


# Listening to the Replayed Touch: A Strata-aural Manifesto

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0. Recording is the ubiquitous air and breath needed to produce sounds.
1. Listening, recording and remembering are fluid changes of tactile-aural states/stages in the layers of the sound making body-media.
2. Be interactive, be part, not apart of from the mechanics of excavation.
3. Recording the sound making is (an) ecstatic sensing of the smooth layer between past, present and future.
4. All stratas are multiple: networks.
5.  [sound file, sent as separate file]
6. Stop error correcting codes and coding processes.
7. Replaying the recorded sound making is touching the spinal column of past and future through the time-visceral.
8. The direct excavation must (occasionally) be guided by the indirect.
9. Replaying is a theory that generates sound making in strata-aural circulation and a process of socially networked reflection.
10. Sound resides in a smooth space: reject the optical apparatus of control.

(Re)play. Inhale/sense/listen. Exhale/sense/listen. Be aware, be present, be part, be in. Constant micro-phonic tension, infinitesimal movement and weight beneath the skin reacts and responds at the heart of cyclic immediacy: a tactile-aural space concrete. Being here, acting here, not staying here, creates the subtle stratification of sound making. No fixed postures allowed. Listen. The lips are seeking.

(Inertia c r e e p s.)

Listen. The lips are seeking. Tactile resonance.

(Touch c r a w l s.)

Listen. The lips are touching the edge of the opening.

Now-here. At this very moment, the lips are made solely for the contact with the tube. The creeping line where the lips finally touch the flute is an organic state/stage of tantalizing, seducing, and exorcising the past layers of touching to the present realm of tactile immediacy. This is where direct excavation has to be done through the indirect motion. Surrendering to the moment can only be done, if one dares to touch the spinal column of temporality, through the mucous coils of time-visceral. This daring leaves no space for cowardly acts, nor accepts any ready-made quotes, shortcuts or excuses. It needs organic fleshly movement for its nourishment. The direct excavation desires plunging and indulging, but it hates commanding and ordering. Now. Be part. Touch and be touched.

*The resonance of the interior cavity of the flute, and the fleshly whistling of the air stream through the small aperture of lips, are layering on each other. The deep inhales and exhales swing smoothly, close to the listener. The flows of blowing, whooshing, air pressuring, and shaping of streams become intensified. The trembling sound of the surface contact and the sucking of air intertwine with each other. The tubes are touched both from outside and inside; their surfaces, interiors, edges and burrows excavated by the embracing of ecstatic breathing. These smooth flows of air soon change to an anxious trembling of the tongue in the mouth, unfolding as the fibrillating air-tube resonance (Riikonen & Saario 2010).*

Luce Irigaray refers to air as the element of “fundamental mode of a permanent, available, ‘there is” (1998: 8). According to her: “No other element is in this way space prior to all localization, and a substratum both immobile and mobile, permanent and flowing, where multiple temporal divisions remain forever possible.”<sup>ii</sup> As soon as an air column encounters a tube surface, the several diverse time-space layers are folded/unfolded. Several speed-inertia nexuses are emerged, and skin pores activated. The air suddenly becomes a cache: it becomes thick of directions, weights, reciprocities, pressures, and returns. It becomes thick in its remembering and replaying. The (scent and) recollection of touching and being touched inhabits the air. The vertiginous abyss of the airflow creates a loop where every breath echoes to its past and present necessities.

The captured sonic strata contain an articulated division of space and time through interweaving of convergent streams of air. It is a strata of naïvely and expressively extended and articulated breath: primitive in its straightforwardness and cybernetic in its cyclic immersion and interaction. The single, singular and composite elements, identities, and any sense of authorship, fuse on the continuum of holding, releasing and expulsion of air, resulting in a playful act of emergent shapes and forms.

*The excavation of the fixed media stratas and artefacts is guided by the ultimate tool of anti-stratification: the ear and the body attached to it. One is always coupled with sound and sound is always all that is present sonically. The inherent corporeality of sound must not be forgotten. Pressure and waves. Playback is essential. The therapist must palpate the contours, the tissue flow, the restrictive bands, and to experience the flow of movement. The target is to improve functionality as a whole. The deep structures can only be accessed by the soft but intent touch. The ear, the conchs, the darkness. Locus solus (Riikonen & Saario 2010).*

## **Tactile listening**

Sound is essentially in constant move. It returns, encounters, vibrates, comes, passes, penetrates and resonates. Jean-Luc Nancy says that “[s]ound has no hidden face; it is all in front, in back, and outside inside, *inside-out* in relation to the most general logic of presence as appearing, as phenomenality or as manifestation, and thus as the visible face of presence subsisting in self” (2002: 13).

The sound maker(s) and/or sound excavator(s) must not aim to separate the semantics and materiality of move from each other. The opening of the mouth must be investigated through the warmth of air pressure; air that pushes the lips at the moment of opening. The meaning of the outspoken word must be interpreted through the tongue’s touching of the teeth. The listening that reaches towards these micro-phonic outside/inside touching of sound is innocent of the restrictive and predetermined modes of contemplation. This listening is thrilled about the potential of new couplings, seams and nodes, because of their ability and tendency to crossbreed delicate and miniscule tremblings and returns, for the skin to feel. The listening is both being and doing the interstices in the network of replayed/excavated sound making.

## **Monoaural monophonic monoaural sound playback. Strata-aural stereophonic monoaural stereophonic monophonic monoaural strata-aural**

Aural, phonic, stereo, mono. Stratas. Listening/sensing voice/sound in space-time. Continua. Recording the listening/sensing. Recording as the listening/sensing. The recordings are stratas of the sound making. They cache particular sub-stratas – tracks – that themselves are multi-sensory and multi-perspective agglomerations of the embodied micro-interaction in the past-present-future circuit. This circuit can be captured and remembered by *ecstatic technology* (cf. Baudrillard 1988), the recording/listening assemblage. It is ecstatic in its becoming and being more techno-logic than technology. Recording/listening is inherently sensitive to the tactile-aural engraving processes of the sound making, because it operates from beneath the skin-strata of the sound maker; whilst producing the sound, the

listening space is an intimate stratum of realtime sensing/listening of the continuously shaped visceral contact with the sound-corporeal. The plural unfolding of sound making is constantly touched by, and within the recording settings, microphone locations, and chosen techniques. In other words, the body, space and technology are inextricable of each other. Also, in the context of strata-formation, the arbitrary split between technique and interpretation is ignored as an oxymoronic fantasy of division of the embodied and social elements of sonic interaction. Instead, the subtle impulses, gestures, utterances, hesitations, clues, traces, intents, presentiments and various preparatory acts, are understood as being inherently layered in the recording/listening process.

Recording/listening processes create epidermal stratas of micro-tactile/aural time-space networks. These stratas are excavated through the *replaying-touch*. The replaying is executed through diverse embodied acts in a myriad of time-space layers: through remembering, listening, discussing, reflecting (verbally or by doing sound), editing and playing back the recordings, touching back, listening back, writing back etc. By focussing solely on the fragile qualities of the sound-skin engraving processes and their respective micro-rhizomic meshes, the intimate registers and dynamics of the touch-sound interplay could be compendiously excavated. The listening to sound making and writing/speaking/remembering it, intertwines with each other. The sound making can be touched from various sides with a simultaneous brushing (motion).

In the context of micro-tactile sound making, replaying touch draws onto-epistemologically from the *recording as an omnipresent socio-material assemblage*. Replaying touch cannot be done without recorded sound. Actually, the sounds themselves cannot be done without recording. The embodied practices of sound making are needed for the recording to breathe; and it can only be excavated if captured. There is no such thing as an ephemeral sound. Touch (as actual epidermal contagion) is ephemeral. Sound is perpetual. Sound always exists in stratas, tracks, memory lines, viruses. Furthermore, sound constantly transforms in its burrows of capturing. Sound does not obey the top-down structure, because it oozes, expands and infiltrates in sensory immediacies. At the moment of recording,

this oozing, expanding and infiltrating speeds and rises up; the fleshly contacts of sound making get exaggerated, convoluted, and thoroughly reassembled.

In the diverse field of sound studies and performance studies, the issue on recording hits several on-going discussions on immediacy, liveness and authenticity in performance (e.g. Kahn 1999; Ihde 2007; Auslander 1999; Sterne 2003).

Surprisingly, the concepts of original and copy, live and mediated, and natural and artificial stubbornly exist and hybridize in the discursive networks. However, in the delicate micro-context of replaying touch of sound making, the dichotomized frame of enslaved concepts becomes futile. The exactitude of touching on the skin level and the abstract distinction between live and mediated realm are very distant to each other. Since touching is always sensing the limits, borders and outlines, it should be investigated in the realm of multiplicity, beyond the desire for violently hierarchical ordering of incommensurable events, experiences and qualities of embodiment. Replaying touch flows in the realm of micro-phonos of sound making: micro-tactile as micro-sensitivity as micro-touch. In this realm the rapturous praise of liveness has no importance as such; the whole strata-aural process of replaying touch always caches the complex time-space layering that feed from the blurred borderlines between the multiple and pluripotent ensembles and organisms.

### **The insect mesh: sound is...sound (as corporeal)**

In the context of environmental archaeology – a macro-perspective of surfaces – the stratification is defined as “the record of past events, processes, and states preserved as phenomena and relationships in sediments” (Dincauze, 2000: 96).

These stratifications are constructed of stratigraphic units that “include *deposits* that are results of discrete depositional events and processes, *erosional or constructional interruptions* (unconformities, pits, and walls) and the *interfaces* they define, and the lateral *gradations* that indicate a change in depositional environments over space (Dincauze, 2000: 97).

Whereas the sedimentation changes in the stratigraphic units are investigated by looking at the shifting flux of the past, the sound-making networks are excavated by

*listening/sensing the past-present interplay.* The excavation of recorded sound making is based on the aural-tactile remembering/replaying that includes particular strategies and rhizomes of investigation. The sound making deposit consists of diverse elements, such as the instruments as material, acoustic and cultural entities, the space of the recording, the microphone settings and their associated reasoning, the social context in the recording situation, and all the embodied interaction – including the politics of touch, ie., the particular intentions and aims of being sonic – during the sound making. The context (e.g., the recording environment) and the tactile flow of sound, however, are intimately interrelated, as they are not separate units of sound producing. This interrelatedness constantly swarms and mutates on the fine, but differentiating surface of the insect mesh.

In the insect(ed) mesh perspective, the particular attention is given to local, personal, and epidermal micro-variations of the sound making. The standardized, idealized and universalized modes of sound generating are left aside. For example, in the case of flute sound production, the focus is on the subtle adjustments of the flautist's lip movements, air stream control, abdomen muscle use, and the gentle contact between the fingers and the flute. These elements are investigated as a constantly shaping *touch between the flautist, flute and the recording interaction as whole*. In this context, the distinction between mediate and immediate touching are rejected, and the focus is on the distinguished qualities on reflexive, reversible, transitive, and reciprocal touching (cf. Derrida, 2005[2000]: 250). The insect mesh captures the diverse recollecting of the tube-lips-air movements, and their resonating touches, their imprints in the skins of the sound makers and the listeners. A total surrendering to the moment.

### **Strata-aural excavation: mutant slang**

The excavation that listens, speaks, writes and oozes through tactile-aural strata-mesh of sound making is a mutant slang. It is the palpating of the undernourished, cycling, sliding, and rupturing past-present-future circuit. It is constantly in the state/stage of becoming/arising, as the touch always is. It is ajar, aware and awake for the varying fluid depths of replayed skin-terrains. The layers of not-anymore-here and not-yet-there fold with the imperceptible embrace of already-here/there. In this excavation process, the touch-moves of sound making, recording, listening and

writing intermingle and fuse with each other. Sound making, recording, listening and writing are all touching the sound with the conch cavities of the ears, and sensing the touching in the delicate inter-sensual expanses of skin, and remembering touching through the tongue that infiltrates words from interactive meshwork of the skin pores.

Be interactive, be locally part of the mechanics of excavation, be in, as an ecstatic mutant subject. Stop coding processes. Dismantle the obsessive switchgear of haunting the authentic origins and the depolitized (and depotized) interests. As Deleuze and Guattari state, "the scientific enterprise of extracting constants and constant relations is always coupled with the political enterprise of imposing them on speakers and transmitting order-words", (1987: 101). It is of paramount importance that the replaying will remain open to multiple hearings and sensing. Inhale to mutate. Exhale to contaminate.

In recent decades, humans have been orchestrated by the combination of written and aural text, and their homotopic roles and authorities. Audio records are strategic instrument, an assault against the silence of memory. Political sound that can be realized theoretically even when the material and multisensory means are lacking, subjugates, orchestrates, and conceptualizes the sounds of daily life. When pragmatics ceased to be, the following items were found near the body: a super-dip language, outpourings of human feelings, justification and the activism of sexual difference. Be the subject to the alternative: fall outside, or answer explicitly. Conventional working conditions syntacticise and semanticise pragmatic determinations. Production techniques are not designed nor applied, not only as social but political, and their use constitutes the fault, virtue, value or sense.

Inhale to mutate. Exhale to contaminate. Inhale to contaminate. Exhale to mutate. Mutate to contaminate. Contaminate to mutate. Incontaminate exmutate.

Inertia seeks, inertia feeds, inertia...

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**Antti Sakari Saario** (b. 1974) is a fixed-media composer fusing acousmatic techniques with eclectic musical and sonic interests. His work has been performed in over 100 concerts, dance performances, festivals and installations in England, Spain, Italy Denmark, Norway, Canada, Germany, Portugal, Mexico, Argentina and Brazil amongst others and has been broadcast worldwide. Saario's process and output are always informed by the experiential encounter with one's environment, whether aural, cultural or purely abstract. He received his PhD in Musical Composition from Birmingham University, UK in 2002, where he studied under Professor Jonty Harrison. For the past seven years Saario's output has focused on collaborative and interdisciplinary ventures. Currently he is a senior lecturer in Creative Music Technology at University College Falmouth, where along with his teaching he is working on practice-based research into fixed-media composition, its performative and critical applications, and experimental production techniques.

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