

Audition Under Sensory Deprivation

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A: What's that sound?

B: Laughter—I think.

A: But whose?

B: No idea, though I hear that's how The Old Ones are invoked.

At the limits of auditory experience, something can still be heard: a “shadow sensation.”* When something is barely heard, the lack of sonic identity provokes multifarious hallucinations laced with abuse value. Dependant on sensory thresholds, stabilizing this encounter relies on “an opulent will to *imbalance*,”* forming out of a “dominant sensation of utter waste.”* “One must circumvent the one with nothing to lose, the emaciated expression, the spirit in entropy, for this scarcity gradually metamorphoses into an unsteady inclination—one that exaggerates proportions, that overdoses the mind and attracts the disoriented.”* Rather than a sensory overload, ubiquitous media constitute a generalized thinning out of auditory experience. For example, the (over)use of compression in nearly all public forms of sound dispersion defines a limited band of dynamic potential. Liminal shadow sensations seduce the listener to push through its aural boundaries, denying false binaries of what is inherent to or projected upon the (un)heard sound, unbinding frontiers formed out of habit and threatening aural traditions. Yet, this is not to unhinge the listener from reality; others are also listening. Gaining traction on the field of sound—even when unheard—rests on a shared listening experience, else what we hear is solely our own au/oto-acoustic emission.

*All quotations from taken from Jason Bahbak Mohaghegh's *New Literature and Philosophy of the Middle East: The Chaotic Imagination* page 139.