

# SoundEffects



An Interdisciplinary Journal of Sound and Sound Experience

*Michael Butera*

## Sound for thought

listening as metabolism

Dr. Michael V. Butera  
Cofounder of salttt, LLC  
Adjunct Professor of Sociology, Belmont University  
Nashville, TN, USA  
mike@salttt.com

[www.soundeffects.dk](http://www.soundeffects.dk)



---

## Abstract

---

*The metaphor of metabolism, in its permeating and incorporative senses, can extend fruitfully beyond digestion. Here, I consider it analogous to the phenomenological process of audition. Neither static nor disaffected in a state of abstract rationality, but necessarily implicated in the objects and contexts of listening, the auditor ingests, accepts, disseminates and expulses sound. Through this, we might see the beginnings of a phenomenological vocabulary which is based on incorporative perceptual subjectivity (not universal aesthetics) and the inimitable character of audition (thus not primarily visualistic). Beyond the construction of an organic auditory phenomenology, the analogy of metabolism and audition suggests a reciprocal correspondence between the listening subject and the world within which sounds are manifested. Furthermore, these metaphors reflect and extend a specific history of philosophical discourse concerning issues of temporal subjectivity, oral othering and affective perception.*

---

## Auditory appetite

What is the embodied relation of the listener to perceived sound and, in return, to itself? How might we observe this relation less as subject/object discernment and more as a process of interpretation and assimilation into a unified experience? And what would be the benefit of doing so, particularly if the method of analysis is analogical rather than strictly literal? In the current essay I explore an analogy between a metaphor of listening and the corresponding logic of permeation and integration found in the metaphor of metabolism. Such a pursuit frames listening as an incorporative process rather than a simple perceptual accomplishment. While recognising the limitations of analogical argument, I propose that it offers a creative and productive reimagining of audition beyond objective sensation.

To do this, I will briefly discuss a particular trajectory of this thought through Husserl, Derrida and Nancy. Far from a complete account of their contributions, this review merely sets the stage for making this analogy relevant beyond a creative suggestion. Following this introduction and the presentation of the metaphors, I will return to a discussion of how a logic of metabolism might fundamentally alter the concept of listening and enable a compromise between the opposing arguments I survey here. Listening is not merely reception; listener and listened are co-emergent in a process of affect and sympathy. The digestive metaphor affords us a dynamic portrayal of listening by illustrating discrete yet interconnected moments in this process.

Sound, as one form of perception, is not interpreted here merely in its material form: a kinetic disturbance of an otherwise static medium, producing vibrations

and wavelengths which are then capable of transmission to a sympathetic receiver. While very important scientifically, the material aspect of sound, at least in its analytical position of exteriority from the individual's experience of it, is largely out of place in this case. Instead, I will consider sound as a phenomenal event, operating in the space between affect and intelligibility. This is not to contradict the material account of sound as objective energetic force; instead, it locates that discourse as posterior to a primary contemplation of sounds as subjectively heard and known.

Lest we assume that the listening subject takes the form of the classic Aristotelian or Cartesian knower with the sound-object as its detached known (Moreno, 2004), Husserl highlights for us a way of separating sounds-as-available from sounds-as-apprehended. Within his more general phenomenological approach, characterised by intentional intellectual bracketing towards the exclusion of extraneous or unpostulated data, he portrays consciousness as operating necessarily within a linear temporal sequence. One of his metaphors for consciousness, the melody, displays the way in which this temporality pervades every perception – the differentiation between conscious moments is made possible through protention towards the future, the fleeting immediate present and retention of prior experience. Caught between memory and expectation, Husserl's knower is continually processing and present-ing objects, aural or otherwise. His preference for the auditory in *Internal Time-Consciousness* (Husserl, 1964) aligns with this goal: to determine a stable subjectivity in the midst of continual change, both in the subject and environment.

However, to assume that audition is a stabilising process seems to neglect the way that sounds both identify and disrupt a sense of self and object. At this stage of his argument, sound perception is taken as a particularly present phenomenon which illustrates the logical capacities of memory and distinctions within time-space. To take this account as accurate is to accept a few implicit arguments: the perceiving subject as central within perceptual analysis, the existence of sounds available external to this subject, the ability of the subject to interiorise these available sounds through possible sensation, the objectifying nature of subjective perception and the ability to retain and project these perceptions in order to assign them a logical order in experience. All of these, in turn, rely upon what Husserl labels “the primordial temporal form of sensation” (ibid., p. 92). This capacity of the subject to constitute duration within experience enables the “mode of objectivity”, which is essential for all subsequent consciousness.

Additionally, Husserl describes “the content of every primal sensation as individual [Selbst]” (ibid., p. 93). This point is crucial for subsequent discussions concerning peripheral integration and the deconstitution of identity within the process of auditory perception, both of which must be pursued largely beyond the scope of this essay. Husserl maintains that sensation or perception can, in phenomenological analysis at least, be taken as a unique instance or event. As he meticulously

describes, it is unified and constituted within the “actual now” of the subject position and therefore bounded by the linear representation of time.

What if, on the contrary, we allow for no such *a priori* subject to maintain this auto-affectation within temporal experience? Without such a centring subjectivity, how could we ground a phenomenology of perception on anything but a myth of reciprocal symbolic exchange? For Derrida, the fiction of the pre-constituted self lies at the heart of Husserl’s account. Rather than centring presence within the individual, Derrida proposes that the immanent subject, so vital in Husserl’s phenomenological description, is only existent and known as a play of *différance* and comparative signification. Whereas Husserl focuses upon the supposed “immediate presence” of the tone, Derrida traces the generation of this moment through its symbolic protensive and retensive modes. Through this, he argues that the present (and thus the self as well) is based upon representation rather than stability, displaced in the very process of its becoming (Derrida, 1979).

Derrida’s critique of Husserl’s theory of primordial presence concentrates on the latter’s account of hearing one’s own voice. For Husserl, this auto-affectation marks the ground for self-presence and, therefore, consciousness and objectivity. Because vocal sounds both emanate and terminate within what appears to be the interior of my private body, he argues that there is no perceived distance between my own intentionality and the perceived sound. Thus, the Husserlian speaker simultaneously produces, hears and understands oral/aural expressions, which in Derrida’s terms offers a seemingly “transcendent dignity with regard to every other signifying substance” through an appeal to the supposed simplicity of phenomenological interiority (*ibid.*, p. 77).

What Derrida proposes, in contrast, is to unhinge the self from this apparent auto-affectation, from Time as given. Rather than an immediate closing, “the temporalization of sense is, from the outset, a ‘spacing.’” He goes on:

Hearing oneself speak is not the inwardness of an inside that is closed in upon itself; it is the irreducible openness in the inside; it is the eye and the world within speech (*ibid.*, p. 96).

Never complete, never original, always becoming made and simultaneously unmade, the Derridian phenomenological subject is a metaphor and trace of prior associations (“spacing” being elemental in this process). Voice, then, is othering rather than identifying. Of course, this project does not simply result in a refutation of the voice as primary within phenomenological theory; for Derrida, this represents a rejection of the predominance of *Logos* itself, the toppling of the authority of the generic subject position. For a theory of listening, what is lost in this transition is sound as an object detachable from the problematic of incompletely incorporating sound into experience.

The Husserlian and Derridian accounts of listening, isolated from their more general respective projects of phenomenological perception and representation, are almost completely opposed. Where Husserl seeks a present subject and a stable temporal object, Derrida undermines such determinacies by highlighting their marginal generations. For my purposes, to bridge this gap we must rely not so much on either the self or the other, but rather their interrelation. In this same trajectory, and to explicitly prepare the discussion of how metabolism might help this divide, let us take into account the work of Jean-Luc Nancy, particularly his recent text entitled *Listening*. Working directly with audition as an avenue towards understanding the problem of subjectivity more generally, Nancy identifies the self as “nothing other than a form or function of referral” (Nancy, 2007, p. 8). With a focus on the echoing, responding and sympathetic body as the site of sonic penetration and interpolative tension, the subject only “appears” or is understood as a resonance of prior (both logically and temporally) intensive forces.

Along with Derrida and against the “pure” subjectivity of Husserl, Nancy admits the temporality of the self but insists on its inherent instability, always being separated from itself in time. Thus, the grounding of the self as referral and resonance is a constantly shifting field, never able to support a unified identity; it is a “sonorous place [...] that becomes a subject insofar as sound resounds there” (ibid., p. 17). The subject is not a prior intention waiting to express itself; it is a place of echoing evocation where the very sense (of sound) emerges prior to signification or rationality (ibid., pp. 20, 31).

An embedded theme in Nancy’s writing, hidden between lines of intellectual deference and musical reference, is the nature of the body as architectural. Before phenomenology, he claims, we must admit a structure (however invisible or metaphorical) capable of sympathy. With Deleuze, he suggests that this body is pre-purposive and begins non-functionally, though remains as a potency or potentiality for reverberation (ibid., p. 78, footnote 1). This “given body” is, in the first and last instance, timbral (ibid., p. 40). With metaphors not too distant from a literal physics of sound, the nature of the resonating body determines the timbre of the listening subject itself. Further, over the course of time even the structure of this body reconfigures according to patterns of acoustic energy, as in the case of the well-aged violin.

This given body, however, is not auto-generated; yet, in Nancy’s account this developmental problem is not encountered. He continually speaks of the openness of the body, even the penetration and incorporation of externality within the core of subjectivity. These align quite well with my subsequent development of the metabolism analogy. Despite this, his discussion remains within the order of the body as presently constituted rather than as a consequential artefact of prior affects. While it may be assumed within the text that contingencies of one’s spatial situation, precedent experience or disciplinary training might be efficient components to describe

such possible origins, this seems to be a crucial issue to consider directly. For if the body is architectural, a “resonance chamber”, it requires a story of development. This cause would not necessarily be understood as an architect or prime builder (for then we would return to the very problem of subjectivity from which we have been running all along – an Aristotelian “Natural Hearing”); instead, we might look at the patterns of prior influence to trace an emergent history of the listening subject.

This is precisely where the metabolism metaphor enters. Rather than starting with the experience of sound or music per se (whether Husserl’s melody, Derrida’s spacing silences or Nancy’s open timbre), a metaphor based on digestion and assimilation enables a meta-categorical, dynamic portrayal of the subject as hearer, listener, discerner and reproducer. The phenomenological experience of sound or voice is taken neither as immediate nor fully displaced. Rather than sounds being seen as objects observed by an autonomous and rational individual, sounds operate within the same order as the subject that perceives them. We are what we hear. The subject is therefore implicated in a process rather than being in control of an objective situation. Through its four stages the analogy suggests processes of incorporation and reflexive determination which situate the subject and body as consequents, not givens, of material and symbolic exchange.

## Ingestion

We recognise the danger of orifices, those marginal regions of permeation and intrusion; yet, into what do they afford entrance? Perhaps the orifice is merely the site of the exterior inescapable from the interior, a conjoined boundary susceptible to exquisite types of exploitation. Or, in the case of digestion (and, arguably, audition), it is the beginning of a circuit of permutations whereby forms beget and destroy one another in cycles of becoming. This question cannot be answered except by probing the depths of this oral opening to discover whether or not a cache lies beneath it: some teleological finality, something worthy of protection and preservation.

What we find, in the course of digestion, is another hole that opens back into the world again. The digestive track is marked, of course, by two orifices; any finality to be found is through a return rather than a contained end. Thus, the search for that which is threatened through the aperture of the mouth ends as ephemerally as it began. Douglas reminds us, in relation to the concept of bodily pollution, that “[a]ny structure of ideas is vulnerable at its margins” (Douglas, 2002, p. 150). It is this threat of permeating destruction that we should exploit in our first step: to understand the initiation of the subject through a formative and dangerous encounter with the world.

It is, on the other hand, also necessary to look at this effective world within which the subject is assumed. An analysis based only on the subject’s internal pro-

tection and process neglects the larger story of structural influence. The social, or that which (dis)places the self, must be taken into account at the beginning and not merely as a final decision of participation or extension. The contingencies of one's situation enable and limit the types of objects one can be influenced by. This simple assertion, nevertheless, precedes the formation of the subject in relation to it. Through conscious decisions and external persuasions, the subject is formed within very specific conditions of appropriation.

In oral ingestion, choices among available foods partially determine the effects of eating; we would not deny the essential tie between dietary choice and physical nutrition. Nutrition, in turn, structures the developing body through its own adaptive reactions: insulin production, long term energy storage, muscle formation etc. Introduction into the system of digestion immediately dissolves the boundaries between the material world and the material self; the process is one of incorporation, not objective observation.

The open ear, traditionally even more so than the mouth, is vulnerable to such breaches of the world/self frame. Often remarked as having no flaps or lids, all material force is given admission into the canal unless otherwise restricted. These restrictions, however, are paramount and ubiquitous. Not limited to fingers, earplugs or headphones, we must also consider environmental and architectural structures as efficient limitations of aural access (Bull, 2000; Goodman, 2009; Thompson, 2002). While the ear might itself be open, as is the throat, we have nonetheless established various social codes (noise regulations) and material fortifications (most simply, the walls of our homes) to partition and control our acoustic spaces. These laws and doors are the functional tongues and lips of our ears, actively shaping the world to suit our perceptual preferences.

To understand ingestion more broadly is to observe the social world as structured in such a way that objects are available to the desiring subject for appropriation and integration. The apparent openings of the mouth or ear are always mediated by these externalities. However, a fully constructivist stance is as useless as the essentialist one for defining the formation of the subject. If external structure (material, discursive or otherwise) is solely responsible for development, the concept of agency is merely transferred from inside to out. In order to question this we need to admit a reciprocal system of affects.

## Affection

Hence, the second stage, that of affection, begins the work of the subject in its interior modality. This interior, however, is not only vulnerable to intrusion from the outer but is constituted only through its relations with this "foreign" presence. A theme of opposition, from Empedocles to Said, loosely holds that objects are defined



negatively according to their opposites or antagonisms; this takes on new dimensions when applied within the body. In sight or touch, the property of distance precludes immediate identification and enables a sense of objective detachment (if merely in a Kantian form). With digestion or auditory perception, such distance is impossible; the process occurs through direct contact and sympathy.

This stage of affection, however, carries with it an assumption: that the material or force that enters the system is even attended to. It is possible, alternatively, to ignore or reject the substance at hand. In digestion, the triggering of choking in the throat or vomiting from the stomach represents this kind of direct rejection of affect; before becoming incorporated, the object must pass a preliminary stage of acceptance and attention. Only following this evaluation is it deemed acceptable material for regeneration.

Similarly, neurological attention (conscious or not) marks the passage of auditory material into the affective realm of the subject. If only because of necessary cognitive efficiency, we cannot process all sounds that are made accessible to the auditory system; a certain threshold of intensity, frequency or significant structure must be reached. And as some have “stronger” stomachs, capable of handling a variety of beneficial or noxious substances, so certain ears at certain times are attuned for loud, quiet, conversational or disengaged listening. The threshold or horizon of sound varies according to these intentional conditions (Ihde, 2007, p. 108).

Affection is a concept often confused with simple or direct influence, an implication that I am not suggesting here. We might start with Brennan, for whom affect is a “physiological shift accompanying a judgment” (Brennan, 2004, p. 5). Distinct from feelings or emotions, affects are neurophysical phenomena dependent on a “faculty of discernment”. Brennan identifies the problem of a binary judgement between sense and intellect as one resulting from confusion of the subject (*ibid.*, p. 20). In other words, in order to perceive the sense as separate from the cognitive perception, one must abstract from the combined experience of passion and reason. This requires the feature of memory or, less consciously, that of habit and training. Also, it is important here for us to keep in mind that the affective stage and the next, the stage of dissemination, necessarily function together. Their codependence is yet another indicator of the subject as coterminous with the object of its perception and analysis.

Once past the initial acceptance of penetration, now authorised for full integration, food or sound are ready for basic treatment and influence within the subject. In the stomach, this refers to a preliminary acidic breaking-down of diverse substances and a minimal absorption of nutrients. A similar cognitive effect happens in listening by parsing sounds into categories for further discernment and interpretation. The categorisation of affects transitions us into types of analysis more traditionally associated with modes of listening: noise, speech, music or other



symbolic associations. Criteria of acceptability require techniques of appropriation. Even before we have made a perception intelligible, these constructed categories of discrimination prefigure a possible response.

We should recall from our discussion of Nancy's listening subject the notion that to be affected phenomenologically is to be a resonant body. In his words, we notice the "timbre of the echo of the subject" (Nancy, 2007, p. 39). Again, however, the issue of a formed (if hollow) subject reasserts itself. The return to Husserlian language here does not rely, however, on the resuscitation of the preformed subject; rather, listening is an adaptive process without a clear primordial moment. To account for the generation of this body is to observe the reciprocal influence of categories and the content placed within them, particularly as this content serves to challenge the clear divisions between affects. This requires the activity of cognitive comparison, through both quality distinction and memory.

## Dissemination

This parsing activity, in increasing detail, signals the third stage of these parallel metaphors. Let us begin here with listening and then move towards the digestive, for this stage is perhaps the most recognisable stage of auditory perception. It constitutes two steps: precise categorisation and distribution into memory. It is the task of the subject to deny sounds their ephemeral and temporally determinate character through naming and recollection.

Continuing the explication of the subject within his lectures in *Internal Time Consciousness*, Husserl names the instance of the "now" as a "temporally constitutive flux" (Husserl et al., 1964, p. 100). Rather than a linear array of objects available for perception, the sensory field instead presents itself in a moment of shifting constitution without succession or even simultaneity. To be objective is to be made an object within this "lived experience of actuality," providing a "primal source-point and a continuity of moments of reverberation" (ibid.). He also ties this to the concept of *reverberation* (*Nachhallmomenten*), which is similar to Nancy's later *resonance*. The subjective present, then, does not afford us a quantified or qualitative metric for perceptual analysis; this method of phenomenological interpretation must be introduced by the subject. While not quite on the given level of Kant's transcendental logic, Husserl nevertheless maintains the capacity of the subject to distinguish adequately or even accurately between significant moments of experience. Though the perception of time itself remains a sequence of instants, the subject is not confined to this singular moment in the act of interpretation. The limitation of temporality, for Husserl, provides the opportunity for establishing logical conception and analysis.

Before leaving Husserl's work again, we should recall his theory of retention and the primacy he places on this portrayal of *memory* to ground his project. He

calls retention the “fundamental phenomenological principle,” even the “principle of principles” (Husserl, 1962, § 24). The idea of retention allows us to account for the changing givenness of sense appearance while maintaining an exact focus upon what is given. In order to account for the essential variability, the flux, of appearance, the subject creates continuity by retaining former impressions and comparing these to other impressions (as protended, for the immediate moment of phenomenological appearance allows no space for such analysis). For Husserl, the consciousness of time is metaphorically perceived as a *flow*, within which “objects” of sense are presented as unified but simultaneously capable of differentiation.

Without accepting Husserl’s complete analysis or the later consequences of it in perfecting the logical subject, we now have a model for understanding the reciprocal roles of discernment and memory inasmuch as they concern auditory perception. The subject responds to particular sensations within a field of prior experiences, retained for their categorical significance, to catalogue this new sensation and thus interpret it within a system of once-present associations. Recognised within this matrix, impressions become memories which in turn effect the categorisation of all future perceptions. This training of the perceptual faculties, the tuning of the ear, occurs both above and below a threshold of consciousness.

A catalogue of perceptual memories, like any organised body, requires techniques of circulation to remain accessible and relevant to future experience. Upon recognition, a perception disperses into its assigned place in the subject’s memory to be stored and retrieved according to the expected requests of the next moment. This is the phenomenologically intentional process that constitutes the subject/body, operating within a field of technological significations. Though the subject exists as a function of this perceptual process, it is only because of these former moments of perception and their subsequent intentional organisation that this perception could be interpreted. Each new perception thus inherits the systematic consequences of prior experience and can only be understood within this temporally constructed subjectivity.

To extend this metaphor to the third step of digestion requires an analogy between lower digestive processes and higher cognitive functions. The former extracts nutrients from the source material and then channels these into appropriate regions of the body, generating the capacity to digest again in the future. The higher auditory functions, on the other hand, determine how sounds are appropriated and categorised by the mind in order to make one’s world intelligible. The lower intestine, like the intentional perceiver, identifies and disseminates significant matter to its appropriate region of the body where it can later be recalled to perform some function.

Auditory perception, I argue, constructs its filtering mechanisms through experience and (non-Platonic) recollection. This was Bachelard’s position on the myth of

digestion when he claimed that “Realists are eaters” (Bachelard, 2002, p. 172). If we take digestion to be a dynamic process, wherein the attributes of the food we eat partially determine the body’s metabolic functioning, the analogy maintains composure. The explicit suggestion here is that mental recollection is a process not only of storage-recall, but also of categorical construction through distinction, diffusion and circulation. Recollection quite literally depends upon prior collection. Memory is regulation within the metabolism of auditory perception, appropriating and retaining these impressions for intentional utilisation by a now-forming subject.

## Expulsion

We are intimately familiar with and often disgusted by the fourth stage of digestion, the automatic ritual cleansing of the gut. The anal orifice becomes another site of vulnerability, this time in both directions: anything in or out is unclean. Excretions are flushed, buried or otherwise hidden from sense, to be rejected and forgotten according to cultural appropriations (Žižek, 1997, p. 4). Where the open eating mouth, the critical stomach and the circulation of the intestines control the intrusion of foreign substance in the body, the anus primarily functions to limit the degree of our own intrusion upon this outer world. Faecal display is to be relegated to a private, invisible, silent and non-fragrant realm.

Consider, analogously, the open mouth used for its other common function: speech. Vocalisation represents the last stage in the auditory metaphor. Having arrived through the process of hearing, attending and interpreting, the subject is now prepared to express itself as a response to former conditioning. Not merely mimesis (though perhaps in Benjamin’s sense [Benjamin, 1986, pp. 333-336; Kahn, 2001, pp. 26-31]), the emission of voice constitutes an ex-clamation, setting forth into the world what was once classified within the self.

This brings us back to Derrida’s critique of Husserl’s auto-affection of the listening self through voice. In a sense, this analysis is a reversal of the primordial voice of Husserl; but also, it is a revision of Derrida’s continual reliance upon the essential tension within subjectivity. While the phenomenon of simultaneous speaking and hearing may start with Derrida’s interior/exterior confusion, it ends with a synthetic (though not fully unified) return as voice. Thus, while not quite evidence of a fully “constituted self”, it nevertheless is not held as the centre point of an anxious, merely differential subjectivity; some efficient unity exists. The uttered voice as consequential expression is taken as evidence of functionality: the necessary defecation of an earlier phenomenal process.

It is clear that the voice is a site of both power and subjection. The role of Rhetoric, at least since the ancients, has been to constrain and discipline the voice, to make it appropriate for a full display of human potential (and, conversely, to reject

the expression of irrational particularity). The psychoanalytic model of expression/repression speaks to this problem more explicitly: anal repression becomes the means towards understanding preceding forms of aberrant psycho-social development, evidenced through the patient's confession. The open speaking mouth corresponds to the released anus, the expression of which can never be properly received again by the tentative self.

To dispense with the substance of one's former impressions through the voice or other sonic implement is taken here to be a technique of the intentional body. Nancy's passive *resonance* takes a more active form here as an empathetic rejoinder to the conditions of experience. This activity need not be voluntary; indeed, it appears that most of what is spoken in common communication requires not much if any conscious forethought. Nonetheless, to neglect the processes behind such capable symbolic expression (vocal or otherwise) is to remystify the subject's epistemological position. Alternatively, the response of the subject in the dispensed voice does not preclude an understanding of the phenomenological subject as an efficient unity. Merleau-Ponty's embodied perception, for instance, attempted to amend earlier phenomenologies' lack of cohesion and therefore applicability to the lived experience of individuals (Merleau-Ponty & Smith, 2002). I have adopted here the same sentiment, if not his precise formulation, in order to chart an ongoing development of the subject without recourse to a primal moment of identification or pure difference. In between these and only as a practice of integration does the subject emerge both existentially and socially.

Faced with a sounding world, the listening individual finds itself evident through a reciprocal and formal exchange of sound for sound. This response need not take the form of rejection or negativity, just as anal expression need not be cause for loathing or disgust. Silence as the withholding of speech, also a recognised form of expression, is no less significant in the final stage of listening. I consider this to be a response through further attention, expressing former affect and solidifying one's phenomenological relation of the listening self to the subjected sound. The fourth stage is thus simultaneously a final preparation of prior events and an invitation for subsequent experience.

## Analogue subjects

I believe this analogy outlines a method for interpreting perceptual and bodily processes which often get confused within subject/object and presence/alterity binaries. Just as ingested food becomes the material for the body itself and listened sounds become the catalysts through which we form vocal expressions, so the subject is only known as a function of a metamorphic perceptual process. Interpretation cannot be seen in this analysis as the application of given categories to

pre-formed objects; rather, it is a significant exchange of the outside and inside, a contribution of each to the ordering of the other.

More specifically in terms of the phenomenologies referenced in this article, I see the metabolic shift as a coherent bridge between otherwise incompatible conclusions. For Husserl's over-present perceiver, the metabolic stages of listening offer a complication of the protention-immediation-retention process while maintaining its inherent temporality. The ingestion and expulsion stages are particularly applicable here as fully embodied and objectifying moments which cannot be divorced from the categorical developments between them. This does not fully resolve the essential problem Derrida highlights in Husserl's overall method: the representational displacement of subjectivity rather than its presence. Instead, by showing the embodied relationship between this subject and its perceptual objects, we limit without denying the autonomous stability of the perceiver. The characteristics of the ingested objects (food or sound) are just as important to consider as the process by which the perceiver metabolises them. I see this as a revision rather than a rejection of Husserl's classic phenomenological model. By conceiving the subject-body as a metabolising site of significant incorporation and reciprocal affect, the subject as immediately present is shown as an atemporal fiction (despite the reliance on temporality in its description). The boundaries between perceiver and perceived are dissolved in the process of interpretation; categorisation determines both parties differentially in its constructive role.

For Derrida's opposing model, metabolism becomes a way to renegotiate the phonocentric critique he outlines explicitly in *Of Grammatology* (Derrida, 1998). Metabolism is an active process, a transcription of affects from outside to inside and back again. However, it is not merely a dislodging of the subject from context or content, but rather a constant resituating in terms of the relationship between process and product. No final stability is present, but also no absolute otherness. As well, the affinity between Derrida and deaf studies (Bauman, 2008) suggests a further reason to consider audition beyond traditional aural logic. To meld metaphors of listening, reading, digesting, signing or speaking can remind us that none of these are isolated phenomena capable of unqualified completion. As elements of human subjectivity, these synesthetic modes share various logics between them. Analogical work, as I have attempted here, might unearth these similarities and challenge their presumed isolation. In short, digestion as a type of representation preserves deference for a unified, transformative body.

Finally, Nancy's account in *Listening* is extended through this analogy to highlight the way that the architectural body is co-generated, and not merely made evident, through contact with sound. It also significantly complicates the relationship between the interior and exterior of this emergent body. In the course of digestion the lines between self and world are dissolved through the incorporation of

externality into the very operation of the body in rhythm, form and content. In this sense, an ontology of listening must take into account the homeostatic and nutritive elements of this necessary yet implicit practice. His work on touching echoes this as well, by finding parallel logics between the senses which he believes might be subsumable under a general sense of touch. As Derrida discusses, reflecting on Nancy's work:

Ears are not alone in listening; eyes do it too, and they respond. But it is lastly by taking root in the totality of flesh that they are able to do it. Flesh listens, and listening in this way makes it respond (Derrida, 2005, p. 251).

To think about sound in terms of metabolism is to recognise not only the presence of this listening flesh, but also its permeability, incorporation and affection. As a phenomenology, sound as food becomes merely one way of investigating the relationship between the subject and its objects. Metabolism offers a bridge across this theoretical and grammatical distance since, following the process of hearing/digesting, the elements of one become indistinct from the other. This metamorphosis and subsequent assimilation of sound into the body incites us to question their initial separation. The four stages (we might call them courses) of listening are metaphorical, representing the diverse ways that sounds are absorbed into experience. From this model, the relationship between listener and listened cannot be reduced to immediate recognition, pure presence or absolute distance. Instead, in sound theory we must remain open to the complex interrelations which occur throughout and between perceptions. This suggestive analogy in particular is intended to remind us of the dynamic, embodied and delicious nature of audition. Taken as a continuous cycle, ingestion, affection, dissemination and expulsion become the figurative techniques through which the listening subject reforms its auditory appetite.

## Bibliography

- Bachelard, G. (2002). *The formation of the scientific mind*. Clinamen Press Ltd.
- Bauman, H. (2008). Listening to Phonocentrism with Deaf Eyes: Derrida's Mute Philosophy of (Sign) Language. *Essays in Philosophy*, 9(1), 2.
- Benjamin, W., Arendt, H., & Zohn, H. (1992). *Illuminations*. Fontana.
- Benjamin, W., & Demetz, P. (1986). *Reflections: Essays, aphorisms, autobiographical writings*. Schocken Books.
- Brennan, T. (2004). *The transmission of affect*. Cornell University Press.
- Bull, M. (2000). *Sounding out the city: Personal stereos and the management of everyday life*. Berg Publishers.
- Derrida, J. (1998). *Of grammatology*. Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Derrida, J. (2005). *On Touching, Jean-Luc Nancy*. Stanford University Press.

- Derrida, J., Allison, D.B., & Garver, N. (1979). *Speech and phenomena, and other essays on Husserl's theory of signs*. Northwestern University Press.
- Douglas, M. (2002). *Purity and danger*. London: Routledge.
- Goodman, S. (2009). *Sonic Warfare*. MIT Press.
- Husserl, E., & Gibson, W.R.B. (1962). *Ideas: General Introduction to Pure Phenomenology*. Collier Books.
- Husserl, E., Heidegger, M., & Churchill, J.S. (1964). *The phenomenology of internal time-consciousness*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Ihde, D. (2007). *Listening and Voice: Phenomenologies of Sound* (vol. 2). Albany: SUNY Press.
- Kahn, D. (2001). *Noise, water, meat: a history of sound in the arts*. MIT Press.
- Merleau-Ponty, M., & Smith, C. (2002). *Phenomenology of perception*. Routledge.
- Moreno, J. (2004). *Musical representations, subjects, and objects: the construction of musical thought in Zarlino, Descartes, Rameau, and Weber*. Indiana University Press.
- Nancy, J.L., & Mandell, C. (2007). *Listening*. Fordham University Press.
- Thompson, E.A. (2002). *The soundscape of modernity: architectural acoustics and the culture of listening in America, 1900-1933*. MIT Press.
- Žižek, S. (1997). *The plague of fantasies*. Verso Books.