

Listening to the In-Between
- Part 2: Sensing Traces of Power(lessness) -
Host: Sharon Stewart

SFX Album *Deep Listening*, track 1, 'Lear' [0:00 - 1:12)

SHARON

Hello everyone, a warm welcome to the second episode of *Listening to the In-Between*. In this three-part podcast series by Radio ArteEZ we will explore various aspects of Deep Listening, a practice developed by the American composer, musician, writer and humanitarian Pauline Oliveros. In this last minute we have been listening to an excerpt from 'Lear', the first track of the 1989 album *Deep Listening*, with Pauline Oliveros, Stuart Dempster and Panaiotis.

I am your host, Sharon Stewart, Deep Listener, sound designer and researcher for the ArteEZ professorship Theory in the Arts.

In this podcast series we put the practice of Deep Listening into context, by providing backgrounds, relevant theoretical concepts and practical exercises you can do yourself.

In the first episode, host Joep Christenhusz and London-based researcher Ed McKeon offered us an introduction to the lifework of Pauline Oliveros, and Colombian sound artist and researcher Ximena Alarcon spoke of her recent work and research and her connection to Deep Listening.

Joep also introduced us to the Extreme Slow Walk - and, if you haven't yet, I would like to invite you to take a listen and try it out yourself in a time and place convenient to you. The potential of this practice as a mode of philosophical action or the realisation of embodied knowledge was explored in Ed McKeon's article "[Moving Through Time](#)," published on APRIA in September.

In the time between that episode and now, on the 5th of October 2022, ArteEZ Studium Generale, in collaboration with ArteEZ's Master Interior Architecture Corpo-real, hosted a hybrid event around Pauline Oliveros's Deep Listening practice.

Nearly a hundred students and participants took advantage of the opportunity to explore the acoustic space around Zwolle's Sophiagebouw and Zwolle's conservatory building through collectively performing Oliveros's seminal Deep Listening practice, the "Extreme Slow Walk". Ximena Alarcón offered a telematic listening experience through her recently-developed Intimal App. And students of the master Interior Architecture at the Corpo-real Lab offered the workshop "Spread Power by Space - Research by Making" to investigate the relationship between power and space by exploring the space with the body and research through the act of making.

Themes that were explored through these practices were the interrelations between the outer and the inner world through sonic awareness, listening to the in-between of real life and dreams through telematic connection and movement, and actively (re)searching spatial, bodily and mental powers.

In this second podcast, *Listening to the In-Between: Sensing Traces of Power(lessness)*, I wanted to further connect the idea of an embodied practice with the theme of power and powerlessness by working with others through the creation of scores, also conceptualized as rituals of attention, that offer a way of listening to or sensing aspects of power and powerlessness in an embodied way.

The practice of creating listening questions and listening scores was developed by Pauline Oliveros over many years in her work, both with those who identify as

musicians and those who do not. These explorations led, in the early 70s, to the compiled set of [25 Sonic Meditations](#) whose impact was discussed in the first podcast, and 2013 saw the publication of [Anthology of Text Scores](#), a collection of over 100 of Oliveros' pieces and meditations for soloists, groups and ensembles. Writing and sharing text scores and listening questions is a generative and creative practice at the heart of Deep Listening.

That being said, exploring the theme "listening to power and powerlessness" adds a layer of focus that is not typically central to the practice of Deep Listening. Yet ... the methods used were informed by my years of personal practice and facilitating Deep Listening® workshops and online sessions for the Center for Deep Listening at RPI and elsewhere.

So, following the event on the fifth of October, we sent out a call for participants, students and others who were willing to enter a three-week creative process of:

- Finding a source of inspiration (text, film, work of art) that deals with the question of power/lessness and imagining ways to investigate this question in an embodied way, through listening and sensing on various levels.
- Meeting online three times to share concepts, ideas, and challenges.
- Using the chosen source of inspiration and online sharing to develop a text score that invites others to enter a ritual of attention that explores this question of power/lessness in an embodied way.
- And finally, for those willing, talking about and sharing parts of their process for this podcast.

I am very grateful to have had the opportunity these past few weeks to work with two participants who are here with us now. Laurens Kruger, a second-year student in the DBKV program - a bachelor for Teacher of Fine Arts and Design at ArtEZ, in Zwolle. Her artistic attention is currently circling around themes such as awareness of temporality in life, creating space and time for loss, and dealing with overload. She is also investigating tensions around the objecthood of the body.

And Martine van Lubeek, a recent graduate of BEAR - Base for Experiment, Art and Research - with her Bachelors in Arnhem. Currently, Martine is involved with trying out ways of thinking-feeling with the earth through artistic research. She is developing tools for (embodied) listening so that through these we can become aware of the ways we are intertwined with each other and generate new forms of being together.

So, good evening, here, now. Welcome to both of you, and thank you so much for engaging with this call, for the supportive discussions we have had, and for sharing your process here, with all of us, now.

So, my opening question is:

- Which aspects of power/lessness were you interested in exploring and which inspirational material did you draw upon? And, of course, maybe it was that you had inspirational material, and that led you to be interested in power and powerlessness, and that's fine.

So, I'll give you the floor, or the microphone, Martine:

MARTINE

Thank you so much for having me, Sharon! To dive into your question, I think the theme of power has already been present within my own artistic practice for some time, but I could not find the right ways or words to articulate it yet. But I think this thinking/feeling with the earth that I explore through my practice actually stands from an overwhelm-tion. An overwhelm-tion of the exhaustion that comes from capitalist society, at least Western capitalist society. And I think that the tension between being part of this force of power, myself, as being a

participant in this capitalist society in contradiction to - also wanting to escape this or wanting to find new ways of being together. I think in that lies this paradox of power that I'm very interested in exploring. I feel like this is also a tension that, at least within my own surroundings that I see with my friends and family, it's also a fear. A fear of how to be in this world that accelerates way faster than that we could ever live.

And I do think that this force of power also connects a lot to language. For my graduation, I researched the Rhine River for a year, but actually I researched "with" the Rhine River for a year more precisely. I went to her, I listened to her, I invited people to come over and listen together, and at first I really thought that this was a one-way street, a one-way of communication. I felt like I talked to her but she did not talk back. But after a while I actually discovered that a certain sound or a certain splash meant that a certain ship was passing through. So, I feel like after some time I was able to understand little bits of her language more and more. And I think this is very important for us as well: what language do we use. I'm a Dutch native speaker, but it's also a language of colonization. We're talking in English right now which is also a language of colonization but also a language that is accessible to most people. So I think these two forces of capitalist power and language, which is tied to capitalism as well, were the fuel of creating my score.

For creating the score I also read the text "Returning the Gift" by Robin Wall Kimmerer as a main source. And in this text, she stresses the urgency of practicing gratitude through a shift in mindset from seeing the earth as a mere resource, which we do in capitalist society, towards acknowledging the gifts that the earth brings forth. So, in a sense she actively asks the reader: After becoming aware of the gifts we receive on a daily basis, what can we actually give back to the earth? And one of our responsibilities is to become familiar with the beings that we live with, so indeed, to learn their language and to find ways of being together through our commonalities within language. And I think that also shows a certain respect. Maybe the last thing I say about the text is a short quote, but I think it's beautifully written: "We have to change our language because it shapes our thoughts and actions. When maple is an 'it', we can take up the chainsaw; but when maple is a 'her', we have to think twice." 13m29s

SHARON

Thank you Martine. I see Laurens nodding as well, and I think we all hear bits that resonate. So, thank you for that. And Laurens, I will pose you the same question. 13m42s

LAURENS

So, I think, the starting point for me to join in this process was that I was thinking for a long time already about how to find ways for an escape when I find myself caught in dualistic paradoxes. Often paradox exists in two, kind of, tension points. And I found a way to deal with this by triangulating the dualistic opposition. But I was also very interested in finding out things about how to look at my bodily experiences with this. Because I come from more of a thinking background, I approach things theoretically. To connect these ideas about analyses, about how things maybe function, to very bodily feelings is often very difficult. So I lose myself in the thinking, while I use this thinking to make sense of all these feelings. And I had heard about these books of Foucault, in which he writes a history of sexuality. I wanted to delve into that, because it seemed to me that I could maybe find some entrance points

there, and also I want to read them because I was curious. But then, there are so many things that you want to explore and do, and these books stayed in the stack. And then, I found this text called "The Subject and Power," and I wanted to read this, because I was thinking that this would be a short introduction towards thinking about a history of sexuality, to take this as a starting point for devising the score. So I started to read this, but it was very heavily theoretical. And also not so much about a history of sexuality, as I was thinking. It's more like a text in which he explains his - of course Foucault is known to be the big thinker about power and power structures - but in this article he says his work was not so much about power but more about inquiry, about different modes by which, in our culture, human beings are made subjects. So it's about, also a response to modernity, I suppose. This ties in with my own feelings about: How can I look at myself and my body from an inner point instead of objectifying myself and then being lost because I can't make the connection between the inside and the outside?

SHARON

Can you tell us a little bit about your process of creating the scores? So you've read the text, you found it, discovered it is more analytical than you were expecting. And it started a train of complex thoughts, but you had clearly defined for yourself areas of investigation. So, just, I'm very curious about that process. And then you can begin, and then Martine can also join in, in a bit. And in this process, you can tell about us anything you want, but I'm curious if there were other aspects of power/lessness that you came across that you were maybe not expecting?

LAURENS

Well, my process was very unexpected because I had read the text and was inspired by certain notions because it coincided with other ideas of myself, that surfaced again, and so and so on. But, then I did not know quite what to do and take, as a next step, in our idea of devising or discovering a score. And, I think I went to bed, and the next morning I had to be somewhere, and I was on my bike, and I felt so tired. And I felt my tiredness was like a kind of swimming underwater, in the kind of water that you can't really see. You can see a bit, but you can't really. Everything is blurred, and I was fighting that, that blurred state of being. I recognise that. I have this often, and I fight it because I want a clear mind. And then, I felt, I was like stretching out. Really stretching my head, as if I was really swimming and trying to be above the water. I recognise this as a rather stressful energy I often have. It was a kind of very bodily dealing with the energies that come from my background. Like, my father and mother had very exclusionary energies. And this stretching out and being on top of things was like an energy that made me, that reminded me that, in a certain way, I wanted to do this better than my father, to be better in thinking and to be better keeping track of everything, or knowing where I was going to. And then I recognised that these were, kind of, bodily oppositions that I was triangulating in myself. And in that way it was an escape of the dualistic structure of my father and mother, if I just could accept to ... swim ... with myself. Well, that was a surprise, a discovery, a new way of feeling and looking at this. And I was so happy, and I tried to do this, just accepting my tired underwater swimming. While I was doing that, and cycling (laughs), I suddenly heard music in myself. And it was the Ave Maria, a soundtrack, a version of the Ave Maria which is very well known and has these tremendous movements in itself about stretching, reaching for something ... and then also grounding and getting down again, and swelling, getting up again. And I felt a kind of letting go, also in a very bodily sensation, it was kind of having white

balloons in my hands, and I let them go, and they would go the heaven. It was a very spiritual experience. And then I realized this was what I had to do in a certain way. I could take the key points of the tensions that my body was describing and bring that to a score.

SHARON

Laurens, I'd love to hear your score. You can introduce it with a title, however you want.

LAURENS

The title I used was "Triangle Dance with force fields".

21m54s-23m54s: <i>Triangle Dance with force fields</i> . See the PDF of Laurens' score.
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SHARON

So, Martine, I'm curious about your process of creating your text score, also curious if there's any aspects of power/lessness that you came across that maybe you weren't expecting.

MARTINE

Yeah, of course. I think it's almost impossible to not to, within any creative process. After having read Robin Wall Kimmerer's text, I realized that her idea of reciprocity was something I wanted to grab, or actually hold on to. And I wanted to relate this to my own embodied listening experience that I do within my own artistic practice. So, for me, naturally the first thing to do was to go outside and have a wander around where I live. I really like thinking through doing or thinking through feeling. I think that's my main modes of research. And when I was walking in my neighborhood, I try to listen through my ears very carefully about any possible more-than-human languages that I did not know yet, or wasn't familiar with yet. But one thing that really struck to me, and I guess this is one of the power forces that I didn't expect is that the thing I heard most were cars moving around, cyclists that were ringing their bells. It was not a lot of more-than-human beings that I heard, which is quite normal, maybe, in the city. But I really thought that I would be able to adjust my attention more to these other sounds. And, after listening very carefully for quite a long time, I was able to make a distinction between some of these more-than-human sounds, but they're also not that present anymore, at least not within the neighborhood that I live in. So, I think it was more of a realization or a confrontation with how more-than-human beings are almost not present anymore within these visible infrastructures I live in. But, then, I thought, okay, but let's find one more-than-human being that I can see or hear or smell or actually use any of the senses, and that's precisely what I did. I found a tree in my street that I look upon, out of my window, and I based my score on that tree as a whole. To think how I could, not embody the tree, but be embodied with the tree. And it resulted in a score that is actually circular. So, it's a multiple-day score, and, at the last day of the score, it's the same action that you do as on day 1, which also enables you to continue practicing the score with maybe the same more-than-human being or with another human being. Which also really relates this reciprocity within Robin Wall Kimmerer's text, which I really enjoy.

SHARON

Would you mind reading us your score then, now? That would be wonderful. And these scores will be available as a PDF, also in the podcast notes. And for

everyone listening, of course we welcome you to try out these scores and write your own.

MARTINE

Before I begin with reading the score, there is one word I use within the score that maybe not everyone is familiar with, and it's the word 'ki'. It's a pronoun that is also introduced by Robin Wall Kimmerer as an alternative to the pronoun 'it' that we use to refer to most beings that are not human. So it's also a coming back to this idea of power and language and of objectifying more-than-human beings, such as the maple tree that I gave the example of. Robin Wall Kimmerer proposes the word 'ki', singular, 'kin', plural, that stems from the word 'kinship' as well. So, in contradiction to the word 'it', 'ki' actually proposes a certain closeness. Or, maybe not proposes ... I feel like the closeness is already within us but it pinpoints this closeness that we already have, or it enhances this closeness. So now I will continue with reading the score. I called my score, actually, the title of the article, which is 'Returning the Gift. Score for thinking/feeling with the earth.' So, it's a five-day score, and I will start with day 1.

29m30s-31m42s: *Returning the Gift. Score for thinking/feeling with the earth.*
See the PDF of Martine's score.

SHARON

Thank you so much. Thank you for being here, for sharing this process and I wish you both a very good evening, and looking forward to performing your scores.

As you can hear, in going through this process of finding a source of inspiration and translating it into a text score, or embodied ritual of attention, Laurens, Martine and I were confronted with a language challenge. We all chose textual sources, and each source offered a different connection to a "performable" activity. The body understands and speaks through doing and sensation, which asks for a certain performative language and cadence.

I immediately thought of the paper - "Uses of the Erotic: The Erotic as Power" - presented by Audre Lorde at the Fourth Berkshire Conference on the History of Women, Mount Holyoke College, on the 25th of August 1978 and published as a chapter in *Sister Outsider* in 1984 as my source of inspiration.

In her public appearances, Lorde would often introduce herself by saying "I am a Black, lesbian, mother, warrior, poet."

And for me, her writing and poetry stem from her deeply felt experience, her unwavering commitment to telling her truth grounded in an unrelenting openness to both historical and contemporary events, her vast knowledge of and connection to literature and poetry, and the travels, teaching, dialoguing, that took her all over the world, connecting with others, in alignment with a spirit of intense engagement. In other words, Lorde's essay already feels as if it springs from embodied practice, especially when you hear her read it herself.

Excerpts from [Audre Lorde reads Uses of the Erotic: The Erotic As Power \(FULL Updated\)](#)

58s-1m20s "there are many kinds of power, both the ones we use and the ones we do not yet use, acknowledged or otherwise. The erotic is a resource within each of us that lies in a very deeply female and spiritual plane. It is firmly rooted in the power of all our unexpressed and unrecognized feelings."

4m11s-4m44s "...the erotic is a measure between the beginnings of our sense of self and the chaos (and power) of our deepest feelings. It is an internal sense of satisfaction to which, once we have experienced it, we know we can aspire."

Once having experienced the fullness of this depth of feeling and recognized its power, in honor and self-respect we can require no less of ourselves."

SHARON

That was Audre Lorde, and in the following I will include more excerpts, in her voice, that guided my process. The link to the entire recording is also in the podcast notes, and of course I highly recommend that you listen to her entire talk.

When I first read her essay in 2004, it had a profound impact on my personal and professional life. This writing guided the direction of my research in music pedagogy around Feminisms, Technology and Improvisation in connection to claiming a libidinal creativity.

Now, returning 18 years later, I find myself able to connect in an even deeper way with her work.

One of the specific aspects of this work that I incorporate in my score is attention to the joy of connecting deeply with others.

Excerpt from [Audre Lorde reads Uses of the Erotic: The Erotic As Power \(FULL Updated\)](#)

Audre Lorde reads Uses of the Erotic: The Erotic As Power (FULL Updated)

11m15s-11:50 "The erotic is the nurturer or nursemaid of our deepest knowledge. The erotic functions for me in several ways. The first is in providing the power which comes from sharing deeply any pursuit with another person. The sharing of joy, whether physical, emotional, psychic, or intellectual, forms a bridge between the sharers which can be the basis for understanding much of what is not shared between us, and it lessens the threat of their difference."

SHARON

The joy of connecting means not only sharing sameness but sharing difference. Lorde was invested in the welcoming of difference as a generative source of change, both within Black communities, as she writes about extensively in the paper "Learning from the 1960's" as well as across racial and class divides within feminist and women studies communities. In another paper called "Uses of Anger: Women Responding to Racism" she writes that

[...]the strength of women lies in recognizing differences between us as creative, and in standing up to those distortions which we inherited without blame, but which are now ours to alter. The angers of women can transform difference through insight into power. For anger between peers births change, not destruction, and the discomfort and sense of loss it often causes is not fatal, but a sign of growth.

Part of this process of coming to terms with difference lies in another aspect of her talk that I drew upon: that of fully opening to and taking responsibility for one's own emotions, whether joy, rage, grief, fear or passion.

Excerpt from [Audre Lorde reads Uses of the Erotic: The Erotic As Power \(FULL Updated\)](#)

16m47s-17:20 "But when we begin to live from within outward - when we begin to live, first from that deepest place and then out through the extensions of ourselves into the lives that we inhabit - in touch with the power of the erotic within ourselves, and allowing that power to inform and to illuminate our actions upon the world around us, then we begin to be responsible to ourselves in the deepest sense."

SHARON

This is in no way a shallow call to focus only on self-care, but to embark upon an understanding of our OWN emotions as a source of energy that can serve to

bring about change. This might involve, for example, directing our own rage, putting it to use to dismantle structures such as racism in whatever ways we can. In the paper mentioned above "Uses of Anger" she writes:

After I read from my work entitled 'A Poem for Women in Rage' a white woman asks me: 'Are you going to do anything with how we can deal directly with our anger? I feel it's so important.' I ask, 'How do you use *your* rage?' And then I have to turn away from the blank look in her eyes, before she can invite me to participate in her own annihilation. I do not exist to feel her anger for her. (24)

Once we are able to engage poetically with our own existence, and I understand this, thinking with Lorde, to mean that we honor the chaotic contradictions that are inherent in the fullness of our own being, then we can engage with others in a way that fully sees them without making use of them.

Excerpt from [Audre Lorde reads Uses of the Erotic: The Erotic As Power \(FULL Updated\)](#)

20m43s-21:30/33 "To refuse to be conscious of what we are feeling at any time, however comfortable that might seem, is to deny a large part of the experience, and to allow ourselves to be reduced to the pornographic, to the abused, and to the absurd.

Now, the erotic cannot be felt secondhand. As a Black lesbian feminist, I have a particular feeling, knowledge, and understanding for those sisters with whom I have danced hard, worked hard, played hard, or even fought. This deep participation has often been the forerunner for joint concerted actions not possible before. And that is what we are about here, isn't it?"

SHARON

This leads to a final aspect that I have worked with in my score, and that is about the tendency to withdraw, distance oneself or shut down - an extreme form would be to disassociate - in the face of powerful emotion, such as existential fear of what one perceives as a threat to one's physical or psychic self.

Excerpts from [Audre Lorde reads Uses of the Erotic: The Erotic As Power \(FULL Updated\)](#)

17m56s-18:15 "In touch with the erotic, I become less willing to accept powerlessness, or those other supplied states of being which are not native to me, such as resignation, despair, self-effacement, depression, self-denial."

22m14s-23m01 "Recognizing the power of the erotic within our lives can give us the energy to pursue genuine change within our world, rather than merely settling for a shift of characters within the same weary drama.

For not only do we touch our most profoundly creative source, but we do that which is female, that which is self-affirming in the face of a racist, patriarchal, and anti-erotic society. I would like us to keep in touch with those deepest feelings that we have, and perhaps it will help us bridge some of the very real differences and some of the very real ways in which we see our cause separately. Thank you."

SHARON

Finally, I mentioned "engaging poetically with our own existence" earlier. Through this whole process I've received a better understanding of Lorde's relationship to the written word as a tool to process, transduce, and share experience. In "Poetry is not a Luxury" she writes:

"Poetry is the way we help give name to the nameless so it can be thought.

The farthest horizons of our hopes and fears are cobbled by our poems, carved from the rock experiences of our daily lives."

And

"Poetry is not only dream and vision; it is the skeleton architecture of our lives. It lays the foundations for a future of change, a bridge across our fears of what has never been before."

When an interviewer asks her "Why do you write poetry," she answers "I write because I am a warrior and poetry is my primary weapon. And so, I have written as much as I have because I have a responsibility to do this work in the world."

Some of my most vivid and enjoyable childhood memories were of writing poetry, or allowing poetry to come to me. In engaging contemplatively with Lorde's poems, I can say that some were painful, confronting, heart-crushing, shame-inducing, and I could observe myself wanting to turn away.

Her poetry opens the cavity of my chest, leaving me gasping for lack of the usual words, the padded woolen words which cushion my white-ish world. Her poetry shapes the tongue of my mind around a new language, angling my blinders to a new perspective. This is good work, and I welcome it.

In respect for this relationship to the written word, to poetic writing, I also turned to stream-of-consciousness writing in the four-day score I created, called "Listening to Connection and Difference".

44m05s-47m44s: <i>Listening to Connection and Difference</i> See the PDF of Sharon's score.
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It has been a great joy to connect with Audre Lorde and her work through this process, and I extend a warm encouraging word to each of you listening to also try creating your own scores in which you listen to power and powerlessness. In the Podcast notes you can find links to the works mentioned here, including Audre Lorde reading her own poems. In light of the theme of this podcast, I particularly recommend "Power."

To conclude, I would like to once again express my gratitude for the participation of Laurens and Martine and express our gratitude for this opportunity to share our explorations, discoveries and performable scores with you. Thank you for listening.