

Quantum Listening

Pauline Oliveros

Ingot Pbk 64 pp

Composer and theorist Pauline Oliveros (1932–2016) brought the concept of Deep Listening to contemporary consciousness with her 1989 album of the same name and her 2005 book *Deep Listening: A Composer's Sound Practice*, in addition to the numerous listening retreats and workshops she facilitated during her lifetime. Her work was dedicated to exploring and expanding the limits of sensory perception.

Summarising her guiding philosophy, her 1999 essay *Quantum Listening* is a manifesto advocating for the practice of listening as a lifelong project towards the expansion of awareness. That essay has been republished in book form, together with new introductory reflections from fellow Deep Listening devotees Laurie Anderson and Ione.

The distinction between Deep and Quantum Listening concerns scope and

extrapolation. Deep Listening is rooted in immediate sense perception, exploring the boundary between the involuntary nature of hearing and the selective nature of listening: "Listening in every possible way, to everything it's possible to hear... the sounds of daily life, of nature, or one's own thoughts, as well as musical sounds." Quantum Listening is "listening to more than one reality simultaneously", exploring "perception at the edge of the new". It is a concept that encompasses the granular and the universal, the scientific and the spiritual, and Oliveros's tone is aphoristic and provocative – I found myself needing to put the book down often to just stare out the window and recover my thoughts.

Oliveros wants you to rethink what existence is and what it can be, to find the sensory "key to multi-level existence". How, through listening, one can "connect with the acoustic environment, all that inhabits it and all that there is". Hearing is passive,

listening is selective, and "we listen in order to interpret our world and experience meaning". Hence the ways in which we listen have huge implications for our ways of existing and understanding ourselves in the world. From this standpoint, listening can be understood as a practice that can lead to enlightenment, healing, the development of culture and the betterment of humankind.

Quantum Listening is an awareness of sounds that are real and imagined, emerging and evoked from memory, echoing from history, attached to geography, sounding now, reflecting and rebounding between past and future. Not just sounds but ideas, inner voices, dreams. Observing sound and ourselves in multiple simultaneous locations on the continuum of experience. These ideas resonate with currently emerging theories of New Materialism, particularly when she notes the intra-active relationship

between perceiver and perceived and the co-creation of meaning: "Quantum Listening simultaneously creates and changes what is perceived. The perceiver and the perceived co-create through the listening effect."

Oliveros says listening can be a form of activism. She notes the ways in which society marginalises listening and favours the visual, and how people are generally not taught how to listen or encouraged to protect their hearing through life. Listening can positively impact our collective futures, not only for our wellbeing, but also for the creation of new aesthetics, forms of expression and new values.

Pocket-sized and at a mere 64 pages, it sort of resembles a prayer book or religious tract. It's the kind of book you might want to carry with you everywhere, a reminder that states of heightened awareness, imagination and awe are accessible anywhere, at any time.

Leah Kardos



Blixa Bargeld

Europe Crosswise: A Litany

Blixa Bargeld

Contra Mundum Press Pbk 118 pp

As translator Mark Kanak explains in his afterword, *Einstürzende Neubauten's* Blixa Bargeld was enlisted to write this short book as part of a litany series formulated by the German publishing house Residenz Verlag in 2008. "Blixa told Claudia Romeder, his editor at Residenz, that the project would interest him, deciding to take the form of the litany as a model to develop a structure for the text, using the upcoming *Einstürzende Neubauten* tour of Europe as the material out of which to create his book."

Bargeld was well seasoned in the art of touring, and while the book uses the band's nightly set lists as an organising device, he eschews any discussion of the shows, or music at all, choosing to focus on the seemingly mundane activities when he wasn't on stage: travelling, eating, drinking, sleeping.

The book is semi-fictional, but the stops Bargeld recounts are real. He includes travel itineraries, lyrics and, most colourfully, menus from the various meals he eats, many at Michelin rated restaurants across Europe. The menus and set lists form the litany of the title, among other inventories – including a list of Arabic first names that stretches on for three pages he's asked to recite for an art installation in a "hypothetical museum" about the US military base in Guantanamo – that are strewn throughout the restless narrative, where rest is elusive.

At times, his interest in eating seems like his top priority, almost suggesting that being in a touring rock band is simply means to an end to satisfy his gourmandism, an unexpected interest for a man who once sought to level the concert venues his band played in. Such

transformations are acknowledged by Bargeld, who also holds forth on his shift on shoes, noting how he once possessed a single pair at once, wearing them until they fell apart, when the duct tape holding them together failed. Expressing his fondness for Italian footwear, he writes, "I now own more than one pair of shoes. I was in a shoe shop in Bologna when Ratzinger was proclaimed Pope; the staff was glued to the radio, I was trying on shoes."

Bargeld's sardonic humour can be withering, as when he recounts how breastfeeding infringed upon his culinary pleasure in a high end Oslo restaurant. "The word 'breastfeeding' is stressed again and again. 'Breastfeeding'. What is she? A professional wet nurse?" His love for Europe is a recurring theme, and while he's an adherent of gastronomy – his enthusiasm in recounting a meal prepared by Spanish chef Ferran Adrià transcends his blurring of fact and fiction – he prefers old world aesthetics when it comes to hotels, pillorying a slick Copenhagen hotel's haute offerings: "What, pray, is a 'Live-life package'? What are molecular drinks? Whatever."

The insight he's developed, along with medical problems, from an endless grind of touring is discussed with nonchalant boredom. "Since a legendary tour of America in the mid-80s, when we flew the distances from city to city, my sinuses – I have none – ears etc, have never really recovered." In another passage he describes counting steps from his hotel room to the elevator. "Then I started to divide the way into bars, up to my room door there are 25 four-four bars." The book may not offer much wisdom, but Bargeld nails the monotony of life on the road with his characteristically mordant wit.

Peter Margasak

Mete Sinabel Aoki