

# *Listening as Reciprocity: Heidegger's Appropriation in Being-Time*

*Being and time determine each other reciprocally... (Heidegger 1972, 3)*

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## A proposition

**H**ow does the soundscape bring awareness to states of being and senses of time? Heidegger's last lectures, *Identity and Difference* (1969) and *On Time and Being* (1972), advocate an end of philosophy so that the experience of Being is foregrounded rather than further abstracted. These treatises serve as a turn away from the metaphysics of Being, of linear conceptions of time-space toward a fourth dimension grounded profoundly in an experience of relationality, the unity of past, present and future in the constancy of approach. The always-already movement of insistent approach instantiates awareness of Being through reciprocal *Appropriation* (a key term) of time by Being and Being by time. This is a phenomenological turn that opens radical consideration of how sound works to position the listener in myriad acoustic fields diverging and converging, the soundscape vivified, where fierce reciprocity gifts awareness of self and world in profoundly experiential ways.



Listening Crow, Crescent Beach, B.C., 2015

In classic phenomenological terms, time-space is constituted through perception as the body moves through it, as a means of determining Being both in linear (Husserl et al 1997; Husserl 1999; Merleau-Ponty and O'Neill 1974) and contested conceptions (Barbaras 2004, 2006; Casey 1996; Elden 2001; Heidegger 1969, 1971). It follows that awareness based in reciprocity of self in the soundscape renders the listening environment as porous and responsive. Thus, time-space holds the potential to constitute itself differently.

The implication of this are profound in that ideas of what constitutes other-than-human sentience, the integrity of ecosystems, and time as nested in presence demands that humans can no longer conceive

## Fish Bones in the Midden<sup>1</sup>

Empty is to space as silence is to sound.  
not empty, not silent.

In silence, the body listens to itself  
extensively. In emptiness, spaces  
fill with oneself emptied.

In the house falling derelict  
to long lost native land,

I make a clay cup clatter,  
while assonance lingers  
under broken floor boards,  
vacant window sills,  
ruinations of a dark frame,  
sink holes of conversation.

Whorling loosestrife blow  
like the locks of long dead longing.

Winds bare  
breath-taking.  
to make the silences speak.

Along the shoreline,  
the midden keens  
fish bones with every wake  
to wash time out of existence.

Listen as wide-eyed,  
night fishers  
fish among themselves.

I cycle through last winter's long grass.  
I cycle through dusk into night to beat  
back the dark,  
I cycle through the shadows,

the old native man and his son,  
long time gone  
come to light  
the light house lamp.



Last occupied house (1970's) and beach settlement site (5,000 years), Tsartlip First Nation Reserve, Helen's Point Beach, Salish Sea, Mayne Island, B.C.

themselves as separate from their immediate surroundings. These are premises from which an ecology of acoustics emerge – based in the listener encounter with the vital flux of sound and toward an acute awareness of sound as profoundly relational. Soundwalking, field recording, sound and radio art, electroacoustic and mediated sound works, a poetics of sound – all hold the capacity to radicalise states of listening-being toward these ecologies of sound based in the listening experience.

## Appropriating lineages

Classical phenomenology is a child of the Enlightenment and, as Heidegger repeatedly points out in his canon, the explained world still tethers to that trajectory. In his last lecture, *On Time and Being* (1972), Heidegger is clearly catechizing and reworking the concepts he put forth in his formative work, *Being and Time* (1962). In so doing, he re-examines the history of the idea of Being from its beginning in Aristotle through to his own work in phenomenological-hermeneutical lineages such as Husserl's concept of consciousness as intentionality where, as Heidegger points out, "a spatial being can 'appear' only in a certain orientation, which necessarily pre-delineates a system of possible new orientations" (1972, 73). Within a visually-based system of directionality distinct from acoustic-based interactive ways of knowing and being, the listener attaches linear orientations, but this can be reconceptualised through the listener energetically co-creating time-space and assigning visual markers to it.

In these final works, Heidegger rattles the Kantian framework: the linear conception of past, present, future that makes awareness, a core value of being human, possible. Heidegger's rethinking of this awareness as presence begins to pry open the possibility of different (non-philosophically abstracted and experientially-based) states of being, such as listener-to-sound relationships. This marks Heidegger's acknowledgment that times have changed, so to speak. Conceptions of time-space as linear and framed have changed, for example in the field of human geography and urban studies where the work of Henri Lefebvre redefined space as produced through human activity attached to the forces of production (Elden 2004; Lefebvre 1961, 1991a, 1991b, 1992, 2005; Shields 1999) and in the notion of the *flâneur* meandering through a bricolage of space as described by Michel De Certeau (1984, 1986, 1988). This signals a shift toward ways of apprehending time-space as non-linear, just as Heidegger seeks to redefine time in the experience of Being. Further, as Heidegger anticipates in these later works, conceptions of time and Being are radicalised through the technologisation

of human and planetary existence – important considerations for soundscape work that takes lived experience into the electro-acoustic realm.

As Heidegger begins to take apart the meaning ascribed to the influential concepts defined in his work in *Being and Time* (1962), he is thinking through to the end of philosophy. This, he claims, is a call to thinking as an activated awareness different in approach from concepts of Being tied to hermeneutical and phenomenological lineages (1972, 55–73). With a departure from the history of philosophy, Heidegger takes on the task of decontextualizing these terms as epochal changes in meaning. Joan Staumbaugh, in the introduction to Heidegger's last lecture's English translation, explains this pivot in Heidegger's thinking that led to *On Time and Being* (1972):

According to Heidegger, Being has been thought in traditional philosophy exclusively as a kind of Presence. The manner of presence changes throughout the history of philosophy, not in the dialectical, calculable fashion of Hegel, but in sudden epochal transformation which cannot be plotted out in advance. (Heidegger 1972, ix)

In this spirit, the phenomenological consideration of sound must untether from classical phenomenology and ocular-centrism in creative and drastic ways. Heidegger's last lecture offers and opens to such frontieristic misadventures, misreadings, mistakings, and misleadings in order to claim an acoustic field aligned with, while distancing from, visual-meta-philosophical centric descriptions traditionally found in phenomenological approaches.

## Misdirected propriety

The acoustic experience is perceived as another aspect of the sensate inhabited world, but for the most part, lived acoustic experience is habituated, taken for granted as organization around speech and as the accoutrement of things in motion, as direction and location. Sound is ideated primarily within linearity and ocular-centrism. For this reason, theorizing sound from within classical phenomenology is problematic. As foundational to contemporary theory, it is an important lineage to embrace in order to depart from it.

The experience of sound resists method, litanies of occurrences, artifacts, descriptions that compromise the complexities of the listener experience or their acoustic being-ness, resulting in insurmountable phenomenological reduction. Don Ihde's 1976 survey of auditory phenomena, contextualized as a method for listening in music and human experience, *Listening and Voice: Phenomenologies of Sound* (2007) admits:

I can focus on my listening and thus make the auditory dimension stand out, but it does so only relatively. I cannot isolate it from its situation, its embedment, its 'background' of global experience. In this sense a 'pure' auditory experience of phenomenology is impossible, but, as a focal dimension of global experience, a concentrated concern with listening is possible. (Ihde 2007, 44)

This supports ecologies of sound based in the listener experience. Linear concepts of time and visual ways of knowing, for example, skew the basic premise of how one experiences the world as sound. Investigations of reflective listener-to-sound experiences offer possibility of coming to know oneself in sound, sound in oneself, in excess of habituation.

## Propinquity

*Appropriation*, as an extension of a specific etymology that Heidegger acknowledges (Dancer 2014, 46-52; Heidegger 1972, 14, 22), means simply to take something as one's own, to own it completely with awareness while acknowledging that it is also a forgetting of other iterations of ownership. *Appropriation* as presence arrives as a gift, a sending forward and holding back that, according to Heidegger, differs from past notions of the present, from linear time and Being as sequential occurrences (an event) of a *now* time. In *On Time and Being*, Heidegger states that "true time is four dimensional" (1972, 15). Heidegger summarizes that in thinking "Being itself and follow[ing] what is its own, Being proves to be destiny's gift of presence, the gift granted by the giving of time" (1972, 22). How is the listener gifted presence through sound?

First, consider that Heidegger is pointing to the question of the horizon of time and how Being manifests in time. He is not, in this last lecture, explaining the role of the human, as such, but rather the relationality of Being and time in being-ness. This relation he calls an *Appropriation*, tossing aside the language of an *event of Appropriation*, which is problematic in that it brings notions of sequential time back into the picture (1972, 20). For this reason, calling sound an *event* or an *occurrence* is not appropriate for this reframing of a phenomenology of sound. Heidegger further explains this dynamic:

According to the meaning of giving which is to be thought this way, Being – that which It gives – is what is sent. Each of its transformations remains destined in this manner... what is sent forth in destining, not by an indeterminably thought up occurrence. (Heidegger 1972, 8-9)

The listener may think of sound as an event or occurrence as part of their conceptualization of sound based in quantitative ways of knowing, visual-based ways of perceiving, the age-old predominance of the measure, but sound exceeds these limitations as sound is constantly in flux and dynamic. It has a trajectory that is non-sequential, remaining consistently mutable as it reaches and extends through myriad encounters with other matter and forces. These encounters can be understood as nested, each retaining and sending forth of themselves one within another.

When sound reaches the listener, the listener as a center point perceives themselves as the apex of the sound. They then concern themselves within the sounds' directionality, quality (tone, pitch, loudness), possible locator meanings and other such requisite information. The listener does not generally consider that they are one of myriad acoustic encounters that determine the listening field. For the listener, the sound approaches, arrives, and moves on in relationship to themselves and along a pathway imbedded in their conception of a past, present, and future. There is the direction of approach that is of interest, the moment perceived as an occurrence of arrival and as the fulcrum, and when it moves on, its passing is soon relegated to the past and elsewhere. However, the listener as

a being – habituated to concepts or seeking alternate awareness – is always-already defined in time-space by the encounter.

In this way, sound can be thought aptly within Heidegger's experimental rethink of Being as time, time as Being, appropriated reciprocally. To consider this, in concert with Heidegger, the question arises as to "what is peculiar to Appropriation" (1972, 22) and, in concert with this thinking of sound, what is peculiar to sound as the listener experiences it as a being in time. Heidegger, in one turn, says that "the sending in the destiny of Being has been characterized as giving in which the sending source keeps itself back and, thus, withdraws from concealment" (1972, 25). This withdrawing from concealment, the opening of sound in its way of being sound, is an important consideration in understanding the potential for sound-to-listener encounters as time appropriated by Being in reciprocity.

As sound emanates from its source, it gives of itself to each thing it encounters in that it changes with each encounter and the encounter changes the thing itself. The changes may be in force fields or cause changes in chemistry or may change perceptions and movements, but the sound gifts itself to what it encounters as it loses part of its duration in the encounter and also is changed, amplified, augmented or denuded in some way. This is how the sending source both retains what is quintessential to sound, what it is in how it interacts with its environment, and how it also withdraws from concealment as it emanates outward. Sound opens itself to what it is in each exchange it encounters as it travels. The exchange extends sound in time as it reaches out throughout its emanations, trajectories and diversions.

This constitutes a possible rethink of how sound exists in time, as interrelations between things and forces toward a complexity of time-space as perceived by beings. Each encounter gifts presence in the way sound lets itself be known as sound – through openings that hold the potential to reveal the nature of what sound is and what it encounters within the soundscape – locations, substance, movements, for example, all profoundly interrelated.

Sound withdraws from concealment by making itself and what it encounters known through reciprocity. These reciprocal presencings are what Being appropriates of time and time appropriates of Being – a relationship of extending and revealing that the listener can, if sensitized, apprehend in listening to sounds in awareness of themselves as integral to the soundscape. In this way, multiple dimension in acoustic listening as Being emerge.

How is time nested in time, space in space? Heidegger points to this contradistinction from habituated ways of experiencing time as linear and sequential as, instead, a degree of absence. As he explains:

In true time and its time-space, the giving of what has been, that is, of what is no longer present, the denial of the present manifested itself. In the giving of the future, that is, of what is not yet present, the withholding of the present manifested itself. Denial and withholding exhibit the same trait as self-withholding in sending; namely, self withdrawal. (Heidegger 1972, 22)

The listener attends to a sound approaching, perhaps a car crossing the Canadian prairie on a frozen winter day or a deer moving through dense foliage in a forest or a motorcycle that drives up a twisting walled rampart, revs its engine and roars away. Each is moving in time-space and, for the time of listening, the listener hovers between themselves and the sound. The *where* of where it is coming from or going to is important for the time in which it shapes the soundscape and brings associations to the listener. In the approach and moving away, in associations and memories, there is a forgetting of presence, a degree of absence. Listeners, perceiving movement as linear in time-space, delight in this phenomenon.

What takes Being-presence is how the listener is caught in the continual exchange of what is approaching and what is passing as it approaches repeatedly and passes repeatedly throughout the



*Soundwalkers*, University of British Columbia Soundwalk, 2007

movement. In this way, sound constantly denies the present manifest in the future of continual approach and the past of continual passing. This, too, is a constant sound-withholding-opening that listeners find intriguing, that brings presence to the fore as the being-self must withdraw in order to embrace the fluidity and vivification of the present as presence. The approach and withdrawal are what gives the impression of the where-ness of time and time-space. From Heidegger's perspective of *Appropriation* of time-Being, the denial of past, present and future is "the realm of its threefold extending determined by the nearing nearness [which] is the prespatial region which first gives any possible 'where,'" (1972, 16). In this prespatial plane, where-ness hovers in heightened awareness.

In this way, a different understanding emerges where the experience of sound shapes the soundscape and the listener experiences themselves as manifest in Heidegger's fourfold time that is and yet exceeds the past, present, future into the opening of presence. Thus, absence that is also piercing presence. Consider Heidegger's explication of absence as:

what has-been which, by refusing the present, lets that become present which is no longer present; and the coming toward us of what is to come which, by withholding the coming toward us of what is to come which, by withholding the present, lets that be present which is not yet present. (17)

The *withholding the present*, [which] lets that be present which is not present is a different awareness from habituated and conceptual ways of Being. It instructs on the nature of sound-to-listener states. It also opens the experience of sound as sound possible when listening to a soundscape composition or high-fidelity recordings of sounds through media – it invites schizophonia and a kind of time-space travel.

Consider the manner of listening, whether live or mediated, where sound is traveling and in that movement defines itself, but until that moment, sounds are in a different defining moment in space that have a trajectory, but from the perspective of the listener, these remain momentarily undefined, ambiguous, radical and on the edge of becoming. Unlike linear conceptions of sound as movement through time, acoustic time and time-space are continually hovering before falling into convergence. That is why one is called to listen deeply, acutely, with all the body and perceptive abilities – and most of all without anticipation – to catch this refined aspect of how sound shapes the soundscape and how being-ness is shaped inside of it. So much presence depends on listening acumen.

This is also how silence, a mode of absence as presence in

## Walking in Sound<sup>2</sup>

In the molten night  
 cicadas rub as cats wail,  
 far a lone tram skims tracks  
 before dawn, the density of  
 the exhaust  
 fans that never sleep,  
 birds that offset morning  
 train's thunder  
 overhead, beneath  
 whispers and sleeves rub a side,  
 let them pass,  
 the early ones.

On the way into the day  
 sing *kachne-bush*, *kachne-bush*  
*kachne-bush*, ride  
 fine-tuned and robust  
 like a Harley  
 through the old gate  
 where wind tosses poplars  
 and birds ride high and wild

The day is on,  
 tossing time like marbles  
 against stone  
 cobbles  
 each glass orb  
 reflecting the world,  
 rolling this way and that,  
 erratic-intent  
 crisscrossing  
 the path of the squat heart  
 while sirens scorch the air.

There is time this day for  
 what sounds in the air, for

tracing the citadel to the strand  
 through whitewash rush-hours,  
 let the insistent  
 trains shake the trestle,  
 let the river quiver  
 and swans hiss.

*Misa* (nthropy) answers to know one  
 not even the static and random  
 airwaves, stations changing  
 through all the broad  
 casts of lives, random order,  
 endless banter barrage.

Ferry me into a lullaby, under  
 across all around, sooth me,  
 with a tune, improvised yet ever-green,  
 through the worldly grind into the  
 wake full ness.

(o to listen and be)

relationship to sound, opens and extends sounds as receptacles of time, time-space and Being. Not at all a true absence, silence is nevertheless a self-withdrawal of sound that brings heightened listening awareness. In silence, the listener becomes aware of themselves in their sound-making bodies, in the space they

are inhabiting, in the nearing nearness of things close and far, in the minutia of the approach and withdrawal, in presence of Being and in time. In fourth dimensional listening, sound is better articulated and, in that sense, proffers a unity, a sense of duration that speaks of lasting, of certainty, of timeliness inside of timelessness. Heidegger states that “presence means: the constant abiding that approaches man, reaches him, is extended to him” (1972, 12). So too, the listener abides in silence, in the refined sense of absence of what is in the nearness approaching, flickering. Heidegger asserts that even this abiding must not be taken for granted for “not every presencing is necessarily the present. A curious matter” (1972, 13). This curiousness holds the listener in presence unique to sound. “What remains to be said? Only this: Appropriation appropriates” (Heidegger 1972, 24). So too, it can be said that sounds sound and crave that listeners listen.

## About the Author

ANDREA DANCER, MFA, PhD, is a writer, soundscape composer and artist as well as arts-based research practitioner and educator. Her works in transdisciplinary forms of expression and research across the field of acoustic ecology, in all its iterations, spans poetry, narrative, radio and sound art, documentary, the art of field recording, and nexuses of visual and sound arts – specifically towards an ecology of sound based in listener-to-soundscape foci. She is the Chair of the CASE. [www.andreadancer.wordpress.com](http://www.andreadancer.wordpress.com)

## Endnotes

1. In exploring Helen’s Point on Mayne Island in the Salish Sea (Gulf Islands, B.C., Canada), the location where I recorded the audio for the soundscape composition, “Sounds Like Home” (2007), I spent time in the original last standing house, occupied by a Tswwassen First Nation family until late 1970s. The site was continuously inhabited for five thousand years and comprises a midden (garbage repository). “Fish Bones in the Midden” is a reflection on that place as I encountered and documented it in the process of compiling audio recordings.
2. “Walking in sound” is a poetic riff taken from the sequence of field recordings comprising a soundscape composition, “Walking Sound / Zvukovou procházku” (2011) and a public soundwalk that took place in Prague, Czech Republic.

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