post-coital feeling: as if you knew you'd had an orgasm recently, but you couldn't remember when, or even exactly how it felt. Maybe this is what sex with space aliens would be like. In any case, the music never builds up to a phallic climax, in the timeworn manner of mainstream rock and roll and other such classical narrative forms. But it also evades – or defuses – the relentless erotic pulse of mutant dance forms like disco, techno and rave. And it eschews as well the frustrated-boy rage and angst of the 'industrial' sound. As guitarist/songwriter Kevin Shields puts it, this music expresses, not 'pure, unadulterated anger', but 'kind of all emotions rolled into one'. An intensity freed from specific content or focus; an erotic, bodily feel no longer tied to particular organs or zones. A sound as floating, enigmatic, and decentred – as 'ambient' and all-embracing – as anything by Brian Eno, but charged with a violent sense of physicality that Eno's music does not possess. […]

So this diffusion and decentring, this in-betweenness, isn't merely a formal strategy; it's also an experience, the way the music is received and felt. There's no longer a clear distinction between inside and outside, or between subject and object. The music has become an extension of your flesh; or better, your flesh is now an extension of the music. Your ears, your eyes, your mouth, your crotch and your skin are absorbed into this irregularly pulsing, anexact, indefinitely extendible space, this postmodern mega-mall. The great ephemeral skin, Lyotard calls it: a labyrinth, or a hall of mirrors, continually breaking and reforming. It's really strange: the more 'alienating' the situation gets (to use that old-fashioned term), the more *intimate* it feels. Fredric Jameson calls it the 'hallucinatory intensity' of 'schizophrenic disjunction'. Or better, think of it as an overwhelming feeling of proximity, crushing and caressing you at once. You can't quite map out this space, you can't locate yourself precisely, and you can't even distinguish one object from another. Everything is just too close to your eyes to be brought. into sharp focus. The noise-laden air is suffocating; it presses down on your lungs, and scarcely gives you enough space to breathe. Yet you're trembling with excitement, or maybe with anticipation. Your flesh is all aflutter. The sound cradles and embraces you, inviting – even demanding – a sensuous, tactile response. Is it too much to say that this music feels sexy and sexual, even though it can't be identified with one particular gender? Not just because men and women share equal duties in the band. But because the sound of My Bloody Valentine has a lovely, playful evasiveness; it slips and slides easily around all sorts of distinctions conventionally associated with the binaries of gender. This music is both hard and soft, both noisy and lyrical; it penetrates and envelops you at once. You might think of it as androgynous, as simultaneously male and female. But maybe it's best described as neither. My Bloody Valentine seems to address you from some sort of intergendered or othergendered space: the space, perhaps, of what have become known on the Internet as Spivak pronouns: 'e, em, eir'. Codified by Michael Spivak, these pronouns may be understood as the exact singular of 'they, them, their'. They compose a third person singular that retains the plural form's indifference, or indeterminacy, as to (biological, social, or grammatical) gender. […]

Steven Shaviro, extracts from 'Bilinda Butcher', *Doom Patrols: A Theoretical Fiction about Postmodernism* (London: High Risk Books, 1997) xx–xx.

Bill Fontana

Resoundings//*c.* 1999

[…] My 1976 recording of Kirribilli Wharf (on Sydney harbour) was the first time I attempted to apply sculptural thinking to the recordable listening process by making an eight-channel field recording.

Kirribilli Wharf was a floating concrete pier that was in a perpetual state of automatic self-performance. There were rows of small cylindrical holes going between the floor and underside to the sea below. They sounded with the percussive tones of compression waves as the holes were momentarily closed by the waves. This eight-channel recording consisted of placing microphones over the openings of eight such holes, making a real time sound map of the wave action in the sea below the pier. It was later installed as a gallery installation played from eight loudspeakers in a space.

This recording was germinal for my work because it was the first time that a conceptual analysis of a natural musical process resulted in a live recording that was as genuinely musical as music; and because of the spatial complexity of eight channels answering each other from eight points in space it also became genuinely sculptural.

It was also sculptural in another important way: the percussive wave action at Kirribilli Wharf had continuousness and permanence about it. This eight-channel tape was not a recording of a unique moment, as with the total eclipse, but was an excerpt from a sound process that is perpetual. Twelve years after this recording was made, I returned to Kirribilli Wharf and placed microphones there which transmitted live sound to the Art Gallery of New South Wales in Sydney, as part of a sound sculpture.

The most elemental characteristic of any sound is duration.

Sounds that repeat, that are continuous and that have long duration defy the natural acoustic mortality of becoming silent.

In the ongoing sculptural definition of my work I have used different strategies to overcome the ephemeral qualities of sound, that seem to be in marked contrast to the sense of physical certainty and permanence that normally belong to sculpture and architecture.

One of the most useful methods has been to create installations that connect two separate physical environments through the medium of permanent listening. Microphones installed in one location transmit their resulting sound continuums to another location, where they can be permanently heard as a transparent overlay to visual space.

As these acoustic overlays create the illusion of permanence, they start to interact with the temporal aspects of the visual space. This will suspend the known identity of the site by animating it with evocations of past identities playing on the acoustic memory of the site, or by deconstructing the visual identity of the site by infusing it with a totally new acoustic identity that is strong enough to compete with its visual identity. […]

Bill Fontana, extract from 'Resoundings' (*c.* 1999), written during work in progress on the two permanent sound installations *Pigeon Soundings* and *Perpetual Motion* at the Kolumba Museum, Cologne.

Jacques Rancière

Metamorphosis of the Muses//2002

Rectangles and mazes filled with loudspeakers and screens. These are above all sculptural objects architecting and sculpting a space. They are also instruments for the production of images and sounds, surfaces for their dissemination, but also metaphorizations of the activity that produces them, of the meaning of this activity and its way of world-making. On these surfaces, in these volumes, bits and pieces of story are created and undone, engendered by sounds, programmed by computers, triggered by select participants or by the footsteps of passers-by as they move about through a squared-off area. Abstract lines or excerpts from films, images of opera choruses or bus routes, advertising jingles or shots on goal flash by on the screens. Sounds of water engender desert: images, symphonic flights of fancy transfigure scenes of everyday life. The screen sometimes goes black to attest to music's power to create images all on its own. Conversely, the tricks of sound dissolve into the projection of light – asserting itself as if it alone generated the visible. These metamorphoses of the sound-image – in as much as they tend to identify with the very processes of the production of all seen and heard stories – themselves lead back toward two great narratives, two large demonstrations of metamorphic power. On one of the installation's coupled-up screens, two stories face one another, as if revealing the truth of all the others: on one side is a cloud of immaterial matter, where light and sound dissolve into their primal unity: on the other, images of DJs at work or of spinning turntables. Two great metaphors of aesthetic *ultima-ratio*: on one hand, the immaterial luminous-sound material in movement, which, within its eternal desirelessness, engenders all form and all melody. On the other, the activity of sovereign artistic will, which grabs hold of all matter, form or technique, which makes art with the noises and silences of the world, with the voices on the radio or the TV and advertising jingles as well as with all recorded and remixed music, from Bach to Michael Jackson, Balian gamelans and Senegalese drums to electronically produced sounds, which for that purpose make use of the computer's silent calculations like the scratching of the needle on the record-player or the crackling sounds of the amplifier. This double game of spiritualized matter and of sovereign manipulation splits the exhibition space in two. It makes it at once into a closed room, where art can exhibit the contradiction of its principle, and a space shot through by the voices of elsewhere – reconfigured by their noise. Indeed, the sound device which constructs a closed-off space by reproducing all forms of music – including that made up of the conditions of its production and distribution – thereby opening up to voices and sounds on the outside: both the noise of the world that surrounds the museum and – or so we are assured – the voices of the dead, recorded in cemeteries.

Let us leave the ghosts aside for the time being. They have a well-known penchant for becoming talkative whenever the inventions of technique propose new means of exploration of an unknown world and a poetics of remythologization of the world as a substitute for revolutionary nostalgia, and as a supplement to the rationality governing the exchange of commodities, opinions and leisure. Let us concentrate, rather, on what is behind the encounter of electronic sound and images, just as in the early years of the phonograph and the cinema, of radiology and the telephone. The voices of ghosts metonymize the device by which the sound and the image are doubly united: through their common dissolution in a cloud of matter similar to that of the spirit, and, conversely, through the collection of voices and recorded sounds, constantly augmented and made available for an infinite number of transformations, in the same way that unusable commodities such as visual artworks, street posters and shop signs have, for a long time now, been brought down to the common identity of fragments available for any new