

Loss, Commemoration, and Listening... For Yoko

Susan Frohlick

University of British Columbia, Okanagan

Abstract: In this exploratory piece, I draw from sound studies and the anthropology of sound to find my way in to a long overdue commemoration of a participant-interlocutor and friend who died in 2018. In thinking back on the significance of sound and listening in our evolving relationship, I work through my grief and loss. I offer two “listening stories” as a means to both honour Yoko and to reflect upon my own “listening habits, privilege and biases” (Robinson 2020, 72) that have implications personally as well as for anthropology more broadly.

Keywords: commemoration; listening; aural memory; hearing impairment; ethnographic writing; fieldwork relationships

Résumé: Dans ce texte exploratoire, je m’inspire des études sonores et de l’anthropologie du son pour trouver ma voie dans une commémoration attendue depuis longtemps d’un participant-interlocuteur et ami, décédé en 2018. En repensant à l’importance du son et de l’écoute dans l’évolution de notre relation, je travaille sur mon chagrin et ma perte. Je propose deux « histoires d’écoute » en hommage à Yoko et pour réfléchir à mes propres « habitudes d’écoute, privilèges et préjugés » (Robinson 2020, 72) qui ont des implications personnelles et anthropologiques, de manière plus générale.

Mots-clés: commémoration ; écoute ; mémoire auditive ; déficience auditive ; écriture ethnographique ; relations sur le terrain

Death and mourning jar us out of the mundane demands of our work, taking us back to what really matters in the anthropological pursuit: the difficult, often bewildering, emotionally taxing, and humanistic passion to understand the diversity of life that only comes by building meaningful relationships in the field. Reflecting on the death of a study participant only invites bigger questions for

anthropologists to consider: What new ways of knowing open up when we re-examine our data and consider how to represent the deceased? Can reflecting on a single life help illuminate the collective experiences of those who are too often forgotten? How can a tragic death reinvigorate an anthropological commitment to pursue the difficult work that really matters?

Jennifer Syvertsen (2019, 122)

Listening Shifts

Late fall 2017. I'm at my office desk in my home in Kelowna, thousands of kilometres away from Winnipeg. It is morning here, early afternoon in the Prairies. My cell phone rings. Yoko's name flashes across the micro-screen, calling my attention. I put down my work and answer.

I'm distracted. My head, as always as of late, buzzing. Like a high-voltage overhead power line, a high-pitched buzz between my ears, *in* my ears.

Something about his tone strikes me. I try to listen as closely as I can, to forget about the buzzing in my ears long enough to focus on his words, their content and, also, their aural meaning. My attention turns to his voice. I try to "hear" through the volume and tone of his voice as well as between the lines of his words to figure out why he's called me.

His life in Winnipeg is unravelling. He needs to leave. He wants to make a major change.¹ He wants to come to Kelowna. He's heard rumours that the construction industry is booming here.

In my effort to listen well and make sense of Yoko's voice, the high-frequency squealing in my head does not abate. Still, it is obvious enough that he is sad. The usual "spark" in how he talks is missing.

"You're serious Yoko?" I ask, responding to the particularities of the story that he is recounting to me but also to his tone.

It's a different tone than the one I am most familiar with, that is, when I interview him and he answers my questions in our researcher-interlocutor listening and speaking roles. I shake the noise in my head, trying to make the much-wanted quiet surface long enough to pull his audibility closer to me. Yet, "the more you objectify, other, and push against tinnitus, the louder and more troubling it becomes" (Thompson and Hagood 2021, 72). Wanting to hear Yoko, I tell myself: Lean into the mash-up of sounds.

"Yes, I'm serious. I want to move to Kelowna."

He wants to move to British Columbia. This *is* serious. Our conversation is related to, yet significantly extends away from, the usual topics—the challenges of adjusting to Winnipeg and Canada as a young Black person and newcomer from the Democratic Republic of Congo and the complex trajectory his life in Manitoba was taking, over-determined by racial discrimination, job and housing precarities, education inequity, and police surveillance.

He sounds different. He wants me to listen to him differently. Not to hear his life story and record his experiences, like an anthropologist.

Hum, ring, hissssss.

With this declaration, he shifts our relationship. He becomes someone with whom I must listen differently, no less significantly than I listen to research participants but differently. In this conversation that is pressing for Yoko I try to make sense of the shift underway. At that moment I was actually pretty distracted—with a bad bout of tinnitus, with marking—and did not really want to be on the phone. For Yoko, I made an exception and took his call. He was becoming a family friend, perhaps like a friend of my son, who is the same age as Yoko. Was he now positioning me as someone to listen to him, to hear that he is serious about radically changing his life, and to hear that he wants my involvement and help in that change? I listen as intently as I can, my inner ear, it feels like, twitching, hyper-active.

He tells me again: He is serious about moving to Kelowna. We talk about the realities of what that move would entail for him, and then he ends the call. He has to pick up one of his kids. I look at the phone for a few moments afterwards, my mind racing and my ears ringing. I detect a backstory between his sentences. I am unsure what to think about this plan of his to move away from the only province he knew, and my role in it.

My memory of this phone conversation is affected by what I discerned to be another transformation in our evolving relationship and in our listening-speaking relations that coincided with the hearing problems that I had begun experiencing around the same time.² I cannot recall the conversation without evoking the embodied memory of my hearing impairment that was messing with my ability to listen without effort—a conversation I recall frequently.

About seven months later, we lost Yoko. He died in a fatal highway crash when he was returning to Winnipeg with friends from a road trip to Alberta.

This is why that morning's conversation remains so alive and sticks with me. It was not my last conversation with him (we met in person for a research project in Winnipeg a few weeks before he died) but it remains one of the clearest memories I have of him. A poignant aural memory.

Commemoration

Yoko's death was shattering. I had known him for ten years, since he was 18 years old. And, as the opening story suggests, he and I had become closer in those past months, transforming our relationship of anthropologist-interlocutor into something else, still very much underway when he passed away so suddenly and so young. Yet I wrote nothing for the longest time, despite the deep loss I felt and continue to feel.

Every June since his passing I have pondered the idea of commemorating his importance to me somehow, through an anthropological lens of some kind. While, as anthropologists, we often form close ties with community members we work with, it is also true that some research participants come to hold special meaning for us. Jennifer Syvertsen (2019, 120) writes, in her touching photo and poetry montage called "Death Poems for Cindy," which commemorates a participant who died, "There are some research participants whom we never forget." Three years since his death, I can no longer put off writing that commemoration. I don't want to lose the memory of him. I want to acknowledge his impact on me and how he inspires me to continue with ethnographic research that can be emotionally difficult. The intimacy of our relationships with people we become close to in the research process does not afford me any privilege of shutting down or tuning out or not being aware of myself as a situated listener, attuning to others physiologically as well as culturally and socially, through gender, race, class, and bodily ability.

It is through sound studies that I find one meaningful way in to what Jallicia Jolly calls "ethnographic mourning" (2021), a form of grief and loss that is compounded through our roles as ethnographer-witnesses to the lives and deaths of participant interlocutors. It is through sound theories and concepts that I have come to appreciate, and think through, the emergent listening relationality between Yoko and me, and its complexity; and, through that, it is how I am working out how to continue to "hear" him (differently?) and relate with him, and therefore to grow as an anthropologist, friend, person, white European third generation Canadian.

What I continue to miss, and how I best knew Yoko, was predominantly through listening and speaking. He never emailed me, not once. Near the last months, he had sent me a few text messages—sparse, sporadic. Textual communication was hardly ever exchanged between us: Instead, we had formed a relationship over time through multiple auditory capacities and contexts, which were of course overlaid with, and not separate from, vision and the other senses too.

Yoko was far too young when he tragically passed, twenty-eight years old: thirteen years after he resettled in Canada with his family through a refugee settlement program, first stepped inside a Canadian shopping mall, and first experienced a Prairie winter that would become his favourite season, and ten years after I met him through a community-based research project.

He had been an outspoken participant in a focus group of young men between the ages of seventeen and twenty years old, refugees of diverse African backgrounds and migration pathways who were making sense of their lives as residents of inner-city Winnipeg. Yoko breezed into the quiet near-empty Sexuality Education Resource Centre (SERC) on West Broadway, a non-governmental agency that provides sexual education to immigrant groups, among other communities. As I remember that evening, his voice from the hallway as he joked and laughed with his friends coming into the space together was audible even before he entered the room. Yoko's sociable presence filled the room. The following year he went through training to become a youth researcher for the project along with graduate students from the University of Manitoba so that he could lead focus groups of his own.

Laughing while being deeply serious in the same breath,

This was your trademark.

Your laughter breaking through the sterility of the sexual health education space

Mingling with the swoosh of heavy denim baggy jeans and the oversized winter parka

You and your friends wore.

Exuberance, joy, and anger resonating simultaneously in your storytelling,

Or its beginnings at least that evening

How do my sonic memories of you, and my tracings back to the first meetings, serve you?

More than sentimental nostalgia but no less than a homage to your friendliness, as it were

The whiteness of the sexual health education space and its ethos

Disrupted by the “playful noise” and camaraderie of Black teen boys

What of that, my own (white settler) listening positionality?

How did I hear you back then?

And, now?

Yoko was a generous research participant, offering his time for several interviews over a couple of years in which he recounted his newcomer experiences. Most often he chose a coffee shop. Sitting in these semi-public spots with Yoko, I tended to speak softly, consciously, so as to set the volume of the interview, aware that people sitting close by might listen in. He answered my questions, though, in what felt like a booming voice, not fazed by potential eavesdropping. One day we experimented with a different location entirely—in front of the house where he first lived when his family arrived in Winnipeg from South Africa, to do walking ethnography. While he was an engaged listener and speaker in the coffee shop interviews, as we walked together in his former neighbourhood his whole body signalled a sensorial familiarity with those particular city streets. There, he became an invigorated speaker. And on that quiet sidewalk, without the possibility of strangers overhearing us, I was a better listener, too. Plus, in the outdoor climes with a slight wind blowing, I barely heard any ringing, such is the context-specific “auraldiversity” of tinnitus (Drever 2019, cited in Thompson and Hagood 2021, 68).

The icy street caked with late spring dirt-tinged brown snow, we stand before his family’s house, while the Prairie wind sings, my hearing is freed from the normal static channel that is tuned in, indoors, and while the Prairie wind sings, Yoko’s smile grows even bigger than normal, for this house conjures up his younger person voice and the stories of those early days in the inner city, the corner of Spence and Ellis where he was first introduced to the informal street economies on the long Manitoban summer evenings when his parents and sisters were asleep and his restless adolescent self couldn’t stop talking with anyone he came

across, and his now adult self can't stop talking about those early days, and suddenly we aren't aware of the icy wind, but are just notebook in hand and words spilling out into the freedom of the late spring afternoon air, a mobile show-and-tell, Yoko's voice animated within the sonic ecologies of neglected neighbourhoods inhabited by low-income, newcomer, African, Latin American, Caribbean, Indigenous, and other non-white and some settler residents, that he loved and hated at once and, he tells me, while the Prairie wind sings, will always be "home."

In our ever-changing relationship, it is listening and audibility that I associate with Yoko over and above other sensory dimensions, such as vision. He was "a talker." Not realizing it while I knew him, we shared audibility vulnerabilities, although through very different registers of power relations. As a middle-aged, Anglo-settler, "able-bodied" woman, middle-class through my position as a university professor, the increasing tinnitus (known colloquially as "ringing of the ears") that I began experiencing in late 2017 or so caused me to grapple with what felt like a failing body, a kind of internalized ableism I am only now recognizing. For Yoko, a working-class young male Black African immigrant, targeted by police, with a history of encounters with the carceral system in Winnipeg, who struggled to find a place within various churches over the years and was popular in high school in part because of the parties he threw and his social and athletic skills on the football team, his speaking capacity was thoroughly mediated and structured by race, bound up with age, gender, sexuality, class, and, bodily ability.

Drawing on W.B. DuBois' term "colour line," Jennifer Stoeber uses the concept "the sonic colour line" to describe "the process of racializing sound—how and why certain bodies are expected to produce, desire, and live amongst particular sounds—and its product, the hierarchical division sounded between 'whiteness' and 'blackness'" (2016, 11; also see Sterne 2021, 236). I now reflect back, thinking about "sonic racialization," a new term for me. Did I witness, and how was I complicit in, the squelching or denial, even, of his aims to speak and be heard, as though he could only "be" through how others, including myself, interpreted his aurality?

Yoko pushed back against any notion I unwittingly held onto about "ethnographer as stranger" (Ahmed 2000). A Christian and churchgoer, he placed a moral value on forming good relations in his social world that

extended to me, whether I liked it or not—which of course I did like. His death has prompted me to think more closely about how listening and hearing plays out in how, as an anthropologist, I know people who entrust me with their life stories, and how these sonic intimacies are intertwined with all of our foibles, physical and social, that, at the end of the day, matter greatly in the relationality that is the crux of what we do and why.

In this spirit, in the rest of the paper I experiment with two “listening stories” as commemoration. An entirely insufficient commemoration of Yoko, nevertheless by writing these stories I am grateful for how they allow me to express my sadness and loss. This commemoration also allows me to reflect on changes over time as an embodied and socially situated hearing subject, a “white listening ear” (Stoeber 2016, 13), and to reflect on how I can better hear him now—not only the words he spoke but the speaking positions he was slotted into, and fought back against, in his vibrant yet uncertain young life.

First Listening Story: Audibility Troubles

In those last months that neither of us knew would be the “last months,” I invited him to talk to my fourth-year undergraduate gender and women’s studies class, *Feminist Geographies of (Un)Belonging*, about his lived experience in Canada.³ He agreed. He wanted the chance to speak with a group of university students, despite being nervous to do so, because his critique of the Canadian immigration system was one that he wanted to share with anyone who would listen. I wanted to give him the space for that conversation, although, I too, felt nervous. Yoko was an outspoken and articulate speaker. However, because he had not attended college or university, I worried that I was putting him at risk of feeling uncomfortable. Or worse, that I was subjecting him to stereotyping, filling a kind of “bad Black boy” slot in the white neoliberal classroom where, as Gloria Ladson Billings attests, “Black males are not regarded as intellectually capable or expected to be intellectual leaders” (2012, 10).⁴ There were no Black students in that class, a predominantly white space. Despite these worries, the troubles that erupted were technical ones, glitches with “the audible infrastructure” (Devine and Boudreault-Fournier 2021).

“Can you hear him?” I ask the students. I didn’t trust my own hearing. I hoped it was my hearing impairment that was the problem, not the sound on his end.

Yoko hates technology. He had declined my invite to do a run-through on the Zoom software on his sister's borrowed laptop the night before.

"Kind of," they respond.

The students struggle to hear his voice. Yet, Yoko keeps talking, seemingly unaware of the sound problems in the physical space of the university classroom. The students, I am so glad to see, pull their chairs closer to the AV speaker, huddling together, ears directed at the box that is transmitting a hard-to-hear audible voice at a very low volume.

I walk around the room, as though hoping to find a spot where a perfectly clear transmission of Yoko's voice might be possible and to rid myself, too, of the static and noise in my head.

Walking back and forth while stopping to close my eyes hoping to clear the constant buzzing, which tends to worsen when I'm under stress, "Yoko, turn up your mic!" I implore him. I feel more frantic by the minute.

In a voice that is faint but nevertheless loud enough that I can hear, he replies, "It's turned up as high as it goes."

He has a puzzled look on his face, as if to say, "What's the problem? I can hear and the students are listening."

I give up. The students seem to be managing. They hear his voice well enough while it goes up and down in volume throughout the hour of his guest talk. They read his bodily language, too, I think. He smiles, he frowns, he shakes his head, he asks and answers questions; in other words, he is actively communicating. He is not bothered by what bothers me a great deal as a technologically-caused slight to my own sense of what his voice should be.

Amanda Weidman (2015, 238) uses the concept of "voicing" to "break down the dichotomy between 'having a voice' and 'being silent or silenced'" – and to complicate the often-assumed equation of voices with representation and agency. I reflect on our/my audibility troubles, and how, despite my good intentions, I had situated Yoko precariously within mediating technologies and social relations through which his voice was shaped and ultimately heard but which could have been a disaster for him. While, on the one hand, he was "muffled," in another way the university classroom set him up as "a masculinized, signifying, authorial voice" that was not separate from his

embodiment (Weidman 2015, 240): His face, his hair, his dark blue suit, his Black masculinity was clearly visible, constituting an authorial “guest speaker,” on the projection screen to the predominantly white predominantly women listeners. Still, the question of agency lingers, entangled with further questions of how race, age, and other power relations were at play in this particular speaking-listening relation and its context.

Second Listening Story: Hearing Gaps

I am holding Adey’s newborn baby, Kiya, in my arms and bouncing him gently while he sleeps soundly. The apartment is warm on a winter day in Winnipeg. It is a short visit. Two days is all I have to catch up on the research project, which is why we all agreed to meet at Adey’s. Her baby can sleep and stay warm, unbothered by the frigid temperatures outside if Adey had had to schlep him with her to a café to meet with us. Adey, Yoko, and I chit-chat about nothing too important yet all that is important: How are everyone’s kids, families, jobs, school, health, housing, the weather?

Yoko presses through this, through the pleasantries we fixate on collectively as an easy way to reconnect. Yoko interrupts this easy convivial flow. The time that I desperately want to simply hang out and be with the research team who are also dear friends is precious. He persists.

“Susan, the guys don’t want to talk anymore about sexuality. They have bigger problems. They want to talk about drug addictions, criminality, guns, the police surveillance they face every day,” he challenges me to listen, urging me out of my state of semi-denial.

I just want to hold the baby. I don’t want to hear Yoko because it means I have to pay close attention to the content. In that moment, I don’t want to pay attention. I only want to be the auntie of Adey’s newborn baby who is sleeping so peacefully. Time ticks on. Yoko persists.

I pass Kiya to Estella, a graduate student who has now joined us in Adey’s toasty warm apartment on that frosty cocoon-ish kind of day. Another research team member, Bonface, has arrived as well. I get out my iPad. Yoko and Bonface join me at the table, and we begin to map out the details for a research project that would allow Yoko to conduct the ethnographic interviews that have become urgent for him. He makes me hear.

When I think back to that exchange, was he calling attention to my privilege of selective hearing where my white subjectivity subtended my listening

positionality... as a researcher with grant funding, an older person, and the only white person in the room, was my agency such that I could ever so easily direct, without thinking about the relations between us as speaking, listening, and hearing subjects, the conversation to serve my emotional interests at the time? Harsh, but true. There is an important lesson here, one that I need to further reflect on, about the difference between “critical listening positionalities” and “settler listening positionalities,” articulated by Dylan Robinson as the difference between “becoming aware of normative listening habits and abilities” and “unmarked structures of certainty that guide normative perception and may enact epistemic violence” (2020, 10). Robinson argues that a western sense orientation emplaces the listener “as the sole subject in the act of listening” which detaches settler listeners from the relations in which sonic encounters are actually “subject-subject relations” (2020, 15). I remember being annoyed with Yoko because I wanted to remain cocooned in that sweet state of coziness while his more urgent business felt like an encroachment. I did shift gears, as it was my responsibility as well as interest to do so. Yet while in that particular moment I was (reluctantly) responsive to Yoko and the community of his Black male friends whom he wished to do something for, this listening story reminds me of the ongoing concern of white privilege and a normative tendency/power to shelter oneself (myself) from the relationality of listening. This was not his responsibility, yet nevertheless I appreciate Yoko’s insistence and how it has led me to an “increased self-reflection toward one’s listening habits, privilege, and biases,” towards what Robinson calls “listening otherwise” (2020, 72). But this is very unfinished work.

Unfinished

This piece is a tribute to, and a remembrance of, Yoko after a long period of silence around his passing and not knowing what to make of it or how to proceed intellectually with that loss. Hearing him is what I have left, and what stays with me. As an anthropologist I collected audiotape recordings of my interviews with him, and these digital files are “sound objects” that will continue to be the mediator of my relationship with him after life.⁵ But, also, my perplexing experience of living with the constant and tiring buzzing known as tinnitus is resonant with my memory of Yoko and his presence in my life during a time when I appeared to be “losing” what I mistook for a prior “perfect” capacity to hear (Sterne 2021). What I think of now as my “hearing disruption” rather than loss, and attempts to live with it, began at the same time that his

voice (and others around me including my family) became all the more precious to me.⁶ Just as we were figuring out this new relationality, steeped in kinship and an ethics of caring that comes from long-term fieldwork, his loss devastated me. In remembering him, and finding him in the material remnants that “are” fieldwork (audio files, and also text messages, his obituary, photographs), it is his voice and the contexts of our conversations that I hold onto dearly.

The contexts of our hearing and multiple modes of listening (Rice 2015) varied and overlapped a great deal over the decade I knew Yoko, from when he first turned up at the sexual health education centre until our last phone conversation.⁷ Over several sessions of listening, I heard fragments of his evolving life story at a Tim Hortons in a downtown mall and in a Starbucks near his parents’ home. I met his youngest child at another Tim Hortons and was touched to hear Yoko talk as an attentive father, helping his two-year-old son take the stubborn lid off the plastic cup of orange juice. On a walking ethnography on that cold early spring day, he spoke about his troubled first years in Winnipeg’s inner city with an intermingling of excitement and somberness that I had not heard before. Then when I moved away from Manitoba back to my home province of British Columbia, the telephone became a new communication mode and form of transduction that was complicated by the changes in my own biological hearing.⁸ On my research trips back to Winnipeg, we met face to face. Somehow the phone calls with Yoko had shifted my sensory attention. Even in person his vocality mattered to me such that, simultaneously, my listening mattered.

Sometimes I listened well, other times not as well as I could have. His experiences as a victim of anti-black racism and violence, of surveillance and targeting by the police, of exploitation by immigration policies, and of neglect by the lack of social housing; his feelings of resentment towards the Canadian government, anger over white supremacy, and grief and sadness about the loss of friends to gang violence—these were realities of his life that were hard to hear because I did not want him to suffer as he did because of the systemic discrimination he faced on multiple registers. (These were hard to hear for other reasons, too, which require further reflection on my part, related to my own growing awareness of whiteness and its politics of listening.) I was sometimes distracted when he spoke to me, fixated on getting posters up or making sure the recorders worked for a focus group. In the last few years, the incredibly annoying and all-consuming bouts of tinnitus pushed me to listen closer and,

too, to self-care with my hearing. In reality, I was an imperfect listener (as we all are), a fact about myself I struggle to accept.

Jonathan Sterne (2015; 2021) talks about the imperfection and precarity with which anthropologists, as hearing subjects, actually hear the sonic milieus we wish to study, whether our interlocutors' stories or their own sonic worlds. Rather than assume, through a form of "normalism," that we all "have direct, full access to our own hearing, or through our hearing, direct access to the sonic world, or through the sonic world, intersubjectivity with others," Sterne (2015, 74) asks instead that we subject our own hearing to critique and reflection. How do we hear? How do we hear through biological faculties, that is, our ears and bodily audiology, and our attentiveness to sounds around us that somehow come to matter? This leads me back to my hearing fallibility over the course of time during which I developed a caring relationship with this young person who is no longer with us on this earth.

When I sat at his funeral, only three months later, I grieved for myself. I would not hear him on the other end of the phone, not ever again. I grieved his passing for his children and for their loss that would last their lifetime. They would not hear his voice, singing, laughing, counselling, teaching, loving. That Yoko loved Beyoncé, blasted through the speaker system of Calvary Temple, aroused sonic memories and unexpected joy. Shared across our research team was a deep audible loss. A loss that is enfolded into the way that I now try to hear, and listen, differently, to work towards listening otherwise (Robinson 2020), as an anthropologist who is also a fallible friend to those I work with whose words, voices, tones, moods, powers of speech are, simply, precious, and a loss that aspires me to be more aware of the politics, the differential embodied affects, and the relationality of listening, hearing, and audibility.

Acknowledgements

An entire research team misses Yoko. To Adey Mohamed, Estella Marmah, Allison Odger, Paula Migliardi, Mubarek Mohamed, Bonface Beti, Rob Lorway, my condolences, and also my gratitude for all that each of you has given. The research project through which we were fortunate to so closely work with Yoko was generously funded by the Canadian Institutes of Health Research, Community Based HIV/AIDS Research Program. Additionally, I wish to thank the two anonymous reviewers whose compassion and apt comments strengthened the paper, and Alexandrine Boudreault-Fournier for her encouragement to write about this and for her big-hearted invitation to

present an earlier draft at “The Sounds That Bring Us Together” panel she hosted at the Legacy Art Gallery in Victoria, BC.

Susan Frohlick

*University of British Columbia, Okanagan,
susan.frohlick@ubc.ca*

Notes

- 1 I leave out the specific details out of respect for his privacy because I name him in this commemorative piece. In other research publications he is not named, except when identified as a youth researcher on the community-based research project.
- 2 I struggled with the hearing problems for a couple of years before I saw an audiologist who diagnosed the tinnitus. Tinnitus is different for everyone and does not go away. Treatments tend to be oriented around experimenting with and altering auditory spaces, tinnitus retraining therapy (TRT), tinnitus masking, wearable sound-generators and other “remedial media” (Hagood 2019). See the chapter, Tinnitus and Its Aural Remedies, in *Hush: Media and Sonic Self-Control* (Hagood 2019) for a fascinating media studies perspective.
- 3 Yoko received the standard honorarium that we give to guest speakers in our classes, \$100 at the time.
- 4 I am grateful to an anonymous peer reviewer for their reference to Billing’s work.
- 5 An in-depth discussion of “sound object” and its genealogy can be found in *Sound Objects*, edited by James Steintrager and Rey Chow (2019). I use the concept quite simplistically here to say that while I have digitized his voice and therefore this might imply its objectification, actually many factors including the media technology of the recording itself must be considered to unpack the aural clips; that is, they will never “stand alone.”
- 6 My father died a year following Yoko’s passing and I inherited his expensive hearing aids, which have become a new means by which I relate to the sonic world as well as feel like I have my dad in my ears when I wear the devices.

7 Tom Rice takes issue with sound studies approaches that detach “distinctive modes” of listening from context, arguing for an ethnographic approach that understands listening “as it occurs within the holistic context of lived experience” wherein it is entirely possible that “a multiplicity of modes coexist” (2015, 108, 104).

8 Thanks to Alexandrine Boudreault-Fournier for suggesting this concept of transduction.

References

Ahmed, Sara. 2000. “Who Knows? Knowing Strangers and Strangeness.” *Australian Feminist Studies* 15(31): 49–68. <https://doi.org/10.1080/713611918>.

Bills, Gloria Ladson. 2012. “Boyz to Men? Teaching to Restore Black Boys’ Childhood.” In *The Education of Black Males in a “Post-Racial” World*, edited by Anthony Brown and Jamel Donnor, 7–16. London: Routledge.

Devine, Kyle and Alexandrine Boudreault-Fournier (ed.). 2021. *Audible Infrastructures: Music, Sound, Media*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Drever, John Levack. 2019. ““Primacy of the Ear”—But Whose Ear?: The Case of Auraldiversity in Sonic Arts Practice and Discourse.” *Organized Sound* 24(1): 85–95. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1355771819000086>.

Jolly, Jallicia. 2021. “At the Crossroads: Caribbean Women and (Black) Feminist Ethnography in the Time of HIV/AIDS.” *Feminist Anthropology* 2: 224–241. <https://doi.org/10.1002/fea2.12054>.

Hagood, Mack. 2019. *Hush: Media and Sonic Self-Control*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Rice, Tom. 2015. “Listening.” In *Keywords in Sound*, edited by David Novak and Matt Sakakeeny, 99–111. Durham: Duke University Press.

Robinson, Dylan. 2020. *Hungry Listening: Resonant Theory for Indigenous Sound Studies*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Steintrager, James and Rey Chow, editors. 2019. *Sound Objects*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Sterne, Jonathan. 2021. *Diminished Faculties: A Political Phenomenology of Impairment*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Sterne, Jonathan. 2015. “Hearing.” In *Keywords in Sound*, edited by David Novak and Matt Sakakeeny, 65–77. Durham: Duke University Press.

- Stoever, Jennifer. 2016. *The Sonic Color Line: Race and the Cultural Politics of Listening*. New York: New York University Press.
- Syvertsen, Jennifer. 2019. "Death Poems for Cindy." *Medicine Anthropology Theory* 6(2): 120-132. <https://doi.org/10.17157/mat.6.2.717>.
- Thompson, Marie and Mack Hagood. 2021. "Tinnitus, Exclusion, Relationality (Beyond Normate Phenomenology)." *Capacious: Journal for Emerging Affect Journal* 2(3): 66-80. <https://capaciousjournal.com/article/tinnitus-exclusion-relationality/>
- Weidman, Amanda. 2015. "Voice." In *Keywords in Sound*, edited by David Novak and Matt Sakakeeny, 232–245. Durham: Duke University Press.