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Shadows In The Field Recording

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Abstract. This paper considers how an ethnographic mentality applied to field recording might benefit the recordist-composer. Many practitioners in the art of field recording are currently experiencing an ‘ethnographic turn’. Recent sonic arts discourse has engaged with the artistic practice of field recording, calling for scholars and practitioners to acknowledge the presence of the recordist as an active agent in the field (Anderson and Rennie 2016; Voeglin 2014; Lane & Carlyle 2013; Demers 2009). This recognition carries with it a heightened sense of awareness and responsibility on behalf of the recordist. As in ethnography, those undertaking field recording are now encouraged to be increasingly reflexive. Meanwhile, in the conceptual ‘border zones’ between art and anthropology, Schneider and Wright (2010, 2013) write that supposed divisions between the two practices actually mask much common ground. Recent sound works located between arts practice and anthropology are shown to reveal the process of fieldwork through field recording (Karel, Cox and Carlyle) and the emotional response of the recordist (Bennett). *Carioca Sound Stories* presents practice-based artistic research in sound undertaken by the author in Rio De Janeiro, Brazil. The work develops this interdisciplinary method further, combining reflexive field recording and ‘context-based composition’ (Truax, 2012). Gregory Barz’s ethnomusicological fieldwork methodology is key to the work, in which Barz describes field research to be ‘one of the most meaningful processes engaged by ethnomusicologists to define themselves’ (2008: 206). *Carioca Sound Stories* translates Barz’s concept of ‘headnotes’ into visual annotations, whereby the piece simultaneously conveys experiences in the moment and reflections gained with hindsight. This practice-based research in composition aims to develop understanding of field recording as reflexive-ethnographic fieldwork, making clear the active agency anyone has when interacting with or documenting an identified field.

Keywords: field recording; phonography; ethnography; context-based composition; soundscape; Rio de Janeiro.

1 Introduction

To achieve a more active criticality, the very roles an artist plays in working with place, and the assumption that site-specific practice will eventually expose the truth rather than pursue its availability, should be understood rather as opportunities for inhabiting the very problematic such assumptions produce. (LaBelle, 2006: 199)

Rio de Janeiro, 2014. “*We’re in Pedra do Sal. This is the real samba party: away from the ticketed, paid-in clubs of Lapa, a regular event happens here every Monday and Friday. We’re in the open air, around a rock found at the centre of an old workers neighbourhood near the port. People snake up and down a set of steps cut into the rock. There’s a palm tree in the middle of the square at the foot of the steps, stalls selling fried food and beer, and I’m in heaven...*

The musicians sit around a table near the tree playing well-known samba tunes. Everyone seems young, it feels alive, contemporary, not simply a retrospective or nostalgic trip. The younger generation, I think, have assumed the responsibility of keeping samba alive – it’s young people that are playing the music, and young people that are listening and singing along to every word.

Later, we make our way into the crowd, pushing through the tight gathering of people, climbing up the steps that are cut into the rock so that we can get to our friend’s house overlooking the samba party. We get invited inside, there are people hanging out, I’m offered a cocktail. I begin to realise that being indoors is not missing out on the party outside, but it’s offering me a deeper, insider’s connection with the place and the people. I’m learning through talking to people in here, perhaps more than I was by just experiencing the music. Certainly, the combination of the two is a greater thing.

Then I have another drink, and then another ... and our hosts put a Jorge Ben album on the record deck...”

1.1 Cataloging Memory and Experience

The above is taken from my voice-over to a composed radio work titled *Rio: An Outsider, Inside*, made for *ResonanceFM* in June 2014¹. The hour-long programme reflects on an extended period that I spent in Rio de Janeiro earlier that year. Through the radio work I voice personal reflections evoked by listening back to the field recordings I had made, and the music I had discovered while in Rio. The voice-over to the radio show was recorded without a script and in one take. As such, it perhaps captured a personal sense of the emotions that I now associated with the field recordings and songs. These sounds had archived my individual emotional data. Sound and music became the equivalent of a diary or field notes, aiding my ability to recall what happened and how I felt when, for example, I was at Pedra do Sal, or being introduced to the music of Jorge Ben.

This could be considered a demonstration of Matthew Stokes's assertion that music (and to which I would add 'sound') becomes a tool for cataloguing memory and experience. He writes that 'the musical event, from collective dances to the act of putting a cassette or CD into a machine, evokes and organises collective memories and present experiences of place with an intensity, power and simplicity unmatched by any other social activity' (1994: 3). From these departure points a question has formed: how might 'context-based' compositions be informed by an ethnographic methodology for field recording?

Beginning in the field, an 'ethnographic conceptualism' (Schneider and Wright, 2013) might be followed through field recording, as it is in other anthropologically informed art. The authors write that this 'does not mean that ethnography becomes unimportant, or negligible, but the initial theoretical motivations arise from a different plane' (p. 18). An artistically-motivated approach to sound in the field might begin to answer the same authors' call for 'experimentation that would result in new and dynamic directions for both contemporary art practices that revolve around various kinds of documentation, and to enlarge the range of work being produced within anthropology' (2010: 3). This paper discusses the merits of one such approach to fieldwork centred on field recording, applied to produce *Carioca Sound Stories*. Here, 'fieldwork' is understood to be an artistic-ethnographic practice that includes observation, documentation, interaction and participation with an identified 'field' - achieved primarily through listening and sound recording.

To begin, precedents in sonic ethnography and methodological similarities with field recording as an artistic endeavor are briefly surveyed. A growing call within anthropology for experimental research and presentation methods (Schneider and Wright) is contrasted with a growing sense of self-awareness within the artistic practice of field recording (Demers, Lane and Carlyle, Voeglin). Fieldwork method in ethnomusicology (Barz, Tilton) and the importance of emotionally engaged field notes in social sciences more generally (Borg, Browne) are presented. Crossovers between sound arts practice and anthropology are considered, particularly the work of Steve Feld and Ernst Karel. 'Annotated' sound art works that reveal the process of fieldwork through field recording (Cox and Carlyle) and the emotional response of the recordist (Bennett) are discussed. *Carioca Sound Stories* - based on extensive field recording undertaken during two periods spent living in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil - also employs the device of text annotation to represent the process and problematics in using field recordings as artistic materials. The piece highlights my experiences recording in the field: issues that arose, knowledge gained, difficulties encountered and further questions that emerged. Furthermore, the compositions reflect on the active agency that my roles as listener, recordist and composer have, both in my understanding of that fieldwork, and in composing with the recordings - a reflexive ethnographic mentality found in anthropology.

2 Sonic Ethnography and Field Recording

The study of the senses is a relatively emergent disciplinary focus in anthropology, growing from key literature and practice such as Feld's *Sound and Sentiment* (1982; 2nd ed. 1990) and Stoller's *The Taste of Ethnographic Things* (1989; 2nd ed. 2010). Within the boundaries of ethnomusicology, the anthropological study of sound could be said to have a longer lineage: at least from the middle of the last century (Kunst, 1950; 1955), or earlier still within the 'comparative musicology' of the early 20th Century (see Merriam, 1977). Both ethnomusicologists and those practicing anthropology of the senses (particularly sound, in this context) retain fieldwork as a core element of their research practice. Fieldwork in these areas does not isolate the sonic, but rather further attempts to understand how sound may emphasise the social, political and cultural dimensions from which it emanates.

¹ <https://soundcloud.com/tullisrennie/rio-an-outsider-inside-originally-broadcast-on-resonance-fm-fri-27th-june-2014>

One of the pioneers of anthropology as sound, and a practitioner of ethnographic study through listening and sound recording, is Steve Feld. His term 'acoustemology' (1996) was coined to describe one's sonic way of knowing and being in the world. Meanwhile, John Levack Drever highlights the commonality between ethnography and soundscape composition, which since the late 1970s has become a common artistic application of field recordings.² Drever writes that both ethnography and soundscape are 'interdisciplinary contextual enquires' that stem from 'fieldwork primarily through sensuous experience' (2002: 24).

The artistic practice of field recording³ shares many aspects in common with traditional ethnographic fieldwork per se, in particular its tendency for long-form contemplation, and an inclination to adopt the position of passive observer. However, practitioners in the art of field recording are currently experiencing an 'ethnographic turn' similar to the crisis of conscience that rumbled through anthropology in the 1970s and 80s, which overhauled the practice of ethnographic fieldwork in the process (see Clifford and Marcus, 1986). Recent sonic arts discourse has engaged with the artistic practice of field recording in a similar way, calling for scholars and practitioners to acknowledge the presence of the recordist as an active agent in the field (Voeglin 2014, Lane & Carlyle 2013, Demers 2009). This recognition carries with it a heightened sense of awareness and responsibility on behalf of the recordist. As in ethnography, those undertaking field recording are now encouraged to be increasingly reflexive. The choices over what sounds one might record, where, when, how and crucially, why, all become much more significant factors.

While approaches to ethnography and field recording may share many similarities, studies within anthropology have typically distinct disciplinary objectives, ethical codes and ways of representing outcomes compared to sound composition. Anthropological work has often been bound by the notion of the written text as the dominant form to present findings. Ethnographer Dwight Conquergood notes the trepidation most anthropologists feel when straying from the written word. He asks: '[w]hat are the rhetorical problematics of performance as a complementary or alternative form of "publishing" research? It is one thing to talk about performance as a model for cultural process, as a heuristic for understanding social life, as long as that performance-sensitive talk eventually gets "written-up"' (Conquergood, 1991: 190). This view, seen from the perspective of a practice-based researcher in the sonic arts, begins to highlight both the limitations of text and the benefits of creative sound practice as a useful and relevant medium for the communication and dissemination of knowledge gained through fieldwork.

Anthropologists Arnd Schneider and Christopher Wright have written extensively about the conceptual boundaries, overlaps and 'border zones' between art and anthropology, focusing on how supposed divisions between the two practices actually mask much common ground. They argue for greater acceptance within anthropology towards more artistic, non-textual and experimental fieldwork, stating that the 'tension between maintaining the standards of the discipline and developing new forms of anthropological knowledge has for too long been overly weighted in favour of the former' (2010: 3). Feld also recognises the border zones between art and anthropology, noting that field recording might act as a crucial bridge. He says: 'for me art-making is something that could be central to anthropological thinking. But it has never happened. Field recording could be an important piece of making the connection' (Lane and Carlyle, 2013: 211).

So, anthropologists are encouraged to embrace less formalised approaches to fieldwork and its representations, while field recordists are equally urged to demonstrate a greater sense of self-awareness within their work and its dissemination. Here we see further movement towards mutual interdisciplinary goals, but equally a potential clash of fundamentals: the formal methodological structures of ethnography against the wilfully experimental and actively non-standardised forms of contemporary arts practice. Schneider & Wright support the art-making as documentation, describing anthropology as being in a state of 'inertia':

Experimentation, in the sense of formal experimentation with representation strategies and outputs, is clearly seen as absolutely central to the development of contemporary art – the situation is less clear within anthropology where there is much to mitigate against the taking of risks in the area of how to conduct ethnographic research and present the subsequent knowledge. This disciplinary and institutional inertia remains an obstacle to the development of a more experimental visual anthropology. (Schneider & Wright, 2010: 11)

² For example the work of Barry Traux, and the World Soundscape Project more generally, of which Feld was also a member.

³ Although field recording has its origins in wildlife documentation and ethnographic research, through the inclusion of environmental sound in experimental music it has become recognised as an artistic practice in its own right. For more, see Lane and Carlyle, *In The Field: The Art of Field Recording* (2013).

As the practices of ethnography in sound and field recording move closer in terms of objectives, ethical rigour and ways of representing fieldwork, possibilities for new forms of reflexive sonic arts practice and sonic ethnography emerge specifically to test those thresholds and border zones. This is demonstrated in the work of Rupert Cox and Angus Carlyle, Ernst Karel, and Justin Bennett, all discussed below. First, how does this reflexive methodology affect the fieldworker, or recordist, *in* the field?

3 Field Method

Ethnomusicology has much to offer practice-based researchers of various disciplines looking for reflexively written experiences of fieldwork. It is particularly useful here for its focus on music and sound informing understanding of human activity and culture. Barz & Cooley's editions of *Shadows in the Field* (1997, 2008) have become particularly important contributions. This edited collection of essays encourages practice-focused approaches, emphasising process over structured outcomes, and encouraging non-standard (i.e. non-text-reliant) presentation formats for disseminating knowledge acquired in the field.

Ethnomusicologist Jeff Todd Titon (2008) proposes a rigorous redefinition of basic fieldwork to be 'no longer viewed principally as observing and collecting... but as experiencing and understanding' (p. 25). He continues that representation of this knowledge should avoid text-reliant forms, whereby 'meaningful actions be experienced as music, not read as text' (p. 28). These experiences should represent 'the insights as well as the ambiguities of the experience of acquiring knowledge through fieldwork' (p. 35). Barz and Cooley stress 'how important it is for the reader to get a sense of the relationships the author developed in the field. Everything that comes later—analysis, interpretation, theory—depends on what happened in the “field”' (ix).

3.1 Cox and Carlyle

This evolving relationship between author and the field is clearly witnessed in Rupert Cox & Angus Carlyle's audio-visual work *The Cave Mouth and the Giant Voice* (2015). The work recounts a conversation with a participant that resulted from a site visit during fieldwork. A selection of quotations from a resulting interview is displayed in text on screen, while we simultaneously listen to a field recording of the cave where the conversation took place. Accompanying notes tell us the participant was compelled to speak to the anthropologist-artists precisely because the group had visited that cave environment as part of their field research.

The interplay of relationships between site, participant and authors within *The Cave Mouth and the Giant Voice* are clearly defined and displayed to the audience. Crucially, both re-tellings of the event in question – the participant to anthropologist-artists, and their subsequent version to us as audience – were mediated through site-specific sound experience. The participant was compelled to speak through being inside the cave. A recording of this cave is the reproduced sound environment in which we, the audience, receive his words when experiencing the piece. This demonstrates a logical connection between listening, field recording, and the roles of author, participant, and wider audience. As such, Cox and Carlyle's piece can be understood to address Titon's proposition for practice-based research, outlined above. The anthropologist-artists position their sound-orientated fieldwork as 'experiencing and understanding'. Its public presentation is 'experienced as music' (sound art) which, as Titon requests, provides 'insights ... into the experience of acquiring knowledge through fieldwork'. This is achieved by evoking, in sound, the site where the work happened and where the knowledge was acquired.

3.2 Field notes

Hand-written field notes in ethnographic work are commonly thought of as private documents, a set of *aides-mémoire* to refer to when 'writing-up' the completed fieldwork. Sociologist Brendan Ciaran Browne (2013) posits the merits of 'making visible the invisible processes of fieldwork'. He suggests fieldworkers should always keep detailed field diaries to record and critically reflect upon the emotional effects that undertaking fieldwork has. He argues that notes should not exclude personal uncertainties over methodology and even the chosen field or research topic. He suggests that personal fieldwork diaries 'become useful repositories for critical reflection on the research process as it is unfolding ... fieldwork diaries act as the place where personal stories of rapport building and strange encounters are recorded' (p. 432). My own emotional and critical reflections on the continual unfolding of fieldwork can be heard, for example, throughout the recorded voice-over in *Rio: An Outsider Inside*, and in questioning my position as recordist-composer through text annotations in *Carioca Sound Stories*.

Social scientist Simon Borg refers to the psycho-emotional support the research diary provides. He writes that 'we rarely hear about the emotional side of doing research, and the implicit message researchers may derive from this silence is that emotions have no role to play in their work ... the research journal can assist the researcher in acknowledging these emotions, expressing them, and, particularly where these emotions threaten the progress of the research, analysing and reacting to them' (2001: 164).

Browne and Borg both indicate the benefits of adopting a reflexive approach to the emotional self when in the field. This can be applied to the practice of field recording through the work of ethnomusicologist Gregory Barz. Barz describes field research as 'performed' and this to be 'one of the most meaningful processes engaged by ethnomusicologists to define themselves' (2008: 206). Barz presents his own fieldnotes 'in tandem with other voices' – a total of three distinct voices 'read' the same notes. The original written note is his unedited, emotional voice in the field. A more reflective 'headnote' voice then re-reads his original text. Both of these are read later with a third, more distanced voice of experience, often after the fieldwork is complete. How then, does this translate into composed sound arts practice based on a reflexive approach to the field?

4 Composing The Field

The act of field recording may be considered to contain fundamental compositional decision-making at its core. The time, location, choice of equipment, microphone placement, length of recording and number of repeat visits made to a site are decisions made by the recordist-composer. All of these decisions may greatly affect the outcome of the sounds then presented or composed with. Therefore, perhaps field recording should be considered an act of composition in itself. From his very earliest outputs, the representations of Feld's field studies moved beyond documentation and into a compositional mode. He recalls: 'I came to imagine a life working in sound both as a musician-composer-engineer and as an anthropologist ... [to] maintain a creative and analytic relationship to both the materiality and sociality of sound' (Feld and Brenneis, 2004: 462). Feld's notion of maintaining a balance in sound between creative and analytic, materiality and sociality is important to the compositional practice discussed throughout this paper. These tipping points are heard being negotiated through *Carioca Sound Stories* and recent works by other artists.

4.1 Ernst Karel

The 'experimental non-fiction sound works'⁴ of Ernst Karel at the Harvard Sensory Ethnography Lab similarly pursue this relationship between the materiality and sociality of sound. Karel's field recording practice strikes an aesthetic/ethnographic balance through edited compositions, which inform both sonic arts and anthropological practices. *Materials Recovery Facility* (2011) focuses on an industrial plant, which sorts 'single stream' recyclable materials.⁵ The seventeen-minute audio piece presents a detailed account of its subject matters through a linear composition of field recordings. We hear recordings of mechanical equipment – machines that distinguish between mixed recyclable materials, a task that apparently households 'cannot be trusted to sort themselves' (Karel in Barrow, 2012: 16). In fact, a large population of human workers complete much of the sorting at the recycling plant. This paradoxical element of the recycling process is heard within Karel's piece.

Documentation of Karel's chosen subject is investigated and presented in sound, delivered as a composed, artistic work. Within the piece, entries of new sound material begin with pitched content or open with clattering rhythmic gestures - Karel decidedly presenting the music within the machinery. We clearly hear distinct sections and cuts; important because as listeners, we then understand *where* the composer's intervention has occurred. Crucially, this gives the listener an awareness of what intent the researcher-composer has and why the field recordings have been made and presented.

Human intervention in an otherwise mechanical process is found both in the source subject and in the method of representation. Karel's interventions in cutting and editing the field recordings reflect the human intervention his recordings document in the recycling process. The piece strikes a balance between the creative and the analytical in both method and presentation. Reviewer Dan Barrow concludes that 'a whole network of social relations lies behind, and is implied by, the hum of conveyor belts, the background rumbles of engines, the clank of workers' boots on catwalks, the clunk and crunch of rubbish as it's sorted or fished out' (p. 16). Thus, *Materials Recovery Facility* shows how field recording and composition can creatively represent and reflect upon societal structures. It tests the border zones between documentary-artistic and exploratory-anthropologic formats in sound.

⁴ <http://ek.klingt.org/bio.html> (visited 1 October 2016)

⁵ Where all recyclable materials are collected together and sorted at a plant, rather than being sorted by the individuals before collection.

4.2 Justin Bennett

Justin Bennett's *Raw Materials* (2011) is an auto-ethnographic composition where sound documents the relationship between place and person, site and the social. This work for stereo sound and text consists of a collection of unrelated field recordings chosen at random from the artist's archive. These are played back seemingly to both the composer and listener in 'real time', while a typed text appears on the video screen – a letter addressed to 'J'. The text, written by the composer, reflects on his personal associations with the sounds. He tells us in the text that, 'with the sounds come smells, stories, feelings'. As the audience listens to each sound, the text continues: *I ask myself: where was it? When was it? What is happening? Who was with me? How did I feel? Why did I record this? What does it make me feel now?* Throughout the piece, Bennett answers each question in an informal and personal way. He makes short practical descriptions while simultaneously considering the retrospective memory and current personal impact of the same sound on himself as composer. This is an example of a reflexive-ethnographic approach to field recording, and its presentation in the form of art and performance. The sounds act as field notes, later heard accompanied with Barz's 'headnotes' voice: a self-conscious and self-critical form of re-reading his sonic diary entries.

5 Rio de Janeiro

I made a large collection of field recordings in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, while based in the city on two separate residencies at the Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro (UFRJ).⁶ These personal recordings were made to document and reflect upon the listening practice I was employing to try to understand more about the city through sound. These recordings became my field notes and personal diary. I came to understand them as intimate documents of my experiences in that city.

When addressing how I might begin to communicate the knowledge gained through the process of listening and recording, I questioned whether these recordings might have relevance to anyone but myself. As Salome Voeglin writes: 'some field recording is thus incredibly boring and irrelevant for all but the recordist: the exotica of the source replacing the idiosyncrasy of the material recorded, the pleasures and complexities of which are hidden and inaccessible to an audience standing by and listening in' (2014: 16). A moment in *Carioca Sound Stories* echoes this sentiment: *I find it hard... to make this recording speak / to reveal something, other than what I know* (08.00-08.22)

5.1 Active Criticality

The difficulties of communicating the 'pleasures and complexities' of these field recordings from Rio became a large part of the impulse to compose. The work became an opportunity for me as recordist-composer to address such issues. As LaBelle writes (quoted in full at the beginning of this paper), through the works, I strive 'to achieve a more active criticality' by 'inhabiting' the very problems inherent within the act of composing with field recordings. To achieve this, 'annotation' as a compositional device is employed to inhabit the field recordings and their problematic issues - combining some composed sound materials as annotation, alongside Barz's concept of 'headnotes' translated into text annotations and the original field recordings. Through these annotations I ask questions of the relevance of the recordings to others, and of the neutrality of my position as recordist. By asking these questions *within* the works, Barz's headnotes process becomes a new compositional method.

6 Carioca Sound Stories

The piece revolves around the two key themes of juxtaposition and stereotype, following extended fieldwork living April and May 2014, which were spent living in the more affluent south of Rio de Janeiro and working in the Complexo da Maré favela.⁷ The geographic and the socio-political landscapes I witnessed while recording throughout the city of Rio presented clear disparities to me, at times seemingly contradictory. The difficulties in attempting to convey anything other than the positive 'marketed' Brazilian stereotypes (sun, sea and samba) or the similarly stereotypical negative aspects (angry, underprivileged poor) were laid bare when trying to communicate this in sound.

The piece has seven segued sections. Like *Rio: An Outsider, Inside*, most sections present edited elements from a single recording: short sections spliced together from a longer single take, always maintaining chronological sequence. Some sections contain the addition of manipulated, layered sounds and sampled music – particularly the first, second and final sections. The sampled Jorge Ben record is of personal significance, heard first when

⁶ The first residency was during the months of May and June 2013, and the second from March to May 2014.

⁷ Maré is a large cluster of sixteen different communities in the north of the city, home to around 140,000 people.

visiting the apartment of a friend, a relationship forged during fieldwork (the host of the party at Pedra do Sal – see above).

The piece employs the use of dramatic tension, silence, and interplay between text and sound. While the text is intended to give context and insight for an audience, long sections of a blank screen allow time for reflection and undistracted concentration on the field recordings. This might allow an audience to consider their own relationship to the recordings, as the narrative ‘voice’ of the text does.

The audience experiences the original sounds and my subsequent reflections on them, including dilemmas and doubts, in ‘real-time’. The audio-textual experience represents my emotional responses to the sounds, where text ‘headnotes’ explicitly communicate personal and contextual reflections. The composition simultaneously conveys my experiences in the moment and reflections gained with hindsight. The intention is to make clear the ambiguity and problems of translating field experience into something meaningful for anyone who hasn’t experienced that field.

6.1 Comparison

By drawing comparison with the works discussed above by Cox and Carlyle, Karel and Bennett, we may critically evaluate the original aspects of *Carioca Sound Stories*. Imagine a linear continuum along which these documentary-compositions might be positioned. If the anthropologically-minded discussions of a specific scenario found in *Materials Recovery Facility* (Karel) and *The Cave Mouth and the Giant Voice* (Cox and Carlyle) are at one end, the artist-led auto-ethnographic *Raw Materials* (Bennett) at the other, *Carioca Sound Stories* (CSS) might be found in between, containing elements characteristic to both ends, as well as some unique features.

All four pieces present and investigate specific sites in sound, using edited but otherwise untreated field recordings. CSS also incorporates composed materials. Karel includes no annotation, while the other three pieces feature white text on a black screen to provide context. Like Karel’s human/mechanical paradox, the juxtaposition of binaries is present in CSS through the various disparities heard in both the geographic and socio-political landscapes.

Similar to Bennett, the personal relationship between place and person is also apparent, linking the chosen site with the recordist who chose to record it. Unlike Bennett’s work however, CSS is not purely personal, nor are the field recordings heard at random. The ‘reflexive self’ narrates both pieces, and both also use dramatic tension through the text annotations guides an audience along a narrative of personal insight and thought.

The most unique element to *Carioca Sound Stories* is the demonstrable tension between the composer as artist, while simultaneously interrogating the role of field recordist as reflexive fieldworker. The difficulties inherent in maintaining Feld’s suggestion of ‘a creative and analytic relationship to both the materiality and sociality of sound’ are displayed, and as such, the piece answers LaBelle’s call to ‘inhabit’ that very problem, *through* the work itself.

Conclusion

The form and function of the works discussed in this paper pose questions of field recording practice, of ‘context-based’ composition practice, of how the recordist-composer is heard represented within them. The sound arts works discussed are all informed by an ethnographic approach to fieldwork through sound, drawing on methodological approaches and thinking of sensory practitioners from within sonic arts and other related disciplines.

In grouping and comparing these compositions, this paper aims to move towards a methodology for field recording understood as reflexive-ethnographic fieldwork. Following this work, other field recordists may also discover, as I have done, new approaches and outcomes by developing reflexive approaches in the field. This may benefit sonic arts practice in further understanding the role and placement of the self, when making art works involving field recordings. It might also aid other disciplines employing ethnographic studies in furthering non-standard and sound-focused forms of representing fieldwork and knowledge gained in the field, demonstrating some possibilities for alternative forms of anthropological representation. Crucially, by displaying the interventions and emotional responses of the recordist-composer, these works make clear the active agency anyone has when interacting with or documenting an identified field.

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