

Lorenzo Ferrarini and Nicola Scaldaferrì, *Sonic Ethnography. Identity, Heritage and Creative Research Practice in Basilicata, Southern Italy*, Paperback, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 224 pp., 2020, ISBN 9781526152000.

Lorenzo Ferrarini and Nicola Scaldaferrì focus their attention on the role of sound-making and listening practices in the formation of local identities in the southern Italian region of Basilicata. Entitled *Sonic Ethnography*, the volume offers a deeply ethnographic, multimedia examination of the acoustic domain and acoustic communities; it is particularly concerned with answering «interdisciplinary calls to engage sound seriously» (p. 1). Rather than present their work solely through text, Ferrarini and Scaldaferrì support their investigation by engaging with multiple media forms – texts, images and sounds – each offering independent narratives.

This multifaceted work by Ferrarini, a Lecturer in Visual Anthropology at the University of Manchester, and Scaldaferrì, an Associate Professor of Ethnomusicology at the University of Milan, is based on a long-standing engagement with the field, spanning some thirty years. The book is the result of a dialogic work between the two researchers and arises from a close collaborative relationship – an uncommon feature in modern ethnographic fieldwork. The volume presents their diverse research methodologies, including collaborative ethnographic fieldwork, music-making, photo-ethnography, and respective creative practices. Emerging from the stunning work of the Ethnomusicology and Visual Anthropology Lab (LEAV) at the University of Milan, the book's contents are also open access (free) and accessible online (an important and welcome feature, especially in these times) on the Manchester University Press' website; the audio tracks are available on Soundcloud only.

Rich not only in text, but also in photographic images and sound recordings, *Sonic Ethnography* is a work which «encourage[s] the reader-listener to play and experiment with the juxtaposition of photographs, sounds and texts that are presented in this book» (p. 19). The unorthodox structure characterising the volume underscores the «fragmentary and multisensory nature of experience» (p. 18), asking the reader-listener to create their own path while experiencing multiple independent (and multimedia) narratives through multiple medias – probably the book's greatest challenge.

The eight chapters in the volume can be distinguished between those based on ethnographic research (chapter 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5) and those which elaborate its methodology (Introduction, chapter 6 and 7); six “sound-chapters”, each a composition of different sound recordings, provide a complementary narrative.

The first five ethnographic chapters span a broad spectrum of themes – the ritual function and meaning of sounds, the role of social control in sonic devotional practices,

and cultural and heritage policies; these are investigated through ethnographic examples of ‘soundful cultural performances’ in Basilicata – including the *Maggio* in Accettura, the *Campanaccio* in San Mauro Forte, the Madonna del Pollino festival, and several Lucanian wheat festivals. The discourse is organised into three main formats, each depending on a different relationship between text and image: first, “images and text complementarity”, in which text and images are presented separately, as they put forward different types of arguments (chapter 1 and 2); second, “images in dialogue with the text”, in which images are embedded in the text, although their role is not primarily illustrative (chapter 3 and 5); and the third format, in which the “visual narrative” is dominant, while the text provides further background to the photographic essay (chapter 4).

Each sound-chapter has been designed by Scaldaferrì as an «autonomous sound narrative to be listened to in parallel to reading the text and viewing the photographs, but also before or afterwards» (p. 17). Two main representational formats are present, resulting from two different sound-editing principles: first, “descriptive sequences” (sound-chapter 1, 3, 4 and 6); and second, “evocative and creative compositions” (sound-chapter 2 and 5). The sound sequences reflect the influence of French experimental electronic music (*musique concrète*, electroacoustic music) and soundscape composition (p. 17). The diverse sources making up each sound composition include: musical performances recorded during the ethnomusicological research; soundscapes and soundwalks; and archival materials. A complete listening guide to these materials, including compositional choices, is provided at the end of the volume. However, the technical process behind the editing of each sound-chapter is not fully addressed.

The two final chapters address more directly several methodological issues, including the authors’ own practice and positionality, and the impact of their research on the various communities. Chapter 6, along with its corresponding sound-chapter, testify to Scaldaferrì’s long-lasting engagement as a *zampogna* player in diverse situations in Basilicata. Sounds (and images) function to support the methodological discourse outlined in the text: they exemplify a way to do research in sound that includes interactions with local communities, collaboration with contemporary artists, and creative practice – a positionality constantly shifting between musicianship and scholarship. This methodology requires a «performative conception of research» (p. 153) whose outcome and forms of representation go «beyond traditional textual forms» (p. 166). The volume comes full circle with Chapter 7, where Ferrarini re-traces the photographic choices made for this book. Photographs are discussed in their relationship «with other images, with people in the field, with texts and with sounds» (p. 171). Through a self-reflexive lens, Ferrarini explains how, in order to «photograph as an anthropologist» (p. 177), one must engage in long-term relationships with the photographed persons and communities and develop a relational photographic practice (p. 180).

Ferrarini and Scaldaferrì bring a large field of scholarship to bear on their investigation, but the core of their approach is represented by a «shift towards listening as a re-

lational process» (p. 6) which, emerging from Steven Feld's "acoustemology" and in the wake of the aural turn in the social sciences, is increasingly prevalent within the fields of sound studies, sensory anthropology, and ethnomusicology. By seeking to go beyond the fundamental premises of an anthropology of sound, the authors focus on «what sound does, and on what it allows people to do» (p. 5) through a listening practice which also means «attending to histories of listening in which forms of power, ritual space and time, and values of authenticity all sound out simultaneously in layers» (p. 6).

Cutting across all these fields and as the result of its close collaboration between the researchers, this approach results in multiple forms of representation, most of which are centred on non-textual discourses. In a final afterward, Steven Feld suggests a mode of engagement with the book that prioritises listening to the sounds and viewing the photographs, leaving the reading for later. Indeed, such use of the book's multiple contents produces a vivid synaesthetic experience. The reading contributes to finding common threads linking the diverse media presented in each chapter, leaving the reader-listener to experience a unique sense of discovery, awareness, and surprise – something that would have been missing if text was instead prioritised.

This book is worthy of attention for those interested in the study of sound and listening (resonance, sound ecologies, power relationship), identity (diaspora, memory), and heritage policies (invented tradition, cultural tourism, festivalisation, nostalgia). It contributes to the further development of study of visual and sound ethnography by centring its discourse on creative research practice. In engaging the discourse over heritagisation in the Southern Italian region of Basilicata, it critically continues the legacy of De Martino's ethnographic research in the region – one of the foundation blocks of modern Italian anthropological and ethnomusicological scholarship. This book fully engages with the provision of an interdisciplinary co-production over text, visual and sound media; it requires the reader-listener to become an active agent in linking diverse types of media, while revealing the connections between them. It is this impressive feat, I believe, which allows Ferrarini and Scaldaferrì's book to lay significant groundwork for other researchers, contributing to the development of still unusual forms of research representation. We can look forward to seeing more of the same in the near future.

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