BRIAN KANE

SOUND UNSEEN

ACOUSMATIC SOUND

IN THEORY AND PRACTICE

CONTENTS

5

Kafka and the Ontology of Acousmatic Sound

In the physical world, sounds are produced when one object activates another. A bow rubs against a string, air is forced through a vocal tract and shaped by a mouth, a raindrop collides with a windowpane. Objects emit sounds. Whether emitting the sounds of instrumental music, household noises, or speaking voices, objects have an inherent potentiality to produce sounds when struck, rubbed, percussed, or bowed. Sounds are emitted at the intersection of an action and a body. Thus, one might posit a simple law: Every sonic effect is the result of the interaction of a source and a cause. Without this interaction, there is no emission of sound.

In the phenomenological world, things are more complicated. Phenomenology begins as a description and analysis of structures of consciousness. It seeks to establish a presuppositionless philosophy grounded on the indubitable evidence of first-person experience alone. In a phenomenology of sound, the knowledge and assumptions we import from the natural sciences like acoustics are suspended, so that the immanent structure of sound *as experienced* can be described. Thus, for the phenomenologist, the acoustical relation of sonic source, cause, and effect cannot simply be presupposed. Real sounds offer evidence as indubitably as imagined sounds, although the thoroughgoing phenomenologist will note their different modes of presentation, degrees of clarity, and distinctness. Moreover, the case of imagined sounds presents a challenge to the presumed co-presence of source, cause, and effect. A listener might hear imaginary sounds that do not possess a source or cause—sounds that seem to be simply sui generis, autonomous, or without location in the physical world. Imaginary sounds dissolve the unity of sonic source, cause, and effect as parts of a single physical event or process, and draw an ontological line between the effect and its source or cause. The effect can be taken as an object in its own right, a "sound object" in Schaeffer's parlance, severed from its originating physical body or causal event. The nature of this severance is *ontological* because the sound object and the physical source or cause of the sound are not only understood as different in kind, but as different kinds of being.

After establishing this ontological distinction, phenomenological accounts of listening all follow a certain trajectory. Because they are made on the basis of first-person experience, such accounts invariably begin with the perceived sonic effect and work their way back to its source and cause—rather than assuming the sonic effect as a result of the interaction of source and cause. This is the basis for Schaeffer's statement that "One forgets that *it is the sound object, given in perception,*

which designates the signal to be studied, and that, therefore, it should never be a question of reconstructing it on the basis of the signal."[1]

Schaeffer is not alone. Other phenomenologists concerned with analyses of sound, listening, and the senses follow the same trajectory. For instance, Hans Jonas wrote a brief comparative essay on the phenomenology of the senses in 1954, entitled "The Nobility of Sight."[2] Jonas begins with a contrast between seeing and hearing in order to defend the superiority of sight in terms of its direct access to external entities. While sight instantaneously presents a world of coexistent objects, detached from yet disposed before the beholder, hearing is doomed to access this world only through the medium of sounds. He writes,

> What the sound immediately discloses is not an object but a dynamical event at the locus of the object, and thereby mediately the state the object is in at the moment of that occurrence.... The immediate object of hearing is the sounds themselves, and then these indicate something else, viz. the actions producing those sounds; and only in the third place does the experience of hearing reveal the agent as an entity whose existence is independent of the noise it makes.... The object-reference of sounds is not provided by the sounds as such, and it transcends the performance of mere hearing. All indications of existents, of enduring things beyond the sound-events themselves, are extraneous to their own nature.[3]

Jonas chides hearing for being twice removed from the sound's objective source: first, by its mediate attention to the state of the external object—the cause of the sound—at the moment of hearing; and second, by the ear's immediate apprehension of sonic effects, the "sounds themselves," which are distinct from all worldly ties. The sound itself is insufficient for establishing reference back to a source; the referentiality of sounds depends on an act of the listener, who supplies a knowledge of the workings of the physical world in order to reason about potential physical sources and causes. The listener must transcend the sound itself to move back one step to the sonic cause or "the actions producing those sounds," and finally to the sonic source. Thus sounds, for Jonas, reveal a chain of mediations.[4]

However, Jonas finds a silver lining. Because of the mediate relationship of sound to the physical-causal objects from which they are emitted, "sound is eminently suited to constitute its own, immanent 'objectivity' of acoustic values as such—and thus, free from other-representative duty, to represent just itself."[5] Jonas distinguishes two forms of objectivity: the immanent objectivity of the sonic effect, which could be characterized as a "sound object," and the external objectivity of a sound considered as the emission or production of some physical source or cause. As an example, Jonas considers the sound of a barking dog: the immanent objectivity of the bark qua sound can be distinguished from the bark as signaling the presence of some particular dog. By describing the sound itself as immanently objective, Jonas repeats the gesture of drawing an ontological line, separating the sound's index from the sound itself.

Jonas's decision to describe the sound itself as an "immanent objectivity of *acoustic* values" is perhaps an unfortunate formulation. The scientific and physical connotations of the word "acoustic" abrogate the difference between the causal context and the sound itself, which Jonas had just established. Perhaps Jonas would have used

the word "acousmatic" instead, had it been available. Acousmatics (*l'acousmatique*), which in Schaeffer's work designates an experience of sound that has undergone the test of the *epoché*, functions as the counterpart to sounds grasped under the natural standpoint, which would encompass the science of acoustics (*l'acoustique*). Regardless of the terminology, both Schaeffer and Jonas stake their theories of listening on the ontological separation of sounds from sources, and both rely on a shared set of phenomenological procedures aimed at disclosing the immanent objectivity of sound as an intentional object. Both are led to posit a regional ontology of sounds themselves.

One could turn to Erwin Straus's work for more evidence of the phenomenological commitment to the ontological separation of the source from the sound itself. Straus, a pioneer in the phenomenology of the senses, first established his mature views on sound in an essay entitled "The Forms of Spatiality."[6] He begins with the premise that sounds must be essentially distinguished from their sources because "it is of the essence of sound to separate itself from the sound source."[7] Aside from the methodological procedures that encourage ontological separation, Straus is motivated to draw a distinction between sound and source to account for the experience of music as an autonomous art. He argues that *music exploits the autonomy of sound itself and turns it to advantage*. Straus writes, "The sound that detaches itself from the sound source can take on a pure and autonomous existence; but this possibility is fulfilled solely in the tones of music, while noise retains the character of indicating and pointing to."[8] Music, unlike the rest of the arts, has a specific and unique claim to autonomy, because it exploits the essential separability of the sound itself from its source. "There is no visual art that is analogous to music, and there can be none because color does not separate itself from the object as tone does. In music alone tone reaches a purely autonomous existence. Music is the complete realization of the essential possibilities of the acoustical."[9] Jonas, perhaps unsurprisingly, also argues for music's autonomy along the same lines as Straus. "In hearing music," Jonas writes, "our synthesis of a manifold to a unity of perception refers not to an object other than the sensory contents but to their own order and interconnection."[10] Music's autonomy, argues the phenomenologist, is grounded in sound's essential separability from its conditions of production and external sources. The only thing that matters is the sounds themselves and their organization in time, pitch, duration, and timbre. Music, as an art, relies on sound's immanent properties alone.

Of course, this view about music's autonomy is not a product of the phenomenological tradition alone, but is closely tied to the history and rise of the autonomous musical work in the 19th century—a tradition that phenomenology tacitly accepts while mistaking it as simply given in the phenomena. The separability of the sound itself from its source also grounds two positions that are closely tied to the rise of the autonomous musical work: phantasmagoria and formalism. In musical phantasmagoria, as described in chapter 4, the separation of the sound itself from its source severs music from its conditions of production, making the latter dispensable or inessential and reifying the former into an ontology of the *tone*. In musical formalism, the ontological separation of the sound itself from its source encourages attention onto the formal configuration of tones alone. While musical formalism has never been univocal in its aims, the separation of tones (and their formal configuration) from the fully aspectual totality of sound (which would include its source,

cause, and signification) is a methodological given in musical thinkers from Eduard Hanslick and Heinrich Schenker to Milton Babbitt and Allen Forte.

Nor has commitment to the ontological separation of sound from source perished since deconstruction and critical theory hastened the demise of phenomenology. Perhaps there is no clearer instance of the commitment than in Roger Scruton's *Aesthetics of Music*. Claiming that musical sounds are intentional and not material objects, Scruton argues,

> The person who listens to sounds, and hears them as music, is not seeking in them for information about their cause, or for clues as to what is happening. On the contrary, he is hearing the sounds *apart* from the material world. They are detached in his perception, and understood in terms of their experienced order. . . . What we understand, in understanding music, is not the material world, but the intentional object: the organization that can be heard in the experience.[11]

What is surprising about this statement is not its venerable commitment to the phantasmagoric separation of musical sound from its conditions of production. Rather, given Scruton's ultraconservative diagnosis of modern music, it is surprising that he affirmatively cites Pierre Schaeffer as the thinker of this position. Surprising indeed, but not misplaced, for Scruton is correct to situate himself in a tradition of phenomenological thinking about music even if he arrives at a very different set of aesthetic valuations about particular works. Scruton's conservative defense of tonality and the great mainstream of musical works may contrast with Schaeffer's aesthetics of *musique concrète*, but both operate with a similar ontology.

Beyond their agreement concerning ontology, important differences should be noted. Most significantly, Scruton conflates the acousmatic reduction and reduced listening. He writes, "in listening, Schaeffer argues, we spontaneously detach the sound from the circumstances of its production and attend to it as it is in itself: this, the 'acousmatic' experience of sound, is fortified by recording and broadcasting, which complete the severance of sound from its cause that has already begun in the concert hall."[12] When Scruton uses the word "acousmatic," he really means both the acousmatic reduction and reduced listening. He jumps immediately to the latter and situates it within a horizon of listening practices originating in the concert hall. One no longer needs the use of screens, scrims, covered orchestral pits, or loudspeakers in Scruton's world, for any time one hears music, one is already listening within the acousmonium. Reduced listening becomes simply coextensive with musical listening, and the whole complex is called acousmatic. Nowhere is this more boldly stated than when Scruton writes, "The acousmatic experience of sound is precisely what is exploited by the art of music."[13]

The conflation of the acousmatic reduction and reduced listening masks an important distinction between the two—a distinction that has not been appropriately appreciated in writing on acousmatic sound. As described in chapter 1, these two distinct yet interlocked reductions perform different operations that should be distinguished in any robust account of acousmatic sound. The first reduction, the acousmatic reduction, is Schaeffer's equivalent of the phenomenological *epoché*. By separating seeing from hearing and barring visual access to sonic sources and causes, the acousmatic reduction *does not advocate any particular mode of listening*. All

modes of listening are available, depending on the attention of the listener. Indeed, Schaeffer's small typology of modes of listening (*écouter, entendre, ouïr, comprendre*) emerges upon the ground of the acousmatic reduction. On the ontological level, there is no claim regarding the separation and difference between the sonic source, cause, and effect. In fact, the purpose of the *epoché* was as a methodical corrective, to help the philosopher avoid all presuppositions based on thetic positings, which assume the world around us to be something factually given. The point of the *epoché* is to "parenthesize everything which that positing encompasses with respect to being."[14] In other words, the *epoché* transforms the philosophical subject into a kind of ontological agnostic, one who does not presuppose or force a pre-given ontology onto their experience of the world.

The second reduction, the eidetic reduction, does just the opposite. It discloses the sound object, the noematic correlate of reduced listening. The eidetic reduction, which discovers the essential or invariant morphological features of a sound object, can only occur in the mode *entendre*. Thus, the acousmatic reduction and eidetic reduction have distinct ontological consequences. While the acousmatic reduction is agnostic, reduced listening is committed, ontologically distinguishing the sound object from its source or cause. Undoubtedly, Schaeffer saw the acousmatic reduction as a preparatory step in establishing the sound object as the foundation of musical research, and reduced listening as the proper mode for auditioning *musique concrète*. But that does not mean that one cannot revisit the acousmatic reduction by reasserting its agnosticism and challenging the subsequent ontological separation of source, cause, and effect authorized by reduced listening.

In what follows, I want to focus on the relationship of sonic source, cause, and effect articulated in the acousmatic reduction before any ontological separation has been asserted. My intention is to expose an unexpected aporia that inhabits the relationship of source, cause, and effect in the acousmatic reduction. If this aporia has been neglected, perhaps it is due to the quick set of moves that aligns the acousmatic reduction with reduced listening and the sound object, and discourages consideration of the acousmatic reduction apart from Schaeffer's modes of listening and ontology of the sound object. My "counter-theorist" to Schaeffer (and the phenomenological tradition generally) will also be unexpected, namely, Franz Kafka. In particular, I focus on a late, unfinished tale titled "The Burrow," which presents the reader with a series of patient analyses of an acousmatically auditioned sound. Kafka's reflections will help to expose the inner logic of the acousmatic reduction in a discourse that is far removed from the phenomenological tradition.[15] Kafka, unlike Schaeffer, Jonas, Straus, or even Scruton, has no desire to ontologically separate sonic effects from their sources. Kafka's rich literary imagination allows the reader to inhabit imaginary worlds that disclose the precise logic of acousmatic sound apart from its actual sonorousness.

INTO THE BURROW

"The Burrow" is a story about acousmatic listening.[16] Written in the winter of 1923–1924, months before Kafka's death, it is a tale of an unidentified animal inhabiting an impenetrable burrow—some kind of mole or badger. The narrator, using the first person throughout, describes the lavish care spent on the construction and defense

of his burrow. Kafka's mole relies on the sense of vision the least. The burrow, comprising various chambers and a central, ration-stocked castle keep, is heard, tasted, smelt, and felt—but not seen. Bathed in darkness, the narrator's ear dominates the other senses, listening for intruders or identifying tiny insects—"small fry"—that wriggle their way through the soil. After a brief sojourn aboveground, the mole returns to its burrow only to discover an unidentifiable high-pitched sound, "an almost inaudible whistling noise."[17] The sound continues "always on the same thin note, with regular pauses, now a sort of whistling [*Zischen*] but again like a kind of piping [*Pfeifen*]."[18] The continuity of the piping is a strong counterpoint to the narrator's rapid succession of changing attitudes. As the mole investigates, positing unverifiable hypotheses, it becomes impossible to determine if the sound comes from one or many places; who or what could be causing it; if it comes from near or far; or if it is not simply imagined. Walter Benjamin elegantly described the mood of the narrator: "as [the burrower] flits from one worry to the next, it nibbles at every anxiety with the fickleness of despair."[19]

Given the current interest in the sonic aspects of Kafka's work, it is surprising that "The Burrow" has not received the same treatment as the other late stories, like "Josephine the Mouse Singer" and "The Investigations of a Dog."[20] Perhaps this is because the other late stories explicitly concern music rather than sound, the former featuring a singing mouse, the latter dancing dogs that produce a strange music from their coordinated motions. In addition, the narrator watches and auditions the musical spectacle with rapt attention.

But "The Burrow" makes no mention of music, only sound—a sound anxiously auditioned by a worried creature. Many exegeses of "The Burrow" tend to ignore the story's sonorousness, focusing primarily on the mole's elaborate descriptions of the burrow's construction. The original German title "*Der Bau*" encourages this reading, with its emphasis on the construction of the burrow and its potential associations—most importantly, an association between the burrow and writing.

In the 1960s, Heinz Politzer identified "The Burrow" specifically as a story about Kafka's own literary production. "In an almost allegorical way," Politzer writes, "'The Burrow' is identical with Kafka's own work. . . . While the narrator . . . describes the hole it has dug in the soil, Kafka explains in a multitude of hardly veiled hints that he is about to discuss the very nature of his own writing."[21] For Politzer, the nature of that writing is a confrontation of author and other that can only be articulated in the form of parables and paradoxes. By the 1990s, after Derridean theories of writing had impacted literary studies, the identification of the burrow with writing remained, albeit in a new form, in which writing migrates from the biographical to the impersonal. For example, Rosemary Arrojo draws a connection between the labyrinthine burrow and a theory of textuality, reading "The Burrow" as "a poignant illustration of Nietzsche's notions of the text and the world as labyrinth."[22] Playing on a double entendre, the *passages* of the burrow must be "constantly reviewed because of the 'manifold possibilities' of their uncontrollable 'ramifications'. . ."[23] The proliferating meanings of Kafka's passages disseminate wildly, operating at a register uncontainable by the presence of the author/builder's intentionality or by any transcendental signified.[24] Similarly, Stanley Corngold makes this casual observation: "That a story of Kafka's called 'Der Bau'—which means, literally, 'The Building' or 'The Construction'—alludes to Kafka's literary

enterprise will come as no surprise."[25] The nonchalance of Corngold's assertion evinces its ubiquity.[26]

This text-centered reading of "The Burrow" depends on a correspondence between the production of the burrow and Kafka's literary production. Yet, by focusing on the construction of the burrow rather than the sounds heard inside, it elicits a nagging question: What is the meaning of the *sound* in the second half of the tale? Kafka scholars have proffered diverse hypotheses: It is the sound of the existential self, whose threatening judgment is ignored by the narrator; or the sound of something entirely alien and ominous, whose terrible force comes to destroy the narrator; the infernal, obsessive compulsion that drove Kafka as a writer; a representation of the narrator's fear and anxiety in the face of solitude; hallucinations and phantasms of paranoia and mental illness; an abstraction from the terrifying, blind acoustic experience of soldiers involved in trench warfare during WWI; or simply the sound of Kafka's tubercular cough, a symptom of the disease that ultimately took his life.[27] Taken individually, the readings are each defensible, but taken together, they present an astonishing multiplicity of irreconcilable interpretations.

Most critics treat the sound in "The Burrow" symbolically, rather than sonorously. Sound acts as a metaphor for some other form of experience—moral, political, philosophical, or psychological. Deleuze and Guattari offer an alternative to these symbolic readings in *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*, a book not only ostensibly concerned with the sonorousness of sound in Kafka's work, but also explicitly invested in "The Burrow" as a central text. In fact, no text may be quite as relevant as "The Burrow," for in its passages, Deleuze and Guattari find the literary equivalent of their master concept, the rhizome. Just read their opening sentence: "How can one enter into Kafka's work? This work is a rhizome, a burrow."[28]

Many of the central concepts from Deleuze and Guattari's other works—becoming-animal, territorialization, lines of flight—appear in the course of their reading of Kafka. Sound is described as "pure and intense,"[29] the kind of force requisite to open up a deterritorializing line of flight. But the same does not hold for music, which is explicitly differentiated from sound by Deleuze and Guattari. Music is unable to reach sound's pure intensity because of its relation to conventional systems of signification: "It isn't a composed and semiotically shaped music that interests Kafka, but rather a pure sonorous material."[30] By escaping from music's power of signification, sound, being the stuff from which music is made, also contains the potential to evade music, to slither from music's grasp and, in so doing, undermine music by abolishing its signifying order.[31] Deleuze and Guattari write, "What interests Kafka is a pure and intense sonorous material that is always connected to *its own abolition*—a deterritorialized musical sound, a cry that escapes signification, composition, song, words—a sonority that ruptures in order to break away from a chain that is still all too signifying. In sound, intensity alone matters, and such sound is generally monotone and always non-signifying."[32] Perhaps the high-pitched whistling or piping heard in the burrow would be just such an example of pure and intense, non-signifying, sonorous material—just like the raspy speech of Gregor Samsa, the voice on the telephone in *The Castle*, or even the silent singing of Kafka's sirens.[33]

Sound's deterritorializing function shares many similarities with another one of Deleuze and Guattari's master concepts, one uniquely suited to Kafka's stories: the

concept of becoming-animal. Both are ruptures, insubordinate to any other territorialization or plane of consistency they may encounter. The language used to describe sound and becoming-animal is strikingly similar, even to the cursory reader. Both are pure intensities, non-signifying bits of unformed matter or material, involved in breaking away or discovering paths of escape. Deleuze and Guattari write, "To become animal is . . . to stake out the path of escape . . . to find a world of pure intensities where all forms come undone, as do all the significations, signifiers, and signifieds, to the benefit of an unformed matter of deterritorialized flux, of nonsignifying signs."[34] Both sound and becoming-animal encourage a line of flight that evades signifying orders. Often they are found together, in that the process of becoming-animal changes the production of sounds from signifying to non-signifying. In language that recalls the sonic—language of vibrations, intensities, thresholds, and movements—one can follow the crossing of sonic production and becoming-animal in this passage:

> Kafka's animals never refer to a mythology or to archetypes but correspond solely to . . . zones of liberated intensities where contents free themselves . . . from the signifier that formalized them. There is no longer anything but movements, vibrations, thresholds in a deserted matter: animals, mice, dogs, apes, cockroaches are distinguished only by this or that threshold, this or that vibration, by the particular underground tunnel in the rhizome or the burrow. Because these tunnels are underground intensities. In the becoming-mouse, it is a whistling that pulls the music and the meaning from the words. In the becoming-ape, it is a coughing that "sound[s] dangerous but mean[s] nothing". . . In the becoming-insect, it is a mournful whining that carries along the voice and blurs the resonance of words.[35]

The animals' sounds escape the signifying chains of territorialized language and liberate themselves from music and meaning.[36] Similarly, one would assume that the same disruptive conjunction of sound and becoming-animal would hold for "The Burrow" too.

Examining the account in more detail, it is surprising to see that Deleuze and Guattari *do not* explicitly identify the "monotone" and "non-signifying" sound heard in the burrow with any kind of pure intensity or line of flight.[37] The sound heard in the burrow is never explicitly addressed, nor is any conjunction posited between becoming-mole and the resonating high-pitched sound. Unlike Kafka's other creatures, whose sonorous productions conjoin with their animality, the mole is a listener rather than a performer. Josephine's whistling, Gregor Samsa's whine, and the ape's coughing are all actively produced—auditioned by others but made by those who have become-animal. Sound may deterritorialize, but where is listening? For Deleuze and Guattari, it is only in the burrow's tunnels (or passages) that "underground intensities" are to be found.[38] Again, it is the production of the burrow, not the sounds that inhabit it, that ultimately fascinates Deleuze and Guattari. Their reading of the burrow does not radically differ from text-centered accounts, which treat the burrow as the figure of endlessly creative, textual production.

FRANTIC HYPOTHESES

Rather than posit another hermeneutic (or anti-hermeneutic) interpretation of the sound in the burrow, or read the text to support some pet theory concerning sound in general, I will simply reassert that "The Burrow" is a text about acousmatic sound and acousmatic listening. Even if Kafka did not know of the term "acousmatic," the sound in the burrow clearly meets the definition of acousmatic sound that Schaeffer cites from Larousse: "a sound that one hears without seeing the causes behind it." Moreover, the specifically acousmatic focus of "The Burrow" differentiates it from Kafka's other late tales, "Josephine the Mouse Singer" and "The Investigations of a Dog," which thematically concern listening and sound.

In "Josephine," the eye and the ear are tightly bound in the reception of musical performance. The narrator declares that there is nothing special about Josephine's singing. On its own, her voice is indistinguishable from a mere "piping" (a *Pfeifen*—the same word used in "The Burrow" to describe the high-pitched monotone), but when reconnected to the body from which it is emitted, the sound is transformed: "to comprehend her art it is necessary not only to hear but to see her . . . when you sit before her, you know: this piping of hers is no piping."[39] Kafka posits a necessary connection between the eye and the ear in shaping auditory experience. Heard acousmatically, the power of Josephine's singing would be simply annihilated. One could not, for instance, understand Josephine's art by listening to a recording, for the inseparability of voice, gesture, and spectacle would be broken.

In contrast, "The Investigations of a Dog" challenges the close intertwining of audition and vision by slightly displacing the two domains. Here, the canine protagonist is stunned by the music he encounters coming from a pack of seven dogs. "I could not recognize how they produced it. . . . They did not speak, they did not sing, they remained generally silent, almost determinedly silent; but from the empty air they conjured music."[40] Although the mechanics of causal production are uncertain, the visual dimension is by no means reduced. This presents the unusual situation where the auditory effect and the source are both known, both equally manifest, while the cause remains mysterious. The music *seems* to be emitted from the very movements of the pack: "Everything was music, the lifting and setting down of their feet, certain turns of the head, their running and their standing still, the positions they took up in relation to one another, the symmetrical patterns which they produced."[41] The visual gestures, while distinct, correspond to a music that comes from nowhere in the visual scene but rather, like an *acousmate*, "from the air." The two modalities, the eye and the ear, have become detached in Kafka's descriptions.

This kind of sonic experience encroaches on the domain of acousmatic sound. Larousse's oft-cited definition *nearly* fits the situation. The narrator sees the source, the pack, but cannot identify the music's cause. The visual presence of the source and the palpability of the auditory effect operate in tandem, but across a gulf not bridged by any mechanical cause. Although the visual source is not obscured behind some figural Pythagorean veil, a strange puzzle remains: the simultaneous co-presence of spectacle and sound, both in absolute correspondence, but seemingly without worldly connection.

Scruton's claim that, in the concert hall, "we spontaneously detach the sound from the circumstances of its production and attend to it as it is in itself" could be applied

to Kafka's canine observer. For the dog's experience of music prolongs a traditional view about music, originating in 19th-century musical aesthetics and perpetuated in Scruton's conservative work. One finds a similar correspondence-yet-detachment between the worlds of vision and sound in Wagner's writings: "besides the world that presents itself to sight, in waking as in dreams, we are conscious of the existence of a second world, perceptible only through the ear, manifesting itself through sound; literally a *sound world* beside the *light world*, a world of which we may say that it bears the same relation to the visible world as dreaming to waking."[42] There can be no causal relation between these two worlds. Wagner insists, "The dream organ cannot be roused into action by *outer* impressions."[43] The sound world and light world remain distinct, situated upon opposite shores of a "mystic gulf" as fact is divided from essence.

If the "Investigations" presented a *weak* acousmatic thesis, where the eye and the ear are co-present yet displaced, the "Burrow" meets the most stringent requirements. In its dark interior, vision does no good—the cause and source are lost to subterranean obscurity. Kafka's choice of a mole for the protagonist was not simply fortuitous; it was likely intended to recall various folk tales and received wisdom concerning moles and their notable sensory powers. Pliny the Elder, in *Natural History*, recounts moles' acute sense of hearing and even their ability to comprehend speech: "…moles hear more distinctly than other [animals], although buried in the earth, so dense and sluggish an element as it is; and what is even more, although every sound has a tendency upwards, they can hear the words that are spoken; and, it is said, they can even understand it if you talk about them, and will take to flight immediately."[44] Alexander Pope, in the *Essay on Man*, locates the mole at the absolute bottom of the scale of visual acuity: "What modes of sight betwixt each wide extreme, The mole's dim curtain and the lynx's beam."[45] Although the association of blindness with a dim curtain is not likely a direct allusion to the mythic Pythagorean veil, the couplet depends upon an association of curtains, screens, and veils with blindness.

One might be tempted to correlate this total separation of eye from ear with a separation of the auditory effect from its source and cause. Orthodox Schaefferian theory would make precisely such a move, arguing that sounds, when acousmatically reduced, take on an aspect of intensified profundity; and they do so in proportion to their ontological severance from worldly sources and causes. But Kafka's mole finds solace neither in a phenomenological shift away from the natural attitude toward sound taken as a pure "sound object," nor in any kind of worldly bracketing or ontological separation. The mole's attention is constantly preoccupied with the mysterious source of the sound and its possible meanings, moving through a crescendo of frantic hypotheses—seven, to be exact.

1. When the "almost inaudible whistling noise" is first heard, it is "immediately recognized" as having been caused by the burrowing of some "small fry," which, in wriggling though the burrow, exposed a "current of air."[46] The sound is rationalized away as a non-intentional trace, a leftover residue that signifies nothing at all.
2. Attempting to confirm that the sound is due to a current of air, the mole notes that the uniformity of the sound continues at every location in the burrow. If

the sound were to come from a single location, proximity to the source should correspond to perceived volume. Confounded by the uniformity of the sound's volume, the narrator posits that there must be two sources quite widely spaced; as one diminishes in its perceived volume, the other increases, giving the effect of uniformity.[47] Two sources have now replaced one.

3. As soon as the two-source hypothesis is entertained, the mole replaces it with another: "it is a noise produced by the burrowing of some species of small fry."[48] The source is now attributed to the digging of the creatures themselves, and no longer to their resultant air channels. The source has moved from the non-intentional traces of action to causal ascriptions of action itself. There is a degree of intentionality in the sound, in the sense that the digging is purposive; but the sounds are hardly full of significance in the way that, for example, a speaking voice would be. It is the sound of action, not communication. But this hypothesis is also quickly negated, for the appearance of small fry is nothing new to the burrow, so why would they have suddenly become audible? "One could assume, for instance, that the noise I hear is simply that of the small fry themselves at their work. But all my experience contradicts this; I cannot suddenly begin to hear now a thing that I have never heard before though it was always there."[49]
4. The rejection of the third hypothesis leads to a new position: that the sound comes from "some animal unknown" to the narrator, a "whole huge swarm that has suddenly fallen upon my domain, a huge swarm of little creatures."[50] But if this were the case, why has the narrator never encountered them? The only possibility is that this swarm is composed of creatures "far tinier than any I am acquainted with, and that it is only the noise they make that is greater."[51]
5. After finding a moment of respite from the sound by huddling at the moss-covered entrance to the burrow, the narrator returns only to move rapidly through three more hypotheses. First, the original view is reinstated, that the sound in the burrow is the sound of air caused by channels dug by the small fry. This return leads the mole to reflect on the fruitlessness of endless hypothesizing: "One could play with hypotheses . . . one is not at liberty to make *a priori* assumptions, but must wait until one finds the cause, or it reveals itself."[52]
6. Next, immediately overturning the appeal to reason, the narrator wonders if the cause might not be a "water burst" that "seems a piping or whistling," but "is in reality a gurgling." This hypothesis, like the first, is also a non-intentional trace—a sound, like those described by Deleuze and Guattari, that seems ominous but signifies nothing.
7. Recalling the work done to drain the sandy soil in which the burrow was built, the narrator jumps from non-intentional trace to the view that the sound must be coming from a single source, a beast, "dangerous beyond all one's powers of conception."[53] The source grows more and more distinct in the mole's imagination, to the point where the mole can even hear a *Doppelgänger* in the sound. Recalling a memory of a similar sound from the early days of constructing the burrow, the mole concludes that the noise comes "from some kind of burrowing similar to my own; it was somewhat fainter, of course, but how much of that might be put down to the distance one could not tell."[54]

The difficulties of locating the source are increased because the sound seems to come from no particular location or, equally, from all places at once. The mole never seems to "be getting any nearer to the place where the noise is, it goes on always on the same thin note, with regular pauses, now a sort of whistling but again like a kind of piping." "The noise can be heard everywhere and always at the same strength, and moreover uniformly, both by day and night."[55] The topography of the burrow complicates and obscures judgments about the distance and location of sounds. Because of its labyrinthine construction, and the resonances generated by such involutions, the burrow blends sounds that originate from the outside with those that originate inside the passages. The German title of the tale, "*Der Bau*," accentuates this fact. Because of its strange denotation, the word is nearly impossible to translate into English. As Mladen Dolar suggests, "It can mean the process of building, construction; the result of building, the edifice; the structure, the making (of a plant, of a novel…); a jail, a burrow, a hole in the ground, a mine. The oscillation is not only between the process and the result…but also between erecting an edifice and digging a hole."[56] Oscillating between above and below, the status of *der Bau* similarly oscillates between inside and outside. Rather than read the passages of the burrow as metaphors for Kafka's textual production, it might be more fruitful to recognize something *organic* about the burrow's topology. Like an ear, the burrow leads from a single soft and protected entrance into a series of tunnels and passageways of differing (but specialized) size and function. And, as with the ear, sound does not simply travel through the burrow, but penetrates it from various points. Just as vibrations travel through the bones of the skull to be received inside the ear, the burrow is similarly permeable, combining signals from both inside and out into a single resonance.

UNDERDETERMINATION

In his book *Individuals*, philosopher P. F. Strawson imagines what it would be like to inhabit a "purely auditory world," a world that is known through no other sensory modality than the ear.[57] Strawson notes, surprisingly, that this purely auditory world would be a world without space. He argues,

> Where sense experience is not only auditory in character, but also at least tactual and kinaesthetic as well…we can then sometimes assign spatial predicates on the strength of hearing alone. But from this fact it does not follow that where experience is supposed to be exclusively auditory in character, there would any place for spatial concepts.…Sounds of course have temporal relations to each other, and may vary in character in certain ways: in loudness, pitch and timbre. But they have no intrinsic spatial characteristics.[58]

Spatial predicates rely on visual, tactual, or kinesthetic contributions that supplement audition, on a multimodal perception of the world. Strawson's space-less auditory world is indeed uni-modal: hearing without seeing (or touching or moving). While space-less, this auditory world is hardly without content; it forms an immanent sphere of sounds related to each other (and these relations would be absolutely intrinsic) but not related to other entities or predicates imported from non-auditory sensory modalities.

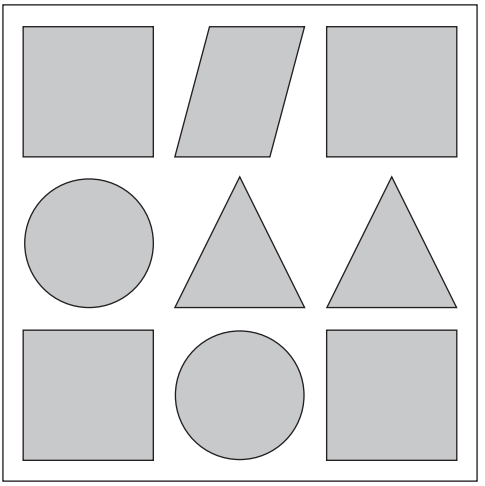

Figure 5.1 After P. F. Strawson, *Individuals*, 22.

This purely auditory world has some unexpected features; in particular, it raises a strange issue concerning identity. Strawson argues that, in a purely auditory world, one can only establish *qualitative* identity but not *numerical* identity. That is, without reference to a spatial framework, one can only establish that two sounds sound alike (i.e., that they are qualitatively identical), but we cannot definitively establish that they are the same numerically distinct individual. For example, we may hear two pipings in succession that, as far as we can discriminate, are qualitatively identical, but we could never be sure if they are two numerically distinct sounds or one numerically identical particular sounding twice.

This may seem an odd problem to fret about, but it is consequential for understanding the logic at work in acousmatic listening. If we contrast the purely auditory world with the spatial world, we can begin to see just how odd this problem really is. Strawson sets up the question of numerical and qualitative identity by giving a diagram similar to figure 5.1.[59]

The diagram helps to disambiguate two senses of the concept "the same." According to Strawson, when we say "The figure in the top-left-hand corner of this diagram is the same as the figure that has a parallelogram to its right and a circle beneath it," we are speaking about the same *numerically identical* object. Whereas, if we say "The figure in the top-left-hand corner of the diagram is the same as the figure in the bottom-right-hand corner," we are speaking of two objects that are the same only in terms of their *qualitative identity*.[60] Qualitative identity means that we are talking about the same *type* or *universal* (i.e., each token or particular possesses the quality); numerical identity means that we are talking about one and the same re-identifiable token or particular. In the spatial world, we can easily distinguish between these two kinds of identity because of the role that location plays in re-identifying numerically distinct particulars.

But in a purely auditory world, there are serious worries about the status of numerical identity. How can we tell the difference between two qualitatively identical particulars and one numerically identical particular played twice? Can any particular in

a purely auditory world be re-identifiable as numerically identical? Strawson writes, "A note could be re-identified, or a sequence of notes or a sonata. But what sense could be given to the idea of identifying a particular sound as the same again after an interval during which it is not heard?"[61] Re-identification could only happen at the level of qualitative identity—at the level of the *type*, like a pitch class, a pattern, a musical work, or a sound object—but not at the level of individual tokens or material things. A purely auditory world, surprisingly enough, turns out to be a world where types or universals, rather than particulars, are primary.

Strawson's distinction between numerical and qualitative identity is useful for analyzing an aspect of Kafka's tale in a theoretically rigorous manner. As the mole flits from fickle worry to fickle worry, running through its seven hypotheses, the mysterious sound is ascribed to different *numerically distinct* sources and causes: a whistling crack, the gurgling of water, some small fry, a swarm of small fry, or a large creature much like the mole. At the same time, the sound remains *qualitatively identical* throughout. It is the same sound again and again or, at the very least, the mole recognizes the sonic effect as qualitatively the same: "always on the same thin note, with regular pauses, now a sort of whistling but again like a kind of piping." Only the qualitative identity of the sound can be guaranteed; its numerical identity is always insecure. Kafka brings this condition to the fore by having his narrator hypothesize so many different, yet logically possible, attributions. The anxious uncertainty that underscores the narrator's fickle hypotheses registers an insight into the logic of acousmatic sound: namely, that the auditory effect, when unaccompanied by contributions from other senses, underdetermines ascriptions of source and cause. To put it another way, given a certain qualitatively identical sound object, its numerical identity cannot be secured without the contributions of the other senses to report on the state of its cause and source.

The frantic hypotheses of the mole rely on acousmatic underdetermination to permit their constantly changing attributions. The auditory effect cannot be simply reunited with its source and cause. Nor can it be absolutely separated. By keeping alive the search for the source, Kafka's narrator does not posit an ontological separation of the sound object from its source. Rather than develop the difference between the auditory effect and its source in ontological terms, Kafka deploys acousmatic sound in order to emphasize the *spacing* of source, cause, and effect, without simply permitting their separation.[62] This spacing of source, cause, and effect provokes a feeling of anxiety. The constant reappearance of the mysterious sound, with its underdetermination of source and cause, is the motor that drives the imagination of the narrator through a series of anxious hypotheses.[63]

CERTAINTY AND UNCERTAINTY

This analysis of acousmatic sound, in which an acousmatically auditioned sonic effect necessarily underdetermines ascriptions of source and cause, contrasts with Schaeffer's own analysis. In the *Traité*, the acousmatic reduction functions as a relay on the path to reduced listening. The latter treats the auditory effect as a sound object detachable from causal and worldly affiliations. When Schaeffer speaks as the theorist of the sound object, he speaks from a position of Husserlian detachment and eidetic perfection. The anxious narrator of Kafka's tale would appear to occupy a

position concerning acousmatic sound that is wholly unrelated to Schaeffer's style of thinking. How could the anxious listening of Kafka's mole be situated vis-à-vis Schaeffer's theoretically detached reduced listener? In a few brief instances in the *Traité*, Schaeffer addresses the anxiety that disturbs acousmatic sound, although he is quick to dismiss it. At one point, he writes:

> For the traditional musician and for the acoustician, an important aspect of the recognition of sounds is the identification of the sonorous sources. When the latter are effectuated without the support of vision, *musical conditioning is unsettled*. Often surprised, often uncertain, we discover that much of what we thought we were hearing was in reality only seen, and explained, by the context.[64]

Schaeffer acknowledges that there is something unsettled, or unsettling, about acousmatic sound. However, the feeling is attributed to the challenge of overcoming "musical conditioning," of overturning longstanding habits that supplement pure audition with visual and tactual information. Perhaps Schaeffer misrecognizes what precisely is unsettling about acousmatic sound. The uneasiness is not the discomfort of acquiring a new habit, of teaching the ear—that old dog!—a new trick.

It is not the overcoming of habit that is unsettling, but rather a structural feature of acousmatic sound that is disturbing, namely, that the sound object is never quite autonomous; that this nearly-*but-not-quite*-autonomous auditory effect *necessarily* underdetermines attributions of source and cause; that the autonomous effect, when heard acousmatically, is pursued by the shadow of its source and cause, a shadow that it cannot escape because without it, the acousmaticity of a sound simply dissipates. The tension inherent in acousmatic sound depends on the possibility that it may become *dis-acousmatized* when identified with a body, or pigeonholed away as a sound object.

By emphasizing underdetermination and uncertainty in acousmatic listening, my theory of acousmatic sound differs quite dramatically from Schaefferian theory. In Schaeffer's work, the acousmatic reduction separates the eye from the ear; this anticipates the separation of the sound from its source. Schaeffer's division of the sensorium must be contrasted with the *epistemological* approach that Kafka authorizes. In the latter, one can talk about a phenomenon like *acousmaticity*, the degree to which a sound's source or cause can be ascertained. Were acousmatic sounds truly autonomous, as they are in Schaeffer's theory of the sound object, they would possess none of their gripping tension and mystery. For example, in Kafka's text, the narrator might have discovered the origin of the sound, which would have reunited source, cause, and effect while dissipating the sound's acousmaticity. However, the same dissipation would have occurred if the mole was simply resigned to treating the sound in the burrow as a sound object, secure in its ontological severance from its source and cause. How can the Schaefferian theory explain the mole's profound anxiety as anything other than pathological—a fixation on *écouter*? Without an account of acousmaticity, a theory of acousmatic listening is severely limited in its explanatory force.

Shifts in the degree of a sound's acousmaticity might be crucial for a listener. For instance, territorial listening depends upon the interception of a sonic effect that precedes the proximity of the source. Roland Barthes, in his essay "Listening," writes,

"It is doubtless by this notion of territory . . . that we can best grasp the *function* of listening, insofar as territory can be essentially defined as the space of security . . . listening is that preliminary attention which permits intercepting whatever might disturb the territorial system."[65] The thing intercepted is a signal, and yet not the source or cause. The security at work in territorial listening depends on the rapid reduction of a sonic effect to its potentially predatory source, but acousmatic underdetermination forecloses the easy attainment of such security. There are always degrees of acousmaticity. In successful territorial listening, the acousmatic source is identified ahead of its arrival. The first appearance of the sonic effect affords the territorial listener an advantage, in that the signal permeates the territory in advance of the predator. Yet, that advantage does not guarantee success; by the time the predator is seen, it is already too late; the territory has been breached. Listening, lacking a perspective but possessing a perimeter, is the first line of defense for the anxious animal.

However, the spacing of source, cause, and effect also encourages a different kind of anxious listening, which is perhaps best displayed in the cinematic figure of the *acousmêtre*, as theorized by Michel Chion.[66] Like Schaeffer's acousmatic reduction, which exploits the split between vision and audition, film is similarly divided between the projected image and the soundtrack. The *acousmêtre*—the shadowy figure whose voice can be heard, but whose body cannot be located—exploits the acousmatic underdetermination of the source by the sonic effect. It makes a sound that comes from no particular location. The acousmatic voice floats or drapes itself around the onscreen characters. According to Chion, the *acousmêtre* has four main powers: "the ability to be everywhere, to see all, to know all, and to have complete power. In other words: ubiquity, panopticism, omniscience, and omnipotence."[67]

It is precisely the spacing of the auditory effect from its source or cause that grants the *acousmêtre* and acousmatic sound their strange power. Thus, one might arrive at the laconic formulation that acousmatic sound is constituted by a structural gap. To be more precise: When source, cause, and effect are simultaneously present, acousmatic sound *is not*. Or, similarly, when the effect becomes an "essence," detached from the cause and effect, acousmatic sound *is not*. Thus, the very acousmaticity of sound—its quality of being acousmatic—depends on the spacing of source, cause, and effect. Acousmatic sound exists structurally between these two possibilities. This neither-heteronomous-nor-autonomous sound can neither be reduced to its source nor reified as an object in its own right. It only *is* when source, cause, and effect are spaced. But even to use the word *is* is itself an infelicity, for the *being* of acousmatic sound *is* to be a gap. Acousmatic sound is neither entity nor sound object nor effect nor source nor cause. It flickers into being only with spacing, with the simultaneous difference and relation of auditory effect, cause, and source. With tongue planted firmly in cheek, one could refer to acousmatic sound's ontology as a non-ontology, a *nontology*.

The simultaneously heteronomous and autonomous auditory effect raises a series of problems for the conceptualization of acousmatic sound, for this strange auditory "effect" is neither directly related to its source or cause, nor is it an object in its own right. According to Mladen Dolar, the acousmatic voice "always displays something of an effect emancipated from its cause. There is a gap between the source and its auditory result, which can never be quite bridged."[68] In fact, Dolar goes so far as to argue that the acousmatic voice can never truly be effectively latched back onto a

body, that "*there is no such thing as disacousmatization*."[69] No matter how drastic one's curiosity or how fervently one tears down the veil to see the speaker behind the curtain, there is no de-veiling of the voice. For Dolar, the source of the voice *always remains veiled by the body of the speaker*, that "there is always something totally incongruous" between a person's "aspect" and "his or her voice." According to this view, the spacing of cause and effect can never be closed, for "Every emission of the voice is by its very essence *ventriloquism*."[70] The voice is neither body nor language, but a phantom effect in excess of both fields. Like music itself, a site of interference between the acoustic and the eidetic, the voice is an illusory *akousma*, reducible to neither the materiality of the body nor the ideality of language. Situated between acoustic and eidetic registers, for Dolar, the acousmaticity of the voice is a terminal condition.

There is much more to say about Dolar's claim in chapter 7. For the time being, one must take his claim with certain qualifications. Dolar exaggerates by making this split between source, cause, and effect permanent; I, on the other hand, do not think that acousmaticity is a permanent condition, but rather a special situation. When a sound is heard in its full acousmaticity, it brings into audibility the incongruous spacing of source, cause, and effect, and (because they are implicated in the determination of source, cause, and effect) the eye and ear. This spacing can be overcome, but at that moment, the acousmaticity of the sound is gone. Some may find that state of dis-acousmatization a relief, given the anxiety, uncertainty, and underdetermination of acousmatic listening.

One can understand the impulse for reduction, whether to the eidetic intuition of the sound object or to the materiality of the source, as recoiling from an acousmatic sound's constitutive unsettledness. Schaeffer follows the former route by positioning the experience of acousmatic sound as a prologue to reduced listening. *Musique concrète* may capitalize on the spacing of source and cause afforded by radio and sound reproduction, but it diminishes the unsettling aspects of such spacing by demanding that the listener hear the sonic effects as self-generated, as autonomous sound objects bracketed from worldly connection. The privilege that Schaeffer gave to reduced listening in the theory and practice of *musique concrète* has set the terms of a great debate within sample-based electronic music ever since: to refer or not to refer? Theorists and historians of electronic music have traced the aesthetic battles over the issue of reference and identification of source and cause, often positing a roster of composers who break with Schaeffer's "puritan position" on reduced listening.[71] The roster of composers who reassert the significance of sonic sources and causes usually begins with Luc Ferrari and includes figures such as Trevor Wishart, Michel Chion, R. Murray Schafer, Hildegard Westerkamp, and Denis Smalley.[72] On the opposite side, Francisco Lopez is often singled out as a lone defender of reduced listening. Such affiliations are undoubtedly correct, insofar as acousmatic sound is construed as a compositional or aesthetic problem concerning a sample's reference or significance alone. But the problem of acousmatic sound has a larger scope that raises ontological questions about the relationship of sonic sources, causes, and effects. Beyond the compositional dilemma of acousmatic sound (to refer or not to refer?), one can detect the presence of a *decision*, motivated neither by love nor distaste for reference nor by dispassionate philosophical reasoning, but by a recoil from the unsettled (and unsettling) relationship of sonic sources, causes, and effects

inherent in acousmatic sound. To decide in favor of reduced listening is one way of negotiating sonic incongruousness—by demanding that it simply go away. To decide in favor of the source by ignoring the structural gap of acousmatic sound and reducing the effect to the source and cause is another. Neither addresses the central problem.

Since the former route has been addressed in chapter 1 and in my review of the phenomenological tradition that Schaeffer shares with figures like Jonas and Straus, I will give some extended consideration to the latter route. The desire to lift the "acousmatic veil" and dis-acousmatize the sonic effect by reattaching it to its source and cause has motivated a variety of related theoretical positions in sound studies, philosophy, and film.

1. R. Murray Schafer's writings and soundscape recordings (in association with his World Soundscape Project) are designed to encourage listeners to reconnect sounds with the environment—an environment pathologized by increasing noise levels, the preponderance of recorded and broadcast sounds, and lack of aesthetic care for sound design.[73] On the ontological register, Schafer tries to overcome Pierre Schaeffer's sound object by positing a new entity as part of the soundscape, known as the "sound event." Unlike the sound object, which holds itself deliberately to "physical and psychophysical terms" and avoids "considering [sounds'] semantic or referential aspects," the sound event places the sonic effect back into a situated spatial and cultural context.[74] "When we focus on individual sounds in order to consider their associative meanings as signals, symbols, keynotes or soundmarks, I propose to call them *sound events*, to avoid confusion with *sound objects*, which are laboratory specimens."[75]

The *decisive* aspect of Schafer's thinking is legible in his critique of *schizophonia*. For Schafer, technologies of sound reproduction have created a new sonic order where all sounds can be separated from their origins in order to be electronically transmitted, reproduced, or broadcast. The portability of sound allows for any sound to be heard anywhere. Schafer bemoans the interchangeability of all sonic environments afforded by schizophonia, and thus the dedifferentiation and lack of attention paid to the specificity of any single sonic environment. This modern state of affairs contrasts with a myth of sonic origins that grounds Schafer's thinking. "Originally all sounds were originals. They occurred at one time in one place only. Sounds were then indissolubly tied to the mechanisms that produced them. The human voice traveled only as far as one could shout. Every sound was uncounterfeitable, unique."[76] In comparison to this Edenic vision of sonic effects and sources indissolubly identified, modern schizophonia appears as a hell on earth—a condition where all sounds are doomed to circulate endlessly without attachment to their sources.

One way to challenge Schafer's account is to compare it with the theory of acousmatic sound developed thus far. First, it should be noted that acousmatic sound cannot be simply identified with mechanically reproducible or electronically transmitted sound. As I have already argued, the utilization of acousmatic situations in the form of bodily techniques and architectural practices was already well established in the 19th century. Those practices may well be schizophonic—in the sense that they encourage a separation of source, cause, and effect—but then schizophonia can no longer be identified with sound reproduction and broadcast media. Second,

environmentally situated listeners always have the potential to encounter acousmatic sounds. If we take Kafka's "The Burrow" as an example, the narrator is both environmentally situated and an auditor of acousmatic sound. There is no reason to hold with Schafer that "every sound was uncounterfeitable, unique." Even in Schafer's Edenic sonic myth, acousmatic experiences would be available. From a biological perspective, territorial listening would be the norm, not an experience of sonic plenitude. Thus there is no reason to accept that the natural or mythical condition of sounds affirms the unity and uniqueness of source, cause, and effect.

2. Schafer's work on the soundscape encourages a counter-reduction where the sonic effect is reduced back to its source or cause, as opposed to the endless tokens of types that follow from the eidetically reduced ontology of sound objects. This form of counter-reduction is often marked by its affirmative claim for sonic uniqueness. This is as apparent in the soundscape recordings made by Schafer and his World Soundscape Project, like those of the harbor in Vancouver, as it is in the work of philosopher Adrianna Cavarero. In *For More than One Voice*, Cavarero offers an ambitious rereading of the history of Western metaphysics by addressing the theme of the voice.[77] In her view, the philosophical tradition, from Plato to Derrida, has systematically suppressed the role of the voice in order to support a videocentric metaphysics, which privileges the access to truth by means of vision, *eidos, theoria*, and such. In philosophy's videocentrism, the voice has been made a refugee; thus the resonating *phoné* has been subsumed under the guise of silent logos, creating a situation where the Said, the propositional content of one's utterance, is privileged over the act of Saying. In tracing the historical disenfranchisement of *phoné*, Cavarero argues for a "vocal ontology of uniqueness," a claim that every voice indexes a unique individual. Uniqueness grounds an ethical ideal whereby individuals will no longer have their voices stolen away into the impersonality of logos, but will engage in a reciprocal exchange of sonorous vocalizations.

Cavarero surveys numerous moments from the history of Western literature and philosophy in her critique. But for the purposes of my argument, I focus on only two: her chapter on Italo Calvino's tale "A King Listens" and the appendix on Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*. Both are significant in that they invoke acousmatic situations. Cavarero's affirmation of a "vocal ontology of uniqueness," like Schafer's emphasis on the uniqueness of every sound event, can be understood in relation to the unsettled character of acousmatic sound, and as motivating the insistent reduction of the sonic effect to the materiality of its source or cause.

Cavarero's appendix offers both a reading of *Romeo and Juliet* and a response to Derrida's brief essay on the play, "Aphorism Countertime."[78] (As one might imagine, any philosopher who is writing affirmatively about the voice must deal with Derrida's work, which is predicated on a foundational critique of Western metaphysics as logocentric and phonocentric.) For Cavarero, Derrida's critique of speech in the name of writing miscasts the history of metaphysics and thus misses an opportunity to separate the role of *phoné* from logos. The history of metaphysics should be understood as a history of "the devocalization of logos, instead of as a triumph of phonocentrism."[79] Derrida is incorrect to argue that philosophy has perpetuated a metaphysics of presence that privileges acts of speech over writing and, in contrast, Cavarero asserts vision's more historically significant role: "[Derrida's] thesis

on metaphysical phonocentrism supplants the far more plausible, and philologically documentable, centrality of videocentrism."[80]

To counter Derrida's proscription of the *phoné*, Cavarero analyzes the famous balcony scene where the lovers converse under the veil of night. In that scene, Juliet poses the question "What's in a name?" in order to sensitively consider the relationship between the signifier "Romeo" and the individual designated by this name. The chain of proper names—Romeo and Montague, Juliet and Capulet—leads to a harrowing order of social, economic, and familial bonds that keep the lovers apart. Yet behind the names are the unique individuals who reciprocate each other's love. Derrida argues that although the proper name and the bearer are non-coincident, the two cannot be definitively separated; since the name of the bearer is given at birth and will persist after the bearer's demise, it cannot be simply renounced or changed at will; it is not coincident with the presence that bears it, yet that presence cannot be individuated, designated as the same, without some proper name; the name and its bearer are related through *espacement*.

Cavarero argues otherwise. The difference between the name and the unique individual who bears the name is articulated through an exchange of sonorous voices; thus the acousmatic situation of the balcony scene affords the lovers the opportunity to recognize each other's vocalic uniqueness, an exchange of pure *phoné* apart from any chain of signification. According to Cavarero,

> The crucial point is that this [unique] ontological status or, better, the singularity of the human being loved by Juliet, is manifested as voice in the balcony scene. Recognizing Romeo's voice, the young girl recognizes the uniqueness of the loved one, separable from the proper name, which is communicated to her vocally. Thus the essential bond between voice and uniqueness—theatrically underscored by a nocturnal darkness that empowers the exclusive role of the acoustic sphere—comes to the fore. . . . Shakespeare could have set the scene in the light of day. By day, the sense of the dialogue, the request to separate Romeo from his name, would not have changed. But he set the scene at night—not, or not only, because the penumbra foreshadows their death, but above all because the voice of Romeo, unseen and therefore unidentifiable through the gaze, is the immediate, sonorous revelation that is proper to that embodied uniqueness that Juliet wants to separate from the name.[81]

In addition to affording the recognition of vocalic uniqueness, the darkened setting of the balcony scene (where the lovers are "unseen and unidentifiable through the gaze") is significant. By diminishing the role of vision in the balcony scene, by short-circuiting the gaze or videocentric metaphysics, Romeo and Juliet are able to discover the "exclusive role of the acoustic sphere," which is "empowered" by "nocturnal darkness." The prohibition of visual access between Romeo and Juliet resonates with Cavarero's critique of metaphysics as fundamentally videocentric.

But what establishes "the essential bond between voice and uniqueness"? Why should the uniqueness of the beloved be any more or less unique when accessed via the ear, rather than via vision? Why should *any* sense modality be privileged in this way? (To argue that the voice is privileged because it is unseen is circular.) Since the acousmatic situation underdetermines ascriptions of source and cause—or,

one might say, it never guarantees numerical identity—there is good reason to be skeptical of Cavarero's leap toward uniqueness. What guarantees that Juliet is indeed speaking to Romeo? What if someone were imitating his voice? Derrida, without providing an explicit analysis of acousmatic sound, notes precisely this aspect of the situation: "She [Juliet] is speaking, here, in the night, and there is nothing to assure her that she is addressing Romeo himself, present in person."[82] Given the ontological agnosticism of the acousmatic situation, Cavarero's vocal ontology of uniqueness, equal and opposite to Schaeffer's ontology of the sound object, is ultimately a philosophical *decision*.

Cavarero introduces her thesis concerning the "vocal ontology of uniqueness" through a reading of Italo Calvino's short story "A King Listens."[83] Part of an unfinished collection of tales about the five senses, the story describes a king who sits immobile on his throne, listening to the sounds of his kingdom from beyond the castle walls. Unable to leave the throne, in fear that another may accede to it, the king's only access to his realm is auditory. Calvino's king is an allegorical figure for the act of listening. This is noted in the topography of the king's castle. Like the underground domicile of Kafka's "The Burrow," the king's palace is constructed like "a great ear, whose anatomy and architecture trade names and functions: pavilions, ducts, shells, labyrinths."[84] That is not the only similarity shared by "A King Listens" and "The Burrow." In both tales, the listening is characterized as a fickle act; both king and mole listen with uncertainty to the sounds that penetrate deep inside their enclosures. Paranoia runs deep, and both remain fixed in acousmatic situations that foil attempts at attaining certainty. In one instance, the king considers the sound of the changing sentries outside the palace. Wondering when he last heard the change of guards, he asks, "How many hours has it been since you heard the changing of the sentries? And what if the squad of guards faithful to you has been captured by the conspirators?"[85] If lack of sound produces a worry about security, the presence of sound cannot assuage the anxiety by bringing certainty. The king muses,

> Perhaps danger lurks in regularity itself. The trumpeter sounds the usual blast at the exact hour, as on every other day; but do you not sense that he is doing this with too much precision?…Perhaps the troops of the guard are no longer those who were faithful to you.…Or perhaps, without their being replaced, they have gone over to the side of the conspirators.…Perhaps everything continues as before, but the palace is already in the hands of usurpers.…[86]

The example could be recast in Strawson's terms. The sound of the guards is qualitatively identical to the sound expected by the king, but qualitative identity cannot guarantee the numerical identity of its source and cause. Mimicry is possible.

In a related example, the king listens intently to a beating tom-tom, unsure if the sound is real or imaginary. Does it come from the underground dungeons, where someone is tapping out a message, or is it a paranoid figment of the king's imagination? Calvino's king wonders, "You want absolute proof that what you hear comes from within you, not from outside? Absolute proof you will never have."[87]

Given the similarities between Kafka's worried mole and Calvino's paranoid king, "A King Listens" seems an odd place for Cavarero to mine a thesis concerning the voice and its ontological uniqueness. Cavarero's reading centers on a single episode

in the tale, when the king overhears a singing voice transported to the palace on a breeze. Upon hearing the unknown woman's song, the king's anxieties are momentarily assuaged. The woman's voice effects a moment of transformation; it is inassimilable to the worried posture of the king's paranoid listening. Upon hearing the voice, the king notes that "it is no longer fear that makes you prick up your ears."[88] The king, attracted by the sound of the voice, articulates a sentiment that is central for Cavarero's account. Calvino writes,

> A voice means this: there is a living person, throat, chest, feelings, who sends into the air this voice, different from all other voices. A voice involves the throat, saliva, infancy, the patina of experienced life, the mind's intentions, the pleasure of giving a personal form to sound waves. What attracts you is the pleasure this voice puts into existing: into existing as a voice; but this pleasure leads you to imagine how this person might be different from every other person, as the voice is different.[89]

The king experiences a moment of transcendence as he is ravished by the singing voice. Cavarero reads this episode as attesting to the "simple vocal self-revelation" of a unique individual, a uniqueness that is never available to the semantic register, which uses a shared and impersonal lexicon to make its statements, but only available to the fleshy singularity of vocal emission.[90] "When the human voice vibrates," Cavarero asserts, "there is someone in flesh and bone who emits it."[91] Although Cavarero admits that the "corporal root of uniqueness is also perceptible by sight," the invisibility of the voice is privileged because it is hidden and interior. Vocal emission corresponds with "the fleshy cavity that alludes to the deep body, the most bodily part of the body. The impalpability of sonorous vibrations, which is as colorless as the air, comes out of a wet mouth and arises from the red of the flesh. This is also why, as Calvino suggests, the voice is the equivalent of what the unique person has that is most hidden and most genuine."[92]

By placing emphasis on the scene of overheard singing, Cavarero uses Calvino's text to develop her central thesis concerning the vocal ontology of uniqueness. In a thetic sentence, Cavarero asserts, "Every voice 'certainly comes from a person, unique, unrepeatable, like every person,' Calvino assures us. He calls our attention to what we might call a vocal phenomenology of uniqueness. This is an ontology that concerns the incarnate singularity of every existence insofar as she or he manifests her- or himself vocally."[93] In positing this thesis, Cavarero neglects to cite the rest of Calvino's sentence, an omission that changes the sentiment substantially. Here is the full passage:

> That voice comes certainly from a person, unique, inimitable like every person; a voice, however, is not a person, it is something suspended in the air, detached from the solidity of things. The voice, too, is unique and inimitable, but perhaps in a different way from a person: they might not resemble each other, voice and person. Or else, they could resemble each other in a secret way, not perceptible at first: the voice could be the equivalent of the hidden and most genuine part of the

> person. Is it a bodiless you that listens to a bodiless voice? In that case, whether you actually hear it or merely remember it or imagine it makes no difference.[94]

Calvino's sentiment is far less thetic and self-assured than in Cavarero's reading, for the statement that the "voice comes certainly from a person, unique, inimitable like every person" appears in the midst of a rapidly shifting series of hypotheses, queries, and worries. Immediately after asserting the uniqueness of a voice, Calvino seems to deny its immediate association with the fleshy materiality of the person from whom it is emitted. The voice is detached or separated from its source. The king entertains a thought much closer to Dolar's position that there is always something incongruous between a person's voice and aspect than Cavarero's "simple truth of the vocal," where the voice immediately communicates "the elementary givens of existence."[95] Perhaps voice and body are related, sharing a deep, secret resemblance, but nothing guarantees such resemblance. Recoiling from such uncertainty, the king moves in a direction where he posits the voice as disembodied, fully detachable and distinct from the source of its emission. The king's final thought should recall Schaeffer's eidetic reduction. The voice becomes a sound object, severed from source and cause. Moreover, as in Schaeffer's eidetic reduction, where imaginative variation is used to reveal the essence of a sound object, the mode of presentation is indifferent—it makes no difference whether the voice is real, remembered, or imagined.

Another scene from Calvino's tale further challenges Cavarero's claim concerning the uniqueness of the voice. In an attempt to find the singing woman, the king entertains the possibility of staging a singing contest in which all female subjects would be ordered to sing for the king. Upon hearing her voice, the king would be able to declare, "She is the one!" and discover the unique source of the voice. Just as before, the king begins to doubt his plan: "But are you sure that, for the steps of the throne, it would be the same voice? That it would not try to imitate the intonation of the court singers? That it would not be confused with the many voices you have become accustomed to hearing. . . ."[96] It is not clear how Cavarero's vocal ontology of uniqueness responds to the possibility of vocal dissimulation. Thus, in the midst of such a perpetually shifting context, it seems unwise to select any particular assertion of Calvino or the king as definitive. Rather, the *indecision* itself is central; the acousmatic situation, whether heard deep in the burrow or in the throne room, underdetermines ascriptions of sonic effects to sources and causes. There are many ways to recoil from that situation. To select, as Cavarero does, one assertion from out of the flow of Calvino's text as supposed proof for a vocal phenomenology betrays a lack of close attention to what Calvino has to say about listening. It is deaf to the nuances of Calvino's text and a far inferior form of listening to that of the king.

3. The counter-reduction of Schafer and Cavarero, motivated by acousmatic uncertainty, is really a drive to dis-acousmatize sound. But while music and philosophy have developed two characteristic strategies for dis-acousmatizing sound, by recasting the auditory effect into a sound object ontologically distinct from its source or cause or by reducing the auditory effect onto the materiality of its source and cause, film seems to have only the latter option. The role of dis-acousmatization in film has been thoroughly explored by Michel Chion, whose pioneering work on film sound is often centered on the issues of acousmatic sound. In *The Voice in Cinema*,

Chion offers numerous instances where an *acousmêtre* is introduced early in the film, in order to motivate its eventual dis-acousmatization.[97] Chion notes,

> An entire image, an entire story, an entire film can thus hang on the epiphany of the acousmêtre. Everything can boil down to a quest to bring the acousmêtre into the light. In this description we can recognize *Mabuse* and *Psycho*, but also the numerous mystery, gangster, and fantasy films that are all about 'defusing' the acousmêtre, who is the hidden monster, or the Big Boss, or an evil genius, or on rare occasions a wise man.[98]

A comic use of dis-acousmatization appears in the final scene of *Singin' in the Rain*. Throughout the film, Kathy Selden (played by Debbie Reynolds) has been acting as the voice double for the selfish and talentless Lina Lamont (played by Jean Hagen). Lamont, who has been suppressing Selden's voice by using it as her own, finally gets her comeuppance when she is exposed as a fraud on the opening night of her new musical picture. Just before Lamont is exposed, there is a remarkable scene where the camera reveals both women standing before microphones but separated by a curtain. Jean Hagen stands in front miming the song, while Debbie Reynolds stands behind it singing (see figure 5.2). The moment of dis-acousmatization occurs when the trio of Gene Kelly, Donald O'Connor, and Millard Mitchell lifts the curtain that acts as a mythical Pythagorean veil. In Chion's insightful description, "An astonishing shot reveals the two women, one behind the other, with the two microphones lined up, both singing with this single voice that wanders between them looking for its source. The audience understands and attributes the voice to its true body"[99] (see figure 5.3).

After the curtain is lifted and Debbie Reynolds is revealed as the true source of the voice, both the onscreen and actual audience are treated to a duet version of "You Are My Lucky Star." The symbolic nature of the performance is obvious enough: Kelly and Reynolds sing a duet together that establishes the reciprocity of their love. Furthermore, Reynolds now gets to come out from behind the curtain and receive the first public acknowledgment from her beloved of their veiled relationship, as well as become the rightful recipient of the audience's adoration. Dis-acousmatization has restored everything to its rightful place.

However, the security of *Singin' in the Rain*'s final dis-acousmatization is easily shaken. Reynolds's voice finds its true body only in the symbolic register. In reality, something much more disturbing occurs. In their study of *Singin' in the Rain*, Hess and Dabholkar noted that "Debbie Reynolds had a natural, virtually untrained singing voice that worked perfectly for simple, bouncy songs, but not so well for others."[100] "You Are My Lucky Star" proved to be too much for the young starlet to handle and, in the final duet with Gene Kelly, her voice was dubbed after many takes. Reynolds's actual voice, which was used while Jean Hagen lip-synched to "Singin' in the Rain," is not the same voice issuing from her lips in the final duet. That voice belonged to another little-known voice double named Betty Noyes.[101]

By counterpoising the reflections on the phenomenology of sound that opened this chapter against the three examples taken from sound studies, philosophy, and film, we attain an overview of the two common strategies employed in dodging the constitutive underdetermination of acousmatic sound. Acousmatic sound is unsettling because it depends on a structural spacing of sonic source, cause, and effect

Figure 5.2 Final scene of *Singin' in the Rain*. Courtesy of Photofest NYC.

Figure 5.3 Moment of dis-acousmatization from *Singin' in the Rain*. Courtesy of Photofest NYC.

that is fundamentally insecure. On the one hand, there is the drive to secure certainty by discovering the material source of acousmatic sound, by lifting the mythical Pythagorean veil and seeing the source in all of its nakedness. On the other hand, there is the drive to secure certainty by bracketing everything that is inessential to encounter the sound object in all of its absolute and essential detachment. In contrast to these two reductions, the utility of Kafka's "The Burrow" is clear. Kafka chooses neither of these routes, maintaining the anxiety inherent in acousmatic sound against any reduction. In his text, one touches the root of the acousmatic situation, free of any drive to theorize away the problems of acousmatic sound.

CHIASMUS

Although the protagonist of "The Burrow" is certainly uncertain, the reader of this tale is not free from epistemic worry either. Among the various fickle hypotheses concerning the source of the sound heard in the burrow, attentive readers will not fail to notice one glaring omission. Is it not possible that the sound heard in the burrow is simply produced by the mole? Couldn't the sound's persistence and omnipresence be explained by some kind of physiological or psychic tinnitus, a ringing in the head of the narrator falsely ascribed to the passageways of the burrow? There is nothing in Kafka's text to help rule out this possibility, although the mole never explicitly considers it. Upon reflection, it appears that Kafka may have given the reader a tantalizing clue that this is indeed the case. After attributing various causes to the sound, the mole finally convinces himself that "the whistling is made by some beast, and moreover not by a great many small ones, but by a single big one."[102] In developing this deduction, the mole claims, "I could clearly recognize that the noise came from some kind of burrowing similar to my own. . . ."[103] A double is posited, perhaps revealing a tenuous identification between the narrator and a rival.

The possibility that the burrower misrecognizes his own sonic production for that of another forms a corollary to my earlier claim. If the sonic effect underdetermines attributions of its source or cause, then the location of that source as definitively located inside or outside the listener's own body also becomes uncertain. Kafka, whose attention to the strange paradoxicality of sound is exemplary, is not alone in exploring this phenomenon. In this respect, "The Burrow" could be placed into a wider literary context where such reversals of inner and outer often occur as a function of sonic underdetermination.

Take Poe's famous story "The Tell-Tale Heart." Everyone knows the tale of the hyperaesthesic murderer who kills his elderly victim, chops up the body, and buries it under the floorboards, only to be driven to madness and confess the crime because of the incessant post-mortem beating of the victim's heart. Yet the plot alone does not do justice to the auditory undecidability of Poe's tale. The reader is left with grave doubts about its veracity, told by an unreliable narrator as a way of ostensibly conveying the sanity and reason behind his murderous act.

In the final scene, the murderer sits with the police in the very room where the body is buried to demonstrate his ease and composure. Soon the sound begins and the murderer's bearing becomes unsettled. The beating of the heart may belong to the victim, as the narrator implies, yet it may just as well belong to the murderer

himself. The source is underdetermined, a chiastic swap of inner and outer. At first it seems that the police have not heard the sound, yet this turns quickly into paranoia:

> I gasped for breath—and yet the officers heard it not. I talked more quickly—more vehemently; but the noise steadily increased. . . . It grew louder—louder—louder! And still the men chatted pleasantly, and smiled. Was it possible they heard not? Almighty God!—no, no! They heard!—they suspected!—they knew!—they were making a mockery of my horror! . . . Any thing was more tolerable than this derision! I could bear those hypocritical smiles no more![104]

The ambiguity is preserved in the final line of the story: " 'Villains!' I shrieked, 'dissemble no more! I admit the deed!—tear up the planks! here, here!—It is the beating of his hideous heart!' "[105] But where exactly is the location of this "here"? Does it refer, ostensively, to the location under the planks or to the breast of the murderer? Without a visual gesture to accompany the phrase, the reader will never know to where the murderer's finger points. If it were the murderer's body producing the sound, the dissociation of the subject from his own body would be a sign of the madness that has already begun. This possibility is supported by the subtle fact that the last line of the text is in quotation marks, the only place in the entire narrative where the murderer quotes himself. The reification of the narrator's voice within the discourse depends on an unraveling of the auto-affective circuit of the subject from its body. The quotation, like the sound of the beating heart, cannot be definitively situated or possessed.

Poe's murderer, unlike Kafka's mole, considers the possibility of the sound's subjective source before rejecting it. In the final scene with the policemen, the sound begins as something other than a beating, occupying, like Kafka's *Pfeifen*, a much higher register. Poe writes, "My head ached, and I fancied a ringing in my ears. . . . The ringing became more distinct. . . . I talked more freely to get rid of the feeling; but it continued and gained definitiveness—until, at length, I found that the noise was not within my ears. . . . Yet the sound increased. . . . It was a low, dull, quick sound—much such a sound as a watch makes when enveloped in cotton."[106]

The change in register is fascinating; as the sound grows in distinctness and definitiveness, it also shifts in pitch from high to low, from inner to outer. The repeated presence of these two registers—one occupied by a high-pitched ringing, whistling, or *Pfeifen*, the other occupied by a low rumbling, beating, or *Zischen*—leads me toward a tenuous speculation. Michel Chion, in *Film: A Sound Art*, introduces the idea of a "fundamental noise" in cinema, usually a continuous or periodic complex sound mass (like the sound of the ocean, gyrating fans, rain, flowing air, breathing, repetitive clicking, or hissing), a sound that other sounds try to cover up, but that gets uncovered again at the end of the film.[107] It acts as a sonic floor upon which the action is situated that, when uncovered, exposes a cosmos indifferent to human agents in its impersonal, mechanical repetition. Chion considers the reason for the presence of fundamental noises in film: that they first emerged as attempts to cover the mechanical sound of the projector; but his discussion also reverses the story, suggesting that we hear in the projector's noise another instance of the incessant, inhuman, cosmological machinery that fundamental noises represent.

Borrowing Chion's terminology, could it be that our two sounds—the high-pitched *Pfeifen* and the low-pitched *Zischen*—are fundamental acousmatic sounds? Of course, these sounds would not have emerged as ways of covering (or prolonging) the sound of the film projector; they would have emerged from a different, less mechanical origin. It is suggestive that these two sounds are also present in John Cage's foundational account of his visit to an anechoic chamber. Cage, upon entering the chamber at Harvard University in order to finally hear silence, expresses surprise at what he discovers: "[I] heard two sounds, one high and one low. When I described them to the engineer in charge, he informed me that the high one was my nervous system in operation, the low one my blood in circulation. Until I die there will be sounds. And they will continue following my death. One need not fear about the future of music."[108] I want to distinguish the punch line of Cage's anecdote—"one need not fear about the future of music"—from an earlier punch line given to the engineer. Imagine the uncanny shock at realizing that two sounds, which were assumed at the outset to be attributed to exterior sources, were actually subjectively produced. Cage's stunning confusion of inner and outer recapitulates the uncanny sonic underdetermination of Kafka and Poe's tales. Inner to outer, outer to inner—once the chiasmus is underway, it matters little in which direction we traverse.[109]

By reading—or should I say listening to—"The Burrow," an aporia at the heart of acousmatic sound is disclosed. The aporia depends on the fact that the auditory effect, when unaccompanied by contributions from other senses, underdetermines ascriptions of source and cause; and, as a corollary, that the chiasmus of sonic ascriptions to inner and outer sounds occurs as a function of this underdetermination. We may be surprised to find this articulated in Kafka's tale, for what can Kafka tell us about listening? But then again, why should we give more credence to Hans Jonas or Erwin Stein or Pierre Schaeffer than Kafka? Why should the philosopher be a more insightful, more systematic researcher than the novelist? If listening to "The Burrow" can shed light on the problems of acousmatic sound—so be it. Who ever said Kafka was only for reading?

of de Duve and vice-versa. Compare de Duve, 351, n. 10, and Nancy, *The Muses*, 110, n. 44, and 188, n. 22.
53. Caux, *Almost Nothing*, 34 (translation modified).
54. de Duve, *Kant after Duchamp*, 352.
55. Ibid.
56. Nancy, *Listening*, 1–2.

Chapter 5

1. *Traité*, 269. I refer the reader to my critique of this aspect of Schaeffer's thinking in chap. 1 in the section titled "Originary experience and the problem of history."
2. Hans Jonas, "The Nobility of Sight," in *The Phenomenon of Life: Toward a Philosophical Biology* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2001), 135–151. Harper & Row first published Jonas's text in 1961, but all references are to the 2001 edition.
3. Ibid., 137.
4. The argument recalls Plato's rejection of artistic mimesis as producing only copies of copies, twice removed from the reality of the forms. In *The Republic*, Book X, Plato compares the cabinetmaker and the painter, both imitators, with God, the true creator of the forms. The imitator "does not make that which really is, he could not be said to make real being but something that resembles real being.… [His work] is only a dim adumbration in comparison with reality" (597, a–b).
5. Jonas, "The Nobility of Sight," 137–138.
6. Erwin Straus, "The Forms of Spatiality," in *Phenomenological Psychology*, trans. Erling Eng (New York: Basic Books, 1966), 3–37. This analysis is cited and incorporated into Straus's magnum opus, *The Primary World of the Senses*. For the original German edition, see Erwin Straus, *Vom Sinn der Sinne, ein Beitrag zur Grundlegung der Psychologie* (Berlin: J. Springer, 1935). For the revised English translation see, Erwin Straus, *The Primary World of the Senses: A Vindication of Sensory Experience*, trans. Jacob Needleman (New York: Free Press, 1963).
7. Straus, "The Forms of Spatiality," 8.
8. Ibid.
9. Ibid., 9.
10. Jonas, "The Nobility of Sight," 138.
11. Scruton, *Aesthetics of Music*, 221.
12. Ibid., 2–3.
13. Ibid., 3.
14. Husserl, *Ideas I*, §32.
15. Although the term "acousmatic" is not deployed, I would assert that Kafka is one of the great thinkers of acousmatic sound. As I argued in chapters 2 and 3, histories of the term acousmatic typically constrain the discourse on acousmatic sound to the appearance of the word in the historical record: a history of Pythagorean veils and acousmates. Rather than confine the historiography of acousmatic sound to a criterion that only accepts instances where some term (acousmatic, akousma, acousmatique, acousmate, etc.) appears, my approach has been to investigate instances where the sensory conditions of acousmatic sound are invoked, in all of their cultural and historical specificity, regardless of what descriptive terms are present.
16. Franz Kafka, "The Burrow," in *The Complete Stories*, ed. Nahum N. Glatzer (New York: Schocken Books, 1971), 325–359.

17. Ibid., 343.
18. Ibid., 344.
19. Walter Benjamin, "Franz Kafka," in *Illuminations*, ed. Hannah Arendt, trans. Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken Books, 1969), 132.
20. For recent work on Kafka from the perspective of the auditory turn, see David Copenhafer, "'Is it even singing at all?' Kafka's Musicology," in *Invisible Ink: Philosophical and Literary Fictions of Music* (Ph.D. diss., University of California–Berkeley, 2004); Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*, trans. Dana Polan (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1986); Mladen Dolar, *A Voice and Nothing More*, chap. 7, and "The Burrow of Sound," *Differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies*, Vol. 22, Nos. 2–3 (2011): 112–139; Kata Gellen, "Hearing Spaces: Architecture and Acoustic Experience in Modernist German Literature," *Modernism/Modernity*, Vol. 17, No. 4 (2011): 799–818; John Hamilton, "'*Ist das Spiel vielleicht unangenehm?*' Musical Disturbances and Acoustic Space in Kafka," *Journal of the Kafka Society of America*, Nos. 1–2 (2004), 23–27 (a special issue dedicated to Kafka and music); and Peter Szendy, *Sur écoute: esthétique de l'espionnage* (Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 2007), 71–79.
21. Heinz Politzer, *Franz Kafka: Parable and Paradox* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1962), 319.
22. Rosemary Arrojo, "Writing, Interpreting and the Control of Meaning," in *Translation and Power*, eds. Edwin Gentzler and Maria Tymoczko (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 2002), 66.
23. Ibid.
24. In line with the textualist account, literary theorist Henry Sussman writes this about "Der Bau": "the construction is already a deconstruction to the same extent that it has been constructed." The composition of the burrow becomes an allegory for the impossible construction of the text. See Sussman, *Franz Kafka: Geometrician of Metaphor* (Madison, WI: Coda Press, 1979), 149.
25. Stanley Corngold, *Franz Kafka: the Necessity of Form* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1988), 282.
26. Corngold's reading focuses on the role played by the figure of chiasmus (or reversal) in Kafka's texts. For Corngold, reversal is the central trope that characterizes the uncontrollable passages of "The Burrow." He offers this bit of the mole's internal soliloquy as exemplary: "And it is not only by external enemies that I am threatened. There are also enemies in the bowels of the earth. I have never seen them, but legend tells of them and I firmly believe them. . . . Their very victims can scarcely have seen them; they come, you hear the scratching of their claws just under you . . . and you are already lost. Here it is of no avail to console yourself with the thought that you are in your own house; far rather are you in theirs" (Kafka, "The Burrow," 326). Notice how the passage inverts the ownership of the burrow; the territorial speaker has been turned into the territorialized trespasser. According to Corngold, Kafka's chiasms "annihilate the opposition between the categories of victim/enemy, inside/outside, legend/knowledge, destroying the specificity of self-identical terms" (Corngold, *Franz Kafka*, 125). The text produces a series of inversions where terms on either side of the equation can never be brought back to equivalence. Like the passages, rooms, and labyrinth of the burrow, the reader follows a circuitous route that doubles back, reverses, leads nowhere, and returns back to where it started, but

never simply back to where it began. Such maddening circuits mark the experience of traversing Kafka's constructed passages.

27. On the sound: As the existential self, see Wilhelm Emrich, *Franz Kafka: A Critical Study of His Writings*, trans. Sheema Zeben Buehne (New York: Ungar, 1968), 215 ff.; as the impending other, see Politzer, *Franz Kafka: Parable and Paradox*, 328–330; as complusion, see Walter Sokel, *Kafka—Tragik und Ironie: Zur Struktur seiner Kunst* (München and Wien, DE: Albert Langen/Georg Müller, 1964), 371–387; as the fear of solitude, see Heinrich Henel, " 'The Burrow,' or How to Escape from a Maze," in *Franz Kafka*, ed. Harold Bloom (New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1986), 121; as mental illness, see Hermann J. Weigand, "Franz Kafka's 'The Burrow': An Analytical Essay," in *Franz Kafka: A Collection of Criticism*, ed. Leo Hamalian (New York: McGraw Hill, 1974), 104; as trench warfare, see Wolf Kittler, "*Grabenkrieg—Nervenkrieg—Medienkrieg. Franz Kafka und der 1. Weltkrieg*," in *Armaturen der Sinne*, eds. Jochen Hörisch and Michael Wetzel (München, DE: Wilheml Fink Verlag, 1990), 289–309; as tuberculosis, see Britta Maché, "The Noise in the Burrow: Kafka's Final Dilemma," *The German Quarterly*, Vol. 55, No. 4 (Nov. 1982): 526–540; and Mark Boulby, "Kafka's End: A Reassessment of the Burrow," *The German Quarterly*, Vol. 55, No. 2 (Mar. 1982): 184. Some evidence for the tubercular reading of the sound is offered by Kafka's friend and executor Max Brod in his epilogue to *Beschreibung eines Kampfes: Novellen, Skizzen, Aphorismen aus dem Nachlass* (Frankfurt, DE: S. Fischer, 1954), 350. However, Brod's claims are often inconsistent and disputed by Kafka scholars.
28. Deleuze and Guattari, *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*, 3.
29. Ibid., 4.
30. Ibid., 5.
31. Ibid., 6.
32. Ibid.
33. Deleuze and Guattari base their argument on Kafka's diaries and letters, and his well-known claim to be "unmusical." The diary entry of Dec. 13, 1911, offers evidence for Deleuze and Guattari's association of music with the problems of signification: "Brahms concert by the Singing Society. The essence of my unmusicalness consists in my inability to enjoy music connectedly, it only now and then has an effect on me, and how seldom it is a musical one. The natural effect of music on me is to circumscribe me with a wall, and its only constant influence on me is that, confined in this way, I am different from what I am when free." Later, Kafka ontologizes his unmusicality into a way of being, an "*Unmusikalisch-Sein*" in a letter to Milena of July 17, 1920. The unique feature of Deleuze and Guattari's reading of Kafka is the distinction they draw between music and sound, which turns Kafka's *Unmusikalisch-Sein* into a virtue when considering sound and sonic phenomena. Kafka's sensitivity to sound is legendary. See Franz Kafka, *The Diaries of Franz Kafka 1910–1913*, ed. Max Brod, trans. Joseph Kresh (New York: Schocken Books, 1948), 176; and *Letters to Milena*, trans. Philip Boehm (New York: Schocken Books, 1990), 92.
34. Deleuze and Guattari, *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*, 13.
35. Ibid.
36. And, to give away the punch line of Deleuze and Guattari's book, so does Kafka's own use of the German language.

37. In fact, it is only the small fry that might be producing the high-pitched sound (not the protagonist of "The Burrow") that are described as "becoming-molecular," an extreme version of becoming-animal. See Deleuze and Guattari, *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*, 37.
38. One should note that it is precisely these tunnels and passages that are the mole's productions.
39. Kafka, *Complete Stories*, 362.
40. Ibid., 281.
41. Ibid.
42. Wagner, "Beethoven," 68.
43. Ibid.
44. Pliny, *Natural History*, 10.88. The translation is taken from *The Natural History of Pliny the Elder*, *Vol. II*, trans. John Bostock and H. T. Riley (London: Henry G. Bohn, 1855), 547.
45. Alexander Pope, "An Essay on Man," in *Poetry and Prose of Alexander Pope*, ed. Aubrey Williams (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1969), Epistle I, 211–212.
46. Kafka, *Complete Stories*, 343.
47. Ibid., 345.
48. Ibid.
49. Ibid., 347.
50. Ibid.
51. Ibid., 348.
52. Ibid., 353.
53. Ibid.
54. Ibid., 356.
55. Ibid., 344, 353.
56. Dolar, *A Voice and Nothing More*, 166, n. 3.
57. P. F. Strawson, *Individuals: An Essay in Descriptive Metaphysics* (Garden City, NY: Anchor Books, 1963), 64.
58. Ibid., 56–57.
59. Ibid., 22.
60. Ibid.
61. Ibid., 62.
62. By employing the term *spacing*, I am invoking Derrida's use of the term *espacement*. Derrida describes spacing as "not only the interval, the space constituted between two things (which is the usual sense of spacing), but also spac*ing*, the operation, or . . . movement of setting aside. . . . It marks what is set aside from itself, what interrupts every self-identity." See Jacques Derrida, *Positions*, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), 106–107, n. 42. In this sense, spacing is a term that marks the stoppage of any closed system of auto-affection or identity claims based on the ground of presence. Something must be spaced from itself for it to be capable of affecting itself. For Derrida, spacing appears as one of many terms associated with *différance*, which does not simply mean difference but plays on the idea of something being, within itself, both temporally deferred or delayed and spatially demarcated or differentiated. A paradigmatic example appears in *Speech and Phenomena*, where, through a reading of Husserl on time consciousness, Derrida exposes Husserl's own thinking of the spacing at the heart of the "living present" and

thus opens up the tight circle of auto-affection that grounds Husserlian subjectivity. By invoking the term in the context of sonic source, cause, and effect, I am arguing that acousmatic sound should be characterized in terms of spacing. Acousmatic sound necessitates thinking of the relation of source, cause, and effect as both unified into a single sound and simultaneously differing as distinct parts of a sound. The spacing of source, cause, and effect forces recognition of acousmatic sound as reducible to neither the synthesis of the chain of three terms nor to the privilege of any single term. Acousmatic sound must be seen as a constant deferral or referral of the effect toward a demarcated but underdetermined source and/or cause and back again. Spacing "is the index of an irreducible exterior, and at the same time of a *movement*, a displacement that indicates an irreducible alterity" (*Positions*, 81). In its underdetermination, the effect demands a movement toward its exterior, to the source and cause. And those terms cannot account for the accomplishment of the effect. The neither-autonomous-nor-heteronomous effect is the result of a perpetual displacement, a game of hide and seek among the three terms, none of which are integral on their own. Concerning the question of reduction, Derrida writes, "Spacing also signifies, precisely, the impossibility of reducing the chain to one of its links or of absolutely privileging one—or the other" (*Positions*, ibid.). In the case of acousmatic sound, the impossibility of reducing it to one of its terms (in what I call either a materialist reduction to source/cause or an eidetic reduction to the effect) has not precluded many authors from attempting such reduction. In fact, the virulence of such reductions may indeed evince spacing's operation. In spacing's movement, "the emancipation of the sign constitutes in return the desire of presence" (*Of Grammatology*, 69). In the case of the acousmatic voice, the "emancipation" of the voice constitutes the demand for the return of presence, here, in the form of two reductions—material and eidetic. The strange absence that inhabits acousmatic sound, especially in the form of the acousmatic voice, cannot be filled by an appeal to source/cause or a hypostatization of it as "sound object." Below, I address the attempts at reduction in more detail. On spacing, see *Positions*, 27, 80–81, 91–94, and 106, n. 42; *Speech and Phenomena*, 86; "Différance," in *Margins of Philosophy*, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), 8, 13; and *Of Grammatology*, Pts. I.2, I.3, and II.3. For a very good account of Derrida on *espacement*, see Martin Hägglund, *Radical Atheism: Derrida and the Time of Life* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2008), 18–19 and passim.

63. Acousmatic underdetermination plays a role not only within Kafka's narrative, but also in its reception. The glut of divergent and incompatible readings of the sound in the burrow offered by literary critics evinces the mysterious sound's underdetermination of source and cause.
64. Schaeffer, *Traité*, 93 (emphasis added).
65. Roland Barthes, "Listening," 247.
66. Chion has written widely on the *acousmêtre*, but the introduction of the term appears in his *The Voice in Cinema*, 17–29. While Chion borrows Schaeffer's acousmatic reduction to describe the *acousmêtre*, relying on the difference between the image track and the soundtrack, he does not invoke Schaeffer's eidetic reduction to sound objects or defense of reduced listening in his explanation.
67. Ibid., 24.
68. Dolar, *A Voice and Nothing More*, 67.

69. Ibid., 70.
70. Ibid.
71. Simon Emmerson, *Living Electronic Music* (London: Ashgate, 2007), 6.
72. For an informative comparison, see Emmerson, *Living Electronic Music*, 3–14, and Joanna Demers, *Listening Through the Noise* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 29–37. In addition, insights from ecological listening, based on J. J. Gibson's work, have been applied to acousmatic sound in Luke Windsor, *A Perceptual Approach to the Description and Analysis of Acousmatic Music* (Ph.D. diss., City University, 1995); and Eric Clarke, *Ways of Listening*.
73. See R. Murray Schafer, *The Soundscape*; his LP, *The Vancouver Soundscape*; World Soundscape Project (Sonic Research Studio, Communication Studies Dept., Simon Fraser University, 1974); and World Soundscape Project and Barry Truax, *The World Soundscape Project's Handbook for Acoustic Ecology* (Vancouver, CA: A.R.C. Publications, 1978).
74. R. Murray Schafer, *The Soundscape*, 130–131.
75. Ibid. Schafer defines a keynote as the anchor or fundamental sound in a soundscape, one that need not be consciously recognized, yet acts as the ground upon which other sounds are noted. See *The Soundscape*, 9–10 and passim.
76. Ibid., 90.
77. Adriana Cavarero, *For More than One Voice: Toward a Philosophy of Vocal Expression*, trans. Paul A. Kottman (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2005).
78. Jacques Derrida, "Aphorism Countertime," in *Acts of Literature*, ed. Derek Attridge (New York: Routledge, 1992), 423.
79. Cavarero, *For More than One Voice*, 215.
80. Ibid., 222.
81. Ibid., 235, 238.
82. Derrida, "Aphorism Countertime," 423.
83. Italo Calvino, "A King Listens," in *Under the Jaguar Sun*, trans. William Weaver (San Diego, CA: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1988).
84. Ibid., 38.
85. Ibid., 44.
86. Ibid.
87. Ibid., 49.
88. Ibid., 52.
89. Ibid., 54–55.
90. Cavarero, *For More than One Voice*, 3.
91. Ibid., 4.
92. Ibid.
93. Ibid., 7.
94. Calvino, "A King Listens," 53.
95. Cavarero, *For More than One Voice*, 8.
96. Calvino, "A King Listens," 57.
97. There is a strange dissymmetry between the two reductive routes found in music and in philosophy and filmic dis-acousmatization. After much reflection, I cannot think of a counterexample, where a filmic disembodied voice is simply detached from its source or cause and ontologically secured. Perhaps this option is foreclosed in film because, since the introduction of sound, film is predicated on the co-presence of

both image and soundtracks. Thus, the two sense modalities of the eye and the ear are forced into a perpetual negotiation in film and can be neither simply separated nor dissolved.

98. Chion, *The Voice in Cinema*, 23–24.
99. Ibid., 133.
100. Earl J. Hess and Pratibha A. Dabholkar, *Singin' in the Rain: The Making of an American Masterpiece* (Lawrence, KS: University of Kansas Press, 2009), 145.
101. Ibid. Also see *Singin' in the Rain*, DVD, 2 discs (Warner Home Video, 2002). Betty Noyes's voice replaced Debbie Reynolds's in the scene where Kathy Selden is seen dubbing Lena Lamont's voice for "The Dancing Cavalier" and sings "Would You?"
102. Kafka, *Complete Stories*, 353.
103. Ibid., 356.
104. Edgar Allan Poe, "The Tell-Tale Heart," in *Poetry and Tales* (New York: Library of America, 1984), 559.
105. Ibid.
106. Ibid.
107. Michel Chion, *Film: A Sound Art*, trans. Claudia Gorbman (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), 453 ff.
108. John Cage, *Silence* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1961), 8.
109. The addition of Poe to the analysis of acousmatic sound brings up a question concerning the relationship between acousmatic sound and the literary genre of the fantastic. Both Kafka's and Poe's tales could be thought to inhabit this genre, as noted by Tzvetan Todorov in his classic study of the topic. There are suggestive similarities and noteworthy differences concerning acousmatic listening and the fantastic. Todorov analyzes the "heart of the fantastic" as follows: "In a world which is indeed our world, the one we know, a world without devils, sylphides, or vampires, there occurs an event which cannot be explained by the laws of this same familiar world. The person who experiences the event must opt for one of two possible solutions: either he is the victim of an illusion of the senses, of a product of the imagination—and the laws of the world remain what they are; or else the event has indeed taken place, it is an integral part of reality—but then this reality is controlled by laws unknown to us.... The fantastic occupies the duration of this uncertainty. Once we choose one answer or the other, we leave the fantastic for a neighboring genre, the uncanny or the marvelous." Acousmatic sound, like the fantastic, could be described as occupying the duration of an uncertainty, an uncertainty about the source of the sound. This is in contrast to the fantastic uncertainty about the natural or supernatural status of the event. Acousmatic sounds are *not necessarily* dependent on a potential supernatural source—for instance, the sound in the burrow—although there may be specific practices involving acousmatic sound that ascribe to the source a supernatural origin—for instance, the angels heard in the voices of the hidden singing nuns. Similarly, when the source of the sound is disclosed, we leave acousmatic listening for another mode of listening (typically *entendre* or *écouter*) as shown in the analyses of sound studies, philosophy, and film discussed above. Todorov also claims that the experience of the fantastic "[does] not specify whether it is the reader or the character who hesitates." This is also a feature of the acousmatic sounds heard in Kafka and Poe, where the reader remains doubtful about the reliability of the narrator's testimony. See Tzvetan Todorov, *The Fantastic: A Structural Approach to a*

Literary Genre, trans. Richard Howard (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1973), 25, 27.

Chapter 6

1. At first glance, it may seem surprising to think of Les Paul's work as relevant to questions of acousmatic sound or even acousmatic music. The term "acousmatic music," popularized by François Bayle, usually refers to a style of prerecorded electronic music that stems from the tradition of Schaeffer's *musique concrète*, where a prerecorded track is diffused live on a multi-channel speaker array. As a term that practitioners of a style use to designate their own practices, one cannot argue. However, the term is often deployed to designate a category within the large heading of electronic or electroacoustic music. For instance, Leigh Landy draws a contrast between acousmatic music and live electronic music; in the latter, technology is used to manipulate and transform the sounds of live performers, while the former "is intended for loudspeaker listening and exists only in recorded tape form (tape, compact disk, computer storage)." Given the broad historical and philosophical context in which I have tried to situate acousmatic sound, I think one can question Landy's definition. Rather than think about acousmatic music as music that reconfigures the sensory ratios of seeing and hearing, and exploits imaginative and aesthetic results that stem from the underdetermination of a sound's source by its effect, Landy's definition determines acousmatic music on the basis of its recording medium, its fixity, and lack of live performers. Thus no music composed before the age of sound recording would count as acousmatic. I think such a definition undercuts the possibility of understanding Schaeffer's practice and the practice of Bayle's *musique acousmatique* as inheritors of the tradition of 19th-century absolute music and Wagnerian operatic reforms. And vice-versa, it disallows the possibility of understanding music before the age of recording as acousmatic in the sense that I have tried to define it. In other words, I do not see acousmatic music as dependent on a particular kind of audio technology or medium. It is a technique for splitting the senses and making the underdetermination of a sonic source by its effect palpable. See Leigh Landy, *Understanding the Art of Sound Organization* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2007), 14.
2. Of course, he was not the first to use overdubbing. Before Paul, there were other instances. In 1931, baritone Lawrence Tibbett sang a duet with himself in the title song of the MGM film *The Cuban Love Song*. It was released as an RCA Victor recording with a label that read "Lawrence Tibbett—baritone, with orchestra. Mr. Tibbett also sings the tenor part." In 1935, Elisabeth Schumann accomplished a similar feat, singing the duet "Abendsegen" from Humperdinck's *Hänsel und Gretel* for the HMV label. In the jazz world, multi-instrumentalist Sidney Bechet cut a famous 1941 recording of "Sheik of Araby" in which he played harmonized lead and rhythm parts. Others followed suit, like Nelson Eddy, whose voice could be heard singing with itself in the segment "The Whale Who Wanted to Sing at The Met," from the Disney film *Make Music Mine*. According to the opening titles, Eddy "does *all* the voices for the tragic story." And, perhaps most significantly for Paul and Ford, in 1947, the singer Patti Page recorded "Confess," in which she sang with herself in call and response, and later, "With My Eyes Wide Open," in which she overdubbed four-part vocal harmonies in a style that would often be compared with Paul and Ford.