The Urban Sonic Landscape: How Music Shapes a Spatial and Social Poetics

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Introduction: Defining the Plateaus

In mediating the line between public and private space in the city — and oftentimes redefining both — playback technologies serve a placemaking function in the organization of perceptual urban space. The way this sound exists in the city ranges from the live networks of music scenes to the external diffusion of sound (using boomboxes or radios) to the hyper-individualized experience of privatized sound (through the use of personal devices). As an account of the shift from an urban collective sonic space to an individual sonic experience — by tracing the history of radio culture to the making of a music scene to the rise of portable private sound — this thesis will focus on the ways music technologies shape public space and urban life. In doing so, this study will reveal the nature of urban space as a perceptual network mediated by interlocking relations, as evidenced by the anarchic channel of communication that music creates in the city.

In *urban perceptual space*, within this shared channel of experience, is where this paper will take shape — in the literal reverberation of sound, there is an opportunity to analyze the poetic resonance of the city. Eugène Minkowski defines *reverberation* as "the dynamism of the sonorous life itself which by engulfing and appropriating everything it finds in its path, fills the slice of space, or better, the slice of the world that it assigns itself by its movement, making it reverberate, breathing into it its own life."[1] This auditory metaphor of space demonstrates the intersection between the spatial and sensual nature of sound; as it bounces off surfaces, echoes between places, it is also capable of producing a resonance within and between people. Music in urban space is an ever-shifting medium made widely accessible by mass-produced technologies.

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[1] Eugène Minkowski, *Vers une Cosmologie*, cited in editor's note of *The Poetics of Space* by Gaston Bachelard, ed. John R. Stilgoe (Boston: Beacon Press, 1994), xvii.

Through this medium, an unseen but *felt* system of relations enters into the city space through resonant sound.

To analyze the innate fluidity of urban perceptual space, I pull upon Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's concept of the *rhizome* as well as Édouard Glissant's *poetics of relation*. The first establishes a process of endless open connection between multiplicities through the conception of a rhizomatic, unbroken root system.[2] Deleuze and Guattari express this rhizome in actual space, describing a new map:

> The map is open and connectable in all of its dimensions; it is detachable, reversible, susceptible to constant modification. It can be torn, reversed, adapted to any kind of mounting, reworked by an individual, group, or social formation. It can be drawn on a wall, conceived of as a work of art, constructed as a political action or as a meditation…A map has multiple entryways…The map has to do with performance.[3]

Building on this infinitely generating mapping system, Glissant weaves a poetics of difference, asserting that "every poetic intention leads straight to a narrative of the world, for which reason this narrative is not a narrative but a state of the relations among differences within an environment, confined or expanding, it depends, and within a given time frame."[4] Together, applied to the intersecting cultural and individual imaginations that comprise the experience of the city, these visualizations achieve an ever-shifting notion of real and perceptual space that resides in the gaps between people and between environments, mediated through difference and connection.

In this realm of urban studies, the map emerges from space and is then expressed through intertwining subjectivities. In what could be termed a *post-structuralist* mode of urbanism, one that organizes via multiplicity rather than through any top-down system, the map arises out of an

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[2] Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Brian Massumi, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), 21.
[3] *Ibid.*, 12.
[4] Édouard Glissant, "A New Region of the World," trans. John Goodman, (speech, Vassar College, March 26, 2007).

infinite assemblage of experiences rather than any one narrative. Michel Foucault describes this by conjuring up a space of perception and dreams which evades the limitations of language and even eclipses the bounds of spatial structure: "a space that can be flowing like sparkling water, or a space that is fixed, congealed, like stone or crystal.[5] As such, space becomes a medium through which to record subjectivity. Deleuze and Guattari throw this idea further into the spatial abstract, describing an eternal process of deterritorialization and reterritorialization.[6] It is a cultural, perceptual space that is seized and redefined in the rhizome, communicated, in this case, through the use and subversion of playback technologies. These are reverberating mediums, sensorial processes of identification offering the possibility of redefinition: what Foucault describes as *technologies of the self*.[7] This thesis will explore the unique functions of these transformative mechanisms in the city. With these technologies, space becomes a malleable medium with which to navigate the self and the collective: to express and deepen existence within a set of relations.

In this rhizomatic urban space, subjectivities shift and reshape in relation to each other; I will use the medium of film to mirror this fluid collectivity. This medium is one of partial representation, implying an absence of universal Being, of totality. A resonant medium, film can express and transform subjectivities to show that no one experience is absolute. As such, film creates a simulated exploration of the relations within space. It also possesses a particularly eloquent ability to merge sound and image into the creation of an experience through diegetic and non-diegetic sound. Diegetic sound signifies the sounds produced in the actual world of the film, linking the experiences of the characters and the viewer; non-diegetic sound is that which is overlaid on the narrative, unheard by the characters. Music in film can traverse this line,

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[5] Michel Foucault, "Of Other Spaces," *Politics/Poetics: Documenta X, The Book* (Cantz, 1997), 264.
[6] Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 10.
[7] Huib Ernst, "The Pragmatism of Life in Poststructuralist Times," *Environment and Planning A* 36 (2004), 442.

seamlessly moving from diegetic to non-diegetic sound. I have chosen six films to represent the different modes of listening discussed in this thesis: *Once Upon a Time in Hollywood…*, *Do the Right Thing*, *The Velvet Underground*, *Rock My Religion*, *Slacker*, and *Baby Driver*. My hope is that these films — distinct in their narratives and forms — will not only demonstrate the use and rituals surrounding these playback technologies, but also exemplify the synchronicity and dissonance of a rhizomatic urbanism.

To align with the flowing networks exemplified by individual and collectivized sonic order in the city, I have organized this thesis into segments that can be read and understood in any order. A *plateau*, as a spatial concept, exists in the same subjective space traversed by playback technologies in the city. Simultaneously interlocking and individual, without limiting delineations, it can express the resonant multiplicity expressed through and created by mediated sound. As plateaus rather than sequential chapters, these segments exist without beginning or end but emerge from a milieu, an in-between, just as the sound they analyze.[8] These plateaus consist of: the exertion of sonic control over the public commons through broadcasting mediums, the creation of a sonic geography through the cultural phenomenon of the music scene, and the seizing of sonic order from collective culture carried out by the rise of privatized sound.

Preview of Thesis

Apparatuses of Sound in Public Urban Space

The first plateau will focus on the use of playback technologies such as car radio and the boombox in the 20th century to document the sonic mapping of perceptual space. The ritual nature of the creation of a cultural sonic space often exists in mass-produced form; radio power entrenches this formation of a mass pop culture. Radio is a broadcast medium, creating a cultural

[8] Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 21-22.

space and an implied community through collective participation in the act of listening.[9] With the means to broadcast this expression of culture, an individual can project radio sound onto the material city, advertising not only the pop culture it represents, but also their own belonging to it. In the case of automotive cities, car radio transforms the transience of a commute into a continuous experience of individual preference and musical mediation. Radio channels become an expression of identity, of realized preference. The mobility of this broadcast identity gives radio its power; music creates *place*, even in transit. In this way, radio not only expresses culture but transforms the urban experience into a place created by that culture. Through this technology, perceptual space becomes a projection of personal and collective identity.

The boombox emerges as a mediator between identities in public space, a channel through which to express what remains unsaid; its sonic power speaks to the imaginary in projecting a perceptual image onto the public sphere. As a mobile device, the boombox can traverse real or imaginary limits in city space. Its portability is its power, as is its literal resonance. In this vein, the portable speaker becomes an extension of the self, a way to carve out identity on the sidewalk or in a public park. It is impossible for the owner to catch up with the sound the boombox broadcasts — the sound will always precede the object. A foucauldian technology of the self, the boombox extends the body and the identity into a monumental realm. In contexts where self-expression is politicized and policed, this sonic power becomes a way to interrupt the hegemonic order of the city and exert a resistant voice on contested public space. Landon Palmer describes this as a "practice of resistance through ritual," a subversive creation of cultural space.[10]

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[9] J. Mark Percival, "Music Radio and the Record Industry: Songs, Sound, and Power," *Popular Music and Society*, 34, no. 4, (October 2011), 457.
[10] Landon Palmer, "Do the Loud Thing: The Boombox and Urban Space in 1980s American Cinema," *Journal of Cinema and Media Studies* 61, no. 5, (2021), 67.

To express this cultural space, this essay will analyze the use of diegetic sound in *Once Upon a Time…in Hollywood* by Quentin Tarantino and *Do the Right Thing* by Spike Lee to show the ways broadcast music both asserts a hegemonic order and establishes a method of resistance. In *Do the Right Thing*, Radio Raheem (Bill Nunn) and his boombox offer an alternative placemaking system; in opting to listen to a Public Enemy cassette on a loop, he finds a way to construct a perceptual order that roots itself in an alternative politics within the racist spatial control of the city. This racialized dispute over the sonic control of urban space is nonexistent in the white world of Tarantino's *Once Upon a Time…in Hollywood*, narrated by Top 40 radio. The diegetic use of late-1960s pop music creates an illusory continuity between the characters' experiences of the city — the Los Angeles AM radio station KHJ acts as an idyllic mediation between the individual and the set of relations they traverse.[11][12] Pop radio music expresses a common culture in Tarantino's mythologized representation of 1960s L.A. but creates a sense of comfortable belonging where there is no real cultural stability. Both *Do the Right Thing* and *Once Upon a Time…in Hollywood* define urban individuality and collectivity as a heard phenomenon. In providing differing contexts of this sonic power in the city, these films depict broadcast sound's ability to order public space and create a new zone of urban commons.

In Between Scenes: *The Velvet Underground*, *Rock My Religion*, and *Slacker*

This placemaking takes on a new form when put into the live and local practices of spatial engagement in a specific music culture. This is the creation of a *scene*, which, instead of exerting individual control over the sonic environment, engages a collective culture revolving

[11] Vance Durgin, "How Johnny Mann came to write the KHJ jingle in 'Once Upon a Time…in Hollywood,'" *Los Angeles Times*, Jan. 21, 2020.
[12] David Browne, "Inside Tarantino's 'Once Upon a Time in Hollywood' Soundtrack," *Rolling Stone*, July 27, 2019.

around live performances and a confluence of cultural and musical expressions of identity.[13] In this case, the production of culture is idolized in its specificity and locale; the romantic bohemian image of the starving artist becomes the ideal, set against the void of predatory industry and capital interest. Thus, the cultural space constructed by a scene is necessarily grounded in the material urban space to which it pertains. As with the Austin indie scene and New York's punk avant-garde, there exists a symbiotic relationship between sound and city, resulting in an alternative mapping of urban space. Unlike the perceptual, collective listening experience created by radio, the scene operates deeply within the built environment of the city, creating complex systems between live venues, recording studios, and other gathering spots.[14] This countercultural sense of place remains long after a scene ceases to be active, real. In life, though, the public nature of the scene creates a placehood that relies on social networks and experimental self-expression — a new sonics of the city created by individual participation in a collective counterculture.

Todd Haynes' documentary *The Velvet Underground* and Richard Linklater's *Slacker* depict this sense of cultural place created by a tangible music scene; additionally, Dan Graham's experimental video essay *Rock My Religion* provides a history of collective musical ritual to ground this scene in an ecstatic imaginary. In focusing on the rise of The Velvet Underground as the central narrative of the New York pop underground scene, Haynes' *The Velvet Underground* presents an avant-garde approach to space and sound. This scene wasn't "with society," as Mary Woronov (a dancer in The Velvets' multimedia performances) puts it — the emphasis on experimental artistry rejected the appeal of a pre-packaged, anyplace culture.[15] Haynes instead

[13] John Bealle, "DIY Music and Scene Theory," presented at *Midwest Chapter of the Society for Ethnomusicology*, Ohio, 2013: 2.
[14] *Ibid.*, 3.
[15] *The Velvet Underground*, directed by Todd Haynes (PolyGram Entertainment, 2021).

equates The Velvet Underground to the New York ethos, cementing the *scene* as a placemaking force and as the genesis of a new aesthetics of urban space. *Rock My Religion* links the creation of a scene to that of an anarchic language; in this new order, there lies a potential for reterritorialization. Starring Patti Smith, Graham's video essay reaches into the material city to access the sonic entryways opened by the punk scene. *Slacker* offers a portrait of the Austin indie scene as an indie work itself, starring figures from the city's young, bohemian milieu. There is no plot besides for the carefree movement of people weaving in and out of the frame, offering fragments of narrative that combine to establish a mapped network of relations. The characters in *Slacker* navigate Austin through its sound as active listeners or as contributors to the music scene. Cultural space in this context thus becomes far more participatory than the individual projection of sound onto the city; the centrality of performance in the scene necessitates a culture based on interplay and communication. Local identity creates local sound, and vice versa.

Alone, Together: Privatized Music in the Urban Crowd and *Baby Driver*

The local connectivity of the music scene relies on communal, material participation — the rise of personal listening devices shifts the urban sonic sphere from a localized, materially connected environment to one that functions outside of any spatial identity. The sole participant in this privatized sound is the listening individual; there is no interplay with other people in the city or with the city space itself. The individual, zoned into the world created by their private listening, mediates the city according to preference and mood. Michael Bull describes this process as "the aesthetic colonization of urban space," emphasizing the audio-visual nature of this hyperpersonalized organization of the city.[16] It's this *aestheticization* that encourages the

[16] Michael Bull, "The Audio-Visual iPod," in *The Sound Studies Reader*, ed. Jonathan Sterne (London: Routledge, 2012): 198.

listener to retreat into a private experience of space, thus turning every other aspect of the city into an aesthetic device. The listener's private sonic world takes precedence over the built reality of the city and the relations that emerge from it. This audiovisual use suggests a denial of the rhizomatic texture of urban space, which is, of course, just another dimension within it. Through the veil of privatized sound, the city becomes the site of individual identity cultivation, rather than that of the urban collective.

Baby Driver by Edgar Wright, as a story that focuses on the mediation of reality through an alienating coping mechanism, depicts this shift to the aestheticization of privatized sonic control. *Baby Driver* centers on Baby (Ansel Elgort), a prodigious yet reserved getaway driver who listens to stolen iPods to mitigate his tinnitus and narrate his dangerous maneuvers through Atlanta. This music serves as an invisible barrier between Baby and the people around him, as relief from his trauma-induced tinnitus, and even stands between him and death itself as he navigates the city. However, there is always the potential for connection through sonic means. As Deleuze and Guattari suggest, music can form lines of flow and connection; its essential rhizomatic nature means it can't be confined to one narrative. Thus, neither can privatized sound be a squarely alienating force. In responding to the fragmented reality of the urban spatial order, this film depicts the creation of a private audiovisual world in the middle of public city life and adds nuance to the politics of aestheticized experience.

Conclusion

Formed in interlocking plateaus documenting the power of broadcast sound in urban perceptual space, the creation of a music scene out of a milieu, and the formation of a sonic culture of one in public city space — this shifting urban sonic order traces a flow of collective

imaginations and systems of relation. In studying this fluidity, this paper takes on its form as an antigenealogy, a rhizome. Rooted only in a multiplicity of imaginations and sense of place, it explores the in-between rather than the endpoints. Deleuze and Guattari state that "a rhizome has no beginning or end; it is always in the middle, between things, interbeing, *intermezzo*."[17] In this between-space is where the urban imaginary resides; in this space, systems of music playback can offer an understanding of relation.

[17] Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 25.

Apparatuses of Sound in Public Urban Space:

Do the Right Thing and *Once Upon a Time…in Hollywood*

The ability to broadcast music onto the city produces a way to lay bare the fluid nature of its perceptual space, to project a subjective gaze that enters into the public consciousness. In other words, it is to assert perceptual control over space, to assign a sonic language to the world. Space, in a more tactile interpretation, is a cultural product created through sensory experience; broadcast sound adds to this landscape, calling upon a sensory aesthetics of place and a politics of contested territory.[18] This act of sensing creates a network of relations, as John Berger describes in *Ways of Seeing*: "What we see is brought within our reach — though not necessarily within arm's reach. To touch something is to situate oneself in relation to it…We never look at just one thing; we are always looking at the relation between things and ourselves."[19] Like the act of seeing, to hear is to interpret and to situate — ultimately, it is a way of being. Broadcast sound technologies, in introducing a new personal layer of audiovisual experience, bring the listener's individual order and reality to the public sphere.

To illustrate the way in which this dynamic flows into the city soundscape, particularly in places with densely intersecting collective memories and cultural allegiances, I will use Édouard Glissant's concept of a *poetics of relation*. Glissant defines this as a living network "in which each and every identity is extended through a relationship with the Other."[20] Relation here is total, extending, and without end; the boundaries exist to live between. Technologies of broadcast sound enhance this poetics, even as the networks they express and the places they establish can prove to be conflicting and discordant. Within the fragmentary nature of sonic

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[18] Dolores Hayden, *Power of Place: Urban Landscapes as Public History*, (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1995), 43.
[19] John Berger, *Ways of Seeing*, (London: British Broadcasting Corporation), 8-9.
[20] Édouard Glissant, *Poetics of Relation*, trans. Betsy Wing, (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1997), 11.

urban space lies a coherent mode of cultural identification and belonging. As such, Joseph Schloss and Bill Bahng Boyer suggest that mediums like radio and the boombox become foucauldian apparatuses, or:

> A thoroughly heterogenous ensemble consisting of discourses, institutions, architectural forms, regulatory decisions, laws, administrative measures, scientific statements, philosophical, moral, and philanthropic propositions — in short, the said as much as the unsaid…The apparatus itself is the system of relations that can be established between these elements.[21] [22]

As apparatuses, these playback technologies signify these relations while also becoming vessels of navigation. While they represent a certain mass-produced order, these apparatuses hold a subversive potential through their production of subjectivity in the city. Using Quentin Tarantino's *Once Upon a Time…in Hollywood* and Spike Lee's *Do the Right Thing* as cinematic case studies, this section will investigate the use of radio and the boombox in urban space to chart an analysis of the sonic channels for reflection and identification in broadcast sonic technology.

Pop Radio and the Assertion of a Dominant Sound

The sound space of Tarantino's Los Angeles in *Once Upon a Time…in Hollywood* is occupied by the homogenizing, glossy drone of a pop radio station. This sound emanates not from boomboxes but from cars and parties, and most notably features the AM radio station KHJ, or "Boss Radio," a popular station in mid-1960s L.A. As such, the film's soundtrack is interspersed with advertisements and animated DJ commentary, creating a commercial space as

[21] Michel Foucault, "The Confession of the Flesh," in *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-1977*, ed. Colin Gordon, (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980), 194.
[22] Joseph Schloss and Bill Bahng Boyer, "Urban Echoes: The Boombox and Sonic Mobility in the 1980s," in *The Oxford Handbook of Mobile Music Studies, Volume 1*, ed. Sumanth Gopinath and Jason Stanyek, (Oxford University Press, 2014), 400.

well as a sensory one.[23] The music in the film comes mostly in the form of car radio, a diegetic source that connotes a way of seeing to be transferred from the audiovisual space of the characters to the gaze of the viewer. Tarantino's painstaking creation of these diegetic soundscapes, even moreso than the actual musical content, are integral to his films, as Ken Garner postulates: "the process of music selection is foregrounded. It is the choice of this-music or that-music in these particular circumstances, its switching on and off — rather than just the music itself — which is made indicative of character or situation."[24] In this way, Tarantino's soundtracks create an audiovisual narrative through centering on the apparatus.

Tarantino returns to a leitmotif of characters (has-beens, starlets, hippies, and stuntmen) driving on the L.A. freeway, silent in their enjoyment of KHJ's content. Pure ease in *Once Upon a Time…in Hollywood* is the feeling of driving down the uncongested freeway, blaring the pop radio station; the ability to create a personal soundscape in the middle of the city in this way allows the listener to access a peaceful sense of belonging even in transit. This sonic technology — car radio — does not offer a communal function, but the construction of a personal sonic space, contained in a vehicle.

AM Radio in the 1960s faced a shift to a more rigid structure of programming. This occurred largely because of a series of hearings in 1960 in which radio DJs admitted to accepting bribes to plug certain songs over the air.[25] Though the scandal around these hearings generated from racialized fears of the invasion of rock 'n' roll and blues into the popular sound space and thus into the burgeoning youth culture, the sanctity of the medium was broken.[26] Subsequently,

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[23] R. Serge Denisoff, "The Evolution of Pop Music Broadcasting, 1920-1972," in *American Popular Music: The Age of Rock*, ed. Timothy E. Scheurer (Popular Press, 1989), 84.
[24] Ken Garner, "'Would You Like to Hear Some Music?': Music in-and-out of Control in the Films of Quentin Tarantino," in *Film Music: Critical Approaches*, ed. K.J. Donnelly (Edinburgh University Press, 2001), 189.
[25] Susan J. Douglas, *Listening In: Radio and the American Imagination* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004), 251.
[26] *Ibid*., 250.

DJs who had previously enjoyed more control over their channels' output found their autonomy restricted. For the most part, public radio hosts no longer had the agency to curate eccentric and diverse playlists for their audiences. KHJ, a Top 40 station, exemplified this new, highly-regulated format; DJs had very little time to talk between the ads and followed a strict 30-record playlist.[27] Despite this strict form, Top 40 radio became a cultural crossroads in the ether, organizing American teen culture to a point wherein it became *too* organized. The nonstop rotation of the same few hits and the incessant ads that accompanied them became "too predictable, too cynical" a space for perceptual connection, as Susan J. Douglas asserts.[28] The revisitation of this sound in *Once Upon a Time…in Hollywood* produces a romanticized image of this curated culture, a nostalgia for the readily available imagined space that the radio apparatus projected.

In *Once Upon a Time…in Hollywood*, the music of Deep Purple, Paul Revere & The Raiders, and The Box Tops becomes the sound not only of the characters' subjective perceptions of Hollywood, but of the viewer's experience of the film. The soundtrack captures an ethos of place as well as time, an instantly recognizable "California Sound," a sonic nostalgia of ubiquitous garage rock and jingly commercialism. It is White sound that mediates Tarantino's construction of Los Angeles.[29] There is no resistance necessary here, no call to the community, no sense of threatened identity; fading actor Rick Dalton (Leonardo DiCaprio) and his stuntman/best friend Cliff Booth (Brad Pitt) exemplify the extreme comfort of navigating urban space as a white man. No choice is necessary in finding the perfect soundtrack to their lives —

[27] Douglas, *Listening In*, 252.
[28] *Ibid*., 254.
[29] Peter Sebastian Chesney, "Drive Time: A Sensory History of Car Cultures from 1945 to 1990 in Los Angeles," (University of California, 2021), 101.

switching the radio on is the extent of the work they must do in order to find their identities affirmed (in bubbly mid-'60s pop sound).

In Tarantino's 1960s L.A., radio serves to distribute sound as a product, a system strictly organized around a formula of advertisements and DJ interjections. There is no radical function here, thus despite the appeal to a certain collective identity, there is no real inter-communication taking place. Tarantino's choice to shape a diegetic soundscape out of a collage of pop songs, commercials, and DJ babble (and effectively recreate the average radio listening experience of the time) speaks to radio's ability to order and develop a mapping of perceptual space that occurs in the collective imagination. Broadcast into the private spaces of cars, the radio serves to form an abstract sense of unity in the film's network of characters as they listen individually or in pairs. The KHJ station speaks to them, they listen. There is no space — really no need — to respond.

As a form of cultural production, mainstream radio suggests an imagined community of listeners united under one sound.[30] Thus, the medium of radio becomes an apparatus enmeshed in a politics of relation. Bertolt Brecht recognized the potential communicational power of radio in 1932 and offered an alternative to its commercial use:

> Radio must be transformed from a distribution apparatus into a communications apparatus. The radio could be the finest possible communications apparatus in public life, a vast system of channels. That is, it could be so, if it understood how to receive as well as to transmit, how to let the listener speak as well as hear, how to bring him into a network instead of isolating him. Following this principle the radio should step out of the supply business and organize its listeners as suppliers.[31]

Brecht gives the medium of radio a positive significance that hinges on its ability to create an open system of channels for full audience participation. Susan J. Douglas asserts that radio

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[30] Chesney, "Drive Time," 101.
[31] Bertolt Brecht, "The Radio as a Communications Apparatus," in *Brecht on Film and Radio* (Bloomsbury Publishing, 2015), 42.

achieved this aim to a certain extent in its prime, before MTV took over in the '80s; she postulates that this participatory function occurred in the listener's ability to create their own perceptual space.[32] This space developed not at the site of geographical identity, but of consumer identity. As Douglas puts it, "radio has worked most powerfully inside our heads, helping us create internal maps of the world and our place in it, urging us to construct imagined communities to which we do, or do not, belong."[33] There is a network produced through the act of tuning in and listening — listeners situate themselves within sequences of relations that feed into collective imaginations and memories.

Radio allowed for a new ordering of cultural space outside the limits of place and time. This new perceptual space created what Douglas defines as "the mass-mediated human, whose sense of space and time, whose emotional repertoires and deepest motivations cannot be extricated from what has emanated through the airwaves."[34] The multiplicity of radio channels allowed for a cultivation of different modes of listening, which gave the listener an ability to transcend static identities and relations through consuming the highly curated options according to preference. Despite its existence as a commercial medium, the radio created networks, validated subcultures, and fostered identities, all in a fragmented experience of subjectivity.[35] The relation between the listener and the DJ, or the listener and other listeners, was one that took place in the imaginary; per Benedict Anderson's formative definition of *imagined communities*, members remain in all ways separate in their realities while "in the minds of each lives the image of their communion."[36] Thus, listening to the radio became a way to curate one's own identity in relation to countless imagined communities, organized by taste. To tune into the radio was to

[32] Douglas, *Listening In*, 4.
[33] *Ibid*., 11.
[34] *Ibid*.
[35] *Ibid*.
[36] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, (London: Verso, 2006), 6.

break with your material reality and create your own. It spurred, in that sense, a process of self-identification.

The complete abstraction of the listening community in *Once Upon a Time…in Hollywood* accentuates radio's ability to create a pre-packaged imagined collective. This has the effect of a cocoon, a sonic system rooted in an ideology of youth culture and distribution. The mapping that situates within this sound refers back to the familiar — it is a nostalgic ordering of the world, most picturesque in a '66 Cadillac Coupe DeVille. Comfortable yet highly ordered, the radio sound that structures Tarantino's film evokes the obliviousness of privilege; none of the characters, awash in their respective California dreams, detect the insidious threat to their cultural control that lies in the looming figure of the Manson family. Tarantino's filmic circumvention of the murders that would act as a loss of innocence in this era keeps this peaceful moment intact in cultural time.[37] For the viewer, this nostalgia is preserved in two interlocking images/experiences: driving down the freeway in a sweet ride and setting a psychotic hippie girl on fire. In Tarantino's revisionist version, Dalton and Booth, the emblems of a dying Hollywood breed, become the mainstream culture's protectors in a hippie-bashing, frenzied carnage. The exertion of cultural control in the

Stills from *Once Upon a Time…in Hollywood*

[37] Carl Sweeney, "'I Wanted Some Fucking Rinky-Dink Movie Career': Quentin Tarantino, the Director-as-DJ and Stardom in *Once Upon a Time…in Hollywood*," in *Film International* 19.4 (Dec. 2021), 59.

violent finale of the film, set to the sound of "You Keep Me Hangin' On" — a white group's cover of The Supremes' hit song — occurs simultaneously over the sound waves.

Despite this forceful seizing of sonic space, there is, as Brecht suggested, a subversive potential in radio technology. Radio is not an inherently impersonal and one-sided medium; the radio DJ in Spike Lee's *Do the Right Thing*, Mister Señor Love Daddy (Samuel L. Jackson), speaks to individual members of the community, inviting them to shout out loved ones and choose songs from his visible studio on the block. Radio, in this case, is built out of a physical community formed by spatial bounds. It doesn't need to appeal to an imagined community, it is a product of its place. As a sort of community apparatus, it necessitates audience participation and integration.[38] Even in its mainstream form, radio creates a space of free subjectivity, regardless of where (on the street, in a car, in a store) or with whom (alone, with other customers, with a taxi driver). For the majority of the 20th century, radio acted as a shared cultural center, a kind of mediated town square located in the sound waves. Radio holds a power, as a live transmission, to make the universal seem intimate — to traverse the limits of place. This medium, if not directly able to connect the listener with others, can at least facilitate connection to oneself.

Alternative Sonic Ordering: The Politics of the Boombox

The main sonic apparatus in *Do the Right Thing* is the boombox, that 20th century sign of cultural projection, of visibility, of revelation. The boombox was an immediate signifier of cultural identity, unmediated by programming regulations or censorship — its accessibility as a consumer product and its mobility in the city added to its ability to create a new system of relations in space. Its power resided in its audio-visibility, its expression of the said and the

[38] Lei Guo, "Exploring the Link Between Community Radio and the Community: A Study of Audience Participation in Alternative Media Practices," in *Communication, Culture, and Critique* 10 (2017), 113.

unsaid. As such, the boombox became a visible sign of a new ordering of the public city soundscape. In fact, as Schloss and Boyer explain, the boombox only lost its symbolic value when its public usage and visibility declined in the late '80s.[39] Its symbolism continues to live in films of or depicting its heyday, acting as extensions of its owner and of their narratives, revealing systems of power relations as a familiar apparatus in the cultural landscape.

Do the Right Thing offers one such representation of the boombox's presence in the city. Spike Lee creates a world mediated by sound, personified in Radio Raheem, who moves through the neighborhood to the looping, resonant music of Public Enemy. The film's soundtrack, and most notably "Fight the Power," which serves as Raheem's anthem, underscores the contested urban space that the characters share with each other and with the police.[40] It's the mobility of his boombox that allows Raheem to transgress the limits of his city and the unsaid social rules built into and around the interlocking multiplicities in the diverse and densely-populated Bed-Stuy block where the film takes place. In doing so, he constructs what Henri Lefebvre defines as a *counter-space*, a spatial practice of resisting power structures and opening channels of communication for oppositional politics.[41] Raheem creates his reality around the sound he

Still from *Do the Right Thing*: Radio Raheem

[39] Schloss and Boyer, *Urban Echoes*, 410.
[40] Gabriel A. Peoples, "Play (Loudly): The Racialized Erotics of Blacksound in Spike Lee's *Do the Right Thing*," *A Journal of Women's Studies* 42, no. 1, (2021): 111.
[41] Sarah Dempsey, Patricia Parker, and Kathleen Krone, "Navigating Socio-Spatial Difference, Constructing Counter-Space: Insights from Transnational Feminist Praxis," in *Journal of International and Intercultural Communication*, 4.3 (August 2011), 5.

projects, situating himself against the networks of white and neoliberal power through the public projection of Black sound.

Raheem's position in space is amplified by the presence of his boombox, which is a monumental specimen: a 25-pound Clairtone 7985/Tecsonic Promax Super Jumbo J-1. As Prasad Boradkar and Lyle Owerko suggest, Raheem's set-up was "loud, not only in the sound it produced, but also in its visual presence."[42] This force of presence, embodied in its heard and seen resonance, renders it a device that cannot be ignored or tuned out. The boombox has an ability to dominate perceptual space through sound while remaining mobile. In this way, the sonic ecology that it manipulates is never static; as its sound moves in and out of earshot, it is able to access a shifting zone of territorial power that lies outside of physical or institutional structures. As Schloss and Boyer describe:

> The ability to exercise control over space allowed boombox owners, often teens without institutionally established places of shared musical experience, to foster spaces of familiarity and comfort out of thin air, and the portability of the boombox allowed them to move this space at will. This movement could be experienced collectively or individually. It could be celebratory or confrontational.[43]

This equipment acts as both a mobile personal device and as an impromptu social center — once within earshot of these loud devices, one becomes part of a sonic space, voluntarily or involuntarily. Additionally, its ability to play radio and cassettes as well as connect to microphones and turntables made it conducive to placemaking through sound broadcasting and music sampling.

Raheem's boombox, a Clairtone 7985/Tecsonic Promax Super Jumbo J-1

[42] Prasad Boradkar and Lyle Owerko, "Big Things," in *Encountering Things: Design and Theory of Things*, ed. Leslie Atzmon and Prasad Boradkar (Bloomsbury Publishing, 2017), 59.
[43] Schloss and Boyer, "Urban Echoes," 407.

In this way, a boombox imbues any place with the potential for art, for communication, for a party. In both form and style, it connotes a sort of collectivized identity, a *montage*: through the boombox's ability to dub tapes, make mixtapes, and form a gathering place, it becomes a key player in the community. Certainly in the hip-hop scene of the '70s and '80s, the boombox was the major identifiable sign of the scene, the sonic center around which breakdancing, rapping, and graffiti revolved.[44] This association attached the device to a racialized narrative situated within the multicultural inner city in the cultural imagination.[45] As such, the boombox brings with it a cultural weight and an established politics of relation.

This association can be perceived as a threat to the hegemonic order of the city. When Raheem walks into Sal's pizzeria to buy a slice, his music enters the scene with him — fighting the power doesn't include respecting the regulations of private property. Sal (Danny Aiello) complains that "he can't even hear himself think" and reaches for his bat, Raheem's huge boombox in his sights. After Raheem acquiesces and switches off his music, Sal says, "when you come in Sal's Famous Pizzeria, no music. No rap, no music. *Capice*?"[46] This interaction establishes the boombox as the site of the neighborhood's growing racial tensions — the struggle for autonomy and cultural power occurs over the soundwaves and around notions of public and private property. When Sal and Raheem fight over space, they also fight over the reality that it symbolizes.[47] Sal's threat of violence demonstrates the danger that Raheem's alternative authority connotes; his music is interpreted as a weapon.

It is in the sonic space where these two realities clash. The spatial delineations of the city blur as a result of Raheem's use of his stereo system, showing the plasticity of urban space in its

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[44] Boradkar and Owerko, "Big Things," 60.
[45] Schloss and Boyer, "Urban Echoes," 400.
[46] *Do the Right Thing*, directed by Spike Lee (Brooklyn, NY: 40 Acres and a Mule Filmworks, 1989).
[47] Harvey Molotch, *The Space of Lefebvre*, review of *The Production of Space*, by Henri Lefebvre, in *Theory and Society*, 22.6 (Dec. 1993), 888.

inherent subjectivity. The layering of relations that his boombox reveals expands the notion of space, as well as of its production — Raheem's manipulation of his environment and subsequent creation of a contested counter-space produces a new conception of belonging, both cultural and spatial. As Harvey Molotch describes: "Space is produced and reproduced through human intentions, even if unanticipated consequences also develop, and even as space constrains and influences those producing it."[48] As a new channel of spatial production opens, another perceptual layer covers the city. Raheem's distribution of sound onto his neighborhood establishes his place in his community and his belonging to a culture, as well as constructs a political territory.[49]

When Sal denies Raheem's belonging by killing his music and destroying his boombox, tensions erupt into riot. The police murder Raheem. It is an endlessly reproduced image that Lee constructs: a Black man in a deadly chokehold, a public execution by law enforcement.[50] The space Raheem created with his boombox contracts to the site of his body, his order over the city destroyed with it. The music dies, and the counter-space no longer holds — the center is gone, the creeping potential for brutality finally comes to pass. This tragic end doesn't mean the sonic power Raheem utilized is necessarily an illusion. Instead, it captures how projecting identity can become a revolutionary act in an oppressive society; the boombox breaks from the individual into the communal, creating an audiovisual experience to be shared. This apparatus, when used to break out of the ideological norm, becomes a tool to assert an alternative subjectivity in space. Lee shows that there is a power of identification in the wielding of these immense instruments, a refusal to be ignored and a rejection of social invisibility.

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[48] Molotch, *The Space of Lefebvre*, 887.
[49] Hayden, *Politics of Place*, 22.
[50] Casarae Gibson, "'Fight the Power': Hip Hop and Civil Unrest in Spike Lee's *Do the Right Thing*," in *Black Camera*, 8.2 (Spring 2017), 187.

Conclusion

In both of these films, playback technology offers a channel through which to form and assert subjective identity. Tarantino's integration of AM radio as the central apparatus in *Once Upon a Time…in Hollywood* demonstrates the conversion of the medium's listeners as subjects to a sonic order. The radio serves as a mirror-image, an ideological State apparatus, which Louis Althusser defines as a representation of the imaginary relation of individuals to their real conditions of existence.[51] The sound space created by radio, then, provides a means of subjective distortion; the collective nature of this distortion connotes ideology. Not all subjectivities are allowed to live in the apparatus, however. The sonic public sphere acts as a political forum with resistant voices seizing cultural power through sound, but as Spike Lee makes clear in *Do the Right Thing*, this power is brutally policed. Despite this, the perceptual montage exemplified by the boombox and hip-hop sound in general does permit a sort of sonic liberation, a fragmented experience of freedom from the powers that be. As depicted by Lee, Raheem's boombox floods his space with relational multiculturalism while perhaps Tarantino's radio creates an illusory and commercial totality, which is a complex system of relations in itself.

Stills from *Once Upon a Time…in Hollywood* and *Do the Right Thing*

The nature of a democratic soundscape, achieved through these mobile technologies, reveals the complexity of a densely populated area's social dynamics; the experience of

[51] Louis Althusser, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses," 1969, 109.

navigating these overlapping sonic ecologies constructs a shifting geography of cultural relations. This has the potential to produce both vibrant underground cultural practices and a sense of place full of discontinuities and contradictions.[52] There is a fluidity here, in investigating the interworkings of these sonic spaces, which reveals the potential of urban space to transcend the material ways of mapping and identification.

[52] Hayden, *Politics of Place*, 17.

In Between Scenes:

The Velvet Underground, *Rock My Religion*, and *Slacker*

Music has the potential to shape a new sense of geography, one that lies within social connection, individual perception, and physical place. If played aloud, sound produces a shared perceptual experience that resides not in any definite interpretation but in the in-between — in the gaps between realities, identities, things, and places. Technological apparatuses are sites of this new mapping, as well as communities based around performance and creation. However, the broadcasting of sound functions differently than live concerts. The implied relations that mechanisms such as the boombox diffuse shift in a live context; this communal apparatus is not a mobile product with a malleable user interface, despite being a kind of analog playback technology. It is embedded in space and in relations, inextricable from its place while manipulating its geography. The music scene that results is a distinctly urban phenomenon. As Peter Hall suggests, subversive spaces of cultural production occur most notably in cities in transition, in "places of great social and intellectual turbulence: not comfortable places at all."[53] These alternative scenes subsequently represent a sonic disruption. As Plato states, "any alteration in the modes of music is always followed by alteration in the most fundamental laws of the state."[54] Music scenes reflect the ever-shifting urban landscape and offer a destabilizing medium through which to claim territory outside the bounds of mainstream spatial order.

For the purposes of this segment, I will provide a lexicon with which to navigate this perceptual apparatus.

1. According to Will Straw, the *scene* consists of "that cultural space in which a range of musical practices coexist, interacting with each other within a variety of processes of

[53] Peter Hall, "Creative Cities and Economic Development," in *Urban Studies* 37.4 (2000), 646.
[54] Plato, *The Republic of Plato*, trans. A. D. Lindsay (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1957), 135.

differentiation, and according to widely varying trajectories of change and cross-fertilization."[55]

2. The scene originates from a *milieu*. In French, this means at once "middle" (spatial, temporal, and figurative), "environment" (in the geographical sense), "medium" (as a channel of expression or substance), and "circle" (social).[56]
3. To expand upon Édouard Glissant's idea of relation through Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's idea of *the rhizome*: a way to conceptualize a network as a horizontal, endlessly connecting root system, growing from a milieu and enmeshed in the relative.[57] This is where the poetics of relation grows.
4. The scene arises from the space *between* things — in the words of Deleuze and Guattari, this in-between is not "a localizable relation going from one thing to the other and back again, but a perpendicular direction, a transversal movement that sweeps one *and* the other away, a stream without beginning or end that undermines its banks and picks up speed in the middle."[58] As the scene forms itself within channels of communication, it flows out of this space between individuals, collectives, places, and things: a system of relations and difference.[59]

With this language, the scene enters into a new clarity through abstraction. To understand the way music can map itself onto space in the formation of a local scene, I will examine how sound emerges from the milieu — Todd Haynes' *The Velvet Underground*, Dan Graham's *Rock My Religion*, and Richard Linklater's *Slacker* will provide a localized history of this function.

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[55] Will Straw, "Systems of Articulation, Logics of Change: Communities and Scenes in Popular Music," in *Popular Music: Music and Identity* vol. 3, ed. by Simon Frith, (Psychology Press, 2004), 84.
[56] Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Brian Massumi, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), xvii, 21.
[57] *Ibid.*, 21.
[58] *Ibid.*, 25.
[59] Straw, "Systems of Articulation, Logics of Change," 85.

Constructing the Milieu Through Sound

The Velvet Underground weaves a narrative of the mid-1960s avant-garde scene in New York City by creating a map of connections and communal places. A sense of this milieu emerges from oral histories from the likes of Jonas Mekas, Mary Woronov, and John Cale — all entrenched in the creative exploits of the forming scene at the time. The Velvets and their sound are the central force of this documentary, but the film is anchored most of all in the geography of the city; specific establishments and meeting places serve as the main reference points in the retelling of the scene's history. The Factory becomes a creative community center under the watchful eye of Andy Warhol, Max's Kansas City is the venue where the scene forms and reforms through performance, a cheap apartment at 56 Ludlow Street houses a revolving cast of artists and eventually leads to the collaboration between Lou Reed and John Cale.[60] In all of these spaces exists an ineffable, unseen locale: an imagined town square in which to see and be seen. These spaces did not exist as endpoints but as open passages.

Danny Fields, an influential manager in the '70s punk scene, describes the milieu as arranged around a spatial network of gay bars, which were busted regularly by police at the time.[61] The scene took root in the spaces between the exclusionary city order, forming along the lines of the margins — not at any one static point, but on a throughline, evading the restrictions imposed by the City. The Velvet Underground affirm this fluid relativity in their lyrics, expressing a comfort and connection with the Other: "If I could make the world as pure and strange as what I see / I'd put you in the mirror I put in front of me."[62] There is, however, a hesitancy in this "if."[63] It is as if some part of the process of relation remains to be seen, confined

[60] *The Velvet Underground*, directed by Todd Haynes (Polygram Entertainment, 2021), 29:12.
[61] *Ibid.*, 28:16.
[62] The Velvet Underground, "Pale Blue Eyes," track 4 on *The Velvet Underground*, MGM Records, 1969.
[63] Matthew Bannister, "'I'm Set Free…': The Velvet Underground, 1960s Counterculture, and Michel Foucault," in *Popular Music and Society* 33.2 (May 2010), 172.

to the imaginary — within the network set up by this mirror, there is only the power of perception.[64] Matthew Bannister connects this system to a foucauldian process of identification, asserting that "identity is not within us, it is what we continuously create in interaction with others."[65] In this way, the music scene is intersubjectivity mapped onto urban space; the perceptual power that music exerts in this context both narrates and manifests this network of relations. Existing both in and out of the confines of the physical city, the music scene exemplifies the nature of the rhizome in its ability to create an endlessly shifting map.

The way in which this localization of sound occurs is often through comparison and difference; The Velvet Underground's New York ethos is most apparent when they travel to the West Coast on tour. Haynes' documentary dwells upon this trip as a formative shift in the band's self-identification, suggesting that it led to rising tensions and Cale's eventual departure from the group. In The Velvets' telling of it, the cultural and sonic differences they encountered evolved from geographical space. They narrate this difference mostly with distaste. Reed remarks, "we'd never been to the West Coast and it was odd the way it struck us that everybody was very healthy…Their idea of a lightshow was to have a slide of Buddha on the wall."[66] Drummer Maureen Tucker derides the California hippie culture, saying,

> This 'love, peace' crap, we hated that. Get real…Everybody wants to have a peaceful world and not get shot in the head or something, but you cannot change minds by handing a flower to some bozo who wants to shoot you…do something about it, don't walk around with flowers in your hair![67]

The Californians were just as unimpressed with The Velvet Underground. Bill Graham, owner of the Fillmore West, famously booked them for a disastrous performance in which he let his contempt for their New York attitude be known (he would later disparage their East Coast ethos,

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[64] Bannister, "'I'm Set Free…,'" 172.
[65] *Ibid*., 172-173.
[66] *The Velvet Underground*, 1:17:27.
[67] *Ibid.*, 1:18:40.

The Velvet Underground in L.A.

simply calling it "tar").[68] Cemented in this New York image of grime, slight paranoia, and artistic and intellectual purity, the Velvet Underground and their surrounding scene take on an illusory, exaggerated sense of place. Lou Reed's gravelly intonations become the sound of New York, reduced to a sign that empties and fills through diffused layers of perception. This mythologization constructs an *aesthetic sensibility* which simplifies the consumption of both the implicated music and the city of its origin.[69] Haynes' documentary re-situates this sound within a fluid system of relations in spatial and creative overlap, initiating a process of re-territorialization: a subversive seizing of a medium of cultural communication, grounded in a specific place and milieu.[70]

The form of the film reflects this process. *The Velvet Underground* brims not only with images — sometimes in diptych, sometimes split into larger multiplicities — but also with music, colossal sounds that resonate within the artistic synthesis the film documents. It is in this layered montage where Haynes searches for the essence of the group and the scene that it emerged from. The milieu materializes from this multiplicity, redefining the spaces it inhabits, building a scene through reflections and relations, and finding entryways through expression, most of all through the medium of music.

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[68] *The Velvet Underground*, 1:20:04.
[69] Leonard Nevarez, "How Joy Division Came to Sound Like Manchester: Myth and Ways of Listening in the City," in *Journal of Popular Music Studies* 25.1, 58.
[70] Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 10.

Still from *The Velvet Underground*

Music serves as the channel *between*, in this spatial and social geography. In *The Velvet Underground*, it enters with a drone out of a cheap apartment on 56 Ludlow Street. The Dream Syndicate, a collaboration between La Monte Young and Tony Conrad, explored sound as an artistic frontier as well as investigated the psychological dimensions of its effects. Young and Conrad experimented with sonic ritual, holding a drone for one and a half hours each day in performances open to the public. It was, as Young describes it, "a discipline."[71] Music took on a different signification in the burgeoning scene; not merely sound, it was art and free exploration — it had a direction and no endpoint. Young affirms the drone as a returning current situated in space; as he states it, "there are new places in sound that [*sic*] you could find a home."[72] The New York underground milieu resided in these new places. Sound, with its endless perceptual possibilities, embodies the in-between nature of this scene; as the avant-garde philosopher Henry

[71] *The Velvet Underground*, 30:03.
[72] *The Velvet Underground*, 30:56.

Flynt notes about the work of this particular milieu, "the boundaries between the mediums become unimportant."[73] Music anchors itself in this milieu as another fluid medium of expression and relation, setting the scene from which The Velvet Underground would emerge.

This drone introduced the deep possibility that resided in a surrealist treatment of sound, the creation of what John Cale calls "dream music."[74] In Reed and Cale's interpretation, this music dwelled in improvisation, in repetition, and in systems — in explorations of the return. Ellen Willis calls this sonic theme a metaphor for urban life, an "anarchic energy contained by a tight, repetitive structure."[75] Such is the unrelenting tone of the group's first album with Nico; the powerful, almost hymnlike drone of "Venus in Furs" and the stark, rushing "Heroin" exemplify a collapsing of the mass-produced form of rock music, in both style and lyrics. As Willis remarks about The Velvet's use of rock as a medium, "it was defiantly crude, yet for those who were tuned in to it, it was also a musical, verbal, and emotional language rich in formal possibilities."[76] Out of a subversive geography formed through artistic collaboration and interaction, there exists the opportunity to not only redefine space through sonic means, but to liberate it into a language of signs and relation. Through this liberated language, Willis suggests, emerged "a metaphor for transcendence, for connection, for resistance to solipsism and despair."[77] Sound, therefore, takes the place of language here; a musical poetics grounded in the modern urban experience is the result.

The Velvet Underground's sound was inextricably linked to the spaces through which they moved because of the essential component of performance in their existence as a group. In

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[73] Henry Flynt, "The Crystallization of Concept Art in 1961," quoted in review by Stephen Peterson of *Beyond the Dream Syndicate: Tony Conrad and the Arts After Cage* by Branden W. Joseph, in *Leonardo* 46.2 (2013), 184.
[74] *The Velvet Underground*, 47:20.
[75] Ellen Willis, "Bring in the Noise (The Nation, April 1996), in *The Essential Ellen Willis*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014), 123.
[76] *Ibid*., 122.
[77] *Ibid*., 126.

collaboration with Andy Warhol, The Velvets curated a sensory experience out of their live shows, culminating in the *Exploding Plastic Inevitable*. These performances occurred at the Dom on St. Mark's, marking the spot as a vital passage into the East Village underground nightlife.[78] The Velvets' droning wall of sound, coupled with projected images and interpretive dance, created a montage of spectacle that pulled the entire milieu into one experience. To be in the scene was to participate in this spectacle, to be a witness to the live sound that emerged from it and shaped it. Antonin Artaud suggests that spectacle should live within "an atmosphere of hypnotic suggestion in which the mind is affected by a direct pressure upon the senses"; in this way, the scene exists by and through the senses, situated in space and connected to a shared imaginary of milieu.[79]

Transcendence from Fixed Space: Performance as Ritual

Through the localized practice of sonic experimentation comes a web of networks that constitutes a music scene, a poetic understanding of space outside the confines of the built city. Artaud connects this poetics to a sense of relational anarchy, writing, "poetry is anarchic to the degree that it brings into play all the relationships of object to object and of form to signification."[80] The public diffusion of sound through a live music scene dependent on communal spots and performances has the potential to embody this anarchic formation, in a reordering of spatial and sonic experience. The scene becomes as if a montage in urban space, connecting people and places through perceptual reflection; Dan Graham's *Rock My Religion* takes this form while narrating the roots of the New York punk scene.

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[78] *The Velvet Underground*, 1:09:38.
[79] Antonin Artaud, *The Theater and Its Double*, trans. by Mary Caroline Richards, (New York: Grove Press, 1958), 125.
[80] *Ibid.*, 43.

Dan Graham, a conceptual artist based in the New York avant-garde from the early '60s onward, released *Rock My Religion* in 1984, a film based on a collection of essays which he began writing in 1965. The film creates a montage of collective ritual created through gathering and noise, connecting the religious tradition of the Shakers to rock and roll performance. The endlessly transforming and re-situating Patti Smith (as Graham pins her: "lesbian, androgyne, martyr, priestess, female God") serves as the main conductor of *Rock My Religion*.[81] As Graham states about Smith in the film, "she saw rock as an art form which would come to replace poetry, painting, and sculpture. If art is only a business, as Warhol suggests, then music expresses a more communal, transcendental emotion which art now denies."[82] Graham suggests that music serves a pure, collective purpose, in contrast to the formalizing art world. This music takes on a sublime quality through its connecting power. The music scene itself, however, is the generating force of this connection, an alternative and living apparatus. Reliant on nothing but the creation and participation of the milieu and the geographic space from which it arises, the music scene creates a map that exists by and through the expanding systems of relations that emerge from these cultural practices. This collectivity defines the live music scene — music channels this communion and gives it a conducive purpose, a space to assert identity.

Still from *Rock My Religion*: Patti Smith quoting Arthur Rimbaud

[81] Dan Graham, "Rock My Religion," in *Rock My Religion: Writings and Projects 1965-1990*, ed. Brian Wallis (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1993), 92.
[82] *Rock My Religion*, directed by Dan Graham, (Dan Graham, 1984), 52:48.

What Graham documents is a form of mapping that marries physical and cultural space. This cultural geography, formed by concentrated creative processes and groups, tends to arise in densely populated urban areas destabilized by transition, often a result of economic decline.[83] Emerging out of a shifting and transient milieu, there lies the possibility for a sense of cultural grounding — a rootedness that defies the political and economic forces controlling other material aspects of city life. Deleuze and Guattari describe this cultural mapping as a portal to a deeper sense of place with multiple entryways, accessed mainly through a broad definition of performance.[84] Graham defines the quality of this performance, reminiscent of The Velvets' earlier experimentations with drones and repetition, as "a hypnotic ritualistic trance basis."[85] An entryway to this new map comes through the ritual of live music, through the relations that surround it and exist in it. This brings sound into the religious sphere; like The Velvet Underground, Graham and Smith return to explorations of sin and redemption, exploring the potential for belief and transcendence in the deteriorating urban environment and the vibrant milieu they inhabit.[86] For them, performance brings both the performer and the public closer to the rich darkness of the self in an attempt to glimpse a spark of the eternal; *Rock My Religion* tracks this history through a study of human connection through music and religion.

Music thus acts as the main expression of this re-mapping, but its channel is the scene. This re-territorialization occurs both in the geographic sense of the city as well as in processes of collective identification. Patti Smith expresses this system of communal identification to an anarchic effect in "Dancing Barefoot":

She is re-creation

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[83] Ingo Bader and Albert Scharenberg, "The Sound of Berlin: Subculture and the Global Music Industry," in *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 34.1 (March 2010), 80.
[84] Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 12.
[85] Graham, "Rock My Religion," 92.
[86] Willis, "Bring in the Noise," 127.

She, intoxicated by thee
She has the slow sensation that
He is levitating with she

Here I go and I don't know why
I spin so ceaselessly
'Til I lose my sense of gravity

I'm dancing barefoot
Hit me, there I spin
Some strange music draws me in
Makes me come on like some heroine[87]

The music that shapes this collective experience becomes a sort of prophetic incantation, an invitation to an absurdist ritual. Space becomes malleable, knowledge irrelevant. Bound to sensual experience rather than cold information, music facilitates communication in a way that transcends language and codified systems. Instead, a music scene forms and facilitates connection through a network of sounds, made social through performance, accessible first through sensory intuition. Gaston Bachelard expresses this sensual poetics as an endless process of identification and re-identification: "In the resonance we hear the poem, in the reverberations we speak it, it is our own."[88]

The Resonant Space of *Slacker*'s Austin

Richard Linklater's *Slacker* is a cinematic exploration of the actual space in which this poetic network resides. As an independent film, *Slacker* reproduces the local networks of the Austin indie scene through depicting a series of interactions which construct the only semblance of a narrative.[89] The film takes shape through a collective urban cartography as nameless characters meet and cross paths in the spaces conducive to the actual Austin indie scene (mostly

[87] Patti Smith, "Dancing Barefoot," track 2 on *Wave*, Arista Records, 1979.
[88] Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*, ed. John R. Stilgoe (Boston: Beacon Press, 1994), xxii.
[89] Maria Teresa Soldani, "The Performance of the Austin Indie Scene in *Slacker*: From the Body of a Scene to the Body of a Generation," in *Imaginations* 7.2 (2017), 73.

in the Drag, an area near the University of Texas at Austin).[90] The actors are all members of the Austin indie milieu; likewise, music by Austin artists including Daniel Johnston, Glass Eye, and the Butthole Surfers comprise the soundtrack of the film, which is all diegetic.[91] *Slacker*, threaded along the errant pathways of its milieu of artists, students, musicians, and freaks, shows a specific Austin: one that forms principally through music.

Still from *Slacker*

Linklater creates a sort of musical geography by filling the film with diegetic sound. This results in a city mapped through live venues, buskers, home and car sound-systems: in short, through resonance.[92] In resonant space, there lies the potential for collective perceptual experience. This resonance exists in the immediacy of a performance or diffusion of sound as well as in the system of reverberations it produces. *Slacker* is, most of all, a love letter to the potential for connection in public urban space as well as an ode to the scene that facilitates it. The perception that Linklater creates is transient yet collective, fleeting yet continuous. The city — and the scene — thrive in a simultaneous sense of rootedness and impermanence.

Conclusion

The music scene, unlike the more literal technologies of radio, mobile stereo systems, and streaming platforms, is an apparatus organic to the urban locale. It arises from the crowd, from a

[90] Soldani, "The Performance of the Austin Indie Scene in *Slacker*," 73.
[91] *Ibid*., 78.
[92] *Ibid*.

milieu searching for alternative modes of seeing and of being in space. In re-territorializing the medium of music and opening the possibilities of sound, a live scene can restructure the understanding of place. In this way, the scene emerges as a way to reorder individual and collective urbanisms.

Though anchored in a particular urban locale, a music scene resides in a shared perception. This moveable sense of locality forms a different map than that which constrains physical space; in communicating the ethos of a certain milieu, music has the power to extend the meaning of *place* to encompass the activities of individual experience and the identification processes that arise from the collective. The formation of a scene — in the abstract and material ways represented by Haynes, Graham, and Linklater — holds a mirror up to the place and people from which it arises. The scene is a system of resonances, echoed and transformed through relations and space. It is in this resonance that perception becomes reality: this space in the middle where speed picks up, where the new system is established.

Alone, Together:

Privatized Music and the Urban Cyborg

In resonant space, music finds a channel of communication that reaches beyond the physical bounds of the city landscape — when this broadcasting is privatized, this channel narrows to a stream without roots in any one culture or area. The sound produced by the personal device (the Walkman, the iPod, the cell phone) manipulates the audiovisual experience of the city but only for one person: the owner, who has full control over it. Michael Bull posits that the use of this personalized sonic medium creates a personal soundtrack, enforcing an aestheticization of space which results in an audiovisual distance from the rest of the perceived city.[93] This use of sound in the city creates an almost completely perceptual culture of *one*; in this sonic world, the personal ideal takes precedence over any spatial locale or community.

Though this sonic navigation complicates the existing system of relation in urban perceptual space, it creates a reordered mapping by blurring the bounds of these spatial networks. Pulling from Bull's analysis of privatized sound, Guy Debord's idea of *psychogeography*, and Donna Haraway's definition of the *cyborg*, this paper will explore the potentials of this hyper-personalized medium. With this theoretical basis, Edgar Wright's *Baby Driver* illustrates the specific perceptual spaces that this technology creates and manipulates. By analyzing this film, this section will explore the psychogeographical effects of a solitary audiovisual space on urban experience as well as on urban identity.

Through the ability to control the soundtrack of the city in an individual listening experience, the reflection and reverberation that define urban space condense into a solitary, inward gaze, concerned only with the curation of the self. It is the inner mind which this

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[93] Michael Bull, *Sound Moves: iPod Culture and Urban Experience* (London: Routledge, 2007), 40.

technology appeals to, not the external world. Bull asserts that in this streamlined mediation of urban space, the individual's identification process results through a "dematerialization of the other," an appeal to an absent collective.[94] With this complete abstraction of the urban imaginary comes an audiovisual mapping that prioritizes personal aesthetic and desire over anything concrete or locational; streaming sad music will render a sunny city block bleak, but only for the one person hearing it. Privatized sound is addictive, just as power is addictive — the control the individual exerts on their surroundings with the aid of their device makes it hard to interact with the city without sonic mediation.

The reflective nature of urban perceptual space finds a new form in this aestheticizing sonic medium. Bull describes the experience of privatized sound on the listener, writing:

> Meaning radiates from him, the internal becomes externalized, constructed through music and made transparent — immediate. He is transformed in the imagined eyes of others becoming the centre of a cognitive universe through which others reflect — his cognitive state becomes their cognitive state — though they are not privy to his sound world. The auditory 'look' is a sufficient tag…for an 'imaginary' recognition to flow from the 'other.'[95]

The sonic landscape that Bull describes is unconsciously isolating, even anti-social. No engagement with the external world is needed in the privatized sound space. In fact, the listener is able to project their desires and emotions onto everything and everyone they encounter. Any urban system of relations that can be expressed through music falls into the complete control of the individual city-dweller; unlike broadcast sound (through boomboxes or other speaker systems), privatized sound generates no spatial or social reverberations. It produces a sound with no resonance at all.[96] Thus, the experience of the city that it mediates falls outside of any tangible poetics of relation — the only person it reflects is the individual listener.

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[94] Bull, *Sound Moves*, 10.
[95] *Ibid*., 42.
[96] Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*, xxii.

The Sonic Navigation of a Cyborg Reality

This sound has a history. The Walkman of the '80s gave way to the iPod in the early 2000s, which led to the rise of music streaming services like Spotify and Apple Music, accessed through mobile phones — this lineage traces the development of an increasingly flawless integration of music into everyday life. If these technologies act as extensions of the body, streaming apps render the act of private listening almost innate. With complete mobility in areas with internet access, these platforms make it easier to compile playlists on the fly, to share music with others, to discover a new artist through an algorithm; mediated by an inviting user interface, it increasingly seems that music enters *into* experience instead of layering *on top of it*.[97]

This new listening culture enters into the realm of a cyborg world, disrupting the order of perceptual urban space and affecting the fabric of relation, or how people relate to each other and to their surroundings. "We must recognize how the cyborg materialises, in part, out of things, but also, in part, out of us," Timothy W. Luke explains, cementing the cyborg as a result of social relation.[98] Donna Haraway defines this cyborg world as symbolizing a new order which renders "thoroughly ambiguous the difference between natural and artificial, mind and body, self-developing and externally designed."[99] Ascribing this fragmenting system to the postmodern environment, Haraway conjures up a new order that navigates the *between* spaces, even at the expense of the solid reality of the human body.[100] The notion of an absolute reality collapses under the reordering of relation in space constructed by digitized private sound; the old binaries and narratives that Haraway describes have no hold in the privatized soundscape of the city. Entering into a more seamless spectacle with the introduction of these efficient listening

[97] Ann Werner, "Phones, Applications, Mobility: Framing Music on the Go," *Streaming Music: Practices, Media, Cultures* by Sofia Johannson et al., (Taylor & Francis Group, 2017), 160.
[98] Timothy W. Luke, quoted in *The Cyborg Experiments: The Extensions of the Body in the Media Age* by Joanna Zylinska (Bloomsbury Publishing Plc, 2002), 4.
[99] Donna Haraway, "A Cyborg Manifesto," *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women* (New York: Routledge, 1991), 152.
[100] *Ibid*.

technologies, individuals experience urban space somewhere between the material delineations of the city and the artificial overlay of their own personal soundtrack.

Privatized sound effectively places aesthetic control into the hands of individuals moving through the city. In this way, these technologies tap into a new form of psychogeography, which Situationist philosopher Guy Debord defines as a navigation of the city through its "psychogeographical contours…constant currents, fixed points and vortexes" — in other words, through the visible and invisible landscape.[101] Debord's conception of the city is a fluid space that contains more than just physical markers; it is an experience shaped by spatial guiding forces, by zones of spectacle. To traverse an urban psychogeography is to roam freely and be led, to shape and be shaped. Privatized sound taps into this envisioned landscape in an extremely immediate way, providing a more convincingly real spectacle for the listener to indulge in. The city is live and shifting, threaded through individual experience and collective memories — *narrowcast* sound (rather than broadcast sound) allows entry into a hyperspecific reality, one that lives in the individual imaginary. Privatized sound serves as a more instant and controlled channel for constructing a psychogeography, a way to create the city in one's own image.

A psychogeography of Paris by Guy Debord

The modern city has long been associated with spectacle and isolation. Debord critiqued the capitalist, alienating nature of urban space while believing in its anarchic potential. In *The*

[101] Guy Debord, "Theory of the Dérive and Definitions," *The People, Place, and Space Reader*, ed. Jen Jack Gieseking et al., (London: Routledge, 2014), 65.

Society of the Spectacle, Debord attributes the isolating functions of the city to the mechanisms of the modern capitalist order:

> The reigning economic system is a *vicious circle of isolation*. Its technologies are based on isolation, and they contribute to that same isolation. From cars to television, the goods that the spectacular system *chooses to produce* also serve it as weapons for constantly reinforcing the conditions that engender 'lonely crowds.' With ever-increasing concreteness the spectacle recreates its own presuppositions.[102]

The power of these isolating technologies resides in their ability to hide the ever-present rhizomatic and fluid nature of society, relationally and materially. "Lonely crowds" emerge from an ignorance — or illiteracy — of the invisible undercurrents of the "real" environment, namely those unending systems of relation described by Glissant and Deleuze. These crowds are victims of their own consumption, but more broadly of a decentralized capitalist culture of isolation. In the contemporary city, the cyborg experience that arises from a heightened proximity with privatized ways of listening further obscures the bounds between the seen and the unseen. Positioned so closely to the self and its perceptual experience, private sound produces spectacle on the most intimate level. In effect, this technology mediates a fragmented experience of the city, allowing the spectacle to decentralize and reconfigure itself into more diffused and personal forms. It is this fragmentation of reality, deepened by the seamless integration of digital music into experience, that creates the cyborg experience. In this cyborg state, no navigation of relation — no Other — is necessarily significant in traversing the perceptual city space or in creating a personal psychogeography.

Fragmenting Realities in *Baby Driver*

Baby Driver exemplifies privatized sound's manipulation of space by weaving the city space of the film around its protagonist's will and movements. As Baby, a getaway driver, uses

[102] Guy Debord, *The Society of the Spectacle*, trans. Ken Knabb, (Canberra: Hobgoblin Press, 2002), 28.

his iPod to narrate his movements through Atlanta, his private audiovisual world (and the viewer's) centers around the vortexes of sound that he controls. In effect, his life, as well as the film itself, follow the rhythm and emotional tone of the music in his earbuds. Baby's mapping of urban space directly corresponds to the eclectic soundtrack he creates for himself; as he walks the streets with his earbuds in, the graffiti he passes transforms to reflect the lyrics of "Harlem Shuffle" by Bob & Earl.[103] There is a sort of magical realism in Wright's treatment of Baby's interaction with the city that reflects the transformative power that this sound holds. In privatized sound, there lies a potential for transcendence from any spatial control; Baby's world literally changes in response to his music. This is a purely personal channel. It doesn't reflect any imagined collective, any shared reality. The Atlanta that Baby moves through is delineated by sound: buskers perform on the street, a bible thumper preaches with a loudspeaker, cars honk.[104] In separating from this wider soundscape and creating a private sonic space for himself, Baby exerts what Bull suggests is a colonizing aesthetic control over public space — his music doesn't fully drown out the sounds of the city, but the streets are his to manipulate to his liking.[105]

Still from *Baby Driver*

[103] Derek Dubois, "Cruising the Hyper-Real Highway: Edgar Wright's *Baby Driver*," *Journal of Film and Video* 73, no. 1, (Spring 2021), 49.
[104] *Baby Driver*, directed by Edgar Wright, (TriStar Pictures, 2017), 8:25
[105] Bull, *Sound Moves*, 47.

As evidenced by *Baby Driver*, this personal sonic space serves as a window onto the city, a transparent layer of separation which re-situates everything in its frame with little active participation from the outside world. Baby, who uses his iPod both to mediate his life and to mitigate the symptoms of his tinnitus, imbues this layer over his reality to a both cathartic and isolating effect. Baby interacts with the world around him, but he is clearly in a city of his own perceptual making rather than in any shared space. He accidentally bumps into people, jumps into the street, ignores people's stares and remarks — in short is oblivious to the world around him, all because his sonic experience obstructs his social and spatial awareness.

The use of sound in the film is apt, considering that privatized sound makes daily life into a pseudo-cinematic experience. *Baby Driver* leans into this conflation between the real and the artificial; the plot and characters weave together through familiar stereotypes, incorporating highly-choreographed movement and dialogue into the action. It is, in any case, definitely not made to look natural. Jean Baudrillard, in analyzing the limits of reality, describes a culture of *simulacra* by writing: "In this passage to a space whose curvature is no longer that of the real, nor of truth, the age of simulation thus begins with a liquidation of all referentials — worse: by their artificial resurrection in systems of signs."[106] It is this "artificial resurrection" that shapes both the structure and content of *Baby Driver*. Derek Dubois argues that in an abject embrace of the hyper-real and illusory nature of the film medium, Wright "welcomes an open recycling of genre and narrative tropes, further abstracting the spectator's ability to recognize the diegesis and foster identification."[107] This process of abstraction also defines the experience of listening to music with an iPod or streaming device; these technologies allow for a constantly malleable

[106] Jean Baudrillard, quoted in "Cruising the Hyper-Real Highway" by Derek Dubois, 48.
[107] Dubois, "Cruising the Hyper-Real Highway," 49.

present, dependent on no central system. Threaded through the simulacra created by privatized sonic means, any sense of rootedness in time and place fades out of experience.

Re-territorializing the Body Through Private Sonic Realities

The endlessly customizable nature of experience via this sonic simulacra is a response to the individual's lack of control over their environment; there is a comforting power in the ability to aestheticize everyday life. This is evident in the market value of noise-cancelling headphones, made to completely tune out all external sound. Valentin Ris describes the commercial appeal of these headphones as a liberating technology, freeing the individual by allowing for maximum control over their perceptual experience. "By means of listening technology," Ris writes, "the subject creates a self-controlled and self-induced environment and thus gains control over himself."[108] In this way, the perceptual urban space is rewritten as a space for personal curation, a reflection of the self found through playlists and algorithmic suggestions. The point is to leave one's surroundings and to enter into the comfort of seamlessly mediated experience. This perceptual practice suggests a transcendence from a dull, unmediated reality, ascribing this technology with a sort of sublime capability; Bull uses this language to assert that the modern "cathedrals of sound…have been redrawn into a largely private and mobile auditory worship."[109] There is a sacred quality to this private sonic sphere, rendered vulnerable by its existence in public space. These advances in auditory technology, which focus on building a more concrete sonic distance between the individual and the outside world, show an attempt to render the cathedral innate within us.

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[108] Valentin Ris, "The Environmentalization of Space and Listening," *SoundEffects* 10.1 (2021), 166.
[109] Bull, *Sound Moves*, 2-3.

This hyper-personalized and tenderly maintained sonic culture presents a new form of rhizome, a new order of relation. The image of an urban population moving through the city with separate but simultaneous experiences mirrors Deleuze and Guattari's idea of the rhizome, in a sort of branching, unfixed way. But what active, shared participation occurs in the act of privatized listening that evokes a system of relation? In a sterile analysis of this sound, these relations are perhaps substituted by self-identification through reproduction, through identifying with a community of listeners that resides not in sonic space but in the cultural imagination. However, the almost perfect totality of illusion created by privatized sound produces an experience that traverses the usual delineations of time and space, allowing the listener to enter a cyborg reality. The very nature of this reality operates in the between, as Haraway asserts; it isn't some chrome, futurist image that the cyborg implies, but a hybrid way of being initiated by the digital age.[110] There is a radical potential here for complete re-territorialization of the human in space and in the body itself.

These sonic sanctuaries create closed circuits of individual perceptual experience, but these closed circuits can be opened. The possibilities of this sound emerge from the fragmentation it initiates. Deleuze and Guattari describe this regenerative process, writing, "a rhizome may be broken, shattered at a given spot, but it will start up again on one of its old lines, or on new lines."[111] Rupture leads to regrowth; the perceptual separation implied by privatized sound can always be bridged through transformation. Private listening platforms bring a new space to urban experience, one that resides outside the physical confines of the city. In a reimagining of space, this is the entryway to a new line of perception, one that allows for the formation of a milieu outside of locality.

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[110] Joanna Zylinska, *The Cyborg Experiments*, 4.
[111] Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 9.

Conclusion

Sharing music in any context is to enter into an audiovisual world, *together* — there is an intuitive desire to make other people love the things you love, listen to what you listen to. It's become easier to make private listening a collective practice with the social aspect of streaming apps. More streamlined than just sharing earbuds (a romantic gesture of the iPod era), the ability to send music and even create collaborative playlists opens a channel, a new kind of milieu that exists in the digital ether. Anja Hagen and Marika Lüders suggest that this practice establishes a network of relations liberated from place and time as well as a new ability to inhabit multiple networks at once.[112] If it's possible to imagine a cyborg unity through this sonic medium, we can imagine, as Haraway posits, a world in which people are "not afraid of permanently partial identities and contradictory standpoints."[113] There is a subversive power in fractured identity, the promise of a reimagined world. Perhaps privatized sound offers a glimpse of this transcendence.

The fluid ordering force of sound in space is embodied in the mechanizations of this sound. This technology, which in the digital era brings us closer to a hybridized cyborg reality, shatters one network and opens into a new one; the way music navigates both spatial and social space is again in the between, in "a stream without beginning or end that undermines its banks and picks up speed in the middle."[114] It is the same thread in different form. This sonic medium takes the psychogeographical construction of the city into another realm, appealing to an invisible collective rather than to one situated in built space. There is a potential for connection that goes beyond just algorithmic organization here, a quiet promise of real relation accessed through this new audiovisual culture.

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[112] Anja Hagen and Marika Lüders, "Social Streaming? Navigating Music as Personal and Social," *Convergence* 23.6 (Dec. 2017), 646.
[113] Haraway, "A Cyborg Manifesto," 154.
[114] Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 25.

Finding the Roots:

A Collective and Poetic Dream of Space

A channel of communication outside of any structured system reveals itself in the way playback technologies map urban space. This sonic channel narrates a stream of relation which remains fundamentally unchanged in its capacity to facilitate connection, despite the different consequences of its transmutating forms. Music in particular — as a subjective medium — opens up an active perceptual space in the city, an entryway to a new realm dictated by an invisible, unordered language. The navigation of experience through sonic means becomes an unconscious portal to a sort of anarchic stage, an expansion on Jane Jacobs' notion of a sidewalk ballet, that urban order wholly "composed of movement and change…the art form of the city."[115] Music and the apparatuses that produce it uncover the system of relation enacting this fluid composition; in broadcast, narrowcast, and live sound exists the potential to access infinite networks, interconnecting to shape identity as it forms in space.

This all leads to an ever-malleable poetics of difference. Perhaps best encapsulated by Édouard Glissant in a vivid passage:

> Every poetic intention leads straight to a narrative of the world, for which reason this narrative is not a narrative but a state of the relations among differences within an environment, confined or expanding, it depends, and within a given time frame. The same applies to the presence of landscapes when, recognising ourselves situated within our open and uncircumventable places, we hear the world sing.[116]

It is a resonant space which forms through this understanding, a space dictated by the very nature of sound — like relation, sound possesses the ability to flow into space without the usual boundaries created by the urban environment. Whether the personal use of sound reflects the *real*

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[115] Jane Jacobs, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, (New York: Modern Library, 2011), 65.
[116] Édouard Glissant, "A New Region of the World," trans. John Goodman, (speech, Vassar College, March 26, 2007).

or only a fragment of individual reality is beside the point; it creates, in either case, a reminder of the endlessly reverberating nature of being in experience. It is not a common language that results, not a sterile unity, but an infinitely branching stream of resonant experience.

Film is able to evoke this movement through its ability to create immersive experiences through combining sound and image. The ability to project sound onto life — whether through choosing music to broadcast, creating a live performance, or tuning into solitary modes of listening — holds a cinematic power, a way to make experience *more* than life, somehow; this is why I chose to use film to provide concrete examples of sonic movement in space. In these six films, it is the illusion of the soundtrack that takes hold in the narrative of urban life. The possibility to seize control of one's own soundtrack (and potentially that of others) produces a dreamlike manipulation of perceptual urban space.

Through different entryways, we enter this dream together. Urban space is uniquely changeable — and thus unknowable — because of its endless movement, its constant cycle of connection and rupture played out through coexisting psychogeographies. Whether music embeds itself in actual space by emerging from a milieu or situates the listener in a specific imaginary outside of time and place, it retains the power to weave a poetics into reality. The power to overlay music on experience or to build communities out of sound allows for a glimpse of a new reality, one created by the listeners, a sort of transcendence from bound expression. Sonic technologies offer a liberated passage into this collective system of multiplicity, a way to reimagine and reshape this anarchic and poetic organization of experience. If we listen for it, we hear the world sing.

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