The Bright Sound Behind the Sound:
Real-World Music, Symbolic Discourse and the Foregrounding of Imagination

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Abstract

This paper responds to a recent article by American sound artist Kim Cascone in which he asserts that the presentation of environmental recordings as 'sonic art' is often crucially lacking in some form of 'soul' or vitality. Cascone suggests that it is the responsibility of an artist working with real-world sounds to enter a more imaginative engagement than precedents within the field (and within the wider field of sonic arts in general) have historically presented. The paper briefly explores historical impulse to deprecate the importance of imagination, along with the imaginative implications of discourse around what Katharine Norman (1996) calls 'real-world music'. From here, we explore the relationship between imagination and sound in two pieces of sonic art and argue that one response to Cascone's call for an imaginative turn can be found within the idea of the 'symbol' as codified in Romantic poetic discourse (after Kathleen Raine's reading of Coleridge). The paper explores the way in which a cultivation of an 'imaginative perception' can be used to elucidate such symbols in a compositional context and relates the creative and interpretive use of 'sound-symbols' to both Voss' methodology of the imagination (2009) and Thomas' multidimensional spectrum of imagination (2014).

Keywords: Imagination, Sound Symbols, Romanticism, Real-World Music, Listening, Creative Process

Foregrounding the imagination

The American sound artist Kim Cascone writes of the experience of a hypothetical sound recordist in his 2014 paper *Transcendigital Imagination*. In summary, the recordist takes his equipment to a forest, during which time he stops, motionless, and stands immersed in the ambience of the place, while his microphone captures the sound. Upon returning to his studio to play back the field recordings:

> …a puzzled expression flashes over the face of the recordist. The sound of the forest now seems two-dimensional, flat, lifeless, corpse-like. Although the sound is technically perfect, it lacks the enchantment experienced in the forest. Baffled, the recordist twists at some knobs on the mixing board searching for something missing in the sound – the soul of the forest. (Cascone, 2014)

It is Cascone's hypothesis that 'technology reduces the creative process to a set of primitive actions […] that, when patched together, form a workflow which produces a cultural artefact' (ibid.), but such an artefact may fail to express the crucial personal, phenomenological or experiential dimension of our relationship with the world: something which cannot be captured in terms of acoustic waves resonating a microphone diaphragm.[1] To create more affecting or meaningful artefacts Cascone suggests that we need to move beyond a preoccupation with the technological workflows that are associated with sonic arts and music production, and 'resurrect' a mode of 'imaginative perception'. This done, Cascone proposes that 'back in the studio, the narrative re-emerges from a palimpsest of synchronicities hidden in the recordings [and] technology recedes into the background as imagination becomes foregrounded.' (ibid.)

Elsewhere, Cascone refers to the perceptual state necessary for this endeavour as '*mundus imaginalis*, imaginal perception, active imagination, subtle realm, participatory consciousness' (ibid.).[2] Such a statement evidently sets Cascone

apart from many of the established discourses in the sonic arts, which have often developed broadly from a Schaefferian attitude of phenomenological reduction, coupled with a drive for experimental technological research.

This paper begins by examining the historical impulse to deprecate the importance of imagination, particularly of the active variety, within the realm of the sonic arts, before turning to listening frameworks that consider imaginative response, and the implications of discourse around 'real-world music'. From here, we explore the relationship between imagination and sound in two pieces of sonic art and argue that one approach to Cascone's 'transcendigital' turn can be found within the idea of the symbol as codified in Romantic and 'traditional' poetic discourse. The paper further explores the way in which a cultivation of an 'imaginative perception' can be used to define, reveal or elucidate such symbols in a compositional context and also relates the creative and interpretive use of symbols to both Voss' methodology of the imagination (Voss 2009) and Thomas' multidimensional spectrum of imagination (Thomas 2014).

Interested enchantment: The listening imagination and the sonic arts

While establishing a context for his proposition of a multidimensional spectrum of imagination, Nigel J. T. Thomas observes that the discourse surrounding the imagination has gone through phases of inflation (e.g. 'the once thrilling hyperboles of the Romantics') and deflation (e.g. as a counter-reaction to the Romantics own turn against the 'Age of Reason') (Thomas 2014, pp. 134-5). Thomas highlights the tendency of 20th-century analytic philosophers to define imagination as a capacity for entertaining propositions, rather than having any connection to the common usage of the term to express '[mental] imagery, hallucination, dreaming, interpretive perception, etc.' (ibid., pp.163-6). Despite the lengthy historical comingling of the musical and imaginative, an essentially propositional conception of imagination is also the assumption encountered in dominant dialogues surrounding sonic arts and

electroacoustic music, which owe much to the phenomenological theories of Pierre Schaeffer, themselves developed to approach the 'problem' of how one should apprehend the radically different forms of acoustic art that he and his colleagues were developing in the domain of *musique concrète* from the late 1940s onward. *Musique concrète* was a technologically mediated art form, realised via the processing and arrangement of non-instrumental sounds on magnetic tape. In a concert setting it was intended to be played back on speakers in an 'acousmatic' context, in which sound is heard from unseen sources in an environment that facilitates a 'reduced listening'. The suggestion is that, without visual cues, the sounds phenomenologically present themselves as 'sonic objects' (Chion 2009, p.11). The concepts of the sonic object and reduced listening have dominated discourse about sonic arts since Schaeffer formulated them, and, although he identified several listening 'modes' (listening, perceiving, hearing and comprehending) (ibid., pp.19-25), all of these are associated with what Korean composer Suk-Jun Kim (2010a) identifies as Schaeffer's psychologically reductive phenomenology: there is no acknowledgment of the imaginative reflex that sound – abstract or not – initiates in other more 'naturalistic' modes of listening. This is likely because the imaginative does not conform with Schaeffer's notion of a phenomenological *époché* (after Husserl), which places our natural engagement with sound in conceptual parentheses (Chion 2009, pp. 28-30). The influence of Schaeffer's phenomenological schemes on composers and theorists engaged with sonic materials drawn from recordings of the real world (rather than using 'abstract' musical pitches) had a profound influence for at least forty years, spawning further specialist grammars devoted to describing sound and the listening experience in objective or technical terms. A notable example of this is Denis Smalley's formulation of 'spectromorphology' (Smalley 1997), which posits a way of describing sonic textures, behaviours and arrangements on their own terms, without the necessity of overt recourse to 'indexical' or 'source-bonded' analogies. The phenomenological approach enabled Schaeffer to construct theories about exactly 'how' his new sounds, constructed using new technological means from real-world recordings and

not conventionally musical, should be engaged with. Schaeffer focused on 'un-naturalistic', but ostensibly objective, modes of listening for understandable reasons within his technological and intellectual climate. The relationship between sound and mental imagery, arguably an important component of listening in a natural or naïve mode, is deprecated as a consequence of Schaeffer's attitude to phenomenology: as with Thomas' analytic philosophers, imagination is generally presented in his journals as a mode of entertaining propositional 'what if' statements (North & Dack 2012). Suk-Jun Kim (2010a) has pointed out 'Schaefferian phenomenology runs the risk of becoming the "Objective Thought"' (p.8) since subjectivity should not be discounted from phenomenology. This is because 'phenomenological analysis focuses explicitly on the linkage between the qualitative character of what we experience and the subjective character of the mental activity whereby we experience it,' (Thompson 2007, quoted in Kim 2010a, p.7), and such subjective characters encompass acts of 'perceiving, remembering, imagining, and so on' (ibid.).

The common criticism of Schaeffer's split between reduced and natural listening is that highly 'mimetic' or 'indexical' sounds in particular almost involuntarily evoke mental imagery related to real-world objects of our own experience. Developing on work by Smalley (1996) on the relationship between spectromorphology and emergent 'sound images' in the listener's mind, Kim has proposed two interrelated frameworks: imaginal listening (2010b) and acousmatic reasoning (2010c), which are particularly concerned with the imaginative relationship between 'real' and 'abstract' sound that a listener entertains when listening to acousmatic compositions. These frameworks are based around a quaternary scheme that moves between identifiable sounds indicating place and 'body' (soundings made by entities or objects), and more abstract non-place and 'non-body' sounds. Here, the immediacy of mental imagery is embraced, although it ultimately serves a propositional purpose: to assist an interpretation of a piece by 'imagining-that' and 'imagining-how' the 'sound images' develop, again as an approach to the 'problem' of how to comprehend a

piece of sonic art. The development of what Cascone might term an 'imaginative perception', which is evidently imagination of another order, is not the aim of the listening strategy. Rather, acousmatic reasoning (2010c) in particular aims to develop a comprehension of a composition by applying proposition about the function and significance of 'sound objects' and their transformations based on the mental images that they suggest. The process by which these propositions are 'tested' within the context of listening to a composition is in the same spirit as scientific method uses deductive, abductive and inductive reasoning.

The possibilities of more explicit frameworks for listening, alongside and a more active, non-propositional use of the imagination have presented themselves over the last 20 years in the composition and theorisation of what Katharine Norman (1996) calls 'real-world music'. Norman proposes four modes of listening and engagement (referential, reflective, contextual and participatory), the referential and reflective being most vital to this discussion. The former of these could be interpreted as a propositional mode: it 'connects sounds to objects, to measurements of time and place', but also, crucially, moves beyond the idea of a piece as a phenomenologically closed system and extends 'to learnt *symbols'*, by which Norman means culturally significant or otherwise learned associations with sound (pp. 5-11). The symbolic connection, however, takes us toward reflective listening, 'into a world of conceptual meaning' where – in distinction to the historically analytic approaches – 'we can obtain a deeper experience of qualities, rather than quantified relationships, of time and space.' (p.12) Norman uses an example of hearing music in the sea to illustrate this shift from an analytic, referential listening mode, to an imaginative, reflective one:

> *To hear music in the sea we change our usual relation to the sound, allowing interested enchantment to eclipse alert information-gathering. As in daydreams and reveries a perceptual shift lulls us into 'forgetting' how, and why, things normally make sense. Instead, we use our ears and minds to*

create, or reinterpret, imagined meanings for the sound. (p.12)

For Norman, an effective, or affective, composition using real-world sound is one in which 'the meaning of the sounds is maintained, heightened or transformed' and which invites the imaginative participation of a listener to in some way 'contribute, creatively, to the music.' (p.4)

The mode of reflective listening as a vital component listening and composing with real-world sound brings us closer to Cascone's call for a 'heightened state of [imaginative] perceptual awareness', which he argues is in need of a revival in order to 'resurrect' the recorded material that a composer works with. Norman has mentioned the concept of a 'symbol' in passing, and it will now be proposed that, vital to the success of such an 'imaginative perception' is an awareness of the particular nature of what has been called the 'poetic' symbol and its attendant symbolic discourse, along with the necessity of acknowledging the creative processes by which composers develop or 'discover' such symbols and convey them to listeners.

Westerkamp's barnacles: Listening to the anima mundi

> *A young poet who visited me to talk about his proposed work on Edwin Muir said 'I do not believe in* anima mundi*; I know you do'. I assured him that there was no question of belief, only of experience.* – Kathleen Raine (1967, p.118)

The poet and critic Kathleen Raine posited that the 'symbol' was a vital component of what she saw as an imaginative, visionary tradition of English poetry stretching from Blake, to Coleridge and Keats, and into the 20th century through the works of W.B. Yeats, George William Russell, Edwin Muir and David Jones. A symbol, she tells us, 'has as its primary purpose the evocation of one plane in terms of another' (ibid. 108). A Neo-Platonist at heart, Raine developed her definition from Coleridge's

famous description of the symbol as being characterised 'by the translucence of the Eternal through and in the Temporal. It always partakes of the Reality which it renders intelligible; and while it enunciates the whole, abides itself as a living part in that Unity of which it representative' (Raine 1967, pp. 108-9). Whether or not one considers the 'symbol' to be, as Raine did, the archetypal language of the *anima mundi* and a tangible expression of transcendental truth and beauty, it is apparent that the 'symbol' possesses a distinct character compared to the common usage of the term to denote metaphor or allegory. For the poet and his or her sympathetic reader, the revelation of the symbol comes with 'epiphanies, awe-inspiring glimpses that move us deeply and inexplicably […] by their numinous nature we recognise them.' (ibid., p. 116) To Raine, symbols are revealed, rather than consciously contrived: they come forth, often unbidden, with a profound vivacity and 'livingness', and they mediate between visible and 'other' realities, which Raine identifies as expressions of the *anima mundi*, or deeper 'order' of the world.

Given the absence of an explicit lineage of symbolic or imaginative tradition within the sonic arts, the process by which we might employ symbols in order to imaginatively resurrect supposedly 'dead' recorded materials may appear obscure. In this respect, a consideration of Hildegard Westerkamp's *Kits Beach Soundwalk* (1988) hints at the potential power of comingling sound and symbolic revelation.

Westerkamp's piece primarily uses real-world sound (an environmental recording of a beach impinged upon by urban noise) and spoken narrative to explore a series of shifting perceptions arising from her engagement with and meditation upon the environment. Westerkamp focuses on the micro-sound of clicking barnacles as a contrast to urban noise pollution, but crucially engages in a reflective, or participatory, turn in which she imaginatively explores the direct relevance of the object of study to herself. She dwells first on the real-world memories that the sound of barnacles evokes: their high-pitched clicks conjure a memory of the artist listening to Iannis Xenakis' tape piece *Concret PH* (1958). She then takes these associations

beyond memory and into an unconscious realm: making links between high-pitched sounds and accounts of what she calls her 'healing-dreams', which give her the strength to face the world. In terms of Angela Voss' methodology of the imagination (2009), the work could be said to depend on a hermeneutic approach to the symbol of the barnacle: it begins with a literal observation of their sound, progressing to their allegorical status in juxtaposition with the city noise, before embarking on a participatory turn. Here, personal memory segues into something notionally transpersonal: the unconscious world of dreams. The barnacle may not have any culturally engrained symbolic meaning, but Westerkamp's approach gives it the function of a symbol in the poetic sense that it mediates between 'realities'.

The consequence of a well-articulated symbol, such as Westerkamp's barnacle, is that the listener is left with a deepened sense of the meaning of one entity in the phenomenal world, akin to the archaic notion of a *signatura rerum,* or the metaphysical sense of immanence. As a consequence of the auditory medium, the symbol exists not only as a mental image (via Westerkamp's spoken narrative), but is inextricably bonded to a sonic signature (by foregrounding the barnacles' high-pitched clicking in the soundscape). Thus both sound and image potentially become a part of the listener's own symbolic vocabulary beyond the piece itself. As an illustration of this, I present below my own account of listening to a purely acousmatic (non-narrated) piece of sonic art by the Greek composer Nikos Stavropoulos. *Portrait Z* is a 17-minute work that uses field recordings from Zanthe as its sources, although these are often highly processed and abstracted and juxtaposed with one another:

> Sitting amongst the assembled audience in a darkened room, surrounded by a ring of speakers, I listen into the soundscape. The opening minutes consist of drones, evoking the sonic signature of cargo ships. These are punctuated by explosions, electronic tones, and the sound of some sort of bird-like animal, before abruptly terminating, leaving my mind clear and alert. I can hear pools of

water, lapping perceptually very near to me. Church bells in the far distance. A lucid image presents itself to me: the sun glares above a mountainous bay. The point of view suggested by the scene tells me that I am standing on the beach, amidst rocky pools and the shifting tide. Yet, a new sound introduces itself: high-pitched clicking. I am reminded of Westerkamp's *Kits Beach Soundwalk*. This new sound shifts my perspective: I feel myself now to be lying, my head in a rock pool, looking at the sky, listening to the barnacles. This triggers a chain of associations: having been initiated into Westerkamp's symbolic world, I think of Xenakis, but I think of his facial injury, sustained from tank shrapnel during his participation in the resistance against British occupation of post-war Greece. These thoughts again deepen my imaginative participation within the soundscape: I am lying in a rock pool, looking at the darkening sky (for the barnacles have fused with the sound of cicadas), because I am, in fact, looking through the eyes of a corpse, lying on the beach. The high-pitched 'barnacle-cicada' noises seem to have foregrounded themselves: they no longer seem to be situated within the pool, but are uncomfortably close, perhaps affixed to my own skull, sparking the realisation that I must have been dead for quite some time. On reflection the mental stage seems to have been set at this point: I am experiencing both lucid visual imagery, and a profound sense of bodily awareness. With the gradual appearance of a low-drone, my mental imagery flows effortlessly in concert with the sound. As the soundscape shifts further away from the real, I experience processes of entropy and infestation; as the real-world fades, my body blackens, pustules burst and my flesh becomes transformed into an assemblage of coruscating rainbows, the tongues of barnacles trail behind me as I drift through the cosmic scene that has replaced the world. I am weightless; floating above planets; observing distant stars; moving through galaxies, across the surfaces of lifeless planets, and through coloured storms of deep-space, post-mortem phenomena: I travel on – and through – sound, as part of another existence, punctuated by occasional glimpses of the phenomenal world as I once knew it.

[Sound example 1:   Edited extracts from Stavropoulos' *Portrait Z*
(used with permission)]

Here, the symbolic knowledge gained from Westerkamp's work became a vital link in a chain of events that precipitated a highly lucid flow of mental imagery (possibly unintended by Stavropoulos himself), developing symbols that themselves compel me to further explore the emergent imagery within both my own work and inner-life. This record of listening indicates the dynamic, imaginative possibilities stirred by the foregrounding of a particular symbol, particularly the latent notion that the barnacle-like clicks symbolise potential ingress with an 'other' world. Reading between the lines of Raine's poetic criticism, one is struck by the sense that her immersion in what she calls 'traditional symbolism' may also have stirred personal imaginative reveries when the symbol was encountered either within the real world or the written word. This prompts us to consider of how powerfully other works of sonic art may be experienced or realised if it were possible to establish other similarly effective bondings of sound and symbol toward a re-consideration of the presence of an imaginative '*gnosis*' alongside the more traditionally epistemic approaches to listening (cf. Voss 2009, p.3).

Black theatre: Composition through imaginative perception

> *"It's a mistake to think that visionaries don't know the machinery."* - Peter Redgrove & Peter Porter in conversation (1982)

For the composer pursuant of the symbol as a way to 'resurrect' sound materials, the creative process becomes intimately entwined with the use of varying modes of imaginative perception as a means of exploring the symbolic meaning within the potential 'signatures of things' that comprise the surface of the recorded material. The particular imaginative method of exploring or revealing the significance of

particular symbols depends on the context itself. Such a perception may develop from a hermeneutic meditation on the particulars of environment and sound recording, as in Westerkamp's piece; otherwise, a point of departure may be found within a body of traditional symbolism related to a composer's own cultural knowledge, such as the symbolism of religion, myth, folklore or the Neo-Platonic doctrine of correspondences; alternatively, the symbol may arise from a more intuitive process, akin to the artistic use of free-flowing mental imagery, pareidolia, decalcomania, chance or divinatory processes, in which the unconscious has traditionally been said to find expression (as Norman's in previously cited example of music in the sea).[3]

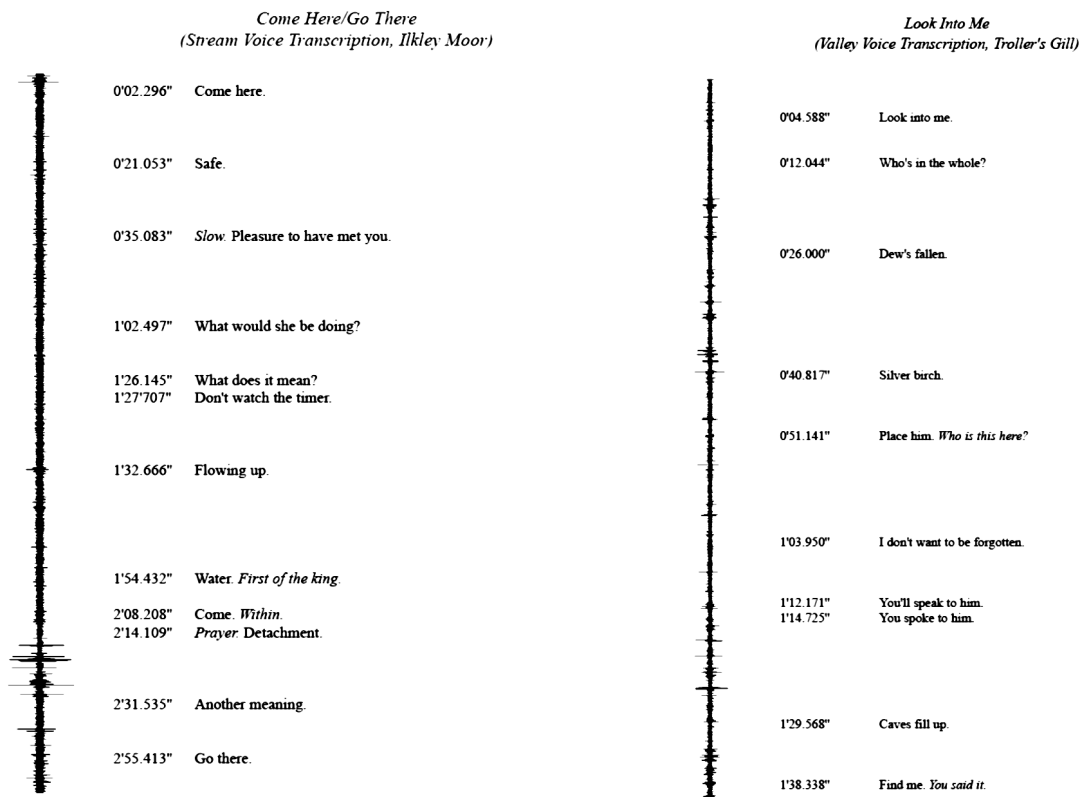| Come Here/Go There (Stream Voice Transcription, Ilkley Moor)		Look Into Me (Valley Voice Transcription, Troller's Gill)	
0'02.296"	Come here.		
		0'04.588"	Look into me.
0'21.053"	Safe.		
		0'12.044"	Who's in the whole?
0'35.083"	*Slow.* Pleasure to have met you.		
		0'26.000"	Dew's fallen.
1'02.497"	What would she be doing?		
1'26.145"	What does it mean?	0'40.817"	Silver birch.
1'27'707"	Don't watch the timer.		
		0'51.141"	Place him. *Who is this here?*
1'32.666"	Flowing up.		
		1'03.950"	I don't want to be forgotten.
1'54.432"	Water. *First of the king.*		
2'08.208"	Come. *Within.*	1'12.171"	You'll speak to him.
2'14.109"	*Prayer.* Detachment.	1'14.725"	You spoke to him.
2'31.535"	Another meaning.		
		1'29.568"	Caves fill up.
2'55.413"	Go there.		
		1'38.338"	Find me. *You said it.*

Fig. 1. Illustrations of the author's own application of random-access auditory pareidolia to field recordings as part of a process to foster 'imaginative perception'.

The use of traditional symbols as way to initiate an imaginative discourse can be illustrated in the author's own work *Angelystor*, for keyboard, cello and soundscape, which developed from field recordings and photography made by Layla Legard at St.

Digain's Church, Llangernyw – a site said to be visited annually by a spirit who announces the names of those who will die in the parish over the next year. Following repeated natural listenings to the source material, the sound of a crow call eventually presented itself as the fundamental sound symbol of the piece. Corvids are traditionally birds of sinister association, carrion-feeding heralds of death. In traditional systems of esoteric correspondence (such as those in Agrippa 1651, II.xxv), the crow is associated with Saturnine powers, as are graveyards and yew trees: coincidentally, the churchyard at Llangernyw possesses a particularly venerable yew tree estimated at 5,000 years old.

Fig. 2. The churchyard and yew at Llangernyw (photo: Layla Legard, used with permission).

The confines of this paper do not allow me to dwell in depth on how this complex of symbols revealed themselves, but some key observations can be outlined. Cecil Collins, an English visionary painter championed by Raine, wrote amongst his

aphorisms that 'the creative power of a symbol is not the symbol but the quality of the symbol, it's the same with everything, its quality is its livingness, its reality' (Collins 2002, p.56). The powerful symbol possesses 'life' (the quality sought by Cascone to 'resurrect' the sound materials). An imaginative discourse with symbols instinctively felt to possess such deeper, 'living' qualities, rather than being willfully contrived, was essential to the compositional process of *Angelystor*. I perceive also that the imaginative qualities of such a discourse were most intense during engagement with what Csikszentmihalyi (1990) identified as the 'flow' state. Within a 'flow' state, subject-object relations become less distinct as the subject becomes more immersed in the 'flow' of an engaging activity.[4] In compositional terms, the composer's ingrained technical knowledge regarding the digital manipulation and arrangement of sounds forms a seamless continuum with the creative imagination immersed in the work at hand. Here imagination can move fluidly, to encompass both propositional use in conceptualisation and problem-solving, alongside a willingness to surrender to or explore arising mental imagery as part of an active 'imaginal' exploration of the symbols. To demonstrate the processes of conceptualisation and imagination in the piece: spectral analysis was used to abstract a series of pitches from the harmonic components in two crow calls. These became a 'crow' scale or tonality, which the pitched musical elements of the piece generally adhere to. Furthermore, the corvid calls were also used to cross-process (convolve) other sounds, resulting in sonic timbres that shared the acoustic qualities of the crows' voices, in effect strengthening the bond between instruments, abstract sounds and the fundamental symbol of the crow. Such technical processes yielded evocative materials that seemed intimately connected with the original symbol, and which served to deepen the imaginative process, forming musical fragments that helped to outline a narrative felt to be immanent in the source materials.
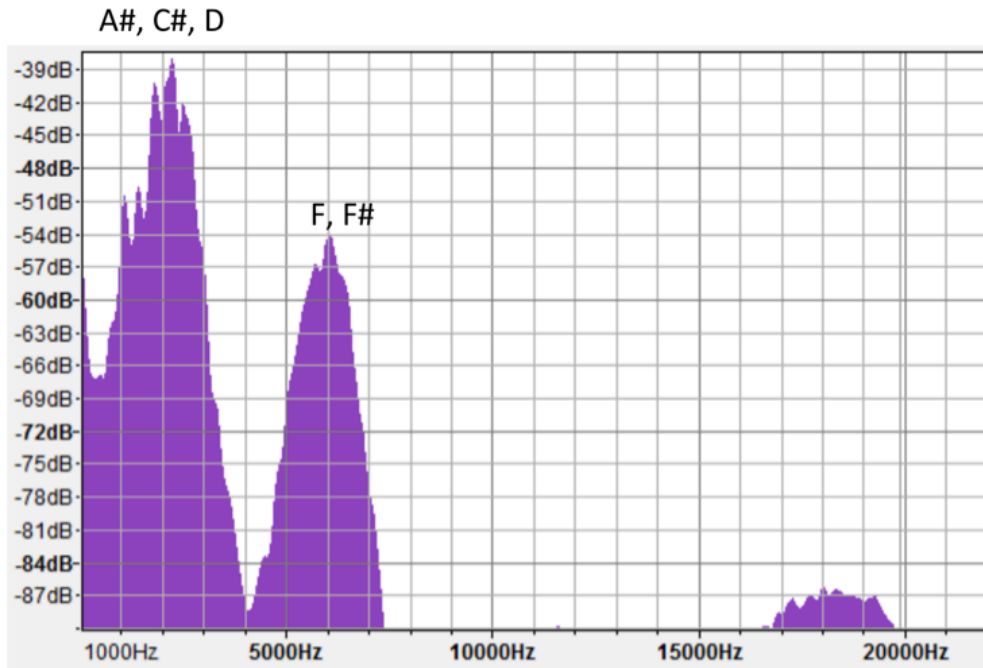
Fig. 3. Spectral analysis of a crow call from Llangernyw, annotated with approximate chromatic tones.

[Sound example 2: Extract from the opening of *Angelystor*, 2'06"-5'06" including piano and organ lines composed using the 'crow' scale]

The final form of the piece comprised seven sections, in which the various symbols 'revealed' by an imaginative engagement with the developing work – the crow, the yew, night and sunrise – entered a fluid play of imagination: what Collins called the 'theatre of the soul' (Collins 2002, pp.148-9), and Redgrove 'black theatre' (Redgrove 1987, p.120, 131). Collin's conception of such a 'theatre' relates to his statement that creative imagination 'circles round a hidden point, so I think of the theatre as concentric imagination' (ibid.) – from such a 'hidden point', the creative work is 'revealed and unfolded, gradually or suddenly, from the unknown' (ibid.) through the interplay of symbols. The central section of *Angelystor* sought to express a 'vision', or 'sudden unfolding' in Collins' terms, that imposed itself upon the mind's eye in staggering clarity as part of the process of listening to the work-in-progress from a standpoint of engaging with a developing flow of mental imagery (as in my account of *Portrait Z*), rather than using a conventionally analytic or technical approach to

listening. The constant repetition of the developing piece, listened to in an imaginatively active 'theatric' mode became an important creative process, distilling the symbolic elements through a repeated process of imaginative circulation.

IV.   Midnight.
20'35" to   In terrifying glory, Angelystor manifests:
25'57"   a towering figure, wings feathered with black
             rainbows, a winding-sheet embellished with shards
             of fossilised birdsong.
             The great yew shakes. An occult force courses
             through its roots, and into the mouths of the
             corpses interred in the graveyard.
             Organ: overwhelming, foreboding.
             Cello: tossed, helpless.

Fig. 4. Composer's outline of the central section of *Angelystor*.

[Sound example 3: Extract from the central section of *Angelystor*, 22'52"-24'55"]

Until this point, terms like imagination, mental imagery and imaginative perception have been used fairly loosely, with a sense that their meaning is implicit. However, to move toward an understanding of how the imagination functions as part of a symbolic discourse within the context of an inherently technologically mediated approach to composition, we may turn to Thomas' multidimensional spectrum of imagination (2014). Here, Thomas attempts to establish continuity between the reductive sense of imagination (the entertaining of propositions and 'imagining that') and the more numinous areas of dream, hallucination and mental imagery. Thomas proposes three dimensions: stimulus constrainedness (a high score indicating conventional sensory perception, a low score indicating entirely mental imagery), will/amenability to voluntary control (a low score indicating an uncontrollable impression) and vividness. Such a dimensional approach seems to provide a way to conceptualise the movement between imaginative states encountered in the creative

processes outlined above. This approach is also important in that it dispenses with the artificial partitioning of the various proposed types of imagining, from the propositional to the visionary, which we have encountered. In an imaginatively engaged approach to our materials, we may find ourselves fluidly moving from propositional imagining (a low degree of vividness, but high degree of will, with stimulus constraint score depending on whether directed toward the sound materials or toward more abstract problem solving) to a feeling of being highly present and actively engaging within the mental imagery evoked (high vividness, high will and low stimulus constraint), or even being moved or transformed by the sudden, hallucinatory 'unfolding' of symbolic imagery (high vividness, low will, low stimulus constraint).

Imaginative mode	Stimulus constrainedness	Amenability to voluntary control	Vividness
Propositional/analytic ('imagining that...')	Fluid (case dependent)	High	Low
Active exploration or development of imagery (active imagination, 'pathworking')	Low	High	High
Vivid 'revelatory' or intuited imagery ('symbolic imagination')	Low	Low	High

Fig. 5. Imaginative modes encountered in the compositional process, projected through Thomas' multidimensional spectrum.

Journeys and gleams: Concluding remarks

"The tree which moves some to tears of joy is in the eyes of others only a green thing that stands in the way. Some see nature all ridicule and deformity... and some scarce see nature at all. But to the eyes of the man of imagination, nature is imagination itself." – Blake (1799)

The bias in this paper, has, of necessity been toward imaginative perception, although it should not be considered as excluding or deprecating other more

objective modes of engaging in compositional and listening processes. We could, for example, approach various listening modes and analytical and imaginative states as a continuum in the spirit of Voss' methodology of imagination (2009): [5]

> Literal mode: what the literal sound-image *is* (Kim's semiotic approach), or what the qualities of the sound-objects are (e.g. reduced listening, Smalley/Kim's spectromorphological approach).
> Allegorical mode: The conscious use of the above in acousmatic reasoning and other interpretive strategies.
> Tropological mode: A consideration of the significance of the sounds to oneself as listener/composer, in terms of memory and personal experience.
> Anagogical mode: The exploration of symbols that powerfully present themselves during the creative process: images 'so beautiful and so fraught with meaning' as Raine would have it (1967, p.115).

The last mode presents a profoundly altered state of consciousness, arising from the conditions of flow, in which a sense of what Collins called 'the sacramental nature of things' is encountered, and which is implied to be vital for an authentic realisation of the symbolic in a creative work. Furthermore, Voss' approach can also be related to modes on Thomas' multidimensional spectrum, moving from the percept-based and propositional imagination to memories and mental imagery with varying degrees of amenability to voluntary control.

This progression lends itself to the 'archetypal' structure of a number of real-world music pieces, which themselves move from the 'real' world, through varying degrees of abstraction toward an inner, symbolic or 'imaginal' world of both personal and shared meaning, ultimately concluding by returning 'home'. As a consequence, both listener and composer have experienced the 'inner', symbolic potentialities of the real-world sounds from which the journey arose. Considered on Thomas' spectrum it is evident that the actual induction of the symbol in a work like *Kits Beach Soundwalk*

scores low on the amenability to voluntary control scale, although it is fluid in other dimensions as it moves from percept-based imagery to mental imagery. The vivacity of the experience could be said to be dependent on the disposition of the listener, since the inclination of listeners and composers toward the 'symbolic' is broadly a matter of individual psychology. We could, however, potentially define a sound-symbol to be distinct from a sound-image based on its persistence beyond the composition that introduces it: it is not a propositional use of mental imagery, but a way in which a sonic signature (and corresponding real-world entity) has a deeper, multi-layered significance associated with it, colouring the listener's perception of the world beyond the confines of the composition. A sound-symbol could be said to be tools by which we can, in Norman's words, 'initiate a journey which takes us away from our preconceptions, so that we might arrive at a changed, perhaps expanded, appreciation of reality.' (2006, p.39) Such symbols should not be understood as prescriptive: they may have a general meaning or convey a general concept, but their 'livingness' allows them to take on new significance or be seen in new light as part of the participatory discourse of reflective listening and imaginative composition.

Norman observes that "real-world music, like poetry, is impelled by a desire to invoke our internal 'flight' of imagination so that, through an imaginative listening to what is 'immanent in the real', we might discover what is immanent in us." (p.53) This inherent sense of the immanence in the real, and the openness to numinous encounters through imaginative perception – what Raine called the 'visionary gleam' – is a constant theme in the poetic, symbolic philosophy, that this paper suggests is worthy as consideration as part of the participatory, creative and interpretive acts involved in working with real-world sound. Raine textually articulates such a 'visionary gleam' in her poem *The Wilderness*, in which the symbolic images drawn from the environment direct the poet to a paradisal experience of Eden:

> *A child I ran in the wind on a withered moor*
> *Crying out after those great presences who were not there,*

Long lost in the forgetfulness of the forgotten.

Only the archaic forms themselves could tell!
In sacred speech of hoodie on gray stone, or hawk in air,
Of Eden where the lonely rowan bends over the dark pool.

Yet I have glimpsed the bright mountain behind the mountain,
Knowledge under the leaves, tasted the bitter berries red,
Drunk water cold and clear from an inexhaustible hidden fountain.

(Raine, 1989, p.80)

Blake, the greatest light of Raine's visionary tradition, observed that 'The tree which moves some to tears of joy is in the Eyes of others only a Green thing that stands in the way' and that 'nature is imagination itself' (Blake 1799). This suggests the motivation for Cascone – an artist presently best known for his minimal, meditative drone work – to frame his call for a more 'subtle' engagement with sonic materials in the context of recording the natural environment. In sonic terms, the sound of the wind in a tree may be 'just' that, or even more detachedly described in spectromorphological terms as a 'modulating continuum of mid-high frequency band noise'. However, with imaginative perception and symbolic discourse it presents itself as something quite different, capable of moving one to tears through a quality of immanence, symbolic potency or 'livingness'. The natural scene – whether experienced in an embodied or documentary (photography, field recording) context – presents a complex and cognitively stimulating environment: one that seemingly welcomes a turn to imaginative perception, inducing visionary gleams in the form of reveries, numinous symbolic associations, and moments of pareidolia. At least, that is how the natural world revealed itself to Blake, Wordsworth, Raine, Collins, and, later, Redgrove. It is evidently Cascone's position that, having 'come to see ourselves as separate from nature' (2014) such perceptions are dismissed by our contemporaries, 'desouling' the world as a consequence (ibid.) Yet, as Thomas's

spectrum illustrates (and poets such as Redgrove [e.g. 2006, p.207] agree), what seem to be opposing forms of imaginative perception – from the propositional to the symbolic and anagogical (Voss 2009) – in fact vary by degree, rather than type and are a necessity for both the creative process and inner lives for many of the poets and artists that we have mentioned in the course of this paper.

Raine and Cascone both seem to echo the position of Coomaraswamy that 'to have lost the art of thinking in 'images is precisely to have lost the proper linguistic of metaphysics' (2004), which also directly relates to Cascone's description of recorded sound being 'desouled': from Aristotle to James Hillman, the psyche, or soul, and the image, or symbol, have been inseparable. Hillman even conflates them to describe the psychotherapeutic process as *psychepoiesis* – at once 'soul-making' and 'image-making' – the former a term Hillman himself drew from the writings of Blake and Keats (Hillman 1983, p.35). Raine criticised the contemporary trend to interpret poems simply based on the 'word on the page' as symptomatic of the bias toward a materialistic, literal (and at most only propositionally imaginative) approach to artistic materials. Such a position also resonates with Cascone's criticism that presentation of real-world sound should be about more than the 'sounds on the recording'. Following the imaginative tradition outlined by Raine, we have proposed that it is an openness to exploring the potential symbols within real-world sound that should, in complement to established modes of working with sound, be considered by those who seek to imaginatively 'resurrect' their sonic art. Additionally, it is hoped that this paper has hinted at some suggestive areas of enquiry for those seeking to move toward more universal frameworks that acknowledge both the *gnostic* and *epistemic* nature of the composing and listening experience.[6]

Footnotes

[1] This may appear contentious, although it does, as I argue in this paper, represent the expression of a mode of artistic thought that has often been deprecated in academic discussions around sounding art, yet which represents a vital working

method for many of the non-sonic artists and poets that will be mentioned (e.g. Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Kathleen Raine, Cecil Collins, Peter Redgrove). It may be suggested that Cascone over-simplifies the issue, and that the search for a 'soul' within our recordings is more a concern of the composer-audience relationship, for we can be powerfully brought back to places and feelings by listening to one of our own recordings, yet without such an experiential context the same recording may be meaningless to a wider audience.

[2] Some of these terms point to longstanding traditions, philosophical and religious, which posit the 'imaginal' as more than simple imagination. *Mundus imaginalis* is Herny Corbin's Latin formulation of the Islamic *Na-koja-abad*, or Eighth Climate (1972), which exists between the transcendent and mundane and speaks in archetypal images, often revealed through moments of insight, visions and dreams. Naturally the resonances of this concept with the Jungian subconscious sees Corbin's work incorporated into post-Jungian movements such as James Hillman's archetypal psychology. Active imagination was itself Jung's term for purposeful imaginative exercises that seek to expose unconscious imagery for therapeutic ends. Participatory consciousness derives from the Romantic science of Goethe, influenced by Spinoza, which emphasised that the imagination creates a connection with the perceived object, which deepens our observation and intuitions.

[3] Decalcomania is a term most readily associated with surrealist painter Max Ernst, denoting his method of using oil paint on canvas, which was then compressed with sheet of glass to yield 'textural surfaces that, he claims, induce hallucinatory vision' (Kavky 2005, p.360). In other words, a decalcomanic process gave Ernst complex patterns that he could then interpret as a visual scene. An antecedent of this method can be found in the notebooks of Leonardo Da Vinci: 'If you look at any walls spotted with various stains […] you will be able to see in it a resemblance to various different landscapes adorned with mountains, rivers, rocks, trees, plains, wide valleys, and various groups of hills. You will also be able to see diverse combats and figures in

quick movement, and strange expressions of faces, and outlandish costumes, and an infinite number of things which you can then reduce into separate and well conceived forms' (McCurdy 2003, pp. 873-4).

Pareidolia is the psychological term for a similar concept, particularly relating to the innate human tendency to perceive faces or hear words when presented with random noise. Diana Deutsch (2003) has explored this phenomenon in terms of hearing 'phantom words' from the conjunction of repeating nonsense syllables split between left and right channels of headphones. The technique was also creatively employed in *Hawthonn* (see Legard 2015) as a method of devising lyrical content.

[4] For developing research into the relationship between flow, artistic practice and imaginative, or 'mythic', affect see the Banfield (2015).

[5] See Legard (2015) for further discussion of Voss' Methodology with regard to three of the author's compositional works.

[6] The intention of this paper has been to bridge Cascone's assertions on 'imaginative perception' and sound art practices by drawing parallels with the philosophy of the Romantic imagination. Further work on what distinguishes the revelatory 'symbolic' mode of imagination from other types of imagining could explore these themes through the 'verticalised', building-block approach suggested by Taves (2010). Such an approach seeks to establish a multi-layered approach to the cognitive science of religious experience, which can potentially encompass both 'scholarship and general human behaviour' (p.14). Taves identifies the 'religious' as a subset of other things (experiences, objects, places, agents) deemed somehow 'special'. It is evident from the writings of Raine, Collins, Redgrove and other visionary poets and artists that the mode of symbolic perception is a 'special' experience, of a particular visionary or vivid quality that sets it apart from other internal experiences. Furthermore, concepts drawn from cognitive psychology such as minimally counterintuitive theory (MCI theory) may explain the persistence of the

'symbolic' ideas and particularly the inclination of Raine and Collins to reject surrealism (an art form involving maximally counterintuitive imagery) in favour of a symbolic, archetypal or 'traditionalist' approach.

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