***Literary Soundings (ENGL 603/2)* [2005-2006]**

**Jason Camlot Telephone: 848-2424 x2353**

**Office: LB 505-5 Email: camlot@vax2.concordia.ca**

A new field is emerging in literary studies, one that is concerned not only with the implicit aural qualities of literature, but also with the technologies by which the sounds of literature are made manifest. Our work in this seminar will focus on the implications of a critical practice that distinguishes between words that are read (silently), and words that are heard. We will consider critical attempts to define the differences between oral culture and print culture, and we’ll examine the implications for this criticism of the fact that our ears and voices are now extended and mediated by an array of new sound technologies (analog and digital recording machines), which represent an alternate, "secondary" domain of orality. A key element of this course will be the development of a critical vocabulary for analyzing the audible acoustic elements of a performed work of literature within its larger cultural context. In *Close Listening: Poetry and the Performed Word* (1998), Charles Bernstein proposes the term "audiotext" for the cultural artifact in question. His term emphasizes the interplay between the written and the oral that will be at the core of our efforts in this seminar, and highlights as its primary critical activity the act of careful, interpretive listening, applied with the same close attention and analysis we use to engage written works. Working from the "sound texts" of a custom-made course-CD, we will analyze the audio productions of literary works ranging from the earliest recordings made in England of Tennyson and Browning, to the Caedmon poetry recordings of the 1930-50s, to recent experiments in recorded "spoken-word" and poetic soundscapes. In addition to reading theories of orality and literacy, and analyzing the spoken performances of literature, we will also study an array of literary works that themselves thematize the oral (i.e. those of Du Maurier, Shaw, Beckett, etc.), thus giving written literature its own "voice" upon the subject of our seminar.

*Required Texts:*

*Literary Soundings (Print)* (Course Pack, Available for Copying in English Department Office)

*Literary Soundings 1 & 2 (Audio)* (Course CD, To be Distributed at second class meeting)

Charles Bernstein, Ed., *Close Listening* (Oxford)

Joseph Conrad, *Heart of Darkness* (Dover)

George Du Maurier, *Trilby* (Broadview)

George Bernard Shaw, *Pygmalion* (Dover)

T.S. Eliot, *The Wasteland and Other Poems* (Faber)

Samuel Beckett, *Krapp’s Last Tape* (Faber)

*Recommended Texts (For Sale in Concordia Bookstore)*

Walter J. Ong, *Orality and Literacy* (Routledge)

Lisa Gitelman, *Scripts, Grooves and Writing Machines* (Stanford)

John Picker, *Victorian Soundscapes* (Oxford)

Jonathan Sterne, *The Audible Past* (Duke)

*Requirements:*

* Seminar-Leading (Oral Presentation) **20%**
* Critical Listening Journal (DUE In Class, WEEK 10) **30%**
* Final Seminar Paper **30%**
* This is a seminar, which means we will be thinking out-loud together. In order for a seminar to work you must complete all of the readings and be prepared to talk about them. For this reason, your participation is also calculated into the final grade. Participation **10%.**
* Power Papers: On TUESDAY December 6th we will have a roundtable of miniature power papers. You will each have exactly 5 MINUTES (no going over) to present (in whatever form you like) one insight you have had during the semester about “the sound of literature.” I’ll explain more about what this will entail as the date approaches. Your power paper will count for **10%** of your grade.

**What the above list of requirements means:**

*Seminar Leading:* For each class one or two students will be designated “seminar leaders” and will be required to lead discussion in readings/recordings of the day (primary, secondary or both, as you decide) with the goal of directing the rest of the class in discussion and exploration of aspects of the readings according to a line of thinking, argument, or exegesis-in-progress developed by the leader(s). These are not formal papers and are not to be read, although you may work from notes. The leader will be required to distribute to the class a handout (one page, or so) of the key points and issues that will be touched upon. This handout may also include quotations from the readings as a means of focusing our work together. You are required to include on this handout at least three formally posed questions and/or formulated theses to test out on the class. In your presentation, you will call our attention to these questions/theses, elaborate a bit upon how you arrived at them, and then work to solicit response from your peers. The attention of the seminar leader should be on the readings and listenings we have done for class, and your seminar leading should not be overly dependent upon other sources (although your might use outside sources as a means of framing a question or thesis). Think of this as an exercise in pedagogy as well as an exercise in criticism. Think about what will work to invite participation or discussion in a seminar context.

*Critical Listening Journal:* The journal should involve several things: 1) Basic responses to the recorded materials, in terms of describing, in the most basic of ways, what you hear, and what questions the recordings raise for you. 2) Considerations of the recordings in relation to the readings, again, in terms of the kinds of questions you think are interesting to ask. 3) Early (or developed) formulations of how you might go about answering some of those questions. 4) Self-conscious work on developing a useful critical vocabulary for talking about sound. (For this last point, I strongly advise that you jump ahead to some of the expository readings of Week 10—Godfrey, La Drière, and Schafer on “Notation” and “Classification”—to help you begin to think about different kinds of vocabulary and notation for recording the audible.) You can bring the recordings or readings to bear on any number of literary or critical works you have already encountered (in your previous education), or simply work with the materials for this course as a contained unit. You can expand the range of materials you listen to as much as you like. The questions and answers you pursue in your journal should, however, ultimately lead to the development of a more specific, research paper. So think of it as an opportunity to brain-storm on the page, with the ultimate goal of determining the questions you're most interested in asking, and which you'll attempt to answer, through research and thought, in your seminar paper. (In addition to the kind of exploration I have just described, at least two of your journal entries should be devoted to the following listening and written recording exercise, designed along the lines of the *soundwalk* as R. Murray Schafer describes it in the “Listening” chapter of *The Soundscape*: You should prepare yourself (clean your ears), and then take a deliberate soundwalk, wherever you please. You may or may not bring a sound recording device with you on this walk. Then you should sit down and write about it. The initial writing can be descriptive, narrative, analytical, probably some combination of all of these. But the culmination of this sound walk will be a short *poem*. Yes, a poem. What do I mean by poem? Well, that’s a key part of this exercise, which is designed to have you think about the relationship between the two words in the title of this course: Literary & Sounding.) Apart from this specific assignment, the journal is open to whatever questions seem important to you. A long list of the kinds of questions you should be asking yourself in these journals—based upon ideas generated in the first class—will be distributed in WEEK 2.

*Final Seminar Paper:* This may, or may not, emerge out of materials you examined in your journal, or oral presentation. You will have to come talk to me about it some time during the term, but no later than the week of **November 30th**. It is up to you to come talk to me about your essay ideas. The final paper is **DUE 4PM, Thursday, December 15th** . I will not grant “In Progress” grades, so be sure to get your work in on time.

**The Critical Listening Journal**

A few ideas, possible questions that might be approached in your Critical Listening journal. This list is by no means exhaustive.

--Is there a theoretical stance (concerning poetics, performance, etc.) implicit in the reading of the poem?

--Does the performance of the poem corroborate or challenge actual theories attributed to the poet (for example, is Eliot's theory of disinterestedness present in his delivery of The Wasteland)?

--Are spoken word performances automatically dialogical (in a Romantic sense, then, antithetical to 'lyric' expression)?

--What is the context, situation of the performance, and how does that alter our interpretation of it?

--What are the important differences between the performed poem, and the poem on the page, as regards a critical interpretation? How is the written work altered in the performance?

--In what ways does a listening audience differ from a reading audience?

--In the case of a recorded live performance: How do (visual and other) aspects of the performance alter out understanding of the sound recording (for instance, how does knowledge of gesture in a performance alter our interpretation of the audio-text)?

--How does the author's reading ironize or render more serious a text?

--How does the appearance of a "serious" discourse (such as poetry) in a medium used mostly for popular entertainment alter each?

--The impact of celebrity performance of literary works upon each.

--What kinds of historical/cultural contexts can we construct around a recording?

--What is the difference between oration and acting?

--How does the performance impact upon what the audience absorbs?

--What is 'instinctively' learned by listening, as opposed to reading (for instance, what do we simply assume when we are listening, that we can't when we are reading, and vice versa)?

--When listening, do we still supply voice (shape it to our own ideas and inner hearings) or are we simply subject to the voice we hear.

--Another way of asking this is: does spoken performance simply replace our imagination during absorption of a literary work, or does it deflect our imagination to other tasks and areas?

--How do we explain the absence of a critical heritage concerning literary recordings?

--How do literary recordings alter our conception of the history of interpretation?

--How is (cultural) legitimacy played out in recorded poems versus published ones?

--What is the relationship between the recording technology and performance?

--How are temporal and rhythmic aspects of a work different in a recording than in a printed work?

--What were the reasons for producing the recording?

--What are the differences between reading and listening in terms of aesthetic absorption?

--What about the recall of literary works: what are the differences in how a work resides within us after listening as opposed to hearing?

--How is our conceptual (critical) and emotional relationship to the work different in reading as compared to hearing?

--What might we learn from comparing different performances of the same text (whether contemporary or of different periods)? And comparing these to the performance recorded by the author him/herself?

--To what uses have specific recordings been put (i.e. relaxation tapes, self-esteem tapes, language learning, etc.) and to what critical effect do we interpret these differences?

--How does a performance of a poem serve as evidence of an 'elocutionary' culture?

--Are written texts always meant to be read aloud? What kinds of literature resist effective reading aloud?

--What effects might we propose sound recording technologies have (have had) upon literary production? And, how do we go about describing and 'proving' these effects (i.e. what can we use as evidence for such arguments)?

--What effects have recorded literature had on subsequent written literature (or subsequent literary recordings)?

--What issued concerning 'authenticity' are raised by a work recorded by its author?

--What are the difficulties of listening as opposed to reading?

--Is there a mode or mode of allusion or intertextuality that is specific to recorded literature, as opposed to written? (i.e. in print we use quotation marks, in performance we can allude to a voice or attitude with change of tone, but not change of content?)

--What is the history of recorded literature as it pertains to accessibility, disability, etc. ? (Talking Books for the blind, for the illiterate...)

--Distinctions in "navigation" (how we work through a text or audiotext) between listening and reading.

--Relationship/influence of recorded music upon recorded literature?

--Who is the audience of spoken word recordings?

--What cultural changes have allowed for recent ascendancy of talking books within publishing industry?

--What is the significance of distinct sound media?

--Develop ideas towards a psychology of listening/voice, a phenomenology, a materialist history, an aesthetics, etc.

***ENGL 603/2—Literary Soundings***

***WEEKLY SCHEDULE***

WEEK 1 (SEPT 7): *Introduction. First Listening*.

*Readings:* Handout—**Alfred Tennyson,** “The Charge of the Light Brigade”, and selected quotes on voice.

*Recordings*: “The Charge of the Light Brigade” as read by **Alfred Tennyson, Lewis Waller, Canon Fleming, and Henry Ainley.**

WEEK 2 (SEPT 14): *Theorizing Technology: Sound, Print, and Other Media*

*Readings*: **Walter J. Ong,**  "Introduction" and "Writing Restructures Consciousness" from *Orality and Literacy* (CR); **Christian Metz,** “Aural Objects” (CR); **Friedrich Kittler,** "Introduction", from *Gramophone, Film Typewriter* (CR); **Sven Birkerts,** "Close Listening: The Metaphysics of Reading an Audio Book” (CR); **Steve Connor,** “What I Say Goes” from *Dumbstruck: A Cultural History of Ventriloquism* (CR); **Charles Bernstein,** "Introduction", from *Close Listening: Poetry and the Performed Word*; **R. Murray Schafer,** “Listening” from *The Soundscape: Our Sonic Environment and the Tuning of the World* (CR)

WEEK 3 (SEPT 21): *Reading Technology Into Things: Sometimes A Voice Without a Body is Just a…*

*Readings*: Week 2 readings, continued; PLUS: **Joseph Conrad,** *Heart of Darkness*; **Ivan Kreilcamp,** “A Voice Without A Body: The Phonographic Logic of *Heart of Darkness*” (CR); **Jonathan Sterne**, “*HELLO!”* from *The Audible Past: Cultural Origins of Sound Reproduction* (CR)

WEEK 4 (SEPT 28):  *The Voice of the Phonograph, circa 1900.*

*Recordings:* Incunabula of recorded sound: **Alfred Tennyson**, **Lewis Waller, Canon Fleming, Henry Ainley**, "Charge of the Light Brigade"; **Florence Nightingle**, "Speech"; **Trumpeter** **Landfry**, "Bugle Call"; **Sir Arthur Sullivan**, "After Dinner Speech"; **P.T. Barnham,** "Speech", **O Henry** "Speech"; Edison House: "Big Ben", Berliner's First German Recording: "Martial Band", **Len Spencer,** “I Am The Edison Phonograph”; **Horatio Nelson Powers,** “The Phonograph’s Salutation”. Commercial Recitations: **Russell Hunting,** “Casey at the Telephone”; **Joe Hayman**, “Cohen on the Telephone”. *Readings:* **Thomas Edison,** "The Phonograph and its Future" (1878) (CR); **J. Mount Bleyer,** "Living Autograms" (CR); **Edward Bellamy,** "With the Eyes Shut" (1889) (CR); Selections from Recitation Scrap-Books: from **H.M. Soper*,*** *Scrap Book Recitation Series* 1 & 3, **J.E. Frobisher,** *Good Selections* 2 (CR); **Lisa Gitelman**, “Souvenir Foils: On the Status of Print at the Origin of Recorded Sound” (CR); **Jason Camlot, “**Early Talking Books: Spoken Recordings and Recitation Anthologies, 1880-1920” (CR).

WEEK 5 (OCT 5): *Sound Adaptations*

*Recordings:* **Herbert Beerbohm Tree**, “Svengali”; **Len Spencer**, “Jeckyll & Hyde”; **Bransby Williams**, “Dream Scene from *The Bells*” (Take 1), “Dream Scene from *The Bells*” (Alternate Take). *Readings:*  **George Du Maurier,** *Trilby*

WEEK 6 (OCT 12): *Late Victorian Phonography & The Phonograph*

*Recordings:* **George Bernard Shaw,** Spoken and Broken English (Sound Recording). *Readings:* **George Bernard Shaw,** *Pygmalion*

WEEK 7 (OCT 19): *Recorded Modernism and the New Criticism*

*Recordings:* **T.S. Eliot,** *The Waste Land* (1946). *Readings:* **T.S. Eliot,** *The Waste Land*; **I.A. Richards,** *from Principles of Literary Criticism* (CR), **William Empson,** *from* *Seven Types of Ambiguity* (CR), **Cleanth Brooks,** "*The Waste Land*: Critique of the Myth" (CR); **Juan A. Suárez,** “T. S. Eliot’s The Waste Land, the Gramophone, and the Modernist Discourse Network” (CR)

WEEK 8 (OCT 26): NO CLASS.

WEEK 9 (NOV 2): *Speaking Verse*

*Recordings:* **T.S. Eliot,** *The Waste Land* (1946), “A Game of Chess” (various takes, 1935); **Robert Spaeight,** “A Game of Chess” (19--). *Readings:* **T.S. Eliot,** *The Waste Land*; **James Stephens,** “On Speaking Verse” (1937) (CR); **Selections from *The Listener*** [print transcripts of a BBC roundtable discussion titled “Well Versed” that aired in 1941]: “How Should Poetry be Read?”, “Must Poetry Make Sense?”, “Is Verse-Speaking a Lost Art?”, “Does it Stick in the Throat?” (CR); **Austin Clarke,** “Verse Speaking” (1947); **Yvor Winters,** “The Audible Reading of Poetry” (CR);  **Seamus Heaney,** “The Power of T.S. Eliot” (CR); **Mark Morrisson,** “Performing the Pure Voice” (CR)

***CRITICAL LISTENING JOURNALS DUE, Wednesday November 9th, In Class.***

WEEK 10 (NOV 9): *Close Listening* [For this class, everyone should have prepared notes towards a ‘close listening’ of one recordings listed below to share in class]

*Recordings:* **William Butler Yeats,** "Innisfree"; **Gertrude Stein,** "If I Told Him (A Completed Portrait of Picasso)"; **Ezra Pound,** "Moeurs Contemporaines"; **Dylan Thomas,** "Fern Hill"; **W.C. Williams,** "The Red Wheelbarrow"; **Lanston Hughes,** "The Ballad of a Gipsy"; **Sylvia Plath,** "Daddy"; **Amiri Baraka,** "Bang, Bang Outishly". *Readings:* Print versions of poems above (CR), plus: **Charles Bernstein,** "Introduction", from *Close Listening: Poetry and the Performed Word*; **Donald G. Godfrey,** "The Critical Analysis of Spoken Word Broadcasts" (CR); **J.C. La Drière**, “Prosody” from *Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics* (CR); **R. Murray Schafer,** “Notation”, “Classification”, from *The Soundscape* (CR)

WEEK 11 (NOV 16): *Memory Tape Subjectivity*

*Readings:*  **Samuel Beckett,** *Krapp's Last Tape*

**David Morton,** "The Tape Recorder, Home Entertainment, and the Roots of American Rerecording Culture" from *Off the Record: The Technology and Culture of Sound Recording in America* (CR); **N. Katherine Hayles,** "Voices Out of Bodies, Bodies Out of Voices: Audiotape and the Production of Subjectivity." from Adelaide Morris (Ed.), *Sound States: Innovative Poetics and Acoustical Technologies* (CR).

WEEK 12 (NOV 23): *The Beats Breath & The Bea(s)ts Speak*

*Recordings*: **Allen Ginsberg**, "A Mad Gleam", "A Supermarket in California", "Howl (For Carl Solomon)", “Footnote to Howl”, "America"; **Michael McClure**, *from Ghost Tantras*. *Readings:* **Michael McClure**, from *Ghost Tantras* (CR); **Charles Olson,** "PROJECTIVE VERSE" (CR); **Allen Ginsberg,** “Meditation and Poetics”; **Douglas Kahn**, "Cruelty and the Beast: Antonin Artaud and Michael McClure" (CR).

WEEK 13 (NOV 30)

Class A- 6:00-8:15pm: *Talking the Talk*

*Recordings:* **David Antin**, "The Principle of Fit II". *Readings* **Bob Perelman,** "Speech Effects: The Talk as a Genre" from *Close Listening*; **David Antin,** "a private occasion in a public place" (CR)

Class B- 8:30-10:00pm: *Poetry Readings &"Spoken Word"*

*Live Readings:* Catherine Kidd. *Print Readings:* **Peter Middleton**, "The Contemporary Poetry Reading" from *Close Listening*, **Maria Damon,** "Was That 'Different,' 'Dissident' or 'Dissonant'? Poetry (n) the Public Spear: Slams, Open Readings, and Dissident Traditions." from *Close Listening*

Week 15 (**Tuesday** DEC 6) *Just Listen to Yourself!* *A Round Table of Power Papers on the Sound of Literature*. I will try to secure a larger classroom for this day. Location TBA.

***FINAL PAPERS DUE: Thursday, DECEMBER 15, 4pm, LB 501*.**