QUESTIONS FOR AVANT-GARDE NOISE AND SOUND (via Douglas Kahn)

1. **Sources of the Sounds of Noise. (p. 428)**

Kahn’s discussion of the Heulsenbeck’s list of brutism’s sounds: “everything on the list was a domestic item, or when they were public, they were kept for the use of men out of sight” suggests that it is important and interesting to think of the nature of the items selected to make noise. What are the symbolic implications of the causal sources of the sounds, so to speak.

For example, one signature sound of the 2012 “Maple Spring” protests was that of the "Casseroles" a series of nightly protests that spread to residential neighborhoods in which people stood on their own balconies banging pots and pans. These sounds were inspired by the cacerolazos protests of Chile in 1971, which also involved residents banging on pots and pans from their windows. The sounds of domestic objects suggests a powerful grassroots form of politics, and the politicization of the personal.

***Questions: What is the symbolic meaning of the causal or material sources of the sounds used to make noise? What do the things used to make the noise signify in the world where sound works according to the rules, and what does it mean to use* those *things to generate unruly sounds?***

1. **Appropriation and power relations of noise (p. 429)**

“During the days of the Cabaret Voltaire Huelsenbeck’s ‘negro’ poems were part of the trivializing appropriation of other cultures Europeans found necessary to vitalize their own.”

“Thus, the grinding sound of power relations are heard here in the way noises *contain* the other, in both senses of the word. Noises are informed by the sounds, languages, and social positions of others.”

***Q: Kahn’s initial comments on appropriated sounds and power relations lead us to ask: Against* what *is the noise of this avant-garde work positioned, and at whose expense? What power is attacked by this noise, and whose power is appropriated by the gesture of sonic attack?***

1. **Hugo Ball’s performance of Edenic language (p. 431)**

“I noticed that my voice had no choice but to take on the ancient cadence of priestly lamentation, that style of liturgical singing that wails in all the Catholic Churches…I began to chant my vowel sequences in a church style like a recitative, and tried not only to look serious but to force myself to be serious.”

We think we have a more straightforward affective model in the relationship between poem and reader: the reader wants to read the poem in a manner that communicates the emotional meaning of the poem. But what about the performance of noise and other kinds of sound? In the non-vocal rendering of such sounds in performance?

***Q: What affective position is required to perform avant-garde noise in any given situation? What is the significance of the artist’s/performer’s affective relationship to the sounds being generated during the performance? (And, to invert the question, what affective positions are expected from an audience of such sound, and how can they be expected to assume such positions in response to sound and noise that is avant-garde?)***

1. **Simultaneity (p. 432)**

“The distinction between a succession and ‘simultaneity’, which defies formulation because it is a direct symbol of action. And so ultimately a simultaneous poem means nothing but “Hurrah for life!”

This is one, historically-specific, possible meaning for sonic simultaneity.

Simultaneity in sound-making acknowledges temporal streams occurring in different spaces, ranks, classes, at the same time. It suggests a multi-track representation of sound in the world.

***Q: What does it mean to isolate this particular sound as a track? What does it mean to play that track alongside another selection of tracks (equally curated)? What does this sonic simultaneity signify as an aesthetic or political gesture?***