Hearing Voices

Sound Art Practice in a Cross-cultural Context

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I hereby declare that the work in this dissertation and the work presented in the accompanying portfolio have been carried out by myself except as otherwise specified.

Signed,

John Wynne

Some parts of this dissertation have been published during the course of its development:

'Language Ecology and Photographic Sound in the McWorld'. *Organised Sound*, Vol 11 No 1, 2006.

'When Is a Click Not a Glitch?' *Sound Art: A Resonance Supplement*. Anna Colin, ed. *Resonance* magazine and London Musicians' Collective, London, 2006.

ABSTRACT

This dissertation is concerned primarily with the body of work which has emerged from the author's project with endangered click languages in the Kalahari Desert. It looks at the development of his sound art practice by tracing the work leading up to *Hearing Voices* and by discussing the directions it has taken since the completion of that project. It examines the dichotomy in contemporary (sound) art between work which deals with ethnic identity and *otherness* and work which does not and outlines the ways in which the author's practice attempts to bridge this gap. Detailed examination of the socio-linguistic context of his work with Khoisan languages leads to an investigation of the issues and ethical responsibilities of cross-cultural practice. Links between acoustic ecology and language ecology are explored and consideration given to the way *Hearing Voices* and other works explore the boundaries between language and music, documentary and abstraction. The possibilities for new relationships between sound and (still) image are assessed through the author's use of new flat speaker technology and through an examination of the differences in approach required for the various media used in the *Hearing Voices* project (installation, radiophonic work, CD-ROM and work for multi-channel concert diffusion). Finally, the roles each of these forms can play in research-led sound art projects are considered.

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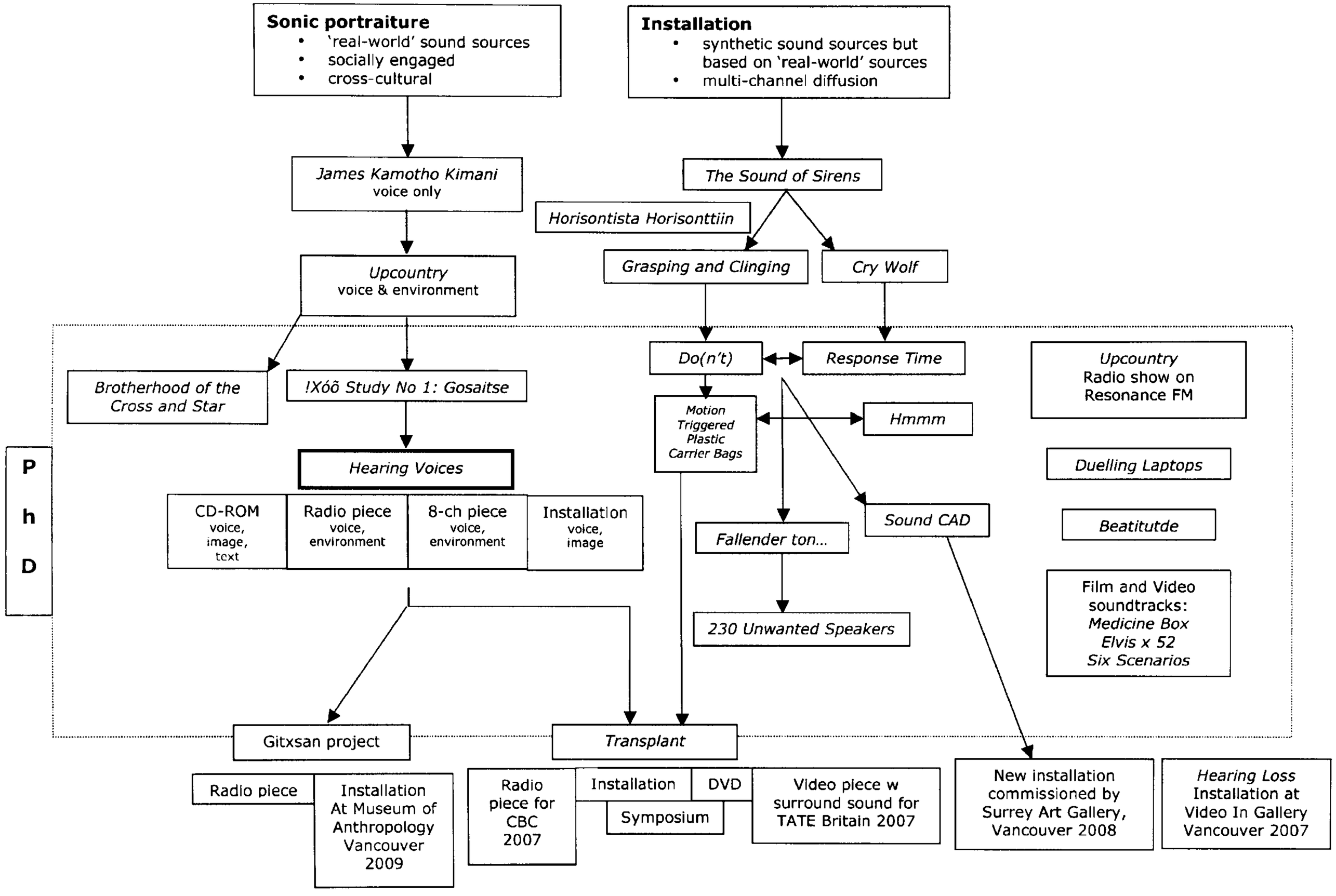
Sonic portraiture
• 'real-world' sound sources
• socially engaged
• cross-cultural
Installation
• synthetic sound sources but based on 'real-world' sources
• multi-channel diffusion
James Kamotho Kimani
voice only
The Sound of Sirens
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voice & environment
Grasping and Clinging
Cry Wolf
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voice, environment
Installation
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Sound CAD
Beatitutde
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Film and Video soundtracks:
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Radio piece
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Radio piece for CBC 2007
Installation
DVD
Symposium
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Hearing Loss
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INTRODUCTION

My practice as a sound artist and composer has for some time followed two divergent paths: multi-channel installations primarily using synthetic sounds of my own design, and what could broadly be called *sonic portraiture* based on recordings I have made in Kenya and Botswana. This dissertation will trace the development of the latter area of my work and explore the ideas and issues involved before moving on to focus on specific issues raised by the materials from Botswana. The Botswana project, *Hearing Voices,* has led to the incorporation of some of the methods and concerns from my installation practice into my cross-cultural work for the first time; my approach to this shift and its ethical, aesthetic and formal implications for subsequent projects with an endangered language in Canada and as artist-in-residence at a transplant hospital will be considered.

The late 1990s works based on my recordings from Kenya, *Upcountry* and *James Kamotho Kimani,* were fixed-medium sound pieces for concert diffusion, radio or CD listening and involved no visual elements. In much of my early installation work, I also strove to minimise the visual content, at least partly out of a desire to counter the perceived visual bias in contemporary culture. My installation practice, since the first work at the Sound Gallery in Copenhagen in 1997, has mostly consisted of large-scale pieces, often in public spaces, using complex computer technology to move sounds independently and with precision across large numbers of speakers in various configurations. *The Sound of Sirens* was arranged for 25 speakers hidden under the paving stones of the Town Hall Square of Copenhagen; consequently visitors were unaware of the source of the sounds, which darted and swept around an area of more than 900 square metres. For *Cry Wolf,* the only visual element was a grid of 25 speakers suspended against the central wall of Kiasma, Helsinki's Museum of Contemporary Art. *Grasping and Clinging* at Project 304 in Bangkok used 10 small motion-triggered sound devices, designed to look like the sort of grey plastic boxes one always sees on the walls of galleries and other architectural environments, which I installed throughout the two floors of the gallery. Here, I sought to minimise the visibility of my contribution in order to interfere as little as possible with the visual impact of my collaborator, visual artist Denise Hawrysio. *Hmmm* (London, 2004) used only a sub-woofer hidden beneath the small stage at the front of the gallery (Figures 1-4 and Disc 5).

In one recent work, the visual element has been eliminated altogether: *Sound CAD,* a piece I developed during a residency at E:vent Gallery in London in 2006 is a site-specific 16.1 channel installation designed to be experienced in total darkness. Another strand of my installation work has involved a strong visual element, but the only visual component is the speakers themselves. *Fallender ton für 207 lautsprecher boxen* (Berlin, 2003) and *230 Unwanted Speakers (Walnut Grained Vinyl Veneered*

Particleboard Construction) (Hull, 2006) both make use of recycled hi-fi speakers arranged in what curator Wolfgang Schlegel described as 'a field of social tension'.[1] *Motion-triggered plastic carrier bags* (London, 2004) consisted of a pile of carrier bags strewn casually on the floor, each with a sound device inside, triggered when someone came near and peered into the bags, at which point the sound of rustling plastic was heard (or is it the sea?). The intensity and complexity of the sound varied according to how many bags were triggered at a given time. This piece, which was ignored by some visitors who no doubt assumed someone had put their shopping down while looking at the other exhibits, toyed with the notion of visual presence, exploring the threshold of our awareness of the visual and sonic environments, an area also investigated in my installation work with auditory warnings (*Do(n't), Response Time, Cry Wolf, Grasping and Clinging*). A new work in progress, *Hearing Loss,* again uses the sound-producing technology itself as the only visual element; this time, the sound sources are 3 pairs of hearing aids left by my father when he died early in 2006 (Figures 5-11 and Disc 5).

The installations described above have certain technical and aesthetic links to *Hearing Voices,* which developed alongside them. Like most of these works, *Hearing Voices* employs no visual element other than the apparatus producing the sound, making use of the speakers themselves as the visual component. In all of these projects, exploring and responding to the architectural, acoustic and social environment of the gallery space through multi-channel diffusion plays an important role in the development and display of the work. *Hearing Voices* marks the first time these concerns became part of the more socially engaged strand, my cross-cultural work. In terms of what the work sounds like and the effect it has on the visitor, there are also similarities; the recycled speaker work makes use of Shepard Tones, the aural equivalent of an optical illusion whereby a sound appears to rise or fall in pitch continuously, forever, and the resulting sense of temporal suspension is not dissimilar to the effect of the immensely stretched vowels in *Hearing Voices*. The convergence of these two seemingly incongruous strands of my work is what I set out to explore in the course of the practice-based research I have undertaken at Goldsmiths, and it has developed in unforeseeable ways. My practice alternates from one strand to the other, which has the distinct advantage of allowing me to approach new projects with refreshed mind and ears, my tactics and attitudes inevitably influenced by my activity in the other strand. Indeed, it often feels liberating to return to work which is less entangled with ethical and political issues.

The form and content of my work is always the result of following my ears. Listening – to voices and to context – precedes the development of methodology, but the approach to the subject matter presently under consideration is also firmly grounded in a commitment to socially engaged, issue-based practice. As Jonathan Sterne argues, '[s]ound is part of the messy and political human sphere,' and its history is '...always contextual'.[2] Although, for some artists, anthropology and related disciplines may be perceived as 'the compromise discourse of choice',[3] they can also – potentially – provide artists with a valuable resource of critically evaluated information and a continuously developing research framework by which to make work which is relevant to the "real world". Of course there are dangers for artists dabbling in one field of study and then another, appropriating

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[1] Wolfgang Schlegel, Press Release for *Fallender ton für 207 lautsprecher boxen,* 2yK Galerie, Berlin, 2003.
[2] Jonathan Sterne, *The Audible Past: Cultural origins of sound reproduction,* 2nd Ed. (London: Duke University Press, 2005) p13.
[3] Hal Foster, *The Return of the Real: The Avant-Garde at the End of the Century* (Cambridge Mass: MIT Press, 1999) p183.

buzzwords and fashionable concepts from other disciplines within their work in a facile way and adopting the 'non-anthropologist's intellectual dilettantism',[4] but if it is desirable for artists to engage with social reality, surely it is necessary to familiarise themselves with the issues and debates which occupy the social sciences. It is sometimes problematic for artists who do fieldwork where, as Lucy Lippard describes in the context of the tourist, 'experience comes first and theory later, once we realise what we *should* be thinking',[5] but for me the cyclical process of research, fieldwork and creative practice is positively informed by contact with these other areas of study, resulting in a responsible engagement with other cultures and in a praxis which is neither culturally insensitive nor compulsively insular. As Simon Waters puts it:

> Until recently, electroacoustic composers have been less interested in the social and cultural than the acoustic construction of their music. This concern with acousmatics and the phenomenology of sound [...] has potentially impoverished the aesthetic development of the genre and stifled some aspects of a serious investigation of the application of electronic and digital means to music.[6]

My work inhabits a territory in which, to paraphrase a recent conversation with John Drever, the audience is required to listen sometimes with electroacoustic ears, sometimes with documentary ears and sometimes with political ears.

The perceived need for sensitivity in cross-cultural work, reinforced by the kind of socio-political wariness fostered by the social sciences, can also be stultifying. An awareness of 'the indignity of speaking for others' can, and in some cases has, as Hal Foster points out, 'effected [...] a censorious silence as much as an alternative speech'.[7] The challenge for both anthropology and for artists whose work takes them to places 'where they *don't* live'[8] is to do more than provide a shallow reflection of the perceived mythology of the *other*, the equivalent of Michael Taussig's half-serious description of ethnography as a process of 'telling other people's stories – badly'.[9]

In the area of my practice under discussion here, I am interested in making work which engages with my own aesthetic concerns as a sound artist living and working in the here (London) and now, but which also engages with other cultures from a position of cultural respect, which addresses the problematic aspects of that engagement while acknowledging the dangers of exoticisation and what Rosaldo calls 'imperialist nostalgia'.[10] The term "exotica" usually refers to a genre of popular music which reflected the allure distant countries and unfamiliar cultures held for Americans coming to terms with their international power and influence in the post-World War II world. In some ways, exotica 'prefigures the sampler principle in its cheerful, open exploitation of sources.'[11] But the term can also be applied to more recent musical projects such as David Fanshawe's *African Sanctus*, which may on the surface promise a deeper engagement with the *other* than classic exotica but which is

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[4] Paul Carter, 'Ambiguous Traces, Mishearhing, and Auditory Space' in *Hearing Cultures*, Veit Erlmann, ed (Oxford: Berg, 2004) p45.
[5] Lucy Lippard, *On the Beaten Track: Tourism, Art and Place* (New York: The New Press, 1999) p 8.
[6] Simon Waters, 'Beyond the acousmatic: hybrid tendencies in electroacoustic music' in *Music, Electronic Media and Culture*, Simon Emmerson, ed (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000) p56.
[7] Foster, p276.
[8] Susan Hiller, 'Susan Hiller in Conversation' with Deborah Rawson <http://www.eta-art.co.uk> (2003) p13.
[9] Michael Taussig, keynote address at *Fieldworks: Dialogues between art and anthropology* conference at Tate Modern, London, Sept 2003.
[10] Renato Rosaldo, *Culture and Truth* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1989) p 68.
[11] Tom Ewing, 'Music to Hear Music By', <http://www.freakytrigger.co.uk/exotica.html> Freaky Trigger website, 2000.

ultimately, like Les Baxter's *Sophisticated Savage,* 'keener to absorb and blend than to preserve or "understand"'[12] (Disc 1 track 1).

I have tried to position my work between the usual approach of art museums or galleries which, as Lippard says, present ethnographic material, if they show it at all, decontextualised and with too little information, and the ethnographic museum, with its old-fashioned, educational approach and too much information for the average viewer, 'sometimes to the detriment of aesthetics'[13] and, I might add, of the dignity of the subjects (Figure 12).

Any representation of difference — and representation almost by definition requires difference — is vulnerable to accusations of exploitation. And the experimental artist with an ethnological bent ought to be wary of the association of experimentation with the tropes of exploration and discovery. John Corbett writes:

> This notion of discovery or exploration helps undergird the idea that the composer is engaging in a value-free, experimental endeavor, even as it allows us to suggest the colonialist impulse submerged in its rhetoric. It is assumed that the discoverer-composer, out on the open seas of aural possibility, surely will bring back ideas and practices from distant lands, perhaps ones that can enhance the quality of Western musical life. Musical experimentation becomes metaphorical microcolonialism.[14]

Nevertheless, such criticism should not stop the artist from moving into unfamiliar territory – 'unless, of course, s/he somehow lays claim to that territory'.[15] My work, in part, involves searching for a way to challenge the concepts and practices of representation and *otherness* by interrogating its own *othering*.

The subject of my work is both people and context, voice and environment. I am interested in using the voice as material for rhythmic experimentation, spectro-morphological investigation and timbral composition, but equally concerned with its linguistic, communicative, social and personal aspects: 'As the essence of individual sonic events, timbre speaks to the nexus of experience that ultimately constitutes us all as individuals. The texture, the grain, the tactile quality of sound brings the world into us and reminds us of the social relatedness of humanity.'[16]

In approaching a new project, I begin with an attitude of openness and a willingness to embrace my own ignorance, a recognition of my own *stupidity*. Foucault sought to 'recuperate stupidity' as a philosophical strategy, arguing that intelligence represents 'stupidity already vanquished'[17] and that the best way to move forward is to allow the world to pass through us and affect our thinking rather than to begin by assuming our own intelligence. The philosopher:

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[12] Ewing.
[13] Lippard, 1999, p75.
[14] John Corbett, 'Experimental Oriental: New Music and Other Others', *Western Music and its Others: Difference, Representation and Appropriation in Music,* G Born and D Hesmondhalgh, eds (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000) p166.
[15] John McAllister, email correspondence, 2006.
[16] Barry Truax, 'Soundscape, Acoustic Communication and Environmental Sound Composition' in *A Poetry of Reality: Composing with Recorded Sound,* Contemporary Music Review, Katharine Norman, ed, Vol 15 Parts 1-2 (Amsterdam: Harwood Academic Publishers, 1996) p50.
[17] Adrian Rifkin, talk at *Encounters, Curiosity and Method: The Making of Practice* symposium at Tate Britain Oct 2006.

> must be sufficiently 'ill humored' to persist in the confrontation with stupidity, to remain motionless to the point of stupefaction in order to approach it successfully and mime it, to let it slowly grow within himself [...], and to await, in the always-unpredictable conclusion to this elaborate preparation, the shock of difference.[18]

John Cage famously approached composition from a self-professed position of not knowing what he was doing. Of course this is more of a metaphor for what he saw as the appropriate humility with which to approach the making of art, but there is, I hope, something of the same attitude in my approach to research-based practice: I knew little about language endangerment or the circumstances or history of the Khoisan when I began the Botswana project and, having learned in school that Canadian history was primarily about events like the War of 1812, I knew precious little about the history or contemporary situation of aboriginal peoples in Canada before embarking on my new project there. My research begins from asking questions – sometimes ostensibly simple or naïve ones – and building a perspective from the ground up – through listening.

Chapter 1 will deal with the work from Kenya which precedes the *Hearing Voices* project, tracing the background against which my approach to cross-cultural practice has developed and the evolution of my use of voice and environmental sound materials. In the second chapter, issues of linguistic and cultural diversity will be outlined and the significance of the progressive silencing of small-scale languages examined. The unique sounds of the click languages of southern Africa will be discussed in the third chapter and some of the theories, myths and prejudices that surround their history and development discussed. Chapter 4, 'Finding Ways of Contributing', looks at the search for strategies to ensure that my research-based projects involve more than "sonic tourism", treating the *other* simply as a source for raw materials for processing or '"sonic fetishism", where the artist is seen to attach an irrational reverence over recorded and reproduced sound and its organisation'.[19] The *Hearing Voices* installation will be described and analysed in Chapter 5, where the positive and negative aspects of the role of technology in cross-cultural research and artistic intervention are also discussed. Chapter 6 outlines the difficulties of developing strategies for working with sensitive materials and subjects that are both responsible and engaging. This chapter also looks at the differing approaches needed for, and opportunities offered by, various forms of output – installation, radio, fixed media concert, CD-ROM. Chapter 7, 'When Is a Click Not a Glitch?' examines the perception of socially engaged work in the broader art community and looks at some of the approaches developed by other artists. Chapter 8 draws some parallels between linguistic ecology and the growing movement for acoustic ecology and continues the discussion of issue-based arts practice.

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[18] Michel Foucault, *Theatrum Philosophicum* quoted in 'Confronting Stupidity', Glen Fuller <http://eventmechanics.net.au/?p=454> (2005) p190.
[19] John Drever, 'Soundscape Composition: The Convergence of Ethnography and Acousmatic Music', *Organised Sound* Vol 7 No 1 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002) p21.

CHAPTER 1

GOING UPCOUNTRY

The starting point for my first sonic portrait was the voice of James Kamotho Kimani from Kiambu, a member of the Kikuyu community who lived on the outskirts of Nairobi (Disc 1 track 2 and Figure 13). When I was introduced to him I recorded a brief speech he made in a mixture of Kiswahili and English, welcoming me to his country and enjoining me to 'give greetings to people on *your* side'. This speech was typical of the sometimes lengthy and rather formal greetings I often encountered in Kenya, and when I listened to the recording in London I was inspired by the beauty of his voice, but I also became interested in his words as phatic statements. As symbols of the relationship between visitor and visited, they were already some half way between language and pure sound, so I decided to take the material still further in the direction of abstract sound, creating wordless rhythms which resonated with his character, or at least that small part of it I glimpsed through the veneer of social niceties. Stuart Hall writes:

> The difference which is untranslatable is not a fixed and essential thing; it is itself a product of translation and is itself always in motion [...]. I think the only way in which people who are different can come to constitute a common conversation is by recognising the inadequacy of each of our positions as well as what is not translatable.[20]

James Kamotho Kimani reflects my interest at that time in Futurist and Dadaist experiments and 'procedures to de-grammaticize language',[21] as well as the influence of *musique concrète* aesthetics and techniques for the manipulation of sonic materials via looping and repetition. The use of voice as artistic material has a particularly rich history, including the search for a kind of 'compositional linguistics'[22] identified by Warren Burt in the work of Harry Partch, Kenneth Gaburo and John Cage. Indeed, Partch's development of his own microtonal tuning system began with his search for 'a way to embody the music he heard in the inflections of everyday American speech'.[23] But perhaps the most significant influence on my work at this time was the combination of a fascination with the abstract qualities of voice and an interest in social context embodied by Steve Reich's *Come Out*, an experimental tape composition based on a recording of Daniel Hamm, a young black man who

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[20] Stuart Hall, in Sanjay Sharma, 'The Sounds of Alterity', in *The Auditory Culture Reader*, Michael Bull and Les Back, eds (Oxford, Berg, 2003) p414.
[21] Elisabeth Penker, 'Contact Situations: Language and Rhythm Transformation' in *Sound Art: Resonance Supplement*, Anna Colin, ed (London: London Musicians' Collective, 2005) p24.
[22] Warren Burt, *Compositional Linguistics: Twentieth Century American Composers and the Text* in Art and Design Vol 10 No 45 (London, 1995) p10.
[23] Burt, p10.

describes how he had to prove to the police he needed medical attention by opening up his bruises to let the 'bruise blood come out to show them'. [24] Both *Come Out* and *James Kamotho Kimani* explore repetition and employ a subjective interpretation of the rhythms of the subject's speech mitigated through both social difference and available technology – in Reich's case tape loops, in mine the sampler. My piece was described by John Walters as 'a cross between *Come Out* and [Luciano Berio's] *Omaggio à Joyce*',[25] the latter being a more directly composed deconstruction/reconstruction of speech using sibilance and other formal elements as compositional material.

I returned to Kenya on another occasion specifically to collect recordings for a composition about William Ingosi Mwoshi, a neo-traditional master musician from the Luhyia community whom I met on the previous trip, when he invited me to visit his home near the village of Kamulembe (Figure 14). The Luhyia (or Luyia or Luhya), whose homeland is in the western highlands north of Lake Victoria, are one of Kenya's 47 officially recognized ethnic groups: they had no writing before the colonial period, so even the spelling of their name varies according to the orthographic conventions of the Europeans (usually missionaries) who first attempted to *reduce* the language into writing.

In *Upcountry*, I broadened my approach to include not only Ingosi's voice but also both his instrument and the environment in which he lives, which includes the nearby Kakamega rainforest. This dense but relatively small fragment of what was once a vast equatorial rainforest stretching virtually unbroken to the Atlantic is where generations of Luhyia musicians and instrument makers have traditionally obtained the raw materials for their instruments. Kenya is home to 1,070 different species of birds, and the variety of calls and the intricate cross-rhythms they and the insect life created in Kakamega was awesome and inspiring; indeed some of what I heard seemed to make the gap between the natural and synthetic sound worlds dissolve entirely, and this revelatory experience has come to influence the way I have worked with the sounds in much of my subsequent practice. (Disc 1 track 3) *Upcountry* opens suddenly with an unmanipulated recording of a dense chorus of birds and insects which many listeners, especially those accustomed to electroacoustic music, assume has been treated or enhanced.

Investigating ways of moving back and forth between field recordings and an abstraction based on the rhythmic complexity and unique sonic characteristics of Ingosi's music and his environment, *Upcountry* moves beyond conventional notions of *portraiture* to become as much about the place and my memory of it as about Ingosi himself. In the gap between my experience and the way it is communicated through the soundwork, I sought ways of working with sound that would express the subjectivity of my perspective without abandoning the context from which the original sounds arose. As John Miller Chernoff puts it in relation to the anthropologist, '[f]inding the proper level of abstraction to portray with fidelity both the relativity of his own viewpoint and the reality of the world he has witnessed necessarily involves an act of interpretation [...]'.[26] In her review of *Upcountry* for the Canadian Electroacoustic Society website, Katherine Norman captures this double aspect of the work very astutely:

> John Wynne's *Upcountry* is—part of the time—a musical portrait of Kenyan master

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[24] Steve Reich, *Come Out* (New York: CBS-Odyssey, 1967)
[25] John L Walters, private communication with the author, 1999.
[26] John Miller Chernoff, *African Rhythm and African Sensibility: Aesthetics and Social Action in African Musical Idioms* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979) p11.

musician William Ingosi Mwoshi, who plays, sings and speaks about his music, cites its roots and his. The environment of a Kenyan village colours his expression and makes his world. He, his locality, and the words and music he creates appear indivisible. A documentary ensues. Ingosi's time.

John Wynne's *Upcountry* is—part of the time—an abstract journey. It often takes a route inland—upcountry, in fact. Ingosi's vocal inflections become material for Wynne's cool, sinuous tones. Layered, whittled down to bare bones, or mixed into new strata; at times Wynne's abstractions stretch out to measure space quite differently from Ingosi's speech rhythms, or indeed the rhythms of his songs. Wynne's time.

> The sonic jump cuts are sometimes quite abrupt [...]. But documentary and abstraction are difficult to reconcile. And the more I listen, the more I like the way Wynne lets them disentangle, and even disagree.
>
> You can be with Ingosi; you can be with Wynne. You can keep one person's world in mind whilst listening to the other's. There's no disrespect intended (quite the opposite in fact). And it isn't that difficult to accept both worlds [...]. A portrait that really sings is, after all, as much about the painter as the person in the chair. And observing the distance between the two is part of the whole experience.[27]

The narrative or documentary elements of *Upcountry* reflect the important role of traditional music in the perpetuation of oral history in Africa. Ingosi describes his own practice:

> All my songs I make from my country or my village because of the history of people which I see [...]. My songs are not just songs: they express what is prevailing on a daily basis in the community [...]. There is a song which I made about some Christian people from a church near to my home who were beating others to push them out, to say 'go away from our church'. These others had struggled to build the church, but those who were doing the beating had done nothing — they had come as visitors [...]. They wanted to replace the head of the church and the secretary and everything — and these were the people who were struggling to make the church. And that is why I made this song.[28]

My piece (and the many hours of Ingosi playing and speaking I recorded) amplify and document his social commentary, but they also represent an aural record of my trip, a 'summarized gesture of my involvement',[29] to quote Chernoff. My primary compositional tools were filtering and time manipulation, themselves effective aural analogies to the effects of memory over time. Luciano Berio once said, 'If we compose music, we are also composed by history [...]'.[30]

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[27] Katharine Norman, 'The Space Between the Jump Cut: A Double Portrait', Canadian Electroacoustic Society's Sonus website, <http://www.sonus.ca/curators/norman/wynne.html> 2004.
[28] William Ingosi, interviewed by the author in Kaimosi, Kenya, 1997. 'Going Upcountry' in *Resonance* magazine Vol 7 Number 2, 1999, p38.
[29] Chernoff, p11.
[30] Luciano Berio in *Noise: The Political Economy of Noise* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1985) p141.

After the long, dense, untreated introduction comes one of the abrupt 'sonic jump cuts' to which Katharine Norman refers — a sudden moment of silence after which the same sound materials reappear but with their apparent perspectives radically altered, as though the ground has fallen away, leaving only the figure (Disc 1 track 4). This abrupt vertical re-ordering of the materials following a horizontal rupture draws attention to the artifice of the piece as well as shifting the listeners' focus from the general (environment) to the specific (individual). It is a device I have developed further in subsequent works, notably the radio piece *Hearing Voices*. In both pieces, this *gestalt* shift takes place after an extended beginning designed to 'intensify perception' and draw the listeners' attention to the 'spectral detail'[31] of the sonic material. The length of this introductory section is critical in freeing the listener 'from being pragmatically and representationally oriented', in inducing 'a profound listening, an immersion in the *inside* of sound matter',[32] as Franceso López puts it – though I do not share his preference for the term "profound listening" over Schaeffer's "reduced listening", finding the latter a more accurate and less value-laden description of the phenomenon. The extended duration of these opening sequences has an effect on the listener analogous to the way repeating a word will suddenly cause one to loosen the grip on its semantic meaning and begin to hear it as pure sound, and prepares the ground for the piece's subsequent shifts between unmanipulated recordings and abstraction.

Ingosi's main instrument is the *shiriri*, a one-stringed fiddle with a small drum as resonator, which is played under the arm using a bow strung with sisal. He also wears *vikholi* (hammered bells with ball bearings inside) tied to his ankles when he plays, providing a rhythmic accompaniment. *Sukuti*, the music of the *shiriri*, is characterised by 'variations and extensions on a single, droning, pibroch-like signature motive [...]'.[33] (Disc 1 track 5) The following more general account of the role of repetition by Tricia Rose in *Black Noise* also describes one of the compositional tactics I developed in *Upcountry*:

> Deliberately 'repetitive' in force, black musics (especially those associated with dance) use the 'cut' to emphasize the repetitive nature of the music by 'skipping back to another beginning which we have already heard,' making room for accidents and ruptures inside the music itself. In this formulation, repetition and rupture work within and against each other, building multiple circular musical lines that are broken and then absorbed or managed in the reestablishment of rhythmic lines.[34]

The loop and other forms of repetition with or without variation have, of course, played a large role in *experimental* music as well as in rap and other forms of contemporary music. Pierre Schaeffer's assertion that, when a sound fragment is repeated, it is transformed and becomes music was virtually a founding principle of *musique concrète* in the 1950s: Henry Louis Gates Jr observes in *The Signifying Monkey* that 'repetition and revision are fundamental to black artistic forms from painting and sculpture to music and language use'.[35]

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[31] Simon Emmerson, 'The Relation of Language to Materials' in *The Language of Electroacoustic Music*, S Emmerson, ed. (London: MacMillan, 1986) p33.
[32] Francisco López, 'Profound Listening and Environmental Sound Matter' in *Audio Culture: Readings in Modern Music*, C Cox and D Warner, eds (London: Continuum, 2005) p87.
[33]John McAllister, 'William Ingosi Mwoshi' Programme note for London Musicians' Collective Eighth Annual Festival of Experimental Music, 1999.
[34] Tricia Rose, *Black Noise: Rap Music and Black Culture in Contemporary America* (London: Wesleyan University Press, 1994) p70.
[35] Henry Louis Gates, Jr, *The Signifying Monkey: A Theory of African-American Literary Criticism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989) p xxiv.

Digital sampling, widely used in hip-hop for arguably subversive ends, 'can be seen as a form of creative arrangement, or of creative exploitation, or indeed of creative criticism'.[36] As Simon Waters has pointed out, the influence of "sampling culture" has prompted some electroacoustic practice to move beyond the somewhat blinkered concern with sound as material towards a greater concern for context, a shift 'intimately bound up with a broader shift in cultural perspective [...].'[37] For one section of *Upcountry* I made use of pitch-to-midi algorithms which attempt to analyze the pitch and rhythm of recorded material and render it as notes in digital form. The digital information I thus derived from one of Ingosi's songs was then used to trigger samples made from my recordings of the *shiriri*. In a sense, then, the computer was attempting to play Ingosi's song using the actual sound from his instrument. The results, which I found as interesting for their inaccuracy as for their sonic appeal, offer a telling reflection of the distortions of cultural bias and of technological interpolation (Disc 1 track 6).

Chernoff's assertion that, in Africa, 'rhythms are built into the way people relate to each other'[38] could, in a broad sense, be said of *any* culture, but it is interesting that despite his lack of exposure to experimental music, Ingosi had no problem hearing the rhythms I created from recordings of his environment in musical terms and simultaneously reading them as part of a loose narrative – one inextricably linked to a specific place and social environment. While wanting to avoid essentialist statements concerning African music as a whole, it seems to me that in Ingosi's own socially anchored musical practice he adopts a similar approach to that described by one of the traditional drummers met by Chernoff in Ghana, who said that 'every place [...] has its own rhythms which give it character; going there one must find a rhythm that fits, and improvise on it.' Chernoff extrapolates: 'Founded on a sense of time and presence, the art of improvisation involves the subtle perfection of this rhythmic form through precision of performance, complexity of organization, and control of gestural timing.'[39]

Time, presence and a kind of compositional improvisation (which is paradoxically both confined and liberated by digital technology) are primary elements in my work; *Upcountry* is permeated with both Ingosi's music and the various social contexts in which I heard him play, and it resonates literally and metaphorically with the physical spaces in which I recorded him. Manipulation and abstraction of acoustic source material can, rather than obscuring the actuality from which it was derived, convey meanings and reveal characteristics hidden from the senses in the context of real-time experience or even when listening to untreated recordings. In putting the case for what she calls 'real-world music', Katharine Norman puts it thus: 'As our listening is questioned and fragmented, so is our evaluation of what sounds *mean*, of their essential being.'[40]

Norman further argues that one of the underlying principles of real-world composition is its adoption and development of the concept of *montage*, and she quotes film theorist Jean-Jacques Thomas to contrast this approach to that of *collage*:

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[36] Simon Frith, in Michael Chanan, *Repeated Takes: A Short History of Recording and Its Effects on Music (London: Verso, 1995) p162.*
[37] Waters, in Emmerson, p56.
[38] Chernoff, p94.
[39] Chernoff, p155.
[40] Katharine Norman, 'Real-World Music as Composed Listening' in *A Poetry of Reality: Composing with Recorded Sound*, Contemporary Music Review, Katharine Norman, ed, Vol 15 Parts 1-2 (Amsterdam: Harwood Academic Publishers, 1996) pp14-15.

> Montage postulates intersubjective communication and the transmission of meaning, but it refuses the literal character of representation and the direct accessibility of its meaning. Just like collage, montage is a destruction of reality; but when collage, insisting on the heterogeneous superficial character of the summoned-up fragments, plays the hand of *provocation* (the rapture of the rupture), montage is an inducement to rediscover the network of signification that organizes them, to recover underneath the deconstruction not a nihilistic chance, which only retains the absurd and the accidental, but the uncanny that economizes significance.[41]

Plunderphonics, a term coined by Canadian composer John Oswald in his seminal 1985 essay *Plunderphonics, or Audio Piracy as a Compositional Prerogative* to describe his radical extension of Burrough's *cut-up* approach into the world of commercial music through sampling, is nothing if not provocative, but its deliberately *irresponsible* tactics and arguably one-dimensional results make it an inappropriate model in cross-cultural contexts. Although both montage and collage deploy temporal displacement to alter our perception of reality, in real-world soundwork the approach is more in the realms of intersubjectivity, of producing a listening experience which will reflect on the subjective experience of both artist and subject as well as implicating the listener in a more active and creative process, 'an invitation to participate *subjectively* in the creation and transmission of transfigured meanings, to create *through* the confusion of our individual listening montage.'[42]

During our interviews in both London and Kenya, I was interested by how often Ingosi's responses came from a pragmatic point of view, in sharp contrast to the more formal and socially removed approach commonly adopted by audiences and critics of Western art music. His first comment after hearing *Upcountry* for the first time was:

> I heard in it a bird in our forest. It is a very small bird but its song is very strong. We call it *shikangamari*. You hear the *shikangamari* in the forest when it is dry. When we are in our villages and we can hear this bird we know that the rain is not coming soon, so we can work on our shambas. If we cannot hear the *shikangamari* we know that the rain is coming[43] (Disc 1 track 7).

It also struck me that for him one of the most important functions of music is to 'make people happy',[44] whereas the song I chose to use a part of in unmanipulated form within my piece was a funeral song: 'When I go to festivals I don't sing that song. It was the first song I learned when I was very young'[45] (Disc 1 track 8). My inclusion of this song says as much about my own aesthetic bias (and, I suppose, about the Western tradition in which the slow movement is usually the formal and emotional centre of a work) as it does about Ingosi. For him, 'the "aesthetic effect" of the music would appear in the particular way the music "functions" to involve people in a specific social event'.[46]

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[41] Jacques Thomas, in Norman, p18.
[42] Norman, p18.
[43] Mwoshi, in Wynne, p 37.
[44] Ingosi Mwoshi, private conversation with the author.
[45] Ingosi Mwoshi, unpublished part of interview with the author, 1999 (see Appendix 1)
[46] Chernoff, p93.

I heard that, after returning to Kenya, one of Ingosi's most vivid memories of London was of the 'earth trains' (the tube) he travelled in and how this meant that he never knew where anything was. He was also fascinated by our search for the medical books his local doctor had asked him to look for, particularly by the fact that we had to 'go down into the earth' (the basement of a large bookstore) to find them.[47] As individuals, I think we felt equally powerless, curious and disoriented in each other's cultures, and it will be interesting to see how London emerges through the filters of *his* memory, cultural bias and compositional mechanisms.[48]

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[47] Ingosi's reactions were reported to me in an email from John McAllister, 2000.
[48] I received a CD of Ingosi's songs composed after his visit to London in the post just one month before submitting this dissertation. On November 13, 2006, I received translations from his son Jackson: see Appendix 2.

CHAPTER 2

LINGUISTIC AND CULTURAL DIVERSITY IN THE McWORLD

Just as traditional artforms such as *sukuti* struggle for survival, small-scale languages are also under threat throughout the world. My initial interest in click languages was aroused primarily by the sound itself: on my first trip to South Africa I watched a Zulu newsreader on TV, fascinated by the seemingly effortless explosions which occasionally emanated from his mouth as part of what otherwise seemed pretty much like just another of the myriad of foreign languages encountered by travellers and inhabitants of multicultural societies. Apart from a now extinct language called Damin, which was used only during male initiation rites by the Lardil in Australia, languages with complex, integral systems of click consonants have only ever been found in southern Africa. Many of the Bantu languages (including Zulu and Xhosa) spoken by more recently arrived inhabitants of this region have almost certainly borrowed their click sounds from the indigenous Khoisan languages. There are many different click languages within a relatively small geographical area (now primarily defined by the Kalahari Desert), and most of them are mutually unintelligible: this is understood to be the result of hunting and gathering in small groups which moved around a great deal, sometimes not having contact with others for long periods of time.

The claim, as reported in a New York Times article in 2003, that the click languages spoken by the Khoi and San peoples of southern Africa 'hold a whisper of the ancient mother tongue spoken by the first modern humans'[49] is compelling but, unfortunately, linguistics is a relatively young field of study which can estimate with reasonable certainty what some languages may have sounded like 5 or 6,000 years ago, but guessing the forms human utterance took 50 or 100,000 years back is clearly in the realm of speculation. Although recent genetic and archaeological research can be interpreted as pointing to such a conclusion, 'the blood and the stones can't talk',[50] so we will never know with certainty what proto-language our earliest ancestors used.

What we do know, however, is that the linguistic diversity of the world is under threat: of the approximately 6,000 languages in the world, it is variously estimated that between 50 and 90 percent will be gone by the end of this century. With the exception of Nama, all of the indigenous languages of the Khoi and San – the politically sensitive terms for groups otherwise known as Hottentot and Bushman – are classified by linguists as either endangered or "moribund". Contrary to the Biblical story of the Tower of Babel, in which the multiplicity of languages in the world is a punishment, it is arguable that, just as biological diversity is necessary for a healthy ecosystem, linguistic and cultural diversity are necessary for healthy human cultural and social development. If language is one of the primary repositories of culture and history and if 'our success at colonizing the planet has been due to our ability to develop diverse cultures which suit all kinds of environments',[51] it follows that 'any reduction of language diversity diminishes the adaptational strength of our species because it lowers

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[49] Nicholas Wade, 'Click Languages, An Echo of the Tongues of the Ancients' in *The New York Times*, March 18, 2003.
[50] Peter Austin, interview with Wynne *Hearing Voices: Speakers/Languages* CD-ROM (London: Sensitive Brigade, 2005).
[51] David Crystal, *Language Death* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000) p34.

the pool of knowledge from which we can draw'.[52] Typically, one of the few instances in which traditional knowledge is perceived to be of value in the North is when it has commercial applications: recently, a plant used by the San to stave off hunger has been seized on by US pharmaceutical giant Pfizer as a potential source for a new anti-obesity drug. Losing a language means that the potential complexity of our understanding of the world is reduced, and the domination of a few global languages is no more likely to foster peace and stability than replacing highly diverse rainforests with huge swathes of single crops is to improve the global ecosystem. One of the greatest pressures on the linguistic diversity of the world is from what have been called the 'killer languages'.[53]

> The language of the global village (or McWorld, as some have called it) is English: not to use it is to risk ostracization from the benefits of the global economy. It is at least partly for this reason that many newly independent countries have opted to use the language of their former colonizers [...]. Moreover, the elite in these countries generally acquire languages through schooling, and use this knowledge to retain their positions of power [...].[54]

Languages that are used primarily for communication within small groups often display great complexity; by contrast, most of the spreading global languages such as Chinese, English, Spanish, and Arabic have tended to become 'grammatically streamlined'[55] through expansion and contact with other languages in a process reminiscent of Lucy Lippard's description of how American radio stations changed in the 1960s:

> When I was a child [traveling by car] with my parents [...], you could tell where you were geographically and culturally by listening to the radio. By the late 60s, a bland generic mediaspeak was replacing local accents in broadcasting, just as chain stores and national franchises have all but replaced local enterprises and their down-home names.[56]

Whilst the acquisition of a national or international *lingua franca* may help members of indigenous communities to communicate with others and to pursue economic benefits only available beyond their community, it cannot offer a real replacement for the distinctive cultural identity embedded in their mother tongue which, once lost, can never be fully recovered:

> Language shift is [...] symptomatic of much larger-scale social processes that have brought about the global village phenomenon [...]. About 100 languages are [now] spoken by around 90 percent of the world's population [...]. This radical restructuring of human societies, which has led to the dominance of English and a few other [...] languages, is not a case of *survival of the fittest*, nor the outcome of competition or free choice among equals in an idealized market place. It is instead the

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[52] Russel Bernard, in David Crystal, p34.
[53] The use of anthropomorphic terms like "killer language", "language murder", and even "language suicide" to describe what happens as the globalising languages spread can potentially promote a misleading oversimplification of the varying social, political, and economic causes of language loss. It is not the fault of the English language itself that other languages are dying: as Professor Peter Austin, Head of the Endangered Languages Project at the School of Oriental and African Studies in London, put it in an interview with the author, 'English is not *doing* anything. It is speakers of languages who are *doing* things' (Austin 2005).
[54] Daniel Nettle and Suzanne Romaine, *Vanishing Voices: The Extinction of the World's Languages* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000) p31.
[55] Nettle and Romaine, p12.
[56] Lippard, p9.

> result of unequal rates of social change resulting in striking disparities in resources between developed and developing countries.[57]

The Kalahari Desert is one of a few fragile and dwindling 'pockets of residual diversity'[58]; another is Canada's west coast, where there are numerous small-scale languages under threat, including several with only a handful of elderly speakers and at least one with only a single speaker. In the summer of 2006 I began a new project with the assistance of a fieldtrip grant from the Endangered Languages Project at SOAS to work with linguist Tyler Peterson in recording speakers of Gitxsan, an indigenous language originating in northern British Columbia with approximately 200 competent speakers remaining.[59] I decided not to pursue one of these "moribund" languages but to work on a language for which there is some hope of revitalisation, however slim. Like many of the click languages, Tsimshian, the language family to which Gitxsan belongs, is considered an "isolate", in that it is not *genetically* related to other living languages.[60]

The decline of indigenous languages and culture in such areas has been vastly accelerated by the multifarious 'challenges of modernity and modernisation'.[61] One product of modernisation which powerfully represents both its opportunities and its problems for indigenous communities is the Trans Kalahari Highway which made my own journey to the village of D'kar significantly less arduous than it would have been only a decade earlier; the sounds of speeding cars and vultures picking at the remains of roadkill which I recorded on this diagonal slash across the desert are used as transitional elements in some of the work which developed from my trip, symbolising this incursion of technology and its pronounced impact on the cultural, linguistic and acoustic ecology of the region.

Ingosi's experiences in Kenya confirm the observation of ethnomusicologist Bruno Nettl that 'community leaders are not always happy about the encouragement of old musical practices because they readily perceive that these may be symbolic of traditional and no longer competitive ways of dealing with problems of modern economics and technology'.[62] Traditional culture can also be perceived as a threat to the authority of community leaders anxious to maintain their positions of power. Ingosi told me:

> [L]ocal leaders, because of my social commentaries which sort of bring realism into the community, they were not proud of me and caused me a lot of trouble. The reason may have been that the leaders saw that my popularity or my revival of traditional music in the community could change people's minds about obeying church *themes*. I struggled really hard to carve about 7 *shiriris*, and all of them were broken by the leaders. [One particular local leader] put on a lot of pressure to shun my services to the community. And because he was one of the members of the Friends Church he put more powers to shun my music because the inspiration of my music pulled the crowd, so he thought maybe I had the intention of forming my

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[57] Nettle and Romaine, p14.
[58] Nettle and Romaine, p38.
[59] The definition of linguistic competence is notoriously difficult to specify, and methods of calculating the number of speakers of a given language vary greatly, so such figures can never be considered wholly accurate.
[60] There is a theory that Tsimshian is related to indigenous languages found much further south on the west coast of America, but this possibility is not universally accepted. Language isolates are often the result of specific migratory conditions combined with the disappearance of any related languages.
[61] Andy Chebanne, interview with Wynne, *Hearing Voices: Speakers/Languages* CD-ROM.
[62] Bruno Nettl, *The Study of Ethnomusicology: Twenty-nine Issues and Concepts* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1983) p296.

own church. He and his deputies tried to stop me pursuing my career, to stop me from promoting traditional music.

[...] You know, the people who don't like me, they say I always get money from music and they don't like me because like now when they hear that Ingosi has gone to England, they say 'Why? Why does Ingosi go to England? My son has gone to university and has a degree – why does Ingosi go to England? Only the *shiriri* sends Ingosi to England? No, this Ingosi is a very bad man.' But they don't know that music is something very important to the people.[63]

It is in some ways ironic, then, that modern technology can represent an important ally for traditional cultures, though communities must of course remain wary, since, as Feld put it in an interview with Robert Reigle, '[i]n the hands of any moderately trained Western lawyer the phrase "oral tradition" simply means cheap and easy-to-acquire property. It's not a phrase that protects anything. Use of the word "tradition" by a lawyer is a way of claiming that something is arguably not owned by anybody in particular.'[64]

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[63] Mwoshi, in Wynne, p38-39.
[64] Steven Feld, interviewed by Robert Reigle, 'Cultural Responsibility' in *Resonance* magazine Vol 7 Number 2, 1999. P319.

CHAPTER 3

CLICK LANGUAGES

Clicks are sonically unique in the range of human vocal sounds in that they are always ingressive (they take place while breathing in), and involve a double stop (they are articulated by two closures in the mouth involving the lips, tongue, teeth and/or the roof of the mouth). There are 5 fundamental click sounds: bilabial, inter-dental, alveo-dental, palatal and lateral, but there is a huge range of variation possible in the influxes or accompaniments that surround these. In *Hearing Voices* for radio, I superimposed the voice of Dr Chebanne demonstrating the fundamental clicks over a series of clicks and click variations I'd edited from the recordings of one speaker and placed at one-second intervals to suggest both the unstoppable march of time and the kind of rigid structures and categories usually imposed on language by those who study them.

The Khoi and San languages of southern Africa are highly complex: 'in grammatical and structural terms, [they] are world class competitors in structural complexity'.[65] One of the most phonetically varied of these is !Xóõ, of which there are currently about 6,000 speakers, mainly in Botswana. With its 48 distinct click variations and some 83 different ways of starting a word with a click, the phonetic complexity of this language 'represents something approaching a maximum for human linguistic behaviour'.[66] More than half of the words in this language begin with a click, and its vowel system is far from simple:

> Even the name of this language, !Xóõ, is difficult for speakers of European languages. It begins with an alveolar click, !, which has the tip of the tongue and the back of the tongue raised for the click mechanism. After the tip of the tongue has come down and the click sound has been produced, the back of the tongue lowers slowly, so that there is a velar fricative of the kind we noted in Gaelic, and in German *Bach*, bax. [...] The complex click at the beginning of the word is followed by a long nasalized vowel on a high tone. The vowel is written with two letter 'o's, so that the high tone can be marked on one and the other can have the nasalization mark. It is, nevertheless, just one long, high-tone, nasalized vowel.[67]

This level of complexity (which one could scarcely expect even from an accomplished musical practitioner of extended vocal technique) is cited by some as one reason to doubt the theory that

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[65] Lars-Gunnar Andersson and Tore Janson, *Languages in Botswana: Language Ecology in Southern Africa* (Gaborone, Botswana: Longman, 1997) p168.
[66] Andersson and Tore, p140.
[67] Peter Ladefoged, *Vowels and Consonants: An Introduction to the Sounds of Languages* (Los Angeles, Blackwell, 2001) p167.

clicks were characteristic of a human *Ursprache*:

> It would be particularly odd to assume that early phoneme systems were similar to those of the Khoisan languages, since these systems are the most elaborated of all on Earth. A primitive protolanguage could not have sustained as many phonetic distinctions as these languages offer in their click accompaniments, phonation types and tones.[68]

Such conjecture also begs the question why, if they were part of a common first language, clicks are confined to such a limited geographical area: there are plenty of examples of one language acquiring clicks from another, but none of languages losing them. Other objections to this theory arise from a justifiable reluctance to encourage a return to the attitude that Bushmen are 'not fully developed, being lower on the evolutionary scale' (Stopa 1979: 18). In *Clicks: Their Form, Function and their Transformation OR How Our Ancestors were Gesticulating, Clicking and Crying*, Roman Stopa spends several pages delineating the primitiveness of the Bushmen's 'anatomical build', their economic system, their technology, their social structure and their 'infantile attitude', and concludes, '[f]inally, the language itself shows features that cannot be characterized otherwise than as extremely primitive'.[69] The effects of primitivist assumptions are more pernicious than simply as examples of political insensitivity amongst academics: they seep into more widespread assumptions such as the following description of click languages recently posted on a history forum:

> - It's very basic, no consonants, no vowels.
> - Easly [sic] distinguished in the savanna environment.
> - Apperantly [sic] not perceived, or only barely, by savanna animals.
> - Successful method - used even today by Hoisan [sic] tribes.
> - This was the first step, more advanced forms of languages were developed as our needs evolved.[70]

Despite the widespread notion that there are some languages which are somehow incapable of dealing with abstract philosophical thought or complex technical concepts, David Crystal reminds us, in *Language Death*, that 'there is no such thing as a primitive language. [...] Every language is capable of great beauty and power of expression'.[71] According to many linguists, '*anything* can be said in *any* language'.[72] Such a statement could be taken as espousal of the 'illusion of benign translatability [which] shields Eurocentric worldviews from comparison with or contamination by Indigenous worldviews [...], urges Indigenous thinkers to translate in such a way as to assimilate Eurocentric worldviews [...], [and] maintains the explanatory power of Eurocentric thought in modern life.'[73] But it is nevertheless true that no language is inherently deficient in its ability to adapt and grow: if there is no existing word for something they want to talk about, speakers of a healthy language can invent or borrow one:

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[68] Hartmut Traunmüller, *Clicks and the Idea of a Human Protolanguage* <http://www.ling.su.se/fon/perilus/2003_21.pdf> (Department of Linguistics, Stockholm University, 2003) p3.
[69] Roman Stopa, *Clicks: Their Form, Function and their Transformation OR How Our Ancestors were Gesticulating, Clicking and Crying* (Krakow Poland: Jagiellonian University Press, 1979) p19.
[70] 'altjira', <http://www.simaqianstudio.com>, Simaquian History Forum, 2005.
[71] Crystal, p30.
[72] Peter Ladefoged, 'Linnaeus, Darwin and the classification of speech sounds', Talk at The School of Oriental and African Studies, London, Feb 2004.
[73] Marie Battiste and James (Sa'ke'j) Youngblood Henderson, *Protecting Indigenous Knowledge and Heritage: A Global Challenge* (Saskatoon, Canada: Purich Publishing, 2000) p81.

> A language like English has a very complex technical vocabulary in terms of science and technology and so on, but that's all very recent and most of it has been developed in the last couple of hundred years; much of it has been borrowed and put together by using words from Latin, Greek and other European languages. Languages are complex in the areas that are significant and important and culturally relevant to those who use them.[74]

If there are no words in the Naro language for "broadband" or "morphological string", it is because its speakers have historically had no use for the terms, not because the language is somehow inherently weak or deficient – or primitive. Considering the subtle and complex ways they have of describing their natural environment, such languages can make some parts of the vocabulary of a Londoner who can barely distinguish one kind of tree from another seem positively impoverished by comparison. However, one characteristic of an unhealthy, dying language is 'limited productive capacity':[75] there are not enough fluent speakers to allow the language to adapt to change, to invent words which are relevant to contemporary life and to borrow without eroding its own foundations.

Despite strong economic and cultural pressures to abandon his inherited artform, Ingosi has continued to make music throughout his life, and his incorporation of contemporary issues into a neo-traditional approach to song-writing and performing has helped his practice survive and enabled him to pass it on to his sons, Jackson and Amusala. The Kakamega rainforest, a valuable region of *biological* diversity and a rich source of materials for both Ingosi and myself, 'is shrinking and [Ingosi's] songs – sententious, realistic, uneasy, nostalgic – reflect both the old life of the forest village and the tough realities of a post-colonial state coming apart at the seams'.[76] Despite his recognition by some as one of Kenya's greatest vernacular poet/chroniclers, Ingosi struggles to make a living for himself and his younger children (he has separated from his wife and it is a tradition amongst the Luhyia for the father to keep the children). As Dr McAllister writes:

> [His] long, discursive songs broadcast the news ("Amusala's boy can't settle down at school", "There's famine at Shimuli", "Regina sleeps in Ivushimuli"), praise the singer's friends or ridicule his enemies, reminisce, play with proverbs and fables, and continuously renegotiate the troubled relationship between tradition and modernity.[77]

One of Ingosi's songs, which he performed at the request of a young relative when we were visiting his sister, is about the dangers and devastation of AIDS. He sings about what is important and relevant to *his* community, though some even within that community fail to recognise the value of the cultural continuity embodied by his work. Similarly, many members of communities whose languages are under threat also see little or no value in putting effort into preservation or revitalisation.

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[74] Austin, in Wynne *Hearing Voices: Speakers/Languages* CD-ROM.
[75] Nettle and Romaine, p54.
[76] John McAllister, Programme note for London Musicians' Collective Eighth Annual Festival of Experimental Music, 1999.
[77] McAllister, Programme note, 1999.

CHAPTER 4

FINDING WAYS OF CONTRIBUTING

> To the field then! With notebook and pencil, record, record, record.[78]
>
> (Theodora Kroeber, describing in 1977 the attitude inspired by anthropologist Franz Boas in the early twentieth century.)

The political and social history of the Khoi and San peoples is comparable to that of other indigenous groups around the world. Since their traditional lifestyle has been made virtually impossible by the fencing off of land for cattle owned primarily by the Bantu-speaking majority in Botswana, the earmarking of vast areas of the Kalahari as game reserves, and the demands of the diamond mining industry to which Botswana largely owes its modest wealth, most have endured marginalised lives, including forced evictions and near slave-labour conditions in jobs that have little or no connection to their indigenous culture (Figures 15-16). Poverty, alcoholism and AIDS are rife and their social and economic marginalisation further erodes the status of their various cultures and languages.

Nicodemus Barkard was our primary translator, the person who introduced us to many of the speakers we recorded in D'Kar, and one of the subjects of *Hearing Voices*. (Figure 17) Like Ingosi, he is a talented and resourceful man who nevertheless lives in poverty. As well as speaking at least 4 different click languages, he is fluent in Setswana, Afrikaans and English, but he readily admits his own drinking problems and is clear about the effects of such factors on his community's languages and culture:

> My wife enjoys church. But I am a drunkard [...]. Now, teenagers in D'Kar have changed a lot. They drink alcohol and get drunk. They do not go to church, they do not want to. But now we have the AIDS disease and young people die in great numbers. When they are drunk they do not know how to conduct themselves. They indulge in sex without protection and they get AIDS. Even a girl in her menstruations – young men just sleep with her. Also, the tarred road through D'Kar kills so many drunken young people because of high speed and drunkenness.[79]

The low social status of the Khoi and San peoples is not a new phenomenon, of course. The name Hottentot (now replaced by Khoi, meaning "person") was a derogatory European invention, derived

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[78] Theodora Kroeber, in Brady, p67.
[79] Nicodemus Barkard, in Wynne *Hearing Voices: Speakers/Languages* CD-ROM.

– according to one early English visitor – from their language, which sounded like 'the clucking of hens or the gobbling of turkeys'[80]. A similar dismissive attitude to linguistic difference was shown by an early European visitor to Papua New Guinea who spoke of the 'hideous, snapping, barking dialect that passes for speech' and noted that 'noises like sneezes, snarls and the preliminary stages of choking – impossible to reproduce on paper – represented the names of villages, people and things'.[81] The word "barbarian" is, of course, derived from the Greek *barbarus,* 'one who babbles'; a barbarian was simply anyone who could not speak Greek. Historically, as Nettle and Romaine observe, '[b]eing linguistically different condemns the other to being savage'.[82]

It is not always an easy task in the face of historical prejudice and perceived economic self-interest, but the promotion of a positive attitude amongst speakers is an essential first step in the struggle to save a language from extinction. Self-esteem amongst speakers is an important factor in the maintenance and continued development of small-scale languages. The first person I recorded, and the subject of the first work I made when I returned to London, was Gosaitse Kabatlhophane, a 17 year old !Xóõ speaker with whom my collaborator Dr Andy Chebanne, a linguist at the University of Botswana, was working to develop the first orthography of this language (Figure 18). Although the written form can never satisfactorily replace the complex oral traditions that are integral to indigenous cultures nor accurately reflect languages which have been 'brought to their polished and idiosyncratic perfection of grammar and syntax without benefit of a single recording scratch of stylus on papyrus or stone',[83] and although an orthography is no guarantee of a language's survival, this process is an important step in promoting the continued transmission of languages which have never been systematically written down. As well as aiding in the documentation of the language, helping a young speaker like Gosaitse to become literate in her own first language also benefits her, both in terms of her general education and the esteem in which she holds her language and culture. Although to some degree it can reinforce hierarchical power structures, the interest of researchers from outside can also potentially help to bolster a community's perception of the value of its language and culture. Projects like the *Hearing Voices* CD-ROM (discussed below) can help to dispel the notion that small-scale indigenous languages are somehow incompatible with the modern world. Like some regional accents in the UK, indigenous languages are often seen by those who speak them as useless or as a hindrance to economic and social progress.

Dr Herman Batibo, a sociolinguist at the University of Botswana, told me of the pride and excitement with which the launch of the first Naro dictionary was greeted by the leader of the Naro community in Botswana, who said '[f]rom now on, I can see that my language is as good as any other languages'.[84] Such a statement can, of course, be seen as evidence of the insidious ideology that maintains the perceived superiority of literate cultures, but it is clear that once written material becomes available, speakers are often anxious to learn to read and write in their own language. All too often, though, 'children's acquisition of an endangered language may be interrupted at the very stage when [...] grammatical complexity is being acquired' because they are schooled only in the

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[80] Edward Terry, in Sandy Gall, *The Bushmen of Southern Africa: Slaughter of the Innocent* (London: Pimlico, 2001) p53.
[81] Unidentified author in Nettle and Romaine, p58.
[82] Nettle and Romaine, p58.
[83] Erika Brady, *A Spiral Way: How the Phonograph Changed Ethnography*. (Jackson Mississippi: University Press of Mississippi, 1999) p67.
[84] Herman Batibo, Unpublished interview with the author, 2004.

dominant national language.[85] Another significant indicator of language decline is an increase in the average age of speakers as the active domain of minority languages shrinks and young people move away to places where their language is of little use. Again, the example of Ingosi's son, who has taken the tradition handed down to him by his father to the urban environment of Nairobi and beyond, is an instance of what happens all too rarely with small-scale cultural and linguistic traditions.

For *Upcountry,* I was not interested in simply sampling Ingosi's music to make a piece of my own: indeed, my recordings of most of his songs were more for his use than mine. For the Botswana project, rather than searching for existing archives of click-language recordings, I sought collaboration with someone in Botswana who could both facilitate the project and make use of the field recordings for other purposes. At any rate, the recorded documentation of Khoisan languages is patchy at best, and anthropologists and even linguists often make unique and unrepeatable recordings that are of poor technical quality. I declined an offer to collaborate with someone working with a focus on oral history *per se*: I was more interested in listening to the quotidian and in exploring the complex layers of mediation involved in the relationships between artist, subject, translator and linguist. I was also wary of romanticising the subject, of contributing to the Northern mythology of the *other* by exploiting the authority of indigenous folklore and legends.

Internationally renowned Cherokee artist Jimmie Durham has made work specifically confronting the use of Native American imagery and symbols by non-native artists:

> 'Today we have "non-Indian" artists using us as subject matter once more,' says Durham. 'It is a phenomenon that seems exactly connected to the special American discourse about "primitives" and "primitivism".' He cites the German artist Lothar Baumgarten, who uses the Cherokee writing system in his work: 'When I say that Baumagarten had used it... I felt appropriated and sort of cancelled.' Thus Durham's installation at the Centre International d'Art Contemporain in Montreal in 1990 included works titled *Not Lothar Baumgarten's Cherokee* and *Not Joseph Beuys' Coyote*. The latter, a reference to Beuys's famous performance with a live coyote at the Rene Block Gallery in New York in 1974, was a skull-on-pole figure with one horn arm and one large rearview mirror arm (the better to see who is catching up from the past).[86]

In early ethnographic recording, '[p]articular performances were important only insofar as they could be used to reconstruct a paradigm for song, story, narrative, or myth in a given culture'.[87] In contrast to this paradigmatic approach, the phrases used in the *Hearing Voices* installation are the recordings of whatever each of the subjects chose themselves to say first when the tape began to roll – I was more interested in the particulars of their utterances than in using the recordings to (re)construct myths. My field recordings immediately took on a double life, as they were donated to the University of Botswana for use in teaching, research and grassroots literacy projects aimed at slowing the decline of the click languages I recorded.

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[85] Nettle and Romaine, p 50.
[86] Lucy Lippard, 'Jimmie Durham: postmodernist "savage"', Art in America, Feb 1993, on Find Articles <http://www.findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m1248/is_n2_v81/ai_13402513> p6.
[87] Brady, p63.

Nevertheless, a form of collective oral history undoubtedly emerges from the nexus of voices I recorded and from the work which arose from them, a kind of '"secondary orality" in which the voice becomes newly alive and significant through electronic media'.[88] The subjects spoke repeatedly of displacement and the struggle to survive on government handouts, and of problems with AIDS, alcohol and road accidents, but some also described life before the imposed alienation from their natural environment or told stories or jokes which originated in those times. The recordings provided me with material for a body of work which includes a half-hour piece commissioned by the BBC[89] (Disc 2), a multi-channel fixed medium concert piece (Disc 3 track 1), and a photographic sound installation entitled *Hearing Voices* (Disc 5).

Early in the development of the *Hearing Voices* installation, it became apparent that there was a potential conflict between the bulk of accumulated voice recordings, interviews and research materials and the minimal, contemplative work I wanted to make. I wanted to create a sounding environment which would draw the visitor in, but the weight of the *issues* threatened to smother the work, denying me the artistic freedom with which I wanted to approach it, or at least turning it into something closer to documentary than I felt was fitting in an installation context. Rather than allowing the viewer/listener to make immediate and easy associations between form and content, the work sits uncomfortably astride an unresolved conflict between the messy, human, political nature of the issues and formal clarity and precision. The distilled intensity of the installation focuses the visitor's attention on the sheer beauty of the human voice in general and of these languages in particular, and as a result the importance of addressing issues about language endangerment and indigenous culture is made more poignant. The context of radio, however, seemed to me to call for a different approach: the radio piece, also entitled *Hearing Voices*, builds on *Upcountry's* investigations of the threshold between documentary and abstraction, using voice recordings, interviews and environmental recordings alternating between raw and manipulated form to present the listener with 'a capricious sound world where aural objects shift and surprise, and conventions are undermined or mutated'.[90]

The installation was intended to be much simpler in form, yet I also felt a powerful responsibility to disseminate and publicise my research materials and to provide detailed background for gallery visitors. The solution was to develop, in conjunction with the Hans Rausing Endangered Languages Project at SOAS, a CD-ROM which would act as catalogue, archive and research document, effectively restoring some of the contextual substance peeled away by the installation[91] (Disc 4). The resulting disc holds my recordings of eight speakers of five endangered languages (Naro, Jun|'hoa, ||Gana, |Gwi and !Xóõ), as well as interviews, information about the languages and about language endangerment and recordings of two click-language choirs (the Bokamoso Pre-School Training Project Choir and the Naro Language Project choir). It is being used by the Working Group

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[88] Brady, p73.
[89] *Hearing Voices* won the Silver Award at the 2005 Third Coast International Audio Festival and Richard H Driehaus Foundation competition in Chicago.
[90] John Drever, 'Of Click and Glitch: Some Notes on Listening to Hearing Voices' in *Resonance* magazine Vol 10 No 1, 2005.
[91] The CD-ROM *Hearing Voices: Languages/Speakers* is distributed through the Hans Rausing Endangered Languages Project at <http://www.hrelp.org/publications/multimedia/>. A portion of any proceeds will go to the Working Group for Indigenous minorities in Southern Africa. It will also accompany Volume IV of HRELP's publication *Language Documentation and Description.*

for Indigenous Minorities in Southern Africa (WIMSA) as part of their campaign for rights and improved self-respect. As an archivist for the Omaha tribe in the United States wrote when he stumbled on a collection of 80-year old cylinder recordings which no living member of the tribe even knew existed, early ethnographic researchers thought of the materials they collected 'as reference notes rather than as documents to come back to the tribe.'[92] Such practices are not confined to the past: Ingosi told me that he was once the subject of recordings made by researchers from the University of Indiana, but he never heard from them again once they left Kenya, and he never received a copy. Similar tales abound amongst the Khoisan.

The *Hearing Voices* CD-ROM made some members of the Botswana government distinctly nervous when I arrived to exhibit at the National Museum in Gaborone. Although the disc is not directly part of the sound installation, it was designed to be available to visitors at a computer kiosk. I refused to withdraw it from the exhibition, and consequently the opening was delayed while the Permanent Secretary examined it. The concern arose mostly from the recordings I'd made of Roy Sesana, a ǁGana speaker and founding member of First Peoples of the Kalahari, a group which, in conjunction with Survival International, has taken the Botswana government to court to challenge the legality of the forced evictions of the San from the Central Kalahari Game Reserve, land they have occupied for thousands of years. Eventually, permission was granted for the delayed opening of my exhibition, but the wait made the museum director and curator – both civil servants – distinctly uncomfortable, and I was asked by the British Council (whose logo was on the publicity material in recognition of their assistance with some Kafkaesque customs regulations) not to go to the press because they didn't want to appear anything other than neutral. The Permanent Secretary perhaps came to the conclusion that the exhibition would have received more publicity if it were banned than if it went ahead.

One of my strategies for *Upcountry* to contribute in a positive way to Ingosi's life was to bring him to London. From the outset, I conceived the première of *Upcountry* at the London Festival of Experimental Music as a concert in which Ingosi would also perform (Figure 19). Besides being a way of thanking him for his participation in the project, I hoped that his presence would help to contextualise and illuminate my work and also bring together before a single audience two forms of music rarely, if ever, experienced side-by-side. My idea for presenting the work was to keep Ingosi's performance temporally separate from my piece so that the link between the two was primarily a conceptual one. I didn't want to force some false or meretricious fusion of musical worlds. There *is* a huge gap between Ingosi's music and mine, *and* between our cultures, and I wanted his work to be presented in as unadulterated a form as possible – notwithstanding the obvious contextual constraints. I wanted to interfere as little as possible, to allow Ingosi, who has been performing for more than half a century, to do what he does best, and to allow our work to be mutually illuminating rather than manipulated into some uneasy hegemony.

I asked the festival organiser, Dr Ed Baxter, for his thoughts on this strategy:

> The results, I think both theoretically and practically, tended inevitably towards privileging JW's piece: not at the expense of Ingosi exactly, but it is self-evidently the case that a performance in the Purcell Room does nothing to recreate the

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[92] Sterne, p332.

circumstances of Ingosi's usual forum for communication. So that while it was apposite and perhaps proper that Ingosi perform, his presence at the Experimental Music Festival was fraught with problems. I don't think that these problems are to be 'solved' by such a concert: at best they can be stated frankly and in as articulate a fashion as possible. Having the artist there was clearly preferable to simply acknowledging him in a programme note or (as I suspect is often the case on a global scale) simply ripping him off. I suspect the flow of information and the aesthetic bias of this juxtaposition is one way, but perhaps JW's work and Ingosi's work, by being placed in the same context, served to disrupt that context for a little while. So that if the audience felt the presence of this "folk" artist was somehow

> forced or unconvincing as a piece of programming, he nevertheless added an element to the event as a whole. Further, it seemed to be above all a good thing to do - morally, I suppose, to pay one's dues, which here meant (for me as a concert producer) enabling JW to acknowledge – and present in its "raw" state – his debt to the artistry of another performer. What did Ingosi get out of it? …the usual rewards of a performer: applause and money.[93]

If indeed the presentation caused some disruption of the audience's expectations of a new music event, I would agree with Baxter that this disturbance can be seen as a constructive part of the experience, calling attention, perhaps, to the anomalous and problematic space Ingosi and I (and our respective work) occupy in relation to one another. But I am not convinced that the 'flow of information' was entirely unbalanced: the music of the *shiriri* is relatively *difficult* for European listeners, and I believe that my compositional investigations into the sound of the instrument and the environment from which it emerged allowed them to appreciate it on a somewhat deeper level than would otherwise have been possible in a first exposure.

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[93] Ed Baxter, unpublished interview with the author, 2000.

CHAPTER 5

HEARING VOICES: A PHOTOGRAPHIC SOUND INSTALLATION

The physical presence of loudspeakers as the primary visual element is characteristic of my installation work, including my work with large numbers of recycled speakers in Berlin and Hull and the work with bespoke motion-triggered devices in *Grasping and Clinging* in Bangkok. The 8-channel installation *Hearing Voices* makes use of new flat speaker technology to personalise the source of the sound – the photographs of the 8 subjects *are* the speakers (Figures 20-24). In this sense, the work offers an alternative to what Susan Stewart refers to as 'the silence of the photograph' and its 'promise of visual intimacy at the expense of the other senses'.[94] The photographs are *animated* by sound, but at the same time the actual images deny visual intimacy and make it clear that we neither hear nor see the *real thing*. The images from which the sound emerges – photographs taken for me by visual artist Denise Hawrysio during the recording sessions – are composed to simultaneously reveal the process, symbolise my own presence and disrupt, frustrate, or at least problematise, the ethnographic gaze, the '"ethnotopia" of limitless observation'[95] (Figure 25). The photographic composition suggests the '"facelessness" such people have suffered in world dialogues'[96] and highlights the power relations which are of particular relevance to technological mediation in cross cultural work. As David Toop puts it:

> The portraiture integrated into the playback system of this installation counters the shift towards a detachment from human agency, yet also engages with the mediating effects of recording technology. Faces are obscured; voices are extended, or filtered, until their meaning is abstracted. These faces, and voices, are both highlighted by the wider world of digital communications, and with conscious irony, absorbed by its power.[97]

The mediation of technology has a particular relationship to power in cross-cultural work, as symbolised by the obscuring of the subjects' faces by the recording equipment. Early in the course of developing this work, I considered using the ex-demo speakers I'd been given by the manufacturers rather than having new ones fabricated specifically for the project. These speakers had been used for a trade exhibition and had images and logos advertising the various multi-national corporations who have incorporated NXT's technology in their products. I researched the process of using liquid emulsion to print the Botswana photographs over the existing graphics so that both could be seen

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[94] Susan Stewart in Lippard, 1999, p8.
[95] Bill Nichols, Representing Reality (Bloomington, USA: Indiana University Press, 1991) p218.
[96] Megan Biesele, 'Stories and Storage: Transmission of Ju/'hoan Knowledges and Skills, <http://www.abdn.ac.uk/chags9/1Biesele.htm> (2002) p6.
[97] Toop in Wynne *Hearing Voices: Speakers/Languages* CD-ROM.

(Figures 26-27), but in the end decided that this approach might oversimplify the issues and make the work too didactic. The demo speakers were also smaller than those I had made, and given the scale of the venues in which the piece was to be exhibited, large images were essential. Another factor was reluctance to be seen to bite the hand that fed me, so to speak – the speaker manufacturers who helped to sponsor the work and whose support I hoped to secure for future work.

Practitioners experimenting with alternative approaches to ethnographic fieldwork now sometimes 'explicitly aim to give voice to researchers and researched, as multiple selves of the field'.[98] In this work, my own voice is implicit in the way the recordings and the images are manipulated, framed and presented. It is, in some respects, an attempt to achieve what Hal Foster advocates: 'a parallactic work that attempts to frame the framer as he or she frames the other. This is one way to negotiate the contradictory status of otherness as given and constructed, real and fantasmatic [...].'[99] The recording equipment is my symbolic presence within the frame and the technology itself represents the developed North; it stands between the viewer and the subject and means different things depending on which side of it one finds oneself.

It would be difficult to deny a degree of sonic voyeurism (*ecouteurism*?) in my sound portraits, but there is also a critical awareness of recording as a symbol of power and of the economic inequity which inescapably frames my relationship with my subjects. The somewhat anxious repetition, throughout the history of ethnographic recording, of images of subjects listening to themselves may, on the surface, demonstrate *their* fascination with *our* technology (Figures 28-30). But a current of condescension lingers whereby the *civilised* viewer inevitably feels superior to the *primitive* folk who may never have heard themselves reproduced artificially. For Taussig, 'the more important question lies with the white man's fascination with their fascination with these mimetically capacious machines.'[100] In the developed world, recording devices are, in a very real and very far-reaching sense, the 'technological substance of civilized identity-formation'.[101] This internalisation of technology amongst those in the North is confirmed by my experience that they are often far more intimidated by microphones and recorders than people in remote areas who are less accustomed to seeing and using them. Perhaps a more intimate knowledge of their power and their ability to distort the truth leads to a greater suspicion of those who wield them.

I also printed the images very faintly, working with an experienced digital print technician and experimenting for weeks to get the exact combination of low contrast and high brightness I sought for these 1m x 1m prints. Joram ǃUseb, a representative of WIMSA who spoke at the opening of *Hearing Voices* at the National Art Gallery of Namibia, noted that the faded printing of the images was a fitting analogy for what is happening to Khoisan languages and cultures. Other aims of the composition and printing of the images were to counter the visual dominance of the gallery site, to encourage the audience to focus on the sound and to reflect the importance of the *aural* in oral culture.

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[98] Amanda Coffey, *The Ethnographic Self: Fieldwork and the Representation of Identity* (London: Sage, 1999) p147.
[99] Foster, p203.
[100] Michael Taussig, *Mimesis and Alterity: A Particular History of the Senses* (New York: Routledge, 1993) p198.
[101] Taussig, p208.

Related strategies were adopted in the earlier work from Kenya. On my last day upcountry, Ingosi took me up one of the many hills above his village to visit his sister. As I struggled to keep up with this man who is some 20 years my senior, I recorded our conversation as best I could. The recording turned out to be full of what one studio engineer called the detritus of recording. My initial reaction to this material was to see it as problematic, but I decided to use the combination of our footsteps, Ingosi's grunting breaths and microphone handling noise to construct a composite rhythm. Partly a signal of authenticity (like the hand-held camera), the incorporation of these mistakes serves as a recognition of the difficulties of trying to simultaneously record, listen and engage in social interaction and also, along with other compositional devices, provides a reminder, even during relatively realistic passages, of the subjectivity and artifice of the piece. Their inclusion is an acknowledgement of the intervention of technology. The microphone, like the camera, always distorts and often influences the reality it purports to capture; both are in essence 'reductive technological devices that imitate human sensory apparatus by performing specific ranges of limited functions from which perceivers then recreate fuller perceptual cues'.[102] Indeed, as López points out, '[t]he way different microphones "hear" varies so significantly that they can be considered as a first transformational step in the recording process [...].'[103] But the presence of these artefacts also reflects my own interest in the kinds of sounds often ignored or avoided by composers and technicians. When I played the finished piece for Ingosi, I noticed him dancing a bit during that passage and asked him if he thought that rhythm had any relationship to his music:

> Yes, yes. And I heard my voice asking a friend who we came across, "Why are you walking so slowly?" and she answered, "Yes, I am going very slowly because where I was to go for working there was no work." ... So thank you very much for taking that song from our Kakamega forest.[104]

Both through narrative content and formal techniques, *Upcountry* recognises and addresses the ironic disparity between its own (relatively) high-tech means of production and the low-tech world on which it is based.

In *Hearing Voices* for radio, one moment echoes the technique mentioned above, albeit in a more subtle form. About two thirds of the way through the piece comes a recording of the Bokamoso Pre-school Teacher Training Project Choir. As the singers settled down to begin the hymn (which they had learned from Dutch missionaries and translated into Naro) and a hush fell, I snapped my fingers close to the microphone in order to help me judge the perspective of the recording, and I deliberately included this in the final piece both as a further element in the constantly shifting perspectives of the piece and as a marker of my own presence (Disc 1 track 9). Such techniques run counter to the tendency of much soundscape composition 'to treat its own technological base as unproblematically straightforward vehicle within which to investigate the inner complexity of sound.'[105]

The strategy of working with a linguist in Botswana distanced me from the subjects to some degree and simultaneously facilitated greater concentration on the recording process, allowing me to make

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[102] Steven Feld, 'From Schizophonia to Schismogenesis: On the Discourses and Commodification Practices of "World Music" and "World Beat"', *Music Grooves: Essays and Dialogues*, S Feld and C Keil, eds (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994) p16.
[103] Francisco López, p84.
[104] Mwoshi, in Wynne p 37-38.
[105] Phil Thomson, 'Soundscape Composition, Globality, and Implicated Critique', Canadian Electroacoustic Community's *eContact!* <http://cec.concordia.ca/econtact/8_3/thomson.html> (2003) p5.

recordings of such quality that they became not only a significant contribution to the documentation of these languages but also superb raw materials for my own subsequent work. *Hearing Voices* involves a kind of double-layered fieldwork. I was, in one sense, observing/recording the social scientist observing his subjects, allowing the social interaction and indeed the substance of the recordings to be determined by *his* working methods.

However, I wanted the work itself to signal the impossibility of reproducing objective reality and to highlight the microphone as a 'non-neutral interface'.[106] Unlike early ethnographers, for whom 'purging the messy means by which information was acquired' was perceived as necessary for maintaining the apparent objectivity and authority of their work, I used photography to highlight the 'inevitable artificiality of the encounter',[107] to question the assumption that, in Heidegger's words, '[t]echnology comes to presence [...] in the realm where revealing and unconcealment take place, where *alétheia*, truth, happens',[108] and to convey a sense of simultaneous movement towards and away from the 8 subjects. The viewer/listener cannot forget the technology in the way doctors have traditionally learned to forget the stethoscope: 'In classic technological deterministic fashion, the tool stands in for a whole process from which it erases itself. Mediate auscultation was thus a "license to forget," a kind of reification. The forgetting associated with technology was the forgetting that all learners do as they achieve mastery [...].'[109] Historically, the stethoscope, like the microphone, became a tool of social mediation, establishing a physical distance between doctor and patient, documenter and documented – a distance which in effect 'renders social difference spatial'.[110]

Recording technology, while helping to preserve oral history in non-literate cultures, can also be instrumental in its demise. In Tsimshian culture, specific individuals were historically given the task of remembering important stories or significant and potentially disputed agreements between individuals such as those concerning territorial rights. Writing and, later, recording devices, began to make these civic positions redundant, providing another "licence to forget". The rise of renewed cultural awareness and pride amongst native communities in Canada in the 1970s coincided with the availability of cheap cassette recorders, and many families and clans recorded the voices of their elders. Once committed to tape, the stories – and sometimes the tapes themselves – were often forgotten. Recording technologies can thus obviate the need for embodied knowledge – 'knowledge literally stored in the body'[111] – and so accelerate the very changes in the social and personal spheres they may seemingly offer to ameliorate.

As well as embodying the social and economic gap between artist or social scientist and the *other*, recording technology also mediates emotional relations. Indeed, recording can replace emotional interaction:

> Warhol acquired his first tape recorder (a reel to reel) in the mid 50s. In the summer of 1965 he engineered a deal with Norelco to acquire one of their cassette audio recorders. This acquisition began his relationships with faithful machines

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[106] López, p84.
[107] Brady, p60.
[108] Martin Heidegger, 'The Question Concerning Technology', in *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays* (London: Harper and Row, 1997) p13.
[109] Sterne, p112-113.
[110] Sterne, p116.
[111] Simon Waters, private communication, 2007.

> that were both surrogates and mediators. He referred to the tape recorder as his 'wife' and quipped that 'when I say "we" I mean my tape recorder and me'. He declared that his tape recorder finished whatever emotional life he had; an interesting problem 'was an interesting tape'. Terrified by death, driven by curiosity about how people lived their lives, Warhol stockpiled a knowledge system, an anthropological and sociological portrait of 'lived lives'.[112]

The immensity of the gap between myself and the Khoisan about whom I was making work prompted me to adopt the twice-removed posture referred to above. In Canada, as well as significant differences, there was also considerable cultural ground shared between myself and the residents of the Kispiox reserve with whom we worked (particularly those of my own generation), and the complexity of this relationship will inevitably inform the outcome of that project.

One of the effects of the mediating role of recording technology has been what R Murray Schafer, in his seminal 1977 study of the acoustic environment, called "schizophonia", by which he refers to the unique separation of sound from its source which occurs when it is transmitted or reproduced:

> Originally all sounds [...] occurred at one time in one place only. Sounds were then indissolubly tied to the mechanisms that produced them. The human voice travelled only as far as one could shout. Every sound was uncounterfeitable, unique. Sounds bore resemblances to one another, such as the phonemes which go to make up the repetition of a word, but they were not identical.[113]

Splitting a sound from its source and working with it through technology is indeed a phenomenon unique to the modern world, but this doesn't necessarily contribute to the deterioration of the global soundscape, even if, as many followers of Schafer observe, the proliferation of "hi-fi" equipment undoubtedly contributes to the increasingly "lo-fi" nature of the (urban) environment. Nor does it necessitate abandoning the experiential world to detached abstraction. Investigative focus on the critical point between fieldwork and creative output can lead to non-exploitive – indeed helpful – context-rooted practice; awareness of what Steven Feld has termed 'schizophonic mimesis' can and should prompt artists to question, through their work, 'the ways [in which] sonic copies, echoes, resonances, traces, memories, resemblances, imitations, and duplications effect, distort and re-invent social realities'.[114] Indeed, if the voices of the Khoisan travelled only as far as they could shout, there is a good chance they might have been silenced before now.

Jonathan Sterne's criticism of '[a]cousmatic or schizophonic definitions of sound reproduction' also highlights one of the contradictions of purist "phonography":[115]

> They assume that sound-reproduction technologies can function as neutral conduits, as instrumental rather than substantive parts of social relationships, and that sound-reproduction technologies are ontologically separate from a "source" that exists prior to and outside its affiliation with the technology. Attending to differences between "sources" and "copies" diverts our attention from process to

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[112] Jean Wainwright, 'Warhol's Wife', in *Art Monthly* March 2002 No 254, p39.
[113] R Murray Schafer, *The Soundscape: Our Sonic Environment and the Tuning of the World* (Rochester, Vermont: Destiny, 1994) p 90.
[114] Steven Feld, 'The Poetics and Politics of Pigmy Pop', *Western Music and its Others: Difference, Representation and Appropriation in Music*, Born and Hesmondhalgh, eds (Berkeley California: University of California Press, 2000) p263.
[115] Proponents of field recording as an autonomous art form have recently reclaimed the term phonography to refer to their practice.

> products; technology vanishes, leaving as its by-product a source and a sound that is separated from it. [116]

Joel Smith, writing on the *Phonography* website, claims that even the word "phonography" is somehow neutral: 'The word *phonography* speaks to me precisely because, like *photography*, it is agnostic; I mean it's factual rather than semantically loaded like *music* or *art* – words that signal worthy ambitions and hierarchies that may, or may not, help you hear (or see) fresh.'[117] *Hearing Voices* takes sound a long way from its source, both geographically and acoustically, but it does not disguise the process or seek to conceal its inherent contradictions or those of its medium by positioning itself as factual or objective. By contrast, in the dominant perception of sound reproductive technology, 'in as much as its mediation can be detected, there is a loss of fidelity or a *loss of being* between original and copy. In this philosophy of mediation, copies are debasements of the originals.'[118] Technology is inextricably linked to social relationships, and the interface between cultures is always mediated through technology. However, '[w]hen technologies of reproduction are idealized as vanishing mediators [a term which originated with Frederic Jameson], they are alternately fetishized as historical agents in and of themselves and instrumentalized as merely a means to an end.'[119]

Even if it were possible to reproduce acoustic environments with total accuracy, such an accomplishment would be unlikely to satisfy me either as an artist or as a listener. For me, much of the audio work whose primary aim is to replicate environmental sounds is the equivalent of the "wish you were here" postcard – if the sound is interesting, I simply find myself wishing I were there rather than listening to a pale imitation. I can still vividly recall my exhilaration at the privilege of not only hearing these languages in person but, with the large-diaphragm microphone close to the speakers' mouths, being able to hear every nuance as though the speakers' mouths were next to my ear. These languages are a tribute to the creativity of the human intellect: 'if Khoisan languages had all died out before linguists described them, it is unlikely that we would ever have guessed that human beings would use such an apparently minor feature of sound production to such complex effect'.[120] The gallery visitor can likewise put their ear up to the speaker/images, and the sounds coming from each are derived from the voice of the individual depicted, the close-miked sound suggesting intimacy, but just as the photographs problematise the voyeurism of visual exotica, the treatment of the sound paradoxically promotes and frustrates the audience's curiosity. The unmanipulated voices emerge only fleetingly amidst a choir of resonated click consonants and elongated vowels. The work aims to create a space in which my presence as an artist co-exists with the *otherness* of the subject rather than either subsuming it or presenting it under the guise of objectivity, 'the ideology of those who are alienated and politically homeless', as Alvin Goulder defines it.[121]

Both photographs and sound thus expose a tension at the heart of the *Hearing Voices* project between the drive to inform and reveal and a reluctance to expose, lest doing so makes the subjects'

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[116] Sterne, p20-21.
[117] Joel Smith, 'The Word *Phonography*' Phongraphy.org < http://www.phonography.org/word.htm> 2001.
[118] Sterne p218.
[119] Sterne p392.
[120] Crystal p53.
[121] Alvin Gouler in Joseph Kosuth, *Art after Philosophy and After: Collected Writings, 1966-1990* (Cambridge Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1991) p110.

languages and culture somehow less *special* and contributes to the flattening tendency of globalisation. Another tension in the installation is that between still photography and sound, the result of which is an experience in which time appears paradoxically to both stop and continue. As Lucy Lippard has noted of *Hearing Voices,* 'the choice of still photography and sound gives it an entirely different sense than video/film.'[122] Still photography, unlike video, represents the suspension of time; conversely, sound is an inextricably time-based medium. Film or video can be stopped and a single frame examined, whereas sound can *only* exist in time – you cannot freeze a sound and still hear it. In *Camera Lucida,* Roland Barthes refers to the 'flat death', [123] 'the defeat of time',[124] embodied by every photograph. Charles Darwent observes that the photograph embodies 'the knowledge that the instant it captures is inherently gone forever.'[125] This tension between the inherent, inescapable movement of sound and the full stop of photography resonates with our awareness that these languages may soon be gone forever. In my current project, *Transplant,* this temporal tension is being explored again, with the symbolic death of the photograph given further resonance through parallel symbolism of organ transplantation and its offer to defeat physical mortality. The anti-portraiture elements of *Hearing Voices* aim to question the easy association of the photographic image with "presence", to disrupt what Barthes describes as the 'antiphon of "Look," "See," "Here it is"'[126] common to all photography. These images counter the tendency of intensely personal photography to entice the viewer to 'consume it aesthetically, not politically.'[127] At the same time, the work also aims to avoid reducing its subjects to the role of signifier in a socio-political or ethnographic discourse.

The *Hearing Voices* installation also returns to what is in some ways the more formal, or at least more closely focussed, approach to sonic portraiture first explored in *James Kamotho Kimani.* Both works are made exclusively from voice materials and deal more directly with language than the wider-ranging *Upcountry.* Although *Upcountry's* weaving of environmental recordings and music sewed the seeds for my subsequent exploration of the boundaries between documentary and abstraction, in retrospect I have always felt that the piece is trying to do too many things, and it was this recognition that led me to utilise a number of distinct media for the Botswana project. Listening to *Upcountry* reminds me to be vigilant against my natural reluctance to discard interesting sound material and brings to mind Pierre Boulez's critique of *musique concrète,* whose works he accused of a 'lack of directing thought' with the consequence that they became a 'flea market of sounds'.[128] I wouldn't entirely agree with such a caricature, nor with its wholesale application to *Upcountry,* but there is a tendency in both concrete music and in contemporary digital music to become a sort of catalogue of effects.

In the Botswana installation in particular, I wanted to distil the materials to their essence. The vowels of each of the subjects' voices have been 'massively extended into shimmering drones'[129] through a

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[122] Lucy Lippard in private correspondence with the author, 2004.
[123] Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida* (London: Vintage 2000) p92.
[124] Barthes, p96.
[125] Charles Darwent, Catalogue Essay for Tim Wainwright's exhibition *We are all the same,* 2006.
[126] Barthes, p5.
[127] Barthes, p36.
[128] Pierre Boulez, in Timothy Taylor, *Strange Sounds: Music, Technology and Culture* (London: Routledge, 2001) p51.
[129] Clive Bell, Review of *Hearing Voices* in *Wire* magazine Issue 258 August 2005.

painstaking process of editing and granulation[130] to give a sense of suspension in time which matches the physical suspension of the speaker/images. Cultural critic Stefan Szczelkun wrote of *Hearing Voices:* 'Languages slowing down, coming to a standstill – almost. The stillness of the sound is poignant. And the space left resonates.'[131] These drones, which are not created by simple looping techniques, shift subtly over time as they retrace the shape of the vowels. They carry the personal characteristics of the voice from which they are derived, but are also, at times, severely filtered, thinned out to take on the sinuous fragility of lone sine waves weaving amongst the other voices surrounding the visitor in the space (Disc 1 track 10). As each brief unmanipulated voice in turn recedes, fading away to thwart the curiosity of the listener, its clicks become modulated into bell-like tones, with their rhythmic placement, characteristic of each speaker and his or her language, preserved. Some of the languages, such as Naro, have only one or two clicks in an average sentence; others, such as !Xóõ, have at least one click in nearly every word. The result is a shifting, syncopated soundscape which retains linguistic cues but also merges into the realms of music and environment.

The success of my intention to create a space for contemplation in which the issues underlying the piece could be considered is borne out by the reactions of visitors, many of whom stayed in the space for 45 minutes or more. One wrote that he 'could come here every day to relax.' There were numerous comments to the effect that the piece was '[s]ubtle and understated – a beautiful rendering of a potent message' and 'an engaging way to bring an important issue to wider attention.' 'On the one hand the sound is just very lovely and meditative and on the other I can't quite lose the feeling that the bell-like sounds mark the passing of something lost – or being lost.'[132] Although in one sense the photographs of the Khoisan speakers suggest their presence, both the nature of the images and their physical suspension suggests disembodiment through technology. Sterne describes the effect of sound technology in the twentieth century: 'Once telephones, phonographs, and radio populated our world [...] the voice became a little more unmoored from the body.'[133] The installation sets up a tension between presence and absence which symbolically renders the limbo in which endangered languages and cultures find themselves.

As well as the sparseness of the sonic space created by the piece, the physical space of the installation is also critical. Each time the piece was installed, I spent considerable time analysing the architecture of the gallery before determining how the speakers would be arranged. In each case, visitors could move freely amongst the speaker/images, the physical suspension of which on transparent lines from the ceiling re-enforced the atmosphere of suspension in time and space. As well as wanting to avoid overburdening the piece with technology, I chose to work with still photography over video to reinforce this temporal suspension. Each speaker/image corresponds to a separate audio channel, so visitors effectively created their own mix as they moved through the space, and the slow pace and low volume of the piece were designed to induce "reduced listening". Indeed, the more installations

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[130] Granulation is a technique pioneered by Barry Truax at Simon Fraser University in Vancouver. 'Briefly, the technique divides the sound into short enveloped grains of 50ms duration or less, and reproduces them in high densities ranging from several hundred to several thousand grains per second. A dramatic alteration of the sound called "time stretching" is made possible with this technique, in that it allows the sound to be prolonged by any factor with no resultant change in pitch. The principle of the technique is that the samples within the grain are identical in order to those found in the original (hence the absence of pitch change), but the rate at which the grains move through the original material may be arbitrarily controlled. The fact that the grains are enveloped prevents audble transients and allows arbitrary sections of the original material to be juxtaposed and combined freely.' Barry Truax, 'Environmental Sound Composition', in Norman, ed, 1996, p61.

[131] Stefan Szczelkun, in visitors' book at Brunei Gallery, 2006.

[132] See Appendix 3 for more visitor comments.

[133] Sterne, p1.

I create, the more critical I have noticed the overall sound pressure levels are to the perception of my work. I often spend a great deal of time adjusting and re-adjusting the playback level to match the mode of listening I hope to encourage, and this level will vary considerably according to the specific social and acoustic characteristics of the site. *Hearing Voices* was played at a very low level, following Cornelius Cardew's insight that 'softness is compelling, because an insidious invasion of our senses is more effective than a frontal attack, because our ears must strain to catch the music, they must become more sensitive before they perceive the world of sound [...].'[134] Volume is a critical element in the overall strategy to discourage the sort of "listening in distraction" (to adapt Walter Benjamin) common to the reception of much media art.

Listening to languages one can't understand frees the listener from the need to interpret semantic meaning: this can 'draw attention to the mechanics and rhetorical structures of linguistic communication',[135] but it can also, paradoxically, facilitate a kind of abstract or musical listening. It could be argued that such removed listening is particularly facilitated by click languages:

> According to the Modulation Theory (Traunmüller, 1994), speech arises when speakers modulate their voice with conventional linguistic gestures. The voice as such is still used for conveying paralinguistic information about the speaker and his state and attitude. This is characteristic of all human speech. However, voiceless fricatives and clicks do not convey such paralinguistic information. Out of context, they do not even identify themselves as human sounds. Listeners who are not familiar with click languages tend to perceive the clicks as extraneous noise even within the context of a stream of speech. The property of fricatives and clicks not to disclose themselves as human sounds appears to be exploited in cooperative hunting.[136]

I am not entirely convinced by the theory that click sounds are particularly useful for communication while hunting – for one thing, they may not sound human to non-click-language speakers, but they obviously do to those who speak them and, presumably, to the animals who live around them. And a click certainly resembles a dry twig snapping underfoot more than any English consonant could. Their percussive energy is astounding (Figures 30-31). The distinctive dominance of so many high-amplitude transients in these languages makes a fascinating contrast to the Tsimshian languages in the project I have recently begun in Canada. The first thing that struck me about the language of the Gitxsan was the large number of voiceless fricatives and other breathy sounds which, particularly compared to clicks, are almost inaudible and present the opposite problems for me as a sound recordist (Disc 1 track 11). And of course Gitxsan, like the click languages, developed amongst a people for whom hunting was an essential part of their culture. Nevertheless, the experience of playing my recordings to people outside of the Kalahari (including people in Gaborone, the capital of Botswana, just on the edge of the desert) is that explanation is sometimes required to make it understood that the clicks are actually *part* of the speech in the same way as the phonemes of other languages.

> Verbal language is a means of communication used by almost all of us, so taken for granted, yet language is a complex act in which the message carried by speech

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[134] Cornelius Cardew, in David Toop, *Haunted Weather: Music, Silence and Memory* (London: Serpent's Tail, 2004) p90.
[135] Simon Waters, private communication, 2007.
[136] Traunmüller, p3.

> is just one aspect of a convergence of cultural context, abstract sonic material, and human body functioning that encompasses breath and brain, gesture and noise.[137]

Much experimental sound work in the past century or so has dealt with the 'purposeful confusion' of categories of sound and the exploration of the 'transitional zones between them'.[138] The fields of improvised music and experimental composition have extended the limits of vocal technique. In his seminal work *Acoustic Communication*, Barry Truax asserts that '[n]ever have the dividing lines between language, music and soundscape been as blurred as when these sounds are used as source material in the sound studio.'[139] A couple of years ago, I banged my leg on the street in Barcelona and, as the result of an unfortunate combination of heat, hypoglycaemia and loss of a large quantity of blood, I passed out. As I started to come to, but before I opened my eyes, I could hear a voice. It seemed garbled and unintelligible, but in that twilight before consciousness I didn't even remember that I was in Spain; my first thought was that I must have fallen asleep in my studio, working on one of my manipulated language pieces. It turns out to have been a Spanish policeman, leaning down and speaking very close to my face. *Hearing Voices* traverses the borders between speech and sound, language and music, and also attempts to explore new relationships between sound and image and to present alternative ways of approaching portraiture through sound. In his foreword to the exhibition, David Toop writes that 'Wynne constructs an experience that flickers on the boundaries between speech and sound, and the various levels of meaning that can be derived from human communications.'[140]

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[137] Toop, ibid.
[138] David Dunn. *Why Do Whales and Children Sing? A Guide to Listening in Nature* (Santa Fe, NM: Earth Ear, 1999) p83.
[139] Barry Truax, *Acoustic Communication* (Norwood NJ: Ablex, 1994) p198.
[140] Toop, in Wynne *Hearing Voices: Speakers/Languages* CD-ROM.

CHAPTER 6

APPROACHING THE MATERIALS

I listened to and thought about the materials I'd recorded in Kenya for nearly a year before I felt able to begin to work on them; it took me another year to complete *Upcountry*, not least because of my awareness of the yawning chasm between the context of the computer studio and that of Ingosi's *shamba* (smallholding), miles from electricity or running water. With a certain unease, I recognised that '[t]echnology is a two-sided phenomenon: on the one hand the operator, on the other the object. Where both operator and object are human beings, technical action is an exercise of power'.[141] While my status as an outsider and my geographical displacement unquestionably contributed to a heightened state of sensory awareness, I wanted to avoid reducing my subject to the status of exotica. For David Toop, '[t]he ultimate goal of the pure exotic is to erase history, stop time, manufacture memories; by force of will to fabricate an identity based on ethnic and cultural characteristics that have never before existed [...]'.[142] Similarly, classical ethnography, 'coupled with imperialism, [...] is always caught up in the invention, not the representation of cultures'.[143] But the cultural and racial characteristics engendered by ethnography and the processes of exotica are not manufactured from thin air. The complexity of these processes is clearly articulated in the following description provided by Dr John McAllister in an email exchange:

> Exotica normally constructs its fictions out of material already 'there' in the world of the *other*. Rather than fabricating an identity, it creates a fiction of *otherness* by focusing on what is "strange" in the foreign culture and then constructing an "identity" out of that which is meant to seem wholly exotic, wholly "not-us". But it never quite succeeds because in order to make the exotic visible, legible or hearable in the first place, at least some of our own familiar structures (in musical exotica, for example, features of form or even instrumentation) must be used; these features then produce a contrary movement to that of estrangement, so that the "piece" of exotica ends up feeling simultaneously strange and familiar regardless of the creator's intentions.[144]

In drawing parallels between ethnography and pornography, Bill Nichols also describes this movement between those features we recognise and those that seem mysterious or exotic:

> We are caught within oscillations of the familiar and the strange. We acquire a fascination *with* this oscillation per se, which leads to a deferment of the completion of knowledge in favor of the perpetuation of the preconditions for this fascination.'[145]

At any rate, it is clear that exotica necessarily involves the construction of a false and reductive model of cultural identity. Through my work, I was attempting to explore what Steven Feld describes as

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[141] Andrew Feenberg, 'Critical Theory of Technology' Simon Fraser University <http://www.sfu.ca/~andrewf/ctt.htm> 2004.
[142] David Toop, Exotica: *Fabricated Soundscapes in a Real World* (London: Serpent's Tail, 1999) p77.
[143] J Clifford, in Drever, 2002, p23.
[144] John McAllister, private communication, 2000.
[145] Nichols, p225.

'strategies and possibilities for valuing indigeneity as something more than essentialized otherness [...]'.[146]

Although interesting in its own right, the work of Italian sound artist Alessandro Bosetti presents instructive parallels and contrasts to my own (Disc 1 track 12). For *African Feedback,* Bosetti travelled around on the border between Mali and Burkina Faso with recordings of his favourite experimental music (including his own) and recorded the reactions of people in rural villages to hearing these on headphones.[147] It is no doubt unintentional – and some of the results are certainly engaging – but there seems to be a hint of condescension in the concept of this work. Much like the history of exotica over the decades, the work may ostensibly set out to explore other cultures but in the end uses the *other* primarily as a vehicle to make sense of the artist's own culture. There is, of course, a sense in which all art is as much about its creator as about its subject, but here the voices of the *unidentified* subjects are only of interest as an indicator of the gap between their understanding of something for which they were given no context and no explanation and the deliberately withheld *real* meaning of this material. In contrast to Ingosi's reaction to my transformations of his voice and the sounds of his environment, at least one of Bosetti's subjects unsurprisingly responded that '[n]o, this is not music'.[148] The accompanying photographs (Figure 33) bear some similarities to those from my project: their composition recalls early ethnographic images of natives listening to their own recorded voices for the first time, but I detect no critique of this relationship in Bosetti's work. The images seem to (unconsciously) reinforce the one-sided nature of this particular interaction and its arguably 'coercive context', to borrow a phrase from Paul Carter.[149] To draw another parallel to the allure of both exotica and "outsider art", the work seems to partake in 'an understandable but futile nostalgia for a time when art wasn't codified and analysed.'[150]

In searching for a compositional approach to *Upcountry,* I began to recognise that Ingosi has *his* instruments while the computer and digital recorder are mine. Chernoff writes, '[L]egend has it that a long time ago some African stevedores, who had their own songs for their work of loading and unloading the boats, first understood a machine to be the white man's music.'[151] In relation to Ingosi's music, mine is, in effect, "machine music". Whereas African master musicians traditionally make their own instruments, the computer composer becomes, in the words of Xenakis, 'a kind of pilot pushing buttons'.[152] It has always been the case that art and music have been influenced by available technology, but digital technology partakes of a remarkable paradox, as described by Michael Chanan in *Repeated Takes: A Short History of Recording and Its Effects on Music:* 'On the one hand, this is the ultimate negation of *musica practica;* on the other, it is like a new form of *musica practica* arising out of microchips and cables.'[153]

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[146] Feld, 1994, p258.
[147] See <http://www.melgun.net/textsoundpieces.html>.
[148] Unidentified speaker in Alessandro Bosetti's *African Feedback.* Sound file: Bosetti African Feedback extract 11.mp3 from <http://www.melgun.net/textsoundpieces.html> (2006).
[149] Paul Carter, 'Ambiguous Traces, Mishearing, and Auditory Space' in Veit Erlmann, ed, *Hearing Cultures*: Essays on Sound Listening and Modernity (Oxford: Berg, 2004) p54.
[150] Ewing.
[151]Chernoff, p35.
[152] Iannis Xenakis, in Jacques Attali, *Noise: The Political Economy of Music.* Manchester: University of Manchester Press 1985) p115.
[153] Michael Chanan, *Repeated Takes: A Short History of Recording and Its Effects on Music* (London: Verso 1995) p162.

Similarly, after my return from Botswana, it took a great deal of time to develop a means of working with the voices (and in this case also the images) that was sensitive and respectful but also performed a kind of aesthetic translation which I would find interesting to engage with as a digital artist. Of course, translating my subjects' words into something between language and music is itself a process permeated with issues of power – a site of 'asymmetrical relations',[154] as Michaela Wolf describes the process of language translation. And I am always uncomfortably aware of the power of the computer, particularly in cross-cultural practice; to quote Katharine Norman, 'it is a certain kind of power – to *orchestrate* sampled sounds from the *real world*, and to use sophisticated wizardry to cajole them into new forms, frequencies and fantastic documentaries'.[155] I was striving to achieve a kind of meaningful minimalism in which the problematics and contradictions of the process became part of the work, to 'alert the perceiver to the beauty of language and its potential as a plastic medium, to specifics and generalities, to political and economic realities, and to the troubled, yet fruitful connections that can be nurtured in spite of an intimidating geographical, linguistic, cultural, and technological divide'[156] and to do so by creating a thoughtful, even meditative environment rather than bombarding the audience with information:

> How do we deal with difference without fixing it as a version of ourselves? How do we deal with difference without entirely reducing it to the terms and categories of our own language? [...]. It is not able to face the fact that it has demolished the other in some way [...]. This act of violation at the heart of language [representation - ed], at the heart of conceiving the other leads me to look for para-linguistic ways of engaging the other. [157]

My approach to the materials differed considerably according to the various media through which *Hearing Voices* came to be realised. The CD-ROM served as a repository for my research materials: the complete recordings of the subjects' voices with English translation and unobstructed photographs of the speakers, the full recordings of my detailed interviews with Dr Chebanne and Dr Austin, all 10 of the Naro language hymns I recorded, maps and information about the languages themselves and the issues surrounding language endangerment. The production of this resource proved valuable as both experience in multimedia production and as a way of ensuring that the many hours of recordings were rigorously organised, documented, translated and edited. The interest of HRELP in assisting the production was invaluable, as the programmer I worked with was also a trained linguist with extensive experience in the field of language endangerment and revitalisation.

My search for appropriate ways of working with the voices as sonic material began through a piece called *!Xóõ Study No 1: Gosaitse*, which was released on Flatpack Antenna, a vinyl release intended to raise funds for ResonanceFM in London (Disc 1 track 13). Here, I began by breaking down this complex language into the most basic elements of all language, vowels and consonants. Like Morton Feldman, I discovered, '[n]ow that things are so simple, there's much to do'.[158] While the integrity of

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[154] Michaela Wolf, 'Translation as a process of power: Aspects of cultural anthropology in translation', *Translation in Intercultural Communication,* M Snell-Hornby, Z Jettmarová, K Kaindl eds (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 1995) p123.
[155] Norman, 1996 p1.
[156] Toop, in Wynne 2005.
[157] Sarat Maharaj, in Sanjay Sharma 'The Sounds of Alterity' in Bull and Back, eds (2003) p414.
[158] Morton Feldman, in Toop, 2004, p253.

Gosaitse's speech (and, I hope, of Gosaitse herself) is maintained, it is progressively accompanied by the products of its own deconstruction, vastly elongated vowels and isolated click-consonants. The clicks are placed at regular one-second intervals to convey a sense of the tyranny of time, the unalterable grid against which the decline of such languages is plotted. This device became the basis for the catalogue of clicks into which Dr Chebanne's explanation of the primary click sounds is woven in *Hearing Voices* for radio (Disc 1 track 14). In contrast, the vowels emerge from the speech itself, as each one is spoken, until they build to a complex chord which seems suspended beyond measured time. This piece marks the beginning of my efforts to fine-tune the balance of treated and untreated vocal material both acoustically and conceptually. My aim is to surprise the listener, to explore but not obliterate or confuse the borders between real and manipulated speech.

Developing the "composed documentary" for Radio 3 provided me with the opportunity to experiment further with all of my materials, including the interviews, before honing my approach for the installation. 'Playing with a sound', writes Truax, 'involves both memory and imagination, the 'what if' question, and the sense of discovery.'[159] The context of radiophonic composition allows access to a broad audience, yet still provides scope for thorough and serious exploration of issues. I wanted to provide listeners with an opportunity to hear these remarkable languages clearly and without the usual mass media devices of simultaneous voice-over translation and musical filler. The (English language) voices of the academics were subjected to the same deconstructive methods as the Khoisan voices, and the resulting materials interwoven with environmental recordings and untreated voice (Disc 1 track 15). Unlike López, who seems to place documentary and music at opposite ends of some linear scale based on his assumption that '[t]here can only be a documentary or communicative reason to keep the cause-object relationship in the work with soundscapes, never an artistic/musical one',[160] I have found through working with my recorded material that the boundaries between documentary and art are rich with creative possibilities. Leading the listener back and forth across the overlapping zones of what Katharine Norman calls 'speech-intended listening' and 'reflective' or musical listening[161] can be a particularly fruitful strategy for the sound artist interested in language as both sonic material and communicative medium.

As with *Upcountry,* the listeners' perception of the untreated sounds in this radio piece is informed by an 'expanded awareness facilitated by the technological intervention',[162] and the piece's undulating movement along the always recognisable but constantly shifting boundaries between modes of listening promotes a notable shift in perception. The listener becomes aware of aspects of the sound which they might not otherwise have noticed.

Radio has historically provided a fertile ground for experimentation, particularly during the first two decades of the twentieth century, when, as Kersten Glandein points out, 'as the first solely acoustic medium in which every visual dimension was entirely absent, it found itself in a pioneer position, challenging the growing dominance of visuality [...].'[163] Since the heady days of Russolo's *intonarumori* and Schwitters' sound poetry, radio production has, more often than not, succumbed to

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[159] Truax, in Norman, 1996 p61.
[160] Francisco López, 'Schizophonia vs. *l'objet sonore*: Soundscape and artistic freedom' <http://www.franciscoLópez.net/schizo.html> 1997.
[161] Norman, 1996 p5 and p15.
[162] Truax, in Norman, 1996 p61.
[163] Kersten Glandien, 'Art on Air', in Emmerson, 2000, p 169.

convention. Amongst influential exceptions were the radio-ballads of Ewan MacColl, Charles Parker and Peggy Seeger in the 50s and 60s and Glenn Gould's *Solitude Trilogy* in the late 60s. Although both of these are examples of interesting combinations of socially engaged practice and formal innovation, neither provided me with a model for the particular balance of text and sound for which I strove. I wanted the musical element to arise from the very materials of voice and sound rather than from more conventionally musical interventions and to play with listeners' expectations of radio in general and the documentary form in particular, to present 'more in form and content, and their interrelation, than the current received rules of radio documentary normally allow.'[164]

While exploring potential transformations of the source material through the radio piece, I was simultaneously searching for a limited range of relatively simple and symbolically meaningful techniques for use in the installation. Given the added dimensions of visual content and physical space, I felt compelled to refine the sonic element in order to achieve the subtlety and stillness I thought would be the most effective way to heighten the visitors' perception and promote contemplation. Clive Bell describes the overall effect as that of 'a shimmering, ominous sound which conjures the desert itself.'[165] The arrangement of the speaker/images encouraged visitors to circulate throughout the space, allowing them to shift their attention/focus both visually and aurally, essentially creating their own personal mix. Multi-channel sound installation allows the artist to take advantage of the '"spherical field" of auditory perception, as opposed to the forward directionality of vision'.[166] As Rolf Julius says, sound installation offers unique opportunities to 'organise the atmosphere, which is material, but in a more abstract way.'[167] The untreated voices of the subjects are still retained, emerging momentarily from each photograph in a way that emphasises both their fragility and their rarity. I was lucky to have a large group of San activists attend the opening of the installation in Windhoek, Namibia, and I noticed some of them moving from photograph to photograph in order to catch the words. Once every 45 minutes, all the voices speak at once, surrounding the gallery visitor.

The materials were further refined and abstracted for *Disappearing*, an 8.1 channel acousmatic piece for concert listening.[168] This piece utilises the spatialisation potential of multi-channel diffusion in a manner entirely different from that of the installation; it is not intended as portraiture in any sense, so there are no untreated voices, and the click sounds are utilised more as pure rhythmic material. Unlike my multi-channel work for auditory warnings, in which sounds travel in sometimes dramatic and rapid fashion through a 360-degree acoustic field, the diffusion for *Disappearing* is more oriented to the front of the seated audience, and the only significant movement of sound is the left/right sweep of passing cars. Nevertheless, the immersive effects of the field of sound permitted by 8-channel diffusion is critical to this work; the stereo reduction (Disc 1 track 9) obviously cannot convey this aspect. To an even greater degree than in the other works emerging from the Botswana project, this piece concentrates the listeners' attention on the vocal and environmental sounds as acousmatic material, though it is punctuated approximately one third of the way though by the vast acoustic space of the desert itself and the beating wings of a huge vulture. Taking into account the

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[164] Drever, 2005.
[165] Bell.
[166] Sterne, p153.
[167] Rolf Julius, in David Toop, 2004, p149.
[168] A stereo remix of this piece will be published on Electroacoustic Music Volume X on the Electroshock label in Moscow.

higher-quality playback system, more predictable listening circumstances and more experienced audience of the elctroacoustic concert setting, I felt able to mix the work with more subtlety than if it had been intended for radio broadcast, where experience has taught me that fine details can easily be lost through broadcast compression and other factors beyond the artist's control.

In Kenya, while walking with Ingosi a few miles from his village, he and I stopped at a school where hundreds of children suddenly converged excitedly on us from all directions, calling out his name and asking him to play for them. Much later, after listening to my finished piece, I asked Ingosi if he thought the piece *works*, if he recognised aspects of himself, his environment and his culture in it. He replied:

> It is very, very important. You remember when you were there they had no pictures, and they wondered how can we show people in London what our school is like, and we said that you could take pictures back to show London, so they could know what it is like all around Tiriki. . . . Yes. You did very good to take my voice to London and to change my music with your brain.[169]

By isolating elements of Ingosi's music and environment and manipulating them for my own ends, I have, of course, distorted them, but I believe I have done this sensitively and with honesty and respect. I was only too aware of what Feld calls 'the potential for technoaesthetics to mask technofetishism,' and 'the significant argument that such projects fulfil the economic and social needs of their makers, reproducing their positions of privilege [...].' But Feld himself goes on to propose that 'it is equally important to explore the potential for technoaesthetics to create cultural respect and musical empowerment'.[170] I was not in Feld's position of making commercial releases of traditional music, the promotion of which he admits was an outrageous contrast to the material circumstances of its producers. I did make good-quality digital recordings of Ingosi which he has been free to exploit for his own purposes and which are – in technical terms at least – a much clearer record of what he does than the muffled cassettes he and his son had been selling.

The fieldwork for my projects involves a process of continuous renegotiation of my aims and methods. The work with Gitxsan speakers in Canada is no exception; beyond knowing that I would collaborate with a linguist and a photographer, I had no preconceptions of how the work would develop. As artist-in-residence at the Harefield heart and lung transplant hospital, my approach has been to listen to people and the environment and to allow what I hear to influence the direction of the project. Indeed, ideas for how to work with the recordings change and develop with almost every patient I record. In a recording session at her bedside, one patient waiting for an urgent heart transplant spoke eloquently to me about her unsuccessful attempts to turn the cacophony of alarms into 'bells on sheep and goats in the Greek mountains' when she first arrived in the hospital – a striking and inspiring image which is influencing my treatment of the environmental recordings I am making throughout the hospital. In Kenya, one of the many ways in which I was forced to rethink my usual working methods came about during a recording session in Ingosi's house when I asked him to play a single unaccompanied note on the *shiriri* (Disc 1 track 16). I have often asked musicians to do this in order to provide me with some clear, monophonic musical material to work with. Ingosi's response, however, was to play several short groups of notes with portamenti. The

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[169] Mwoshi, in Wynne, p38.
[170] Feld, 284.

second take, after my clarification, was similar to the first; I didn't ask for a third. This episode brought home to me a fundamental difference between our respective approaches to the materials of music and was indicative of the broadening contextualisation of my methodology in both collecting and working with recordings made in other cultural contexts than my own. Although the *Hearing Voices* project's precedent of distributing the output across various media – radiophonic, installation, CD-ROM and acousmatic concert piece – is one which will most likely influence my work on both the hospital and Gitxsan projects, the ways in which I will actually work on the sound will only develop as the complex relationships between myself and the subjects and the linguist and the photographer form and shift.

CHAPTER 7

WHEN IS A CLICK NOT A GLITCH?

The development of this body of work has brought me to question why there seems to be such a dichotomy in the arts between work which deals overtly with ethnic *otherness* and work which is either more abstract or unequivocally rooted in the concerns of the dominant culture.

For artists who are themselves other, the notion of multiculturalism may, on the surface, suggest inclusion but could also be said to represent simply another form of what Edward Said calls 'the sheer-knitted together strength of Orientalist discourse'. [171] As Said argues, 'Orientalism depends for its strategy on ... [a] flexible *positional* superiority, which puts the Westerner in a whole series of possible relationships with the Orient without ever losing him the relative upper hand'.[172] Multiculturalism may just be another instance of this strategy in a more benign guise. This would account for Rasheed Araeen's observation that the culture of the artist who is *other* 'always sticks to their work as a tag of "oriental" or "ethnic" art, whereas the work of Western artists can be acknowledged as "modernist" or "post-modernist" art'.[173] For artists like myself working primarily in a context in which we are not ethnically *other*, to make work about these issues is not only to risk accusations of exploiting our subjects or otherwise supporting the structures of dominance, but also to immediately exclude the work from a significant sector of potential viewers/listeners. As soon as the work contains elements which can be identified as ethnically *other* (a recording of someone speaking an exotic language or a photograph of someone who is not white and not here), audiences, critics, curators and record labels swiftly divide into two camps – those who want to look/listen, and turn elsewhere. Is it just a matter of taste, or has the entirely justified post-colonial suspicion of primitivism led indirectly through political correctness to a reinforcement of the hierarchical North/South and East/West dichotomy? Not that there aren't differences – and it is important that we remain 'critical about the way difference is being represented'[174]– but difference needn't be the end of the story.

Commercial projects like Paul Simon's *Graceland, Deep Forest* and the 'white retro-hippie band Kula-Shaker'[175] haven't helped: 'this souveniring of sound and culture is only possible on the basis of a

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[171] Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage, 1979) p6.
[172] Said, p7.
[173] Martijn Van Beek, paraphrasing Rasheed Araeen in 'Imagining Other Places: cosmopolitanism and exotic fantasies in multicultural cities' <http://www.geocities.com/udeifelten/imaginingotherplaces> (2001) p9.
[174] Van Beek, p12.
[175] Van Beek p 34.

long history of colonial power and theft [...]'.[176] Crispin Mills, lead singer of Kula Shaker was filmed watching some local musicians in India for MTV: 'this is the tribal stuff, everyone has a good heart and they put it into their music [...] they are just happy [...] them living their culture just seems completely natural'.[177] The arts and media abound with romantic, exoticised representations of the *other*, examples of Rosaldo's "imperialist nostalgia". When I arrived to exhibit *Hearing Voices* in Botswana and Namibia, more than one person expressed relief that not only was my work contemporary in formal terms, it also showed its Khoisan subjects as contemporary individuals rather than perpetuating the myth-making versions promoted by the eco-tourist industry, the perception of indigenous culture as 'a past existing in the present'.[178] Johannes Fabian asserts that:

> the idea of modernity and its doctrine of progress was often taken to imply the historical superiority of "modern" civilization (generally urban, cosmopolitan, largely white, middle-class culture in the United States and Western Europe) over other cultures by casting those different (yet actually contemporaneous) cultures as if they existed in the collective past of the moderns.[179]

Perhaps I am just obsessed with the issue of boundaries because my own practice has for some time alternated between installations using purely electronic sounds and electroacoustic work based on voice and field recordings and because I am now engaged in developing appropriate strategies for bringing my language/sonic portraiture practice into the realms of multi-channel installation. Perhaps spending three years exploring what happens when you put seemingly incompatible genres with very different audiences ('A mix of country music, experimental soundworks and the kind of dance music that makes you want to sit down') next to or on top of each other on my ResonanceFM show, *Upcountry*, is an indication of some perverse desire on my part to mix oil and water. But I have always thought that sound art and electroacoustic practices offer promising opportunities to explore, break down or just overlap boundaries, so it is frustrating to find that the art world is so divided.

Despite the tendency described by Barry Truax to treat 'all sound in the experimental studio, whether of natural or synthetic origin, [as] abstract material awaiting rebirth within a new communicational framework',[180] sonic "exploration" (itself a word with strong colonial resonances) cannot be viewed, particularly in a cross-cultural context, as an entirely neutral pursuit. But does the sense of responsibility engendered by awareness necessarily result in work which will be perceived by many as either didactic and overtly *worthy* or indulging in exotica?

One strategy for allowing one's work to engage with real-world concerns without the art itself becoming overtly burdened by the weight of *issues* is for the materials to take on a dual life and form part of a wider project. Patrick Sutherland is a photographer who has been working for 15 years in the Spiti Valley in Himachal Pradesh in northern India, documenting the culture of a remote Tibetan Buddhist community as it opens up to tourism, development and rapid social change. As well as photographs, he has been making superb sound recordings which will be stored in the British Library as well as in an archive accessible to the community. Peter Cusack recently made recordings in Azerbaijan which, in addition to becoming material for his own sound art practice, were part of a

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[176] John Hutnyk, in Van Beek, p34.
[177] Crispin Mills, in Van Beek, p28.
[178] Sterne, p315.
[179] Sterne, p27.
[180] Truax, p198.

collaborative educational project to examine planning policy (or the lack thereof) in the capital Baku's history and its oil-driven present. His *Favourite London Sounds* project was used by the Greater London Authority in the development of their ambient noise strategy.

Both my Botswana project and the new Gitxsan project in Canada are intended to contribute to the documentation and study of languages that are under threat. Recorded documentation of endangered languages is essential if their sounds are to be preserved for future generations within and beyond the community; it can also provide an important resource for both linguists and communities engaged in the struggle against their decline. There are plans for the Gitxsan project to include workshops for community members at 'Ksan, a local indigenous art gallery where I have also been invited to exhibit my work, to enable them to digitise and edit the many hours of home recordings made over the past three decades. Home recording of elders speaking in their native languages blossomed in the 70s in Canada when the availability of inexpensive cassette recorders coincided with a resurgence in awareness of the importance of keeping indigenous languages and cultures alive. These fragile and deteriorating sound materials are often both very personal and of significant historical importance, and facilitating the empowerment of people to digitise, restore and archive them locally rather than handing them over to outsiders is one of the ways my project can make a contribution to the community. It will also, no doubt, expose me to unique sound materials I would otherwise never have heard. The difficult political situation regarding the *Hearing Voices* CD-ROM and its inclusion in my exhibition in the capital of Botswana at least confirms that my work has not become as irrelevant to those on whom it was based (and those under whose authority they live) as much anthropology remains for *its* subjects. Trinh Minh-ha describes anthropology as '[a] conversation of "us" with "us" about "them" [...,] a conversation in which "them" is silenced [...]'.[181]

My year-long residency at the transplant hospital is still going on, and the official survey carried out amongst the participants I have worked with so far has revealed some interesting responses. One said that it was good to have 'someone to talk to who actually listens' and another commented that the project is an important way of 'showing we're still here, still alive and occasionally still smiling – finally we shall return'[182] (Disc 6).

Negotiating ethical challenges has become an integral aspect of my work. The Gitxsan project presents even more thorny circumstances than my work in Botswana, not least because of the more widespread political engagement of indigenous communities in Canada. Also, people can be understandably touchy when outsiders tell them that their language is dying, and there are examples of linguists being banned from working in communities as a result of their lack of sensitivity to such feelings. The transplant project, which involves working with a group of people who are also vulnerable, though in very different ways from those in my other work, has already thrown up some interesting challenges in the form of requests to remove sensitive information from my recordings of patients speaking about their experiences and debates about levels of intrusion into highly emotional areas. Gaining access to critical areas such as the Intensive Treatment Unit and operating theatres has involved building up trust amongst patients and staff and explaining my work carefully to the Ethics Committee and the Chief Executive of the NHS Trust. The struggle to retain a sufficient degree of artistic freedom in these projects is an integral part of the process; moral

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[181] Nichols, p228.
[182] Anonymous patient, in *Report on the Trial Period of Artists in Residence at Harefield Hospital*, compiled by Victoria Hume for the Royal Brompton and Harefield NHS Trust, July 2006.

and ethical issues shape and inform the work in interesting and challenging ways. But even before the completion of the project, the potential benefits of the project to patients and their families (as well as to psychologists and clinicians working with them) is becoming clear. I recently heard from a woman whose husband I recorded only a few weeks before his death: she wrote of the 'enormous value of your project' and described the materials I sent her as 'of priceless value - a record of what it was like during our last few, very intensely devoted, months together in the Transplant Unit. There is no-one else in my life now who knows really anything about that time, so it is particularly wonderful to be able to summon it up by picture and by sound.'[183]

Ultra-red is an LA-based group which, according to their mission statement, pursues 'two aesthetic-political objectives: to explore acoustic space as enunciative of social relations and, secondly, to radicalize the conventions of electro-acoustic art.'[184] Their projects include working with the Union de Vecinos, an organisation of low-income public housing residents fighting for fair housing policies as well as work on issues such as needle exchange and AIDs awareness. Far too *worthy* for some audiences, I'm sure. And while some of their artistic output successfully negotiates the aesthetic barriers which often fence off socially engaged practice and simultaneously bridges some of the cultural, class and taste divisions of the artworld, at least one member of the group readily accepts the difficulties of such a practice:

> Accompanying my interest in sound, I also hold to an equally constant devotion to social/cultural transformation. The two commitments are rarely in harmony. Rather, between them and their playing out through my life, there grows a continual swell of noise. My political commitments find little sympathy in my artistic practice. All efforts at a synthesis produce a dissonance whose rhythm is neither constant nor regulated [...]. I am comforted to know that the dialectical oscillation between actions of sound and politics is not a solo effort. But I must admit to being less than satisfied with much of the results.[185]

'By the radical deployment of sound, Ultra-red have given a voice to those who are forced to remain invisible,' according to *The Wire* magazine.[186] Part of their success in overcoming the gaps mentioned above is that their work also engages with (post-)digital aesthetics, under the broad umbrella of which we also find the glitch, which some argue carries with it 'an implicit critique of digital technology and its embeddedness within broader social and political relations [...].'[187] The glitch, so the argument goes, is a prime representative of 'the 'pariahs of sound', the sonic attributes that had been historically purged from musical language'.[188] According to Kim Cascone:

> it is from the "failure" of digital technology that this new work has emerged: glitches, bugs, application errors, system crashes, clipping, aliasing, distortion, quantization noise, and even the noise floor of computer sound cards are the raw materials composers seek to incorporate into their music.[189]

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[183] Nina Lillie, personal email, February 2007.
[184] Ultra Red, 'Public Record' <http://www.ultrared.org/publicrecord/contact/ultrared.html>.
[185] Ultra Red website <http://www.ultrared.org/lm_soundbody.html>.
[186] Wire magazine quoted on Antiopic website <http://www.antiopic.com/catalog/an003.html>.
[187] Phil Thomson, p2.
[188] William Ashline, 'The Pariahs of Sound: On the Post-Duchampian Aesthetics of Electro-acoustic Improv', in *Contemporary Music Review* Vol 22, No 3, 2003, p 57.
[189] Kim Cascone, 'The Aesthetics of Failure: "Post-Digital" Tendencies in Contemporary Computer Music', in *Computer Music Journal*, Vol 24, No 4 (Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 2000) p13.

But much of the post-digital sound work being made with such materials takes asocial modernism to the extreme, as even the Mille Plateaux label's website admits: 'clinical approaches to making music have dominated much of the clicks & cuts / minimalist aesthetic out there'.[190] In much of this work, the dominance of style over substance ensures that any critique remains unarticulated. For Phil Thomson, although 'the fantasy is that microsound's incorporation of glitches and errors embodies some kind of critique of technology, ... the critique is now at the point where it risks becoming formulaic and losing its critical edge.'[191] In his own work, Thomson aims, like me, for 'a balance of self-conscious technological critique and social consciousness/conscience, a rescuing of self-reflexivity from self-absorption.' [192]

Digital clicks are infinitely reproducible, whereas it is physically impossible, according to Murray Schafer, 'for nature's most rational and calculating being to reproduce a single phoneme in his own name twice in exactly the same manner'[193]. Nevertheless, and despite its current and perhaps inevitable slide into the realms of cliché, from Cascone's 'aesthetics of failure' to Thomson's 'failure of aesthetics',[194] the Cagean spirit of inclusiveness which first brought attention to the glitch was certainly reflective of a desire to foreground the unheard and ignored of the sound world, albeit from within a primarily technical context.[195]

I would not argue that socially engaged, research-based practice should entirely displace that which is not – I am rather fond of clinical modernism and post-digital aesthetics myself and am resistant to direct didacticism in art. And of course not all work which is socially engaged needs to deal with ethnicity. But 'sometimes self-referentiality tends towards asociality, because a work can end up referring to nothing but itself, even if a broader social critique is initially intended.'[196] I suspect if you took an art audience, showed them two doors and only told them that behind one was art based on clicks made from slicing up a sine tone and behind the other was art based on clicks made by the speakers of an endangered languages in Africa, the majority would not hesitate before choosing one or the other. I am not altogether sure which room I would go into myself – but it seems certain that the shadow of that tag "ethnic art" would hang over the latter, even if nothing were revealed about the artist, and that shadow would make many head for the other door. Part of the decision might well be on the basis of an aesthetic preference for electronic vs real/concrete sound worlds, but the *ethnic thing* would almost certainly play a role, as if *ethnic* were some kind of stylistic category like abstract expressionism.

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[190] Mille Plateaux website <http://www.mille-plateaux.net> (2004).
[191] Phil Thomson, interview by Sing Sweet Software <http://structuredsound.net/ssw/phil.html> (2004)
[192] Thomson, p5.
[193] Schafer, p90.
[194] Thomson, 2004.
[195] My own 1996 piece *$75CDN*, released on the Canadian Electroacoustic Community's 'Presence' CD, made use of the sounds of the equipment on which it was made – the whirr of floppy drives, the click of buttons, the buzz of tape mechanisms, etc. *Noise floor*, a short piece made in Helsinki in 1997, used only the underlying system noise of the equipment in the sound studio of the Fine Art Academy where I was teaching at the time.
[196] Thomson, p5.

CHAPTER 8

LINGUISTIC AND ACOUSTIC ECOLOGIES

Historically, the pariahs of language have undoubtedly been those spoken by indigenous people. As Barry Truax says, language 'is a power that like all power can be abused and distorted for the control and manipulation of others. It is a power to be conserved and respected like any natural resource in danger of pollution or extinction'.[197] While the notion of pollution is a fraught one in regard to languages, since healthy languages constantly borrow and adapt words from others, there is no doubt that the extinction of languages leaves the world impoverished and diminishes the repository of knowledge and culture on which we stand as a species. It has also been argued that 'the more an Indigenous person learns and tries to express Eurocentric ideas in his or her Indigenous language, the more that person realizes that Eurocentric languages constitute an imposed context that Indigenous people have neither authored nor experienced.'[198]

The field of language ecology bears a clear relationship to that of acoustic ecology, itself an interesting example of an area in which the work of sound artists can take on a dual life, providing materials for both creative practice and more practical/social applications. The activities of the World Soundscape Project[199] at Simon Fraser University in Vancouver in the late 60s and early 70s included studies on the changing acoustic environment and noise pollution as well as creative work made from the materials collected for those studies. The field of acoustic ecology which grew from those activities still encompasses this duality of purpose, but it too is often regarded from the outside as the domain of a kind of humourless "sensitive brigade",[200] and as such limited or skewed in its aesthetic appeal.

Just as globalising languages and cultures are drowning out minority voices at an ever-accelerating rate, a busy motorway will mask the natural sounds which might otherwise be heard nearby, leaving none of the 'acoustic niches'[201] animals naturally locate for themselves. Reference was made above to the symbolic presence of the Trans-Kalahari Highway in *Hearing Voices* for radio and in the 8-channel acousmatic concert piece *Disappearing*. At the climax of the extended opening crescendo which mixes desert insects, stretched vowels and a car approaching from a great distance at high speed, just as listeners might start to wonder if the sound might be a motor vehicle, the car passes through the stereo field with such intensity that it works almost like a slap in the face (without the pain). This long, slow opening, which I am told raised some eyebrows at Radio 3,[202] builds tension

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[197] Truax, p41.
[198] Battiste and Youngblood, p81.
[199] The World Soundscape Project was an educational and research group established by R Murray Schafer and early members included Barry Truax and Hildegard Westerkamp.
[200] Sensitive brigade is a term coined by visual artists Denise Hawrysio and Peter Lloyd Lewis in the 1990s to refer to artists and audiences whose commitment to sensitivity and a kind of humourless political correctness colours both the perception and creation of artwork. I have adopted the name for my own practice – in part ironically because of my concern with negative effects of the tyranny of oversensitivity, but also partly in recognition that artists do need to be aware of the personal and political meanings and consequences of their practice, that sensitivity should be taken seriously, if not militantly.
[201] Bernard Krause, *'The Niche Hypothesis: Creature Vocalizations and the Relationship between Natural Sound and Music'* <http://www.naturesounds.org/Win97NicheHypothesis.html> (1997).
[202] Alan Hall, private conversation with the author (2004).

and sensitises the listener to the timbral dimension of sound, preparing them for the sound world they are entering into. The spectra of the sounds are shaped over time to hold the listener hovering between recognition and abstract listening, between pitched material and texture: '[T]he borders between pitch and "timbre" are very imprecise, and subject to drifting perceptual demarcations among which we may fluently commute if the musical context permits [...].'[203] Throughout the piece, the listener's 'focal scanning'[204] is manipulated, shifting between the micro and macro levels of perception.

The inclusion, indeed foregrounding, of such elements as cars, which are often treated as a nuisance in environmental recording, is intended to challenge idealised notions of both nature and human culture. David Dunn holds that 'the elision of sound fragments of natural environments that contain human sonic intrusions (aircraft, road traffic, etc.) – by not recording them or editing them out – is a "false representation of reality" that lures people into the belief that these places still fulfill their romantic expectations'.[205] In my radio piece, after the Naro hymn *Qgoo máá te chìbi ne* which was recorded outdoors at the Dutch Reform mission at D'Kar, there is a momentary sense of acoustic and physical space opening up, but this is soon punctuated by a Land Rover bouncing through the sand with people shouting to be heard over it – a frequent source of difficulty in making the pristine voice recordings I wanted to provide Dr Chebanne with and which I also wanted for use in the installation, but a sound which was so characteristic of the place that its inclusion felt like a necessity. Another sound mark I chose to incorporate in the radio piece is one which is disappearing from the Kalahari: galvanized metal windmills were once the primary method of bringing water up from the underground rivers which criss-cross the desert, and the rhythmic clanging of one of these as the wind rustles through long dry grass forms one of the environmental segments of the piece. These windmills are now being replaced by motorised pumps as unstoppably as Khoi and San languages are being replaced by Setswana and English and traditional bush foods by government rations of *millipap*.[206]

Just as natural ecosystems are sometimes destroyed by overwhelming direct interventions such as strip mining or forest clear-cutting rather than by natural or evolutionary processes, there is often explicit and direct pressure exerted by dominant cultures to suppress indigenous languages. During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, children caught speaking their native tongue in Welsh schools were forced to wear a block of wood called the *Welsh Not*, which the wearer would pass on to the next pupil heard speaking the language until, at the end of the day or week, the unfortunate child in possession of it would be subjected to corporal punishment (Figure 34). In southern Africa, it has been reported that '[f]armers and employers threaten people who use Khoekhoegowap [Nama] because, in a paranoia that is common to all oppressors, they believe the speakers are plotting subversion.'[207] In this respect, there are some interesting parallels between Canada and Botswana:

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[203] Denis Smalley, 'Spectro-morphology and the Structuring Processes' in Emmerson (1986) p66.
[204] Smalley, p81.
[205] Dunn in López p85.
[206] Millipap is ground maize. !kun/'xae, a /G'ui speaker in D'kar, told us: 'When I was brought up, I ate wild roots – roots for water, roots you can eat, roots you can roast and eat - we didn't have any of the modern foods you get now, but wild foods were everywhere and easy to get. Because I got married, I moved here with my husband, but now I am suffering because I don't get what I need here, because wild foods are scarce – now people eat millipap, only millipap. I am not getting food rations from the government – although they wrote down our names we never got such help and we are still waiting, waiting. And I am just depending on food that other people are getting from the government.' in Wynne *Hearing Voices: Speakers/Languages* CD-ROM.
[207] Frank Seifart in Crystal p82.

both countries enjoy an international reputation as beacons of democracy and fairness, but both have been less than admirable in their treatment of the indigenous population. In Canada, the long-established and highly developed traditions of education in aboriginal communities were forcibly replaced by a system of Residential Schools, originally run by missionaries and later jointly administered by the churches and the government. At these schools, which first appeared as early as the seventeenth century and did not completely disappear until 1998,[208] children were not only sometimes subjected to physical and sexual abuse but were also forbidden to speak their native languages. Children were often taken hundreds of miles away from their families and, as a result, many adults who attended the Residential Schools missed out on learning both their language and the stories told by their elders at home. Such examples of the deliberate silencing of difference (and/or dissent) expose the essential violence at the heart of both colonisation and globalisation.

The relatively recent rise to prominence of artists such as Yinka Shonibare and Chris Ofili in the UK and Brian Jungen and Peter Morin in Canada can be seen as an indication that perhaps the compartmentalisation characteristic of the art world since well before the 'highly contested "multicultural boom"'[209] of the early 1990s is finally breaking down. It could be argued, however, that ethnic politics as subject matter is still only palatable in the context of a certain post-modern knowingness of form and enough humour to allow the work to sit comfortably amongst the mainstream.

Nevertheless, the combination of my recent exposure to the work of Jimmie Durham and my experiences on the Kispiox reserve has led me to re-examine the role of humour in my own work. If there is an element of "imperialist nostalgia" in the *Hearing Voices* installation, it is perhaps evident in what could be perceived as its atmosphere of sorrow; 'There is sadness here', wrote one gallery visitor. Similarly, my use of Ingosi's funeral song feels in retrospect uncomfortably akin to the approach of some anthropologists:

> It is hard to imagine that the Native Americans who cooperated in making these recordings thought of themselves with the same pathos and tragic sense employed by their anthropologist contemporaries who wrote about them – even when they did imagine preserving some aspect of the music and tradition for future generations.[210]

But the material conditions of Khoi and San people I met was far worse than that of the members of the Gitxsan community with whom I have been working – the former have little to laugh about in their lives. After all, '[s]ome indigenous nations have survived the five-hundred-year nightmare of destruction; others remain little more than memories – collections of vulnerable, abused, and disadvantaged peoples.'[211] Nevertheless, it seems that humour is one element of my other installation practice which has not yet successfully migrated to this strand of my work, and this is an issue I intend to confront more directly within the new work. There was a great deal of laughter during my time on the reserve in Canada which must somehow come through regardless of how I end up working with the material. On the *Transplant* project, I am also determined to make work which

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[208] Government of Canada website, Indian Residential Schools Resolution Canada < http://www.irsr-rqpi.gc.ca/english/historical_events.html> (2006).
[209] Lippard, 1993, p2.
[210] Sterne, p330.
[211] Battiste and Youngblood, p81.

somehow reflects the sense of humour I've encountered amongst and between patients and hospital staff. I greatly admire the dry humour of Durham's works which 'satirically protest the ethnographic habit of perceiving anything about Indians as fair game for the display cases of history, deflecting the naive points of "educational" display to prove that "they're human beings just like us".'[212] Addressing such issues will not be an easy task for me as a non-native, especially having accepted what may be the poisoned chalice of a commission from the Museum of Anthropology in Vancouver. Durham's work is described by Lucy Lippard as 'a welcome antidote to the humorless theorizing and earnest proselytizing of much art on the subjects he tackles'.[213] This provides a judicious caveat for my own work. Although tragedy might well be part of the story, I want to avoid the hierarchical projection of sadness onto the subjects of my work, to avoid the all too common tendency to view the *other* as *victim*.

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[212] Lippard, 1993, p2.
[213] Lippard, 1993, p2.

CONCLUSION

Warren Burt conjectures that our brains might be hard-wired to categorise sounds as either speech, environmental sounds or music, but also notes that we are capable of allowing sounds to shift from one category to another. And, as David Dunn writes, '[m]uch of the experimental work with sound done by artists in [the twentieth] century has been about exploring the reclassification of different sounds from one category to another and the transitional zones between them'.[214] Perhaps if the same spirit could be applied to the categorisation and separatism characteristic of the art world's approach to issues of ethnicity, artists would be freer to engage in cross-cultural activities without dividing audiences before the work is even made.

The acoustic environment, like human languages, will inevitably evolve over time, but it is important to document it along the way and to understand how and why it changes if we are to manage this evolution thoughtfully rather than standing by in idle ignorance while the economy of scale flattens everything in its path. Language itself can both facilitate and act as a barrier to communication, and the role of technology is similarly contradictory. Both within my African projects and in the broader context of relations between the North and the South, technology can be an important ally in the maintenance, documentation and understanding of threatened languages and cultures, but it is also inextricably linked with the expansionist pressures of the developed world which cause their decline. The technologised North and the small-scale local cultures of the South have much to learn from each other, but the 'ethnographic impulse'[215] amongst artists must carry with it a recognition that, as Steven Feld argues:

> The politics of being an engaged and responsible researcher are now bound up with giving voice to people whose validity, indeed whose humanity, is denied or silenced by the world's dominant cultures.[216]

Ingosi Mwoshi's neo-traditional music and my own practice are most definitely minority activities in global terms. Both of us attempt to deal with specific social realities in ways that are not possible within the forms fostered by global culture and, without wishing to draw on the myth of music as universal language which has historically served to mask ethnocentrism, I would say that there is often a strong sense of affinity between creative practitioners which stretches across cultures. It could be argued that I have exploited this special relationship, since, despite the fact that I have not profited directly from the project, the work does contribute to my career as an academic, composer and sound artist. Perhaps I am – however unwillingly – the 'producer of a symbolism of power',[217] to

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[214] Dunn, p84.
[215] Foster, 1999, p181.
[216] Feld, 1994, p285.
[217] Attali, 1977, p116.

borrow a phrase from Jacques Attali in *Noise: The Political Economy of Music*. And my work may, in turn, be exploited by the next generation of commercial sound artists and designers (including perhaps some of my students) in the way that the commercial sector has always appropriated ideas from artists in order to feed the relentless appetite of commodification.

Although my projects have contributed to the documentation of threatened languages and cultures, the very act of documentation is itself problematic, a decontextualised snapshot of living traditions. As Sterne observes in relation to the work of anthropologists such as Fewkes and Fletcher, who recorded Native American music: 'The cylinder collections represent systematized cultural fragments solicited and preserved by one set of institutions while another set systematically destroyed the culture from which the fragments were taken.' [218]

I could, like the vast majority of contemporary artists and composers, ignore the local traditions of small-scale communities in the *developing* world. Or I could simply 'shut up shop and keep silent [...].'[219] But rather than be defeated by 'moral masochism' which, at any rate, may well be 'a disguised version of *ideological patronage* [...], a position of power in the pretence of its surrender',[220] I look towards the relatively new methods and approaches of electroacoustics and sound art as a potentially (though regrettably not always in practice) unencumbered language of sound. I will continue to negotiate the personal, ethical and political through a cycle of research and creative sound work involving, I hope, a responsible engagement with both individuals and culture in a positive attempt to move beyond cultural voyeurism and "imperialist nostalgia". With self-reflexive, culturally sensitive and historically critical practice, 'it becomes possible to think of a cultural poetics that is an interplay of voices, of positioned utterances.'[221]

The demands of nation-building in the *developing* world and the desire to participate in the global economy need not be mutually exclusive with the survival of small-scale indigenous languages and cultures. Unfortunately, the slowly developing awareness of the importance of ecology and the interconnection of its various realms – environmental, biological, linguistic, even acoustic – is, for some, too little too late. We should be listening all the harder.

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[218] Sterne, pp331-2.
[219] Frank Denyer, 'Finding a Voice in the Age of Migration', in *Contemporary Music Review*, Vol 15, Part 3, p80.
[220] Feld, 1994, p277.
[221] J Clifford, in Drever, 2002, p24.

Fig 1. *The Sound of Sirens.* Lyd Gallery, Town Hall Square, Copenhagen, 1997. 25 speakers are hidden under the paving stones.

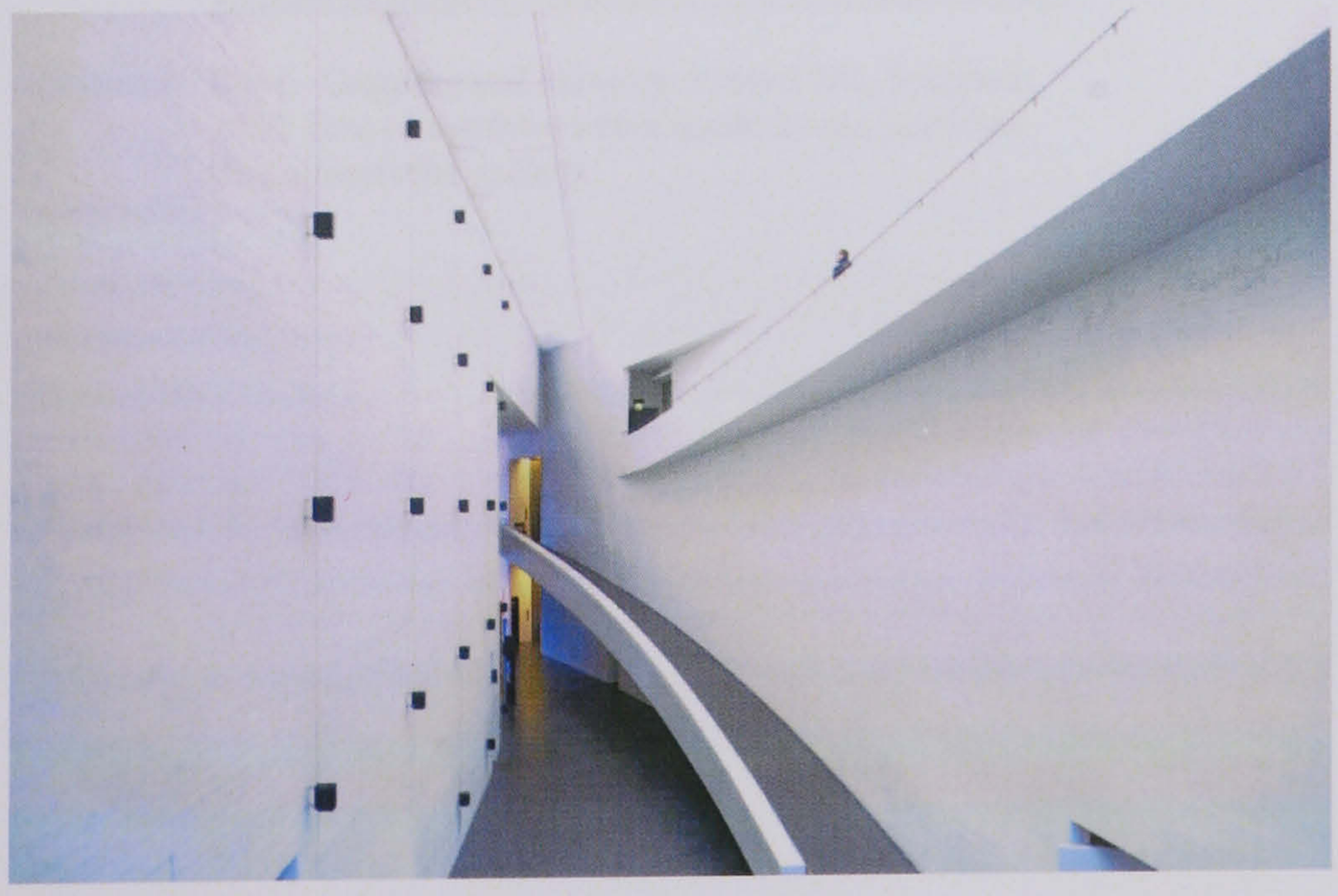

Fig 2. *Cry Wolf.* Museum of Contemporary Art, Helsinki, 2001.

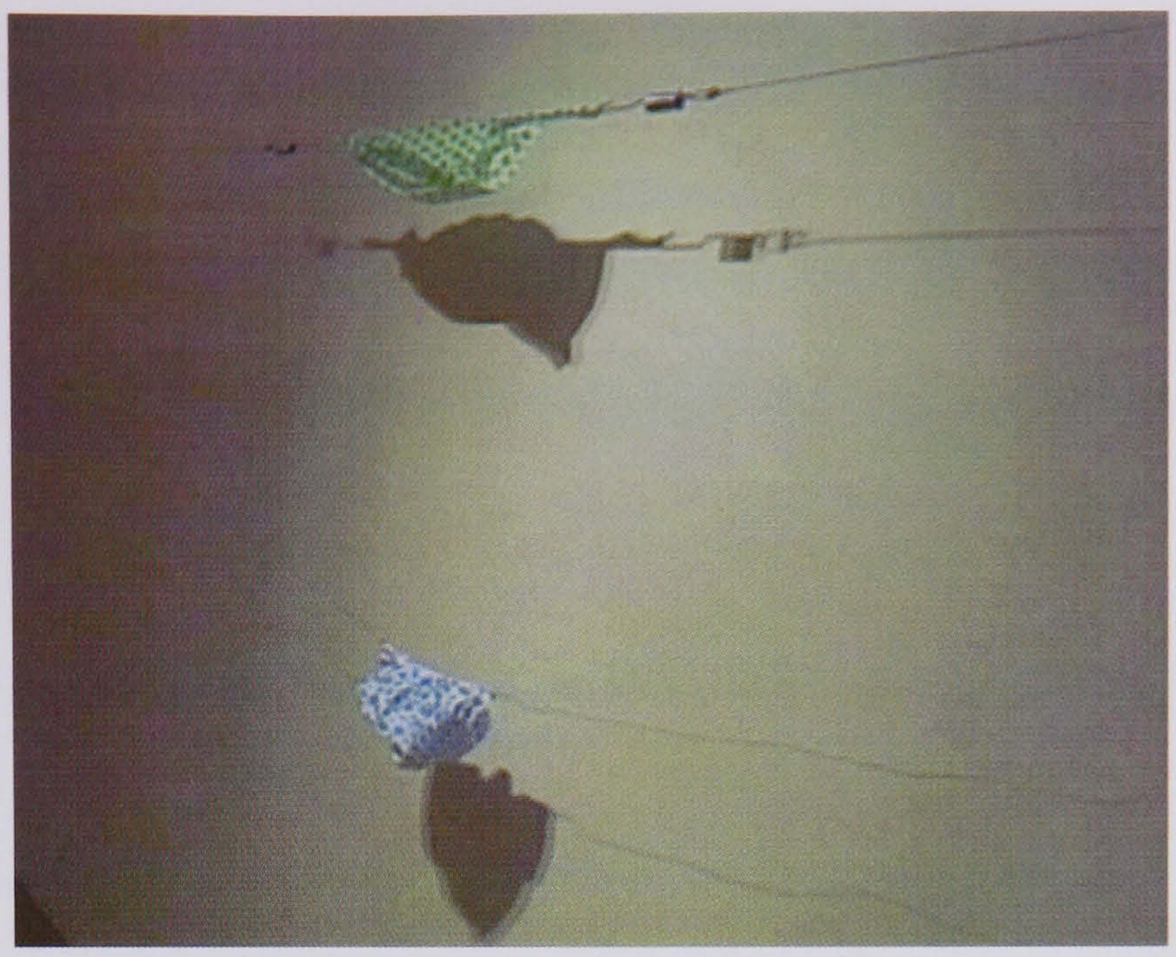

Fig 3. *Grasping and Clinging*. Project 304, Bangkok, 2000. Collaboration with Denise Hawrysio.

Fig 4. *Grasping and Clinging*. Project 304, Bangkok, 2000. One of ten interactive audio boxes installed throughout the gallery.

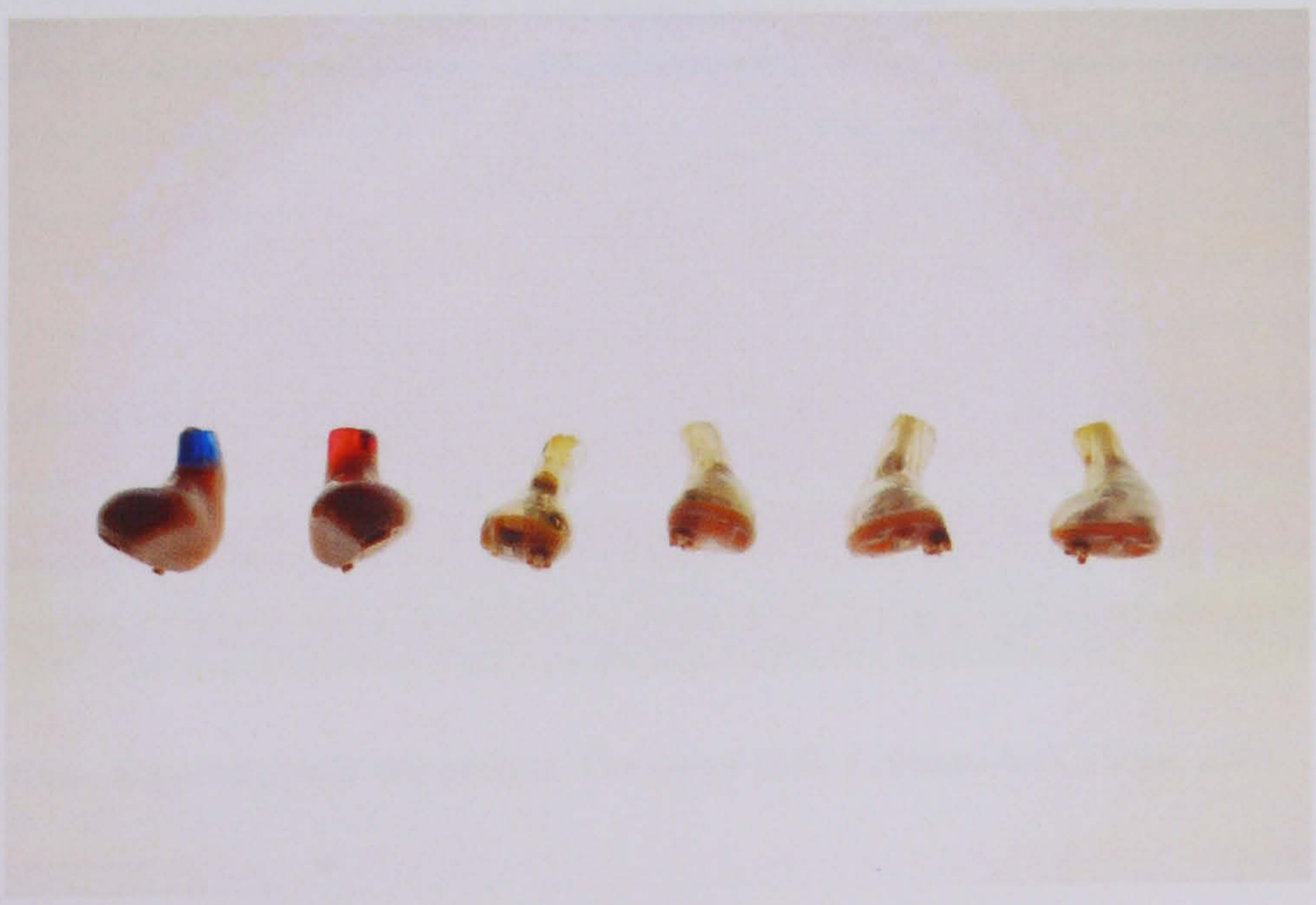

Fig 5. *Hearing Loss*. Work in progress.

Fig 6. *Hmmm*. Sub-woofer hidden beneath stage. 'Noises', group show, Open Arts Platform, London, 2004. Other works by (L to R) Toby Clarkson, Vanessa Bily and Chris Weaver.

Fig 7. *Motion-triggered plastic carrier bags*. The Great Hall, Goldsmiths College, 2004.

Fig 8. *Fallender ton für 207 lautsprecher boxen*. 2yK Galerie, Berlin, 2004.

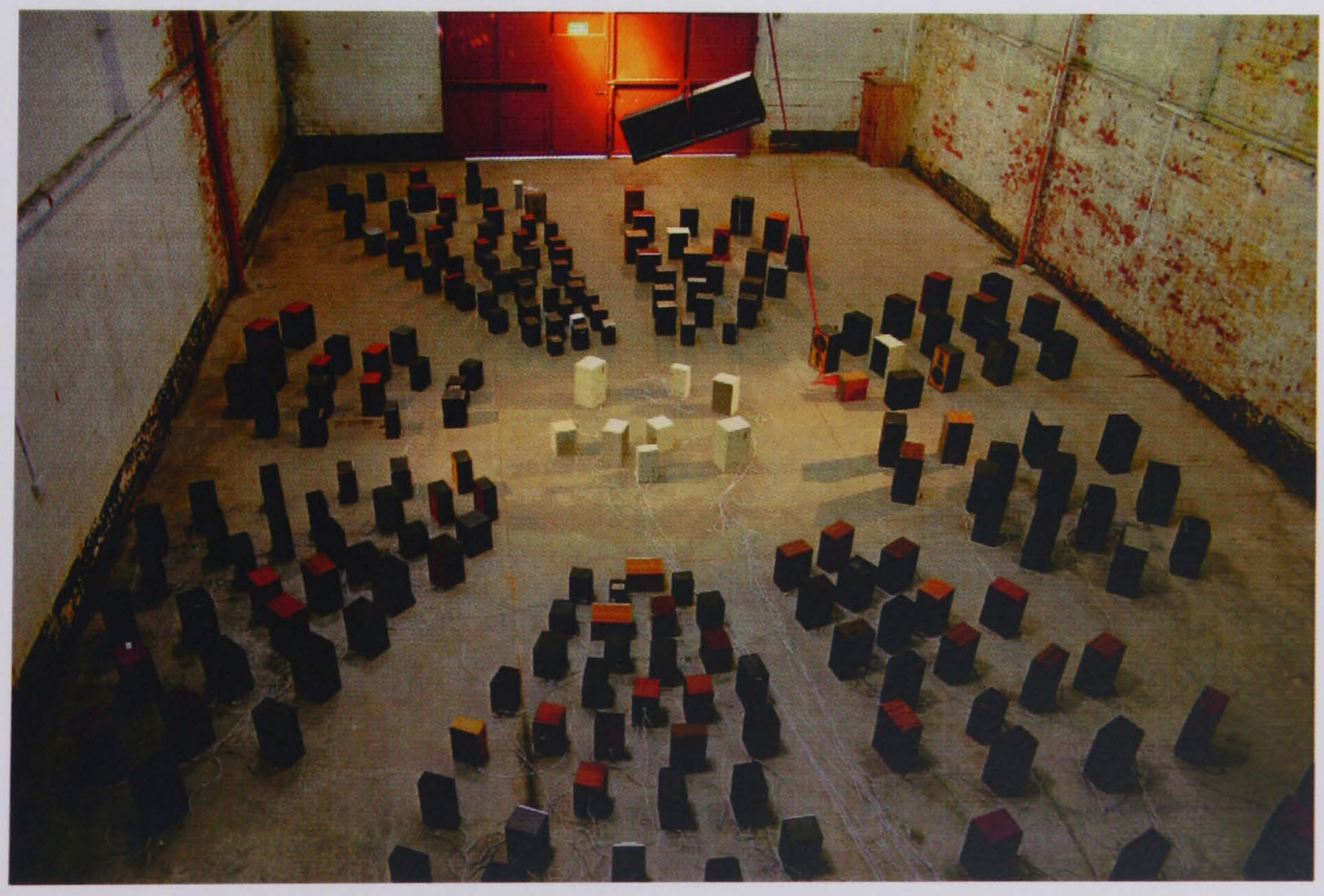

Fig 9. *230 Unwanted speakers (Walnut Grained Vinyl Veneered Particleboard Construction)*. Hull Art Lab, Hull, 2006.

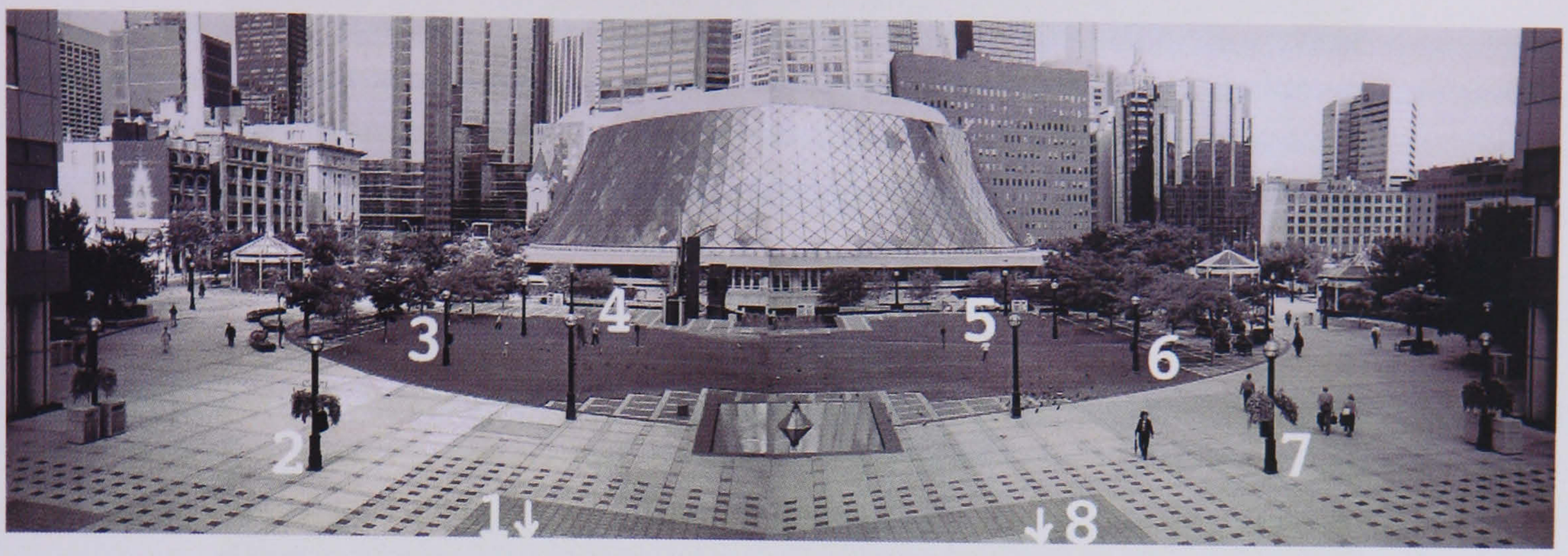

Fig 10. *Response Time*. Metro Hall Square, Toronto, 2002. Numbers show locations of speakers.

Fig 11. *Do(n't). Victoria Square,* Hull, 2005.

Fig 12. San diorama, Owela Centre, National Museum of Namibia, Windhoek.

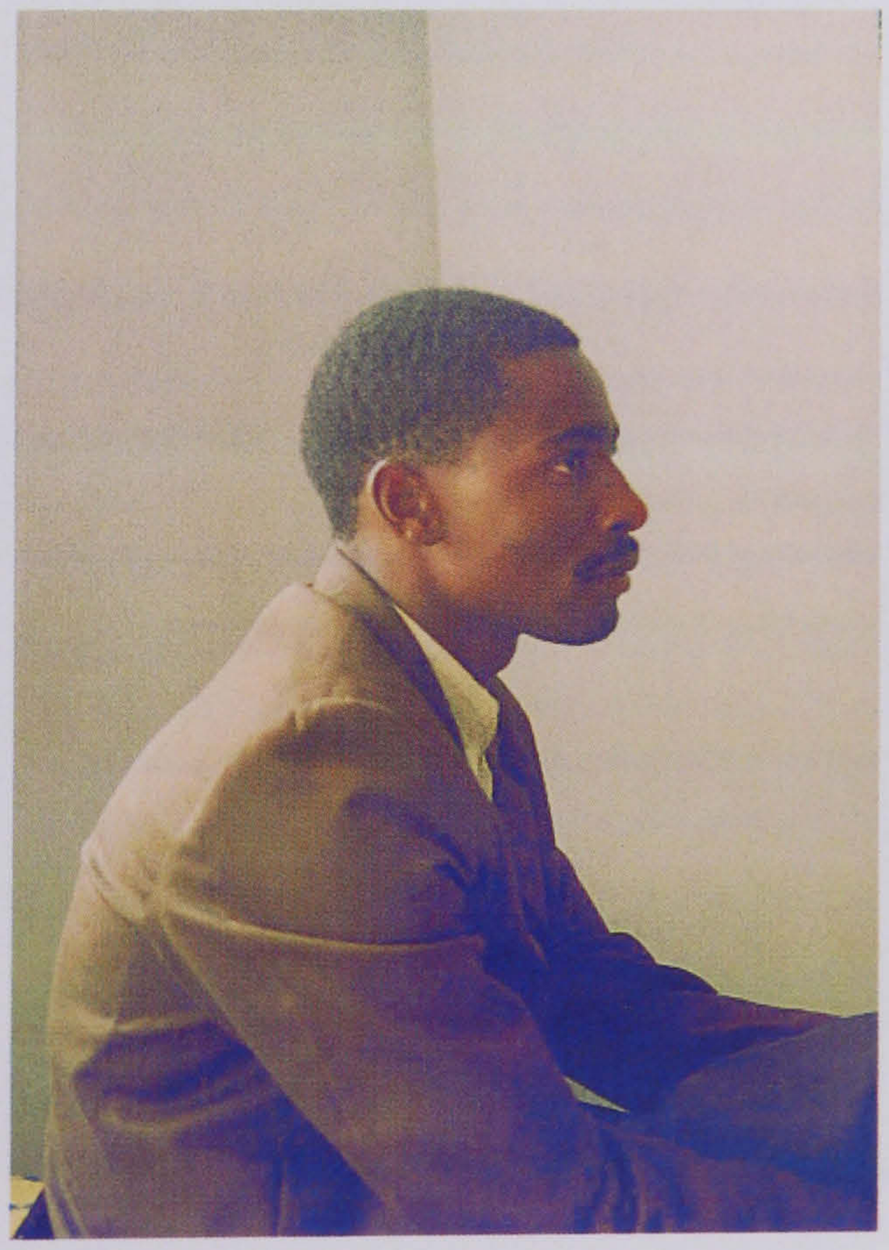

Fig 13. James Kamotho Kimani. Photographer unknown..

Fig 14. William Ingosi Mwoshi playing the shiriri in his home in Kamulembe, Kenya.

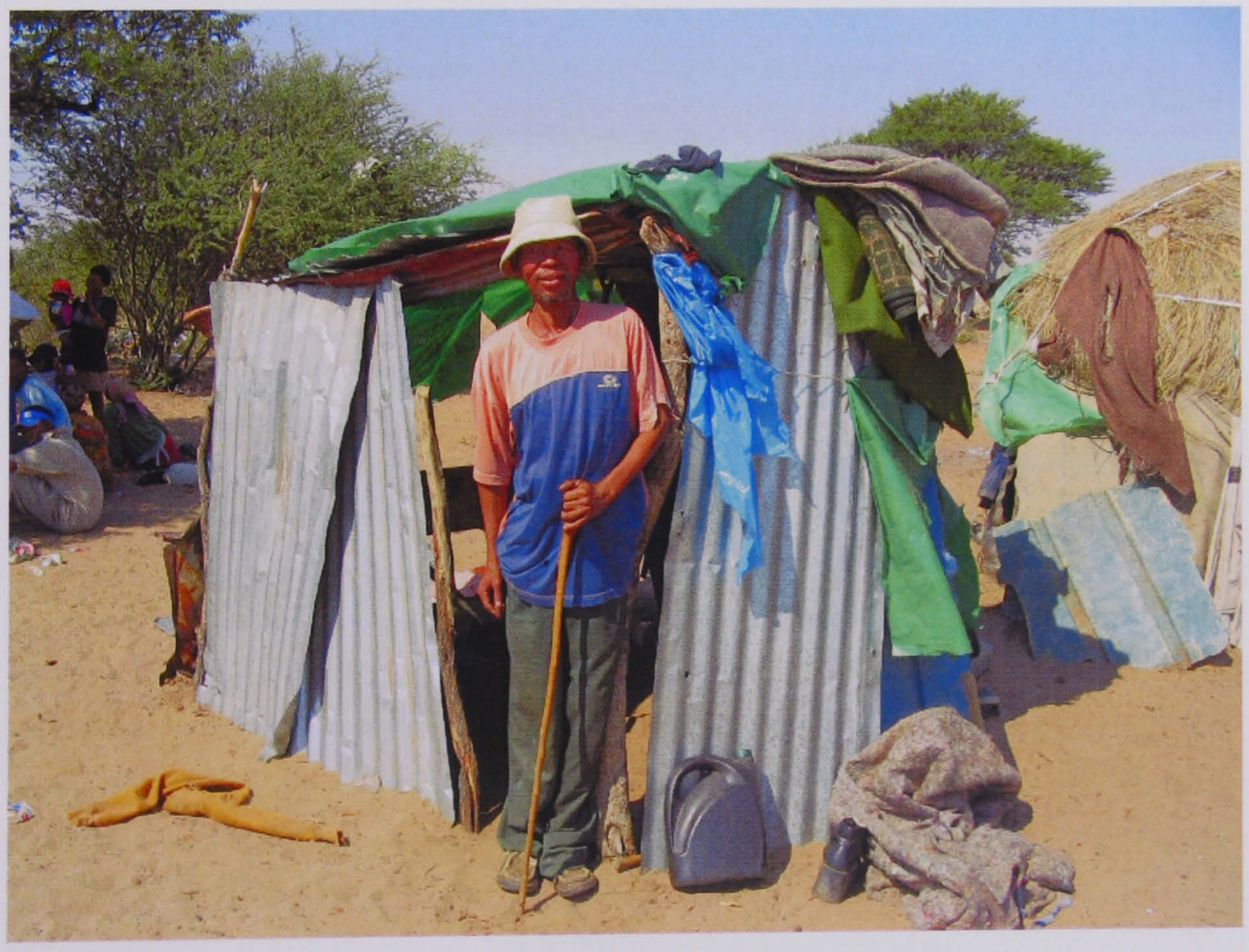

Fig 15. Kanokabe//nee//ee, one of the subjects of *Hearing Voices* who lives in a squatter camp beside the Trans Kalahari Highway near Lone Tree, Botswana.

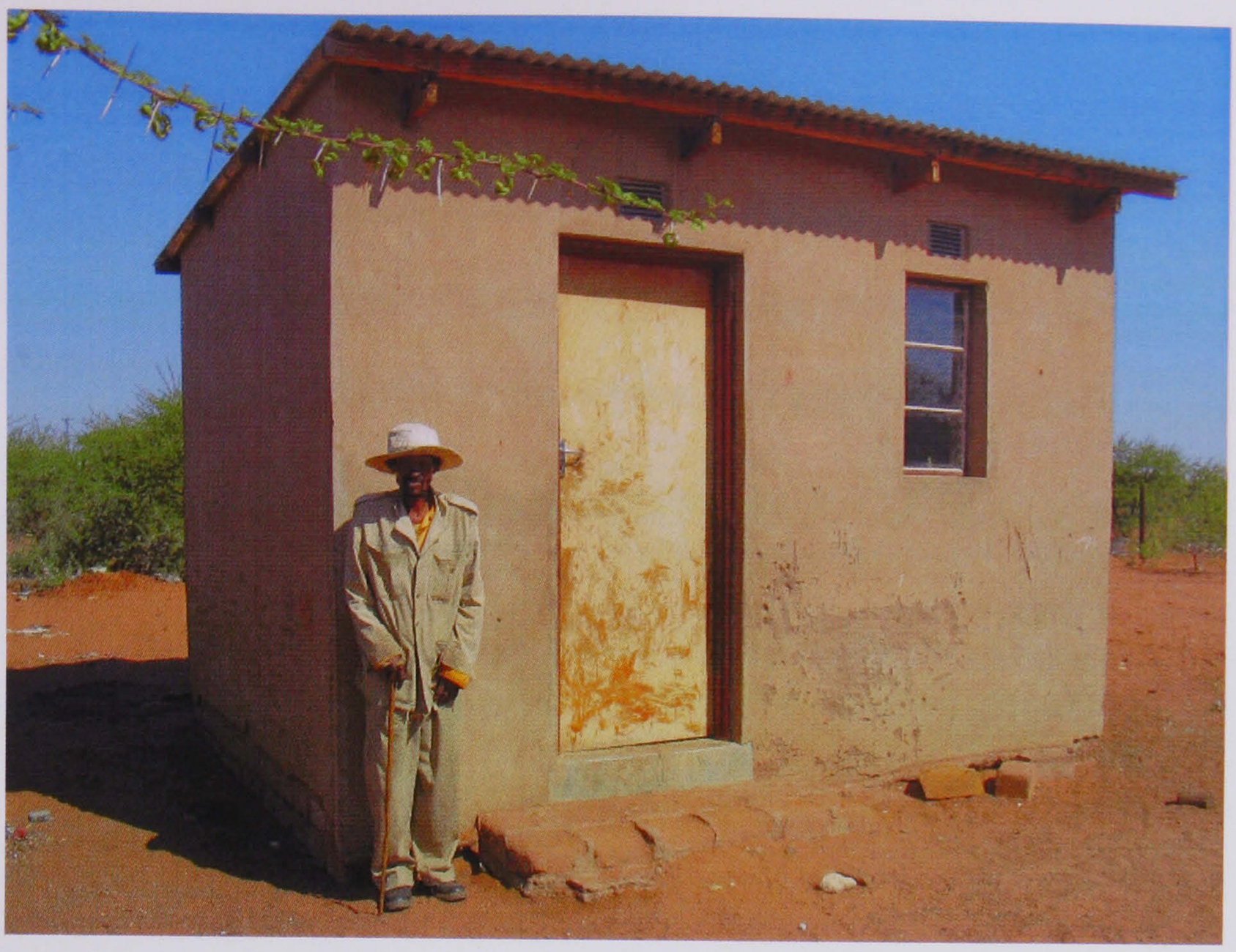

Fig 16. Thamae Sobe outside a house typical of what the government provides for some of those evicted from areas like the Kalahari Game Reserve. D'kar Botswana, 2003.
Photograph by Denise Hawrysio.

Fig 16. Translator and project participant Nicodemus Barkard reviews an early version of the *Hearing Voices* CD-ROM at the Botswana National Museum in Gaborone, Botswana, 2005.

Fig 18. Gosaitse Kabatlhophane with Dr Andy Chebanne at the University of Botswana.

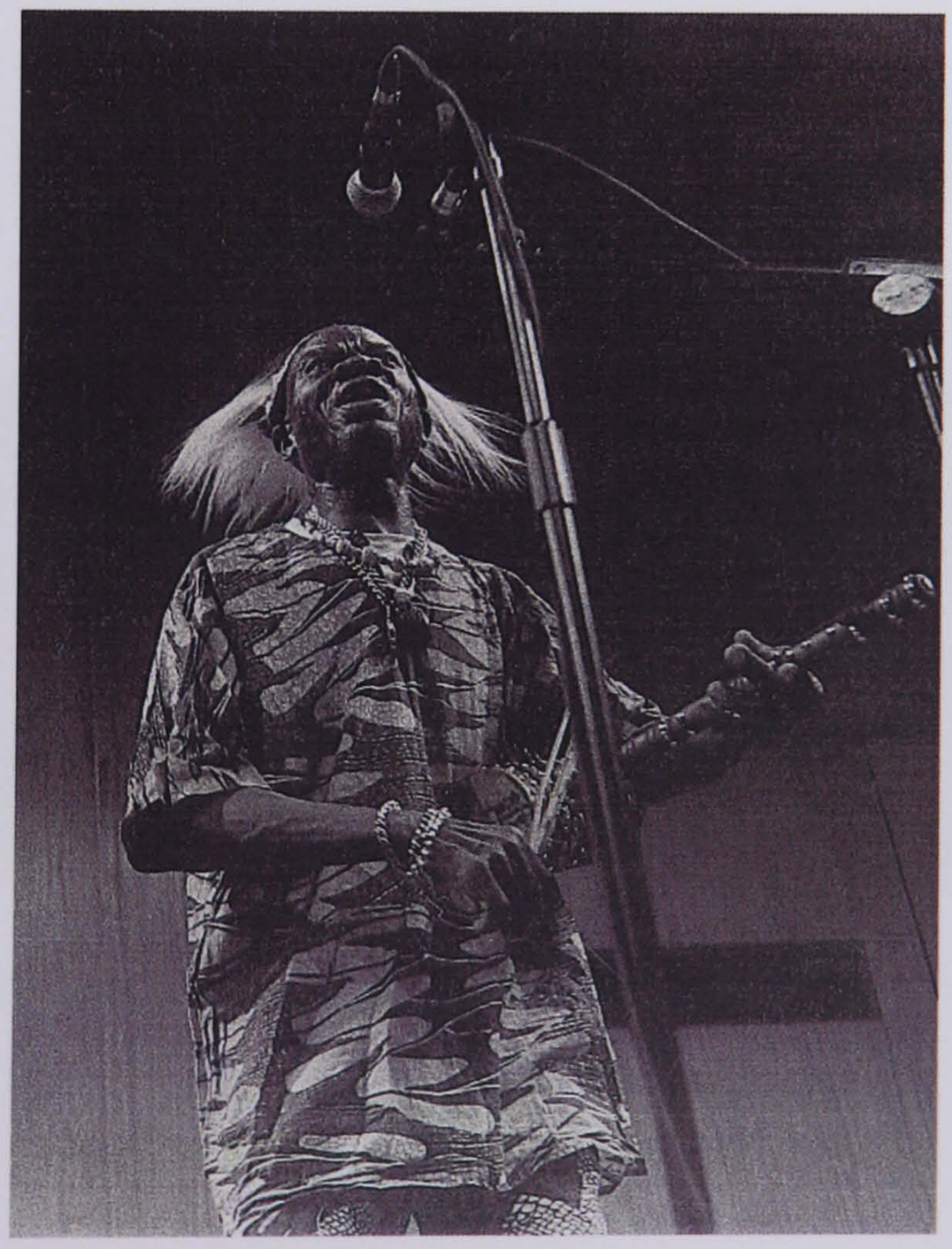

Fig 19. Ingosi Mwoshi performing at the Purcell Room, London, at the 8th Annual LMC Festival of Experimental Music, 1999. Photo by Mikka Eley.

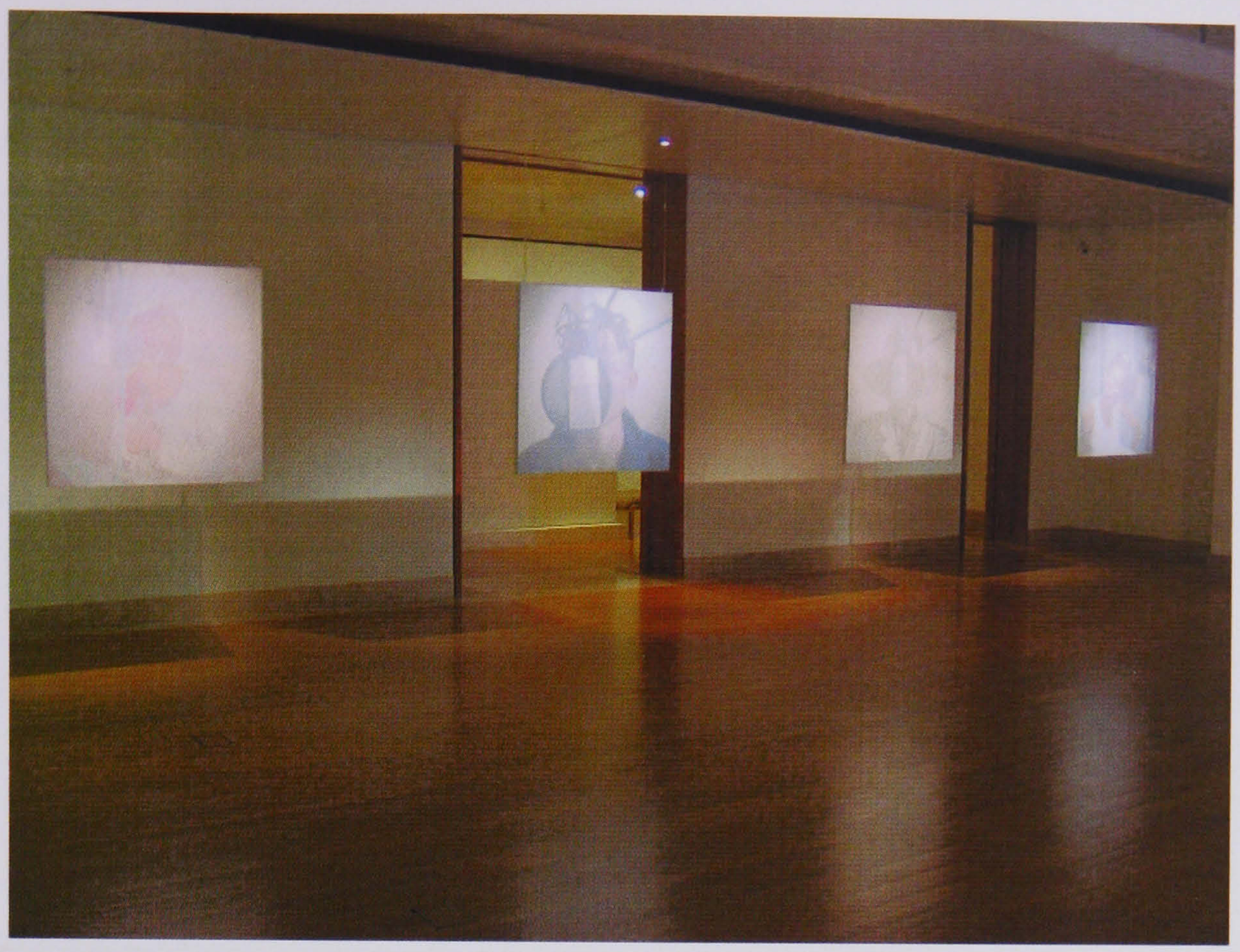

Fig 20. *Hearing Voices*. Brunei Gallery, School of Oriental and African Studies, London, 2005.

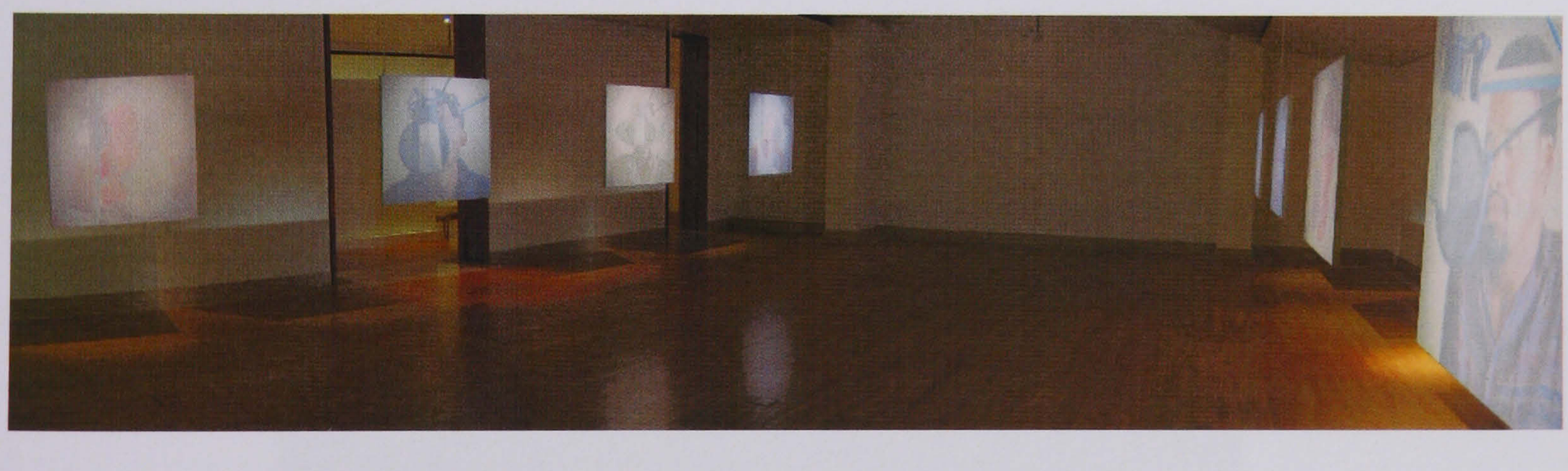

Fig 19. *Hearing Voices*. Brunei Gallery, School of Oriental and African Studies, London, 2005.

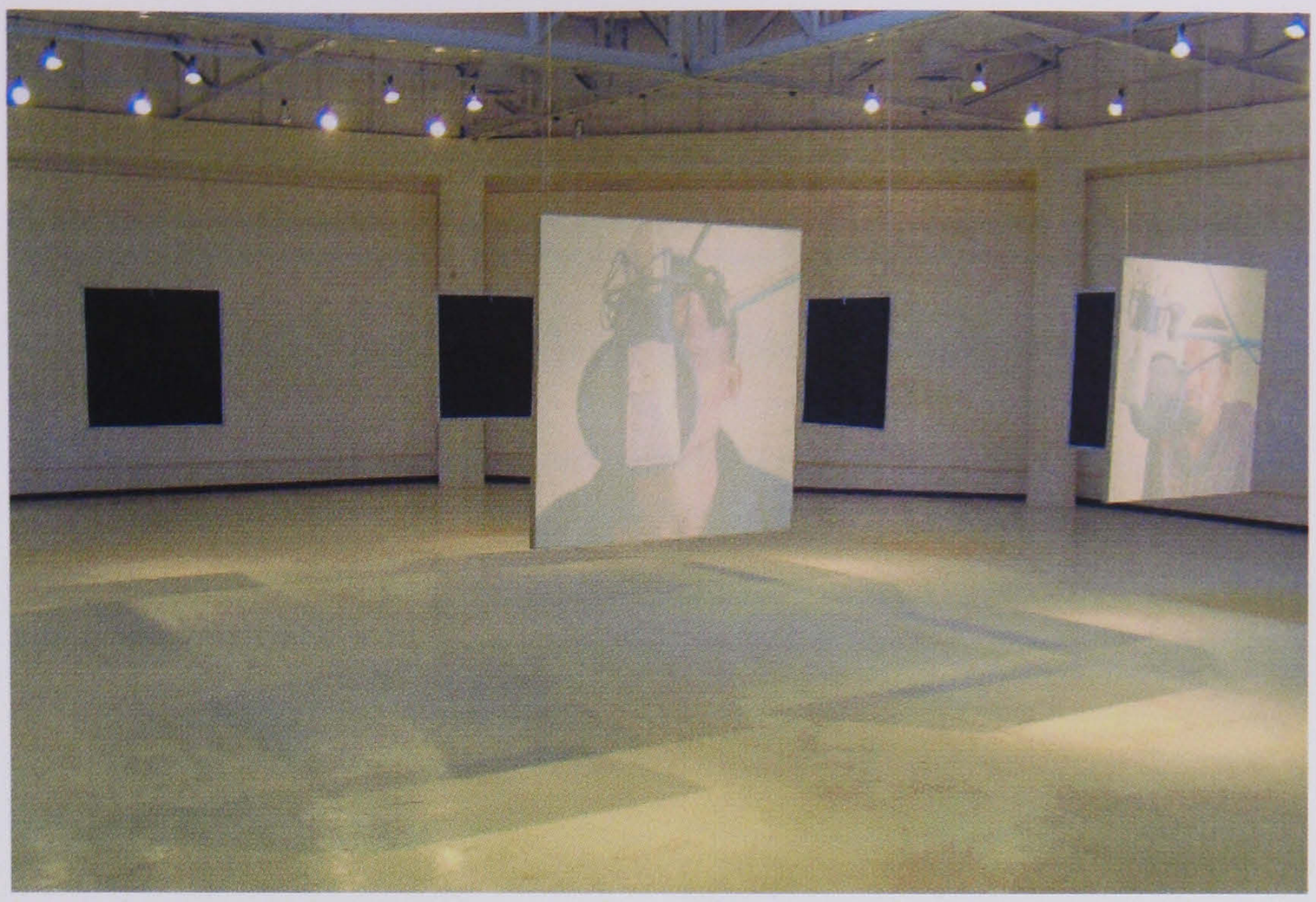

Fig 22. *Hearing Voices*. Botswana National Museum, Gaborone, Botswana, 2005.

Fig 23. *Hearing Voices*. National Art Gallery of Namibia, Windhoek, Namibia, 2005.

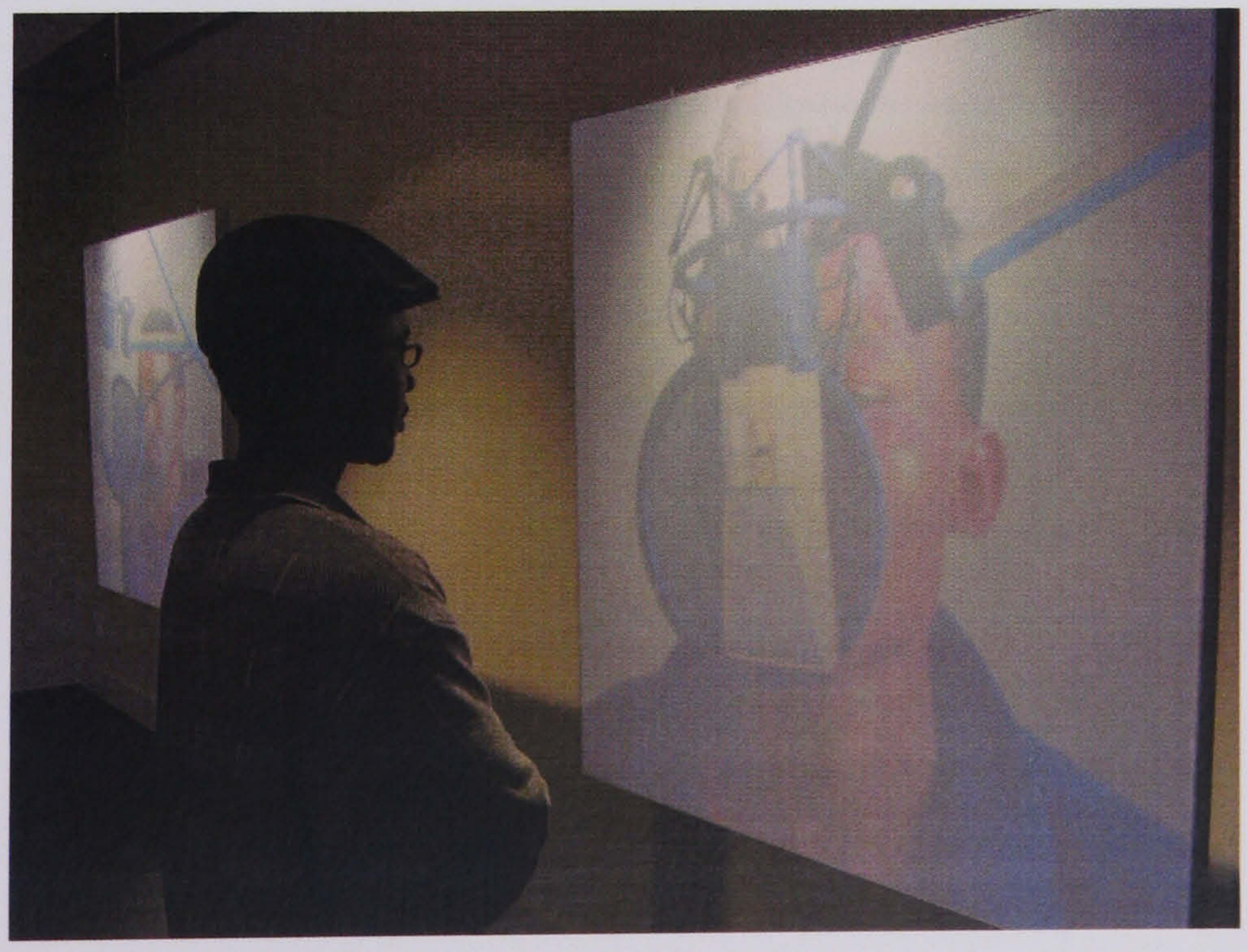

Fig 24. *Hearing Voices*. National Art Gallery of Namibia, Windhoek, Namibia, 2005.

Fig 25. Thamae Sobe. Photo by Denise Hawrysio.

Fig 26. Early study for flat speakers.

Fig 27. Early study for flat speakers.

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APPENDIX 1

WILLIAM INGOSI MWOSHI INTERVIEWED BY JOHN WYNNE

Excerpts published in Resonance magazine, Vol 7 No 2, 1999.

JW: *What do you think of my piece Upcountry?*

WIM: It is very very good. I heard in it a bird in our forest. It is a very small bird but its song is very strong. We call it *shikangamari.* You hear the *shikangamari* in the forest when it is dry. When we are in our villages and we can hear this bird, we know that the rain is not coming soon, so we can work on our shambas [small plots of land]. If we cannot hear the *shikangamari* we know that the rain is coming.

So you could recognise the songs of certain birds in my piece – does the piece seem like music to you?

Yes, it seems like music to me. I heard the song [starts to sing the song I used a part of in my piece].

Yes, your song...

That means, when I was very young and you know there is a funeral, when the people come to the funeral somewhere to show the person who has taken .....they come to bury him...they come to say 'Sorry to lose your son, your friend….' When I go to festivals I don't sing that song. It was the first song I learned when I was very young.

I'm glad to know a bit more about what that song is about. The things that I have done in my piece of music - when I've taken your voice and changed it and taken the shiriri and changed it…

You did it very well, because you know when you want to make music different exchange – English and African – you use the things as far as you have done in that music.

So do you think what I have done is to combine English music and African music?

Yes, that is how to do exchange – African music and English music.

Do you find it strange that I take your voice and change it, twist it around?

Yes. I heard it very very very very nice music and very very good music. And good interesting for that music.

So you find it interesting?

Yes, and the hall was full of so many people who are interested in that music.

You remember at the beginning of my piece where I use a recording of you and me walking up the hill towards your sister's house and I use it to make a kind of rhythm . . . I noticed you dancing a little bit . . . do you think that has any relationship to your music, that rhythm?

Yes, yes. And I heard my voice asking a friend who we came across why are you walking so slowly, and she answered, 'Yes, I am going very slowly because where I was to go for working there was no work.'

So she is walking home slowly because there was no work.

Yes, that is the answer that I heard in your piece. So thank you very much for taking that song from our Kakamega forest. You did very well.

And those people who were at Masasa Primary School, the teacher Mr Rogers and the headmaster and even the students who were very much interested in meeting you, and afterwards when you came back and sent them a tape and pencils and books. And when I went there to show them that a friend of Ingosi's has sent these books and pencils and they were just [claps and sings]. If you would just be near they would be very happy, all the classes.

Oh, good, good. In some ways, I was trying in my piece to do something similar to what a painter does in making a picture of someone - I was trying to make a portrait of you in sound. Do you think it works, can you see aspects of yourself in it?

It is very very important. You remember when you were there they had no pictures and they wondered how can we show people in London what our school is like, and we said that you could take pictures back

to show London, so they know what it is like all around Tiriki.

That's not quite what I was asking.... My piece of music is about you and about the place, Tiriki and Kakamega forest. When you hear it do you think I have done a good picture of you and the place in sound, in music?

Yes. You did very good to take my voice to London and to change my music with your brain, and to make it very nice music and beautiful and interesting.

You find it interesting, that's good to hear. You heard a lot of music that is very new to you - very different from what you have ever heard before. Last night, for example, do you remember the one with the high pitched sounds [Filament]?

When I was there the music was done but it was very high pitched. Every people was taking his ears to put his fingers in because it was eeeeeeeehhhhhhhhh and that was high, high, high.

And what do you think about people in London coming to hear that, paying money to listen to that?

That is very funny. I have seen the people in London love music very much. Everywhere I go I find full of people coming to hear music.

If people back home ask you what the festival was like, how will you describe it.

I'm going to tell them I have seen something which I have not seen before.... I have also been to Aberdeen, and they were very interested in music as well - the hall was full of people who are interested in music. I also went to Tokyo, where I saw that all people, even the young people, were interested in music. And in Paris I met people who love music. And London too is full of people who love music.

Back to your music ... Do all traditional musicians like you make their own instruments.

No, not all. You see, even in my village some people try to make music but they can't. I make *shiriri,* I make sukuti, I make *litungu* [a lyre with 8 strings] – I make every instrument for African music.

So you make instruments for musicians who cannot make their own?

Yes. All the schools – secondary schools, universities, colleges – come to buy musical instruments from me. Even if you come to Nairobi and say 'I want a sukuti' everyone tells you 'Go to Ingosi's home' because there is no one who can make it.

The materials for your instruments – the wood and the skins – do they come from Kakamega forest?

Yes.

But isn't the forest protected?

Yes, it is protected, but I am allowed because I went to the Ministry of Culture, who gave me permission to use the skins of different animals. But other people are not allowed because it is a reserve.

So you are allowed to go into the reserve to take materials?

Yes, because it is my forest and my home and I love to live there.

Yes, of course it is.

The government recognises that I am not selling things from the forest, I only take what I need for instruments.

And you also get your medicines from there?

Yes, in Kakamega Forest every stick, every tree is full of medicine. You cut some trees and cook them together and you have medicine.

Is it true that some of the animals you have used in the past are now very rare?

The government doesn't allow some people to go and kill animals in the forest, because there are too many animals coming out.

Are there some animals that you are also not allowed to kill?

Yes, even me. But I don't like to kill them because these animals bring people to our country to see them.

So, when you play music at home do people usually dance – unlike when you play here and everyone is sitting still?

I don't say that I was wonderful, but everywhere I go when I play my music everyone stands up and dances. I was the only one here with my music, but back home I play with others and they say 'welcome, welcome, enjoy us' and the people say you are doing very good music and they throw money. You know,

when you are on stage, it is hard for someone to throw the money so they take notes – 500 [shilling notes] – and they take one shilling to make it very heavy and they wrap the note around it to get it where you are. Even sometimes when you go to play for the President he puts his hand in his pocket to give you money, because your music makes the country known and people who come to Kenya hear the music and music is very important.

Have you always earned a living from music alone?

I make money from music, and I make money from selling instruments to the schools. Every school has a choir, and they ask me to make sukuti, shiriri, every instrument, and they want me to go and teach them how to play and dance. I have taught at the Bomas of Kenya and the Kenya Cultural Institute.

Was your father a musician?

My great-grandfather was a musician – he played the 8-stringed lyre. He used to play at the markets around Shemahoho where they sell African things made by the people – what we call *jua kali.*

The money you make from music and instruments – how does that compare to what others in your village make?

Yes, I use the money I make to buy things for my children – school clothes, and things. My son Jackson who has followed my steps in music is now in Holland performing. I was asked to go there, but I said that I must come to London.

People love music, and good music you do with a story because as a musician you must see how the people are going and make a song about it. Is that right?

Yup. You have performed for political leaders like Moi. A lot of people don't like him.

As a musician, when you sing you are not involved in politics. When you do music, you make your country to go up. You can't do campaigning. If you do campaign and someone fails to become a minister, he will be annoyed with you. You don't sing music for politics.

But what if someone, the president or whoever, did such bad things – if for example President Moi didn't like the Luhyia people and did things with his politics that were bad for your people and then said "Come and play for me… do you see what I mean?

Yes, I see what you mean. …You don't sing songs according to politics. You sing songs to make your country up.

You said yesterday that the main reason to do music is to make people happy...

Yes.

But not all of your songs are happy – for example the funeral song which I used in my piece.

When you do your music, and all the people like what you do except one person because it has nothing for him. When teachers try to teach people how to write and there is one person who does not want to learn....You must follow the teacher's rules. When the teacher says jump up, you jump up. Otherwise why do you come to school, why don't you stay at home?

What if the teacher is bad?

There are no bad teachers. Even ministers send their children to school.

A lot of your songs are about things that happen in the village, things that happen to you and to other people.... The history of your tribe, the Luhyia, is kept through your songs, is that right? Is that history written, too, or is it just through songs by you and other musicians?

That is a very good question. All my songs I make from my country or my village because of the history of people which I see. There is a song which I made about some Christian people from a church near to my home who were beating others to push them out, to say 'go away from our church'. These others had struggled to build the church, but those who were doing the beating had done nothing – they had come as visitors.

They wanted to take the church over?

Yes, they wanted to replace the head of the church and the secretary and everything – and these were the people who were struggling to make the church. And that is why I made this song.

So your songs tell about the history of your people and your village. You have passed on your skills to Jackson, your son, but he no longer lives in the village, so what do you think will happen to traditional music in the village? What will happen to the history of the village.

When you are a Christian person, you can't carry something with you against your people. You can't carry panga and stone in your pocket – in this pocket you must carry a Bible. And the Bible is to read to every people to follow the fellowship of God.

There are a lot of churches around your village. Are you a Christian?

Yes, I am a Christian.

But do you also have more traditional African beliefs at the same time?

Yes, we have Christian songs and we have traditional songs to put together in the church. Because when you go somewhere, we have church choir to sing for you and some people like Ingosi to sing traditional songs for you.

So when you make a song like the one about the people beating others in the church, are you making a song to tell other people what is happening?

Yes, the song tells the people how they are doing, what is going on. Because you visit somewhere and the church is different – we have Salvation Army, we have Friends' Church (Quaker) in our village – and sometimes you visit somewhere and he says "You are Roman Catholic, you can't come in my church", and you visit somewhere and you are Salvation Army and they say "You can't come near to me" – that means you are not a Christian. Christian means that you love everybody,... you don't have your god separate from other people.

Do you think your songs change people's minds sometimes? Do you think people might hear your songs and think that they are not being a good Christian?

Of course, my songs always change people's minds. If you use songs to praise god, you are one of mine ... For example, there is one church in Paris where you find a picture of Mohammed, you find Roman Catholic pictures – in one church you find every church....

And you think that's good.

That is good because, when you are a church person, you go to church to praise God, and this person is praying to God and you don't have your gods separate. Is that right?

Ahhh, I don't believe in God.

Let me tell you something.... Here in London there is a bridge where we passed yesterday…

Waterloo bridge.

Can you go in the river? You can't pass in the river – you all pass on the bridge.

Yes...

You follow the way the people are going. For example, when you came to my village you went to Kakamega, and you followed the way, and when you came from Nairobi, you followed the way to Kakamega. And when I came here to London, I followed the way which every people is going. Is that right? [Laughs]

Yes, well, we'll agree to differ on that one. So, your son Jackson has moved to Nairobi, you are getting older – are there many young people around your area still playing traditional music?

Yes, I always go around to teach music to every people, and I told you before that when the school people learn. I do this music, and when I have a little money I buy school uniforms because I want my people [children] to know more than me, to learn more than I. Because when I was born, so many schools were not present, but now schools are everywhere, and I want my people to know more, because they can help me in the future, if I am alive for some time – you can't say you will be alive full time, because where you go you don't know; where you come from you don't know; is there god, who knows?

You have a song about AIDS, which is a very new thing, and your music is very old. Do you see anything strange in using an old style of music to do songs about such things?

But I am doing new one and I am doing old one, and I wish my people to do more than I do – that's why I am going around and around to teach because I build my music. If I take my music and don't want to teach other people, it's be like when you have something which can help people and you put it in your house and close your house. I don't want to close my music – I want to make my music grow, everywhere. As far as I know you, Mr John in England here, I come, because I want you to make full music, more than me, and you praise my name – you say, 'Yeah, Ingosi is a good musician'.

Are you happy that your music will continue to grow when you are no longer in the village, that your music will continue after you are gone?

Yes, I am very happy. You can see some young people doing my music and playing my shiriri and drumming my sukuti, I say 'Thank you very much', but I walk as man because my job is going on and when I go somewhere and someone says, 'Ingosi, there's group singing your song' and I say 'Yes, yes, yes' because my music goes on.... I make a song and I go to schools to teach them. I get called every year to teach the songs that I will sing in the national festival.... I go to teachers' colleges and universities and even junior schools to teach very small children.

Good, I'm very glad of that. Are there people who don't like you because you are a musician?

Yes, that is right. You know, the people who don't like me, they say I always get money from music and they don't like me because, like now when they hear that Ingosi has gone to England, they say 'Why, why does Ingosi go to England? My son has gone to university and has a degree – why does Ingosi go to England? Only the shiriri sends Ingosi to England? No, this Ingosi is a very bad man.' But they don't know that music is something very important to the people. Is that right?

Yes, I agree.

That is why I sing that song in the festival .... All the people are wondering ...Ingosi is a big man?...

The funeral song....

When you want to be a good musician you must remember what has passed and what is being done, you see – that is why you are a musician .... but not in writing, you remember in your mind. For example, you heard that Kenya was bombed, the American Embassy – I am going to make a song about that.

And will you make a song about this trip to London?

Yes, I am going to make a song....

APPENDIX 2

TRANSLATION OF LYRICS BY INGOSI MWOSHI

Following is one of the songs written by William Ingosi Mwoshi following his visit to the UK to perform at the LMC Festival of Experimental music. The translation was provided in an email from his son, Jackson Ingosi, on November 13, 2006.

Ingosi Nuwina? (Who is Ingosi?)

Who is Ingosi to sing and tell us good things about the British and the UK?
Why do Ingosi sing and praise the Britons?
The British have looted our wealth!
They have to compensate… time to pay….
However, I Ingosi just want to let people know that those ancestors who did wrong
or fought each other are not even existing now.
People should not teach children bad history that will make them ever live like enemies
or make them provoke global peace accord that has consumed leaders a lot of resources here and there.
I Ingosi am just a peace maker and by that time before independence, I was there.
I even performed for First Queen Elizabeth on her visit here in the year 1947.
I was inspired to play versatile *shiriri* by the Scottish people who were mining gold
in my home area Tiriki in Kibiri forest.
Reality is that they gave to take as the Americans do,
and unfortunately here, their counterparts (big fish here) were given to
but not the Tiriki people who are presently the most poorest and unrecognised here in Kenya
regardless of bordering the rich gold.
Ingosi does not know how to speak English!
Who talks on your behalf?
How do you communicate to the British out there?
Do the British understand what you sing?
Who translates your songs?
Do they understand your music?.
But I answer them… music speak itself!

APPENDIX 3

ON *HEARING VOICES* – FROM THE BRUNEI GALLERY VISITORS' BOOK

- Languages slowing down, coming to a standstill – almost. The stillness of the sound is poignant. And the space left resonates.
- Very, very impressive – clear, succinct, perceptive….
- Great stuff, very unusual to experience something like this that's genuinely informative! (CD-ROM really helped)
- [in Welsh] …very interesting and also very important. Ironic the change in 100 years – in 1905 the Welsh spoke Welsh at home but were not allowed to do so in school!
- Incredible installation, relaxing and encompassing, with a serious message.
- Good to have the CD-ROM available to consult as well. Enjoyed it very much.
- Moving and inspirational exhibition/installation. Their voices really do need to be heard by the world.
- Chanced on this exhibition and what a delightful, interesting and thought-provoking experience.
- Superbly mounted and all too timely.
- Moving and inspiring. Human beings are amazing.
- The pale images and vivid stories have such intensity; the beautiful sound is mesmerising and thought-inducing, so elegant and intelligent and loving.
- Beautiful. I could come here every day to relax.
- A beautiful and thought-provoking installation. As a songwriter it really connected with me and reminded me of my obligations to language and culture.
- Subtle and understated – a beautiful rendering of a potent message.
- A beautiful and engaging way to bring an important issue to wider attention. The oral traditions of indigenous languages and culture must be preserved and celebrated, not just as a curiosity but to live and grow.
- Thought-provoking, especially as a speaker of a 'dominant' language and considering the implications that this has.
- Hypnotic and deeply moving.
- A beautiful piece. On the one hand the sound is just very lovely and meditative and on the other I can't quite lose the feeling that the bell-like sounds mark the passing of something lost – or being lost. So it's beautiful and very sad but also wonderful just to hear the great sonic qualities of these languages. The faded and obscured quality of the images perfectly matches the feelings brought up by the sound.
- There is sadness here. Endangered too is the Swahili language of the Swahili coast of Eastern Africa – hi-jacked by the Swahili speech of the coastal hinterland and the interior!
- Absolutely beautiful piece of work, makes you think that all hope is not lost and reminds you of everyone's responsibility.
- Beautiful contemplative installation. I would have liked to shut the doors and sat of my own in the middle of the room to hear these people's voices – important voices to hear….
- The importance of this exhibition and this project is beyond measure – I salute all contributors to this project, may it save at least some of the 3,000 languages that may be lost this century.
- Haunting and beautiful, like an echo from the past and present.
- Language can be so many things….

- An eye-opening, almost disturbing experience of the fragility and subjectivity of language. An amazing project.
- Very rewarding. *Vive la diversité!*

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COMMENTARY ON SUBMITTED WORKS

Following are some of the works completed during my PhD studies:

Hearing Voices

For radio, 2005. Disc 2 (29:00).

Hearing Voices is a half-hour *composed documentary* commissioned by BBC Radio. It has been broadcast twice on Radio 3 and has also been broadcast by both the BBC European Service and the World Service. It won the Silver Award at the 2005 Third Coast International Audio Festival and Richard H Driehaus Competition in Chicago.

Based on recordings made in and around the village of D'kar in the Kalahari Desert, Botswana, this is a sonic exploration of languages on the brink of extinction. Apart from interviews with academics in the field of language endangerment and the environmental sounds made on location and on the Trans-Kalahari Highway, all the sounds in the programme are derived from the voices of the click-language speakers who are its main subject.

Far from being *primitive,* click languages represent something like a maximum for human linguistic behaviour. In !Xóõ, the most acoustically complex of these languages, there are 83 different ways of beginning a word with a click. If these languages had disappeared before the advent of recording technology, it is doubtful that we could have imagined that any human language could make such extensive – and beautiful – use of click sounds.

Hearing Voices moves seamlessly back and forth between documentary and abstraction and between language and music, weaving facts, interviews, field recordings and a kind of electroacoustic music made from these materials.

Hearing Voices

Installation, 2005. Disc 5.

Hearing Voices is an 8-channel photographic sound installation which innovatively combines still image and audio to address issues of linguistic diversity as well as to investigate portraiture, identity and technology in a cross-cultural context. I travelled to the Kalahari Desert in Botswana to work with linguist Dr Andy Chebanne in recording the voices of 8 speakers of highly endangered Khoisan 'click-languages'. Large-scale photographs of the subjects taken for me at the time of the recording by Denise Hawrysio have been mounted on special flat loudspeakers so that the images themselves are the actual, physical source of the sounds. The sounds coming from each speaker are derived from the voice of the person depicted. The result is a shifting, immersive environment in which the original speech is revealed momentarily amidst a chorus of resonating clicks and elongated vowels, traversing the boundaries between language and music, speech and abstract sound.

Hearing Voices has been shown at the Botswana National Museum, the National Art Gallery of Namibia, and the Brunei Gallery at SOAS in London.

Hearing Voices: Languages/Speakers

CD-ROM, 2005. Disc 4.

This interactive CD-ROM was developed to accompany the *Hearing Voices* installation as catalogue, research archive and educational tool. Produced in conjunction with the Hans Rausing Endangered Languages Project, the disc presents John Wynne's superb recordings of 5 endangered

Khoi and San click-languages with full English translations and includes:

- A foreword by David Toop, author of *Ocean of Sound* and *Haunted Weather*
- Voice recordings and photographs of 8 speakers of Naro, Jun|'hoa, !Xóõ, ||Gana, |Gui
- Maps and information about these languages
- Exclusive recordings of 2 click-language choir
- Interviews with Dr Andy Chebanne, University of Botswana, and Dr Peter Austin, Chair of the Hans Rausing Endangered Languages Project at SOAS
- Information about *Hearing Voices* and John Wynne's other work

!Xóõ Study No 1: Gosaitse

Audio, 2004. Disc 1 track 13 (2:32).

This short piece, released on vinyl by Resonance radio to raise funds for London's first radio art station, was the first composition made with recordings I made in Botswana. It represents my search for ways of working with spoken word that transform and draw the listener into the sonic detail of voice while still leaving space for the beauty and dignity of the language. The subject is Gosaitse Kabatlophane, a 17-year old speaker of !Xóõ, the most complex of the click-languages. Gosaitse has been working with Dr Andy Chebanne at the University of Botswana, where the recording was made, to contribute to an orthography of this language, which has never been systematically written.

The piece breaks the language down into the most basic elements of all language, vowels and consonants. The vowels are stretched, starting when they are first uttered and building up to a subtly shifting chorus. The clicks, which are essentially consonants, are edited out and placed at regular one-second intervals to convey a sense of the tyranny of time, the unalterable grid against which the decline of such languages, and the cultures to which they are integral, is plotted.

Translation: 'Women and children like to go and collect wild berries and edible and succulent roots when there is little water available. Many of them [women and children] go out for the whole day. When they are far in the wilderness, small children get thirsty and the group must go back home to get water for them [children]. When men go far to hunt, they go where there is water and they drink from ponds [water points]. As for women they do not go far to gather, but where they go there is no water. When men go for hunting, they return with lots of meat.'

Disappearing

Audio, 2004. Disc 3 track 1 (11:00).

Disappearing represents the most distilled use of the sound materials collected in Botswana. All the sounds, apart from the recording made on the Trans-Kalahari Highway which cuts through the middle of the piece, are derived from the voices of 3 click-language speakers: !Kun||'xae, Thamae Sobe and Gosaitse Kabatlhophane, and they speak, respectively, ||Gana, |Gwii and !Xóõ. But no unmanipulated language remains here – rather, we are left with a kind of 'compositional linguistics' (Warren Burt) from which a kind of degrammaticised musical translation emerges. The piece was originally composed for 8-channel concert diffusion and has been played in the Great Hall at Goldsmiths College as well as at the Sounding Out festival in Nottingham.

Fallender ton für 207 lautsprecher boxen (Falling tone for 207 loudspeakers)

Installation, 2004, 2yK Galerie, Berlin. Figure 8.

I have been collecting speakers on the streets of London for many years. In the summer of 2004, I filled my car with as many as I could squeeze in – about 45 – and drove to Berlin to take up a

residency with Kunstfabrik and 2yK Galerie. Once there, I secured sponsorship from a recycling company and collected another 162 discarded – but working – loudspeakers. In the studio, it became immediately apparent that each of these rejected pieces of consumer technology had a story to tell, a history which endowed them with a kind of personality. Although it was far from my original intention, I decided to arrange the speakers in what the curator, Wolfgang Schlegel, described as 'a field of social tension' which would suggest a sort of narrative but also draw attention to the personalities of the individual speaker boxes, projected through their design, the marks of use and misuse, the modifications carried out by their owners and even their smell.

The huge speaker which appeared to be emerging from the wall (or was it crashing into it?) must have once lived in a pub, as it was sticky with old beer and smelled of stale cigarette smoke. The sound emerging from it was a set of very slow Shepard Tones, which give the illusion of falling continuously in pitch – forever. This is impossible, of course, because the sound would soon go below the frequency threshold of human hearing: Shepard Tones, as developed by Roger Shepard in 1964, are the aural equivalent of an optical illusion.

Circulating through the other 206 speakers in 7 audio channels were fixed frequency sine tones tuned to the resonant frequencies of the gallery, as well as a set of sounds I synthesized in response to the ambient sounds of the building and the surrounding environment. When the falling tones crossed the frequencies of the fixed tones, a pronounced beating occurred as the sound waves moved in and out of phase with each other. Although a story of some sort was clearly suggested by the "personalities" of the speakers and by their arrangement, the interpretation of possible narratives was left open. I wanted to create a feeling of suspension in time, of travelling but never arriving, but I wanted it to remain unclear whether this was a moment frozen in the middle of a disaster, a miracle or something altogether more quotidian. Consequently, some visitors saw it as a concert hall scenario or a choir, others as a cityscape, still others as a political rally. Although most people immediately saw the humour of this absurd gathering, after a time some found the atmosphere contemplative, others unsettling. Associations were made with the Jewish Memorial in Berlin, with 9/11 and with wartime bombs.

230 Unwanted Speakers (Walnut Grained Vinyl Veneered Particleboard Construction) Installation, Hull Art Lab, Hull, UK, 2006. Disc 5 and Figure 10.

This 17-channel site-specific sound installation was made for Hull Art Lab. Like *Fallender ton für 207 lautsprecher boxen* it made use of Shepard Tones, although this time, instead of a constantly falling tone, an apparently endlessly rising set of tones was used. The sounds circulating around the outer speakers were synthesised in situ in response to the ambient sounds in and around this former potato warehouse and were designed to blur the boundaries between the real and the synthetic. The sounds used on the central speakers were 'pure' sine tones edited and arranged for 8 discreet channels of diffusion.

As with *Fallender ton,* I strove to leave the work rigorously underdetermined despite its strong pointers towards narrative or metaphorical meanings, preferring to leave interpretation up to the audience. Again, I was not disappointed:

> While your first thought might be to wonder if you've just walked into another gallery full of pointless pretentious nonsense, your preconceptions are quickly vanquished. You come away thinking about recycling, about the personality of inanimate objects, about the artistic merits of sound installations, and maybe even about the nature of adoration – why one "speaker" might be lifted above and "worshipped" by the rest of the speaker society (Hull Daily Mail).

Response Time

Installation, Toronto (2002) and Kitchener, Ontario (2005). Figure 10 and Disc 3 tracks 3-5.

This is an 8-channel sound installation designed for open public spaces. It was installed first in Metro Hall Square in Toronto and later in the rotunda of Kitchener City Hall as part of the 2005 Open Ears Festival and as part of a ResonanceFM event in Munich in 2005.

Response Time makes use of a set of auditory warnings of my own design to explore that dividing line between ignoring something because we hear it all the time and listening because it signifies something directly applicable to ourselves. It also brings out the abstract beauty and musical qualities of these sounds, attributes usually obscured by their potentially high annoyance factor. The piece paradoxically makes use of sounds that are designed to grab our attention to make music which can be quite beautiful and actually enhance the ambience of public spaces.

Response Time was described in MusicWorks magazine as 'an ambient, ghost-like presence.' One aim of the piece is to promote a long-term qualitative change in the way people experience the urban sound environment and an increased awareness of the value of silence.

The accompanying clips are stereo reductions which cannot, of course, convey the spatial aspects of the piece. The piece was also designed to mix with the sounds of the public sites in which it was installed.

Do(n't)

Installations and text/sound pieces for the web, 2003-2005. Figure 11 and Disc 5.

> Physical noise, mental noise and noise of desire – we hold history's record for all of them. And no wonder, for all the resources of our almost miraculous technology have been thrown into the current assault against silence (Aldous Huxley).

This work is a development of my long-term interest in the design of auditory warnings. My first piece using alarm sounds of my own design was *The Sound of Sirens,* which was banned by the City Council of Copenhagen in 1997 for allegedly 'frightening and confusing' the public.

Do(n't) began as conference paper and interactive installation for the European Group for Organizational Studies in Barcelona. It then became a set of text/sound pieces for the online academic journal *Ephemera: Theory and Politics in Organization*. In 2005, as part of the Humber Mouth Literary Festival, Hull Art Lab chose the 3 text/sound pieces which constitute *Do(n't)* to play at half-hour intervals on the BBC's controversial Big Screen on Victoria Square in the centre of the city of Hull. The BBC flatly refused to allow *Orange Alert* to be screened. They also said that the 30-second silence with a blank white screen I deliberately added to the end of *Auditory Warnings* specifically for this location had to be edited out, despite the curators' objections, because the public would think the screen was malfunctioning. *Confidential Report* was played without edits throughout the two-week festival.

Although the 3 text/sound pieces are on the accompanying DVD, the best way to view them is through my website, http://www.sensitivebrigade.com, as the website's vector graphics provide superior resolution to the compressed DVD.

Sound CAD

Installation, E:vent Gallery, London, 2006.

In April 2006, I was chosen to take part in an experimental collaborative residency at E:vent in London along with selected graduate students from the Architectural Association of Great Britain. There were no specific expectations on the part of the curators apart from the aim of producing a site-specific installation. Inspired by the 3D computer drawings of the space which the AA participants made to aid in our discussion of what to do, I wondered if it would be possible to create the life-size equivalent of a CAD drawing using only sound. The resulting piece was impossible to document: it was in total darkness, so there was nothing to photograph, and the sound was inextricably site-specific and dependent on 16 separate channels and a large concealed sub-woofer. My initial idea was to try to make the equivalent of a CAD drawing using only sound, starting with a 3-dimensional "wireframe" line drawing to trace out the dimensions of the space and then rendering the walls with "sheets" of sound. The challenge was to find sounds which would remain localised as much as possible to the surfaces of the space, but which were also sufficiently distinguishable from each other to allow the visitor to negotiate the space using only sound, in the total absence of light.

Spending a lot of time in the space, I became acutely aware of the sounds from elsewhere in the building which filter through to and resonate within the basement space, so I decided to populate the continuously looping sound frame with the sounds of the building itself as recorded by the AA participants. These elements, filtered through my subjective experience of them as I worked in the dark, added a dramatic element which momentarily obliterated the visitor's ability to navigate and brought the space back to life, simultaneously announcing its presence to the rest of the building. After the loud and dramatic crescendo, the space returned to its normal acoustic state for a short time before the cycle began again with the sonic dotted line of the audio "wireframe".

> John Wynne's installation constituted a masterful experiment in controlled sound manipulation, intense and at times looming, which accentuated the perception of space as well as the sense of hearing (Chloe Vaitsu).

I have recently been commissioned to develop a site-specific version of this piece for the Surrey Art Gallery in Vancouver.

Hmmm

Installation, Open Arts Platform, London, 2004. Figure 6.

This is a site-specific installation made for a group show entitled Noises, curated by Toby Clarkson. A very low-frequency tone, carefully tuned to the resonant frequencies of the space was played through a large sub-woofer hidden under a small wooden stage at the end of the gallery. The sound increased gradually in amplitude over a period of 5 minutes until the stage began to rattle, at which point the sound cut out suddenly, returning the space to its previous acoustic state for 5 minutes before ramping up slowly once again. As well as interacting with the physical and acoustic characteristics of the space, the piece plays with the threshold of attention. Although the sound caused the wooden stage to rattle, it never became so loud as to dominate the space and because of the slow increase in volume, some visitors did not notice the sound until it stopped. *Hmmm* explores the threshold of audibility and perceptio. Like Max Neuhaus, in order to make *discovery* part of the process of experiencing my work, I often make installations which will go unnoticed by many of the people who encounter it.

Motion-triggered plastic carrier bags

Installation, The Great Hall, Goldsmiths College, 2004. Figure 7.

A selection of carrier bags containing small devices incorporating motion sensors and audio playback were arranged on the gallery floor. Many visitors failed to recognise this as art. Those who approached the bags heard a chorus of rustling plastic reminiscent of the sea – the complexity and intensity of the sound depended on how many of the devices were triggered at one time. Also installed in the Well Gallery, London College of Communication.

Brotherhood of the Cross and Star

Audio, 2002. Disc 3 track 2 (3:40).

Being a confirmed atheist, submitting this track for release with Earshot magazine's issue on Sound and Architecture (Vol 4 No 2) made me somewhat uncomfortable, but it captures a delicate sonic moment for me as well reflecting some of the social and architectural complexity of the place, a large Victorian church at the Elephant and Castle now occupied by the Brotherhood of the Cross and the Star. I arrived at 10 am one cold Sunday to find the church mostly empty. One of the parishioners – all of whom wear white robes and believe that the Nigerian founder of the Brotherhood, Olumba Olumba Obu, is actually the Son of God – greeted me, showed me where to put my shoes and led me across the rather lumpy red carpet to a pew in the male section. Since I assumed nothing would happen until a lot more people arrived, I placed the microphone on the pew in front of me to listen for a moment and decide where best to place it. As soon as I pressed record, a bell rang and the lone voices of the few people there started to sing – some close by, some in the distance, some amplified, some not. People moved about, rustled plastic bags, opened and closed doors, etc, but these sounds only emphasised what was to me a peculiar and interesting mix of religious formality and social informality. At the front of the church, above the altar, was an electronic sign which read, alternately,

The Lord is in his holy temple
Let all earth keep silence before him
www.ooo.org.uk
Mobile phones must be switched off

Duelling Laptops

Audio, 2005. Disc 3 track 7 (8:33).

This track is the result of a live collaboration with Jem Finer – sound artist, banjo player and founder member of the Pogues. All the sounds are derived from our respective 5-string banjos, apart from that of a small wind-up music box placed on the resonating body of one of the banjos.

How to Use a Condom

Audio, 2003, Disc 2 track 8 (1:00).

This short piece was created for radio using a tape purchased in a charity shop. It takes the form of a public service announcement but could be mistaken for a long-lost passage of the SCUM manifesto.

Beatitude

Audio, 2002. Disc 3 track 6 (10:36).

This is a rhythmic track made with sounds recorded on an island off the coast of British Columbia, including a chain saw, for many the symbol of corporate greed through rampant commercial forestry, but also an indispensable tool in rural life on the west coast of Canada.

Medicine Box

16 mm film, 2004. Disc 6.

The soundtrack for this 16mm film by David Leister was created by manipulating sounds on analogue quarter-inch tape and combining them with auditory warnings of my own design. It has been screened in numerous international venues including the Rotterdam International Film Festival and the European Media Art Festival.

Six Scenarios

DVD, 2005. Disc 7.

Six Scenarios is a collaborative experiment in radical displacement of sound and image with visual artist Denise Hawrysio. The three Super-8 films which were the starting point for this video were made by attaching the camera to various machines; in each case an invitation was made to the operator(s) of the machines to participate in the making of a film. The film and the sound were structurally determined by the events and actions of the context in which each was made; the duration of each film is determined by the length of one Super-8 cartridge with no editing outside the camera. The soundtracks for each segment of the film are from unmanipulated recordings of 3 distinct sound events: a telephone conversation found on a cassette tape bought for 25 cents from a street vendor in New York City, an Irish country 'n western bar in Kingston, Ontario and a recording made in a squat in South London.

Six Scenarios has shown at Foldback 2006 in London as well as the 2005 Chicago Experimental Film Festival.

Upcountry

Radio show, 2002-2005. Disc 3 track 9 (4:37).

John Wynne invites Tammy Wynette to take tea with Pierre Henry – in a thunderstorm (Ed Baxter).

For 3 years, I made a fortnightly programme for ResonanceFM which was 'a mix of country music, experimental soundworks and the kind of dance music that makes you want to sit down.' As well as honing my editing and mixing skills and providing an opportunity to air my own work, making *Upcountry* allowed me to challenge some of the received rules of radio and to experiment with various strategies for layering and moving back and forth between radically different sound worlds – strategies which have had an undeniable influence on my other work. I viewed the hour-long show itself as a kind of extended experimental composition, and, to my surprise, my ideas were widely appreciated. I have been invited to revive the show, which I may do when time permits.

The excerpt provided on Disc 3 is from a 2003 show in which I interviewed Chris Kubick, an American artist whose work with Language Removal Services speaks for itself.

Transplant

Installation (work in progress) 2006. Disc 8.

I am currently artist-in-residence at the Harefield Hospital in Middlesex, one of the world's leading centres for heart and lung transplantation. Working in collaboration with photographer Tim Wainwright, I am collecting materials for a photographic sound installation using flat speakers. The materials collected include the voices of patients and staff, environmental recordings in the wards, Intensive Treatment Unit and operating theatres and recordings of devices such as ventricular assist devices (VADs), both external and within patients' bodies. The work, which is about the experience of transplantation with all of its social, philosophical, and psychological implications, will continue my exploration of relationships between still image and sound. The accompanying disc contains a QuickTime movie which is a kind of study towards the installation which will be completed in September 2007.

Hearing Loss

Sound sculpture (work in progress) 2006. Figure 5.

Hearing Loss is made with the 3 pairs of hearing aids left by my father when he died early in 2006. It makes use of the tiny but complex feedback field produced by what are essentially 6 tiny microphones and 6 tiny speakers in close proximity; the sounds produced are relatively quiet but piercing and difficult to localize. The pitch and timbre of the sounds change in response to the ambient sound in the room and are also affected when the viewer moves her/his hand close to the devices. I have been invited to contribute an image and statement about the piece for an upcoming issue of MIT's Leonardo Music Journal, and the piece will première in Vancouver in 2006.

THESIS CONTAINS CD/DVD