CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Music, Noise and Conflict: Sociotechnical Imaginaries, Acoustic Agency and Ontological Assumptions about Sound

LUIS VELASCO-PUFLEAU

Mack Hagood, *Hush: Media and Sonic Self-Control*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2019. x + 276 pp. ISBN 9781478003212 (hard cover); 9781478003809 (paperback); 9781478004479 (ebook).

Samuel Llano, *Discordant Notes: Marginality and Social Disorder in Madrid, 1850–1930*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2018. xiv + 260 pp. ISBN 9780199392469 (hard cover).

Hearing the Crimean War: Wartime Sound and the Unmaking of Sense, edited by Gavin Williams. New York: Oxford University Press, 2019. liv + 268 pp. ISBN 9780190916749 (hard cover); 9780190916756 (paperback).

In a 1969 interview, the Italian composer Luigi Nono stated that, 'If a score cannot provoke or incite revolution, it can contribute to it by participating in intellectual and revolutionary hegemony.'[1] Drawing on the work of Antonio Gramsci, Nono considered composers as intellectual workers with a responsibility to catalyse or amplify the social struggles of their times through the technical means and material employed in their works.[2] The scores, tapes or concerts were sites of action and representation of revolutionary struggles: 'A score can mature and evolve into direct and concrete participation of the struggle, which can be confronted and transposed into the score.'[3] He believed that the musical experience was capable of reconfiguring reality through dual listening – the composer's listening to revolutionary struggle, and audiences' listening to the resulting musical works.

Furthermore, Nono proposed a direct link between technology, hegemony and the use of sonic archives. As I have examined elsewhere, in the 1960s and the early 1970s Nono believed

---

[1] 'Entretien avec Luigi Nono', in *Luigi Nono: Écrits*, ed. Laurent Feneyrou (Geneva: Éditions Contrechamps, 2007), 296–304 (p. 301).
[2] Robert Adlington, 'Whose Voices? The Fate of Luigi Nono's *Voci Destroying Muros*', *Journal of the American Musicological Society*, 69 (2016), 179–236.
[3] 'Entretien avec Luigi Nono', 301.

that the use of technology (for example, the electronic studio) was crucial for the dissemination of ideas to support the cultural and ideological hegemony of international struggles.[4] Listening to the voices of historical revolutionary leaders was important for this objective. In *Für Paul Dessau* (1974), Nono sampled recorded speeches of Vladimir L. Lenin, Ernst Thälmann, Patrice Lumumba, Che Guevara and Fidel Castro, and included excerpts from recordings of his own works *Il canto sospeso* (1955–6), *Non consumiamo Marx* (1969) and *Como una ola de fuerza y luz* (1971–2). Nono defined a geographical and political genealogy of twentieth-century struggles through archival voices, and outlined a sonic cartography of his own works and historical social revolutions.

Significant in Nono's musical practices and political thought are the social imaginaries conveyed by his discourses and ontological assumptions about music and sound. In fact, Nono's views on music, technology and power were embedded in what Sheila Jasanoff and Sang-Hyun Kim call sociotechnical imaginaries. These imaginaries are defined as 'collectively held, institutionally stabilized, and publicly performed visions of desirable futures, animated by shared understandings of forms of social life and social order attainable through, and supportive of, advances in science and technology'.[5] Nono's musical practices, including the use of sonic archives, were part of collective efforts to imagine and perform desirable futures. The roles of these practices were grounded in ontological assumptions about music and sound: collective beliefs about what music and sound are, what they can do or accomplish and how they define our subjectivity. As the philosopher and musician Eric Lewis asserted, 'One's ontological beliefs influence, and often determine, a bevy of aesthetic and social beliefs one has about such […] musics, and crucially, the converse also holds.'[6] Although Lewis examines musical practices foregrounding improvisation, this key idea is useful to explore both perceptions of sonic environments and every kind of 'humanly organised sound'.[7]

How are sociotechnical imaginaries and ontological assumptions about sound related to affect and conflict spaces? What do sociotechnical imaginaries tell us about social and individual control of sonic environments? Why is it important to think about ontological assumptions of sound when recovering aural experiences of the past in archives? The three books under consideration in this review article address these questions in different ways. They explore the use of media devices to produce affect and social relations, the role of categories of music and noise in the control of urban spaces, and the politics of archival sounds and silence.

In *Hush: Media and Sonic Self-Control*, Mack Hagood explores 'orphic media': technologies 'designed for the sonic control of one's affective state and environment' (p. 23). These

---

[4] Luis Velasco-Pufleau, 'On Luigi Nono's Political Thought: Emancipation Struggles, Socialist Hegemony and the Ethic behind the Composition of *Für Paul Dessau*', *Music and Politics*, 12/2 (summer 2018), <https://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/mp/9460447.0012.205/--on-luigi-nonos-political-thought-emancipation-struggles?rgn=main;view=fulltext>.

[5] Sheila Jasanoff, 'Future Imperfect: Science, Technology, and the Imaginations of Modernity', *Dreamscapes of Modernity: Sociotechnical Imaginaries and the Fabrication of Power*, ed. Sheila Jasanoff and Sang-Hyun Kim (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2015), 1–33 (p. 4).

[6] Eric Lewis, *Intents and Purposes: Philosophy and the Aesthetics of Improvisation* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2019), 3. See also Philip V. Bohlman, 'Ontologies of Music', *Rethinking Music*, ed. Nicholas Cook and Mark Everist (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 17–34.

[7] John Blacking, *How Musical Is Man?* (Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press, 1973), 10.

sociotechnical imaginaries posit control of the acoustic environment as a form of freedom. Rather than examining how music can be used as a 'technology of the self',[8] Hagood analyses the use of media as a means whereby the individual can produce and control affect. Orphic media promise consumers that they will be able to break free from environmental noise through the use of sonic control devices. Tinnitus maskers, white noise machines and noise-cancelling headphones are media devices used to reshape audible spaces, to suppress undesirable resonances and, more generally, to enable the individual to remain unaffected by others' sonic worlds.

Mixing both ethnographic and archival approaches, the book is organized in three parts, each focused on an affective modality through which 'orphic media fight sound with sound' (p. 7). The subject of the first part is *suppression.* It examines within an ethnographical perspective the sonic experiences of people suffering from tinnitus: the experiences of the sounds in the subjects' heads or ears that have no external physical source. Tinnitus sufferers use digital sound machines, hearing aids and white noise apps in order to suppress sonically the aural presence of this 'phantom sound'. Interestingly, Hagood shows how 'an affect of fear can attach to our listening at a neurological level when we feel sonic difference diminishes our ability to act' (p. 7). Thus, the success of the clinical treatment of tinnitus depends on the combination of sound technology and techniques of listening which weaken the affect of fear.

The second part of *Hush* explores the role of *sound-masking* technologies in the control of sonic environments during the last six decades in the USA. The relationship between affect and acoustic agency has been explored by scholars working on music, detention and violence; since the pioneering work of Suzanne Cusick,[9] the monopoly on acoustic agency has been examined as an issue of control and power which is central in the construction or destruction of subjectivities.[10] Hagood argues that the use of orphic media such as white noise machines, LP record series and sleep apps has participated in the utilitarian production of apparent states of a self in control fostered by 24/7 information capitalism. Orphic media marketing assures consumers they can take control of their acoustic environment in order to be able to sleep, concentrate and be more productive. The consumption of technology is promoted as acoustic agency 'in an inherently noise-corrupted social world' (p. 162).

The orphic media promise of total control as *cancellation* is the subject of the final part of the book. Noise-cancelling headphones offer consumers the 'production' of a personal space in which the sounds of others are turned into a self-cancelling signal. According to the manufacturer of sonic devices Bose, noise-cancelling headphones 'help to turn any space into the perfect place to listen to music, get work done, or just shut out the world for a few moments

---

8   Tia DeNora, *Music in Everyday Life* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 46.

9   Suzanne G. Cusick, 'Music as Torture / Music as Weapon', *Trans*, 10 (2006), <https://www.redalyc.org/pdf/822/82201011.pdf>; '"You Are in a Place That Is Out of the World …": Music in the Detention Camps of the "Global War on Terror"', *Journal of the Society for American Music*, 2 (2008), 1–26; 'Towards an Acoustemology of Detention in the "Global War on Terror"', *Music, Sound and Space: Transformations of Public and Private Experience*, ed. Georgina Born (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 275–91.

10 Morag Josephine Grant, 'Pathways to Music Torture', *Transposition: Musique et sciences sociales*, 4 (2014), <https://journals.openedition.org/transposition/494>; Tom Rice, 'Sounds Inside: Prison, Prisoners and Acoustical Agency', *Sound Studies*, 2 (2016), 6–20; Luis Velasco-Pufleau, 'Listening to Terror Soundscapes: Sounds, Echoes and Silences in Listening Experiences of Survivors of the Bataclan Terrorist Attack in Paris', *Conflict and Society*, 7 (2021), 60–77.

and relax'.[11] What is noteworthy in Hagood's analysis is how differing racialized, gendered and classed conceptions of noise proposed by manufacturers such as Bose and Beats Electronics participate in the construction of antagonistic identities. The sounds we want to eliminate, or from which we want to be protected, are those of specific subjects. While Bose's early marketing centred on the business traveller who wanted to protect himself from the sounds of jet engines and the voices of women and children, the Beats television ad campaign 'Hear What You Want' shows Colin Kaepernick preserving himself from the jeers of racist fans, sounds which threaten the personal space of calm and concentration he needs in order to succeed.

Hush is a valuable contribution to the field of sound studies. It shows how orphic technologies mediatize the aural world and are 'potentially *productive* of particular ontologies and social relations' (p. 195). However, related to the subject of *cancellation*, Hagood's analyses tell us almost nothing about which music repertoires the wearers of orphic devices – that is, noise-cancelling headphones – might listen to and the social imaginaries that these repertoires convey. If manufacturers' marketing asserts that individuals could use noise-cancelling headphones to remove *unwanted* sounds and relax, they mostly frame the use of the device around music listening. In the 2013–14 Beats 'Hear What You Want' campaign, Kaepernick starts playing Aloe Blacc's song *The Man* just after his orphic device cancels the threatening sound environment, and the song remains until the end of the ad ('Stand up now and face the sun, Won't hide my tail or turn and run, It's time to do what must be done, Be a king when kingdom comes').[12] In current marketing, Beats tells consumers, 'We believe your playlist is your sanctuary,'[13] and claims that, 'With Active Noise Cancelling (ANC), you can tap into your creative side and get fully immersed in your music.'[14] The issue of *which* music repertoires wearers of orphic devices are listening to is complementary yet essential in order to understand the production of affects and moral values bound up with these media. *Hush* invites new empirical studies in order to explore these relationships. What is the role of social imaginaries of music in the construction of antagonistic identities? How can concepts about, and boundaries between, music and noise frame social relations in conflict dynamics?

Samuel Llano addresses these questions in *Discordant Notes: Marginality and Social Disorder in Madrid, 1850–1930*, exploring the intersections between music, marginality and social control in Madrid from the 1850s to the 1920s. The book examines musical practices such as flamenco performances and the music of organ grinders (*organilleros*) as elements of social disorder and tools for negotiating marginality. Llano argues that musical practices and urban soundscapes were sites of contention in which social attitudes towards social problems such as crime and poverty were transposed. Musical practices from groups seen as 'marginal' were perceived as threats to public security and social order. At the same time, 'marginal' groups used music in order to 'negotiate the boundaries that separate them or bring them closer to the rest of society, and as a means of resistance to the strategies of control that target them' (p. 4). The political powers in Madrid regulated the musical and sonic practices of marginalized peoples through legislation and repression.

---

[11]   <https://www.bose.com/en_us/products/headphones/noise_cancelling_headphones/noise-cancelling-headphones-700.html> (accessed 25 June 2021).
[12]   <https://vimeo.com/133813688> (accessed 25 June 2021).
[13]   <https://www.beatsbydre.com/stories/2021/06/new-more-music-less-noise-with-beats-studio-buds> (accessed 25 June 2021).
[14]   <https://www.beatsbydre.com/stories/2021/04/drops-psychworld-x-beats-studio3-wireless> (accessed 25 June 2021).

The concept of 'aural hygiene' is central in the exploration of how Madrid authorities tried to shelter inhabitants and urban spaces from musicians' lifestyles and musical practices. Aural hygiene designates 'the rise in concerns about the impact of noise on the public' (p. 111) and was based on pseudoscientific rhetoric of degeneration and crime developed in the second half of the nineteenth century. These approaches classified criminality and deviance on the basis of the behaviour and 'biological deficiencies' associated with certain 'races' and social groups. Medical and social hygiene metaphors designed *flamenquismo* – 'the lifestyle embraced by people who attended performances of flamenco and plays featuring Andalusian and Gypsy elements' – as a 'genuine plague', an 'epidemic' and a 'morbid gene' responsible for the 'decadence' of the Spanish 'race' (p. 20). Likewise, organ grinders were seen as 'enemies of the values that the rising middle classes most cherished and protected, such as productivity and comfort' (p. 103). Their music was considered to be 'noise', and to be spreading uncontrollably around the city.

Madrid authorities passed legislation to control or ban musical practices perceived as unhygienic or deviant. Organ grinders were legally persecuted in the 1880s and 1890s in order to 'sanitize the urban soundscape and create a culture of comfort in the wealthy quarters of the city' (p. 8). In the 1900s, the activity of taverns and flamenco cafés (*cafés cantante*) was severely regulated, and musical practices and social interactions were delimited or banned. Workhouse bands were used to silence the music of organ grinders, perform socially accepted music repertoires in urban spaces and keep the poor away from the streets.

Music was used to negotiate norm and deviance, and as a means of both social control and resistance. Interestingly, the contingent concepts of 'music' and 'noise' were at the centre of the contention dynamics and reflected the moral values of dominant groups in Madrid society. As Llano argues, social critics 'often referred to flamenco and the music of organ grinders as "noises" in order to undermine their cultural value and to elicit animosity toward them' (p. 5). Such 'noises' were perceived as elements of social disorder which must be controlled by any means. Paradoxically, the use of the categories of 'music' and 'noise' was 'not related to the perceived aesthetic qualities and loudness of different music styles but to the moral values that society attached to them' (p. 6). Thus, they reflected ontological assumptions about sound which were entangled in social imaginaries and discourses about 'degeneration' (p. 41). Sound was perceived as having some of the properties of the bodies who produced it: a degenerate body produced a degenerate sound which was able to corrupt other bodies and, if it was not stopped, the whole of society.

However, written and sonic archives reproduce hierarchies of power which are embedded in ontological and social beliefs about sound. *Discordant Notes* raises the issue of the use of written archives in order to listen to the aural past. Archives and documents examined rarely give voice to musicians perceived as 'marginals'. Since archives are 'constructed entities', as Annegret Fauser asserts, 'they privilege certain experiences over others' and reflect 'the value systems not only of past societies but also of current ones'.[15] Whose voices are recorded and whose are neglected? How do we recover the diversity of aural experiences of the past? How are these experiences historically produced and mediated? These questions address the political dimension of archival research and the relationship between aesthetics and politics in social orders.

---

[15] Annegret Fauser, 'Sound, Music, War and Violence: Listening from the Archive', *Transposition: Musique et sciences sociales*, Hors-série 2 (2020), <https://journals.openedition.org/transposition/4310>.

Gavin Williams's edited volume *Hearing the Crimean War: Wartime Sound and the Unmaking of Sense* explores these issues through a transdisciplinary examination of wartime sonic experiences. It studies listening practices, hearing experiences and archival traces of what is considered to be the first war covered by mass media.[16] Paying attention to the experiences of sound in the imperial archives and published accounts of the Crimean War (1853–6), the collective aim of the editorial project is 'to interrogate the political nature of histories of sound' (p. xix). What are the politics of the sensory experience of wartime violence? If music and sound are resources that can be mobilized in processes of constructing subjectivities, in understanding and making sense of the world in which we live, what are the particularities of human experiences of war and its acoustic realities? These questions are addressed across ten chapters through various approaches which show the challenges of studying the relationship between music, sound and violence.

The book shifts focus from the sounds of the battlefield to aural experiences of civilian actors, including women and displaced local populations, contributing to vibrant scholarly discussions on the intersection between sound studies and cultural histories of war.[17] The book pays attention to sound in wartime, rather than sound in war or warfare. Wartime is understood, drawing on Mary A. Favret's work, as 'the experience of war mediated, of time and times unmoored, of feeling intensified but adrift'.[18] Each contribution deals with 'a particular construction of wartime: an experience of temporality that, to a greater or lesser extent, permeated everyday life in territories far removed from battles' (p. xxxi). Flora Willson's chapter ('Operatic Battlefields, Theater of War', pp. 175–95) approaches the Crimean War through an 'operatic lens', examining how opera structured the perception of the wartime for the military elite in Constantinople. Opera not only consisted of staged performances, but also served as a sonic metonym and a symbolic point of reference: it 'demands inclusion in any account of events in Crimea' (pp. 192–3). Willson reveals the class-contingent sense of continuity 'between wartime as experiences from Crimea and as lived on the British domestic front' (p. 192).

The Crimean War was a mediated conflict in significant new ways for both the military in Crimea and civilian populations at home. New technologies, such as the telegraph and photography, allowed distant spectatorship. Williams's chapter ('Gunfire and London's Media Reality: Listening to Distance between Piano, Newspaper and Theater', pp. 59–87) explores the performances and 'textually mediated' representations of gunfire in piano pieces, newspapers and theatre in London in late 1954. Examining pieces for piano inspired by the Battle of Alma, which took place on 20 September 1854, he shows how these pieces 'recruited visceral effects to inscribe a sense of war's distance' and established specific temporalities (p. 68). The sounds of the Battle of Alma were also represented in news reports and plays, where the emerging figure of the war journalist took a starring role, encouraging 'audiences to imagine the battle being placed before them' (p. 79). New technologies not only mediated the sound and silence of wartime experiences but also provoked legal reforms. Peter McMurray ('The Revolution Will Not Be Telegraphed: *Shariʿa* Law as Mediascape', pp. 24–58) examines Islamic sharia law as a

---

16   Ulrich Keller, *The Ultimate Spectacle: A Visual History of the Crimean War* (London: Routledge, 2013).

17   Jim Sykes, 'Ontologies of Acoustic Endurance: Rethinking Wartime Sound and Listening', *Sound Studies*, 4 (2018), 35–60; Nikita Hock, 'Making Home, Making Sense: Aural Experiences of Warsaw and East Galician Jews in Subterranean Shelters during the Holocaust', *Transposition: Musique et sciences sociales*, Hors-série 2 (2020), <https://journals.openedition.org/transposition/4205>.

18   Mary A. Favret, *War at a Distance: Romanticism and the Making of Modern Wartime* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2010), 9.

'mediascape' in the Caucasian Imamate and the Ottoman Empire. Addressing the 'deeply sonic foundations of law' (p. 29), he explores the beginnings of official use of the telegraph in the Ottoman Empire as an example of the capacity of sharia to take on and evaluate technological development. The archival sources used by McMurray highlight the sociotechnical imaginaries and theological justifications of the use of new technology in the Ottoman Empire.

Imperial archives could be useful to show how sensory experiences of the past are historically contingent on technology and media. But how can wartime experiences of sound be recovered when they have been erased from archives? What does this 'archival silence' tell us about hierarchies of power and erased memories? Three chapters address these questions. First, Maria Sonevytsky ('Overhearing Indigenous Silence: Crimean Tatars during the Crimean War', pp. 88–102) examines the gap in representation of the Crimean Tatars, the indigenous population of Crimea, and the possibility of recuperating their 'narratives of wartime loss through musical sounds that are indirectly evoked, implied, or referred to in historical and contemporary accounts' (p. 88). Drawing on the work of Ana María Ochoa Gautier,[19] Sonevytsky mobilizes the concept of indigenous memory and explores the genre of 'émigré songs' in order to challenge official histories, from the Crimean War to Vladimir Putin's annexation. Her chapter is a meaningful contribution to music scholarship which explores songs and music-making as both historical sources and modes of resistance against the erasure of memory.[20] Secondly, Andrea F. Bohlman's contribution ('Orienting the Martial: Polish Legion Songs on the Map', pp. 105–28) examines, 'against the silences of the archive' (p. 126), how Polish legion songs can define geographical boundaries and develop a sense of belonging to an imagined community in the absence of nationhood. Finally, Kevin C. Karnes ('Who Sings the Song of the Russian Soldier? Listening for the Sounds and Silence of War in Baltic Russia', pp. 129–49) explores the 'traces of auditory experience in and of the Baltic theater of the Crimean War' and the 'capacity of silence to function as an index of absence' (p. 133). He examines the sounds and silences that accompanied conscription, encampment, combat and mourning, as well as the gradual erasing of the Crimean War in Latvia's national historiography.

Mediated sound contributed to the memorialization of the Crimean War and constructed imagined communities in a conflict which involved and reconfigured multiple empires. Dina Gusejnova examines this issue in her chapter on Leo Tolstoy's account of the Crimean War ('Sympathy and Synesthesia: Tolstoy's Place in the Intellectual History of Cosmopolitanism', pp. 3–23). Thinking of this conflict as a 'contact zone' between distant cultures and communities, combatants and non-combatants, and between people of different classes and ethnic backgrounds, Gusejnova asserts that it became a 'cosmopolitan moment thanks to the production of moral sentiments by the increasingly global literary public sphere' (p. 18). She explores how Tolstoy's narrative techniques 'enjoined his readers to witness war synesthetically' (p. 7) and argues that the intervention of the narrator in his writings 'was central to attuning his readers' moral sentiments to a cosmopolitan point of view' (p. 22). Tolstoy's narrative techniques reflect his cosmopolitan commitment, an ethical and political sense of belonging to a 'larger world',[21]

---

[19]   Ana María Ochoa Gautier, *Aurality: Listening and Knowledge in Nineteenth-Century Colombia* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2014).

[20]   Joshua D. Pilzer, *Hearts of Pine: Songs in the Lives of Three Korean Survivors of the Japanese 'Comfort Women'* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012); Kathy Nguyen, 'Echoic Survivals: Re-documenting Pre-1975 Vietnamese Music as Historical Sound/Tracks of Re-membering', *Violence: An International Journal*, 1 (2020), 303–31.

[21]   Sarah Collins and Dana Gooley, 'Music and the New Cosmopolitanism: Problems and Possibilities', *Musical Quarterly*, 99 (2016), 139–65 (p. 141).

which emphasized injustices and transcended classes and empires. The importance of personal experiences of the Crimean War in Tolstoy's narrative is also examined in Alyson Tapp's contribution ('Earwitness: Sound and Sense-Making in Tolstoy's *Sevastopol Stories*', pp. 196–213). Focusing on the representations of sound in the *Sevastopol Stories* (1855), she argues that Tolstoy creates a new literary genre 'where reportage and fiction meet' and uses the wartime soundscape of the Crimean War in order to make sense, 'both psychological and moral' (p. 213).

Exploring the use of sonic devices in literary accounts is central to interrogating the political nature of sounds and voices of the Crimean War. It means that sound descriptions are always more than just acoustic accounts; they are forms of knowledge which are tied to history and particular subjectivities.[22] Delia Casadei's chapter ('A Voice That Carries', pp. 150–71) examines the geopolitics of Italian sounds and voices in the Crimean War, in particular the rise of literary accounts of Crimean wartime in the context of the Italian unification. She discusses the centrality of war memories and written accounts – including those of Karl Marx – in the politics of voice: how 'voice is transformed into a form of collective fusion – the primal formation of the body politic as visceral national identity' (p. 158). In her sophisticated contribution, Casadei examines the limits of the 'aural prestige of Italy's voice' in commemorative memoirs of Crimea which flourished in the context of the Italian occupation of Eritrea. Finally, Hillel Schwartz's essay 'InConsequence: 1853–56' (pp. 214–42) explores in a fascinating (and funny) way the aural traces of whistling and the ubiquity of the song 'Pop Goes the Weasel' in the Crimean wartime. Schwartz 'listens' to the war in Crimea through several 'filters' – dying horses, whistling bullets and a song which is 'still with us in the guise of a nonsense nursery rhyme' (p. 223) – in order to show multiple perceptions of wartime sound and how the senseless refrain of a song can be a 'blatant analogy to what was happening not only in Crimea but in physics, engineering, and the countryside of the United Kingdom precisely at mid-century' (p. 233). Sound and language are a means to explore the cultural and political consequences of the Crimean wartime in the British Empire.

The three books examined in this review article are significant contributions to the study of how humans make sense of their sonic environments in situations of conflict, and how music and sound can be powerful devices to construct narratives and build antagonistic identities. Technology and language mediatize our aural worlds, and mediated sound produces affect and shapes public and private spaces, whether through orphic devices, urban music performances or staged representations of battlefield noise. Furthermore, ethnographic and archival research is central to the process of recovering aural experiences of the past. Since such experiences recorded in archives participate in a particular 'auditory culture',[23] it is essential to interrogate the categories used to talk and think about sound, and to explore how the notions of music and noise can act as 'regulative concepts' which suggest beliefs and values at a particular point in time.[24]

---

[22] Deborah Kapchan theorizes sound knowledge as 'a nondiscursive form of affective transmission resulting from acts of listening' and sound writing as 'a performance in word-sound of such knowledge'. See Kapchan, 'The Splash of Icarus: Theorizing Sound Writing/Writing Sound Theory', *Theorizing Sound Writing*, ed. Kapchan (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2017), 1–24 (p. 2).

[23] Brian Kane, 'Sound Studies without Auditory Culture: A Critique of the Ontological Turn', *Sound Studies*, 1 (2015), 2–21 (p. 15).

[24] Regulative concepts are 'structuring mechanisms that sanction particular thoughts, actions, and rules as being appropriate'. Lydia Goehr, *The Imaginary Museum of Musical Works: An Essay in the Philosophy of Music* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 104.