Dead Logics and Worlds: Sound art and sonorous objects

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From the early experimentation with specific sounds in musique concrète (Palombini 1999) to the 'anecdotal' music of Luc Ferrari (1996) and the ecological sound activism of Hildegard Westerkamp (2002), the collecting, composition and recomposition of sonorous objects has been central to sound practice. Some sound art has privileged a relationship with visual arts and the structuring of objects in curated spaces (Licht 2007), others with the sound worlds beyond the exhibition (Schafer 1994). By examining a specific sound art installation, *Sound and Seclusion* by Tim Shaw, this article reworks the idea of sonorous objects as artefacts displaying different kinds of representations, knowledges or data. This question of sonorous 'knowledge-objects' is particularly important as 'collected sounds' become incorporated into compositions away from their, often remote, spatio-temporal origin out there in the landscape. This article raises three areas for discussion. First, what can sonorous objects tell us about the pre-compositional world (Impett 2007)? Second, in what ways can we understand sonorous objects as they are reworked in compositions which re-narrate them? Third, how can we understand sonorous objects as traces and pieces of data as well as aesthetic productions? The article concludes with a case for reworking the very idea of a sonorous object in sound practices as a product of dead logics and dead worlds as it emerges in new ensembles of composition away from its origin.

1. INTRODUCTION

This article attempts to rethink the sonorous objects of sound art composition and performance through an explication of a specific work of sound art, Tim Shaw's *Sound and Seclusion* (2013). Sonorous objects are sounds which are materially generated and collected as 'data' for knowledge about the world they were collected from or generated within. They are the basic materials for sound art composition. According to Impett, sound is marked by what we might call the 'pre-compositional world' – the social and historical worlds that sounds are generated within or extracted from (Impett 2007). As products of that world, before the composition begins sounds can represent those worlds, can display social or natural relations or can even disguise their relationship to that world. Shaw's work is an attempt to extract and use sounds from that pre-compositional world and test the boundaries of composition as the sounds are reworked, composed

and then displayed in the post-compositional location of performance.

Attempts to understand the meaning and signification of sounds are problematic (Hudson 2014a, 2014b) particularly when the relationship of sound art to both music and visual art is complicated by issues of composition and curation (Licht 2007) and of the classification and history of organised sound (Landy 2007: 5). Hudson has noted the use of sonorous objects in musical rather than sound art composition elsewhere and their representation of the world they are collected from (Hudson 2015). This article argues that by understanding 'knowledge-objects' as the products of 'dead worlds', before composition we can begin to think about questions of knowledge, representation and data without reducing the aural artefact to an exemplar of natural or social relations. The fact that the sonorous artefacts of *Sound and Seclusion* have their origin in field recordings of natural processes in rural Northumberland also means that in the recording, compositional and performative process the whole question of 'natural' objects itself becomes complex. We look at three entwined processes as part of understanding sound art as knowledge. First, what can sonorous objects tell us about the pre-compositional world (Impett 2007)? Second, in what ways can we understand sonorous objects as they are reworked in compositions which re-narrate them? Third, how can we understand sonorous objects as traces and pieces of data as well as aesthetic productions?

2. UNDERSTANDING SOUND ART AS KNOWLEDGE: THREE PROCESSES

2.1. Sonorous objects and the pre-compositional world

From the early experimentation of Schaeffer with specific sounds in musique concrète (Palombini 1999) to the 'anecdotal' music of Luc Ferrari (1996) and the ecological sound activism of Hildegard Westerkamp (2002), the collecting, composition and recomposition of sonorous objects have been central to sound practice. Problems of their use in composition have always been noted including the relation between composer-generated 'artificial sounds' to those generated in the

world out there as 'dirty sounds' (Robindoré and Ferrari, 1998: 10).

In an attempt to understand the relation between sound and the world, some sociologists, including both Bourdieu and Adorno, have often understood sound as part of a representational system that can be clearly interpreted through the 'data' (DeNora 2003). In this way, sound is seen as part of the notation of social organisation both signifying and enacting social relations as 'abstract representations' of social structure (Van Leeuwen 1998: 38). If composition is a social production and practice, then it becomes possible for the social structures of the pre-compositional world to be discerned in the sound because the sonorous object is a depository of meaning of that social world which produced it. Further, working with documentary field recordings of sounds extracted from the natural pre-compositional world means that the sound is a depository of meaning or knowledge of that world also (Bowers and Shaw 2014). Sounds are 'dirty' because they have been touched and marked by the locations from which they have been extracted: bearing within them the histories and logics of their worlds. The sound is sonorous 'knowledge-object' in that it carries meaning and knowledge within it as an artefact. The sound, however, is not reducible simply to its manifestation of the meaning of society or nature but is an artefact in and of itself both displaying and dispelling the meaning and order that the listener is trying to extract or impose upon it. Hudson (2014b) has examined the ways in which a sound artefact can make itself intelligible to the listener, displaying its properties and communicating its materiality. He has questioned a reductive analysis of the sound as simply social or natural data in favour of understanding how the processed or composed sound is transposed and dislocated in new listening environments (Hudson 2014a).

There is a critical necessity to examine the relation between sound and world and between manifest artefacts and social and natural structures. Technologists and scientists work with artefacts all the time. They manipulate them and operate upon them, they interpret them and recompose them into new narrative structures of art or evidence, they auralise them or visualise them in increasingly sophisticated and microscopic ways. This is part of the process of disciplining objects and at the same time the objects discipline the ways in which they can be read (Lynch 1985). Composers and sound artists use similar materials extracted from the social and natural world, reworking and recomposing sonorous materials into new forms, narratives and assemblages. Yet that aesthetic process does not fully address the reality that the artefacts, often collected from 'fields', are full of metrics and knowledge, and of *data* with a history and a provenance. Further, these materials display the logics of the world that they have come from.

Like metaphors, the sound objects re-emerge as materials for composition but their meanings and logics have been reworked into new narrative ensembles and new compositions and arrangements (Garro 2012: 110). In relation to Shaw's *Sound and Seclusion*, the spatio-temporal origin of the materials that are reworked is a dead, pre-compositional world in which the compositional and performative use of those collected materials continues. Hudson has noted the immense power of the idea of the dead and the dead world in art and the way in which art uses the forms and artefacts of 'dead generations' (Hudson 2000, 2002).The pre-compositional world included the hedge borders of fields, the seams and the geological meeting spaces of sandstone rock formations. It contained modes of traversing mines and caves, the live objects of bird migrations and the dead objects of sandstone. Materials emerged from islands, fells and fields – each of them composites and amalgams of natural borders, logics and orders (bird migrations) and sometimes of human ones (field patterns). The found, 'dirty' objects that provide the materials for composition are marked by their transition through the world.

These borders in the social and natural world are central to Shaw's work as is the sense of dislocation when they are disrupted and materials emerge in new spaces. This question of the worldly origin of sonic materials and their re-narration in art is an important part of the compositional processes of several composers, not least Westerkamp and Ferrari. Andra McCartney locates the creative origin of Westerkamp's work in the border between wilderness and human culture (McCartney 2000: 108). The relation between the pre-compositional and the compositional for Westerkamp lies in the feedback and echoes that shape conceptual pieces, as she makes clear in her compositional notes (McCartney 2000: 113).

David Kolber, in his description of the relationship between Westerkamp's compositions and the world, identifies a central dual aspect of the recorded material in how it stages and performs meaning and order within nature itself:

> The more concrete an image evoked the better able a sound can transcend sonic abstraction to be both abstract and abstracted, sound and metaphor. This duality of being, of being two completely separate things at the very same time can be extremely powerful in its presence and as a form of communication. The sound bridges two completely unrelated worlds by occupying both at the same time. The more integral that sound is within those worlds, the stronger the connection. (Kolber 2002: 42)

For Westerkamp, using the compositional 'language' of nature is documenting the life of the world (Westerkamp 2002: 51) where the process of composition becomes both dislocating from and disclosing

the materials found there (Westerkamp 2002: 53). The border sites that Westerkamp's compositions emerge from structure and determine subsequent meaning, but the semantics of those compositions are disturbed by the fact that they are remote from their origin in the world (Westerkamp 2002: 56).

Ferrari, in a late interview reflecting on his life as a collector and composer of sounds, remarked on the microscopic nature of the 'objet sonore' (Robindoré and Ferrari 1998: 8). His version of musique concrète was one which was deflected away from a sense of purity or isolation from the world. For Ferrari, his compositional project was 'a collection of dust: the sound objects were dirty, the source material was found in any old corner. It was literally made of dusty old bric-a-brac, like coils, sheet metal, and broken pianos' (Robindoré and Ferrari 1998: 10). The quotidian, anecdotal extractions from the pre-compositional world displayed logics of that world and by collaging and juxtaposing such extractions new ways of composing narratively emerged (Robindoré and Ferrari 1998: 13). Ferrari's sound compositions were less representations of the world displaying any fixed meaning than a reassembling of its detritus in a new form. The materials were discarded moments that were not usually attended to in listening. Trevor Wishart has seen Ferrari's work as a palette of landscape in sonic performances which rework the idea of the world (Wishart 1996: 159). This points at the very localised production of these sounds in nature and landscape (Landy 1991: 37) and the kinds of forms that can emerge in working with nature as a compositional tool (Wishart 1986: 43).

For Brandon LaBelle the project of musique concrète is enmeshed in this sense of localisation as it 'locates sound's liberation through ideal configurations, harnessing sound's intrinsic ambiguity or malleability so as to create distinct auditory experiences abstracted from an original source, beyond or in spite of material reference' (LaBelle 2007: 25). The 'insistence on the source' in Ferrari's work for LaBelle privileged the autobiographical narrative inherent in the material rather than ideal or re-imagined sonorous objects (LaBelle 2007: 31). LaBelle further notes its relation with Westerkamp's works which are locationally highly specific even when 'dislocated' into new contexts (LaBelle 2007: 207).

Ferrari's recordings of his own sound world are a mode of reproduction rather than the production of a new abstract composition (Wishart 1986: 43). Simon Emmerson points to ways we can think about 'unprocessed' sound and recordings which are mimetic and tell stories about the world from which they emerged. According to Emmerson, these 'anecdotes' about that world are about allowing sonorous objects to speak for themselves on the one hand or, on the other, in using the basic, sonorous materials to make much more complex 'sound objects' in montage which become more and more removed from their original locations (Emmerson 1986: 19).

2.2. Composition/performance as a new ensemble of objects

As we have seen in our brief discussion of 'concrete' sounds, composition can be a complex re-ordering of materials collected in the field in new montages ever more abstracted from any origin or referential moment. The curation of 'artefacts' and 'objects' in visual exhibited spaces can be seen as the reassembling and presentation of the sonorous object as a 'phenomenon of nature and/or technology' (Licht 2007: 10–14). As they find themselves incorporated into new compositions, a sense of visuality becomes privileged over aurality in presentation in museums, galleries and soundwalks (Licht 2007: 16–17). The presentation of the aural object in time and space becomes a moment of participation in the space and time of the object at the same time as visuality becomes privileged over aurality (Voegelin 2010: xii).

The question of the transferral of meaning, of referentiality and of what comes from the 'field' is noted by Dominguez Rubio and Silva in their work on exhibited artworks. They argue against the 'inert' nature of objects as vehicles of meaning and for a vision of objects which themselves determine interpretation, how the field itself is organised, and the whole nature of 'the enacting of field practices' (Dominguez Rubio and Silva 2013: 162). The power of the material object is therefore central to understanding the narrative composition of sound art where those materials are not just inert objects waiting to be disciplined and re-ordered. As sonorous objects become part of the compositional process, listeners will attempt to make those referential connections and to locate the origin, provenance and perceived causes of that sound (Andean 2010: 108). That mode of listening of the sonorous body is noted by Gary Kendall: 'not just the sounds but, by immediate extension, the listening strategies, knowledge of auditory patterns and history of auditory associations that are inextricably linked to everyday listening' (Kendall 2010a: 63). These references and associations are forms of 'domain-specific knowledge' and 'domain-specific mappings and associations' which attempt to relocate the re-narration with the origin of the sound (Kendall 2010a: 65). The narrations of Ferrari and Westerkamp are, for Kendall, geographical journeys across real territories (Kendall 2010a: 71). This sense of spatiality and location is central to an auditory experience which distributes its sonorous objects in space (Kendall 2010b: 228–9). Ferrari sees the process of composition as a way of telling a story or 'to unfold a sound adventure' across landscapes (Ferrari 1996: 97).

The 'concretisation' of each sound moment is like a moment in a diary or a material part of a narration (Ferrari 1996: 99). The manifestation of these material moments in composition entails ordering them in new narrative forms which both display and dispel the logics of the 'dead worlds' from which they emerged and were collected from. The dislocation, and re-materialisation of these sonorous objects in new contexts of curation and performance is both a spatial and a temporal leap. If that process of dislocation both displays and dispels meaning, how can we see these objects which have their origin in a specific territory, location or landscape become something new when reassembled and composed?

2.3. Field practices: sonorous objects as extraterritorial data artefacts

Sonorous objects are at once social and natural data and aesthetic artefacts. The 'fields' from which those objects emerge are social fields and natural fields. Even what can be seen as profoundly processed sounds are the productions of a human and technological set of relations that are not extra-social. The private, autonomous aesthetic space of an auteur and a dirty, unprocessed, documentary field recording of a social or natural phenomenon may use exactly the same objects. Further, there is no reason why an object cannot be the repository of data and aesthetic at the same time (Bowers and Shaw 2014). This is where we can think of three types of field practice. First, the literal field practice of recording and extracting sound in the pre-compositional world through documentary field recording. Second, the different ways on which the sonorous object moves, displays itself, dispels meaning and accrues meaning as it journeys through the geographical locations of composition and performance. Third, the disciplinary field of composition, governance and operation upon the sonorous object as a practice.

In terms of the territorial origin of Shaw's work, there are sustained periods of fieldwork and attention to the aural qualities of spaces in rural locations including caves and mines in Cumbria and Northumberland and the sounds of birds and weather on islands and in fields. These recordings provide not just the foundations of Shaw's compositions, a process comparable to collection/recording processes of 'musique concrète', but undergo a material transposition which dislocates, de-materialises and re-materialises the sound artefacts processed in new spaces and locations (Bowers and Shaw 2014). The sounds become 'extra-territorial' to their original locations twisted and transformed like the language in motion of Nabokov and Beckett which changes into new syntactic forms as their authors cross territories (Steiner 1972: 10–11). That extraterritoriality in terms of spatial dislocation is

part of a new re-composition of materials but there are also questions in Shaw's practice about the specific materials that he chooses in terms of quotation, extraction and the process of 'anecdotal music' as we have noted above in the work of Ferrari (Caux 2012). In Ferrari's works such as 'Presque Rien' ('Almost Nothing'), the specific 'quotation' means understanding the relation between the environment and its use in the environmental sound work. In his discussion of Pierre Schaeffer and 'Presque Rien', Robin Parmar defines this sense of composition as rooted in extracted rather than generated sounds (Parmar 2012: 202). The almost documentary but still compositional sense of 'Presque Rien' is virtually an abdication of authorship. It 'empowers the sound material to *speak for itself*' (Parmar 2012: 209). As Parmar notes:

> We live in an acousmatic world; the separation of sound from its origin is no longer a novelty or aberration, but is rather a commonplace. Thus it is ever more important to develop an integrated and sustainable model of sonic practice that addresses the acousmatic, a model that does not forsake origin, context and intentionality. (Parmar, 2012: 210)

Objects, then, refute the idea that they are 'inert vehicles of social meaning' or in Van Leeuwen's term acting as the 'geometry of social structure' (1998). They are complex and multifaceted arrays of information, of substance and of qualities. They are knowledge formations in and of themselves. In fact the whole question of knowledge displays the problem with the human observation of the object, something which a variety of new materialisms have questioned (Hudson 2000, 2002; Harman 2002, 2011; Brassier 2007; Meillassoux 2008). Object-oriented ontologies within philosophy have attempted to eliminate that privileged observational position and to displace it with the materiality of the inhuman object (Bryant, 2011: 268). For Graham Harman, working with objects and the displacement of human-grounded observation means 'ferreting out the specific psychic reality of earthworms, dust, armies, chalk, and stone' (Harman 2009: 213).

We can see the privileging of the sonorous object in Steve Mills's auditory studies of past social formations where sound is central to the prehistoric life world (2014). Using the idea of matrices of 'acoustic information', Mills examines landscape and sound objects in order to extract meaning and make sense of ontological formations (Mills 2005: 79–80). Similarly, in their work on performance and archaeology, Mike Pearson and Michael Shanks privilege the role of objects as a 'multiplicity' of metrics. Depending on the heuristic tools used to measure the object, for Pearson and Shanks the object defines its own nature and properties even with its 'multitude of data points' (2001: 99). To reiterate Ferrari's dirty, sensual,

sonorous objects as 'a collection of dust: the sound objects were dirty', each broken piano, each coil becomes a found object which displays its materiality and which in turn enacts its own field, yet at the same time itself as an object is curiously unperturbed (1998: 10).

By attending to those modes of speaking which objects allow, we can examine the social effects of specific objects and also attempt to describe what those objects perpetuate in terms of 'knowing' or data. A classic phenomenological account of the material objects of music is provided by Douglas Bartholomew who argues that 'The perception of sound … is correlated not with an enduring aspect of an object but with a reproduction of this aspect' (1989: 26). The material object of sound is just an 'auditory aspect' of the original, the 'sounds of' another object (1989: 27). In other words, it is simply the trace of something else which is only then brought before us aurally but remains distant.

3. DEAD LOGICS AND WORLDS: TRACES AND ETHNOGRAPHIES

If these traces are an aural 'aspect' of something else, speaking only of themselves can they demonstrate something about their origin and where they came from? The territorial distance is that of what might be called the world of the 'dead'. As Hudson has noted, the remembrance of origin, of capture, of past being and moments is itself an act of 'Disclosing the dead' (Hudson, 2000: 274).

Antoine Hennion has addressed the dead, 'elusive nature' of objects in his description of materialities of notation which attempt to fix musical movement to make it more stable and visual. Recordings, tapes and notation are the 'mobilisation of material intermediaries' to create a sense of 'autonomous reality' of material traces that stand behind them in the world (Hennion, 2008: 178). This question of the marshalling of material traces has a profound resonance for the practice of sound art and visual performance of material:

> What then can be said from the perspective of music about this sudden return of 'performance' in the domain of visual contemplation – the resurgent condition of having to re-create an image in order to access it, of making something else, alive and perceptible, out of the traces left by a dead, invisible object. (Hennion 2008: 179)

The mobilisation in performance of material objects often extracted from the 'past' are about how far the logics of 'dead' sounds (ghosts/revenants) can be brought back to life (Hennion 2008: 179). It is also about how far the 'pre-compositional world' creates objects with 'structuring devices' that work as continually reflecting mirrors of that world creating new

interpretations of objects, facilitated by those objects, and illuminating new qualities or properties of those objects (Impett 2007: 84). Similarly David Osmond-Smith, in his work on Berio's music, has talked about 'isolating its phonetic components' (Osmond-Smith 1985: 1) in order to examine specific objects in composition. Berio's compositional practice engaged with the microscopic attention to words, motifs, speech patterns and electronic sonic data (Causton 1995: Giomi, Meacci and Schwoon 2003; Cremaschi and Giomi 2004), all extracted from the dead, pre-compositional world into new formations.

In the recomposition of materials and the composition of sound art, new assemblages are produced and new ensembles of 'data' are performed. But this is not a performance of the pre-compositional world. Its quotations, extractions and 'anecdotes' are re-situated in the new material environment. Its logic of presentation and recombination is different from that of the prior world, distant and removed. The trace in the composition is that of both 'dead worlds' and 'dead logics', but ones which still have a structuring power over new forms within their present worlds and new logics. As Martyn Hudson notes elsewhere of visual art and the 'dead of world history':

> We learn that pictures are not silent, that images are more than metaphors, that surfaces have a depth, that examination can lead to understanding, that a picture is a trace, however distorted of something which lies beyond it, an elsewhere to where you are now. It is a disclosing, a document, an artefact, a track of something, a peculiar fragment thrown before our eyes for a moment and a reminiscence and a residue of another previous moment. It is a discursive phenomena which can disclose the extra-discursive moment of its capture. (Hudson 2000: 263–4)

This disclosure of dead logics and dead forms in the practice of art is at once a practice and an ethnography of that practice. Such ethnographic descriptions of activities took place during the recording, performing and practice of a set of commissioned musical and sound art works in 2013–14. The ethnography and the compositions were themselves part of a wider knowledge exchange process developed as part of an Arts and Humanities Research Council research project. The intended outcome of the project was to map and understand questions of knowledge exchange through arts commissions. The fragmentary knowledges that Tim Shaw re-materialised into the new space of performance were themselves modes of speaking that were consequent upon Shaw's own ethnographies of sound. Ethnography and listening, as Westerkamp notes, is at the heart of recording and composition – 'The ear and the microphone are the starting points for the soundscape composer' (Westerkamp 2002: 53).

Sustained periods of attention to sounds and experimenting with forms of recording were central to

Shaw's field ethnography of caves, mines and islands. Understanding specific durations, timbres and tempos of natural sounds in the field and in post-recording listening were an attempt to understand the sonorities of landscape environments and Shaw's own sonorous presence within and upon the land in caves and fields.

A secondary ethnography lay in the description, by Hudson, of the spaces to which Shaw brought those knowledges: observations of the composed and curated spaces and the new logics and traces of the pre-compositional world in the form of performing 'data'. This secondary ethnography mapped the circulation of sonorous objects from their moment of capture in their field of origin into their traversal through multiple fields, through processing, performance, audience reception and re-recording. It described, in notebooks, the ways in which the materials were aesthetically presented and the kinds of data that were being used and re-used and gradually dislocated from the original field. The central performance of the piece in the Victoria Tunnels, Newcastle was an almost entirely aural experience as the journey through the tunnels and the listening experience were in darkness.

4. ENSEMBLE OF OBJECTS IN DARKNESS: TIM SHAW'S *SOUND AND SECLUSION*

The re-assemblage of the traces of 'dead logics' and 'dead worlds' into new performative ensembles entails an understanding of sound as a set of data points. These data from the 'dead' pre-compositional world in the act of composition is reworked into new narrative structures and logics but ones in which the residues and traces of the dead world are still present. Describing the circulations and recompositions of those knowledges was a central part of the project process.

Tim Shaw's work *Sound and Seclusion* was commissioned by the *Northumbrian Exchanges* programme of knowledge exchange supported by the Arts and Humanities Research Council in 2013. It was part of a series of commissions, workshops and events designed to think about questions of location, landscape and multiple circulations of knowledge in rural communities of Northumberland. The other two works in the series were musical commissions and included the classical composition of Matthew Rowan and the traditional music composition of Shona Mooney. The commissions were attached to workshops around early and traditional music and sound art and field recordings as part of the programme.

Sound and Seclusion was premiered at Victoria Tunnels, an old coal transportation tunnel that runs underneath Newcastle-upon-Tyne, on 19 October 2013. The tunnels provided an environment to install and perform the findings. Originally a network of mining tunnels, the space was used as an air raid shelter during the Second World War. Blast walls were added to the structure to provide extra safety if a bomb was to hit the surface above the tunnel. A consequence of this is that each blast wall 'chamber' has its own unique sonic characteristic, useful for playing back contrasting compositions. One of the chambers is particularly sonically interesting: a layer of thick concrete has been added to the surface, resulting in an extremely resonant, reverberant space. Playing back long sustained sounds in this space provided a very strong physical sense of the enclosed environment.

Subsequent to the Victoria Tunnels event, the work was presented at the University of Kent's Symposium on Acoustic Ecology (October 2013) and at Culture Lab's Work in Progress festival (December 2013). It was originally presented as an 8-channel (octophonic) installation. A stereo version of *Sound and Seclusion* is also available online (Shaw 2013).

Using the confined spaces of mines and caves, contrasted with the openness of the Northumberland landscape, the piece explores the sounds of solitude and isolation as associated with the industrial and religious histories of the North East. *Sound and Seclusion* is an amalgam of composed sounds and documentary field recordings comprising three main sections each with its own characteristics and modes of expressing material objects of knowledge. The first section is concerned with a set of sonorities associated with soundscape/landscape. The second is more abstract and fuses field recordings with more specific tonal and rhythmic 'musical' structures. The third uses industrial objects as compositional material. Alongside the composition and the circulating movements of the audience through the space, the other co-author used ethnographic methods to examine the material objects and circulations of knowledge including the appearance, re-appearance and recomposition of the sonorous objects.

The use of sound as data of landscape and place is a central part of Shaw's practice. His compositional approaches include the 'auditory reflection' and mirroring of real-world environments as well as the sonification and visualisation of various forms of data (Bowers and Shaw 2014). The piece was conceived to exist in the darkness of the tunnel making an aural intervention between the human observers and the non-human data and artefacts. The transference and disruption of the extraterritorial locations – from the origin of the field recordings into the tunnel – was counterposed by the processing and disruption between the abstract tonal and rhythmic elements and their relationship with the naturally occurring but intangible 'field artefacts'. Each section of the piece occurred after the shift in location of the audience to different sections of the tunnel each with their own sonic distinctiveness. The space, and the audience's movement through it, created a further re-structuring element to the sonorous objects.

Part One of the piece distributes a set of sound artefacts from different locations of Northumberland, largely unprocessed and linked to a set of knowledges and histories in the landscape researched by Shaw. The first section includes traces of moorland fowl, mainly curlews and red grouse. These sounds were recorded near Allendale in the North Pennines, supported by Chris Watson, around a set of old lead chimneys enmeshed in local industrial history. The second section contains recordings of wagtails, crows and blackbirds recorded at Hazelton Rigg and moves into ambient recordings of the sounds of Thrunton woods. The next section dislocates from the moorlands and woods of Northumberland to the sound of the North Sea around the Farne islands, including wave structures, the boat engine and tourist narration of the MV *Glad Tidings*, the sounds of shags, arctic terns, kittiwakes, cormorants and eider ducks. It also captures a passing airplane. On shore again it transitions into recordings from lime kilns on Holy Island and, through the use of a hydrophone, captures the island shoreline from under the water, a humanly inaccessible perspective. Recomposing natural sounds through intervention, rain from Holy Island was recorded from underneath a drum skin. As more rain gathers on the skin of the drum, we hear a lowering in pitch, this intervention created an arhythmic pattern alongside a descending tone. The location then disrupts again in the next section where Shaw reworks the natural sounds of caves in Northumberland. The first set of recordings are from Cateran's Hole, long associated with fairies and local folklore. Conducted with Bennett Hogg of the Landscape Quartet research group, the recordings are the results of a set of audio experiments in this resonant confined space, including the use of Tibetan singing bowls, a site-specific Aeolian harp (suspended fishing wire strung to resonant violin bodies) and Northumberland mining songs. Further recordings to conclude Part One of the piece included resonant bowl recordings in Cuddy's Cave, well known as a pilgrim site for St Cuthbert.

Part Two contains much more processed sound artefacts, more abstract use of field recordings and is aurally much closer to the listener creating a more musically expressive movement and distribution of objects. Aural objects from cave and confined space sonorities continue (Cuddy's Cave, Victoria Tunnel, and Cateran's Hole), each of them processed, layered and textured. This sedimentation and stratification of distributed objects recomposed and dislocated into the new space is itself analogous to the description of actual, external landscapes. With the re-entrance of the rain on drum, there emerges a recording of hydroelectric machinery captured on the Cragside estate and hydrophone recordings of Holy Island. At 14:08 we hear the entrance of a resonant storage object from Cragside processed (pitched, reversed and convolved)

and at 14:17 red grouse re-occur abstracted from the soundscape heard in Part One.

Part Three takes the assemblage of recordings to a new degree of industrial intensity. At 16:32, there is a new reassembling of hydroelectric machinery from Cragside with some processing of resonant materials from the caves and tunnels with the large clangs taken from the hydraulic accumulator on the Cragside estate (itself invented by the Tyneside industrial and military manufacturer Lord Armstrong, founder of the estate). The helicopter-like sound from 18:02 is a re-appropriation of waterfall recordings from Cragside presented using a self-built granular synthesis system. This merges into the blowhole from Rumbling Kern, recorded at Sugar Sands near Longhoughton (18:38) and a number of performances striking a large glass bowl at Cragside accompanied by manipulated recordings of hydro machines (18:36). At 21:06 the sounds are reassembled: the glass bowl (from Cragside estate), the blowhole and various resonances alongside processed red grouse re-emerging to close the piece.

The disruption of the logics of the natural, precompositional environment through the recording of fragments and elements of the totality of that world becomes even more pronounced as those fragments then become even more dislocated in their new narrative structure and performative space of the Victoria Tunnels. The dead logics and traces are experienced in new ways by an audience traversing the territorial spaces of the tunnel system (largely in darkness) and being offered the new de-materialised, re-materialised and extraterritorial performative ensemble. This fracturing of a simple depiction or picturing of that world, broken into isolated sonorous elements, and reformed in composition brings some trace of those precompositional moments and the lost material worlds, logics and artefacts.

5. SONOROUS OBJECTS AND WORLDS

The three-part piece of *Sound and Seclusion* describes three processes in turn: a human intervention of the recorder into landscape; a reworking of previous and natural human interventions in terms of farming, rearing and industry; and a reassembling of sonorous objects into aural and physical space in which the sounds of 'origin' have been de-materialised from the landscape and become extra-territorial entities. This then raised three significant aspects of sound as 'knowledge-objects'.

First, to what extent can a recorded sound act as data that can tell us some 'thing' about the dead sounds and logics of the 'pre-compositional world'? Some forms of contemporary arts practice 'perform' social-scientific data using, in turn, arts as a mode of research. The disciplinary subordination of aesthetic objects

when thinking about a sociology or anthropology of art and music has led to a reductive sense that they are there to be examined by research practice in order to tell us about something else. But aesthetic objects are in rebellion, they are 'insubordinate', they have their own logics, properties of knowledge, substance that can frustrate the regimes imposed upon it and the questions asked of it. This takes us to the very notion of a specific sonority, and whether it can be described as an 'artefact' or an 'object' in the first place. What does listening to a sonority as an object mean in the sense of what is displaced or privileged when we think of or hear objects? Clearly such a sonority is a reassertion of a bounded entity, permeable and porous as it may be, which can be listened to in and of itself even when it is distributed and structured amongst a range of other objects in space and time. Listening to the sonority as an object does not define it, it does not exhaust its aesthetic possibilities, but it does trigger thoughts about one element that can be abstracted from it – the capacity or incapacity of the object to hold, retain and sustain often complex knowledge forms within it or what we might describe as 'data'. Further, where does that data advance us to depending on what questions might be asked of it? The set and structuring of artefacts that Shaw coordinates in *Sound and Seclusion* displays a specific ontology of 'things'. This is that a sonority can be recorded and that it can be related to a 'word' and a 'being' – the existent of a boat, a red grouse, a machine. The object/artefact/entity/existent has power to diminish or expand interpretation. But the pre-compositional world also provides some context for those objects – the landscape, the histories of places and the coordinators own complex reasoning for recording 'this', 'there', in that place. All of this is what Tim Ingold calls the 'meshwork' (Ingold 2007, 2011) of human and natural activity and agency. And the objects hold within them powers of describing the lines of the meshwork within which they are captured and operate. There are complicated methodological operations to be performed on these 'data' but they are possible and meaningful and should not be suspended in favour of totally 'open work' (Eco 1989).

Second, to what extent can a recorded sound have signification – how far would we accept the material sound object as a trace of something else, or in and of itself as sound and sonority? Sonorities are material, they exist as objects, full of meaning and description beyond the interpretations that are supported or extracted from them. But they are also traces, often of 'dead worlds' (Hudson 2002; Hennion 2008). The question of whether these traces are modes of signification – displaying structures and process, 'geometries', that somehow lie beyond them and that can be traced by sociology and semiotics – is an epistemological one. It is the case that the objects hold 'data' but the question whether the social relations of a whole social structure can be read off from them denotes an entirely different set of aspirations. The only limitations lie in what the artefact itself makes possible in terms of interpretation. And of course the description of mediations around sound art is entirely part of those 'meshworks' of human and social relations.

Third, what is being recomposed in the act of processing sound objects? Field recordings are often part of the process of natural-scientific data recording. They are also often part of aesthetic intentions, procedures and interventions. Aside from the 'intent' and also the ethics of the operation of recording, we have argued that they can still be fairly defined knowledge objects in themselves even when utilised in aesthetic strategies. This becomes problematic when collected and generated sounds become part of specifically musical forms of composition. The interface between organised, distributed sound assemblages and the organised sound of music is one of collision and discomfort, particularly when field recordings are entwined, as in the work of Richard Skelton (Hudson 2015), with processes rooted in the European chamber music traditions and in ambient music and electronica. Shaw's work is a set of processes. There are a set of transitions and translations of objects, unpacked, presented and performed from arrival at place to recording; interventions in sonorities through technology; fixing the distribution temporally in terms of sound; and finally to fixing the distribution spatially in the Victoria Tunnels and blast chambers. This process both abstracts and makes abstraction: sound documents profoundly de-materialised, and estranged, and dislocated in hearing from the original unprocessed or semi-processed 'field' recordings. The collision is one between sonority documents and composition. They are what might be called 'adventures' of sound – creating new and experimental aural experiences through the use of objects. The multiple aural and physical places of performance of the assemblage of objects again point to the importance of sound art – that very entwining of the spatial and the temporal, the visible and the audible tells us something about 'knowing' the dead world.

6. CONCLUSION

> I could thus represent images, send them out and pull them back, I could articulate the language of noises. I could make an entertainment/performance from darkness. (Luc Ferrari, 1996: 101)

We have developed here the possibilities of thinking about an anthropology of sonorous objects: considering sonorities as distributed artefacts of knowledge, accessible to methodological discipline, but whose

substance and qualities determine the kinds of narratives and interpretations that we would want to extract from them in their potential descriptions of other places, social relations and 'dead worlds'. The data journeys of sonorous objects in sound art display an affinity with musical composition (Hudson 2014b, 2015) but the notations and practice of a specifically musical description of 'worlds' raise profound new directions for an anthropology of sound data. New scholarly descriptions and ethnographies of music have to address representation and extraterritoriality but also what Adorno calls the 'force of gravity of extant forms' and the power of musical history and tradition (Adorno 1989: 93). Thinking about the sonorous objects of musical composition would have a dual role of elaborating the social power of music and complicating the idea of music as simply a geometric articulation of a social system. The interrelation between field recordings, the process of aesthetic intervention, the space and performance of sound art, are all contributions to the interrogations of knowledge and what we can possibly know through listening. The intensity of new aural, physical and phenomenological experiences that pieces such as *Sound and Seclusion* might indicate are enhanced through that interaction even when we might think that sound art privileges spatial and visual experiences over sonority. But it is the performance of that sonority, in that space, bringing to us visualities of other times and places, that best informs the methodological descriptions of the agency of non-human forms.

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