

... secrets objects share: Francisco Lopez and Paratactic Listening

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This presentation explores some of the paradoxes inherent in any effort to listen to *untitled #305 (seven nights)*, a fifty-six hour work of sound art by Francisco Lopez, first released in January 2013. I begin with a quasi-phenomenological account of some of the impossibilities inherent in approaching a work of this magnitude, a work that is also in itself nearly inaudible. I turn then to an analysis of Lopez's own provocative theoretical essays in which he launches a compelling critique of John Cage and develops (in the spirit of Pierre Schaeffer) a "purist, absolute conception" of "profound listening." Arguing that *sonic matter* has "its own phenomenological realm," Lopez insists that he defends sonic matter not "as an aesthetic or conceptual category, but as a *gate* to different worlds of perception, experience, and creation." To pursue these ideas further, I turn to Jean-Luc Nancy's important distinction between *listening* and *hearing* and to his insight that contemporary music "*makes us listen or restores us to listening.*" Elaborating Nancy's suggestion that the notion of the "subject" is linked to "timbre" as "the very resonance of the sonorous," I return to *untitled #305* and argue that Lopez's work offers us a privileged instance of how "listening is musical when it is music that listens to itself." Such listening involves, not a reassuring synthesis of the subject and its sonorous object, but an openness to the discontinuities inherent in the paratactic montage of resonating sonic matter.

References:

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Jonathan Scott Lee teaches philosophy at Colorado College in Colorado Springs. Working at the intersection of archaic Greek philosophy, late 20th century European philosophy, and psychoanalytic theory, he has written and published on John Cage, Pierre Boulez, Iannis Xenakis, Cecil Taylor, AMM, Jackson Mac Low, Giacinto Scelsi, Stéphane Mallarmé, Antonin Artaud, Spike Lee, Nancy Spero, Alvin Lucier, and Wolfgang Laib, among others. The author of a book on Jacques Lacan, Lee also writes music for small ensembles and is currently engaged in a book-length essay on the video and cinema work of Jean-Luc Godard as a form of philosophical insurgency.