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Bull Michael

### Gendered sound

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Thompson Marie

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## 11

## GENDERED SOUND

*Marie Thompson*

The instructive voice of the GPS system, or ‘sat-nav’, has become an audible presence in many people’s everyday lives. These navigation devices offer a range of ‘male’ and ‘female’ automated voices with different accents, which the user can select according to their own personal preferences. Some devices enable the user to employ a famous voice to issue directions, such as that of Marge Simpson, Mr T or the Dalek from Doctor Who.

Despite the variety of male, female and ambiguously gendered voices available (what is the gender of a Dalek?), sat-navs are often associated in the popular imagination with what is understood as a ‘neutral’ (that is white, middle class) feminine voice. Indeed, automated voices have often been feminized, partly through their association with ‘assistance’ – there is, for example, the female-voiced computer of Spike Jonze’s 2013 film *Her*; the secretarial voices of smartphone personal assistants such as Cortana and the US version of Siri; and the ubiquitous feminine voices in public spaces that remind listeners to keep their personal belongs with them at all times.

If gender is something that pertains to bodily difference and body-world relations, then it might seem problematic to describe the disembodied, automated voice, such as that of the sat-nav, as ‘masculine’ or ‘feminine’. Yet while gender is a complex material-discursive site, in the field of robotics, the sound of gender is neatly charted in relation to wavelengths. A.O. Roberts describes how gendered speech synthesis is ‘actively policed around 100–150 HZ (male) and 200–250 HZ (female)’ (Roberts, 2015). In doing so, the field of speech synthesis reproduces the highly problematic cultural tendency to attempt to to ‘fix’ gender in relation to particular ‘biological’ and ‘physical’ characteristics. In conforming to popular imaginations of what gender sounds like, and by understanding gendered vocal expression through ridged dualisms of quantifiable difference, robotics and speech synthesis ‘hold up an acoustic mirror to the dominant cultures from which they materialize’ (Roberts, 2015).

With the automated voices of sat-nav, the entangled relationship of sound and gender comes to the fore. Sound is gendered insofar as gender is integral to the epistemic, practical and technological apparatus through which it is produced, accessed, experienced and understood (Martin, 1991; Rodgers, 2010a, 2010b; James, 2010; Ingleton, 2016). To talk of ‘gendered sound’, however, seems to imply that the former (gender) is something that happens to the latter (sound). But this relationship is not simply one of mediation. Sound does not reflect pre-existing gendered modes of being, nor is sound a passive medium through which notions of gender are transmitted. Rather, as I repeatedly assert, gender is constituted ‘with, through and alongside’ the sonic.

Sound is one of a number of materialities and mediums with which gender is made and remade, produced and reproduced. The relationship between sound and gender is thus multidirectional and co-productive. From this perspective, the automated voice of speech synthesis doesn't just hold up a reflective 'acoustic mirror' but actively (re)produces notions of what gender sounds like.

To describe sound as 'reflecting' gender also risks attributing a stability or rigidity to the latter. Yet on both a 'micro-' and 'macropolitical' scale, gender can be considered dynamic, fluid and mutable. Indeed, although Eurocentric society is primarily organised in relation to two genders, this binary obscures a multitude of masculinities, femininities, a-gender, transgender and genderqueer modes of being, which are co-constituted with other socio-economic categories of embodied difference: for example, race, class, disability, ethnicity, sexuality, age. Gender, then, is not a fixed category that precedes embodied experience; rather it is continually produced and reproduced with the body's 'repeated yet constantly evolving interaction with our social and material worlds' (James, 2010: 24).

I have asserted that sound and gender cannot be cleanly separated insofar as they are produced with, through and alongside one another. Nonetheless, to temporarily assume such a separation is possible in order to draw sound and gender into comparison with one another reveals a number of important similarities. While it is sometimes useful for the purpose of analytical enquiry to treat them as distinct categories, neither sound nor gender exist or are experienced in 'pure' form. As Jonathan Sterne states: 'Sound is always defined by the shifting borders that it shares with a vast world of not-sound phenomena... sound in itself is always shaped by and through its exteriors, even as it acts on and within them' (Sterne, 2003: 343). Just as gender is, in its actuality, inseparable from, amongst other things, race, class, sexuality, disability, ethnicity, sound, too, in actuality, is inextricably entangled with a variety of 'extra-sonic' processes, relations and norms – from environmental and physical factors such as movement, humidity and atmospheric pressure, to 'social' practices, epistemologies and institutions such as Capitalism, militarism, medical understandings of the human body, architecture and urban planning (Sterne, 2003).

More generally, sound and gender exist amidst the relations between bodies, environments, epistemologies and ideological apparatus. They both occupy the connecting line between the physical and the physiological, the material and the discursive, 'nature' and 'culture' (James, 2010). This connecting line does not mark a straightforward, causal relation, though it has often been presented as such: just as essentialist accounts have understood particular bodies or bodily features as 'causing' particular gendered modes of being, particular sounds or sonic properties have sometimes been understood to 'cause' particular types of social behaviour and psychological effects. And just as sound has been subject to naturalisation, the 'non-naturalness' of gender has often been obscured by these essentialist accounts.

The remainder of this chapter introduces three examples which are used to further interrogate the production of sound and gender 'with, through and alongside' one another. 'Gendered-sound discourses' points to the inextricable relationship of gendered and sonic discourses. 'Gendered-sound production/reception' returns to an aforementioned method of sound-making which many debates on sound and gender have focused: the voice. Here I pay particular attention to the gendered-sound aesthetics and politics of transfeminine voices and the potential disjuncture that arises between gendered voices as they are produced and gendered voices as they are heard through normative expectations of the body-gender-voice relation. The third section, 'Gendered-sound policing', examines how the policing of auditory culture – understood both figuratively and literally in relation to the recent alleged ban on bashment music in Croydon nightclubs – is bound up with longstanding pejorative imaginations of 'disorderly' black masculinity.

## Gendered-sound discourses

In the introduction to her once controversial and now canonical *Feminine Endings: Music, Gender and Sexuality*, first published in 1991, Susan McClary asserts that *contra* claims of objectivity, neutrality and social autonomy, music and musicology are inextricably bound up with notions of gender. One of the ways in which this entanglement is expressed is through music's rhetorical formations. McClary highlights how the metaphors of 'traditional' (that is Eurocentric, classical) music theory expose the gendering of musical practice and discourse. The classification of cadence-types according to gender, for example, explicitly reproduces dominant social formations of masculinity and femininity. McClary cites the 1970 edition of the *Harvard Dictionary of Music* which asserts that the a 'masculine' cadence 'must be considered the normal one', occurring if the final chord of a phrase or section occurs on the strong beat, where the 'feminine' cadence 'is postponed to fall on a weak beat' and 'is preferred in more romantic styles' (Apel quoted in McClary, 2002: 9). As McClary notes, in this short dictionary description, its author, Wili Apel, 'has managed to engage some of the most prominent of Western beliefs concerning sexual difference':

This standard definition makes it clear that the designations 'masculine' and 'feminine' are far from arbitrary. The two [cadences] are differentiated on the basis of relative strength, with the binary opposition of masculine/feminine mapped onto strong/weak. Moreover, this particular definition betrays other important mappings: if the masculine version is ('must be considered') normal, then the implication is that the feminine is abnormal.

*(McClary, 2002: 10)*

Given the explicitly gendered language of McClary's illustrative example, it might be tempting for contemporary readers to dismiss her as stating the obvious. Yet at the time of writing (and indeed sometimes today) music theory was often treated as an abstract and ahistorical system, which was organised around 'naturalised' rules. McClary's work, by contrast, begins from the perspective that the 'structures graphed by theorists and the beauty celebrated by aestheticians are often stained with such things as violence, misogyny and racism' (McClary, 2002: 4).

Where feminist and gender criticism have become reasonably well-established within the field of musicology, partly due to the wide influence of McClary's work, it has been less prevalent within the broader, trans-disciplinary field of 'sound studies'. Yet sound's discourses (which includes but extends beyond music) are also produced with, through and alongside gendered metaphors, practices and standpoints. Just as McClary showed how the seemingly 'abstract' realm of music theory is in fact 'muddied' by gendered values, scholars such as Tara Rodgers and Holly Ingleton have shown how the historical consideration of seemingly and 'objective', 'neutral' and 'measurable' sonic parameters such as pitch, timbre and amplitude reveals their entanglement with, amongst other things, philosophical and scientific epistemologies of sexual difference. Many of these parameters are largely indebted to the work of nineteenth-century German physicist and physician Hermann von Helmholtz, which has become the normative sonic epistemology that defines the norms and 'laws' of scientific acoustics (Rodgers, 2010b; Ingleton, 2016). Yet general models are by no means neutral models. Helmholtz's acoustics is underlined by, amongst other things, a preference for neoclassical aesthetics, expressed in his prioritisation of purity, simplicity, order and control. Many of these underlying aesthetic priorities are evident in Helmholtz's figure of the sine wave – a singular, simple, neutral, 'pure' and 'clean' tone that is without 'body' and 'colour'. The sine wave has been treated as an acoustic ideal and standard

against which all timbral variations are compared (Rodgers, 2010a; see also Schafer, 1994; Kahn, 2001; Evens 2005). And as the benchmark against which ‘deviations’ are measured, the sine wave is structurally analogous to the white masculine subject (recall the universalising ‘normality’ of the masculine cadence). Just as ‘bodied’ and ‘coloured’ tones are acoustic deviations from the purity of the idealized sine tone, white masculinity has historically been installed as an idealized benchmark against which radicalized and gendered ‘deviations’ are compared. Moreover, the qualities attributed to the sine tone are also qualities that have historically been attributed to white masculinity and, by extension, ‘virtuous’ femininity; where those qualities that are anti-thetical to the ‘pure’, ‘clean’ sine wave – for example, ‘colour’, ‘body’, chaos, disorder, unruliness, noisiness, dissonance, excess – have constituted racialized ‘others’ and/or deviant femininities. I shall discuss this further in the final section of this chapter.

More generally, the sonic and the feminine have been frequently articulated in relation to one another. Indeed, it is significant that Helmholtz’s sonic parameters helped bring (‘feminine’) sound into (‘masculinist’) order; they enable ‘unruly’, ‘immersive’ soundwaves to ‘analysed’, ‘controlled’ and ‘mastered’ (Rodgers, 2010b). The rhetorical feminization of sound and its perception can be highlighted in relation to what Jonathan Sterne has labelled ‘the audiovisual litany’. The audiovisual litany is a recurring discursive tendency and dominant ideological formation that opposes sound and hearing with vision. Predicated on the sensory registers a universal and ahistorical human subject; the audiovisual litany tends to appear as a list of binary oppositions. One of the key oppositions around which the audiovisual litany is organised is the distinction between sound’s ‘immersion’ and vision’s ‘distance’: ‘hearing immerses its subject, vision offers a perspective... hearing involves physical contact with the outside world, vision requires distance from it; hearing places us inside an event, seeing gives us perspective on the event’ (Sterne, 2003: 15).

To differentiate the sonic from the visual in terms of immersion is highly problematic: for example, light, upon which vision relies, might too be understood as an immersive phenomenon. Nonetheless, the audiovisual litany remains prevalent in sound’s discourses (Schrimshaw, 2015). Moreover, the audiovisual litany’s central binarism of sonic immersion/visual distance is also indebted to gendered terminology and imaginations. Indeed, this onto-epistemological distinction has frequently appeared in feminist discourse. The distance, directionality and objectivity of vision associates it with dominant Eurocentric imaginations of masculinity, while the connection of phallogentrism and oculo-centrism is a common tenet of post-1968 French feminist philosophy (Jay, 1994: 526; Irigaray, 1993). Likewise, descriptions of sound as an immersive and surrounding medium resonate with numerous notions of femininity; in particular, the notion of the ‘maternal-feminine’. For French feminist philosopher, Luce Irigaray, the maternal-feminine is ‘an *envelope*, a *container*, the starting point from which man limits his things’ (Irigaray, 1993: 11). Given this connection, it is no accident that many of sound’s origin’s myths begin with pregnancy and the womb. R. Murray Schafer, for instance, makes apparent the intimate relation between the maternal-feminine, immersion and soundwaves in his discussion of ‘first soundscapes’. Schafer asserts that the first sound heard ‘was the caress of the waters... The Greek myths tell how man arose from the sea.’ According to Schafer, watery beginnings are invoked in antenatal experience: ‘the ocean of our ancestors is reproduced in the watery womb of our mother and chemically related to it. Ocean and Mother’ (Schafer, 1994: 15). Through such metaphoric figurations, the sonic is feminized and feminine is rendered sonic.

### Gendered-sound production/reception

In the discourse on gendered sound, the voice has been positioned as central; prioritised as the primary sonic medium through which gender is produced, transmitted and received. Anne

Carson, in her essay on the gender of sound, describes how feminine voices have been historically denigrated by comparison to their masculine counterparts: 'High vocal pitch goes together with talkativeness to characterize a person who is deviant from or deficient in the masculine ideal of self-control' (Carson, 1992: 119). Carson's observations resonate with those of Rosalind Gill, writing in the context of 1990s UK independent radio, who shows how 'women's feminine voices have been deemed as unsuitable for radio by virtue of being "too shrill", "too high", "too dusky" and "grating"' (Gill, 2000).

As these accounts suggest, the gendering of the voice is often defined in relation to vocal pitch. Moreover, as was highlighted apropos of the automated voice, the relationship between voice, vocal frequency, sex and/or gender has often been presented as an unproblematic biological 'fact'. Some have sought to nuance this correlation by using the now-common distinction drawn between sex-as-biology and gender-as-social to differentiate between 'innate' and 'learned' vocal properties (Stuart-Smith, 2007; Zimman, 2015). However, the sex/gender binary has also been critiqued. Judith Butler, for example, has famously argued that 'sex' as well as 'gender' is socially constructed, insofar as the ways in which biological sex is understood is inextricable from cultural notions of gender – what 'counts' as biological sex is entangled with socio-cultural categories and ideas of gender (Butler, 1993; 2011). Likewise, as Lal Zimman argues in his research into transmasculine voices, although biological sex is often construed as 'fixed' by comparison to the 'fluidity' of gender, the 'biological' body and, by extension, 'biological' sex are in fact malleable – they can be changed through, for example, hormone therapy and other forms of medication, food consumption and exercise. Consequently, 'As we consider the ways gendered embodiment interacts with the voice, it's important to keep in mind that sex is not static, not purely natural, and that it does not necessarily cause gender differences even where correlations exist' (Zimman, 2015: 199). Butler and Zimman's work suggests that the relationship between biology, body, sociality, gender and the voice is far from straightforward. As a result, it becomes questionable as to how it might be possible to distinguish the voice's 'natural' traits from the 'nurtured', the innate from the learned.

The complexity of the relation between body, gender and the voice can take on a particular significance in relation to transgender modes of being. 'Transgender' is an umbrella term that refers to a heterogeneous spectrum of gender manifestations that 'call attention to the fact that "gender" as it is lived, experienced, performed and encountered, is more complex and varied than can be accounted for by the dominant binary of sex/gender ideology of Eurocentric modernity' (Stryker, 2006: 3). Though its meanings may vary in the contexts of medical and psychological discourse, political activism and institutional policy, 'transgender' is typically used to refer to those whose gender in some way differs to that assigned at birth. Some transgender people's gender expressions align with dominant binaries and expectations of body-gender relations (for example being 'masculine men' or 'feminine women'), where others may align with neither or numerous gender categories. Consequently, there is not one but multiple transgender configurations of body-gender-voice relation. However, dominant cultural understandings and expectations of the body-gender-voice relation, insofar as they are largely predicated on Eurocentric modernity's sex/gender binary and assume a neat alignment between these categories, often fail to account for transgender modes of being. Indeed, by perpetuating expectations of what men and women 'naturally' sound like, dominant understandings of the body-gender-voice relation also perpetuate problematic gendered distinctions of 'authenticity' and 'artificiality'. Julia Serano has highlighted that the voice's use in media representations of transgender women's lives – alongside other gendered technologies – lends support to the idea that they are 'fake' or 'artificial' women. Serano notes that the majority of depictions of trans women – whether fictional or real – assume that all trans women want to achieve a stereotypically feminine appearance

and gender role. Consequently, these depictions tend to centre on processes of ‘feminization’, in which trans women are captured ‘in the act of putting on lipstick, dresses and high heels, thereby giving the impression that trans woman’s femaleness is an artificial mask or costume’ (Serano, 2007: 41). Serano highlights how the road-trip film *Transamerica* exemplifies this phenomenon. The opening scenes of the film depict its protagonist, Bree Osborne, practicing along with the instructional voice-training video, *Finding your Female Voice*, as well as changing into a pink dress suit, padding her bra and putting on stockings, makeup and other cosmetics. In the first dialogue of the film, which follows this opening scene, Bree discusses with a psychiatrist her hormone replacement therapy and discloses other cosmetic procedures that she has undergone. As Serano argues, this opening presentation of cosmetic, medical and sonic feminization ‘are clearly designed to establish that Bree’s female identity is artificial and imitative, and to reduce her transition to a mere pursuit of feminine finery’ (Serano, 2007: 42).

Serano’s remarks regarding the perceived ‘artificiality’ of trans women are in some ways echoed by ‘E’ in her reflections on the voice and gender. E is a vocalist and musician active in numerous bands and musical projects in the UK. The relation between E’s gender and voice is unproblematic: E is a woman and so her voice is a woman’s voice. However, there is a disjuncture between dominant social expectations of what a woman’s voice is and what, in light of transgender experiences and manifestations of womanhood, a woman’s voice might be. This disjuncture requires E to spend ‘much of my time on metaphorical tip-toes... I worry that I have to conceal and conform for my own safety and peace of mind... the idea of being seen as something that I’m not feels close to violent to me’ (interview with author, 2016). The potential disjuncture between the gendered-voice as it is produced (that is a woman’s voice) and the gendered-voice heard and interpreted in relation to social norms of the feminine-female voice is a fraught and threatening space, which can result in misgendering. As a result, E’s voice varies in different contexts. However, this variation is not necessarily conscious or intentional:

Essentially I feel that I have a ‘good’ voice and a ‘regular’ voice and there are variations, graduated based on levels of trust... [with people I’m really comfortable with] I trust that dropping my pitch and being lazier with my speech won’t invalidate my gender in their eyes... The thing is, the good voice is unsustainable... I can’t even work out how it feels in my throat, it’s involuntary and a safety issue. I feel I have almost no control over my voice really.’

(Interview with author, 2016)

E’s remarks highlight the role of the voice in negotiating the complex web of gendered power relations that many trans women are faced with. On the one hand, transfeminine voices can require a reconsideration of what women sound like and what constitutes a ‘female voice’. As E states, ‘the world needs to get used to more diversity in what it considers a woman’s voice (or body for that matter)’ (interview with author, 2016). On the other hand, becoming ‘hyper-visible’ (and/or ‘hyperaudible’) as transgender in certain social contexts can be risky in terms of personal safety, and so there can be a need to conform to normative expectations of the body-gender-voice relation. Yet, in both ‘failing’ to match up with normative expectations of what ‘women’ sound like, and in trying to conform to them, trans women risk being labelled as ‘fake’. As E explains:

Trans women are seen as fake, synthetic, cosmetic, performative. With regard to the voice, trans women feel a lot of anxiety about the point in their transition where they will begin to work on it, and how people will react to hearing a different, new voice

from a person they know. It seems put on, unreal and therefore ridiculous. Personally I have come to a point where I know there are several voices inside me, and I choose between them to an extent, and yeah, that makes me feel fake sometimes for sure.

*(Interview with author, 2016)*

In being heard as ‘fake’, trans women and transfeminine voices resonate with longstanding Eurocentric tropes that construe femininity and feminine voices as artificial. In this regard, they can be understood not as ‘unfeminine’ but as ‘*hyperfeminine*’. As Serano notes, femininity has been pejoratively construed by both misogynistic narratives and some strands of feminist scholarship as ‘artifice’, ‘merely performance’ and ‘false consciousness’, particularly by comparison to the ‘sincerity’ of masculinity (Serano, 2007). This can be exemplified by liberal feminist Naomi Wolf’s recent call for young women to ‘give up’ their ‘annoying’ and ‘destructive’ (feminine) vocal habits such as vocal fry, breathiness, soft-spokenness and ‘uptalk’, which are heard as deferent, hesitant and uncertain. Instead, Wolf calls for young women to reclaim their ‘strong female voice’ which is heard as ‘authoritative’ and ‘serious’ (Wolf, 2015). The ‘*hyperfeminine*’ transfeminine voice can thus be thought of as amplifying cultural anxieties around ‘fake’ femininity. In short, there is nothing more feminine than being heard as inauthentic.

### Policing gendered sound

As the previous discussion of the transfeminine voice suggests, the boundaries of the audible are carefully policed: the distinction between what is permitted and unpermitted, wanted signal and unwanted noise, what sounds ‘right’ and wrong’ within a particular social space is a political question that is bound up with, amongst other things, notions of gender. This policing of auditory culture occurs in relation to numerous registers. It may be part of our ‘self-management’, or it may occur in relation to more formal, institutional channels, such as when we are instructed to switch our phones to silent in particular spaces, like a train carriage or cinema. Sound might be quite literally policed in relation to noise abatement legislation and public order acts.

In March 2016, a bar in Croydon accused the borough’s police of banning bashment music in relation to concerns about ‘safety’, prompting widespread criticism and allegations of racial profiling. Bashment may refer to any kind of Jamaican music or musical gathering but it is also sometimes used to refer to a particular style of upbeat dancehall music. It was reported in *The Guardian* that Roy Seda, the owner of Croydon’s Dice Bar, was allegedly approached several times in 2015 by police officers urging him to stop playing bashment, as it was deemed ‘unacceptable’ by the borough: Seda was said to have received an email from Sgt Michael Emery, a licensing officer in Croydon, which makes reference to ‘what the borough finds unacceptable forms of music’ (Grierson, 2016). Seda also claims that police had asserted that bashment was ‘linked to crime and disorder’ (Davies, 2016). It was reported that officers first raised concerns about bashment with the venue when the licensing officer PC Darren Rhodes advised the owner to remove the term bashment from a flyer for the club, along with other advertised musical genres such as R&B, Garage, House and hip-hop. According to Seda, he was ‘advised to remove the word “bashment” because the words chart and commercial music is considered safer’ (BBC, 2016). In response to the allegations, the Metropolitan police issued a statement claiming that they had not requested a ban on any type of music at Dice Bar but that Seda as licensee had volunteered not to host bashment music events in order ‘to tackle “crime and disorder” issues in his venue and *make it safer* [sic.]’ (BBC, 2016).

Though the Metropolitan police’s statement denies a formal ban on music, it nonetheless maintains a connection between bashment, and, by extension, black clubbers and crime and

disorder. Indeed, the alleged 'bashment ban' is one of a number of high profile cases in which the Metropolitan police have been accused of racially profiling 'Urban' music audiences, spaces and nightlife under the guise of 'safety'. This includes the perceived disproportionate restrictions placed on grime events through the use of '696' – the Met police's 'Promotion Risk Assessment Form – 696'. The original form asked promoters for the ethnic 'make-up' of their target audience and details of the music that the event would be playing (Bramwell, 2015: 65). Clubgoers, promoters and artists have suggested that the 696 form is used as a means of shutting down grime nights with little justification beyond 'intelligence about an incident' (Hancox, 2009).

This policing of black musical practices and spaces points to a racialized politics of listening. Blackness is often produced by the ear of the state as disruptive, aggressive and threatening; and thus its sonic manifestations require monitoring, securitisation and abatement. In this regard, the policing of bashment and grime forms part of a long urban history in which 'blackness' and 'noisiness' are heard together. Scholars such as Jennifer Stoever and Emily Thompson, for example, have highlighted how in a US context, social and racial 'others' have been disproportionately targeted by dominant culture's campaigns against noise and abatement legislation. From the perspective of white, dominant culture, blackness has been imagined as both a source of noise and immune to noise (Stoever, 2015; Thompson, 2004).

This racialized politics of listening is also gendered, insofar as it is frequently produced with, through and alongside pejorative stereotypes of black masculinity. This is not to deny the active participation of women in bashment and grime nights as both performers and clubgoers. However, dominant cultural imaginations of black masculinity have often defined it in relation to criminality, deviancy and aggression, many of which are reproduced when black musical spaces, audiences and nightlife are conflated with criminality and disorder. The production of black masculinity as violent criminality is bound to histories of colonialism, slavery and white supremacy (Davis, 1981; Fanon, 1986). Writing in 1952 about the psychopathology of colonialism Frantz Fanon argues: 'In the collective unconsciousness, black = ugliness, sin, darkness, immorality. In other words, he is negro who is immoral. If I order my life like that of a moral man, I simply am not a Negro' (Fanon, 1986: 149). More recently, apropos of US hip-hop, Tricia Rose has highlighted the tension between, on the one hand, an exceptionalism that presents the purported violence and aggression of black masculinity as at odds with a mainstream culture, and, on the other, mainstream cultural endorsements of violent masculinity:

Throughout the twentieth century especially, violence was wedded to mainstream visions of manhood... The pro-violence, celebratory air associated with military action and action heroes and the fascination with mobsters... hunting, and the regulated violence that fuels boxing, football and hockey have saturated American culture. In every case, these expressions of American values celebrate the male who is able and willing to challenge others to battle and be prepared to act violently.

(Rose, 2008: 107)

The conflation of black masculinity and violent criminality is produced with, through and alongside the policing of the urban soundscapes. Hearing bashment and other black musical genres as 'causing' or 'encouraging' criminality and disorder rearticulates and reaffirms long-standing cultural imaginations of black male deviancy. It also exemplifies the ways in which the distinctions upon which the policing of auditory culture relies – between wanted and desirable sound (for example the 'safety' of chart and commercial music) and unwanted and threatening noise (for example the 'aggression' of bashment and grime) – are tied to gendered, classed and racialized social relations.

## Conclusion

The relation between gender and sound is one of entanglement. Gender is sonic, inasmuch as sound is a medium through which it is produced, expressed and interpreted; where sound is gendered, inasmuch as its technological and discursive apparatus are bound up with histories and philosophies of sexual difference. This chapter has introduced three examples, which have been used to highlight the ways in which sound and gender are produced with, through and alongside one another. However, there are many other approaches that can be used to exemplify this relation. For example, historiographical work can reveal how certain forms of gendered and racialized labour are overshadowed in histories of sonic culture that are organised around the figure of the ‘pioneering’ white male inventor (for example Rodgers, 2010a); or how sound technologies and gendered social practices develop through and alongside one another (for example Martin, 1991).

Gender, then, is not simply an addition that muddies the ‘purity’ of physical waves. Indeed, just as it is questionable as to whether it is possible to talk of the ‘purely’ biological in isolation from the social with regard to gender, it is questionable whether it is possible to talk of ‘purely’ physical sound in isolation from its socio-historical epistemologies. Gender is not something that happens *to* sound – a ‘social’ or ‘cultural’ add-on to a ‘natural’ or ‘physical’ phenomenon; rather, gender and sound, both of which oscillate between the ‘natural’ and the ‘cultural’, the ‘material’ and the ‘discursive’, the ‘physical’ and the ‘social’, occur *with* one another.

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