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Introduction

Geoffrey Cox

Conceived at the Sound and Music in Documentary Film Symposium (SMDF) of February 2017, this collection of essays considers the ways sound as noise, music and speech informs the documentary form: noise as location sound, sound effects and concrete sounds that blur into musical expression; music as asynchronous score, diegetic performance and the musicality of the timbre of the speaking voice; speech as commentary (educative, poetic, surreal), witness testimony and expert exposition. All consider sound as a sonorous and resounding listening experience. Whilst any such collection must consider the audiovisual relationship as a primary concern, it is the special power of sound to generate profound feeling, employed in documentary to represent, inform, interpret, inspire and persuade, and ultimately to create powerfully affecting meanings to which the essays invariably return.

The purpose of this short introduction is to highlight the enveloping import of sound, to show how listening can generate great emotional as well as cognitive meaning and to outline the implications of both for the soundtrack of documentary film. In the following series of documentary case studies, the authors detail these powers of sound and listening. They articulate their implications and the meanings that are inherent, intended and can be extrapolated from the audiovisual relationships in the films under discussion.

Sound and Listening

The capacity for sound to be powerfully evocative is unquestionable. An old photograph, or even a silent cine film from one’s childhood, brings back memories and can have strong emotional resonances. Listening to the ‘unseen sound’ of an old audio recording however, can almost without warning, engulf us in the feelings it triggers. The sound of a distant night-time foghorn or of close-by early morning
chirruping sparrows can transport me back, as if through some mysterious portal, to my childhood bedroom in East London where I fell asleep and awoke to those sounds. The room itself and the very feeling of being there, and listening, is evoked. Delia Derbyshire has described how the sound of air-raid sirens during Coventry’s wartime Blitz in her childhood engendered her ‘love for abstract sounds’, as did the ‘percussive sound’ of millworkers’ ‘clogs on cobbles’ going to work at six o’clock in the morning in her later childhood home of Preston (Cavanagh, 1998). Listening is an intense, inner experience that can have lifelong resonances since ‘there is nothing to stop’ sound’s ‘penetrating enveloping presence from overpowering’ (Rangan, 2017, p. 284); it has no bounding frame like the image, containing, defining and controlling it, and so is freer to generate deep affects that we have little voluntary control over. It is such a freedom that lies at the heart of the writing in this collection and its concern with the enveloping presence of sound in the context of documentary film. The photograph can show us things, even bring emotive responses but as all of the authors here show, sound’s affectiveness can be deployed to generate deeper meanings beyond those provided by the frame of moving pictures.

This tendency of sound to break the frame makes it ambiguous and ephemeral. We talk of the ‘soundscape’, yet unlike its sister landscape, its content and especially its edges are far more blurred and ultimately, indefinable, even unknowable. Sound emanates from objects that in general, we can see, at least in one’s mind’s eye, but as Steven Connor suggests, the actual attachment of sound we make to those objects is dependent on whatever other thing is acting on them. There is in a sense, no sound of the object itself (2004, pp. 161 – 2). Anyone who has ever tried to record the sound of the wind will know that it appears to have no clear character or even sound unless it is blowing through something, such as the wires of a telephone line. We may not even make any attachment of sound to object. As Delia Derbyshire explains of the air-raid sirens, she did not know the source or meaning of their sound as a young child. Their power was both abstracted and metaphorical, like music, and this explains how they had such a profound effect on Derbyshire’s future career as a composer of electronic and concrete music. Further, citing Lucy Donaldson, Simon Connor writes in this collection that unlike vision, in such listening, sound also ‘makes a vital contribution to the evocation of other senses, for example, the sound of wind rustling leaves invites the feel of air on our skin, or the sizzle of food cooking conjures taste’ (Simon Connor, 2018, p. 91). Sound seems to almost ‘touch’ us and then explode a multitude of responses, its sensual effect at once beguiling and unsettling. Compared
to seeing, hearing is thus associated more with sensual feeling than understanding, since the experience of listening can be intense but without clear specificity (Steven Connor, 2004, p. 157). Sound comes towards us such that ‘we cannot listen without taking into ourselves the sounds we hear’ (p. 163). Sound thus has a very real physical power; it has a tactile, bodily effect despite this lack of materiality and specificity; it ‘moves, shakes and touches us’, yet remains ‘mysterious’ (p. 157).

**Music and Noises as Music**

It is of course the mysterious power of musical sound that can potentially move, shake and touch us the most. Traditionally, music operates on a generally non-referential, non-specific level in the first place, its power lying in its capacity to operate on a metaphorical and symbolic level, characterized by Pierre Schaeffer as the comprendre mode of listening. This has led to Friedrich Schlegel referring to music as, ‘the highest of all arts’ due to its apparent transcendent capacities and what Schopenhauer suggests is its relation ‘to the true nature of all things’ and its ability to ‘express the metaphysical to everything physical in the world’. As Kulezic-Wilson perceptively suggests, Schopenhauer’s idea that when played ‘to any scene, action, event, or environment . . . music seems to disclose to us its most secret meanings, and appears to be the most accurate and distinct commentary on it’, is a quite precise description of music’s ascribed role in film (2015, p. 19). A deeper, non-cognitive understanding can thus result from this metaphorical transcendence.

However, as Schaeffer, and John Grierson before him explored, non-musical sounds of the everyday, organized in certain ways, can also take on the guise of music whilst partially retaining their links to their causal source. Boundaries become blurred between simple indexical recognition (Schaeffer’s écouter listening mode), and Schaeffer’s analytical entendre mode of objective, phenomenologically-inspired ‘reduced’ listening. The founders of modern documentary in the form of the British pre-war Movement, made films that employed the use of both music and sound in these ways. Examples such as *Coal Face* and *Night Mail* with their scores by Benjamin Britten are well known, but as early as 1930, Grierson was also suggesting

[t]here must be a poetry of sound which none of us knows. . . . Meanings in footsteps, voices in trees, and woods of the day and night everywhere. . . . I have, like everybody else shut my eyes . . . and sat for hours trying to make something
of the door-bangings and footfalls and crazy oddments of conversation that broke the plush darkness of a London night (p. 13).

The result was films such as Movement directors Edgar Anstey and Harry Watt’s 6.30 Collection (1934) about mail sorting at the GPO, an early documentary that, along with the likes of Dziga Vertov’s Enthusiasm (1931), explored the possibilities of the creative treatment of location sound recordings. Holly Rogers cites Ruoff’s idea that the somewhat chaotic world of documentary location sound recording tends to abstract Grierson’s ‘crazy oddments’ of sound from their sources as they ‘coalesce in the aural middle ground’. This makes them both more confusing than sounds in everyday life and ‘less realistic to ears attuned to the artificial sonic clarity of fiction film’. As a result, there is a tendency to push such sounds into the ‘non-referential realm of music’ (2015, p. 9), even before any creative manipulation of them. Once consciously and creatively organized, this tendency enables sound to enter the metaphorical realm as Grierson suggests:

another curious fact emerges once you start detaching sounds from their origins, and it is this. Your aeroplane noise may not become the image of an aeroplane but the image of distance or of height. Your steamer whistle may not become the image of a steamer but of isolation and darkness (1934, p. 103).

Similarly, in a review of Enthusiasm Grierson extols its sonic potential: ‘you will find most excellent passings of melancholy sound into musical sound: you will hear it distorted till it screams, and you will find feeling in it’ (1931, p. 349). This is ‘expanded listening’ rather than Schaeffer’s reduced variety and Grierson’s direct listening experiences informed his understanding of the power of all sounds in documentary — synchronous and asynchronous and the myriad gradations in between the two. Such a listening experience is shared by the authors in this book. They examine sound in documentary from this perspective, following what Birtwistle suggests is film studies’ ‘increased interest in perception, embodiment and the senses’ (2010, p. 6). They do so in a variety of ways: by interpreting their own listening experiences; by studying the listening experiences of other filmmakers, composers and sound designers; or by examining sound from the perspective of their own documentary creative practice.

Sonorous Voices
A further aspect of the documentary soundworld is, of course, the speaking voice. The ‘voice of God’ commentary (another legacy of the Griersonian tradition), the talking
head, and the interviewee’s testimony are traditionally seen as being at documentary’s cognitive heart, the powerhouse of claims to any ‘reality effect’ and very much concerned with conveying specific information and ideas. Documentary has long privileged such an acquisitive listening, ‘the fulfilment of a desire for understanding (something, someone)’ (Leimbacher, 2015, p. 314). Watch almost any mainstream television documentary today and you will not find that the talking stops for very long, as if the audience cannot be trusted to think for themselves. It leaves little time for reflection. The dominance of often didactic commentary or interviewees acting like ‘puppets conforming to [the] line’ of the hidden voice of the filmmaker (Nichols, 1983, p. 27) is still common. There is sometimes a sense that one just wants the talking to stop: in critiquing the documentary work of the Films of Scotland Committee (discussed by Cox in this collection), film critic Allen Wright goes as far as to call for an ‘embargo on wordiness’ that if enacted for ‘even a year would be the greatest blessing that could be bestowed on Scottish films’ (1974, n. p.).

Yet, as several of this collection’s authors reveal, in taking what Birtwistle describes as an ‘affective turn’ compared to the ‘linguistic turn’ of the 1960s (2010, p. 6), the ‘sonorous voice’ of such commentary can communicate through more ways than semantic articulation (see Kooij and Koen, Jorge, Tsai, Kilpiö, Berkenhoff). Even where the cognitively reliant, educative exposition of meaningful language is important (Rudnicki and Brereton, Connor), the sonic adornment of the voice can make meaning more felt and thus enduring. The voice can be ‘the transient, transforming wave of sound through which we connect to each other’ (Leimbacher, 2017, p. 293). Drawing on the work of philosophers Jean-Luc Nancy and Mladen Dolar, Leimbacher draws a distinction between ‘listening, which attends to voice, and understanding or hearing . . . which seeks the meaning embedded in the language of speech’ (2017, p. 296). Hearing attends to linguistic signification whereas listening is open to a more elusive sense that adheres to the voice’s grain. In such listening, comprehending language may not be the final goal since our ears are more ‘inclined toward affect rather than concept’. It is upon this affect that much of the discussion of voice in this collection focuses. The authors ‘listen otherwise’, as Lisbeth Lipari suggests is necessary in order to expand listening and go beyond conformity to something deeper, and so they are ‘committed to receiving otherness’ (Leimbacher, 2017, p. 297). This is manifest in their discussions of the speaking voice’s timbre, rhythm, musicality and emotively human qualities that stretch well beyond language.
Listening and Looking

When it comes to the relationship between sound and image in film, the dominance of the visual is almost a given, although so much has been said in recent decades about the earlier neglect of sound’s importance in the relationship, it can no longer be considered neglected at all. Whilst in much film there is still the sense that sound and music is essentially there to support the image, filmmakers such as Robert Bresson are willing to assert that sound is ‘more evocative than an image, which is essentially only a stylization of visual reality’ (Burch, 1985, p. 200). This returns to Rangan’s idea of sound’s ‘penetrating enveloping presence’ that in documentary film leads to its ‘modes of interpellation lean[ing] toward the audial as much as if not more so than the visual’ and the related idea that it uses our listening ‘processes of auditory discrimination and discernment . . . to build second-order systems of meaning’ (2017, p. 282). This presents a conundrum for documentary with its ‘lingering imperative of objectivity’ (p. 283) since such second-order meanings can easily be seen as being anything but objective. The imbuing of metaphorical meaning to diegetic sound and its inherent contribution to music, make sound’s overall ‘penetrating enveloping presence’ a powerful conveyer of subjective meaning. As Michael Chanan points out with regard to music in documentary: ‘it isn’t factual, or neutral or even limited to the descriptive, but . . . is emotive, expressive and associative. It therefore inevitably functions as a form of commentary, sometimes all the more insidious for not declaring itself as such’ (Chanan, 2007, p. 117). This is not so much André Bazin’s ‘window on the world’, film’s photographic transfer of ‘the reality from the thing to its representation’ (Nagib and Mello, 2009, p. xvi), as a mirror reflecting the agenda of the filmmaker or other inherent biases. As we shall see, this notion of an ‘agenda’ and how this can be bolstered by sound (and especially music) has legitimacy (Kilpiö, Cox, Jorge, Jordán González and Lema Habash), but the concept of ‘the real’ is also questioned, and the problem posed of how one might view attempts to reach at least, certain kinds of ‘truth’ or understanding via the deliberate creative exploration of the sonic (Tsai, Berkenhoff, Nogués). Such a delineation is however rather too stark as the authors show; the two positions are not mutually exclusive, since after all, one person’s agenda is another’s truth.

Dai Vaughan has written that documentary film is inevitably a construction, the editor reluctantly allowing ‘the film to take on the form to which it seems to aspire’ and that it is always distinguished from reality, because it is ‘about something’ (1999, p. 21). He points out that ‘all events, at least in human affairs, are events
perceived by somebody’, but that documentary filmmakers attempt to ‘prevent their own perceptions from intervening between the viewer and the pro-filmic’ (p. 57). Transparency, objectivity and neutrality can be aspired to even if never fully attained. By contrast, Jay Ruby asserts that documentary filmmakers have a duty ‘not to be objective’ since they are essentially ‘interpreters of the world’ (2005, p. 45). Yet interpretation is not the same thing as representation, even though the two terms are sometimes closely interconnected in discussion of documentary. Grierson was of the view that documentary deals with the actual, and in that sense the real, but that what one should be aiming at is the ‘really real’ which ‘is something deeper than that. The only reality which counts in the end is the interpretation which is profound’ (Aitken, 1990, p. 109). Aitken suggests that Grierson privileges the notion of an abstract, ‘poetic reality which existed beneath the rational’ (p. 114) and that the ‘intrinsic empirical naturalism of the documentary representation must become organized in order to express general truths, which exist at the level of abstraction, beyond the empirical’ (p. 109). Schopenhauer’s idea of how any ‘scene’ accompanied by music discloses ‘to us its most secret meanings’ (cited above), is echoed here and not surprisingly so given Grierson’s university study and lifelong adherence to the Idealism of philosophers such as Schopenhauer. It also chimes with Lindsay Anderson’s documentary work that, even when consciously realistic, sought deeper implications beyond the surface realities. For him ‘the most important challenge is to go beyond pure naturalism into poetry [in order to] penetrate the reality of [a] particular world since as Brecht has said “realism [doesn’t] show what things really ‘look like’ but how they really are”’ (Sussex, 1969, p. 12). Herzog calls this a quest towards a mysterious and elusive ‘ecstatic truth’, only reachable ‘through fabrication and imagination and stylisation’ (Rogers, 2015, p. 5).

The penetrating force engendered by the creative treatment of sound and employment of music in documentary therefore can be embraced as a means of reaching such ‘realities’ and ‘secret meanings’, the ‘really real’; the poetic truth. However, this appeal to ‘sensual and intellectual’ understanding that deliberately goes beyond the straightforwardly cognitive, tapping into what John Corner describes as the ‘dreamlike potential for the indirectly suggestive and associative’ (2003, p. 97), can also be harnessed to empower promotional persuasion (Finch, Cox, Rudnicki and Brereton) and bolster political ideology and propaganda (Kilpiö, Jorge, Jordán González and Lema Habash). It does, as Chanan said, ‘inevitably function as a form of commentary’. In its audiovisual relationships, it can be less like Bazin’s filmic window on the world and more like a mirror reflecting sometimes hidden purposes and ideas.
Soundings: Documentary Film and the Listening Experience

The 2017 SMDF Huddersfield Symposium came about through my own research-led creative practice as a composer and documentary filmmaker. As a result, the aim evolved to bring together practitioners and researchers via an open call for discussion on all aspects of sound and music in documentary film, including expositions of presenters’ own creative practice (sometimes with film screenings). This led to talks ranging from discussion of the articulation of desired meaning through practical aesthetics and techniques, to theoretical analysis of such practice. It also brought together attendees from a variety of disciplines: musicology, film and media studies, filmmaking, art theory, art practice, theatre, composition, sound studies, sound design, social science, cultural history, philosophy and English literature. This eclectic mix has filtered down into the range of topics the authors discuss in this collection which was conceived at the closing discussions of the symposium.

Documentary is not a ‘stable set of conventions [or] ethical motivations’, but rather an ‘evolving and heterogeneous constellation’ (Rangan, 2017, p. 286). This is reflected in the range of disciplines that both examine and become involved in the practice of documentary filmmaking. Unlike fiction film, the theoretical and ethical questions posed by such interdisciplinarity have been part of documentary practice’s story from the beginning with filmmakers, theorists and critics alike contributing to journals such as Cinema Quarterly and Sight and Sound from the 1930s onwards. Often such a filmmaker, theorist or critic was one and the same person and this is also reflected in the contributions here: practitioners discuss techniques, theory and idea in their own work (Bulley, Kötting, Berkenhoff, Connor, Rudnicki and Brereton), and in the work of others (Bulley, Cox, Kooij and Koen), whilst analysts consider the implications of both the detail of practice and wider philosophical and cultural questions of sound’s role in documentary (Jorge, Tsai, Finch, Kilpiö, Nogués, Jordán González and Lema Habash). This blend of practice-based discussion and theoretical analysis can be seen as a complement to the growing scholarly interest in the role of sound in documentary film within the last decade. Gunnar Iversen and Jan Ketil Simonsen’s edited collection Beyond the Visual: Sounds and Image in Ethnographic and Documentary Film (2010), Music and Sound in Documentary Film (2015) edited by Holly Rogers and the fall 2017 issue of Discourse, ‘Documentary Audibilities’, are recent key examples. Soundings: Documentary Film and the Listening Experience adds to this scholarship by linking both the technical and aesthetic aspects of practice and detailed analytical expositions,
to sound’s powerful affects, placing emphasis on its penetrating meaning-making in the documentary context.

Whilst the collection does not have a specific theme beyond that of the affective power of sound and music in documentary film outlined above, three broad areas emerged from the writing. These areas are linked and provide the structural foundation: ‘The Promotional Imagination’; ‘Foregrounding the Aesthetic: Strategies and Practices’; and ‘Nationhood and Conflict’. The script of filmmaker Andrew Köttering’s poetic and challenging SMDF keynote talk forms a centrepiece between the second and final sections. What follows is a brief summary of each chapter in the order that they appear in the book.

The Promotional Imagination

Will Finch’s opening chapter looks at the Arena Hotel, a website used as a promotional archive and form of exhibition for the BBC’s long running television arts documentary, Arena (1975-present). It uses the features of a virtual hotel to help browsers navigate the programme archive. Finch examines how sound, and especially the music of featured artists of the hotel’s documentary extracts, is used to ‘blur’ figurative gaps between different subject areas and films in the hotel such that time and space become ambiguous, nostalgic memories are evoked and artificial juxtapositions elided. Promotion through a rootedness in the past is also a feature of the next chapter where Geoffrey Cox examines the industrial documentary Weave Me a Rainbow (1962), a film about turning wool into clothing produced by Films of Scotland and sponsored by Scottish wool manufacturers. Cox discusses how the collaboration between director Edward McConnell and composer Frank Spedding enables arresting cinematography, poetic commentary and especially jazzy, modernist-tinged music to suggest a forward-looking industry and a ‘country on the move’, at the same time as recognizing the importance of timeless tradition.

Radoslaw Rudnicki and Jude Brereton undertake a rather different promotional exercise; that of an interdisciplinary educational project (documentary video, computer game and audiovisual performance) to aid public understanding of how scientists are using sound to aid comprehension of the interaction of complex molecular structures in designing anti-cancer drugs. Synthetic electronic music and sound design are at the heart of their practice. They describe how both are made and then used to inform, engage and enhance the audience / participants’ experiences, and how the scientists themselves are employing sound.
**Foregrounding the Aesthetic: Strategies and Practices**

Simon Connor is an electronic music composer who records and manipulates field recordings extensively in his work. Here he details the processes of recording the construction of a giant inflatable and the musical performances within it, for use in his soundtrack for *Action Space* (Wahl, 2016), a feature-length documentary about the work and ideas of the arts collective, Action Space (1968 – 78). His focus is on aesthetics, ‘play’ and how the inherent playfulness of the collective itself affected his own approach, helping to create the balance between informative interviewee testimony and highly sonically and visually evocative sections of the film. *Action Space* features performances by AMM and Henry Cow’s Phil Minton, but we must turn to Rosa Nogués for discussion of music documentary proper in her analysis of Shirley Clarke’s *Ornette: Made in America* (1985). Her premise is that the film looks how its subject, pioneering avant-garde jazz saxophonist Ornette Coleman, sounds: its structure, editing style and heterogeneous make-up, is driven by the freedom of form and expression of Coleman’s featured music. She highlights the outsider status of Coleman and Clarke and, in detailing this, shows how Clarke conveys a political sense of irony about the American Dream, plays with the line between fact and fiction, and addresses Coleman’s ostracization within the jazz community and his own questioning of his masculinity.

Music and the way it can drive visual structures is also at the heart of video artist and composer James Bulley’s practice. Here he combines his creative work with research into the collaboration between electronic music pioneer Daphne Oram and experimental documentary filmmaker Geoffrey Jones in a project called ‘Progress Music’. He uses textual historical analysis of their documentary film *Trinidad and Tobago* (1964) to inform his audio-visual, film-sound installation *Progress Music I*, and both are detailed here. His desire to ‘unfold untold histories’ of these underrepresented artists is realised through the ‘liberation’ of archival material, further ‘activated’ by the re-composition processes used in the installation. The analysis of creative practice from the perspective of other creative artists, is also exemplified by filmmaker Demelza Kooij and sound designer / composer Lars Koen’s examination of the aesthetics of the voice in the documentary films of Peter Mettler. In doing so, they privilege techniques, intentionality, and creative and authorial issues. Mettler’s use of interviews, radio announcers, crowds, and his own voice-over in conjunction with sound design and imagery is discussed through the filter of Michel Chion’s ideas. These emphasize Mettler’s tendency to separate voice from body, focus on its sonorous qualities and question the limits of language.
Ana Berkenhoff, sound artist and theatre maker, also examines the use of the voice, in this case the voice-over commentary in *Cormorant* (2015), a short film by her and Ethan Folk that blurs the boundaries between documentary and video art. Shot in the City of London, the film is a ‘movement and perspective study’ questioning the life of people in the City’s financial centres and asking ‘what the poet is for’. In her desire to bring ‘new realms of meaning into existence’, she discusses the way the disembodied voice and music, in combination with almost banal everyday imagery, can be used as a possible ‘call to action’, a raising of possibilities in the audience’s consciousness. Berkenhoff’s ruminative, lyrical approach to her elucidation leads well into filmmaker Andrew Kötting’s centrepiece, ‘The Unwanted Sound of Everything We Think We Want’. He poses fundamental questions about the nature of documentary and explores his interest in ‘the thin membrane between what might be called fiction and non-fiction’ and how music and sound are key not just to his work, but to his life. Like his films, the highly poetic, stream-of-consciousness approach is rich and engaging, and underpinned by a deceptively logical flow.

**Nationhood and Conflict**

The sonorous voice of commentary, but here more a ‘voice of God’, is also explored in Tsung-Han Tsai’s opening chapter of the final section of the collection with an examination of Humphrey Jennings’ *A Diary for Timothy* (1946). Tsai provides a detailed analysis of the sonic ‘polyvocality’ of the film featured in the diegetic music of Beethoven (played by Dame Myra Hess), commentary spoken by actor Michael Redgrave and written by E. M. Forster, and diegetic sound (especially that of rain). On the surface, the film depicts a nation on the brink of wartime victory but uncertain of its future, but Tsai concludes that its sonic complexities actually elucidate a ‘self-conscious examination of identity politics’. Anita Jorge continues the theme of wartime Britain with an analysis of Len Lye’s *When the Pie Was Opened* (1941), a government-sponsored informational / propaganda film depicting a middle-class family dealing with rationing by the making of a suitably austere vegetable pie. Its soundtrack includes what Jorge describes as the official, reassuring discourse of the ‘musicalisation of warfare’ but, she suggests, concealed in its highly experimental juxtaposition and treatment of surreal, asynchronous mechanical and natural noises, is a political message of socialist Lye’s own: it is the working classes that have made the meal possible at all. Kaarina Kilpiö offers a different wartime perspective in her analysis of Axis-aligned Finland’s WWII propaganda films, as well as of those films that presented a cultural representation of
Finland into the 1950s. Both placed importance on musical soundtracks, especially the use of Sibelius’s music and allusions to folklore, to bolster nationalistic feelings via the creation of a national ‘sonic image’. More than any of the chapters in the collection, Kilpiö’s critical approach articulates how documentary’s truth claims can be warped and subverted by music, commentary and staged visual material such that any ‘truth-value’ is heavily compromised.

The collection closes by moving beyond the perspective of the West to Chile via Nicolas Lema Habash and Laura Jordán González’s chapter on Raúl Ruiz’s Ahora te vamos a llamar hermano (Now We’re Gonna Call You Brother) (1971) about socialist President Salvador Allende’s visit to the regional home of the Mapuche people. They present a nuanced reading of the film’s political complexities inherent in the sonic tension set up between a speech by Allende and the voices, language and music of the Mapuche people. Uniquely to this collection, Lema and Jordán deal exclusively with ‘direct cinema’ and its concerns not to ‘mystify its objects’ but they show that even here, the film employs ‘direct sound as a powerful creative and political device’. In doing so they highlight the richness of the broad theme running through this book: sound as a sonorous and resounding listening experience that can empower the documentary to reveal, imply and create, complex and nuanced but ultimately, powerfully affecting meanings.

Finally, John Corner concludes the volume with an Afterword that, in the light of the contributions, reflects broadly on aspects of sound in relation to the development both of documentary and of documentary scholarship, indicating some of the possibilities which the book opens up for future inquiry.