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## **Clocks, horses, trains**

the aural space-time complex in the late-nineteenth  
and early-twentieth centuries

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## Abstract

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*This essay considers time's relationship with space in the experience of sound, as depicted in a range of texts from the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries. Though some of these texts view time and space as incommensurable – most notably, Henri Bergson's **Time and Free Will**, whose criticism of "spatialised" time is a touchstone throughout the essay – the majority consider the two categories as cognate and as pragmatically, if not ontologically, inseparable. Each of the three objects named in the essay's title appear as yielding knowledge, though of a kind dependent on what Bergson (in his early work at least) considers, paradoxically, to be founded upon misperception. Aside from Bergson himself, the essay considers fiction by Faulkner, Proust, Patrick Hamilton and Olaf Stapledon; poetry by Wallace Stevens; the psychology of William James; the physiology of John Hughlings Jackson; and the musical aesthetics of Edmund Gurney and Vernon Lee.*

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## Introduction

How do we know what time it is? Assume that we cannot do so visually by looking at a clock: we may yet do so aurally, perceiving such a timepiece with our ears. Thus Henri Bergson, in *Time and Free Will* (1889; English trans. 1913), whose account deserves to be quoted at some length:

While I am writing these lines, the hour strikes on a neighbouring clock, but my inattentive ear does not perceive it until several strokes have made themselves heard. Hence I have not counted them; and yet I only have to turn my attention backwards to count up the four strokes which have already sounded and add them to those which I hear. If, then, I question myself carefully on what has just taken place, I perceive that the first four sounds had struck my ear and even affected my consciousness, but that the sensations produced by each one of them, instead of being set side by side, had melted into one another in such a way as to give the whole a peculiar quality, to make a kind of musical phrase out of it. In order, then, to estimate retrospectively the number of strokes sounded, I tried to reconstruct this phrase in thought: my imagination made one stroke, then two, then three, and as long as it did not reach the exact number four, my feeling, when consulted, answered that the total effect was qualitatively different. It had thus ascertained in its own way the succession of four strokes, but quite otherwise than by a process of addition, and without bringing in the image of juxtaposition of distinct terms. In a word, the number of strokes was perceived as a quality and not a quantity (Bergson, 2001, p. 127).

At least three things are remarkable about this passage. Firstly, there is the dialectic of attention and inattention, allowing perceptions to be rescued, as it were, by the former from the latter. Secondly, we may note the insistence, towards the end of

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the passage, that the knowledge thus gained of how many strokes have sounded is qualitative and not quantitative – a claim secured, here and throughout Bergson’s work (supposedly), by an analogy between the phenomenon at hand and music, or more specifically, a “musical phrase”, which operates here as a privileged figure for perceptions that are not discrete and ranged side by side each other, but continuous and mutually bound up. Thirdly (though to see this fully we have to go beyond what is directly given in this quotation) we may note that Bergson deems the knowledge thus gained from the sound of clock strikes to be an artefact of “pure duration” (ibid., p. 91) – *not* time falsely passed through the medium of *space*. For as he goes on to state immediately following this passage, the spontaneous and synthetic sense of time given in such instances of clock audition is to be contrasted with – and indeed preferred to – “symbolical representation[s]” of time “derived from [spatial] extensity” (ibid., p. 128).

It is the latter form of knowing (or *mis*-knowing), in fact, that draws the bulk of Bergson’s criticism in *Time and Free Will* as a whole. Throughout this work, he argues that outside such experiences as those described above, our knowledge of the causes of sensations tends to enter into and thereby falsifies these sensations themselves. Referring to aurality (and music) again, he thus contends that when we hear “a series of blows of a hammer, the sounds form an indivisible melody in so far as they are pure sensations [...] but knowing that the same objective cause is at work, we cut up this progress into phases which we then regard as identical” (ibid., p. 125). Or, in a similar example: “when we hear a noise of steps in the street, we have a confused notion of somebody walking along: each of the successive sounds is then localized at a point in space where the passer-by might tread: we count our sensations in the very space in which their tangible causes are ranged” (ibid., p. 86). In both cases, the charge is that sound, instead of being heeded in its true phenomenal character, is being treated as a kind of abstract grid on which are plotted where, and how many times, its source has acted. As Bergson sums up this tendency, here we have a “confusion of duration with extensity [...] of quality with quantity” (ibid., pp. xix-xx).

What, then, is the relation envisaged throughout these passages between the two things whose conjunction this journal-issue as a whole considers: sound and hearing on one hand; knowledge on the other? Considered in relation to this assumed conjunction, Bergson’s answer might at first appear mildly heretical, being (apparently) that though in some ways, knowledge may indeed be founded in sensation, including hearing, in other ways, it travesties and contaminates this very basis. From this vantage point, Bergson could be construed as saying that much, if not all, of our customary knowledge is illusory. But there is another, I think more interesting and fruitful, vantage point from which it can be argued that instead, Bergson sees knowledge, more precisely, as founded *on* illusion: that for us to know – at least in the ways we find habitual, and all but ineluctable – we must, in some sense, *mis*-

*perceive*. As Bergson will put it later, in *Matter and Memory* (1896; English trans. 1911), not only do we habitually translate time and quality as space and quantity, but we have every “right to do so and are even bound to do so,” since our engagement with objects is above all from the perspective of utility, and only secondarily (if at all) from that of fidelity to the phenomenon at hand (Bergson, 1991, p. 191; emphasis added). As we shall see, utility itself is understood by Bergson in terms of space, the very medium whose aural (mis-)perception *Time and Free Will* deprecates. It is thus by reading against the grain of Bergson’s censorious account of “spatialised” perception in the earlier work that we will ultimately arrive at a conception of what I call the “aural space-time complex”: a cognitive and sensory amalgam in which time and space are inextricable, allowing temporal “values” to be read directly off spatial percepts (and vice versa) – *without* this being cast as illusory or privative. And if the positive evaluation of such a complex implies some departure from *Time and Free Will*, it will come as no surprise to learn that its delineation entails looking at other writers besides Bergson, whose objectives and concerns sometimes differ widely from his own.<sup>1</sup> We will retain sight of this departure point, though, by tracing our itinerary through the three key features of Bergson’s “clock” example so far identified: the understanding of temporal-perceptual continuity in terms of music; the apparent, if not (it now seems) utterly illicit habit of interpreting time in terms of space; and, firstly, the workings of attention.

## Attention

Attention is one of the great topics of late-nineteenth-century psychology (see Cray, 1991). For William James – a writer, incidentally, in implicit or explicit dialogue with Bergson throughout his career – in *The Principles of Psychology* (1890), it is the “nucleus of our inner self”; a means by which “each of us literally *chooses*, by his way of attending to things, what sort of a universe he shall appear to himself to inhabit” (James, 1950, vol. I, pp. 447, 424; emphasis in original). More specifically, James distinguishes four distinct areas in which attention may heighten our capacities – perception, conception, distinguishing and recollection – adding in relation to the first two that “When the facts are surveyed [...] it must be admitted that to some extent the relative intensity of two sensations may be changed when one of them is attended to and the other not” (ibid., p. 425). Here, then, is an explicit statement of the principle the “clock” example from Bergson only hints at: that attention works not just upon an already-formed sensation, but also, so to speak, *within* sensation as the latter is assuming shape.

Elsewhere, in a remark that reverberates throughout the *Principles* (similar things are said about the way objects present themselves to sensation, and about consciousness itself),<sup>2</sup> James claims that attention is always, in its “pure” form, of

complex things. No matter how many things one may attend to, “they can only be known in a single pulse of consciousness for which they form one complex ‘object’” (ibid., p. 405). However, he later states that it is precisely the work of attention to perform analysis *within* these complex objects, breaking them down into isolated elements. Thus, our “original experience” of time and space “is always of something already given as a unit, inside of which attention afterward[s] discriminates parts in relation to each other” (ibid., p. 610). And this is not the only way in which his account of attention overlaps with that of time, especially. Of the former, he says, “No one can possibly attend continuously to an object that does *not* change,” and of the latter, that “Awareness of change is [...] the condition on which our perception of time’s flow depends” (ibid., pp. 421, 620; emphases modified). Moreover, like Bergson, James gestures at a privileged link between time consciousness (if not here, especially, attention) and the sense of hearing.<sup>3</sup> “Almost all the experimental work on the time-sense has been done by means of strokes of sound,” he notes; understandably, since “Hearing is the sense by which the subdivision of durations is most sharply made” (ibid., p. 611).

What, then, might it be like to combine an attention-heightened sense of hearing with a heightened sense of time, especially given that according to Bergson, as we have seen, many of our experiences of sound involve the “cut[ting] up” of time along the lines of space, and that for James, as we have seen more lately, the office of attention is to isolate elements within a complex whole? To answer this, we may turn to a literary source contemporaneous with Bergson’s highest vogue in North America, and whose protagonist (or one of them) skips a class in James’ discipline, psychology, at James’ *alma mater* and later near-career-long place of employment, Harvard University.<sup>4</sup> The first thing to say about William Faulkner’s *The Sound and the Fury* (1929) is that its first section, focused on Benjy (each of the novel’s four sections centres on the perception of a different character), collapses temporal distinctions radically: as a congenital idiot, Benjy “does not know how to tell time” (as Jean-Paul Sartre comments); hence, this section of the novel’s “clockness[ness]” (quoted in Faulkner, 1994, p. 266). The second thing to say, though, is that by a complementary, countervailing gesture, the novel’s second section, narrated by Benjy’s brother Quentin, is positively obsessed with both time and clocks, and opens upon a scene that effectively reprises Bergson’s account of the experience of timepieces from *Time and Free Will*. Here is Quentin waking to the sound of his watch:

I lay listening to it. Hearing it, that is, I don’t suppose anybody ever deliberately listens to a watch or a clock. You don’t have to. You can be oblivious to the sound for a long while, then in a second of ticking it can create in the mind unbroken the long diminishing parade of time you didn’t hear (ibid., p. 48).

As in Bergson's "clock" example, attention (designated here by the sense-specific term, "listen[ing]") acts as a corrective to inattention, which we may call (again, in sense-specific terms) "mere" hearing. But contrary to that example – or more specifically, the radical distinction Bergson uses it to draw between qualitative, indivisible time and quantitative, divisible space – Quentin here spreads the very "unbroken[ness]" of time upon a quasi-spatial mental canvas. A "parade" in this context, after all, is almost certainly a group of figures moving consecutively through public space (or perhaps, is this public space itself): in other words, a paradigm of quantifiable, discrete succession. Quentin's hearing of this watch, then, conflates the two types of temporal audition Bergson's "clock" and "hammer" examples, respectively, are designed to hold apart: the "good" durational awareness of the former, on one hand; the "bad" spatialisation of the latter, on the other.

Already visible in this episode, then, is a hint of how writers other than Bergson, whilst echoing Bergson's own descriptions of experience, may nonetheless depart from Bergson's conclusions about what this experience means. Specifically, in this instance, it appears that time and space may be commensurable, rather than otherwise. But what does all this say about one of this journal-issue's master themes, the status of audition as a source of knowledge? Just before describing his awakening, Quentin recalls that in giving him the watch, his father has said, "I give it to you not that you may remember time, but that you might forget it now and then for a moment and not spend all your breath trying to conquer it" (*ibid.*, p. 48). Happiness, or psychic health, might be defined in terms of a loss of attention and knowledge, rather than a burgeoning or grasp of either. Moreover, Quentin later recalls his father saying, "clocks slay time. He said time is dead as long as it is being clicked off by little wheels; only when the clock stops does time come to life" (*ibid.*, p. 54). In this declaration – exemplary of a certain popularised Bergsonism pervasive amongst Faulkner's generation – it seems more particularly the differentiation of parts within an otherwise continuous whole that constitutes the regressive move from "life" to death.<sup>5</sup> Quentin's eventual suicide, hinted at throughout his section of the novel, indeed seems to put a seal on this suggestion. Quentin's consciousness may then be defined by an excess of time attentiveness/differentiation – an excess that, throughout his section, interestingly, is aurally encoded. Take the way that, having awakened, he puts his watch out of sight in order to "forget" time, but then, "as soon as" he cannot see it, "beg[ins] to wonder what time it [i]s" (*ibid.*, p. 49). Or take the way that, in an effort (apparently) to balk this "wonder[ing]", he goes

to the dresser and took up the watch, with the face still down. I tapped the crystal on the corner of the dresser and caught the fragments of glass in my hand and put them into the ashtray and twisted the hands off and put them in the tray. The watch ticked on (*ibid.*, p. 51).

Again, in an attempt to follow his father's counsel and "forget" time, Quentin succeeds only in fixing his attention all the more intently on time's passing – specifically, the "ticks" that mark time's aural subdivision.

It may thus appear that Quentin's consciousness of time can be analysed further into a visual element, responsible for knowing *what* time it is, and an aural one, responsible for knowing more basically *that* time is – a distinction his attempts to first conceal and then destroy his watch's visible markers would perhaps seem to underscore.<sup>6</sup> In fact, however, his narrative as a whole does not support this neat distinction. At both the end and the beginning of his day, Quentin is able to tell more or less exactly what time it is by listening to the Harvard bell, which variously strikes a quarter hour (*ibid.*, p. 51), a half-hour (*ibid.*, p. 52), a three-quarter-hour (*ibid.*, p. 65) and so on. Moreover, in the sojourn through the countryside that takes up his time between awakening and death, he remains vigilant for other auditory time markers, such as a lunch whistle at a factory which (he speculates) would allow him to tell him that it is one o'clock (*ibid.*, p. 76). All these details indicate that time, for Quentin, is not just aural, but also spatial: a thing encountered through specific features of the built environment. In short, his consciousness of timepieces functions to orientate him not just in time, but also space.

Given this conclusion, the way is open to asking if there may not be a spatial as well as temporal character to aurality itself. To be sure, this is now a well-worked theme in sound theory: as long ago as 1977, for example, R. Murray Schafer coined the term "soundmark" (by analogy to the more familiar "landmark") to designate sounds whose phenomenal characteristics help "map" the places they appear in (Schafer, 1977). The Harvard bell in Faulkner's novel would surely be a good example of just this. But there is a less familiar, and surely more surprising, context in which sound's relationship with space might consist: music.

## Music and kinesis

Here, we may switch protagonists to consider John Hughlings Jackson, one of the most influential British physiologists of a slightly earlier period. Like William James, a little later, Hughlings Jackson considers hearing "the sense pre-eminently appreciative of time intervals" (Hughlings Jackson, 1932, vol. II, p. 104). Unlike James, however, he roots this pre-eminence in one part of anatomy clearly responsible for hearing – the auditory nerve – and in another that, at first sight, looks far removed from it: the heart. In a text from 1875, he explains that in one of its divisions, the auditory nerve is afferent (i.e. leading to) "centres for the movements of the heart;" a fact he feels explains the "cheering effect of music" (Hughlings Jackson, 1875, p. 162). Since time perception depends on movements (a claim explicable in terms of James' at first sight more commonsense assertion that it depends on *change*) Hugh-

lings Jackson further argues that consciousness of time is modelled on the first movements the auditory nerve may reasonably be said to form a sense of: those of the heart itself. Thus, “our ideas of time have final, although unconscious, reference to the rhythm of the heart, as our ideas of space have to movements of our locomotor organs” (ibid.). First time is *in us*, and only then do we locate ourselves in *it*.

Moreover, in a later text, Hughlings Jackson recalls how in the earlier one, he tried

to show that the auditory nerves also have direct association with movement. An hypothesis stated is that the cochlear division of the auditory nerve is afferent to the heart and arterial system; whilst the tripartite division for the three semicircular canals [in the same nerve] is afferent to centres for movements which are leading in locomotion. The nerve we call auditory might [thus] with propriety be called [both] affero-cardiac and affero-locomotor (Hughlings Jackson, 1932, pp. 238-239, footnote).<sup>7</sup>

When they are seen as parts of an ensemble, then (as Hughlings Jackson insists they *should* be) the nerve’s component branches appear as integrated agents of a single complex of percepts and behaviours, connecting movement with hearing, time with space. And if the “cheering” effects of music were, in the earlier text, said to corroborate a link between the heart and hearing, a further link from both the heart and hearing here to “locomotion” generally is in the latter text said to be born out by *dancing* to the tune that music sets. For in such dance, Hughlings Jackson adds, “Both divisions of the so-called auditory nerve and related central nervous arrangements are engaged” in tandem (Hughlings Jackson, 1932, p. 104).

Here, then, in a complementary though rather clearer outline than in Quentin’s audio-attuned peregrinations, is an incipient theorisation of the aural space-time complex: again, a sensory and cognitive – and here, also, motor – complex in which time and space appear “naturally”, as it were, rather than illicitly, aligned. It is with this in mind that we should recall Bergson’s idea of music. As we have seen, Bergson associates the art form – like many others, incidentally, before, at the same time and since – with time; specifically, time’s gathering up or inner unity (in his terms, the indivisibility of pure duration).<sup>8</sup> However, in a more obscure but parallel tradition, music is identified also or instead with space and movement. For Robert Musil in *The Man Without Qualities* (1930-42), for example, “Music is inward motion, it supports the kinetic imagination” (Musil, 1995, p. 459). For Edmund Gurney in *The Power of Sound* (1880) – certainly one of the most exhaustive, if not most influential, treatises on musical aesthetics of its period – there is “perpetually involved” in melody, especially, a “stimulation of the auditory nerve [which] overflows into the general nervous system; the discharge often finding vent in actual movements, and causing a general diffused excitement throughout the organism” (Gurney, 1966, p. 32). And in Vernon Lee’s *Music and its Lovers* (1932) (a study considerably indebted to Gurney’s, if only tacitly), movement is identified as both the cause from which music stems

and an effect in which it often ends. For here, not only is movement seen as necessary for music to be produced at all, but it is also said to have “the power of setting up movements in us, making us march and dance, move our limbs in imitation of *its* movements” (note here, of course, the link to Hughlings Jackson) (Lee, 1932, p. 351; emphasis in original).

In Gurney’s case, these observations ultimately lead to a theory of music and its accompanying faculties that are *para-* or *ideo-spatial*, rather than of space as such. Thus, for all that “The feeling of stretching out longingly to a foreseen note” (for example) may often be “indicated [...] by actual movements of the hands” (*ibid.*, Gurney, 1996, p. 337), music is adjudged a thing of “Ideal Motion”, not extensive bodies (*ibid.*, p. 168). For Lee, however, a less exclusive and, so to speak, more intimate relation is envisaged between what we might call “the two movements”, musical and physical. Drawing on the later neuro-physiology of Richard Semon (1859-1918) and Sir Henry Head (1861-1940), she postulates the existence of writing-like “schemata” in the brain, recording past experience in such a way that they may be traversed in memory whenever subsequent experience echoes the original.<sup>9</sup> Arguing further that such schemata are at the root of aesthetic feeling, she states that with music, one is essentially dealing with

ghosts of past movement, which, evoked by our auditory sensations, inform us [...] of musical spans (which we call intervals), musical directions, upwards and downwards (towards and away from) attractions we call harmonies and discords, in fact imaginary movements mapping out a metaphorical space which we feel to exist as the *sound-space*. And it is the existence in our own minds of such *Schemata* of movement and movement’s various modes which accounts for our sense of the stresses and strains, the suspensions and resolutions, the modes of activity of musical sounds, even independently of that distribution of time which we refer to as pace and rhythm (Lee, 1932, pp. 79-80; emphases in original).

Music is thus a diagram of movements copied over, as it were, from “real” space to “sound-space”: a copying that may well render our most familiar experiences of embodiment unrecognisable as such, but which, in so doing, translates them into such no less familiar “musical” terms as pitch, cadence, dissonance and harmony.

Notwithstanding the physiological or any other merits (or otherwise) of this argument, there is at least one imaginative figure whose work “literalises” Lee’s account: the science fiction writer Olaf Stapledon, several of whose works describes worlds in which space and extension are directly musical and vice versa. In the short story “A World of Sound” (1936), for example, the narrator explains, “I found that, by reaching out a musical limb and knitting its extremity into the sound-pattern of some fixed object at a distance [...] I obtained a purchase on the object, and could draw my whole body toward it” (Stapledon, 1936, p. 247).<sup>10</sup> But for an account that, while no less complementary, is both more nuanced and conceptually intricate

than this, we may turn to Wallace Stevens' 1947 poem, "The Pure Good of Theory", and more specifically its first section, "All the Preludes to Felicity". Though music does not appear here until the seventh stanza, the first three stanzas are worth considering in their entirety as a clearing of the ground upon which music will subsequently appear:

It is time that beats in the breast and it is time  
That batters against the mind, silent and proud,  
The mind that knows it is destroyed by time.

Time is a horse that runs in the heart, a horse  
Without rider on a road at night.  
The mind sits listening and hears it pass.

It is someone walking rapidly in the street.  
The reader by the window has finished his book  
And tells the hour by the lateness of the sounds. (Stevens, 1997, p. 289).

Immediately, we are back with time – and more specifically, with Hughlings Jackson's claim that time is known via inward movements of the body (more specifically still, those of the heart: Stevens' "beat[ing] in the breast" and "run[ning] in the heart" itself). But we are also, no less immediately, back with space; or rather, an imaginary space upon which sounds (those of "a horse/ Without a rider on a road at night") are mentally projected. We have considered Bergson's objection to precisely such projection, on the grounds that it confuses sound's causes with effects, and we may now note how closely the scenario sketched in Stevens' second and third stanzas resembles one of Bergson's own examples: that of counting the steps of passers-by ("when we hear a noise of steps in the street, we have a confused notion of somebody walking along" etc.). But in Stevens' presentation, such inference – not only from effect to cause, but also, of course, from time to space – seems to yield rather than distort awareness. One "*tells* the hour by the lateness of the sounds," just as, it seems, time's passing is truly rather than "falsely" gleaned by aurally perceived movements: notice here especially the tacit granting of a parallel, if not positive, identity, between time's "pass[ing]" and the horse's motile "pass[age]".

It is in this context, then, that we should consider music's introduction in the seventh stanza:

Felicity, ah! Time is the hooded enemy,  
The inimical music, the enchantered space  
In which the enchanted preludes have their place. (ibid., p. 290).

"Music" is time's coincidence with space. For whatever else may be obscure in these lines, it is clear that the conjunctive "is" links its immediate object, "Time", with "music" and with "space" in a direct line, making a single, compound object. (If it

may clarify this thought, it can be noted that elsewhere in Stevens, music “seems” to be “a nature, a place in which itself / Is that which produces everything else” [ibid., p. 256]. Music is thus *foundational*, grounding and incorporating what might otherwise seem more elemental things.) “Preludes”, whether musical or poetic, may then be said to find their “place” in time in much the same way bodies and other objects inhabit “orthodox” (including Bergson’s) space.

Where, then, does all this leave the Bergsonian conception of music from which this section started? Let it immediately be said that nothing that we have lately seen need pose any fundamental challenge to Bergson’s theory’s emphasis on time. Rather, we may say that his insistence on music’s qualitative “indivis[ibility]” can simply be displaced from a temporal to a spatial context – or rather, that both contexts, where music is concerned, might henceforth be considered indissociable.<sup>11</sup> However, a more substantive disagreement *does* emerge when we compare the “positive” account of knowledge derived from Stevens with the “negative” one encountered earlier in Faulkner. For if in Faulkner, knowledge, of at least a certain type, is “death” – the knowledge that, like Quentin’s, follows the diremptive workings of attentive – in Stevens, it rather buttresses the mind; grounds the statements out of which poetry is made. This contrast is further heightened by the fact that, of course, knowledge is of the same object in both instances: for “death”, in Quentin’s father’s terms, we may clearly substitute Stevens’ “hooded enemy”; both complex, over-determined signifiers of an awareness of time that is conditioned by awareness of mortality, and vice versa. The two texts differ, then, more in their accounts of knowledge’s affective consequences than of its experiential basis. And again, what of the latter? We may reaffirm its locus in aurality, which in Stevens and Faulkner alike (especially in the latter’s case, when showing Quentin’s awareness of the Harvard bell) perceives time and space as intimately bound up; pragmatically, if not ontologically, indissociable.

## Train audition

We are led back, then, as if inexorably, to the third issue identified in our initial discussion of Bergson: the surreptitious passage from time to space; or, in terms we have used most recently, from sound’s effects to their (inferred) causes. Though we have had cause to avert to this phenomenon several times already, it has always so far been with one eye on Bergson’s claim that “spatialised” audition travesties experience. But we may now consider it from the perspective he took up *after* framing this objection – a perspective our own discussion of music helps anticipate. For in *Matter and Memory*, Bergson invokes the category of “movement”, central to both Gurney and Lee’s musical aesthetics (and, at one remove, too, to Hughlings Jackson). The key to the importance of this category in Bergson’s thought lies, however, not

in music specifically, but in a much more general link he now discerns between perception and utility.

This link is constituted by a cognate category: action. Thus, in *Matter and Memory*'s opening pages, Bergson proclaims “the utilitarian character of our mental functions, which are essentially turned toward action” (Bergson, 1991, p. 16). More specifically, he writes, “my perception displays [...] the eventual or possible actions of my body;” thus, “perception as a whole has its true and final explanation in the tendency of the body to movement” (ibid., pp. 22, 35; emphasis added). By this account, the hearing of footsteps as spatially distributed – to revisit one of *Time and Free Will*'s examples one last time – may no longer seem a mishap, but rather an all but ineluctable consequence of the fact that anyone listening may wish to quicken or relax his or her own steps, say, in order to avoid or coincide with the other figure perceived as walking. Utility, in other words, entails a view of perception as *always* spatial, whether explicitly or implicitly – both because it is the body's own position in space from which perception necessarily proceeds, and because it is towards the body's movements vis-à-vis other objects that perception, no less necessarily, extends. Translating sounds perceived in time as “point[s] in space”, then, now seems all but indispensable: indeed, we have quoted Bergson to this effect already (not only do we translate this way, but we are “right” and “even bound to do so”). If all perception is at least incipiently motile, there is no perception that is not at least to some extent locational.

To illustrate this conclusion, we may consider two final literary examples, both focused on the sound of trains. The first is from Proust – perhaps the imaginative writer most commonly aligned with Bergson (not least because the latter married the former's cousin). Here, the narrator of *Swann's Way* (1913) lies awake in bed at night and wonders

what time it could be; I would hear the whistling of the trains, which, now nearer and now further off, punctuating the distance like the note of a bird in a forest, showed me in perspective the deserted countryside through which a traveller is hurrying towards a nearby station (Proust, 2002, pp. 1-2).

Although the question is to do with time, the “answer” is all to do with space: the space sound conjures as a mental image. Rather than being opposed, however, as in *Time and Free Will*, time and space are here co-efficient, for it is only by the train's *taking* time to pass *through* space (“now nearer and now further off”) that the contours of the landscape are imaginatively delineated.

Much the same is true in my second example (near-contemporaneous, as it happens, with Stevens' “The Pure Good of Theory”), where the protagonist of Patrick Hamilton's *The Souls of Solitude* (1947) goes into the English countryside to

look at the moon and listen carefully [...].

At such moments the countryside, stealthily informing her of its immense size, would seem, of course, in grandeur, wildness and stillness, completely to dominate and submerge all things appertaining to men and towns, and to reduce, in particular, to microscopic, thread-like smallness the railway-tracks by which these communicated with each other – the noise of the trains thereon falling on her straining ear like something less than minute rumblings in the enormous belly of the enormous supine organism enveloping her and everything (Hamilton, 2006, p. 110).

Again, the train provides an auditory coordinate from which the rest of space is measured – its very feebleness, in sonic terms, throwing the contrasting “grandeur” of the surrounding countryside into clear relief. Moreover, as with Proust, landscape appears here not so much as a series of cut-up details (as the censorious passages on auditory space in *Time and Free Will* might have it), but what William James might call a single “complex ‘object’”.

None of this is to say, of course, that these or any other examples simply illustrate or ratify what Bergson says in either of the texts we have considered. Neither Proust’s nor Hamilton’s protagonists “move” in quite the way *Matter and Memory* envisages – though their perceptions may, I think, be aptly characterised as sketching the latter text’s “possible”, potential movements (in Proust’s case, moreover, they do so by encoding *another* agent’s moving: the “hurry” of the railway traveller). More generally, my intention throughout this essay has less been to show how Bergson or anyone else “explains” my literary and other examples, than show how all the texts I have considered participate in theorising – not always explicitly, and at times, for sure, obliquely – what I have called the aural space-time complex: to recall my previous definition, a cognitive and sensory amalgam in which time and space are inextricable, allowing temporal and spatial percepts to be converted into and out of one another. As I hope may now be clear, such a complex does not inhere in any single text, or even pair of texts (at least in full-fledged form), but is better thought of as something looming in the interstices between them – not unlike Max Weber’s “ideal type”, which similarly may be partly represented in many contexts despite not being fully present in any one of them (Weber, 1949, pp. 89-90).<sup>12</sup> The ultimate lesson of this attempt to delineate this complex is perhaps that time and space are never far apart in people’s thinking about and experience of time – even where (as in *Time and Free Will*) their equation is resisted. For every attempt, such as the latter’s, to hold these things apart, there will be others seeking to put them back together.

## Notes

1. I say relatively little in what follows about the period Bergson shares with these other writers (broadly speaking), preferring to let the topical connections between their texts speak for themselves. Such historic contextualisation would certainly not, however, be impossible or irrelevant. For instance, Bergson's identification of perception with utility is part of a far more general trend, according to which the survival chances of organisms (and thus their likelihood of reproducing) lie at the root of these organisms' propensities and faculties – an idea grounded, of course, in Charles Darwin's evolutionary theory. James' theory of attention, Gurney's and Lee's theories of music, and even Faulkner's sense of Quentin as "fated" to death by his hypertrophic time consciousness (all considered later in this article), for all their manifest differences, might also be seen as instances of this historic trend.
2. See pp. 606 and 224, respectively.
3. For more on this link in the period, see Erlmann, 2010.
4. For the protagonist skipping class, see Faulkner, 1994, p. 64.
5. For more on Bergsonian ideas in Faulkner and other writers of the period, see Douglas, 1986.
6. Cf. the episode in a clock shop, where Quentin compares his now mutilated watch to the many on display, all telling different times, and asks the proprietor which of the latter is correct (p. 54).
7. It should be said that in the later text, Hughlings Jackson abandons his theory of the heart's relation to the sense of time, at least in its original form, partly in the light of criticisms made by Gurney in the text I go on to discuss below.
8. Others who make the association include Hegel, 1975, vol. II (p. 907), Ehrenfels (see Smith, 1988) and Adorno, 1955.
9. The *locus classicus* for this idea is Semon's *Die Mnemischen Empfindungen* (1909), whose English translation (*Mnemonic Psychology*, Semon, 1923) has an introduction by Lee.
10. Stapledon also rehearses this idea in *Last and First Men* (1930) and *Star Maker* (1937).
11. This is not the only way in which Bergson's theory may be reconciled with that of Lee or Gurney, in particular. For instance, compare what Bergson says above about the "melt[ing] into one another" of elements in melody with Gurney's claim that "when we once know a musical sentence, a phrase of it which suggests itself vividly to the mind, as though on its own account, will as a rule entail some faint ideal representation of the rest" (p. 205).
12. Cf. Dahlhaus' (1989) application of Weber's category to the idea "absolute music" in nineteenth-century musical aesthetics, pp. 38-39.

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