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**SIDEWALK:
STEPS, GAIT,
AND RHYTHMIC
JOURNEY-FORMS**

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*Well, you can tell by the way I use my walk
I'm a woman's man, no time to talk
Music loud and women warm
I've been kicked around since I was born
And now it's all right, it's O.K.*

—Bee Gees

It is possible to be on excellent sidewalk terms with people who are very different from oneself, and even, as time passes, on familiar public terms with them. Such relationships can, and do, endure for many years, for decades; they could never have formed without that line, much less endured.¹

—Jane Jacobs

How pedestrian life acts as an encounter of differing urban signals to forge an acoustic space as well as a set of operative rhythms, to narrate a step-by-step drama.

Leaving the home and coming outside, the dynamics of sound and auditory experience open up toward a realm of greater public interaction conditioned by rhythms and the mobility of being on the go. What rises up from the underground, through the floorboards of the home, and then out, through the front door and into the open, can be characterized as a rhythmical flexibility bringing one into contact. On the sidewalk, we meet the coming and going of others. In this sense, the sidewalk is a volatile stage where the individual body takes a step, and then another, to ultimately negotiate the movements of others as they shuttle pass: I push along, maybe holding a bag under

my arm or close to my chest, shifting left and then right, trying to thread my way through a group of kids gathered there, lingering along the steps, laughing and pushing each other. As the site of pedestrian movement, the sidewalk functions as a rhythmic intensity weaving together the fleeting occurrences defining an essential aspect of public life.

The sidewalk is a threshold between an interior and an exterior, between different sets of rhythms that come to orchestrate the dynamic passing of exchange each individual body instigates and remains susceptible to. It is in turn a structuring space or topography that positions the body between an inside and an outside; within the urban milieu, the sidewalk is the site for the potentiality and related problematics of social expression. Whether in the form of individual itineraries, or in the collective articulations forged by groups, the sidewalk is a primary site of modern public life—*of stepping out and into*—and the notion of public gathering. In its banality, the sidewalk shadows the public square, supplementing the image of democratic gathering with smaller forms of sociality. A fragmentary and mundane democracy might be said to flourish on the sidewalk, as a field of local movement and sharing, what Jane Jacobs refers to as “informal public life.” The sidewalk for Jacobs acts as an important site for making contact, between neighbors, between office workers, and between children, providing space for “mediating between [public organizations] and the privacy of the people . . .”²

As a motif of the subject in the midst of public space, walking has featured in cultural literature as an emblem of the everyday practices of urban space. Embedded in such literature is an optimism that places great promise on the act of walking as it threads together nodes of urban intensity while also fraying the strict formulations of the urban grid. The walker from this perspective is a force of potentiality bringing forward an unlimited horizon.

Jean-François Augoyard’s empirical research conducted in the 1970s at l’Arlequin, a town on the outskirts of Grenoble, underscores pedestrian experience as an interaction between the meeting of individuality and the structuring architectures of the built environment.

As he elaborates, “Every walking, every inhabiting gives itself out not only as structures, figures, but also *configuration*, *structuration*, that is to say, deformation of the built world such as it was conceived and re-creation of space through feeling and motor function.”³ Hence, walking forms an “articulatory process” that writes and rewrites across the existing syntax of the built through motoric action, sensation, and emotional life. For Augoyard, the primary gesture of the *step* initiates a supple and frictional topography of contacts, giving meaning to the here and now.

Through a series of detailed interviews with inhabitants from l’Arlequin, Augoyard establishes an evocative geography defined by the place of the body within a given space. For instance, the “daily stroll” is underscored as forming an “intermediate practice” by connecting different places in an individual’s life. Importantly, the stroll defies “functional classifications” by occupying a fragment of the day as well as the spaces between the “main” points of living and working. The daily stroll in this regard exemplifies a spatial practice that resonates with a “highly polymorphic” expressivity worthy of detailed consideration.⁴

What unfolds, as in Michel de Certeau’s later *The Practice of Everyday Life*, is a demand that understandings of the built environment incorporate a radical appreciation for the *step* as a signifying gesture. Importantly, for de Certeau such walking-writing, this *step-by-step* articulation, confronts or frays the inscriptions marked on the body as part of an administrative, socializing process enacted through the built environment. “What is at stake is the relation between the law and the body—a body is itself defined, delimited, and articulated by what writes it.”⁵ The major formulations of individual identity—as a legible “text” on the skin—may slacken within the minor act of the walk.

As an essential site for contact, the sidewalk resounds with acoustical expressions aimed at or initiated by the walking body. The interlocking of steps and forces of inscription, as the dynamism aligning the body and location, opens up to rhythmical expressions. As Tia DeNora elaborates, early on rhythms feature as devices for

entrainment, defined as “the alignment or integration of bodily features with some recurrent features in the environment.”⁶ From children’s games, such as jumping rope or hop-scotch, which are often accompanied by singing rhymes or clapping hands, to more informal gestures, like skipping down the street while singing, whistling, or humming, bodily expression or behavior is wedded to an auditory and gestural partner, fusing self and surrounding to “orient and organize themselves in relation to environmental properties . . . In this way, environmental patterns come to afford patterns of embodiment and behavior through the ways they are responded to as entrainment devices.”⁷ Entrainment aids in locating features in the environment to provide security and safety, through an unconscious alignment, as well as enabling self-expression by which one may find place, or escape it.

Claiming an informal space within the everyday, the walker might be said to push against “official” scripts through the force of crossing the street, or side-stepping the crosswalk for an alternative path. The daily stroll, as an intermediate practice, imparts an elemental rhythmic flux to the more fixed structures of daily routine. The individual body in this regard is not so much a resisting agent, but a movement in continual negotiation within surrounding patterns. From this perspective, the small space of the sidewalk offers a generative stage for narratives that unfold this process while bringing into relief new configurations, sudden excitement, arguments, an entire promiscuous and difficult economy at the heart of public life.

This gesture of walking, of threading through city sidewalks and streets, or out in the open, finds vibrant expression within artistic practice. Walking, as a performative act that sets into relief a dialogue between subjective consciousness and the dynamics of place, uncovers the *textual* scripting and unscripting de Certeau describes. Francis Alÿs’ work in particular often incorporates or draws upon walking as a ritual tracing of material and social contact. “Walking is one of our last remaining intimate spaces,” Alÿs proposes.⁸ In this way, the walking body carves out within the environment a sort of refuge for making contact or for cultivating an explicit orchestration. Might walking then

formulate, through its syntactical interruptions, an invitation to the other? Though Alÿs often walks alone, he leaves us clues or traces to follow; from spilt paint as a thread trailing through the city to the smear of moisture left by a block of ice the artist pushes down the sidewalk in Mexico City, all such traces and residues mount a poetical script as part of the urban texture. A process of continual departure, Alÿs writes in streaks and scrawls, in actions, as an itinerant body drumming out a set of perforations onto the city.

The promise of this pedestrian writing is located within or against the perceived systematic planning of the modern metropolis and its shortcomings. Jacobs' *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, in laying out a detailed account of the life of cities and their spaces, aims to counter much of city planning's lack of understanding onto the nuanced and complex social interactions and configurations thriving in the metropolis. Jacobs' understanding of the sidewalk to act as mediating space between formal structures of urban systems and informal movements of private life suggests a deeper appreciation for street life in general. Not only as a heightened drama of individual bodies on the move, but more as the meeting of such bodies and the greater organizational weave of urban space. Walking might be seen to enact a *mediating action* in whose configurations the meandering flow of private life and the geometries of public institutions meet. In this way, walking as practice is not a bold step out from the greater forms of alienation, but rather a teasing or a "ruse" as de Certeau points out; it puts to use the urban system, and in doing so supplies continual energy for possible rupture or joy.

Claiming the pedestrian as a wilful user, unfolding potent trajectories within everyday life, walking amplifies quotidian experience to fill the city with social energy and imagination. Such perspectives must also include the rather mundane and at times brutal experience walking comes to express: the walker is also a body without, as in the itinerant worker, the crazy bum, or the lost teenager. From this perspective, to walk is to not only forge possible forms of urban use and everyday practice, but to signal defeat in the face of greater flows,

reminding, as de Certeau further suggests, that “To walk is to lack a place. It is the indefinite process of being absent and in search of a proper.”⁹

As a mediating space, the sidewalk draws out an acoustical flux of so many occurrences and events. It teems with energy, frictions, and noises to form a sonorous fabric signaling the ongoing flow of life. Opening the window of my apartment on a warm summer day, the acoustical shape of the room is flooded with overall input, remixed by the passing of cars, the humdrum of voices, birds in the trees, and the breezes that modulate this propagating jumble. Leaving the apartment, I jump into this mass of sonority, like tumbleweed tossing here and there, to find my way through its flux of energy. In the city, the sidewalk seems to overwhelm or disregard the dichotomy of silence and noise with a general hubbub rising and falling through the day and night. Pockets of intensity, zones of volume, shifting gradations of acoustical flow that makes the sidewalk a sort of sound membrane contoured by the noise of the street on one side and the buildings on the other.

Following Jacobs’ notion of the sidewalk as mediating space, and de Certeau’s appreciation for the walking-semantic, I want to highlight instances of pedestrian movements that actualize a meeting between the public and the private—situations that bring the individual walker into public systems of the urban. In addition, by orienting a view on walking through an auditory, rhythmic perspective, I also want to extend the visual and textual emphasis de Certeau enacts. Understandings of the walker, as a counter-narrative whose script cuts across the system of urban space, operate as a readable or signifying gesture to which de Certeau, and Augoyard, impart great textual function. In tuning in to the rhythmical beat of the step, and the acoustical envelope surrounding the sidewalk, I want to amplify the noises walking at times produces. Such instances recompose notions of private and public as fixed, to reorient the senses to the forceful mixing the city comes to enact. Within this relation, rhythm is an operative texturing, drawn into or aiding to carve out a geographic

supplement to the built—it is spacing, timing, and energy flow all in one, giving a read out of the relational mix occurring on site. The sidewalk throbs with life, and the walker I suggest *beats back*. With the step, a walker imprints onto surroundings so as to draw out his or her own time signature. Walking then is a beat oscillating between the more structured or regimented time of the body and the more spontaneous or improvisatory movements that seek flexibility.

The urban soundscape is itself a material contoured, disrupted, or appropriated through a meeting of individual bodies and larger administrative systems. From crosswalk signals, warning alarms, and electronic voices, the urban streets structure and audibly shape on a mass scale the trajectories of people on the move. In contrast, individuals supplement or reshape these structures through practices that, like de Certeau's walker, form a modulating break or interference. From iPod and mobile phone use to musical instruments and live sensing devices, such signals can be heard to form a mediating dialogue between the individual body and greater structuring sounds performed by the city. In this sense, the auditory topography of the urban milieu is heard as the mingling of differing flows and rhythms that shift through gradations of freedom and arrest—an experience oscillating between feeling overwhelmed *and* supported, and beating within the scriptural economy elaborated by Augoyard and de Certeau.

Following these intensities, and the movements between formal scripts and informal pedestrian rewriting, the sidewalk provides a line to the flows and counterflows, the signals and beats, which lay claim onto the urban system. In pursuing the sidewalk as an acoustic territory, I want to draw out such dynamic instances so as to indicate the potentiality found in pedestrian life and the way in which sonority participates.

Pedestrian Sounds

The experience of the city sidewalk, as zone of pedestrian life, is partly shaped by a continual flood and movement of sonic activity.

We enter an acoustic space in continual evolution with so many perspectives. Construction noise in the distance, laughter passing here and there, the skirting and skidding of shoes on the pavement, bicycles shooting past to circulate a wind of energy by the ear, all bumping and whirling in a flood of warmth and monotony. One might draw up an inventory of the urban soundscape heard from the sidewalk throughout the course of a single day and arrive at a sonorous picture containing a mixture of manmade, machine, and natural sound pushing and pulling at each other. A superimposition of sound events that flow into a steady undulation of intensity: background becoming foreground, and back again, in a fluctuating mass of stoppages and starts that move in and out of communicational attention to puncture the air.

The sidewalk can be heard as an acoustic space that gives indication of the balance between the private and the public Jacobs finds as a key feature of urban life. Through its blend of voices, traffic, signals, and all the small audible traces of so many actions and bodies, sidewalk acoustics tosses with these intersecting flows between private address and public dialogue. On the sidewalk, I drift along on my way to work, humming to myself, and at the same time I am continually bumping into sounds around me that draw me in, repel me, and force negotiation. This sonic choreography acts as a contouring energy locating my senses within an ongoing, mediating flow that softens the borders between unconscious and conscious thought. The siren from an ambulance grabs my attention and forces reaction while my mobile phone rings and announces a sudden connection away from the immediate scene. A sort of feverish vapor, sidewalk acoustics is a connective reverberation, breaking the seal of private life while in turn countering the ongoing rush of public presence. Alongside taking steps then is the ever-present mesh of acoustical events tickling perception to resonate with or disrupt the private self.

This medley of acoustical movement finds further expression with electronic signaling, in particular crosswalk signals, which define a

set of patterned movements and thereby give orchestration to sidewalk acoustics. As an urban detail, the crosswalk signal (which I will concentrate on in terms of their audible aspect) may be placed within the larger spectrum of warning and distress signals. While occupying a more pedestrian application, crosswalk signals nonetheless aim to address the walker by warning of possible danger, signaling when it is appropriate to walk or not, and contouring the urban landscape with an ordered pattern. This patterning brings forward elaborate research, including statistical analysis on traffic flow, handicap access, and crowd control. For instance, *The Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices* (MUTCD) requires high pedestrian crossing volumes for extended periods of time, with a volume of 100 or more pedestrians over the course of four hours or 190 per single hour needed to warrant the installation of a crosswalk in the US. In contrast, the Ottawa-Carleton Department of Transportation recommends a minimum of 200 pedestrians crossing in an eight-hour period for flashing crosswalks.¹⁰ The transportation and environmental concern imported onto the site of the crosswalk emphasizes how crosswalks provide a key structuring device for not only public safety, but also for the flows of traffic by creating breaks in traffic volume and pedestrian movement.

The crosswalk signals throughout Denmark and Sweden, mostly designed and monitored by Prisma Teknik, a company based in Sweden, function as one specific example of crosswalk signal design. Designed to be sensitive to existing noise levels in the city, Prisma Teknik's Digital Acoustic Pedestrian Signal (DAPS) is based on the delivery of up to 16 types of audible signals set to clearly define and convey traffic information according to three stages (red, green, and flashing green modes) while also being sensitive to the given environment. Fixed with a microphone, the units can be set to automatically increase or lower the volume of its signal according to ambient levels of noise. In addition, the units can be tuned to different time periods, for instance at night the signal can occur at a lower volume. The audible signal itself is designed as rhythmic beating or pulses that vary in

volume, sound type, and rate so as to convey whether it is appropriate to walk or not at a given time: generally, the faster beating conveys it is safe to walk, whereas the slower signals mean one should wait for traffic to stop.¹¹ The slower pattern is like a form of relaxed breathing whereas the more rapid rhythms support if not propel the movement of the body forward during a green light while also giving slight warning that time is running out. (This finds an exaggerated form in Australia where during a recent visit I was immediately struck by their unique crosswalk signals, which sound like a rapid-fire taser gun upon initiating walk mode, making one literally jump into action.)

The movements and timing of the pedestrian, existing within individualized yet common time signatures, are interlocked with the urban pattern, from the length or dimensions of city blocks marked by traffic signals, road signs, and numbering to the signaling of stops and starts, comings and goings. Crosswalk design aims to support the pattern of the walker by lending rivets and breaths to pedestrian life. Forcing one to stop, the crosswalk also allows instances of pause, to relax, to tie the shoe, to reposition one's bag, or take a sip of to-go coffee. These undulations and rhythmical marks operate as patterns within the environment that stimulate forms of alignment or entrainment. The rhythm of the walker steps in line, falls behind, or runs over such existing patterns, formulating a counterpoint to the time signature of urban systems. The unconscious registering of crosswalk signals punctures the vague spatiality of an average urban soundscape, demarcating through patterning and electronic signal points in space and time: one anticipates the starting and stopping of traffic, and the subsequent movement of bodies, incorporating this into one's own rhythm of thinking, gesturing, or daydreaming. The signal acts to coerce the body into rhythmic alignment—it acts as a line around which the step circulates.

Alongside the increased pedestrian life found in cities like Copenhagen, as well as the intensification of traffic occurring throughout modern cities, crosswalk signals lend to shaping the fluidity and sense of free and safe movement within a city. They

address the walker increasingly as a sensing body, with current signaling often also including vibration plates for tactile sensing.

Within the established ordering of these signals, a timing that regulates the flows between pedestrian and automobile, and between opposing traffics, other forms of being on the street appear. The body in the midst of signals not only follows the patterns of warning or messaging, but also those of individualized sonorities. From ghetto blasters to iPod usage, Discmans to mobile phones, the body on the street often seeks to personalize movement by adding customized ingredients to the regulatory humdrum of the street and its management. In particular, the iPod has come to impart new dimension to both sidewalk acoustics and the related rhythms and time signatures enacted by the city.

Michael Bull's valuable studies of personal stereos and iPods give wide access to this terrain. A number of key observations surface from Bull's empirical studies, notably, the suggestion that the use of these auditory technologies aid in individual negotiation with the inherent "fragmentation" of urban experience.

Personal stereo use acts as a strategy for "managing time and experience whereby [the users] construct sites of narrative and order in precisely those parts and places of the day that threaten experiential fragmentation."¹²

As my description of sidewalk acoustics suggests, the blending of all that input radically places demand on the senses, often challenging one's sense of self with an excess of public presence. The urban if anything is that condition of excess on so many levels. Personal audio technologies provide a performative shelter for the senses by both filtering out the undifferentiating flood of sound as well as empowering individual agency in controlling what comes in. By granting such control they also assist in sculpting a new form of sidewalk presence, countering the repetitive signaling of the crosswalk, and its related order, with a seemingly autonomous addition. Users set their own pace through a choice of music, inserting themselves into the time signature of the sidewalk according to personalized rhythm that often appears *out of place*—the user moves down the sidewalk as an

alien figure hovering somewhere between presence and absence, locating their sensory attention on an unsteady fulcrum between here and elsewhere.

The wired-up walker enacts a sort of *ghosting* of the sidewalk—we may never know what sonic matter is floating through the ear of the iPod user, whose step occupies the vague threshold between zombism and activism. The spiriting of electronic technology finds a new host within the contemporary walker, taking hold within these new forms of mobility to draw out phantasmic bodies.¹³ Might the iPod user script a new mythology of the urban, giving narrative to augmented life now spanning the globe?

Turning it up, conducting soundtracks, or smoothing out the pressures, acts of *musicalizing* the sidewalk function to add other forms of rhythm, audition, and sonic experience to city life, creating subjective nests within the social pattern—a supplemental layer of timing to those designed for mass movement. “New sonic territories are composed in the course of this mobile listening experience. As the body moves in synch with the music, the listener transforms the public scene and provides a new tonality to the city street.”¹⁴ Jean-Paul Thibaud’s observations of audio technology use give further shape to Augoyard’s *step-by-step* analysis of the pedestrian. For Augoyard, the step acts as a lever for expanding a relational integration with one’s environment, explicitly operating as an “expressive” gesture to forge a mesh of connective threads. Enveloping such a mesh within a sonic rhythm enlivens the step into a personalized “gait,” which “transposes the rhythmic qualities of sonic time at the level of the walking expression of the listener.”¹⁵ The gait marks out in an expressive manner the meeting point of private listening and public space—it pumps up the step to make the sidewalk a zone of freedom, or to detune the sonic script of patterning with a meandering beat. (Though we must not forget the ever-present jogger, who races down the sidewalk, across the park, cutting here and there the space of the city—and who most often than not is equipped with an iPod. No doubt the sonic accompaniment fills the jogger with great energy, supporting their sportive movements.)

As a pre-echo to the iPod performer, I'd like to recall the opening scene to *Saturday Night Fever*, as a sidewalk moment where music and the body fall in line to a certain beat. With the Bee Gees "Stayin' Alive" hovering around Tony as an omni-directional soundtrack, the scene weaves together the body, the music, and the city into unified composition. There's something dynamic, suggestive, and sexy about Tony's strut, the way in which the street seems to flow around him, supporting his desires, his appetites, his fantasies: the street is there for Tony, and he easily glides, eating pizza, buying shirts, checking out the chicks. The music supports his bold smoothness. It becomes a cradle, a structure that brings Tony in line with the city—he walks to the beat, and the music seems driven by Tony's youthful grace. The music we might say stitches him and the city together, granting Tony incredible confidence. The scene immediately reveals that Tony is part of the Hood, with the Bee Gees singing:

Well, you can tell by the way I use my walk,
 I'm a woman's man, no time to talk.
 Music loud and women warm,
 I've been kicked around since I was born.
 And now it's all right, it's O.K.

Following Tony down the street, it becomes apparent how music supplies a deep psychic and emotional medium for how to negotiate urban life, and how to compose daily rituals. As Tony demonstrates with his strut—the strut is pure rhythm, propulsion, confrontation, and erotic confidence all in one; it is an urban rhythm shaped by flows of multiple glances, perspectives, and possibilities *as event*.

The time and movement of rhythm builds out and expresses this spatial and emotional event, giving flexibility and points of contact to all that comes to bear down on the city and those who inhabit its spaces. Music steps in, time devolves and develops, rhythms give movement and potentiality to what it means to be *in place*: to drum along, to stomp the foot, to tap the table, to wait in line and then exit, coffee in hand and the street ahead, is to carve out a *journey-form*.

Taking a step and finding oneself on the ground is answered by the subsequent sensation of the ground rising up, to form a steady contact lending to knowing where and who we are. Walking is a dialogue flexed by rhythmical propulsion.

The sidewalk, as site for such energies and dynamics, is also a space where bodies strive and struggle. For rhythms are also directed by tensions of force and movement, of reciprocation and breakdown—negotiations with other bodies and their authority. As Steve Pile seeks to remind, “the psychodynamics of place . . . are [also] actualised through interrelated regimes of vision, power and sexuality.”¹⁶ Tony strutting down the sidewalks of Brooklyn expresses not only the freedom of youthful beauty in full public view, but, as the film further portrays, the tensions of what it means *to belong*. Yet against the coding of visibility, and the related power dynamics, music and sound appear as a contouring medium for possible routes out or around strict readability. From the disco to the street, music in the film gives shape to a narrative of transformation, of finding hope—to continually relocate the step, into other moves. The geographies promulgated by sound then give dynamic space for ducking and diving the writing occurring between body and law, which may support understanding of the intensification of iPod use and the emergence of sound culture as a counter to the semiotic, imagistic, and ocular demands of modern society.

Extending the drive and flex of the acoustical step, the project *Sonic City* developed in Gothenburg, Sweden, seeks to make more complex the very potential of sonic experience to redesign the patterns of walking and the flow of signals.¹⁷ The project is based on using live sensor technologies and fitting these to the body through a customized vest, so as to create mobile opportunities for collecting, processing, and transforming live input. “The goal of the project is to enable people walking in a city to create electronic music in real time through everyday interaction within the urban environment, literally playing it as a musical instrument.”¹⁸ Consisting of microphones, light sensors, accelerometers, and metal detectors, the project becomes

an elaborate prosthesis, extending the body and its perceptual and sensory range. Yet significantly, it allows a user to collaborate, through a sort of musical dialogue, with the environment, making a game out of exploring the city as a form of interface. Body and city meet in a generative interaction, where “The users actively directed sensors with their body. In order to produce input, they often got closer to fixed artefacts at hand such as metal or walls.”¹⁹ Turning the street into an expanded field of input, musicality and noise, embodiment and emplacement unfold through improvisatory actions—“one of the players started jumping around and playing his body against shadows and metal objects, improvising musically while waiting on a corner for the traffic light to change.”²⁰

These movements extend walking as a poetical rupture, harnessing the syntactical overwriting notably marked out by Augoyard and de Certeau—the Sonic City Body makes explicit walking as not only a form of inhabitation, but importantly as configuring through temporary displacements the lines and demarcations of the urban milieu. Through headphones a listener hears not the selected tunes of their iPod, but the environment around them captured and processed by an array of digital effects. This process slowly unfolds into a sonic potential, as the user (or player) develops an instrumental understanding, opening up to more elaborate integration. In doing so, it also unsettles the defining parameters of optical space, the space of the *text*, and the features of self-image by making the body a fidgeting sonic mechanism: one has to move in unexpected ways, to gyrate in search of noises and tonalities surrounding the body, captured as signals in the air or electromagnetic clouds, to explore this invisible acoustic space. Such a shift also creates dynamic interaction between vision and hearing, tuning a listener in to all the complementing and contrasting signals surrounding what they see. The presentation of the self and the forms of pedestrian life unfold to an inclusive and expanded feeling for emplacement, which also locates the user in their own universe of experience. The Sonic City Body on the street comes to supplement the breaking of the urban

text by acting as noise-machine, beat-box, and pirate radio all in one, defining a sonic geography with an excess of dimensions.

Whereas the street musician stands in full display, as a supplication to the urban crowd, the Sonic City Body samples, collects, and literally embodies its local soundscape, sonifying secret constructions of time and place. Electronically wired, the user becomes a secret agent on the field of sociality. Wandering in the city, the user discovers a form of body language that exceeds both the step and the gait to include an entire range of gestures.

Sonic City comes to bend the structurations of the built environment, and the contours of the sidewalk, creating an augmented weave of signals. From pulses to clicks to static to washes of sound, the body is an extended instrumentation finding points of contact within the fields of energy swarming through the city. Wireless signals, mobile networks, radio transmissions, the medial flow of input and output zooming, as aerial strata all around—itself a new kind of syntax in the structures of the city, official and unofficial alike—is brought against and into the body, as auditory matter, supporting this reimagining of one's place in the city.

Such a project finds echo in various works of media artist Jessica Thompson, which further support the liberating expressions of the individual walker. For example, her project *Walking Machine* (2003) consists of applying small microphones to the shoes of participants, and fitting them with amplifiers and headphones, thereby allowing a user to hear the city from shoe level. Walking then turns into a small act of auditory pleasure, giving larger space to the momentary instance of placing one's foot on the sidewalk. Step by step, the work comes to impart or let loose an acoustical delight in finding place. Thompson presented the work in 2004 in New York City, during which time "each group of participants became more inventive in the way that they were experiencing the environment; stomping on sewer grates, splashing in puddles and crunching garbage."²¹



IMAGE 10 Jessica Thompson, *Walking Machine*, 2003 (omni-directional lapel microphones, mini amplifier, headphones), at Psy-Geo-Conflux, New York City, 2004. Photo: Joshua Weiner, courtesy of p|m Gallery, Toronto.

As with the *Sonic City* project, *Walking Machine* amplifies the relation of body and space, forming a prosthetic extension to physical points of contact. As the artist proposes, the physical space of the walker is supplemented by a virtual addition, where “technology becomes an enabler, facilitating a heightened sonic experience that liberates the wearer from normal conventions of ‘public behavior’.” Lacing an auditory thread through the simple experience of walking, “grass becomes a swishing soft carpet, gravel grinds and pops, and ice and snow creaks and groans under the weight of your feet.” To hear one’s footsteps brought forward in all their tactility and granularity grants an immediate pleasure, giving recognition to the material frictions of the underfoot.

In following such works, and the structuring device of the crosswalk signal, the acoustics of the sidewalk can be heard as an economy of signaling and counter-signaling. From the pulses and

repetitions of the crosswalk to the differentiating rhythms supplied by personal audio technologies, the pedestrian threads their way. Yet sound and walking have a longer historical coupling, as with the practice of soundwalking. Developed predominantly within the field of acoustic ecology, soundwalking is a practice that encourages a deeper, more sensitive approach to location based on actively exploring specific environments through walking and listening. “A soundwalk is an exploration of, and an attempt to understand, the sociopolitical and sonic resonances of a particular location via the act of listening.”²² Usually functioning as a guided tour by a leader, the soundwalk quietly probes a given place, appraising the subtle and dramatic movements of sound as they come to filter in and through the walking group. Notably, soundwalking has become an active and rich base for enlivening acoustical understanding and appreciation, appearing within a variety of festivals, conferences, and gatherings. It captures the general drift of the meandering body, focusing the poetical drive underlying the walker as a creative agent, and redirecting or suffusing this with an acoustical project. What such instances aim for is a deeper tuning of self and surrounding, lending to the pedestrian project of making malleable the sense of place and feelings of relatedness.

The Brazilian artist Romano further highlights this relation, while adding certain tension with his *Falante, escultura sonora itinerante* (2007). Consisting of a self-made backpack fitted with a single audio speaker and playback mechanism, the work is essentially a performative action designed as a walk through the city. With the phrase “Não preste atenção” (“Do not pay attention”) repeatedly playing out from the speaker, Romano walks around, taking various routes through the city. As a stroll, the work draws out an uncertain line between the sounding body and those who hear. On one hand, it calls attention to itself through an amplification that immediately bursts onto the public scene—people turn, looking, wondering . . .—while demanding that one also ignore the meandering figure. Such a confusing gesture plays havoc on the scene of the sidewalk, and the mediation between private and public.



IMAGE 11 Romano, *Falante*, escultura sonora itinerante, Rio de Janeiro, 2007. Photo: Edouard de Fraipont.

Rather than a participatory and instrumental redefining of the body—as a liberating gesturing movement—Romano as walker numbly circulates as an acoustical pest. His sonic city is an instrument that stages the difficulty of finding autonomy or integration, and instead, performs as an antagonistic nuisance. His noise-machine enacts its own failure by producing the conditions it seems to aim against. *I don't want your attention* leads to *I can't get rid of your attention*. Locating his walk within the city, as a meandering step, Romano supports the project of the free walker as well as complicating this with his own script. He circulates as a daily stroll that shuns the intimacy Alÿs finds in the space of the walk to dislocate forms of social construction. Such actions further contribute to the rhythmical vocabulary of the step, accentuating the beat as means by which to negotiate the time signatures of place.

The Sonic Body

Stepping out from the house, the acoustical view of the sidewalk opens up, which is dotted with rhythmical patterning drummed out by

the step in all its metered and fluctuating dynamic. To follow this is to track the marks and scuffs amidst the urban texture, forming a map of so many itineraries. From the daily stroll to the determined walker, the cartography of the step also traces out the audible events surrounding and aiding pedestrian movement. Rhythm, in piecing together the heat of the sound wave with the materiality of the built environment, sculpts out a time-space figure whose energies temporally demarcate the city.

What then might be found in these sonic projects that supplement or shape pedestrian practice with audibility? How does the interlocking of differing rhythmical patterns lend insight onto the social relations oscillating within public space? Henri Lefebvre, in his *Rhythmanalysis*, proclaims that in order “to grasp a rhythm it is necessary to have been *grasped* by it.”²³ Thus, the beat is a forceful exchange built from multiple input; a sliding back and forth, an expanding and contracting structure broken and remade by the frictions of the private and the public, of being in and out of sync. This relation in turn comes to locate the body, to fix one within particular orders. As Lefebvre further observes, “Everywhere where there is interaction between a place, a time and an expenditure of energy, there is rhythm.”²⁴ The walker *mobilizes* such triangulation, putting it into the world and against the street to occupy the full breadth of its beating drama. Walking makes a discourse out of the step, whose rhythmical language coheres as a “journey-form.” According to Nicolas Bourriaud, the “journey-form” is a contemporary compositional principle based on a “cluster of phenomena” evolving from within the mechanics of globalization.²⁵ It composes into artistic objects, actions, and investigations built from the rhythms of global movement. From the continual shuffle of networked society arises such a mode of cultural practice, aimed at performing the very conditions of displacement—to fashion an endless itinerary out of the transient condition one is already called to occupy. The journey-form thus “takes account of or duplicates a progression” whose rhythm stitches the local body into a greater network of relational exchanges.

Lacing this back onto our sonic walker, the acts of entrainment, and the dynamics of rhythm—from the step to the gait and finally, to the journey-form—leads to what I want to call *the sonic body*, as the effective dislocation and reconfiguration of the body under the mediating spell of a sonic event. That is, the body totally reconstructed according to the dynamics of listening and in search of a new city. The journey-form of the sonic body is an improvisation seeking out possible entrainment within the soundscape; to drum out, through the step and the gait, a progression ahead of or behind the mapped itinerary—a *splinter, a fragment, a dislocated center*. The sonic body as step-by-step journey-form, whose walk rubs against the patterning of urban systems, and the ebb and flow of exchange, to perform an orchestration of emotional matter—of the psychodynamics of being *in place* and already somewhere else. For the triangulation mapped out by Lefebvre—of place, time and energy making contact—beats out the surge and syncopation of a body cutting through and being cut into by the urban, as so much emotional vitality. De Certeau's counter-scripting, as a ruse and as a tactical antagonism, can be heard to beat from the sidewalk as raw aggression, humor, or love; in the interweave of the rhythmic, the step is prone to digression. As Tony demonstrates, dancing may teach us how to elaborate the step into a journey-form of transformative power.

Riots, Street Fights, and Demonstrations

The city as a topographical condition, as a set of structures and systems, spaces and cultures, bodies and rules, is also, because of such intensities and their mixing, the site of perennial change. The city is a sort of barometer for the confrontations, radicalities, and imaginations that may be said to define history. For the city not only brings together the forces which in their meeting create rich experiences, but in turn resounds with their celebrations and arguments. Though the historical may be examined through textual record, accounts, written archives, and documents, it is equally an audible

echo taking shape through material forms, cultural markings, and geographic flows. History is also movement. The auditory then may lend dynamic appeal to the historical imagination to not only fixate on archival pages, but to supplement such reading with a sense for what is buried within, for history is also made concrete through initial articulations, interactions, frictions, and the vibrations of bodies, voices, movements, and their expressiveness. To read then might be to also hear what lies somewhere between the words, inside the white blanks, or over and around the languages that were once scratched onto paper, as an emotional energy.

As Mark M. Smith has commented, the absence of archival sound recordings of particular historical periods does not undermine historical examination of sounds from the past, for these would not necessarily reveal the way a society experienced and received such sounds.²⁶ How sound comes to circulate, lend meaning, and give shape to social processes and attitudes for Smith may still be found in written documents. The question becomes not so much to seek the original sound, in pure form, but to hear it within history, through an extended ear, as a significant phenomenon, material, and shared experience participating in the movements of history.

The city is also a noise as well as a text, a culture as well as a map, a reverberant terrain as well as a space full of signs; a history surfacing through government policy as well as the potent sonority that envelopes everyday life. To return to the sidewalk as a space mediating between inside and outside, private life and public organization, the meeting of city policy and private use might be glimpsed.

Mitchell Duneier's engaging study of sidewalk life in New York City reveals this relation. Following the daily life of various homeless men, informal book vendors, and panhandlers, Duneier unfolds a detailed understanding of the men who live from this sidewalk economy and the city laws from which they are always under pressure. Interestingly, sidewalk life comes to develop its own set of regulations that conform to city law while seeking ways around it. As Duneier documents: "The Administrative Code of the City of

New York states that no street vendor may occupy more than eight by three linear feet of sidewalk space parallel to the curb. Since most tables are six to eight feet long, generally no vendor can have more than one table on the street. So those vendors who wish to use more than one table pay some of the men without accounts to stand behind or ‘watch’ their second and third tables.”²⁷

Sidewalk life acts as a key to understanding the interactions between social norms, as public language, and their upsetting through diverse appropriation or use, marking the sidewalk as a space for expression, argument, and fighting. The riot, the street fight, and the demonstration may be understood as dynamic instances of conflict and debate, as well as an audible interaction between writing (the dictates of law) and noise (the suspension of law), an interaction that lends to defining history: on one side, the law as a signature of written record, decree, juridical account, and on the other, a drive toward its overturning, whose momentum relies upon, is initiated, or calls for the development of a separate language, one that stands in opposition, or that brings the law into its own hands. This other side seeks to resist written record and to supplant it with its own, one that is initially often shaped by the political speech, the verbal slogan, the passing of secret messages, as an orality whose power resides in speaking out, rallying, and having a say. Thus, riots, street fights, and demonstrations produce an audibility that seeks to overturn or overwhelm the written record, the law, and house rule with a meaning determined by volume and the promise embedded in making a noise. Such actions in turn instigate new patterns, aiming to reconfigure set rhythms with other timing. To *break* the law then is to also break the functioning order of a given system.

A set of examples of instances of rioting, street fighting, and demonstrating may lend to this proposal—of listening in while also letting out the nested audibility and emotional force within history, and the tensions intrinsic to pedestrian spaces. In this case, walking and the space of the sidewalk are understood as operating within practices of social transformation. Shifting from the individual walker

and to the forces of collective gathering, I want to extend the beating movements of the sonic body, as an emotional and embodied geography, as a journey-form, so as to appreciate how the step manifests in more overt political actions. In locating the flexibility and malleability enacted through the individual walker at the center of an acoustic politics, the verve of rhythmic propulsion must also be heard in the cascade and harangue of collective gathering, which utilizes the mediating line of the sidewalk.

Atlanta, Mob Rules

The inconsistencies, disparities, and imbalances at the core of the Atlanta race riots of 1906, as David Fort Godshalk has examined, point toward complicated social and psychological relations among blacks and whites at this time, in this city. As white mobs brutally sought out and attacked blacks throughout the city, firstly in poorer neighborhoods and later in more middle-class areas of the city, both black and white civic leaders struggled to give articulation to ideas which in the end were neither for or against, but rather sought to understand the complexity of the situation and all the underlying histories and values embedded therein. Thus, “In Atlanta, public words imperfectly reflected underlying ideologies partly because enormous social and economic disparities dramatically influenced both what blacks and whites could say and how they could say it.”²⁸ As with most riots or demonstrations, the power of the spoken word takes on profound importance, along with the ability to capture the public imagination through the use of the voice, language, and related media platforms. The riots in Atlanta were marked by such dynamic, and more so, by the intensities of who spoke, lending to the voice and its meaning the presence of the skin and its color.

Throughout 1906 in Atlanta, the white imagination of the black threat was emblazoned by the ongoing debate of the racial situation, and the endless newspaper reports of attacks by black men on white women, all of which carried threats not only to white society, but

specifically to an inherited code of chivalry carried by white southerners based on defending white women. Such social unrest and reporting eventually turned the Atlanta streets into a cacophony of shouted headline reports, gossip, verbal fighting and debate, and finally escalated into mob rule, documented in Thornwell Jacobs' striking novella *The Law of the White Circle*:

"Where's the police?" the countryman with the little red moustache on the end of his nose asked a young hoodlum who stood by him.

"Raidin' the dives down on Decatur Street."

"Listen to that!"

Again the cry:

"Third assault! Paper, mister?"

"By G_d, there's goin' to be trouble here, and right now, at that! Come on, boys, let's give 'em h__!"

"I just heard two little white boys was held up and robbed in the suburbs," the hoodlum answered.

"And look a-yonder!" a gamin cried. "Did you see that nigger grab that white woman's pocketbook?"

"Gee-muny-chrismus! They're fightin'!" he yelled, as a white man sprang on the negro and bore him down.

Two other negroes came instantly to the aid of the first, and a rough-and-tumble fight ensued. At last the crowd became noisy, the tension began to give way, the lightning flashed, and the storm broke.²⁹

The collectivization of anger, mounting disregard for law and order, the feverish organization of immediate reaction, form into a radical communicational passing where one voice spurs another to ultimately become a chorus of embroiled emotion that, in this case, also crosses and weaves together in a complicated fabric the tensions of racial conflict. The city street as an acoustical partner resounds with aggression, information, pleas and reports, helping to mobilize and provoke,

defend and resist according to territorial demarcations—the voice both passes information while defending territorial boundary: from Dark Town to Brownsville, the black neighborhoods became sites of conflict where the voice was replaced by the sheer force of bodies beating each other, and public squares the site for last minute attempts at reason.

The ideological fact of racial tension finds articulation in the printed word, as with newspapers and legal document. Yet it poignantly presses in on real bodies through acts of vocality, forceful argument, and hate speech. As Judith Butler observes, “a statement may be made that, on the basis of a grammatical analysis alone, appears to be no threat. But the threat emerges precisely through the act that the body performs in the speaking act.”³⁰ The acoustical thrust of speaking, as the Atlanta riot reveals, was paramount in spurring violence. Yet as Godshalk maps out, the riots themselves came to act as a forceful expression leading to an array of attempts to transform not only the racial situation in Atlanta, but for all black southerners. Vocal aggression, as a key aspect to the thrust of the riot, might be heard to also bring forward a new acoustical space not only on the sidewalk, but importantly, within the courtroom.

London, Suffragette Tactics

Though the voice and orality dynamically function within the insurgence of street fighting, like a vehicle carrying threat and ideological struggle all in one, the public street also carries with it other potential tactical sonorities.

The Suffragette movement in Britain throughout the early twentieth century was a sustained political agitation onto established codes of conduct, social mores, and legality, and ultimately aimed to acquire the right to vote for women (which was only fully legalized in Britain in 1928). Throughout their struggle, a variety of tactics were established as means to give expression to their plight that can be understood to supplement or extend the strict use of vocality to carry the message.

One such tactic for the Suffragettes was the method of smashing windowpanes of public buildings, one of the most notorious being enacted by Amelia Brown and Alice Paul during the National Anthem at the Lord Mayor's Banquet in 1909.³¹ Organized window-smashing acted to draw attention to the movement, and to specific protests, by not only vandalizing public property, but also by creating an audible scene: while the voice within public debate is a tool for putting forth alternative views, or generating collective emotion, it may also fail to be heard or find reception—to rise above the established order. Women smashing windows in public, as well as throwing stones and also burning post boxes, other tactics of the Suffragettes, amplifies ideological conflict by attacking civic architecture and the established system. Countering, attacking, searching for a route in, the smashing of windows can be heard as vandalism aimed at society at large, underscoring political view embodied no longer in the voice, or on the skin, but in the gendered body making a noise. Whereas later in the century the afro, the black leather jacket, and the rifle would stand as emblems of the Black Panther movement, formulated into a vocabulary of black resistance, the middle-class woman smashing windows in 1909 stood out unmistakably against the backdrop of English society, turning the sidewalk into an acoustical register of political conflict.

Paris/Bologna, Poetic Politics

The taking of the Sorbonne in Paris in May of 1968 stands as a mythical revolutionary instance whose echoes seem to resound throughout the contemporary cultural environment, marking the beginning of our current legacy and the ending of certain modernist views related to opposition and subjectivity. The function and usage of media may be seen to take a shift at this time, whereby questions of representation, political statements, and debate slide into a slippery space of nomadic identities, metropolitan Indians, radiophonic cacophony, poetic graffiti, and multimedia formats hinting at networked collectivities, all of which

place language into a state of dislocation. Contoured by the emerging electrified environment of the 1960s, the new stance of revolutionary statements seem sparked by an extensive sonority, whereby words unfolded in multiplied entities, whose reading became a voluptuous act, a promise of subjective becoming.

Following 1968 and the related cultural outpouring, the Autonomia Movement in Italy led to the establishment of various subgroups, one being Radio Alice, which sought to continue the initial rebellion.³² For two years the broadcasts of Radio Alice in Bologna functioned as an experiment in political action, identity, and language, operating as an open platform where voices mingled and mutated through call-ins, open broadcasts and debate, fantastic reports, noise and music, montages of poetry and newspaper readings, etc. It thus sought to occupy not the streets, or particular institutes and buildings, but an ethereal, electronic space directed at the imagination ensconced within the urban environment: the poetical graffiti scrawled throughout Paris in 1968 was replaced by electrified expressions of total audibility—it was sound on the run, aimed at the social heart, targeting not a particular political party, or government official, but the very structures of socio-political subjects. Radio Alice was a kind of demonstration on the airwaves, an ongoing occupation whose message was difficult to apprehend, and thus arrest. It remained live, electric, free media on the dial, a sonority spread out across the city.

Copenhagen, 2007

In response to the recent “normalization” process initiated by the center-right government under Anders Fogh Rasmussen, Danish police eventually stormed the Ungdomshuset (“the Youth House”) in Copenhagen, evicting the squatting community and leveling the house to dust. Such military intervention sparked extensive rioting, unsettling most of the Nørrebro district with nightly gatherings, vandalism, and the storming of various buildings. Throughout the week-long confrontation, the rioters employed a series of modified

flat-bed vans. Fitted with PA speakers and a sound system, the vans rolled through the streets at night to lead the demonstrating crowd through the city. Blasting from its speakers was various music, mostly hardcore techno and beat-oriented, along with anti-globalization anthems, underpinning the force of the crowd and lending a dynamic addition to the gathering. Across the neighborhood one could hear the throb of the music enveloped by occasional cheering and screaming, forming into an auditory register of the movements of the crowd and the demonstration. With the van moving through the streets, music functioned as a physical and emotional support galvanizing the bodies on the street into a collective force, literally expanding the presence of the crowd, and the related message of dissent and dissatisfaction.

* * *

In following the noise of rioting, street fighting, and demonstrating, it has been my interest to listen in on history, albeit swiftly, to recognize in what ways pedestrian life, and the individual walker, shift within a climate of political dissent. To take to the streets, or to seek to disrupt public space, reveals the desire or necessity to interfere with established order. Moments of social transformation bring the walking body into an extended breakdown of official scripting, pushing the instrumentality of locating oneself into an orchestration of larger aggression. The syntactical interruptions of the individual walker on the sidewalk spill over into street action. The geographic nesting of personal sound erupts into a collective voice or action, shifting the acoustics of sidewalks into a dramatic noise. This aggression finds its complement in reactionary attempts to cancel, annul, silence, and over-sound such noise, in a fighting whose ideological intensities resound in meaningful volumes. For example, Act-Up's (the AIDS activist group) slogan "silence=death" underscores such perspectives, highlighting the sheer importance of being heard, on any level, within a sphere where sound is more than just decibels.

Sidewalk acoustics gives expression to the steady rhythms of the everyday as well as the transformative intensities of social unrest.

From the walker shifting between crosswalk signals and headphone tunes, from the step to the gait, and further, to the sudden shattering of glass or the gathered voices of collective protest, pedestrian life flows to write those scripts of de Certeau's walking semantic by seeking more pronounced volume. Wind in the trees, a woman's high heels tapping behind, and the puncturing sound of your own laughter suggests this new text marked out underfoot is also an acoustical space gaining definition through beats and their modulating force.

Marching

The rupturing agitation of rioting and street fighting, with its tumult of related noise and acoustical disruption, gains momentum through the disorganization of bodies—impelled by the collective force of bodies confronting bodies, balanced across the threshold of stability and change, control and its breaking, such unrest requires mass force contorting under the pressure of arrest and containment. In contrast, the timed order of military drill (as the other side, of policing and control) necessitates collective subservience to a rehearsed functionality that folds the individual walking body into the historical and political time signature of the march. Against the acoustical matter found in taking to the streets or confounding civic order, one might hear the keynote of political order and control resounding as a counter-acoustic throughout history and the city. Here, walking shifts from the meandering step or the collective surge, and toward timed regimentation.

William H. McNeill, in his study of marching, has shown that the orientation of military drill functions to secure group cohesion through the initiation and control of group muscular movement. For McNeill, the extreme needs demanded by military order necessitates an intensification of emotional and muscular expression, fostering individual ability to do battle and to withstand the extremes of war while participating in an elaborate mechanism of control and command. Thus, the muscular ordering of military drill releases within the individual body a functional relation to emotional investment, ordering the rapture of embodied

expression into a greater choreography of marching and repetition, an entire refinement of corporeal organization by which the body is mechanistic *and* potentially lethal. The history of military drill is woven through the history of battle tactics, war strategies, philosophies on how to order the inherent chaos of conflict, where invasion and defence, communications and command, rely upon and necessitate the total organization of bodies. The individual energies of the soldier are brought forward by that tangible experience of collective motion, deepening a primarily muscular release that is nonetheless complex. Such mobilization not only expresses ordered direction, but also grants momentum to the individual body in withstanding the extremes of ordered conflict. Yet what propels this intensity of energy rests below the line of consciousness. As McNeill observes, the rhythmical excitation of the body in the heat of military drill “is centered in those parts of the nervous system that function subconsciously, maintaining rhythmic heartbeat, digestive peristalsis, and breathing, as well as all the other chemical and physiological balances required for the maintenance of ordinary bodily functions.”³³

The ordering of military drill tapping into the nervous system and unleashing muscular and emotional force may also find audible expression not only in the passing of information and the signaling of group action, but also in marching bands, and their inherent musical-muscular functionality. The rioting body on the street breaking shop windows, throwing stones or causing trouble is replaced by the march of the military band, which produce and in turn are supported by audible intensities.

Though marching bands appear in different forms, from high-school parades to street festivals, I want to explore them as located within the military. The gesture of walking, as that rhythmical instant of making contact and navigating the line of the sidewalk, takes on additional meaning when participating in the mechanistic force of the military march. Rhythm here is brought into a time signature that expresses an altogether different order, but one that is also interlocked with that of the liberatory expressivity of the step or the

gait. As a countermeasure to the spontaneous skip or the personalized sonic, the march fixes the inherent singularity of the body into a contained regiment; it draws in the embedded energy of the walk but restricts it to a set of prescribed measures. This is furthered through an elaboration of material contact: the sonic body as a noisy reconfiguration of embodied performativity, shaped by the emotional flows of pedestrian life, takes on another shape in the march. Initially, the individual marcher is partnered with the musical instrument, extending the body through a device of audible expression, as a second voice by which embodiment finds a new spatial field of sensorial and commanding effect. This is furthered through participation in the band—the rhythmic pulsing and physical exertion of marching in time and collectively literally composes sound and the body into a larger disciplinary system. Lastly, this formation of a musical-muscular organization is placed within the city, as a military force, unifying this expressive conglomeration into an act of occupation. This totalizing, sonic collectivity unfurls the forceful energies that make the military marching band a complex expression: the seemingly cheerful melodies of John Philip Sousa’s “Stars and Stripes Forever” carries forth an entire national image of democratic freedom through the robust disciplinary vigor of the US Marine Corps, bending musicological appreciation with forceful patriotism. With the beating of the collective step, as a drumming without alteration—a hammering repetition—the Stars and Stripes are marked out as a symbol backed by the force of a metered order.

The marching band is an elaborated embodiment, pressing into the muscularity of the body and capturing the nervous energies, and finally, unfolding all of this, as a network or detailed choreography of singularities, to hit the asphalt with exuberance. Michel Foucault pinpoints this elaboration as part of a historical instance found in the establishment of “disciplinary power” that was to invade and radically define the Industrial age. The intensity of this shift lies precisely in its effective overlay onto the movements, behaviors, and desires of subjectivity. Thus, within forms of productive labor or within the field of

military drill, a precision of calculated movements, the regimentation of timing and energy expenditure, and the internalization of related values brought the body in line with new forms of control. Within the field of military strategy, Foucault explores the development of military manuals outlining means for establishing powerful force through repetition of actions, or what he refers to as “the instrumental coding of the body.” From how to handle a rifle to maintaining cleanly appearance, the military brought every detail of the subject into an elaborate order. “Over the whole surface of contact between the body and the object it handles, power is introduced, fastening them to one another” so as to align or “coerce” the body into an economy of power.³⁴

The marching band can be appreciated as participating within this organization of embodied energy, placing the march in line with the drum. The drum as an instrument plays a significant and absolutely pertinent role within marching bands, for the drum best exemplifies the power marching bands wield and the force of occupation it seeks to announce. As John Mowitt’s engaging study of drumming shows, the interplay of percussion, skins (of drums and bodies), and the beat interlock power with the corporeal and emotional intensities generated by music. The drum acts as signaling device with great command, replacing the voice of the commanding officer with percussive precision in which “particular beats came to assume the status of signals, calling, for example, for infantry soldiers to fire on the enemy, or, when all else failed, to retreat.”³⁵ Music and audible signaling were thus woven into the strategies of the new modern army, appropriating from the earlier Ottoman military bands the dynamic blast of percussion.³⁶ The history of the drum is interlocked with military history, either by direct involvement or as a rhythmic parallel in which keeping time, unifying single units into collective signatures, and organizing the individual body as an instrument through whose repetitive rehearsal power could be cultivated.

The phenomenon of the Buekorps in the city of Bergen in Norway testifies to the weave of music, bodies, and marching bands, formed as public spectacle that still carries within it patterns of battle. Developed in the 1850s, the original Buekorps

emerged from young boys imitating their fathers who formed small battalions or militia to defend local streets or villages. Wielding wooden rifles, the boys copied their fathers marching formations, dress, and manner, replacing much of the actual defensive concerns with that of music and display, the drum becoming the essential instrument. Still existing today, the Buekorps function as social units of young boys (only a small number of Buekorps now accept girls) that take to the streets throughout the spring, to practice in preparation for Norwegian Independence Day on May 17, during which time competitions take place, turning the streets into a cacophony of percussive rapture. The streets reverberate with sudden bursts of drumming with each Buekorps demarcating a part of the city their own, utilizing the narrow streets and hillsides as acoustical partners, with accompanying shouts and verbal signals punctuating the marches. The young boys thus continue traditions built from the interweaving of military manoeuvres and drumming, interlocking their steps with the movement of marching patterns and the collective surge of timed display.



IMAGE 12 Buekorps, marching through Bergen, Norway, 2009.

Drawing upon the tradition of the Buekorps, the composer Jørgen Larsson presented his own version of the march, titled “I Ringen” (“In the Ring”) as part of the Borealis music festival in March of 2007. Working with four units of Buekorps drummers, the performance took place throughout the afternoon, starting with the movement of the drummers marching respectively through different parts of Bergen to finally meet in a public square for musical battle, or “slagerkonk.” In addition, the artist had set up microphones on the square connected to a series of speakers mounted on building façades. Utilizing computer treatments, Larsson sampled the live drumming and played it back through the sound system, transformed into a series of reverberant rhythms, accentuating the drumming with added beats and electronics. While the performance lasted, crowds gathered from the four corners of the square, drawn by the intermingling of the live and the sampled, the recognizable marching body as known throughout the city and the transformation or supplemental electronic addition echoing over the square. The work underscored the very performative nature of the marching boys, amplifying their public spectacle into a composite of rhythms that also unravelled the order of their march. Larsson’s appropriation of the drummers, as identifiable symbols, both seem to accentuate the way in which drum, body, and city space interweave in a complex sonic organization while disrupting this with an excess of electronic treatment and performative energy. With the reverberation of their drumming beating throughout the main square, the work seem to stage the very staging already intrinsic to the Buekorps as performance that acts to bind young boys into tribal units through forms of ritualized synchronization, in which drumming awakens the city to the coming of age of their men. Thus, their music (recognizable within a repertoire of marching music) is an expression of agency given its annual freedom at a specified time of year, bringing the body in line with certain orders that are musical as well as social. For in this act of coming out, the Buekorps also function to grant the public access to the ongoing lineage of male order, which in this sublimated and parodic form may entertain while hinting at a deeper foundation of national values.



IMAGE 13 Jørgen Larsson, *I Ringen* (In the Ring), Borealis Festival, 2007. Photo: Thor Brødreskift.

The marching band as an intervention onto the street, a disruption onto established rhythm, can also shift from strict military use to tactical and interventionist appropriation. The Infernal Noise Brigade (INB) takes up the reverberant form of the marching band to spur tactical ruptures as part of various activist campaigns. Started as a protest action, the INB marched through Seattle against the WTO meeting held there in 1999, forming an assertive expression of sonic agitation onto the scene. Echoing other activist bands, such as Rhythms of Resistance, the samba band from London, the INB infuses the rhetoric of the military marching unit with ironic flair that supports the ensuing euphoria that comes with collective action. As Jennifer Whitney recalls:

Marching in, we formed a circle and played for a few minutes to general consternation and astonishment before clattering back out onto the streets again. It was one of my favorite

moments of the day, because it was like we were announcing, “Hey, normal life ends here folks, there is a marching band in your Starbucks, you’re not going to work today!”³⁷

The marching band forms a nucleus around which numerous meanings circulate, and which interweaves music and place in a way that amplifies the inherent power of sound. Drumming and combat, rhythms and fighting, timing and obedience, coalesce into the expression of the march. The pedestrian movements of the walker are restricted into a refined set of actions to articulate the ideals of a specific order. Marching, as a movement somewhere between walking and running, between the meandering step and the dynamics of the gait, serves to remind that to “keep time” is to hold power. The single body, in relinquishing individual expression, participates in this display of power, gathering all the dynamics of the pedestrian into a precise mechanism.³⁸ The marching band can be understood as means for establishing order while bolstering the intensities needed for it to gain momentum. We might then recognize this weave of marches and music as the intersection of varying forces in whose performance bodies and cities meet, to articulate rhythmical intensities that both topple and reinforce tradition.

Sidewalk Acoustics

Stepping out onto the sidewalk, walking is a simple gesture. Yet, carrying all the stuff of the body, step by step, the action of walking supplies the imagination with the very promise of *mobility*. To walk is to already leave behind one place for another. To search, to seek, to wander, the walk is the making of an itinerary. Sidewalks then serve this process, as a space allowing free passage, a ground for the expressivity found at the base of the step. Pivot, shift, and then release, the stepping body learns the promise of the horizon from the perspective of the sidewalk: this line of pavement, of stone or concrete, acts as a blank page for the imagination. Yet the page is

certainly already occupied, by others and by many scripts—an occupation that brings to earth the flight of the imagination. Free passage then is also a continual side-stepping to avoid bumping into others, creating or modulating the gait of the walker by adding a skip there or a hop here to the rhythms of being free. Private and public, the sidewalk is a zone for sharing all the small details of what it means to be, to move, and thus, to interact in and against a context.

The mediating space of the sidewalk, as Jacobs meticulously details, by interlocking private lives and public organization delivers an acoustical thrust found in a soundscape that might be heard as a superimposition of all that comes flooding from *without* and all that surfaces from *within*. From street noise that washes over the sidewalk to shouts that break from windows, the sidewalk soundscape is a medley mixing together these two conditions. By extension, inside and outside feature also as fictitious or narrative zones whereby the emotional and psychological experiences of city life intersperse amidst the social and systematic operations of the metropolis. Finding pockets of reprieve or for improvisation—for that intimacy Alÿs defines—or contouring pedestrian life with auditory secrets and technological differences, to walk is to produce a mesh made from repetitions and rituals; to make narratives out of the stroll. It is a rhythmic performance treading a line between dreams and work. Might rhythm teach us how to use our walk, to forge contact, connection and also new patterning? To walk enacts that primary rhythm, as an extension of the heartbeat, of breath and the pulsing of perception, heard as the click and tap of the step made from the *in* hitting the *out*. Sidewalk acoustics forms dynamic immersion for a body attempting to find its own step.

To supplement such steps with the march, I've also tried to suggest complexity to the gait, as a forceful energy brought into an ordering beat. Like the iPod user, and Sonic City Bodies, the marching musician also figures as a sonic body. Wedded to a musical instrument, the marcher is propelled by the urgencies of disciplinary order keeping time to musical composition, and the muscular force

of playing while marching. This sonic body, though, finds a further complement, which I have not touched upon, but which must figure, as a figure itself, within the line of the step, the gait, and the march—that is, the dancer. The sonic body can already be thought of as a sort of dancer, as one driven by the beat yet finding its own particular expressive shape, as a responding counter-rhythm that follows the beat while already breaking it. Dancing dynamically expresses how rhythm is a timed order containing the promise of its own rupture—to dance is to follow the beat while fraying its edges; to cut into the beat with feverish steps. This is given expressive shape in the figure of the breakdancer. As a special sidewalk figure, the breakdancer has occupied city space as a location for display and competition, performing as a total sonic expression by locating the step, and the gait, across the entire body, to bring the beat in and let it press out in pops and drops, hops and flairs. Such moves poignantly locate rhythm as means for reordering place, for pushing against the inscriptions marked on the body, and as a production of another kind of public space—all of which give a lead to the sonic body, as a journey-form of rhythmic urbanism. To dance then is to take the step for a long walk.