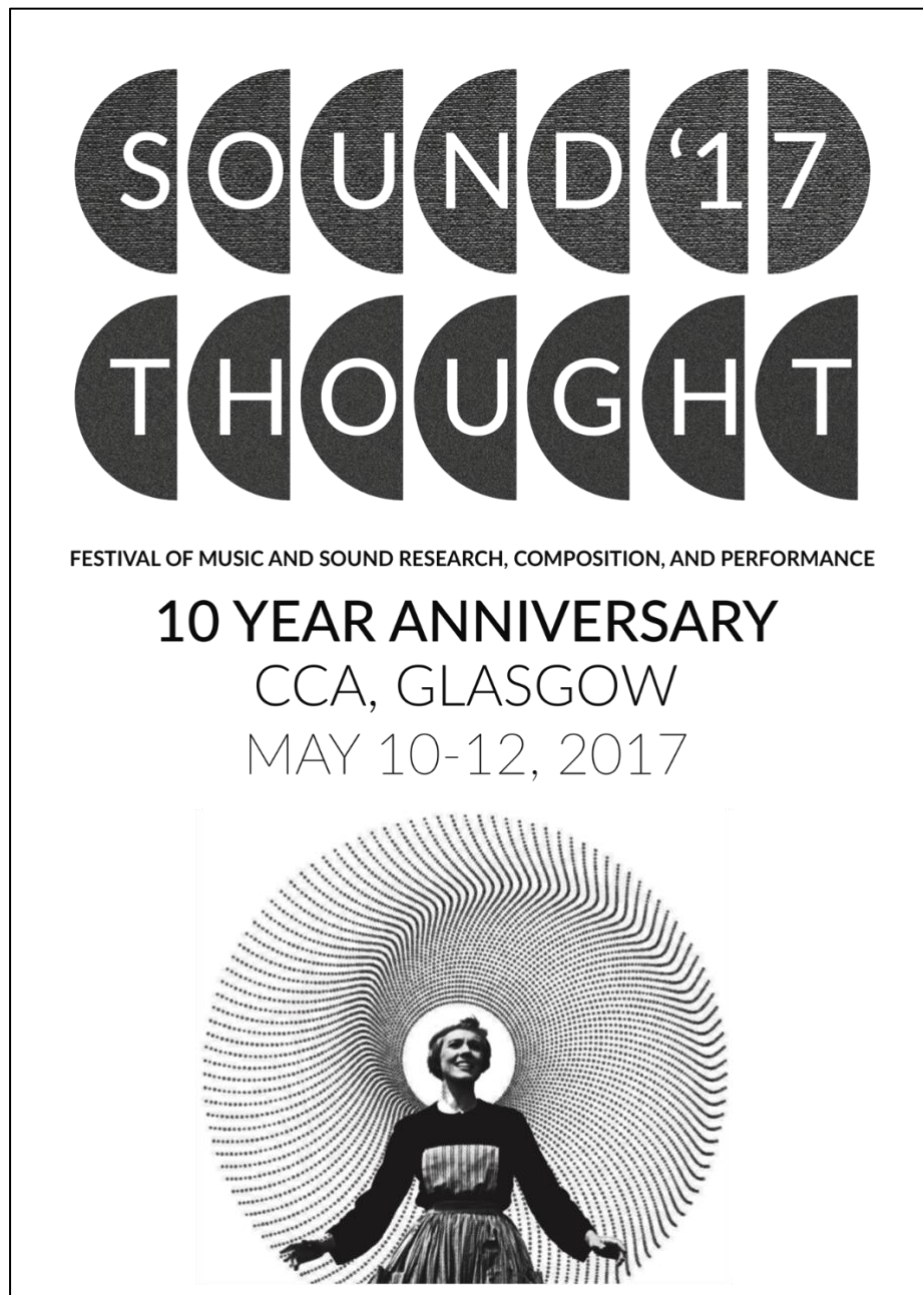
The Sound Thought Poster 2017

Pictures from the Sound Thought Festival

Filip Sande & Vibeke Lunel (Nesodden, Norway) / *Bubbletalk*

Micah Nye (Forth Valley College, Glasgow) / *Lost and Found in the Volta Region*

Frank Rossi (Mannheim, Germany) / *So viele Farben Schwarz*

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Ollie Hawker & Nick Smith (University of Glasgow) / For Two Heartbeats

Sound Thought control room.

Tracing the Liminal: Autoethnographic Strategies in Soundscape Art

Dr. Iain Findlay-Walsh (University of Glasgow)

Abstract

Listening in a present-day urban environment requires the reconciling of multiple orders of auditory space simultaneously. The prevalence of recorded audio transmission in everyday soundscapes fills the spaces of experience with additional 'virtual' spaces that listeners are tasked with making sense of, deciding between, and locating themselves amongst. In this sense, the listener's perspective can be understood as liminal – fluctuating on thresholds between actual and virtual environment, between sound, space and body, and between producing and receiving sound. The listener is (an) in-between space. In such a context, how might field recording and soundscape art practices, by turning the focus in on the recordist-listener, engage with changing relations between listening and aural environment?

This article explores reflexive strategies in recording, producing, and presenting first-person environmental audio. Drawing on the ideas of Eric Clarke, Salomé Voegelin, and Ragnhild Brøvig-Hanssen & Anne Danielsen, and discussing pieces by Hildegard Westerkamp, Steven Feld, Christopher DeLaurenti, and Marc Baron, as well as my own recent pieces, I focus on soundscape work which explicitly re-stages and layers the personal listening experiences of the recordist. Through this discussion, I will present some specific ideas and approaches to recording technology, which have evolved through my own practice-as-research, highlighting strategies for generating sonic self-narratives that document, interrogate and re-present the listener's changing relationship with sound and environment. Taken together, I propose that these methods and works can be understood in autoethnographic terms, and form part of a wider emerging discourse around reflexive soundscape work.

1. Introduction

> […] perceptual liminality is first and foremost a relation between one and an other; a space in which boundary is unresolved. (Dietz 2014, p.18)

> […] you've been Orbed if you're sitting in a room and you get up and look out of the window and suddenly realise it was coming from the record (Ultrared 1997)

> The creativity with which autoethnographic pieces are often written, opens up a reflexive world in which the researcher/ researched join with the reader to create a story. (Grant *et al.* 2013, p.2)

Listening in a present-day urban environment requires the reconciling of multiple orders of auditory space simultaneously. The prevalence of recorded audio transmission in everyday soundscapes fills the spaces of experience with additional 'virtual' spaces that listeners are

tasked with making sense of, deciding between, and locating themselves amongst. In this sense, the listener's perspective can be understood as *liminal* fluctuating on thresholds between actual and virtual environment, between sound, space and body, and between producing and receiving sound. The listener is (an) in-between space. In such a context, how might field recording and soundscape art practices, by turning the focus *in* on the recordist-listener, engage with changing relations between listening and aural environment?

This article explores autoethnographic strategies of recording, arranging, and presenting environmental audio that trace and re-present the liminal auditory perspectives of the recordist-listener. It considers a range of methods and works that capture and exploit auditory liminality as compositional material, and discusses the active role of listeners in realising such work. To begin with, recent writing on sound and listening (LaBelle 2010; Voegelin 2010; Brøvig-Hanssen & Danielsen 2013) is discussed to consider notions of aural environment and liminal listening. Then a range of reflexive soundscape pieces are explored, including work by Hildegard Westerkamp, Steven Feld, Christopher DeLaurenti, and Marc Baron, as well as some of my own recent work. Each can be understood to explicitly re-stage the listening experiences of the recordist and re-present these for subsequent listeners. This work is then discussed in relation to autoethnographic research methods, and some *sonic-autoethnographic* strategies developed through my own work are outlined. The article concludes with a brief discussion of possible future directions for research in this area.

2. Listening and liminality

2.1 Listening as relational production of space and subject

Drawing on recent theories of sound and listening, we can understand listening as a perceptive process through which a listener-subject and their environment are relationally produced. In proposing an 'ecological approach to perception', Eric Clarke (2005) draws on the writings of James Gibson to theorise that auditory perception unfolds in relation to the 'affordances' of sonic-spatial information as it is experienced. Such affordances essentially play to the prior knowledge and experience of the subject and therefore vary for each listener. Through the process of listening, the listener's perceptual and cognitive activity draws on embodied knowledge and memory, developed through previous auditory experience, to produce an understanding of current environment and position. In turn, the listener acquires new knowledge through such auditory experience that informs subsequent experience (2005).

In recent years, a range of theorists have developed similar theories of listening, albeit each from different methodological starting points. Similarly emphasising the entanglement of listener and environment, Brandon LaBelle writes,

> One latches on to location, such a view expands understanding of the inter-relation
> between self and surrounding by appreciating the world as elemental partner (2010,
> p.131).

Salomé Voegelin presents comparable ideas on listening, with a focus on the nature and process

of a listener-subject (or 'sonic self'), which emerges through ongoing aural encounter:

> [...] the reciprocal intertwining of the 'I' with the sonic life-world produces a transient and fleeting subject, en par with the sounds of its composition (2010, p.93).

Focusing directly on everyday music reception, Michael Bull's writing emphasises the conscious and active role of listeners in using music to control their experience of environment. Nevertheless, the reciprocal relationship between space and subject is key: 'Sound enables users to manage and orchestrate their spaces of habitation in a manner that conforms to their desires' (2004: pp.283).

Each author seeks to develop understandings of listening-as-process, and in doing so to unpick the complex inter-relation between sound, environment, body, and subject that listening both facilitates and navigates. Each emphasises listening as the production of (aural) environment, and as a perpetual process of subjective becoming – the listener-subject continually emerges and is shaped through sonic-spatial experience. Following this research, listening can be understood as a means by which subjects perceive their environment, and locate themselves within it, while being shaped by it.

A straightforward working example would be listening to a person speaking to an audience in a small conference room (without a microphone). The voice in the room communicates ideas about a given topic using language and an argument structured in advance. Audience members listening to the voice in the room may engage with this information, but are also able to engage with the sonic characteristics of the voice resonating with/in the room. The sound of the voice resonating in space affords certain information pertaining to the listening environment, e.g. dimensions of the space, density of the walls, objects in the space, as well as the listener's position within the space (and in relation to the voice), which can be perceived via listening. In short, listening to a person speaking in a room affords the listener knowledge of the room and their location within it.

2.2 Listening to recorded sound

What happens when we listen to the same voice speaking the same words but this time in the form of a sound recording (dry, close-miked) transmitted into the room via loudspeakers? Following Schaeffer, we can say that recorded sound is 'acousmatic' in that the initial sources of the sound are not visually apparent. With this example, we can still identify 'a voice' (and the information it presents via language and structured argument), however, the voice we identify is 'virtual', in that it is not physically present in the space. And similar to the actual (physically present) voice in the first example, we can, by listening to it, perceive the location of this virtual voice in the room, its position within an actual listening environment, and listening to it can tell us some things about the characteristics of that environment, as well as our position within it. Listening to the transmission of the recording allows us to locate a virtual voice in an actual environment, and, in turn, to perceive the listening environment and our position within it.

A final hypothesis: what happens when we listen to a recording of the same voice speaking the same words, but recorded on a busy street? Again, the initial sources of the sounds are not visually apparent, and in this case, we hear a voice in another environment (other than our listening environment). Specifically, we hear a virtual voice speaking in a virtual environment, projected into an actual environment – the room that we are listening in. While it is safe to say that the recorded busy street is 'virtual' in the sense of it not being physically present but projected via technology, it can nevertheless be understood as a space that subsequent listeners can engage with and, to an extent, inhabit. Given the aforementioned theories of listening - as the relational production of space and subject, it seems reasonable to consider recorded environments as real environments, constituent elements in the 'spaces of our experience'. However, if recorded and transmitted environmental sound is 'real' space, what happens to an actual space when virtual (auditory) space is projected into it via loudspeakers? And if the projection of environmental audio into an actual room causes one space to be layered over another, what can we say of the location of the listener as they listen? How stable is the listener's position or perspective while listening to layers of aural-environmental information simultaneously?

2.3 Recorded music as virtual environment

In recent years, recorded music has been theorised as a type of virtual environment that may mimic and play with some of the sonic characteristics of actual spaces, using the capacities of production and playback technology to develop virtual auditory space as a culturally significant material. According to Simon Zagorski-Thomas (2010), record production aesthetics have at times developed in response to the 'ideal' reception spaces for specific styles of music. An example of this would be 'stadium rock' studio recordings produced using studio reverb and equalisation to synthesise the sound of a stadium concert for people listening in their homes, or disco tracks that conversely minimise reverb on drum tracks to facilitate rhythmic clarity and impact when listening and dancing in small clubs (Zagorski-Thomas 2010, pp.253-256). David Byrne (2012, pp.14-15) makes similar observations regarding the development of the punk and post-punk sound in New York clubs in the 1970s.

Ragnhild Brøvig-Hanssen & Anne Danielsen (2013) discuss the tendency of some recorded pop music to evoke numerous spatial settings within a short time period, transposing Dennis Smalley's notion of 'space form' from the discussion of electroacoustic practice to a theorising of pop music meaning. As with Zagorski-Thomas, such emerging tendencies within production practice are linked to new challenges and potentials for the listener's engagement with recorded music:

> [E]ven though we know it is music, we still experience the tension between the nature of actual spaces and the virtual space of music. Consequently, music's spatiality is able to evoke our familiarity with physical spaces at the same time as it subverts it. (2013, p.79)

While this research considers the listener's engagement with the virtual spaces of recorded music, and examines various aspects of the relationship between the virtual environment(s) of recorded music and actual aural environments, recorded music still tends to be discussed as a self-contained virtual space, or structure of virtual spaces. However, whether projected through loudspeakers in a club, or through headphones directly into an individual's ears, recorded sound only ever layers the actual listening environment - it never completely masks or replaces it. When we listen to recorded sound, we are always in at least two places at once.

2.4 Liminal listening

The polymorphous auditory spaces created via the widespread transmission of recorded sound alter the process and function of everyday listening. Analogous with a viewer's everyday engagement with laptop, tablet, or mobile phone screens, which can similarly be understood as virtual spaces within actual environments, a listener's attention fluctuates between actual space and virtual, technologically produced, space, often frequently within a short time period. In this relatively new context, listening can be understood to include the active selection and navigation of layers of sonic-spatial information. A listener is receiving and dealing with multiple orders of sound-space at once, and, through listening activity, takes a position in relation to each and all simultaneously. This adds a new dimension to the inherent *liminality* of listening as a perceptive process. The relational nature of listening has been discussed briefly above, as a co-emergence of sound, environment, body, and subject. However, when considering listening to recorded sound and music, we can introduce a concept of aural liminality with reference to a listening process that takes place *between* spaces (or orders of space). As sound artist Jason Kahn has written on the subject,

> […] the concept of liminality also extends beyond notions of sound - I use this in thinking about space in all its forms and in the ways these spaces interact. Where does the liminality of movement place these different spaces when they collide or coincide? (2014, p.7)

3. Reflexive soundscape art

In the context of such developments in the practice of listening, how might field recording and soundscape art practices respond to changing relations between listening and environment? Since the mid-twentieth century, field recording has been explored as a means of tracing subjective experience in relation to aural environments. Luc Ferrari's reference to his phonographic collages as nature photographs implies both the documented landscape and the perspective of the photographer/viewer. More recently, some soundscape composers and acoustic ecologists have explicitly conceptualised sound recording in terms of documenting (their own) listening encounters. Hildegard Westerkamp highlights the 'complex and fine line… between the voice of the recorded environment and that of the composer' (Westerkamp 2013, p.116), while Lasse-Marc Reik talks of 'storing the listening process' (Reik 2013, p.173),

and Steven Feld of holding up an 'acoustic mirror' to auditory experience (Feld 2013, p.212).

By consciously practicing field recording as the tracing of a listening-subject as they respond to an aural environment, perhaps it is possible to capture not only the relationally productive process between sound, environment, and listener, but also the liminality of the listener's environment and perspective. To this end, I am interested in practices and works that use what we might refer to as 'first-person' field recording as a starting point for engaging with listening. By documenting, layering and re-presenting listening encounters, such work has the potential to lead to new embodied understandings of the listening process for subsequent listeners. By presenting such work in immersive reception contexts, it may effectively put listeners 'in the shoes' of a previous listener. I would like to touch briefly on examples of such work.

Kits Beach Soundwalk: This well-known piece by Hildegard Westerkamp (1996) is based on a field recording made in an environment of personal significance to the artist, which is combined with a questioning, poetic voice-over recorded subsequently, during which the recordist-composer reflects on her relationship to the place, the experience of listening to it, and some thoughts on composing with, and altering the audio, after the fact. The roles of recordist, listener, and composer are productively conflated as a means of exploring the meaning of the soundscape and its documentation.

Waking in Nima: A single edit of field recordings by Steven Feld (2010) that captures the aural environment as Feld wakes up each day in a tree house in Nima, Ghana. As listeners, we hear the day 'come alive' from the perspective of a listener who is slowly waking into consciousness. The title, sleeve notes, and recordings encourage the listener to perform each 'waking' as if it were their own experience. *Hidden Tapes*: Marc Baron's *Hidden Tapes* (2014) is composed primarily of field recordings and found tapes, and much of the five-track collection consists of dense textures of abstract tape noise. However, these are occasionally dramatically interrupted by what appears to be the sound of recording and/or playback technology being handled by the recordist. These first-person interventions have a jolting effect on the listener, forcing their attention on to the materiality of the music technology they are using, and mirroring their solitary experience of environmental audio reception. They also introduce a tension between the environmental recording and the actual listening environment by bringing the activities of recordist and subsequent listener close together.

Live at Occupy: Christopher DeLaurenti's *Live at Occupy (for Audio Field Report side one 16 Minute Version)* (2012) also features frequent handling noise and the sounds of a recordist 'on the move'. In this case, however, the recordist is audibly moving with and among crowds and can be heard to participate in a protest and march. The recordist's roles as documentarian, listener, and activist are entangled, and the experience of listening back is one of feeling involved in a dynamic, embodied, first-person experience of protest.

Each of these examples uses first-person field recording as a key technique in capturing aural encounters, and highlights the capacity of sound recording to represent a range of environments and perspectives simultaneously. In all but *Waking in Nima*, the virtuality of recorded audio is also foregrounded for the listener – each presents the recording *as recording,* inviting the listener to critically distance themselves from the piece while listening, and to

consider the virtual soundworld of the piece within the wider context of their listening environment and activity.

The creative documentation of auditory experiences and exploitation of such aural ambiguities, as well as the de-centring of the recordist's perspective (or 'ear', or 'voice') in these pieces, has strong parallels with autoethnographic practices, which have emerged in recent years. In the section which follows, I will briefly sketch out some key aspects of autoethnographic practice, before discussing the application of some autoethnographic methods in my own soundscape work.

4. Autoethnographic strategies

Autoethnography can be understood as a set of related research methods and practices which combine autobiography and ethnography. In such work, researchers reflexively document their personal experiences as the basis for wider cultural and political inquiry. A starting point for such research is a requirement that the researcher is an active participant in the culture that they are studying, however, crucially, the integrity and stability of the researcher's account as 'authentic' voice is problematised through a range of writing strategies. These include fostering narrative discontinuity, focusing on emotional and subjective responses as research, frequent use of quotation, and the juxtaposition of conflicting accounts and styles of communication. According to Grant *et al.* (2013, p.7), 'The act of writing opens the writer up to becoming what is not yet known and what can never be contained in words'. What often emerges is written research which resists a stable, definitive reading, and requires interpretation by the reader as they work to find a place within the multiplicity of voices. Such work serves to implicate the reader as another actor in the research process, another problematic agent piecing together subjective, plural, and often fragmentary responses to the researched topic. In recent years autoethnographic practice has emerged as a useful research paradigm within the social sciences and beyond, and is now utilised in areas as diverse as performance studies, public health, and pedagogy.

In my own sound art practice, I combine autoethnographic methods with field recording and soundscape composition, swapping written documentation for first-person audio recording that documents my listening encounters. This recorded material is then edited and layered, and redacted using improvised processes of real-time mute-automation, often during further processes of extensive self-documentation. These results are then presented as immersive reception situations – including surround sound pieces, installations, and headphone pieces – in order to place subsequent listeners 'in the shoes' of the recordist-listener.

The Closing Ceremony (Findlay-Walsh 2016) is a 5.1 multichannel soundscape composition which uses multiple field recordings and found recordings of the same music event (the closing concert of the 2014 Commonwealth Games) to re-present it from a variety of different listening perspectives. Field recordings made during the open-air concert in the surrounding streets are juxtaposed with smart-phone recordings made at the same time by audience members situated inside the concert venue (and subsequently ripped from Youtube). By abruptly editing between this range of recordings, or 'aural selfies' (Findlay-Walsh 2018),

each of which acts as the index of a different listening perspective, and presenting these as an immersive surround sound piece, the audience is continually re-positioned in relation to the same music event. Additionally, recordings made of the home-studio as I edit the piece are also fed back into the mix, introducing further layers of abstraction and technological distance. The listener is immersed in a fragmentary collage made of environmental recordings which trace the different listening perspectives and environments of multiple listeners as they encounter the same concert. The collage also includes quiet and 'silent' passages which turn attention away from the piece and back to the listening environment in which it is being encountered. As a self-narrative, the piece uses first-person field recordings to tell a story of listening as a process of self-location.

In the piece *Born W king On* (Klaysstarr 2017), my own listening encounters during a daily train commute to work are documented, reordered via a collage-edit, and re-presented as a headphone piece. During each commuter journey, I listened to the same recorded song using an iPod and headphones, and this was captured using in-ear binaural microphones, worn beneath iPod headphones. This recording strategy (used simultaneously along with a handheld stereo recorder and contact microphone) serves to document the experience of listening to music through headphones while travelling, revealing the experience as one, not of total immersion in a virtual aural environment (recorded music in the headphones), but of the partial masking of an actual listening environment with a virtual environment. Again, frequent and abrupt 'silent' passages or drop-outs introduce a tension between the piece and the environment in which it is being encountered.

Similarly, the stereo track *app ause* (Klaysstarr 2017) uses in-ear binaural microphones to capture the sound of wearing and using headphones, however, in this case the auditory experience captured is not iPod listening during a train commute, but the process of recording and editing a track of music, as it is being monitored via headphones and studio monitors. Various stages of the editing and mixing process are themselves recorded using a range of miking strategies (in-ear mics, boundary mic on the work desk, ambient miking in the editing-studio space), capturing shifts in listening perspective, the sounds of editing using a computer keyboard, and the repetition and boredom involved in the process, while creating a feedback loop between making and listening to the piece. Also intended as a headphone piece, *app ause* uses the in-ear mics to capture the sound of headphones being removed and replaced. When encountered subsequently on headphones, these moments have an uncanny effect of sounding as though headphones are being removed from the listener's ears, when in fact they are hearing the recorded sound of headphones being removed from the recordist's ears. This kind of rhetorical trick foregrounds the listening process as the production of aural environment, and throws the relationship between virtual and actual sonic-space into question.

Each of these pieces use autoethnographic methods to document and represent personal listening encounters. First-person audio documentation (field recording) is the basis for generating immersive, rhetorical soundscape pieces, which foreground listening as the relational production of space and subject, and generate productive ambiguities between recorded virtual aural environment, and actual listening environment. Each piece is presented as a disjunctive but immersive encounter for subsequent listeners, who are involved in

positioning themselves in relation to the various competing (recorded) aural perspectives. Autoethnographic strategies were developed through each piece in order to trace the liminal listening experiences – as relational production, and as negotiation between layers of virtual and actual aural environment.

5. Summary and future research

In summary, I have suggested that listening can be understood as a perceptive process through which space and subject are relationally produced. I have discussed some consequences of the transmission of recorded sound (as virtual environment) for the everyday experiencing of auditory space, and proposed that such auditory contexts render the listener's perspective *liminal*. Field recording and soundscape art practices have been examined as means of tracing listening experiences and re-presenting them for engagement and interrogation by subsequent listeners. Examples of work which uses first-person field recordings as documentation of personal listening encounters have been explored, with particular attention given to their capacity to generate productive ambiguities between virtual and actual aural environments, and between recordist and listener.

By employing autoethnographic research methods it is possible to extend some of the possibilities afforded by field recording as a way of capturing and re-presenting the liminality of present-day listening. This can be pursued through unusual approaches to recording, miking and editing audio, and can be effectively presented by contriving immersive reception contexts for pieces, so that the listener may be placed 'in the recordist's shoes'.

Developing this work has increased my interest in researching the everyday transmission and reception of recorded sound, and the everyday practice of headphone listening, as 'virtual reality' practices. Similarly, it has raised the question of what potential uses autoethnographic methods may have in engaging with and developing virtual reality practices in other media. Finally, this research points towards the potential usefulnesses of notions of perceptual liminality in pursuing new understandings of listening, of virtual reality, and of 3D audio-visual reception.

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'Like A Nightmare': Dissimulation and Dispossession in the Andantes and the Blossoms

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As part of the history of popular music, 'girl groups' remain a thoroughly overlooked area of cultural activity (Gaar 1993; Warwick 2008). In *Girl Groups Girl Culture: Popular Music and Identity in the 1960s* musicologist Jacqueline Warwick (2007, p.ix) defines girl group music as comprising of several different elements relating to an overall sound, having emerged in the studio, the dominance of orchestral arrangements, and most notably the audibility of adolescent female vocals 'interacting in dialogues between lead and backing vocalists'. In this work, Warwick discusses the role of girl groups that emerged from the late 1950s and that were active throughout the 1960s in relation to girl culture and constructions of female identity. Further writing outlines the significance of girl groups in relation to lyrical content concerning adolescent females (Bradby 1990) and the audibility of an undisciplined adolescent vocal (Stras 2011). In her essay 'Why the Shirelles Matter?', Douglas (1995) identifies the role of girl groups during her own adolescence, indicating the importance of such groups as an extension of expression for female teenagers. Douglas also outlines the significance of girl groups active during the 1960's to girl culture highlighting the role of the music as being for young girls as both culturally and economically as listeners and consumers. However, the focus of the book is on the relationship between backing groups and girl groups in relation to dissimulation and vocal dispossession.

In the paper 'Selling an Image: Girl Groups of the 1960s' (Cyrus 2003, pp.173-193), Cyrus discusses the role of uniformity among many girl groups, noting how the equal visual identity of personnel enabled an interchangeability of group members with little remark, or even detection, from their audience. The visual uniformity highlighted by Cyrus indicates a tension between the visibility and invisibility of group members, leading the her to state that '[e]ach member has chosen to subordinate herself to the group' (2003, p.179). Significantly, this subordination not only creates an image of a female clique that any female listener can project herself onto, but it does this via an obfuscation of the members themselves. This muddying of individual identities enabled the interchangeability of group personnel and created opportunities for record labels to use one group of vocalists for several other faux-groups by only changing the group name. This meant that releases could be continuously produced without flooding the market with supposedly one group. If a primary group was unavailable, for example due to their touring schedule, an alternative set of female vocalists would undertake the recording and the release would appear under the touring group's name (Brown 2008; Clemente 2000, p.10).

Warwick notes this interchangeability of bodies and voices in the essay '"And the Colored Girls Sing…": Back Up Singers and The Case of the Blossoms' (2008). Warwick (2008, p.67) observes how The Blossoms' vocals appear on recordings that were eventually released under the name of another girl group who were on the same record label (Philles), the Crystals. In her discussion of the role of the female backing group, Warwick (p.66) highlights the practice of masquerade where groups such as the Blossoms were involved in 'complex representations of

race and generational identity'. Describing the Blossoms as 'shape shifters', the text demonstrates how such groups were required to alter their vocal style depending on the material at hand (p.66), indicating how the role of such backing vocalists were dependent on a subordination of not only their own identity, but, in the case of the Crystals, the identities of the primary group as well. Similarly to the Blossoms, other girl groups from this period identified and recorded as both backing and primary groups.[1]

The following paper considers how this double role held by some girl groups works to further mask the identity of other groups and the problems this may cause for the female performing subject. Moreover, the paper aims to extend Warwick's (2008) thinking to discuss how the vocal 'shape shifting' required of backing groups may relate to themes of dispossession and dissimulation. It asks whether the dissimulation of identities acts to cancel out the presence of either party where the constant obfuscation of one by the other means that neither can be realised, ultimately leading to a dispossession of voice for all parties. It considers how a muddying of vocal identity in addition to invisible movements of voices and bodies might further destabilize the listeners' ability to hear who is singing and maintain the division between unique voices coming from unique bodies. Largely uncredited as individuals but rather named only by their group moniker, many of the performers associated with these groups maintained, at best, only partial visibility and audibility. This concurrent lack is further enhanced by the interchangeability of vocalists by record labels, as mentioned previously. The displacement of voices and bodies in this way causes a double rupture, as reclamation for either party can never be fully realised. Furthermore, the paper will discuss how experiencing this material live or mediatized works to amplify the division between the visible and audible. Figures are not only seen and not heard; they are 'heard but not listened to' (Hoffman 1986, p.306).

Furthermore, the concept of (dis)simulation will be used to formulate a two-fold sense of vocal dispossession where neither subject is in possession of her own voice. This concept has been developed, albeit tentatively, to describe the simultaneous formation of dissimulation and simulation.

Part one will focus on the role of the Andantes for the Motown record label. It will consider the Andantes' position as the record label's in-house backing vocalists, discuss their role as a sound, and question the invisibility of the group and the disembodiment of their vocals during live and televised performances.

Part two will extend Warwick's (2008) discussion regarding the Blossoms to focus specifically on how they feature on releases by the Crystals. Discussing the Blossoms' recordings of 'He's A Rebel' (Philles 1962) and 'He's Sure the Boy I Love (Philles 1962), part two considers how the release of this record, under the name of the Crystals, sets up a problem for both of the groups. Significantly, the voices of the Blossoms are not credited on the record nor do they seem to be identified by the listener. The Crystals were subsequently made to either lip-sync to a set of voices that did not belong to them or made to modify their own voices to more closely imitate the voices on the release (Clemente 2000, p.76).

Louvain Demps, Jackie Hicks, and Marlene Barrow, known as the Andantes, worked with

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[1] It was not uncommon for record labels or publishing companies to make a recording featuring an existing girl group yet release it under a different name. For example, the Blossoms featured were also the Playgirls; the Jaynetts were also the Clickettes, the Poppies, the Patty Cake and the Z Debs; the Cookies also appeared as the Palisades, the Cinderella's and the Stepping Stones.

Motown from 1959 to 1972. They have been said to have featured on an estimated twenty thousand recordings (Dyson 2004). Their primary role was one of an in-house backing group. However, the appearance of the group's voices extended that of the background, as their vocals were often used as replacements for primary groups, or to enhance or 'sweeten' the voices of others via live blending or dubbing. Their role as in-house backing group has been considered to be due to, one, keeping costs low as they could figure on several recordings in one session and, two, as a way for label owner Berry Gordy to possess a sound that no other studio could fully duplicate, suggesting that the group were more than simply backing vocals, that it was the nature of their voices, the uniqueness of the sonic quality of their voices together that meant that Gordy could maintain control of the label's 'sound'. Although this might be construed as liberating, seeing as the group was so integral to the record label's sound, their contracts stipulated that they were not permitted to record for any other record label, seriously reducing their opportunities of work as session vocalists (Wright 2007). At Motown, the group also figured as stand-ins for groups who were touring as a way to ensure recordings and releases 'adhered to a timely schedule' (Clemente 2000, p.10). The permanency of the Andantes sits at odds with the common narrative forwarded by Stras (2011), Warwick (2007), and Cyrus (2003) who note the disposability of personnel due to the anonymity of girl group members. Yet for Demps, Hicks, and Barrow it was due to the subordination of their identities that their singing on such a large number of sessions and recordings was made possible.

The group did not notably appear as a primary act but was rather used by the label as only ever aural components. Their vocal placement on tracks such as 'Ask The Lonely' (Motown 1964) for the Four Tops utilises the group as vocal flourishes, providing the opening lines of the track followed by uttering 'oohs' and 'aahs,' mimicking the orchestral arrangements, and finally repeating the lines of each chorus of the track. Their vocals are a significant element of the song, yet their unknown identities position them as closer to the instrumentation on the track than the other vocal lines. Positioning the group in this way is further highlighted by an online clip of a televised performance from Marvin Gaye of his 1965 Motown single release of 'Ain't That Peculiar' (MyRhythmNSoulTV 2014). During the televised performance, the vocals of the Andantes are present but their bodies are absent. It is unclear whether they are situated out of frame, or perhaps more likely, as Gaye is performing on his own with no visual sign of instrumental accompaniment, their vocals are being produced via a backing track. Either way, the vocals of the Andantes are disembodied with no hope of corporeal identification. Throughout the song, the group is limited to echoing back the final word of the verse and the chorus. From the beginning of the second verse, the group is permitted to utter harmonic 'oohs' and then once again to repeat the final word of the second verse ('stronger'). During the track's bridge, the group tautly echoes Gaye's utterance of 'ah ah ah' and 'hey hey', once again 'oohing' through the verse until finally repeating the final word of the third verse ('tears') followed by cyclically repeating Gaye's 'ain't that peculiar'-chorus until the fade out of the song. During Gaye's performance, the disembodied vocals of Barrow, Demps and Hicks exemplifies the role of backing singers as lacking distinct identification, but rather symbolically functioning as 'reductive […] stereotypes of black women as selfless sources of emotional and practical sustenance for individuals whose identities are assumed to be more psychologically complex and important' (Warwick 2008, p.75). Notably high in the mix, the vocals demonstrate the now familiar call and response motif used in many Motown and earlier Rhythm and Blues tracks.

However, the absence of the Andantes' bodies and the presence of Gaye's body sets up a curious dynamic where the performance is haunted by three additional voices. These voices, however, are locked into echoing the phrase of the chorus, the last line of the verse, or collapsing away from language altogether, providing harmonic 'oohs' throughout the verse. These utterances further destabilize a secure sense of voice and body, but rather appear as if they exist only in that moment, cyclically chanting their parts awaiting Gaye's interjections. It is as if their voices would continue regardless of Gaye's presence – eternally articulating, repeating, and stating.

Although informed by Motown label owner, Gordy Berry, that they were not considered a primary group, the Andantes did record one single under their own group moniker for one of Motown's subsidiary labels, VIP. 'Like a Nightmare' (VIP 1964) was recorded with Ann Bogan of Motown's the Marvelettes as lead vocalist. However, the release did not provide the group with the primary performer status they desired (Barrow cited in Wright 2007; Cosgrove 2016). In her biography of the group, Vicki Wright (2007, p.99) describes how '[t]he Andantes were so valuable to Motown that they were repeatedly denied the opportunity to record their own records and do their own shows'. Similarly, Barrow notes the following:

> We talked to Berry about giving us a chance […] but they just pacified us and kept us in the background […] they didn't want us out on our own or leave them. As you can see, we sing on just about everything in that catalog. If we had recorded as a group, there may have been an opportunity for us to travel and that would make us unavailable for studio work. They wanted us here, in town and at their disposal when they were recording. (Barrow cited in Wright 2007, p.99)

The intention of the record label to keep the Andantes in the background shows how the voices of the group were considered sonic objects used to recreate the sound known as Motown. Barrow (cited in Wright 2007, p.100) observes how 'Motown saw our voices as their "sound"'. Barrow's point suggests how the group were not thought of as subjects producing a distinct and unique voice but rather as a sound to be used with little to no reference to the body that produces it. The role of the Andantes as a 'sound', rather than a set of distinct voices, frames them closer to a kind of technology as well as reflecting Warwick's (2008) observation of the backing group symbolically functioning as a reductive stereotype of black womanhood.

The Andantes' status as a 'sound' is highlighted in their role at early revue shows where they accompanied live acts from behind a curtain. Obscured from view, the audience remained unaware of the Andantes' existence and their role in creating the 'sound' they heard during live performances and on recordings. Present at the *Motortown Revue* held at the Fox Theatre in Detroit in 1963, one of the Andantes' friends, Rita Lumpkin-Daily, records the following:

> The girl group that was on stage ended up getting boo-d because the microphone for the Andantes went out. The girls on stage didn't sound so great and the audience let them know it. Back then you wanted them to sound like the record. The audience got restless because the girls on stage weren't sounding like the record. (Lumpkin-Daily cited in Wright 2007, p.74)

While discussing Tricky's use of a female voice, Mark Fisher (2014) recognises how 'the one who is possessed is also dispossessed – of their own identity and voice' (p.45). The incident described above suggests how both the primary group on stage and the Andantes from behind the curtain both fall prey to Fisher's description of dispossession. The dissimulation of the Andantes occurs in two ways: the curtain hiding them from view and their anonymity on

recordings and the visible bodies performing on stage. Both act to obfuscate the vocal presence of the Andantes and to dispossess them of their own voice. Similarly, a process of vocal dispossession occurs with the group members onstage who are also dispossessed of their own voices via the aural presence of the Andantes.

This dispossession via dissimulation continues with the use of editing processes, such as vocal blending, that were undertaken by the Motown record label. Clementes (2000, p.10) describes how, by the mid-1960s, the Andantes' voices were being used and blended onto nearly all Motown records: '[o]n some occasions vocal accents were provided through overdubbing. On other occasions, the Andantes stood at one microphone while the other group stood at another and the vocals were blended together. Many times, the Andantes' backing would be favoured'. The blending of the Andantes' vocals with those of another group causes both vocal tracks to obscure each other in some way. This blending of several vocals not only means that the vocals on the recording cannot be adequately reproduced live but also that both voices on the recording are always obscured. This problem is emphasised by the refusal of the Temptations to have the group record on later releases, as they found it impossible to replicate live (Clementes 2000, p.10). As highlighted above, there were times when the voices of the Andantes were chosen over those of the primary group, meaning that it was the vocals of Barrow, Demps and Hicks that appeared on the release on behalf of the primary group named and credited on the record. The use of another group name and the continual invisibility of the group via the insistence of the record label makes it easier to correlate the vocals to, for example, the bodies performing on stage or the bodies associated with that specific group name. In Wright's (2007, p.106) biography of the Andantes, Marlene Barrow describes experiencing the use of the Andantes' vocals by the record label for other groups as both painful and alienating. The alienation described by Barrow supports the argument that this might be thought of as a form of dispossession and that this dispossession emerges from a continuous dissimulation of their identities. In terms of (dis)simulation, where dissimulation and simulation occur simultaneously, the Andantes might be thought to characterise this in different ways. First, appearing on such a large amount of recordings made it difficult for a primary group to fully re-present a track live. This is highlighted by the Temptations' request that the Andantes' voices no longer be used on their recordings as it was becoming increasingly difficult to replicate during live performances. The Andantes were therefore already part of a system that dissimulated and simulated simultaneously. Yet their role, although audibly present, is obscured by a lack of visibility on production credits or physical presence during live performances. The group therefore helps produce a sound that simply cannot be replicated live without their presence, whether physically on stage or via a backing track. Although this might be construed as empowering, as the sound quite simply cannot be adequately reproduced without them, the suppression of their identities seems to have the very opposite effect. Instead, in this case both the Temptations and the Andantes create a cyclical system of vocal dispossession where neither party is in full possession of their own voice.

For the Motown record label, the Andantes' vocals remain disembodied. Moreover, their voices are, not only, no longer their own, but considered merely sound, further erasing their bodily origins. Furthermore, the Andantes' roles as 'replacements' or 'enhancements' demonstrate a two-fold obfuscation of the female performing subject. Barrow, Demps and Hicks

are like ghosts that haunt every track, unnamed and always slightly out of reach. Like several images projected on top of each other: they obscure both themselves and others.

As outlined by Warwick (2008) in 'And the Colored Girls Sing…' Backup Singers and the Case of The Blossoms' the Blossoms were both a backing group, solo artists, and primary recording group. Where the Andantes were kept hidden and their role very much limited to the studio, the Blossoms were a much more visible group in terms of live and televised performances and record releases. However, the aim of this second part is to discuss the use of the Blossoms on recordings that were then released under another group's name. The specific releases in question are 'He's A Rebel' (Philles 1962) and 'He's Sure the Boy I Love' (Philles 1962) released by the Philles record label under the name of another Philles group, the Crystals. The aim is to consider how the Blossoms' vocals problematize subsequent performances of the track by the Crystals.

Although having changed members from their initial formation in 1961 by the release of 'He's A Rebel' (Philles 1962), members of the Crystals included Barbara Alston, Delores (La La) Brooks, Delores (Dee Dee) Kennibrew and Patsy Wright. In his detailed description of over fifty girl groups active during the 1960s, Clemente (2000) describes how the Crystals first heard the recording of 'He's A Rebel' (1962) on the group's car radio while on tour. As noted by Clemente (2000, p.76), the group was 'shocked' at hearing the radio host describe the record as the new release from the Crystals. They were then informed by their record label that they would need to learn the song and add it to their current live repertoire. Label owner and producer, Phil Spector, had undertaken the recording of this track by using the West Coast group, the Blossoms. Spector indicated that the recording might be released for the Blossoms themselves, however the group was to discover later that it had been released under the Crystal's moniker. That same year it happened again when the Blossoms recorded 'He's Sure the Boy I Love' (Philles 1962) for the record label, only to have it released under the name of the Crystals (Clemente 2000, p.27; Warwick 2008, p.68).

As noted by Warwick (2008), although the line up of the Blossoms had changed throughout the years, at the time of both recordings, the group members were Darlene Love, Fanita James, and Jean King. The group not only comprised session vocalists but was also an active primary group since their initial formation in 1957, releasing records on record labels including Capitol Records, MGM, Bell, and more. Additionally, both Love and James recorded with Bobby Sheen as Bob B. Soxx and the Blue Jeans (Philles) and in 1963 Darlene Love released her first solo single with Philles records.

The recording of 'He's A Rebel' (1962) sees Love perform lead vocals with James and King joining on the last line of each verse, singing throughout each chorus with Love and continuing the line 'he's not a rebel, no, no, no' at the end of the track. As James and King repeat this last line, Love freestyles over the top, letting her powerful voice emit excitable repetitions of 'no' until the track fades out. In his biography of Phil Spector, Brown (2008, p.105) describes how these final interjections by Love were unscripted, spontaneous outbursts signifying of Love being swept away during the recording.

During an online clip of a televised performance of 'He's A Rebel', the Crystals lip-sync to Love, James, and King's vocals, aware of the fact that the song is only theirs by name. Their performance is awkward, lacking the energy from the performance's aural component. Viewing the clip is uncomfortable as each lip-synched moment further conceals the identity of both the

Crystals and the Blossoms. Although it was not uncommon for performers to lip-sync during televised performances, the fact that the bodies on stage do not belong to the voices being heard remains problematic. The female performing subject is situated in a kind of limbo where the performance creates a voice without a body and a body without a voice: a subject that is simultaneously visible and invisible, vocal and silent, present and absent.

As indicated earlier, a similar occurrence happened later that year where the Blossoms recorded a song that was then released under the Crystal's moniker. The supposed intention for this track was to be the first solo release for Darlene Love on the Philles record label. However, in a similar occurrence to the Crystals', on hearing their name announced on the radio after 'He's A Rebel', Love expected to hear her own name announced yet to her dismay she heard the host declare that the track was by the Crystals. Love begins the track 'He's Sure the Boy I Love' (1962) with a spoken word monologue:

> Always dreamed the boy I love would come along,
> And he'd be tall and handsome, rich and strong.
> Now that boy has come to me,
> But he sure ain't the way I thought he'd be

As previously mentioned, the Crystals were instructed by the record label to add both songs to their live performance roster. By doing so, the Crystals were required to modify their vocals in order to sound as close to the recording as possible. Although Barbara Alston often performed lead vocals for the group, it was decided that for 'He's Sure the Boy I Love', Delores (La La) Brooks would perform lead as it was considered that her gospel training meant her voice could imitate the power of Love's vocals more closely (Clemente 2000, p.76). However, Love's West Coast accent was difficult for Brooks to imitate, as Brooks possessed a distinct Brooklyn accent. In her attempts to imitate Love's accent, Brooks is forced to subordinate and hide her own identity. Brooks' attempts at simulating Love's accent work to both obscure Love's original presence while obfuscating Brooks' own identity.

Significantly, little to no observations were made regarding the presence of Love's voice and the modification of Brooks' voice. Industry papers reveal that only one report was made concerning the changing vocals of these groups.[2] In his article 'Crystals Mysteries', British journalist Derek Johnson (1963, unpaginated) notices the similarities of vocals on records pertaining to the Crystals, Bob B Soxx and the Blue Jeans, and the Ronettes. Although Johnson (1963) describes the vocals on Darlene Love's solo record, 'Wait Until My Bobby Gets Home' (Philles 1963) as possessing a similar 'earthy' quality to the Crystals, he does not recognise it as the same voice. Johnson also goes on to introduce another Philles girl group, the Ronettes, as sounding more like the Crystals than the Crystals themselves, hinting to the formulation of a possible three-fold dissimulation whereby the dispossession of voice via the Crystals and the Blossoms somehow alter the perception of the voices of the Ronnettes. Echoing Fisher's point previously stated, the possession of one voice for another creates a consequent dispossession of voice and identity, yet the reorganisation of vocals for the Crystals by the Blossoms demonstrate two counts of dispossession.

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[2] This statement is based on research undertaken at the British libraries periodical archives. From dates ranging from 1960 – 1967 from the magazines and industry papers: Variety, Billboard, NME, Melody Maker, Disc, and the New Yorker.

Having to simulate the Blossoms recordings, the Crystals are locked into a cycle of (dis)simulation where their imitations increasingly subordinate and obscure their own identities. Equally, by simulating the vocals of the Blossoms, they further confuse and conceal the voice of Love, James and King. As suggested by Johnson's (1963) own confusion, these voices have become so detached from their bodily origins that it is difficult to relate them to a specific body.

This paper has shown that material associated under both the term girl group and backing group still remains an area of study to be given attention and that the girls groups are organised in a similar way to backing groups.

Thinking about the use of female backing groups as a studio sound rather than a set of unique female voices shows how these women were considered to belong to the studio, where their voices were considered closer to a technical device. By considering the different ways that the Andantes were persistently hidden from view, this paper has demonstrated how the group members were frequently divided from their own voices. Their disembodied vocals were used to create a unique sound, yet they were given little to no attention for this role. Furthermore, the process of vocal blending not only obscures the bodily origin of their own vocals but also those of the primary group. As mentioned, this process where the Andantes' vocals were often picked over the primary group causing them to sing lead on a record that they would never perform caused feelings of both pain and alienation, highlighting the problematic outcome of such activity. For the Andantes, it was as if the voice remained disembodied and prohibited from returning to its origin. Barrow, Demps and Hicks were dispossessed of their voices and made to belong to the studio, behind curtains and out of the frame.

The insistence of the group image affecting girl groups from this period already obscured the identity of individual members. As noted by Cyrus (2003), visual uniformity not only enabled the interchangeability of personnel but also provided the opportunity for listeners to project themselves onto the group as a member. However, when releases feature the voices of a different group this works to further scramble an already muddy identity. The identities of the Crystals were already disguised via the image of the group, and the appearance of the Blossoms' voices causes further dissimulation of both identities. Their identities are then further problematized when they modify their own voices in order to imitate this new aural identity provided by the Blossoms.

The relationship between the Blossoms' voices and the Crystals' bodies indicates two possible counts of dispossession. Those recordings featuring the Blossoms cause the Crystals to perform to a voice that does not belong to them and perform a song that their voice never recorded. This process of (dis)simulation causes a double dispossession of voice for both groups whereby The Crystals are dispossessed of their voices due to their bodies' silent possession of a voice that is not their own.

Both the Andantes and the Blossoms enact what has been described in this paper as (dis)simulation. (Dis)simulation has been used to describe a process where the arrangement and re-arrangement of voices and bodies cause subjects to simultaneously conceal and imitate voices that do not belong to them. The paper also puts forward how this (dis)simulation can be thought to cause a two-fold dispossession of voice where the appearance of one voice for another dispossesses both the performing subject who is made to perform a voice that is not their own, while concealing the body from which the voice originates. The voice remains disembodied and prohibited from returning to its origin.

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