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The Auditory Academic
Transforming the Soundscape of Scholarship

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Abstract

Seeing is believing. Supposedly. But how many metrics, online dashboards, 'stretch targets,' bullying incidents, research misconduct and academic misconduct cases do scholars need to see before alternative modes of higher education are considered? If distinctive and dissonant ways of teaching, learning, researching and knowing are to be offered, then it is time to activate the soundscapes of scholarship via the auditory academic. Revisiting the work of two powerful Canadian scholars from the analogue age – Murray Schafer and Harold Innis – their key tropes of the 'Thinking Ear' and the 'Bias of Communication' are deployed to configure and shape the auditory academic, listening to the different ways of knowing, rather seeing (and believing) the unjust, irrational and mediocre.

Keywords: Soundscape, Auditory Culture, Neoliberal University, Bias of Communication, Thinking Ear, Murray Schafer, Harold Innis

Reduce. Cut away. Park. Minimize.

Much of academic life activates performative metrics, harvesting data sets from Scopus and Google Scholar. Our research lives are punctuated by indices, Orcid, YouTubed keynotes and Instagramming of #academiclyfe. Bouncing from screen to screen and selfie to filter, the highlights and lowlights of being a scholar are curated, shaped and built into a Goffman frontstage (1959). Performance reviews, online dashboards, university rankings and stretch targets punctuate the pathway to achievement. Visual platforms are the mechanism for the perpetuation of this irrationality and superficiality, propelling the confusion of management and leadership, profit and people, reporting and rigour. Supposedly, the more platforms activated in the contemporary university, the greater the profile.

My thinking for this article began in a different intellectual place, divested from this saturated visuality. As I turned off the (metaphoric) academic screens, my question

interrupted and agitated. What is the soundscape of the neoliberal university? This tragic and toxic question summoned another: are there alternative soundscapes to revive and transform our failed and failing higher education system? These two questions shape a quiet space, a smaller frame, to activate the auditory academic as a trope, term and project, exploring how we transpose the soundscapes of scholarship away from bullying, ambition, burnout, silent quitting and iterative restructures. Part of our political work in the neoliberal university must be critiquing what Vrancken described as the "digital visual overload" (2020, p. 91). In this context, sounds can salve.

This research has a personal and professional frame. My first two degrees were in European history, taught in Australia. They performed the colonization of our universities. Foreign knowledge invades and overlays the delicate and profound filaments of Indigenous languages, family structures, faith structures, epistemologies, ontologies and methodologies. Yet through those undergraduate and MA degrees, social history and oral history emerged as a disruptive, occasionally decolonizing, intervention in the narrative of great men undertaking great deeds (Thompson, 2002). My subsequent qualifications have been based in education, cultural studies, communication, media studies, internet studies, leadership studies, and – indeed – gastronomic tourism. Fingerprints of these qualifications mark and texture the context of this article, to lift the volume on the soundscapes of scholarship. I have seen tragedy, injustice, ridicule and bullying in my academic career. I have heard a lot more. As I have moved around the world, working in ten universities in four countries, this academic life has been punctuated by despair, fear, confusion, profound instability, and living out of suitcases for years. Every job I have attained, I have been lied to through the appointment process. My household belongings have remained in storage for a large chunk of my adult life. Therefore, I am no hypocrite, sitting in a safe and tenured job in an elite university, offering commentary on the neoliberal university from a safe and embolden position. I have lived and worked at the (metaphoric) Beachy Head of academic life. The suicide capital of the United Kingdom, 'tourists' buy one way aeroplane tickets to Gatwick, board a train from the airport station to Eastbourne, and then walk to their death (Andrews, Jimura, & Dixon, 2019). With the rates of suicide (Okechukwu et al., 2022), burn out (Boamah et al., 2022), rage quitting (Montaudon et al., 2022), and quiet quitting (Morrison-Beedy, 2022) in higher education reaching visibility and the peer reviewed literature, the failures of our universities and the deaths these toxic cultures they have created – of ideas, of knowledge, hope, expertise, and evidence-driven decision making – are starting to be discussed.

With this hot, frightening and disturbing narrative of intellectual life in place, I hem the emotions and locate a different way of thinking about and through our universities and academic life. I am mobilizing multimodality in a distinctive way, acknowledging the great etymological trajectory of the concept through the work of Gunther Kress (2003). His focus on visuality, particularly in education, was transformative for many disciplines.

Conversely, I cut away some sensory experiences, and probe the transformation of meaning for academics as we are restructured, made redundant, become sick and are discarded from the workforce, and die. The sickness of our universities summons inelegant proxies, including the mental health challenges of PhD students (Evans et al., 2018), problematic leadership cultures (Brabazon, 2020; Brabazon, 2021), and the retraction of both the natural sciences and humanities, validating applied knowledge with the foundational disciplines discarded. To understand these troubling trajectories, this article summons key scholars of sound and communication to then probe the nature of sonic resistance for a multimodal future.

Schafer and the Soundscape

Raymond Murray Schafer died on August 14, 2021. Born in 1933, his intellectual life offers a powerful shaping of the auditory academic. He moved the mind furniture of multiple scholarly generations through his World Soundscape Project (Truax, 2023). This focus on soundscape matters, as it cuts away myriad sensory experiences to consider how sound creates a sense of place. Schafer was a writer and composer, interested in the formulation of a sonic ecology, connecting the maker of the sound with the sound made. He called for experimental music or "Ear Cleaning" (Schafer, 1967) and promoted the development of what he termed the "Thinking Ear" (Schafer, 1988). This phrase is integral to the argument of this article. In disciplinary terms, the Thinking Ear requires activating sonic studies, acoustics, psychoacoustics, sound engineering, media, communication and cultural studies, and noise studies.

This is key component of the Canadian history of ideas. Schafer was born in Sarnia, Ontario, and studied at the University of Toronto. It was his work at Simon Fraser University through the 1960s, probing the soundscape, that would be his first major intervention in knowledge. This innovation was followed at the end of the decade with the trope of "schizophonia" (1969), probing what emerges when a sound is separated from the source of the sound. When sonic signifiers and environments are disconnected, this independence enables the potential for restitching sounds into a different context. Steven Feld described this process as schismogenesis (1994, pp. 265-271). For Baudrillard, he summoned "floating signifiers" that activate the re-representation of the simulacrum (Baudrillard, 2001). Laclau confirmed the distinction between an empty signifier and a floating signifier (2005). This is an undulation of disconnection and reconnection of text and context, sound and source, signifier and referent. While Schafer focused on the horizontal movements of sonic signifiers through diverse landscapes, Baudrillard added height through the cascading simulacra, with signifiers moving vertically through the real, representation and simulacrum (Brabazon, 2010; Brabazon & Redhead, 2013).

Digitization has transformed the theorizations of sound. Tracking the movement

of sonic signifiers in the research literature has been displaced and marginalized through the digital screens that dominate our lives. Gunther Kress – in his theorizations of multimodality – mobilized a visual imperative (2004). Sound was a secondary medium and platform for multimodal theorizing through the 21st century. That is why it is appropriate that this article returns to two important Canadian scholars from the 20th century to locate new pathways and trajectories for sound in revising the reverberations in and beyond digitization. Appropriately therefore, one of Schafer's keynotes for the 12th International Congress on Sound and Vibration in 2005, and published in 2009, was titled, "I have never seen a sound" (Schafer, 2009). Beginning in 2010, World Listening Day has been held on Schafer's birthday (World Listening Day 2023). The question is how to transpose Schafer's tuning of the world into the inelegant and brutalizing score of the contemporary university, to block the easy visuality of dashboards, key performance indicators, excel-generated columns predicting growth in student numbers and income, and lush promotion documents. We enact ear cleaning to summon the Thinking Ear (Schafer, 1988).

For those (of us) that learn and work in our universities, we are what Schafer describes as "earwitnesses" (1993, p. 17) to the changing relationships between information and knowledge, teaching and learning, research and ignorance, and social justice and neoliberalism. Crucially, these soundscapes of difficult, unpopular and underfunded research are not foregrounded. The challenges of gritty, post-Covid, first year teaching are not discussed. Social justice has been reduced to EDI (Equity, Diversity, Inclusivity), rarely speaking the words behind those letters and placing them into meaningful and transformative contexts. Researchers of higher education do not possess the sonic literacy to interpret fear, redundancy and loss. Quiet quitting (Lawless, 2023) is much more common than rage quitting (Caterine, 2020). Through restructure after restructure, colleagues are discarded and their expertise maligned. Ponder the seething silence and jutting, brutalizing anger in response to institutional inaction from decades of sexual harassment. Consider the corrosive 'acceptability' of – and consent to - research misconduct, appropriating the research of others, and adding authors to publications with which they had minimal involvement (Penders & Shaw, 2020).

These losses, brutalizing injustices and seething silences nestle in our institutions, rarely rising to dominance in the corporate university soundtrack. But if we listen with consciousness, then we summon that Thinking Ear (Schafer, 1988) and recognize the alternative soundmarks of our time and place. Therefore what – to cite Schafer - are the "sounds that matter" (1993)? Sounds are so pervasive, and the sonic literacy to decode them so unsophisticated, that this gap blocks the structured or scaffolded development of sonic literacies in the context of auditory cultures. Sounds grant a sense of place, and sense in a place. Ponder the sonic interventions in our lives: wind, rain, traffic, the pings that announce the arrival of emails, kitchen equipment whirring, and sound leaking from televisions and computers. Sounds are deeply rooted in our surroundings and build the

layers for our identity. They punctuate buildings, workplaces, streets and family life. We learn about expectations and consequences through sound.

Formal educational structures like schools and universities are geared to develop literacies in managing print, text and artefacts we can see. In opening our ears to other rhythms, melodies, intonations and textures in the sonic palette, researchers and citizens see that sound creates a shape and architecture in our environment that is fragile, changeable and under-researched. Through sound, citizens and scholars discover systems and structures of belonging, inclusion and exclusion. Soundscapes reveal layers of sound that operate like the textures of skin. They are uneven, delicate, and create spaces of separation and difference. While visual media are implicated in debates about representation, race, gender and generation, there are more subtle and perhaps more damaging modes of displacement and marginalization that emerge from the waves of distinction created and perpetuated through sound.

Soundscapes describe a more random and accidental alignment of sound and landscape. The consequences of these supposed accidental alignments are that we gather most of our information about reality, truth and life through our eyes as they flick over the visual landscape. But listening can also be crucial to survival. Soundscapes speak of alternatives, offering different sorts of belonging. Kelman argues for what he terms "disciplined listening" (2010), where humans shut away visual semiotic systems to understand the environment through sound. This is a powerful phrase because our ear is on the side of our face. This is symbolic of how we think about sound. The physical ear has some skin and ligament on the outside of our face, but penetrates deeply in our head to provide rare, sonic information. The ear is one of the few spots in our body that is always open to the air. So many media platforms close our body to its environment. But just as the camera changed how we see, the phonograph, cassette systems and MP3-enabled platforms altered the limits of our hearing and listening, and deliver new sonic opportunities to our body, through our ears. We move between reason and resonance.

Citizens and scholars do not learn about sound naturally. We must intervene and create a sonic lab in our personal and professional lives, to take our eyes away and erase the domination of sight. Aural life is different from our visual life. Summoning personal and professional narratives, how would identity or relationships change if we focused on the information provided by our ears rather than our eyes? After the industrial revolution in the 19th century and the growth of both urbanization and cities, it was difficult to locate silence. Silence is rare. Actually, the right to be silent is a great statement of power. When noise and sound are everywhere, silence is the statement of power. But silence remains defiant. Its power is clear. Its meaning is not. Therefore, when silence is interrupted, the meanings from auditory culture can commence.

Education for the Ear

The challenge is moving from Schaefer's tuning of the world to the tunings of higher education. Oral and aural literacy remains important when determining who belongs and who is excluded. Historiography, narrative inquiry, storytelling and storying are important to this analysis. Oral history transformed the conceptual foundation of evidence, testimony, fact, and value. While most discrimination is visual - we see a difference and judge it - sound operates differently from vision in its discriminatory capacity. There are differences between what can be seen and heard. Firstly, we can only see in a straight line in front of our eyes. Hearing operates around corners. Also, sight is binarized: we can either see or not see. In comparison, hearing is odd. Listening becomes more sensitive through concentration. We listen with greater intensity and clarity through a focus on loops or cycles. We can hear the chewing of gum from the person sitting next to us, but also the rumble and jutting of a car driving over a speed hump at speed. We can listen to sounds that are close and far away – concurrently. This is different from seeing. We can either see something or we cannot. We do not have earlids. If we do not want to see something, then we can simply close our eyelids. But we do not have earlids. Sounds enter our body and there are few ways to stop them. If we do not recognize a sound and are not literate in it, then it is termed noise. Noise is the description of a sound for which we do not hold literacy. Lacking earlids, strategies are required to limit the foreign, unrecognizable sounds (noises) that enter the environment.

The neoliberal university reveals the sounds of survival. These accompany the sounds of desperation, fear, vulnerability and compliance. These are the silences that mask fear, rage, confusion and refusal. What is the response to strategic plans, KPIs and stretch targets? What is the response to the irrational, meaningless and irrelevant? We need to open our ears to alternatives. Through the pandemic, visual media proliferated. Schools, universities and businesses continued to expand and enhance digitized visuality, including online lectures, Zoom meetings, Teams meetings and Skype meetings (Brabazon, Hunter, & Quinton, 2020). Sound-only media were displaced and silenced, as visual platforms became a synchronous inelegant proxy for 'normality.' This pandemic 'reality' and 'normality' has a much longer history, and this legacy is captured by - and shaped by - the Canadian communications professor, Harold Innis. Born in 1894 and dying in 1952, his life saw the movement from newspaper culture to television culture, and the development of a national communication system that could move ideas internationally. The education system in which Innis taught and researched was dominated by British born and educated academics, who patronized Canada and Canadians. Innis was the first academic who stood up to this mode of learning and organizing knowledge and valued the Canadian academic and the Canadian voice on its own terms, rather than as a poor relation of the British. He was – as Watson's biography described him – a "marginal man" (2006). He made that

marginality resonant, powerful and potent.

Innis was a career academic, working at an elite university, the University of Toronto. From this stable career foundation, he created his "Staples Thesis," confirming that the Canadian culture and economy was shaped and organized by the exploitation and exportation of coal, fur, wheat, lumber and fish. This thesis and argument were the foundation for thirty years of Canadian economic history (Easterbrook & Watkins, 1984). Yet from this scale of influence – creating a transformation and intervention in Canadian history – he moved into a tangential and emerging field of communication. This was the act of scholarly courage. Unfortunately, this 'late style' intellectual courage (Said, 2006) is marginalized and undermined through the emphasis and focus on the later members of the Toronto School of Communication Theory. These subsequent generations of scholars built on the work of Innis and Eric Havelock (1986). The best known are Marshall McLuhan and Edmund Snow Carpenter. James Carey, through his remarkable publishing career, was able to enact some historical repair work and re-place Innis and his influence on communication history (Carey, 1992).

This research – built on Innis's courage and innovation - was important for Canadian universities and created a definitive space and voice for Canadian scholars, beyond the double colonization from the United Kingdom and the United States. Importantly, this man who revalued the role of sound and the ear in life, living and reconfiguring power, was also a strong advocate for the role of universities as independent institutions that enabled knowledge, citizens and citizenship (Innis, 1951, pp. 83-89). Early embers of this resistive and empowering project were present in Innis's Master of Arts degree, completed at McMaster University. Having returned from the war and attempting to understand what he had seen, his thesis was titled, "The Returned Soldier." This thesis – from which he graduated in 1918 – presented the public policies that would be necessary for returned soldiers to understand the personal consequences of the war (Innis, 1918). When reading this thesis, which has been made publicly available by McMaster, the two rivers of Innis's academic life can be forged. We see the economic imperative to enact considered public policy change, but also a 'plea for time' to understand the granularity of experiences through a global event such as World War One. While his PhD at the University of Chicago was written on the more conventional subject of the Canadian Pacific Railway, later becoming a scholarly monograph (1971), it is important to remember and validate the alternative intellectual filaments that were revealed in this master's degree. At Chicago, he was influenced by Thorstein Veblen and his critiques of consumerism (2005). Innis logged his influence and innovation in his Essays in Canadian Economic History (2017). While Innis appeared to research conventional and conservative subjects through much of his career, the innovations of his master's thesis and exposure to Veblen provided a pathway to his innovations in communication theory.

At its most basic, Innis investigated the relationship between the media of

communication and the configuration of identity. Suddenly in his life and career, he became interested in incredibly large social variables, such as time and space. He became focused on the notion of bias (Innis, 2008). This was not – overtly – political bias. He argued that different societies have been dominated by different media of communication: from clay, and papyrus, to parchment and paper. Each medium creates a different monopoly of and on knowledge. A society that balances space-oriented media and time-oriented media will be successful in both space and time. But if the bias is not recognized then communication media create the limits of what is possible to experience.

Bias is used with great distinction and distinctiveness in Innis's research. The trope has affinities with a bias-cut dress. The fabric of the frock is cut in a particular way. The bias is cut in one direction and not another. When Innis uses bias, it was not a political definition, or assuming that the views were affiliated in a particular direction, but that the communication system was cut and organized in a particular way, encouraging some modes of thinking and discarding others. This cut encourages a particular mode or form of communication and makes other modes or forms more difficult. Innis, in his use of bias, described emphasis. Innis studied the Greek and Roman Empires. The Roman empire was based on written communication which commanded power and respect. Oral communication maintains cultural practices. Written communication maintains power. In the Roman Empire, laws were written accurately and dispatched around the empire. Oral societies embed knowledge in a community, that are then preserved by particular members of a community. In Ancient Greece, epic poems conveyed the great stories. They were shared through the community, remembered and continued to move through time. Innis called this "the epic technique" (1951). The choice of media influenced the type of empire constructed. Innis was interested in the senses: what happens when a culture is organized for the ear rather than the eye? What makes Innis important is this sensory component, that has created an array of post-disciplinary intellectual streams. The question of relevance to this article is, what do we lose from our society when all communication systems value the eye and the visual? This is not an abstract question. We are living in that system. We are living in this bias.

Innis's bias of communication is not only a theory of culture, but a theory of power and theory of political organization. It is a theory of technology. Space biased media prioritize the eye and prioritizes the individual. These platforms include paper, books, and electronic communications. They expand ideas through space, with attendant military power, and impose changes, specifically changes from the centre of an empire. Time biased media prioritizes the ear and prioritizes the group or community. It incorporates verbal communication, and papyrus, with preservation of important and intimate ideas enabled in a small space but over a long time. Continuity and decentralization are valued. There is an emphasis on collective, communal and celebrative media of communication.

For those of us living eighty years after Innis's death. every new communication

and media technology has increased the bias of space. Ideas, people and money have moved over increasingly large terrain, and at faster speeds. Space has been commodified. Money is made when ideas and products move through space. Obviously, this expansion has been attended by military expansion through endless wars. Political expansion follows a soldier's boots. Commercial growth emerges through online banking and ecommerce. The question is what scholars and citizens have lost through this heavy dominance of space biased media.

The (post)disciplinary alignments between Innis and Schafer are clear. Innis realized the value of sound, the ear, in the maintenance of culture and community. Schafer confirmed the cost to education and our lives if we continued to prioritize the screen. Schafer stated that, "we will not argue for the priority of the ear. In the West the ear gave way to the eye as the most important gatherer of information about the time of the Renaissance" (1993, p. 21). The solidification of power and hierarchy through the proliferation of digital visuality followed this specific ordering of the Empire of the Senses (Howes, 2021).

Sound is promiscuous. It moves in unusual and unpredictable ways. Sound and sonic media activate slower pathways to meaning. Neoliberal education is fuelled by the speed granted through screen-based visuality. This is accelerated modernity, to cite Steve Redhead (2006). The drivers for the neoliberal university are Key Performance Indicators, learning outcomes, graduate attributes, stretch targets and impact. Sonic literacies are slow. It is also a different way of engaging with information. It defamiliarizes the relationship with information in a visual age. Sonic media create a more fluid and complex alignment between information and the ear of the listener. Meaning is formed through the relationship between form and content, signifier and signified. But the meanings that are possible in relation to visual signifieds are less diverse. Eyes flick through text. But when listening, these sounds occupy real time and slows the construction of meaning. We must listen at the pace of the sound. For difficult intellectual work that is abstract, sonic media platforms are often an option, slowing the students down and encouraging alternative modes of thought.

Building on Innis and Schafer, my argument in the book *Digital Dieting* (Brabazon, 2016) was that when teachers cut digital information (such as visual material), then we learn differently. What if less is more? What if we gain more meaning from fewer media? There are positive consequences when using our senses in different ways to create distinctive environments for listening, learning and thinking. Listening requires effort. Decoding the unknown and inaccessible into the realm of interpretation and understanding is difficult. Listening has a history and it changes. Each new musical technology creates artificial ear lids to develop a new intimacy between the self and sound. As digitization has proliferated in our daily lives, sound is increasingly mediated, filtered and channelled through visual media. Uncomfortable or inconvenient sounds, noises and music are filtered

or ignored by overlaying other sounds.

Sound and sonic media are integral to our resistance to the neoliberal university. This "audio academia" to use the powerful phrase from Mack Hagood (2021), asks that we as academics reflect on academic media, probing and problematizing genres and interfaces, formats and practices. Audio academia includes podcasts, audiobooks, and online lectures. This proliferation of genres is important, moving beyond peer reviewed publications to increase the readership – or the listenership – for our work. Audio Journals are increasing in number (Groth & Samson, 2016). The challenges of digitization summon affordances through sound. But further, these experimental audio journals can capture, store and carry innovations in sonic media, fleshing out the future of the auditory academic. Sound creates connection through a diverse, unpredictable and international listenership.

The audio academic can offer alternative pathways through a post-Covid screen-based teaching and learning culture, and Zoom-based administration. This reorganization is particularly significant for scholars, recognizing Mack Hagood's powerful phrase that is the foundation for the work in this article: "audio academia" (2021). This innovative mode of communication for scholars increases the complexity of the content within the phrase "academic media." New genres, platforms, interface, formats and applications emerge. The developments through podcasting, audiobooks and online lectures wedge open the relationship between publications and creative work. This is a new way to summon original research in original ways. The dispassionate singularity of academic identity is displaced as a diversity of accents, bodies, classes and nationalities are squeezed through the vocal cords. This new auditory academic embodies the research, configuring alternative arguments, evidence and illustrations. Noting these innovations in our present, the article concludes by summoning our multimodal future and a trajectory from the neoliberal university.

The Multimodal Future from Our Neoliberal Present

Our experience of the world is multisensory. Yet this complexity in the online world is reified to the visual. In David Howes's *Empire of the Senses* (2021), visuality is the dominant lens to the world. Noting the intentionality of that metaphor, the question is how we as citizens and students are socialized into a desire and imperative to listen to learn, and to listen to speak. The screen is not the world. As Innis confirmed, it is a bias of communication that flattens and restricts not only our world, but our world view. It is also clear that the digitized screen restricts the parameters of knowledge, and how an academic works and is understood. As Lynn Harter confirmed, "scholars read and write. Citation chains compose bodies of research, linking authors and advancing theory. This is my home. I love the written word … That said, conventional research reports are limited in their ability to register the visceral experience of suffering and resilience" (2019, p. 126)

Ideologies of certainty, rigour and clarity follow and marinade the written word. Expertise follows writing and is amplified through references, bibliographies, and the use of the third person. Sound is much more fluid and liminal. It sits. It moves like water. It flows. It floods. It is hot. It summons and shreds emotion. It can carry - or flood - expertise.

With the proliferation of platforms, the question is how the diversity of floating signifiers are controlled and managed, particularly when enabling teaching and learning, and research. The neoliberal university, for much of the last twenty years, has promoted Fordist learning management systems and specific metrics that promote corporatized academic publishing cultures, such as through Elsevier and Springer. It is important when configuring a different path through the neoliberal university that intentions, outcomes and agency are activated and actioned. Therefore, multimodality is the key trope of our time, ordering the relationship between information, platform and audience. When considering dissemination protocols beyond the ranking of journals and the validating of problematic citation metrics, it is crucial to consider who is the audience for the research. This audience arches beyond 'stakeholders.' It is a group or community that holds, shares and builds the literacies to decode, understand, embed and embody the research. Upon selecting an audience, the next task is to select a media platform that is appropriate for connecting with that community. From the audience specification and platform selection, information, knowledge and research can be tempered, translated and transformed.

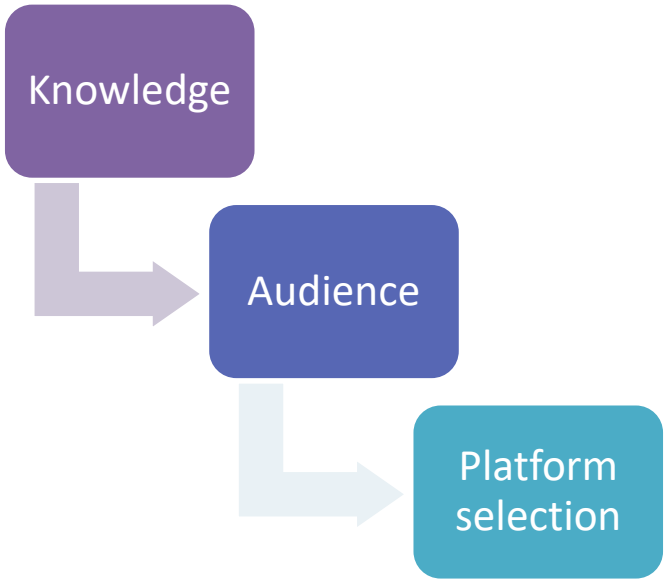

Figure 1: The stages of dissemination (Tara Brabazon)

The neoliberal university retracts diverse realities, pathways and trajectories. Proliferated by Margaret Thatcher's TINA ideology – There is no alternative – the capacity to recognize and validate alternatives to Key Performance Indicators, Journal Rankings, University Rankings, Scimago, Rate My Professor and Graduate Attributes is pushed down, minimized, ridiculed, dismissed and discounted. But sound does not abide by the binaries of success and failure in neoliberal vision statements and operational plans. Indeed, Schafer's soundscapes bleed through teaching and learning environments. We hear alternatives before we see it. We listen to a difference before we recognize it and become literate in sound through immersion in the alternatives, the noise of difference.

Schafer discussed "the thinking ear" (1988). Paul Warburton – over three decades later – validated "Ear Training" (2023). Significantly, Warburton's book was independently published, outside of corporate academic publishing. While Warburton focused on the role of ear training to "enhances the ability to perceive and comprehend the nuances of music" (2023, 2), his phrase is provocative, particularly when summoning, listening to and valuing alternative stories, narratives and realities that are speaking loudly outside the discourses of the neoliberal university. This ear training allows us to hear narratives, build communication systems, and rebuild a different "sensorial world" (Warburton, 2023, 4). Sounds can rarely be described, encoded and decoded effectively into alternative textual systems. A written note on manuscript paper occupies a different weight and credibility to the playing of that note on a piano, tuned drum, ukulele or trumpet.

The question is how academics build sonic literacy, ensuring that a "thinking ear" gains "ear training." This is particularly important when activating Innis's theorizations of the bias of communication. The written word captures the views of the powerful and disseminates these ideas widely. Therefore, to transform power, meaning and purpose in higher education, intervention is required. Warburton argued that these alternative soundscapes are shaped by soundmarks. These were described as "sounds that carry a particular significance for members of a community or that have come to partially define the community itself" (2023, 24). This somatic knowledge – that which is learned through the body – is then mediated through symbolic communication systems such as language. Soundmarks are tenuous, delicate and dexterous. This mediated knowledge cuts the cloth of Innis's bias in a different direction. Validating soundmarks and somatic knowledge is an epistemological intervention in higher education, transforming the nature of knowing, and methodologies of how we know.

A library book exists if it is never read. So does a university's strategic plan. But the listener is integral to the creation of a sonic event. A soundscape is summoned by the sounds available to the ear in a particular place and time. The sounds that pass through our ears and are heard move through sonic enculturations built through a lifetime of listening. Current listening is always tethered strongly to prior listening. Therefore, and summoning Roland Barthes, sounds retheorize the real, activating alternative spaces beyond the

empirical, that dances around scientific methodologies (2012). Sonic proof is rarely validated by empowered institutions like media organizations, the policy or the military to the same epistemological standard as a photograph, mobile phone or CCTV footage, even though we know the filters and editing that can be enacted. Sound is different. It is a retheorization of the real. While literature and history were transformed by empirical and scientific renderings of proof through the 19th century, what seems real, may not be verified by scientific methods. This is Barthes and his "reality effect" and "referential illusion" (1968). The real is documented and granted authenticity by making connections to that which is outside the narrative.

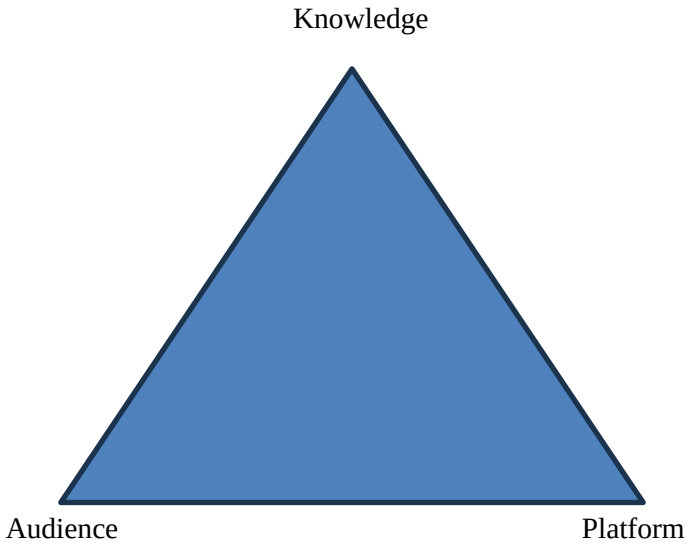

Figure 2: Reorganizing disintermediated dissemination (Tara Brabazon)

When this relationship between audience, knowledge and platform is configured through a textbook, then knowledge is reified, packaged and corporatized to be sold to undergraduate students. Soundmarks can rarely be sold in this way. But the "Thinking Ear" offers a new way to summon media literacy and information literacy. Multimodality – and multimodal decisions – become overt, clear, precise, accountable and transparent.

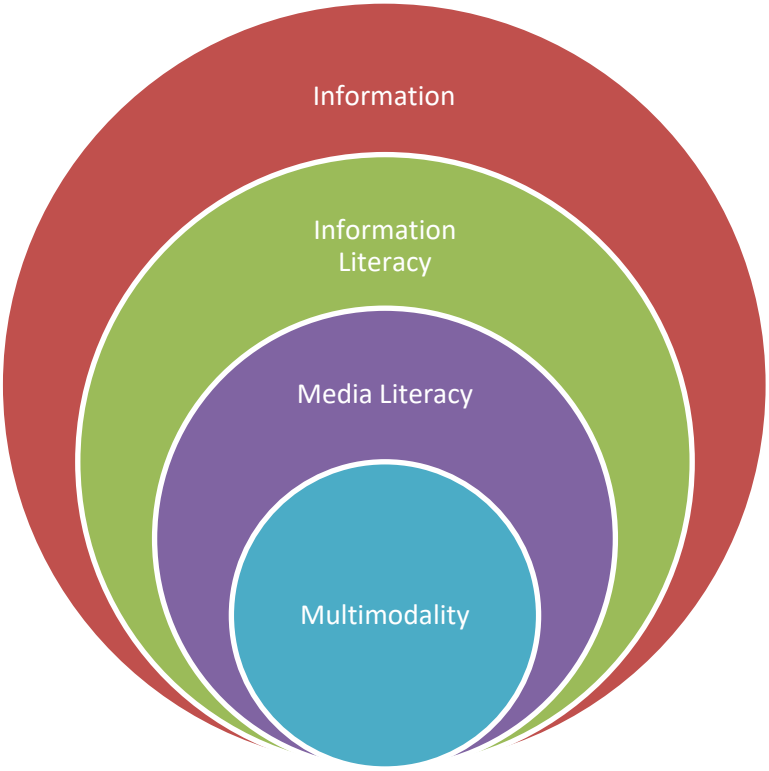

Figure 3: Reshaping information and media literacies (Tara Brabazon)

Multimodality activates the consciousness of the platform choices that are available, and how they are rendered effective for particular audiences. Multimodality requires the building and activation of an information scaffold. An information scaffold is like a ladder. Citizens – and learners - take one step, then another and then another, and it gets us to where we need to go. Literacies are developmental. They begin where we are comfortable but move citizens a step at a time to more complex ideas. It takes one mode of knowledge and deploys that already existing expertise in a mode to improve the expertise in other modes. The interface loans us literacy, while we are developing the connections between signifiers and signified in the sonic communication system. Through multimodality, strengths and weaknesses are identified, and we move from everyday literacy to critical literacy. Therefore, Harold Innis's bias of communication is challenged and transformed when considering the development of an information scaffold.

Multimodality allows citizens and learners to take one set of skills and abilities, understand how they are used in one mode, and then move them to another. It enables the configuration of how to operate in a multi-platform environment. It ensures that scholars can move between platforms with clarity and consciousness. Therefore, multimodality is

powerful and resonant for scholars creating alternative audiences and priorities in the contemporary university. Our reality – what we believe - is based on our interpretation of signifiers. We trust some signs and not others. Each of us maintains cues that we read as reliable or credible. The late Gunther Kress remains the key theorist of multimodality (2010), building on his social semiotic research with Robert Hodge in the 1980s (1988). Through the 1990s Kress became fascinated with how images worked. By the 2000s, multimodality became the focus: how to determine the best use of media platforms for specific audiences. He remained focused on the best use of visuality, with sonic platforms neglected.

Sound is different. It whispers. It convinces. It offers. Therefore the audio academic can be part of a quiet, careful revolution, in bringing quality information back to our public debates, and into our private lives. Those of us who work in Universities have been given the great endowment of shaping knowledge and guiding the best and brightest to become the best people they can be. But we do hold another role in public education, to disseminate the outcomes of our research, and make them more relevant in the process. Often – very often – universities are ignored by the media. Often – very often - the media are ignored by Universities. Our marketing, public relations and communication departments are either ridiculed or ignored for not doing enough or intervening in the 'proper' scholarly business of a university. But there is an important space to maneuver between the aloof scholar electronically tagged to the archive or the laboratory, and the gross prostitution of the university's function, selling our wares with a measure of desperation to 'industry partners.'

Universities matter a great deal to so many of us. They changed my life. They made my life. Gordon Graham, in his book *Universities: the recovery of an idea* (2002) explored the role of the contemporary institution negotiating between idealism and pragmatism. He asked whether it is possible to continue the Socratic role of asking unsettling questions. The importance of independence – in thought, approach and interpretation - is part of the public function of universities. It is perhaps through the Thinking Ear that the auditory academic is revealed. We must listen to these difficult questions to begin to answer them. This "acoustemology" (Sabol, 2013, p. 29) offers a way of thinking and being in an unjust present, while also creating the silence and investing in the voices to grant our universities with memory and purpose. We stimulate a new way of thinking, teaching and learning through sound. The challenge remains how we account for and are responsible for those ideas, students and scholars we have lost. Our Zombie Universities are haunted by all the alternative pathways that could have been taken, the voices that were not recognized, and the stories not told. This re-sounding of higher education history requires that the failures and errors and injustices are acknowledged and understood. As Carolyn Kane has confirmed, we maintain attention on waste, noise, the discarded and the unwanted (Kane, 2019).

Jacques Derrida asks that we – as scholars – ponder the power of repetition of our stories, and indeed problematize the notion of beginning and endings (1985). He asks that we "listen to it with another ear" (1985, p. 4). Let us summon Derrida's other ear. We exist in the afterlife of our zombie universities. The empirical is irrational. Facts are parked. Research is valued for the funding that it attracts rather than the outcomes that it summons. Teaching and learning are assessed through 'employable graduates' or 'graduate attributes.' These intellectual cul-de-sacs have dominated our universities for too long.

The neoliberal university can dominate our screens. The fightback begins through sound. Sonic media and auditory cultures are our future. Sonic research - spanning from sonic art, sonic architecture, oral history and soundscapes - enables what Schafer described as, "The recovery of positive silence" (1993, p.388). He wrote a book "about sounds that matter" (1993, p.23). Our task is to live educational lives curating the sounds that matter. Intentional listening practices enable new relationships between research and dissemination, research and preservation, podcasting and the public good. We will listen to our future before we see it.

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Biography

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