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Sonic Poetics: Listening and Resistance in *Our Death* by Sean Bonney

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This paper presents one case study in my theory of sonic poetics. Sonic poetics is the apprehension of sound and listening as each operates in the reading of a poem. However, sonic poetics is not exclusive to poetry: sonic poetics is a way of being that can be applied, through aesthetic, ethical, decolonising and antifascist contexts, to academic or non-academic practices. I centralise key acts of listening within Sean Bonney's poetry in a wide spectrum of impossible music, microsounds, inaudible sound, human and inhuman sounds. How is sound presented in his poetry and how does this inform our own listening? I give readings of what I call Bonney's 'sound spectrum' in his last book, *Our Death*, analysing individual autonomy within dominant cultures, and trace an avant-garde tradition from Baraka, Césaire, Hölderlin, and Pasolini in poetry, to Iannis Xenakis's 'stochastic resonance', and François J. Bonnet's concept of 'desiring-listening', in music and Sound Studies. The desire of sonic poetics is for creating, listening to, and listening within, autonomous spaces. François J. Bonnet's *The Order of Sounds: a Sonorous Archipelago* is a key text for sonic poetics. Bonnet's voyage into archipelagic interstices of listening targets sound itself, as well as listening beyond the audible. Sonic poetics begins where Bonnet's *The Order of Sounds* ends: sonic poetics examines sound and listening as it is represented in poetry.



Sonic Poetics: A Brief Introduction

Sonic poetics is a listening practice. It aims to experience sound and the representation of sound in poetry and poetics. In sonic poetics, listening is an act of resistance. It is made of anti-fascism, the decolonisation of literature, and Sound Studies.

The sonic is both material and immaterial. In its material aspect, the sonic is made of vibrational energy. Our linguistic experience of the sonic constructs semantic content as historical and political information and experience. This sonic aspect is unfixed in poetic texts, in states of becoming that can be met through close, contextualised readings. The sonic is an experience of sound as it intersects with the contexts of listening. We read when we listen and listen when we read. We attune the inner ear when reading and when we are out in the field of listening. Sonic poetics changes the way we listen and imagine listening within the poem.

The sonic is not fixed or pure. Rather, the sonic is in a constant state of becoming. The sonic itself is moving in particles and waves that are vibrating through the air, particles and waves which are in turn experienced by the listener through complex psychological and physiological processes. In both particle and wave theories of sound we attune to sound's physical nature.¹ But our apprehension of sound is anything but fixed. In *Irreversible Noise*, Inigo Wilkins redresses the reduction of auditory reception into simple physical terms:

Schaeffer, and Chion, argue that the experience of sound has certain correlations with the physical pressure waves, however these correlations are characterised by anamorphoses and distortions resulting from physiological and psychological particularities. This means the relationship between the pressure waves received by the body and the experience of sound cannot be reduced to a linear mechanical chain of cause and effect. The conscious sensation of sound is the result of the non-linear processing power of the auditory system and is thus quite different from the physical vibrations.²

The 'non-linear processing power' of 'anamorphoses and distortions resulting from physiological and psychological particularities' is of practical use to sonic poetics. Each individual inner ear has a highly complex system within it for processing the sounds to which it is listening: the inner ear processes sound physically, as well as co-creating the sonic while listening. The inner ear of the listener can be accessed in order to resist dominant cultures. In this sense, the 'sound spectrum' of sonic poetics is wide, chaotic and kinetic; it takes into account music, vocal soundings and non-human sounds as well as inaudible sound, and sound that is imagined in the inner ear.

The poet can present moments of listening, moments which are themselves moving, moments to be deciphered first by the poet listening in ways that are specific to their own contexts of listening. These moments are later transferred to the reader-listener, an individual who will in turn bring their own personal history and contexts to the representation of sound and listening by the poet. Poetic language can merge individual experience with that of collective histories. I mean 'poetics' in the sense of the influence of context, politics, ethics and aesthetics on poetry: these influences can take the reader to the edge-lands of the imagination, to the outer limits of the ear. Sonic poetics treats auditory hallucination with the same respect as the speaking, or singing, voice. The inner ear is one way to resist dominant cultures.

As a sound artist and poet myself, I am drawn to forms of knowledge about sound and listening embedded in the interplay between sound art and poetry. The application of recent research in Sound Studies to the ways in which sound and listening is represented by, and function within, poetry will add to the field of enquiry. In particular, poets, and the study of poetics, would do well to learn from practitioners from within sound art in order to deepen their understanding of the role of sound and listening in poetry.

Desiring-listening and Sonic Poetics

Sonic poetics draws upon Sound Studies in order to inform how listening is presented in poetry. One critical influence on sonic poetics is that of 'desiring-listening', a concept developed in François J. Bonnet's *The Order of Sounds: A Sonorous Archipelago*.³ Bonnet composes and performs electroacoustic music under the name Kassel Jaeger, and as Director of INA GRM in Paris is an influential figure in Sound Studies and sonic arts. As Bonnet writes:

Desiring-listening is the listening that perceives in the object that it targets a certain promise. This promise is unspeakable because it augurs both the realization of the object and the accomplishment of the goal, the fulfilment of listening.⁴

But where Bonnet is writing about listening from within Sound Studies, in sonic poetics I develop the idea of desiring-listening to include poetic responses to that listening. In this mode, the individual holds some latent, conscious or unconscious desire for the 'promise' of sound and listening. While Bonnet describes 'desiring-listening' as a state of apprehension, he uses the term 'apophenic object' as the target of that state, where 'apophenia' 'is a condition leading an individual to consider certain of their sensations or certain perceived objects as being coded messages that are meant for them'.⁵

The apophenic object is a phrase I will use to describe the transmutation of desiring-listening into a poetical phrase, line or passage:

The real object of the desire of listening is an apophenic object, an object that addresses itself and makes the world speak to it, affirming an order of things and ensuring the legitimacy of the place of the perceiver, who is also a moving part in this order of things. The real object of the desire of listening is not sound but that which, through sound, serves as a revelation.⁶

Since the sonic is in a constant state of becoming, the poet creates the ‘apophenic object’ through listening. The apophenic object can produce a shared, collective revelation.

Bonney’s Autonomous Zones

Sean Bonney (1969–2019) was born in Brighton, grew up in the North of England, and established his writing first in London, then Berlin. His life and poetry is informed by embracing political activism, anarchism and anti-fascism. As Bonney says in a 2019 interview:

I’m an old member of Antifa in England before the group was known as Antifa. It has actually been going since the 1930s here in Germany. It was an organisation of self-defence against Nazi street gangs. The version in Britain in the late ‘80s, early ‘90s was called Anti-Fascist Action. It was fairly small. We’d find out where the fascists, who were still a small group, were holding their meetings, and we’d make it impossible for them to hold meetings.⁷

Such is the practical, urgent nature of Bonney’s writing, a body of work that is written so completely in the present, it is natural to read his work and reflect immediately on one’s own present condition. For instance, where I am registered to vote, in the UK’s July 2024 elections, the only candidate who wanted a ceasefire in Palestine could not bring themselves to call a genocide a ‘genocide’, when scholars in Holocaust and Genocide Studies have signed a statement on the genocide that has been ongoing, at the time of writing, for 10 months, and one which has been developing from before the Nakba of 1948, and the British Government’s Balfour Declaration of 1917.⁸ We know about Colonialism, white supremacy, and the USA-Euro countries who manufacture and sell arms. We see genocide daily in our phones and laptops. We go to protests against genocide in Palestine, Sudan, and the Congo, and the USA and UK-lead bombing of Yemen. We feel helpless but we still listen. We have to resist in any way we can. This is our present tense. Maybe, one day, I can write on what has happened to time, on some

of the ways in which we are changed utterly. As I write this now, I suggest that through listening, we can resist genocidal culture. One of Bonney's statements on this is at the end of *Our Death* (125), where he writes of making 'art in order to contribute to the formation of new directions in antifascist art, something that seems to be among the most pressing tasks facing leftist artists in the current political and historical moment'. Sonic poetics is a contribution to such a formation of our future.

In the work of Bonney, sound and listening function across time zones, cities and literary histories. His poems represent sound in such a way as to enact his own listening as the sound occurs, and transmit listening practices that can in turn influence the reader's own listening while reading poems that present experiences of political defeat, private trauma and autonomy.

In my reading of Bonney's poetry, one crucial feature that emerges with clear, almost obsessive regularity is his preoccupation with listening to a wide frequency spectrum of audible sounds, microsounds,⁹ and what he calls the 'inaudible'. He listens to sound and makes revelations, and experiences, out of his listening,¹⁰ from the 'wavesound' of *Blade Pitch Control Unit* (2005),¹¹ to the 'BANG' of riot resounding through *The Commons* (2011).¹² In 2002 Bonney wrote a manifesto for poetics that made sound central to poetic experience:

I make poetry from the entirety of speech. Sounds clicks shrieks. Lies. Histories. All the possible permutations of the alphabet invaded by non-alphabetic signs. Variations and hybrids of meanings. The differing levels of account on the page: calligraphy the stubborn scrawl of charcoal: undulations of voice, different each time because ventriloquism is a dangerous skill because we know what the dominant culture has to say about hearing voices. An attempt at a viable political and ethical poetics, a space where it's possible to move, within the space of a single sentence, from a bald statement of fact to a bellow of rage to a whimper to a cry of love.¹³

Bonney's early declaration of writing from the 'entirety of speech' grows over time through a sound spectrum that attempts to contain a 'political and ethical poetics'. Listening can be presented through literary production, but listening itself can be a mode of production where, as Bonnet writes, 'sound is unmarked, where it goes off the map'.¹⁴ We can trace Bonney's sound spectrum of listening from this early assertion: 'we know what the dominant culture has to say about hearing voices'. His opposition to the 'dominant culture' was, in this early example, counterposed by an openness to 'hearing voices' that, as I will show, develops into complex modes of 'apophenia', where Bonney's vulnerability to sound creates 'desiring-listening'.¹⁵ Listening within

the poetic imagination is contra to a 'dominant culture' that for Bonney included several Tory governments, Blair's War on Iraq, UK Austerity, systemic violence within the UK against minorities, as well as his experiences of the far right, both in his lifetime and in other literary experiences of fascism that provide for him traces and threads of many dominant cultures throughout literary history.

In Bonnet's concept of the 'sonorous archipelago', his theoretical mode of a kind of '*other listening*'¹⁶ (author's italics) is a way of releasing potential movement into sounds that are outside known territories. Bonnet's 'sonorous archipelago' has an unfixed and dynamic energy through which unheard and imagined sound can proliferate:

But neither does this *other listening* aim at a pure nature of the sonorous or at sound in itself. It *releases* the interstices within which sound is unmarked, where it goes off the map, assumes its character as a phantom island, advocates for a territorial limit-existence, a veritable *temporary autonomous zone*.¹⁷

Such release of the 'unmarked', the autonomous resonance and movement of sound, and the anonymity of such a space, is applicable to sonic poetics.

Critics have concentrated on the aspect of 'interruption' in Sean Bonney's work, thus reading the work through the lens of modernist disjuncture. Zoë Skoulding (2020)¹⁸ has related Bonney's interrupting figures to the use and appearance of noise as a development of the lyric. Critics such as David Nowell Smith (2013),¹⁹ and David Grundy (2020)²⁰ have viewed Bonney's work as interrupting or rupturing a 'stream of reality'.²¹ I add to this critical stance by considering how rather than 'interrupting' reality, Bonney's poetry suggests that there is no pure reality to interrupt. When Bonney wrote in his 'Letter on Poetics' how 'the lyric I – yeh, that thing – can be (1) an interrupter and (2) a collective',²² I think this is one argument for the potential functions of lyric voice, a voice which 'can be' both interrupter and collective. As such, it can be limiting to read 'interruption' as one 'key' to, or central explanation of, Bonney's whole poetics.

Bonney's texts present multiple views of history and reality. The writers dearest to Bonney throughout his career all wrote from positions of constrained autonomy *in spite of* dominant cultures, which is to say, there was never a 'pure' reality to interrupt in the first place. Rather than 'interrupting' reality, Bonney's poetry shows that the very idea of interruption implies a singular and linear idea of history. There is a risk now that in fetishizing interruption, writers become part of a normalisation of history, a monologic view of 'world history' and 'fixed reality' that implies an Enlightenment

ideology of progress. A tag such as ‘interruption’ may have a domesticating effect on the very complexity Bonney’s work invites: his work could be co-opted by more normalised readings. For Bonney and the poets he admires, reality is not pure, and nor is sound, which is in a constant state of sonic movement. As I show this, I develop a way of reading Bonney’s work by widening the consideration to his use of the apophenic object in ‘desiring-listening’.

Our Death and The Inaudible

I will examine sound and the ‘inaudible’ in *Our Death* in the theoretical context of Bonnet’s *The Order of Sounds: a Sonorous Archipelago*. One major progression in the later work of Bonney is his move toward ‘the borders of the known imaginary spectrum, those impossible borders’:²³ here, Bonnet’s equivalents are the ‘thresholds, between thresholds, fragile interstices’ of sound.²⁴ As we shall see, *Our Death*²⁵ is held together by many moments of desiring-listening that explore ‘inaudible’ sound at the moment of being in a state that is, as Bonnet writes, ‘evaporating before it has appeared’. Sonic poetics studies this kind of elusive movement.

Bonney’s last book, *Our Death*, is preoccupied with ‘the inaudible’, a concept which is described within a vast sound spectrum. The inaudible is apparently impossible to hear, or just out of human hearing, due to its high frequency, or low, distant volume. In this paradoxical sense, Bonney imagines the existence of the inaudible, while at the same time acknowledging that it might not be heard, but only imagined. The inaudible is heard in the sky, in ‘Letter Against the Language’: ‘A kind of high metallic screech. Unpronounceable. Inaudible’.²⁶ It is heard in Berlin’s Landwehrkanal, in ‘Letter in Turmoil’, which calls to mind the ghosts of Rosa Luxemburg and Paul Celan, and the latter’s poem ‘Du liegst’ (‘The Landwehr canal will not roar. | Nothing | |stalls’ translated by Pierre Joris):²⁷

about how he talks about the silence of the canal, or at least about how the canal has become silent, and I think about how wrong that is. Its inaudible radioactive signals never stop shrieking.²⁸

In ‘About the Weather’, Bonney considers starlight in terms of granular particle synthesis: ‘Nobody can see anything except the murderous glare of the sky, the entirety of human history split to a constellation of more or less inaudible sound particles’.²⁹ Memory is related via the inaudible in ‘Abject [After Baudelaire]’: ‘The city’s windows, your systems of memory, both of them an alien landscape, an inaudible language that speaks at times of human love, a golden net about as plausible as the sounds made

by cash'.³⁰ The fear of violence returns with this sound, in 'In Fever: Notes on Les Chimères de Gerard Nerval': 'The thirteenth returns, and everything we once thought inaudible. There is gunshot, there is fire in the suburbs, the fixed stars falling like cops or roses, the darkened rituals of the middle class'.³¹ These moments exemplify the richness and diversity of Bonney's sonic poetics. The inaudible can hide from our listening but can then explode into being, like the sound of gunshot. So, Bonney's acknowledgement of the inaudible prepares him for the possibilities of listening.

Bonney's concept of the 'inaudible' is analogous to Bonnet's 'imperceptible territories' that exist at thresholds of listening:

The imperceptible [...] is not so much that which absolutely cannot be perceived as that which resists perception, that which is positioned at the very limits of our perception: 'impregnable sites of an imperceptible territory that is constantly overflowing'.³² To get out of the clutches of determinations and rationalizations—such seems to be the promise of the imperceptible, in the sense that it is nonrecuperable. Sound work with the imperceptible can therefore only be a work on thresholds [...] Such work is the temptation of the almost nothing, of sound that fails to present itself, evaporating before it has appeared.³³

In *Our Death*, Bonney's '[s]ound work' occurs at such thresholds, as in this prose poem addressed to 'Dear Katerina', Katerina Gogou, the Greek poet, anarchist-activist and actor:

There is a lot can be said about that, about the landscape inhabited by cops, that is to say, the landscapes inside your poems, where the cops are twitching baleful shadows, aeons away from the music that defines them, music they have never known how to hear while, for us, we have loved it so much it has smashed our lives into countless fragments, some of whose names we know and some we don't need to know...³⁴

In Bonney's reading of the 'landscapes inside' Gogou's poems, it is '*music that defines*' (my italics) resistance to the cops of dominant culture. In 'CANCER: POEMS AFTER KATERINA GOGOU', Bonney inserts that of two landscapes from his own life into Gogou's: '*Kreuzberg. Exarchia. Hackney*' (italics mine).³⁵ Exarchia is the name of the self-governing anarchist area of Athens³⁶ where Gogou lived, an autonomous zone that speaks to Bonney's desire for landscapes which, to use Bonnet's phrasing, 'resist the clutches of determinations and rationalizations' within dominant culture. Bonney's desiring-listening finds love in such 'imperceptible' music, a music which has

‘smashed our lives into countless fragments’.³⁷ Desiring-listening in Bonney’s poetry is an example of ‘[s]ound work with the imperceptible’.³⁸ Such sound work reaches an ‘impossible music’ at the ‘limits of our perception’,³⁹ at the edge-lands of Bonney’s sonic poetics.

The Deregulation of Listening in ‘Letter Against the Language’

The tension between audible sound and the inaudible is explored in ‘Letter Against the Language’, the exemplary first prose poem in *Our Death*,⁴⁰ which sets up essential desiring-listening processes for the ‘letters’ that follow.⁴¹ While in *The Commons*⁴² Bonney used polyphonic collage to create a collective voice, his later prose poems use the device of Bonney-the-persona.

Hölderlin is a key figure in ‘Letter Against the Language’, and is important to Bonney’s use of the prose poem form across *Our Death* in terms of what Adorno called Hölderlin’s ‘parataxis’.⁴³ Stylistically, Bonney makes use of a paratactic phrasing that enables streams of association.⁴⁴ In *Our Death*, parataxis is often used to situate poet and reader in the present moment through complex narratives that are discontinued via what Bob Perelman has called, when discussing poets such as Ron Silliman and Lyn Hejinian, ‘denarrativization and renarrativization’.⁴⁵ In Bruce Andrews’s 1998 essay, ‘*Praxis: A Political Economy of Noise and Informalism*’⁴⁶ he positions parataxis in avant-garde poetry:

Parataxis, with its discrete sequence of motivic atoms creates too many gaps ‘in the argument’ to allow a rationalizing (or modernizing) of, by, and for the individual. It undercuts any single dynamizing teleology or resolution (in a full conversational ‘turn’ or the clicking shut of imagistic epiphany). Instead, outward holistic form is constantly revoked — as it gets simultaneously, microscopically built.⁴⁷

Andrews’s metaphor of ‘atoms’ that are ‘microscopically built’ to form units of parataxis is useful in examining Bonney’s use of parataxis and hypotaxis in writing the apophenic object. Take this example from the end of ‘A Butcher’s Lullaby’:

It’s all so quiet. The shrieking is quiet. The blank statistics of the calendar are quiet. The obsolete sigils scratched onto my windows are quiet. Kreuzberg is beautiful in the summer. The sounds from the canal are even louder, the screeching of invisible time zones blocking out the shapes of the sun.⁴⁸

First, sonic hallucination is related through parataxis (‘It’s all so quiet. The shrieking is quiet’), often via an audio-visual cue that expresses his desire for meaning or feeling

in sound and image ('The obsolete sigils scratched onto my windows are quiet'). He then extends into hypotaxis by dependent clauses that build up the hallucination into the sound spectrum of Bonney's complex dissociations ('The sounds from the canal are even louder, the screeching of invisible time zones blocking out the shapes of the sun'). Thus, the moment of desiring-listening is created through a consideration of the apophenic object.

In 'Letter Against the Language', Bonney searches for apophenic objects while wandering at 'absolute random'⁴⁹ through the outskirts of Berlin. Bonney's text develops this wandering with a parallel reading of Pasolini's 1968 film *Theorem*,

where the father – having given his factory away to the workforce, and then having tried and failed to pick up a boy at a railway station, takes off his clothes and wanders off into some strange volcanic or desert landscape and, as he enters that landscape, he screams.⁵⁰

Bonney describes 'that scream to contain all that is meaningful in the word 'communism' [...] A kind of high metallic screech. Unpronounceable. Inaudible'. But this appreciation of screaming and meaning becomes 'about toxicity and audibility, about the weird silence I live inside right in the middle of the deafening din of this city'.⁵¹ Bonney wanders at random to the outskirts of the city and thinks about Pasolini in terms of a 'high metallic screech' that might be of such a high frequency as to be above the range of human hearing, thus '[i]naudible'. Bonney's sound spectrum allows for screaming as well as the inaudible:

Some academic once wrote of Pasolini that we 'should turn down the volume on his political sermons and listen to what he whispered in his work,' which is obviously pretty stupid because the politics are precisely within those whispers or, rather, those barely audible screeches.⁵²

Part of the anger of Bonney's criticism of this academic's view of Pasolini's work is his own implicit assertion that form and content, view and context, are relational rather than separate. For Bonney, the quietest moments of Pasolini are as important as the screamed political 'sermon' precisely because this near-silent communication will contain within it truth about context, or invigorating antagonism about the relation of individual to the state, or the artist to their audience or collective or enemy. Bonney's vulnerability to the extreme ends of the sound spectrum, from screaming to the barely audible, triggers a range of responses. Between these extremes lies the question: why call this poem 'Letter Against the Language'; is it against the English language, the

language of this poem, the language of poems? 'Letter Against the Language' speaks to the heart of atrocities in our contemporary age, and to the wounds inflicted on that language by those atrocities. Bonney then links his contemporary age to an essay by Pasolini:

In one of the last essays he wrote, Pasolini made it pretty damn clear what might be implied by 'inexpressible things,' things 'we are not able to tell.' It is names. 'I know the names', [Pasolini] wrote, in that essay published in 1974. The names of those who sit on the various committees. The 'names of those responsible for the massacres.' The names of power. The forbidden syllables.⁵³

Pasolini and Bonney could, in their respective countries and times, consider who was responsible for massacres and see the elision of the names of 'those responsible for the massacres' in both Italian and British history.⁵⁴ Silence and the inaudible in this respect are representative of massacre in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

Bonney uses parataxis to describe sounds at the edge of perception. Within this experience, we begin the political work of de-regulating our relationship to dominant culture and its relational atrocities. 'Letter Against the Language' deregulates the sensory perception of the sun into the auditory reception of the sound of the sun being 'smashed'. The text smashes the hope of understanding difference between (or, finding 'meaning' within) German and English, which Bonney elucidates with rage: 'whatever the fuck language a person is supposed to use'. He imagines 'the sun coming up [...] Maybe someone had smashed it [...] Like the 'total silence' of Hölderlin, ecstatic and packed with noises, has been smashed'.⁵⁵ Here is a moment where sounds move among poems, the smashed sun of total silence 'packed with noises' as is the neighbourhood in the untitled poem at the opening of *Our Death*: 'Our houses are packed so close | They are no longer houses. Get that'.⁵⁶ Word and image swap roles. In 'Letter Against the Language' the word 'no' means the 'opposite of the sun'. The sun has the texture of a window, of glass, and so shares the possible sound of smashed glass, since in the socio-political environment of *Our Death*, 'Maybe someone had smashed it'. The incidental, volatile taunt of 'Maybe' is part of the exasperation of the text, making a hypothetical possibility, through the deregulation of listening. The idea of the sun being 'smashed' is a deregulated sensory experience. It could stand as a metaphor for climate change and for an acknowledgement of the rising temperatures of the earth. It is the sound of a *smashed* sun that is described in the course of the sequence 'Our Death' as the 'violent disk in the centre of the sky'.⁵⁷ Across the sequence of 'Our Death', the sun moves Bonney further into the inaudible: 'whatever it is we can call the strange glow of the sky in these peculiar, hijacked days. It's all so quiet. The shrieking is quiet [...]

the screeching of invisible time zones blocking out the shapes of the sun’;⁵⁸ ‘the inner workings of a solar cop. That lucky old sun etc’;⁵⁹ ‘We talk of suns and minerals, of monotony and fear’;⁶⁰ ‘Approximations of the Solar Enemy’;⁶¹ ‘We were wondering if that bastard the sun was ever going to return, and what it was planning on doing when it got here’.⁶² Bonney deregulates the image of the sun into moments of listening.

In ‘Abject (after Baudelaire)’, Bonney engages with the French avant-garde tradition through solar sounds:

*Love’s solar objects crashed into several oceans their integrity slipped. Please tell me again about the quiet of springtime, the balance form of streetlights. At times like this, the universe hangs over us. When we block it out it roars.*⁶³

The desire to listen to someone speak about the ‘quiet of springtime’ is overshadowed by ‘the universe’ which ‘hangs over’ the inhabitants of the poem. This roaring sound operates at a volume similar to the ‘solar objects’ that crash ‘into several oceans’. The lines serve as a warning to the reader not to block out these sounds or images: when blocked, they will roar.

The deregulation of the sun into imagined sounds is developed later in the book: ‘When the sun hits the earth it shatters into all human data, calendars of the places music goes when its notes disappear’ – ‘In Fever’.⁶⁴ In his PhD thesis Bonney wrote on Baraka’s concept of the sorrow song, a subjective experience of Black history and Black time explored in Baraka’s fiction, which is rendered, through the memory of African American history and concern about future myth-making, with the melancholy of the Blues: ‘Got to find out where music goes when we don’t hear it no more. Got to know about the silence at the top of our screams.’⁶⁵ Bonney’s treatment of the sun echoes that of Aimé Césaire’s *Solar Throat Slashed*,⁶⁶ and brings to mind Bonney’s blogpost ‘Baraka and Surrealism’, where he defends Césaire from Baraka’s dismissal:

That is, as far as Césaire is concerned, his ‘wild imagery’ is going further than merely creating ‘new meanings’ – or even digging into the concealed ‘old meanings’ of the injustices of the past – but is smashing through the barriers put in place by the old meanings and imagery of the bourgeois world.⁶⁷

Bonney’s characterisation of Césaire as ‘smashing through the barriers’ of meaning is counter to Baraka’s reduction of Césaire’s work as ‘wild imagery’:

While European Surrealism is concerned with the dream, and something they refer to as the ‘marvellous’, Black Surrealism has more to say about ‘the multiplicities of

Madness, the nightmares, the terrifying hallucinations embedded in the collective black unconscious'.⁶⁸

Influenced by Black surrealism, Bonney's late poetry asks us to consider the madness, nightmares and hallucinations of a mutable collective unconscious. Robert Hampson has demarcated differences in treatments of the unconscious in Black and European surrealisms, and characterised the influence of Black surrealism on Bonney:

[...] Bonney turns to the surrealists as an earlier attempt to combine radical poetics with radical politics – and, more specifically, he turns to Aimé Césaire. He figures surrealism in terms of the creation of strange worlds with an antagonistic relationship to the bourgeois world, exposing the barbarism that that world conceals in the conditions of oppression in the everyday. However, where European surrealism is concerned with the 'marvellous', Bonney argues, Black surrealism is grounded in the nightmares embedded in the collective black unconscious.⁶⁹

While Baraka's subject is African American consciousness and genocide, Bonney is concerned with genocide and the threat of apocalypse in the sense of the sun hitting or colliding with the earth. Baraka's voice speaks on behalf of the Black Radical Tradition; the screaming is part of the African American collective experience of slavery.⁷⁰ Bonney's focus on 'all human data' continues the interest in human cataloguing which is present across Bonney's works, and which usually suggests, or contains the oppressive shadow of, the policing and surveillance of individuals. When 'In Fever' Bonney writes 'When the sun hits the earth it shatters', we can also read this moment as a description of *sunlight* hitting the earth. Seen and heard this way, Bonney's deregulation of listening hears the image of the sun through a Romantic view of radical change.

'Our Death' as a Sequence: 'impossible music'

Bonney develops the notion of 'impossible music' in 'Letter in Turmoil'.⁷¹ The poem opens with Bonney engaged in the act of reading Ernst Bloch, whose despairing words signal a present tense of general deregulation: 'It is no longer possible to have a balanced relationship with the world'. Bonney's reaction to this statement is to 'throw the book at the wall, scream for a while' and run from his flat toward the Landwehrkanal in Berlin. When Bonney shrugs off the name 'Rosa Luxemburg etc.', he is referring to the weight of failed revolt and Luxemburg's murder on the 15th of January 1919. It is in this context that Bonney then invokes Celan, whose

poem 'Du liegst' addressed Luxemburg's death in terms of listening. I quote Pierre Joris's translation: 'YOU LIE in the great listening,| ambushed, snowed in [...] The Landwehr canal will not roar.| Nothing| |stalls'.⁷² Luxemburg was executed with Karl Liebknecht, with whom she founded the socialist Spartacus League at the start of World War 1. Joris's notes show us that Celan's poem is a narration of a walk taken in Berlin with psychiatrist Walter Georgi. Part of Bonney's difference from both Luxemburg and Celan is that, as it is presented in the text, he is alone. The 'you' to whom his prose poems are addressed is never named: this could suggest a variety of addressees. The implication is that it is the reader who is Bonney's companion. But Bonney's own great listening does not rest with the imagined silence of the dead. He diverges from Celan:

about how he talks about the silence of the canal, or at least about how the canal itself has become silent, and I think about how wrong that is. Its inaudible radioactive signals never stop shrieking, an impossible music I've been unable to stop dancing to for days now, each of its notes the representation of an impossible world flickering somewhere just outside the borders of the known imaginary spectrum, those impossible borders, those ridiculous walls.⁷³

These 'impossible borders' relate to the 'impossible music' of *Our Death*. Bonney's concept of 'the known imaginary spectrum' is relevant to my analysis of his sound spectrum: it shows that Bonney thought of his own imagination in the metaphor of the spectrum, and that, in and around the 'notes', that spectrum was the 'representation of an impossible world'. This realisation shows ways in which Bonney presents his desiring-listening: his apophenic sound objects move in and around such moments as the 'impossible music' of an 'inaudible radioactive' shriek that induces dancing in the listener, while giving a stochastic, and quiet, rather than regular, rhythm for dancing. Bonney's admittance of his own 'imaginary spectrum' relates to the 'no borders' of his own ear: listening is one way to imagine such real and imagined borders. His view of the 'inaudible' takes issue with 'silence', which is shown to be, in itself, impossible. Bonney dismisses the anthropocentric concept of a 'pure' or 'final' silence after death, in favour of a Cageian concept of hearing not silence but sound after death, since there is always sound, and that the existence of that sound can be both inaudible and imagined as sounded, and 'impossible', while the listener's response to those sounds might be suitably deregulated in order to move beyond, or attempt to listen beyond, the received sounds of the canal, of water, and of a 'silence' that contains sounds that are imperceptible.

Bonney is committed to engaging with the listening practices of the Other, to the possibilities of collective listening. Luxemburg's body was dumped in the Landwehrkanal, and Celan would commit suicide by drowning himself in the Seine, and, as a result, the waters and the cities of Berlin and Paris will 'never stop shrieking'. The beat-less, shrieking 'impossible music' of this 'impossible world' has a deregulating effect on Bonney. He describes himself as 'unable to stop dancing to' this 'impossible music' 'for days now': this 'impossible music' is received through his inner ear, and transformed through desiring-listening. His 'imaginary spectrum' is aware that both the imagination and the body are subject to border control. Music assists his development of this mode in the poem 'Where Have They Been?': the title is also the chorus of Joy Division's 'Decades',⁷⁴ whose lyrics, by Ian Curtis, explore what happens to the voices of soldiers when they have died. Bonney writes in this poem, 'Songs are holes in that sky, in those noises, those you sing and those you don't know how to sing'.⁷⁵ This impossibility of singing songs you do not know how to sing is resolved into a ringing sound: 'All you can hear is the ringing that remains when the notes fade away', which shows how Bonney's sonic poetics develops from Baraka's search for 'where music goes when we don't hear it no more',⁷⁶ into an exploration of the possibilities of the sonic as it moves in time and space. The deregulation of listening is one way to both imagine and break out from 'impossible borders', borders that might signify the limits of a poetic 'I' as well as the physical, political borders that make the seeking of asylum increasingly impossible for many non-white nationals in Europe.

'A Butcher's Lullaby' signifies a return to Celan's 'Du liegst' and the lines 'Go to the Spree, go to the Havel, | go to the butcher hooks' – lines which reference '*Plötzensee*: the place where the conspirators of the July 1944 assassination attempt on Hitler were executed and hung on butcher hooks'.⁷⁷ Bonney hears the history of Nazi Germany in the streets of Berlin, which in turn remind him of the decay of his contemporary Britain:

Even in Kreuzberg I can smell the burning remnants of Britain [...] the swifts and the sparrows that shriek like shattered human things all through the morning [...] It's all so quiet. The shrieking is quiet. The blank statistics of the calendar are quiet. The obsolete sigils scratched onto my window are quiet. Kreuzberg is beautiful in the summer. The sounds from the canal are ever louder, the screeching of invisible time zones blocking out the shapes of the sun.⁷⁸

The sun is shattered still, in plural 'shapes' blocked out, in visual perception by the auditory reception of 'the screeching of invisible time zones'. Hölderlin's 'total

silence'⁷⁹ is, like the sun, still in pieces. The volume of noise from Celan's Landwehrkanal increases: 'The sounds from the canal are ever louder'. The title, 'A Butcher's Lullaby', filters the impossible music of such deregulated sound through cross-hallucinations between the silence of Kreuzberg, and both Luxemburg's, and Celan's, Berlin. This mode of desiring-listening is in fear of violence past and present. This is a development in the treatment of silence in Bonney's sound spectrum, from when in *Letters Against the Firmament* he addressed sound and the butchering of animals through a quotation from Aimé Césaire:

Spectrums, butchers. 'Poetry', remember, 'is born in the great silence of scientific knowledge'. What do you think that means, 'the great silence'. I ask because I'm not quite sure.⁸⁰

Bonney's treatment of the 'Butcher's Lullaby' in *Our Death* provides some answers, although this 'What do you think that means' has no question mark, like the title of 'What If the Summer Never Ends', as if the 'answer' for both phrases is an impossible answer, an impossible music. Bonney's development of the sound spectrum, and the role 'the inaudible' plays within it, is to engage with the tension between artistic and political life.⁸¹

While, in *Letters Against the Firmament*, Bonney asks his unnamed reader for assistance with the interpretation of Césaire – 'What do you think that means, 'the great silence[...]?''⁸² – in *Our Death* the answers exist in sonorous, autonomous spaces, in the streets of Berlin, in the waters of the Landwehrkanal, in the sky.

Xenakis: Pulses, Particles and Stochastic Resonance

I will end by relating the concept of stochastic resonance in Sound Studies to Bonney's poetry.

Sound and listening in Bonney's early work functions to attune to audible or inaudible particles of sound. In sonic poetics, I use the term 'stochastic resonance' to describe how a poet 'targets' – with the will of 'desiring-listening' – representations of sound. Stochastic resonance is not just a disruption, or interruption, but rather, in the words of Hillel Schwartz (2011), is an energy of 'random pulses that, instead of disrupting a process, further enable it'.⁸³ Pulses in poetic language occur between the *stokhastikos* or 'guess' that is made as the poet explores autonomous territory, and the *stokhos* of the 'target' of the poet's desiring-listening. In 'A Theory of Resonance', Wai Chee Dimock (1997) describes how resonance operates within the sonic: 'a weak signal is boosted by background noise and becomes newly and complexly audible'.⁸⁴

In *Formalized Music* (1992), there is a passage in which composer Iannis Xenakis describes protest as a metaphor for ‘stochastic resonance’, a metaphor applicable to Bonney’s treatment of riot in *The Commons*, and the ways in which Bonney’s sound spectrum operates in Berlin:

Everyone has observed the sonic phenomena of a political crowd of dozens or hundreds of thousands of people. The human river shouts a slogan in a uniform rhythm. Then another slogan springs from the head of the demonstration; it spreads towards the tail, replacing the first. A wave of transition thus passes from the head to the tail. The clamour fills the city, and the inhibiting force of voice and rhythm reaches a climax. It is an event of great power and beauty in its ferocity. Then the impact between the demonstrators and the enemy occurs. The perfect rhythm of the last slogan breaks up in a huge cluster of chaotic shouts, which also spreads to the tail. Imagine, in addition, the reports of dozens of machine guns and the whistle of bullets adding their punctuations to this total disorder. The crowd is then rapidly dispersed, and after sonic and visual hell follows a detonating calm, full of despair, dust, and death. The statistical laws of these events, separated from their political or moral context, are the same as those of the cicadas or the rain. They are the laws of the passage from complete order to total disorder in a continuous or explosive manner. They are stochastic laws.⁸⁵

Xenakis hears how a ‘human river shouts’, as ‘clamour fills the city’: such a description of sonic phenomena is applicable both to the riot texts of *The Commons* and to Bonney’s performances of those texts.⁸⁶ After Xenakis describes the ‘enemy’ of cops at a protest, the violence of ‘machine guns and the whistle of bullets’, there is an eerie quiet: ‘after sonic and visual hell follows a detonating calm, full of despair, dust, and death’. There is a sense that the kind of quiet described in Bonney’s performances of *Our Death* is similar to that of Xenakis’s ‘detonating calm’.⁸⁷

For Bonney, the view of language as granular particles is not meant to destroy language but rather to invoke and activate a style of attention to both language and the world. Poetry is one way of slowing down time in order to analyse the ‘acoustic energy’ of the moment of apprehension. Bruce Andrews has used the atom as a metaphor for sound and social context: ‘Individual sound complexes are social atoms whose (political) significance emerges from interplay, a mix of dislocation and collegiality of incompatibles.’⁸⁸ For Bonney in ‘About the Weather’, starlight instigates the opening of energy, a social energy that is part of a shared, collective experience: ‘Nobody can see anything except the murderous glare of the sky’. In ‘On Throwing Bricks’ we glimpse the echo of starlit apophenic ‘inaudible sound particles’ as imagined voices: ‘I wonder

about the sounds the dead would make if they could imagine the light that surely does reach them from whatever future still remains to us'.⁸⁹ Light, in this moment, becomes a generative energy for sonic poetics.

In *Our Death*, the apophenic object of starlight becomes a revelatory moment of listening which represents for Bonney the 'entirety of human history split to a constellation of more or less inaudible sound particles'.⁹⁰ This is one example of Bonney using desiring-listening to see and hear sound as 'particles', and one which shares similarities with 'granular synthesis' as developed by Xenakis.⁹¹ In *Formalised Music*, Xenakis described the 'elementary sonic particles' of his granular synthesis thus:

A complex sound may be imagined as a multicoloured firework in which each point of light appears and instantaneously disappears against a black sky ... A line of light would be created by a sufficiently large multitude of points appearing and disappearing instantaneously.⁹²

The 'sonic particles' of Xenakis are related via the metaphor of the firework, and these terms are similar to how Bonney envisions sound in the sky. Bonney's complex apophenic objects, his 'more or less inaudible sound particles', are listening events teetering on the edge of human hearing, 'appearing and disappearing instantaneously' in the moments of reading the poem.

Conclusion

Sonic poetics is a practice of resisting dominant culture through listening. I have shown how François J. Bonnet's concept of desiring-listening can amplify how we approach the representation of listening in Sean Bonney's *Our Death*. Bonney's deregulation of listening is present in his poetic readings of Pasolini and Hölderlin. 'Letter Against the Language' is one case in point for Bonney's expression of the inaudible, where the experience, and future, of language itself can only be approached by an antagonism to its usefulness. This kind of energy is further developed in Bonney's writings through his appreciation of the Black Surrealism of Césaire and Baraka, with whom Bonney finds affinity in his assessment of genocide and apocalypse. Bonney's 'impossible music' is an experience of apophenia: he hears 'impossible music' in Celan's *Landwehrkanal*. Lastly, I have shown how the experience of 'stochastic resonance' is applicable to Bonney's poetry. While the firework metaphor of Xenakis is achieved through that composer's apprehension of listening to the emergence of a crowd's resistance to the dominant culture of cops at a protest, Bonney uses a poetic method of parataxis-hypotaxis-syntaxis to write his own apophenic objects. In doing so, he creates a world of listening, a practice of listening that can resist dominant culture.

Notes

- ¹ In *Microsounds*, Curtis Roads traces a brief history of the two theories, from Leucippus and Democritus in 5BC advancing an atomic theory of sound, and Aristotle's 'analogy with water waves', to how wave theory was the preferred view of Descartes and contemporaries, up until Einstein, then Dennis Gabor, by which time particle and wave theories are seen as mutually beneficial in the characterisation of sound. See 'Optical Wave versus Particle Debate', MIT: Cambridge, Mass. 2001: 49–55.
- ² Inigo Wilkins. *Irreversible Noise – The Rationalisation of Randomness and the Fetishisation of Indeterminacy*. PhD thesis. Goldsmiths, University of London. Submitted 7.12.2015: 267. In this quote, Wilkins is addressing Chion's (2009) *Guide to Sound Objects: Pierre Schaeffer and Musical Research*. (Trans. Dack, J. & North, C.). Accessible online: <https://bit.ly/1ljzW0Q>.
- ³ François J. Bonnet, *The Order of Sounds: A Sonorous Archipelago*. Trans. Robin Mackay. Falmouth: Urbanomic, [2012] 2016.
- ⁴ Bonnet, pp. 135–136.
- ⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 326.
- ⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 327.
- ⁷ 'Their Own Pantheon: Sean Bonney Interviewed by Jeffrey Grunthaler' in <https://bombmagazine.org/articles/sean-bonney/>. 11.12.2019. [Accessed 15.12.2019].
- ⁸ 'Statement of Scholars in Holocaust and Genocide Studies on Mass Violence in Israel and Palestine since 7 October', Raz Segal, December 9, 2023: <https://contendingmodernities.nd.edu/global-currents/statement-of-scholars-7-october/> [Accessed 25.7.24].
- ⁹ See Curtis Roads, *Microsound*, for a definition which is applicable to sound and listening in Bonney's work: 'Beneath the level of the note lies the realm of microsound, of sound particles. Microsonic particles remained invisible for centuries. Recent technological advances let us probe and explore the beauties of this formerly unseen world [...] Sounds may coalesce, evaporate, or mutate into other sounds. [...] Dense agglomerations of particles form swirling sound clouds whose shapes evolve over time', p. vii.
- ¹⁰ Pierre Schaeffer wrote on language and music as sound in 'Linguistic Structures, Musical Structures' in *Treatise on Musical Objects: An Essay across Disciplines* Trans. from the French by Christine North and John Dack: 'Like music, language is sound and takes place in time. It is interesting to compare the uses, structures, and perceptions that diverge from this shared basis. It is no less interesting to try to find a viewpoint, beyond these constructs, from which all these can be explored at the same time. We run little risk of getting it wrong if we assume that this viewpoint, if it exists, must be sought at the level of the sound object': University of California Press: [1966] 2017. First Edition, p. 58.
- ¹¹ *Blade Pitch Control Unit*. Salt: Cambridge, 2005.
- ¹² *The Commons*. London: Opened Press, 2011.
- ¹³ 'The Is ::: Occupied Territory: Anger Is An Energy'. *PORES: A Journal of Poetics Research*. Ed. William Rowe. <https://www.pores.bbk.ac.uk/2/bonney.htm>. 2002 [Accessed 2.3.2020].
- ¹⁴ Bonnet, p. 332.

- ¹⁵ Bonnet, pp. 133–148.
- ¹⁶ Bonnet, p. 332.
- ¹⁷ Ibid.
- ¹⁸ Zoë Skoulding. 'Noise: Sean Bonney's Resistance'. *Poetry and Listening: the Noise of Lyric*. Liverpool University Press, 2020, pp. 43–63.
- ¹⁹ David Nowell Smith. «'An Interrupter, a Collective': Sean Bonney's Lyric Outrage», *Études britanniques contemporaines* [Online], 45|2013, Online since 02 December 2013 [Accessed 12 2.2020].
- ²⁰ David Grundy. 'Sean Bonney's Life Work'. <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/harriet/2020/03/sean-bonneys-life-work> 2020 [Accessed 9.9.2020].
- ²¹ Smith examines poetic 'interruption' in 'An Interrupter, a Collective': Sean Bonney's Lyric Outrage», *Études britanniques contemporaines* [Online], 45 | 2013, accessed 12 February 2020. Grundy uses the phrase 'interrupting noise' to describe Bonney's poem of improvised and ruptured language culled from the 'speech made by Mr Blair, Glasgow, Feb 15th 2003' from *Poisons, Their Antidotes*, collected in *Blade Pitch Control Unit – 'Sean Bonney's Life Work'*. <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/harriet/2020/03/sean-bonneys-life-work>. Skoulding views Bonney's use of noise in his poetry as a way of breaking through and resisting reality in 'Noise: Sean Bonney's Resistance' in *Poetry & Listening: the Noise of the Lyric*: 43–62. Robert Hampson builds upon Nowell Smith's essay by considering the influence of Baraka, Rimbaud and Baudelaire on Bonney: 'Speaking with the voices of the dead: Sean Bonney, Arthur Rimbaud, Amiri Baraka and revolutionary poetics', *Journal of British and Irish Innovative Poetry* 14 (1).
- ²² Sean Bonney *Happiness: Poems after Rimbaud*. London: Unkant, 2011, p. 65.
- ²³ Bonney, *Our Death*, p. 67.
- ²⁴ Bonnet, p. 288.
- ²⁵ The title *Our Death* echoes the Christian prayer 'Hail Mary' that ends: 'Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and *at the hour of our death*' (italics mine). In this sense, the title is an instance of desiring-listening since it alludes, in my reading here, to both prayer and to speaking on behalf of a collective death.
- ²⁶ Bonney, *Our Death*, p. 17.
- ²⁷ Translated by Pierre Joris. See his version, notes and accompanying Vimeo walk to the Luxemburg memorial: <https://pierrejoris.com/blog/rosa-luxemburg-karl-liebknacht-murdered-100-years-ago-today-paul-celans-poem-you-lie/> Bonney's 'impossible music' is in a sense, *lying* as sound particles in the water of the Landwehrkanal.
- ²⁸ Bonney, *Our Death*, p. 67.
- ²⁹ Ibid., p. 72.
- ³⁰ Ibid., p. 105.
- ³¹ Ibid., p. 119.
- ³² Bonnet is quoting from P. Criton, 'Territoires imperceptibles', *Chimeres* 30, Spring 1997: p. 65.
- ³³ Bonnet, p. 288.
- ³⁴ Bonney, *Our Death*, p. 117.

- ³⁵ Ibid., p. 30.
- ³⁶ The area has changed significantly since Gogou lived there, and since Bonney visited. In March 2024, I was invited to play some musical performances for the 15-year anniversary of the Tape-worm label, and saw some of the effects of gentrification. The closing of Exarchia Square for the building of a new metro has closed an important autonomous meeting place for inhabitants of the area. The 24-hour police presence is inimical to the functioning of that space.
- ³⁷ Ibid., p. 19.
- ³⁸ Bonnet, p. 288.
- ³⁹ Ibid.
- ⁴⁰ Bonney, *Our Death*, pp. 17–19.
- ⁴¹ I use the term ‘prose poem’ to describe the block texts of *Our Death*, rather than ‘letter’. On the ‘letter’ as a form, Bonney described *Letters Against the Firmament* as ‘a collection of open letters to the poetry community about the political situation in Britain at the time’, while writing *Our Death*, ‘it became clear that the pieces I was writing were no longer letters. They were much more classically prose poems.’ This distinction in formal development is instructive for the dialectical parallel in calling poems with ‘Letter’ in their title, ‘prose poems’. ‘Their Own Pantheon: Sean Bonney Interviewed by Jeffrey Grunthner’. *BOMB*. <https://bombmagazine.org/articles/sean-bonney/> Dec 11, 2019 [Accessed 7.10.2021]. ‘Letter Against the Language’ is part of the sequence ‘A Riot is a Haunt’, with the actual section called ‘Our Death’ starting on page 65. ‘Letter Against the Language’ was first published online 12.1.2016 in Bonney’s blog: <https://abandonedbuildings.blogspot.com/2016/01/letter-against-language.html> – and subsequently in the ‘Manifestos’ issue of *Cambridge Literary Review*, Michaelmas 2018.
- ⁴² Bonney, *The Commons*. London: Opened Press, 2011.
- ⁴³ See Adorno on specific qualities of parataxis in Hölderlin’s late work. I will italicise the phrases most applicable to Bonney and which show his synthesis with Hölderlin: ‘The Hölderlinian correspondences, those *sudden connections between ancient and modern scenes and figures*, stand in the most profound relationship to the paratactic method [...] *Poetry wrested both from the zone of madness*, where the flight of ideas thrives, as does the readiness of many schizophrenics to see *anything real as a sign of something hidden, to encumber it with meaning*. Irrespective of anything clinical, the objective substance tends in this direction.’, Theodor W. Adorno. ‘PARATAXIS: On Hölderlin’s Late Poetry’, [1958] 2019, p. 401.
- ⁴⁴ Parataxis is used throughout Bonney’s works. Commenting on the *Modern Poetry* guide in 2009, Peter Philpott wrote of Bonney’s ‘breathtaking creativity with language in its utterance and through complex feats of parataxis; energy, energy, energy!’: ‘A Quick Introduction to the Poetry of Sean Bonney’ <https://www.modernpoetry.org.uk/introsb.html> [Accessed 27.7.23].
- ⁴⁵ Bob Perelman. ‘Parataxis and Narrative’. *Artifice and Indeterminacy: an Anthology of New Poetics*. 1998, p. 42.
- ⁴⁶ *Close Listening: Poetry and the Performed Word*, edited by Charles Bernstein, 1998, 73–85. xliv Bruce Andrews, ‘Praxis: A Political Economy of Noise and Informalism’, *Close Listening: Poetry and the Performed Word*, p. 75.
- ⁴⁷ Bonney, *Our Death*, p. 17.
- ⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 71.

- ⁴⁹ Ibid.
- ⁵⁰ Ibid., 17–18.
- ⁵¹ Ibid., p. 18.
- ⁵² Ibid., p. 71.
- ⁵³ Ibid., p. 18.
- ⁵⁴ Ibid.
- ⁵⁵ In '[Negative Poetix Manifesto 1], Bonney approaches a poetics of paradox and void: 'There is no inside. There is no outside [...] the voices in the poem are not your friends'. *Document: Poems, Diagrams, Manifestos, July 7th 2005 – June 27th 2007*. London: Barque Press, 2009, pp. 14–15.
- ⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 13.
- ⁵⁷ Bonney, *Our Death*, p. 18.
- ⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 71.
- ⁵⁹ Ibid., p. 78.
- ⁶⁰ Ibid., p. 81.
- ⁶¹ Ibid., p. 68.
- ⁶² Ibid., p. 89.
- ⁶³ Ibid., p. 105.
- ⁶⁴ Ibid., p. 118.
- ⁶⁵ Amiri Baraka, *The Fiction of LeRoi Jones | Amiri Baraka* (Chicago: Lawrence Hill Books, 2000), p. 2.
- ⁶⁶ In *The Complete Poetry of Aimé Césaire*, trans. A. James Arnold and Clayton Eshleman, [1948] 2017.
- ⁶⁷ Bonney, 'Baraka and Surrealism'. <https://notesonbaraka.blogspot.com/> [Accessed 27.4.2021] Friday, 26 July 2019.
- ⁶⁸ Ibid.
- ⁶⁹ Hampson, R., (2022) 'Speaking with the voices of the dead: Sean Bonney, Arthur Rimbaud, Amiri Baraka and revolutionary poetics', *Journal of British and Irish Innovative Poetry* 14(1).
- ⁷⁰ See Fred Moten on the vocal style, text and scream of Baraka's and the New York Art Quartet's 'BLACK DADA NIHILISMUS', whose 'sound extends a powerful strain in the African American tradition [...] a hard critique like a multiphonic scream or 'slide away from the proposed' – from the propositions encoded in the philosophical instrument that sounds your death and birth and death and birth – is opened'. Moten. *In the Break: The Aesthetics of the Black Radical Tradition* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003): 96.
- ⁷¹ Bonney, *Our Death*, p. 67.
- ⁷² Translated by Pierre Joris: <https://pierrejoris.com/blog/rosa-luxemburg-karl-liebnecht-murdered-100-years-ago-today-paul-celans-poem-you-lie/> [Accessed 25.7.23].

- ⁷³ Bonney, *Our Death*, p. 67.
- ⁷⁴ Joy Division, *Closer* (Manchester: Factory Records, 1980). Vinyl, LP, Album, Stereo. Consider Curtis's lyrics in light of the quest to find absent sound as well as deceased soldiers in WW2, 'Here are the young men, the weight on their shoulders,| Here are the young men, well where have they been?'. Soldiers lost in war to, presumably, Nazi conflict gives an extra context to Bonney's consideration of anti-fascism in 'Where Have They Been?' for example, 'There are many songs are simply cops, have set up border patrols inside your memories, have confiscated your passport and replaced it with an endless scream that blocks out the words of those songs you have known since before you were born'. 'Decades' by Joy Division is one such song vulnerable to the patrolling cops of Bonney's memory.
- ⁷⁵ Bonney, *Our Death*, p. 94.
- ⁷⁶ Amiri Baraka, *The Fiction of LeRoi Jones | Amiri Baraka*. Chicago: Lawrence Hill Books, 2000, p. 2.
- ⁷⁷ Pierre Joris, 'Rosa Luxemburg & Karl Liebknecht: Murdered 100 Years Ago Today – & Paul Celan's Poem 'You Lie.'" <https://pierrejoris.com/blog/rosa-luxemburg-karl-liebknecht-murdered-100-years-ago-today-paul-celans-poem-you-lie/> 15.1.2019 [Accessed 25.7.23].
- ⁷⁸ Bonney, *Our Death*, p. 71.
- ⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 19.
- ⁸⁰ Bonney, *Letters Against the Firmament*, p. 115.
- ⁸¹ Bonney, *Our Death*, p. 125.
- ⁸² Bonney, *Letters Against the Firmament*, p. 115.
- ⁸³ Hillel Schwartz. 'Reverb: Notes'. PDF endnotes to *Making Noise* available at: <https://www.zonebooks.org/books/69-making-noise-from-babel-to-the-big-bang-beyond>. With thanks to Russell Haswell for this recommendation, at a time when I was asking my first research questions, ever before I knew I would embark on a PhD.
- ⁸⁴ Wai Chee Dimock, 'A Theory of Resonance.' *PMLA*. Vol. 112, no. 5, 1997: 1063.
- ⁸⁵ Xenakis, *Formalized Music*. Revised edition. New York: Pendragon Press. 1992: 9.
- ⁸⁶ Bonney, reading from *The Commons and Document: poems, diagrams, manifestos* (Barque Press, 2009) at The Other Room, Manchester, August 5, 2009: https://media.sas.upenn.edu/app/public/watch.php?file_id=138420, from 2:50.
- ⁸⁷ 'Sean Bonney – Our Death' <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m29h7KF39Zk> 25 Feb 2018: 47:10 [Accessed 28.7.2023].
- ⁸⁸ 'Praxis: A Political Economy of Noise and Informalism' from *Close Listening: Poetry and the Performed Word*, edited by Charles Bernstein. OUP, 1998, p. 84.
- ⁸⁹ Bonney, *Our Death*, p. 76.
- ⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 72.
- ⁹¹ See Curtis Roads on the 'granular synthesis' of Xenakis in *Microsound*, p. 84.
- ⁹² Xenakis. *Formalized Music*, pp. 43–4.

Competing Interests

The author has no competing interests to declare.

