

History, Archaeology, and De-anthropocentrism in Sound Art

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History isn't just what humans say and do. Events and entities that are irreducible to concepts: such things are also history. Alongside people and their descriptions and discussions, nonhumans do historical work, recording and remembering history. This means that history is felt, heard, seen, tasted, smelled, and done, as much as it is written and spoken. It means that accounts of history are always incomplete, especially discursive ones, and that some aspects of history are beyond human understanding. Sound art can do some historical work that language can't.

Like any artwork, a sound artwork isn't a description of the past but a presencing of the past in the here-and-now. But unlike film and visual art, sound artworks, especially installations and sound sculptures, rely as much on hearing and touch as they do on seeing. Unlike music, in which humans use dedicated instruments to express ideas and emotions, sound art is also a self-expression of nonhumans who exist for purposes other than those of human artists. In sound art nonhumans are often the sole performers. Sound art does history in a way that dislodges humanity from the epicenter of meaning. It is nonhumans' obscure call, their plea for acknowledgment and care; thus as a multisensory history, sound art is also a summons to an ecologically sensitive future.

W.G. Sebald uses the term "natural history" to describe historical work that emphasizes nonhumans. One form of "natural" historical work, the kind that sound artists practice, is archaeology.

In musicology, archaeology usually means a study of discourse – the way people talk about things – undertaken in the style of Foucault. In Foucault, "Archaeology tries to define ... discourses as practices obeying certain rules," and then identifies the rules (Foucault 1972: 138). Archaeology "designates, for every verbal performance ... the set of conditions in which the enunciative function operates, and which guarantees and

defines its existence” (151). For example, Gary Tomlinson demonstrates how, in Renaissance Italy, theories of music and magic stemmed from equivalent “structures of knowledge” (Tomlinson 1994: 39). Digging “underneath” the particulars of musical and magical practice to “unearth” the social and epistemic conditions that enabled such practices to go on as they did: that’s Foucauldian archaeology. Roger Scruton argues that “musicology has begun to treat musical works as ideological productions, whose meaning lies in their social function,” suggesting that most musicology is in fact archaeology, looking “underneath” music for the socially constructed desire that “underlies” its production (Scruton 1999: 399).

Foucauldian archaeology goes “beneath” what we say to discern what makes it possible for us to say such things. Since it’s partly by talking in certain ways that we learn to think in certain ways, Foucauldian archaeology is ultimately about how human subjectivities develop, how we learn to be who we are. It’s anthropocentric: it’s about language and society – it’s all about humans. To be sure, it’s fuelled by the impulse of critique, which points out the insidious ideologies behind seemingly innocuous statements. Critique is indispensable to ecological and historical work. However, if we were to turn Foucault’s trowel upon Foucauldian archaeology, beneath it we would find anthropocentric ideology: the idea that expressions are made primarily by humans and determined by human constructs (like “social functions” and “structures of knowledge”). This assumption is untrue, yet it’s the basis on which Foucault turns the practice of digging in the ground for nonhuman artifacts – the original meaning of “archaeology” – into a metaphor for the study of human discourses and concepts.

Foucault doesn’t often appear in discussions of sound art, even though sound art does involve critique, because sound art isn’t just a discursive practice. Music isn’t either; without nonhumans such as trees, muscle tissues, and air molecules, musicking simply wouldn’t happen. Yet the nonhuman aspects of music are secondary to its meaning and purpose. In sound art, nonhumans are primary, sharing the spotlight with humans and human concerns, if not upstaging them altogether. Bill Fontana’s *Golden Gate Bridge* is the voice of no one but the bridge; the sounds of Toshiya Tsunoda’s *Monitor Unit for Solid Vibration* are those of the walls in an empty room; the star performer in Yann Novak’s *The Breeze Blowing Over Us* is a bedside fan. In Kathryn Eddy’s work, it’s the ghosts of animals we hear, in Steve Roden’s *ear(th)*, it’s the planet and tectonic plates. These things are real material bodies with the power to affect other bodies and bring about events. As such they’re irreducible to epistemic, discursive, or social structures.

A growing interest among sound artists is media archaeology, pioneered by Wolfgang Ernst. Media archaeologists study the physical processes by which machines mediate human actions and ideas: history as the movement of a typewriter ribbon over an archival index card; memory as the flickering of electrical signals inside a computer. By tinkering with machines and thinking about how they work, media archaeologists re-

envision history as not only a matter of discursive accounts, human recollections, and cultural memories, but also a bunch of continually active technological processes. “Media archaeology concentrates on the non-discursive elements in dealing with the past: not on speakers but rather on the agency of the machine” (Ernst 2012: 45). Thus in thinking about sound, Ernst doesn’t just consider what it means to humans (hermeneutics); he also examines how nonhumans process and represent sound: how computers “see ... spectrographic image[s] of sound memory,” how they effect “close reading[s] of sound” not by listening and interpreting but by “dissolving” the sounds into “configurations of data” and “discrete blocks of signals” (60). Inspired by Ernst’s ideas, Morten Riis created *Steam Machine Music*, a steam-driven zither made partly of LEGO and programmed via punch cards, a mechanical sound artwork that calls attention to its own inner workings. Riis is one of several artists who view sound art as “a media archaeological exposition that portrays the music machine as a multifaceted entity in which a complex shifting between material physicality and symbolic predeterminedness is unfolded” (Riis 2013: 262).

Media archaeology excavates the technological processes that help humans to make and record history by physically looking inside machines, revealing the nonhuman practices that enable human practices such as sound and memory. This archaeology shares Foucault’s concern for what lies hidden, often deliberately concealed, beneath accustomed practices and explicit statements. So does “natural history.” However, “natural history” accentuates *all* nonhumans that typically go unnoticed in discursive historical accounts, not just the equipment that mediates human thoughts and activities.

For Sebald, history is an “emergence of memory” that “sets you thinking” (Sebald 2001: 211, 2007: 106). Physical contact between individual beings provides the opportunity for memories to “emerge” in all concerned parties, whether or not they are human. This emergence can take the form of physical sensations (2001: 150-1). History, then, is felt and suffered, not necessarily narrated. It is “natural” history when some sensual contact, specifically with oft-unrecognized nonhumans, sparks the emergence of memory and reflection. The nonhumans need not hail from the so-called “natural” world, but the contact must be of a kind that brings them, in all their beautiful, repellent, or inconceivable strangeness, to the forefront of attention. For example, photographs that render “process[es] of degradation visible in very concrete form, are surely part of a natural history of destruction”: “moraines of rubble ... stovepipes emerging from the remains of walls”; “plants growing among the ruins”; corpses covered in “finger-length maggots” (2004: 37-9). Making such things *felt* by whatever means: that is natural history, the evocation of a more comprehensive sense of what happened, for instance in a thoroughly documented bombing, than documents can provide. Natural history also appreciates the beauty in small, neglected, difficult-to-classify, nonhuman beings: “admiring the endless diversity of the semi-sentient marvels

oscillating between the vegetable, animal, and mineral kingdoms,” for example, imagining their dreams, memories, and emotions, reflecting on a more complete, richer multi-sense of what is and what has been (2001: 88, 83, 94).

Sebald’s natural history is a form of aesthetic appreciation. It’s also a kind of field archaeology, the “original” science of archaeology that physically unearths bones and shards from recalcitrant ground, turns them over in sunburnt hands, brushes the dirt from them with care, analyzes the dirt and the strange forms of the archaic beings. Field archaeology is not a metaphor. According to Bjørnar Olsen, known for his excavation of the Soviet arctic, field archaeology’s “first and foremost” concerns are the nonhumans that originated in bygone times (Olsen 2010: 2). They might be reindeer or fishing rods; they may be prehistoric or very recent. Either way, Olsen’s concern is with their presence here and now, with how and what they remember, how their presence brings the past into the present and makes others’ memories emerge. Nonhumans may not take part in what humans call discourse, nonetheless they express themselves by being physically and materially present. Using our senses to engage with them may help us to become aware of the past’s persistent vivacity, to undergo history as a *felt* experience.

Olsen’s work represents a recent trend in field archaeology. In the twentieth century, Foucault’s archaeological metaphor became so influential that the actual practice at the heart of the metaphor adopted the meaning of its metaphorical figure: field archaeology became Foucauldian archaeology. Until Olsen began to advocate bringing nonhuman bodies back to the center of archaeologists’ attention, field archaeologists followed in the anthropocentric footsteps of Foucault, Adorno, and other thinkers who in their humanistic zeal demonized nonhuman bodies. To think too much about fossilized leaves or broken pots was considered “materialistic,” “fetishistic,” indulgent in distractions from what really mattered: human relations, thoughts, and means of survival (93). Pre-Olsen, “true” archaeologists considered artifacts to be nothing more than signs of how the people who lived with them interacted with one another. According to “archaeological rhetoric: the material was only a *means* to reach something else, something more important – cultures and societies: the lives of past peoples, the Indian *behind* the artifact” (23). Nonhumans were mere “sites of ‘inscription,’ metaphorical ‘stand-ins’ that always represent something else and more importantly: the ‘social,’ the ‘cultural,’ the ‘political’” (3). The goals of field archaeology were hence the same as Foucault’s: distilling the social and epistemic conditions that enabled artifacts to exist.

But this inquiry rested on the assumption that societies pre-exist and produce the nonhumans with which people interact. Olsen denies this assumption emphatically; for it means that nonhumans are just human expressions, “mirror images of ourselves and our social relations,” and that archaeology amounts to nothing more than a look in the mirror (36). Instead he summons archaeologists back to the dirt and the shards

themselves. He calls for a “somatic” relationship between archaeologists and nonhumans: a multisensory engagement that, instead of reducing nonhumans to mere products of human ideologies and sociopolitical processes, considers how nonhumans actually induce and stabilize human relations and ideas (62).

Although Olsen’s archaeology is a multisensory practice, it’s not “corporeal archaeology,” wherein musicologists discern how traumas to human bodies might influence how they make and hear music. Olsen would not confuse field archaeology with the kind of analysis that is currently widespread in musicology, feminist studies, and anthropology: the hermeneutic perspective that reduces interactions between humans and nonhumans to celebrations of “the human body” alone. “One often gets the impression that in these disciplines, the human body is the only flesh of the world,” Olsen laments, “and that this lived-in body roams the ground rather unconstrained by other types of beings” (7). Archaeologists, however, should recognize that nonhumans enable and participate in everything we do; not just “conspicuous” nonhumans like sculptures and musical instruments, but also those banal entities that humans take for granted like food sources, dining chairs, and droughts (105).

For Olsen, field archaeology amounts to some kind of multisensory engagement with nonhumans that inspires three appreciative moments. First: archaeology teaches us to appreciate the nonhumans that “attach us to one another,” like salmon steaks, tectonic plates, and electrical signals, “because they circulate in our hands and define our social bond by their very circulation” (Latour 1993: 86). On some level it is nonhumans that make human bodies so adept at our own practices: “try out the cleverness of the hands without keyboards, weaves or textiles,” Olsen says, “explore whether you can remember in solitude, which seems equally futile” (Olsen 2010: 80). The archaeological perspective appreciates that humans and nonhumans are not enduringly separate or distinct. All beings are rather heterogeneous yet entangled individuals that comprise, cohabit, and affect what we call “the world.”

Second, archaeology illuminates the valuable, beautiful, intrinsic qualities of nonhuman entities, qualities that only the entities themselves can express. The cupness of a cup, what it means to be a magnet, or what it’s like to be a bat are all respectively intrinsic to cups, magnets, and bats, but irreducible to discursive or conceptual meaning. The archaeologist understands this, Olsen believes: she feels, observes, and listens to nonhumans express themselves simply by being; and instead of just reading into them hermeneutically, she appreciates their irreducibility to human notions even though it means that she will never fully understand them. In fact their obscurity makes them all the more wonderful.

Third, archeology senses the past and the future – our own and others’ – in the presence of nonhuman beings. Olsen’s archaeologists acknowledge that what humans like to call historical change consists of alterations to our relationships with nonhumans, hence those relationships enable us to “experience ‘episodes’ of history such as the

advent of farming, urbanization, state formations, industrialization ...” (10). Further, archaeologists acknowledge that nonhumans have memories. If a habit is a kind of unconscious memory – a body gets so used to doing things in certain ways that it remembers how to do them without having to think – then nonhumans have several habit-memories, the most important of which are being and persisting. “Duration,” continuing to be, is “the material, physical, expression of memory. The past endures, it accumulates in every becoming ‘now,’ making these presents polychronical by definition” (120). Archaeologists acknowledge that nonhumans express their memories of being by being, making the past present and promising to carry it into the future. Nonhumans’ memorializing presence invites the emergence of memory in others. An archaeologist therefore interacts with nonhumans in a manner that, while respecting and enjoying the incomprehensible aspects of nonhuman being, encourages the archaeologist’s own subconscious memories to emerge.

To reprise, what Olsen calls archaeology is what Sebald calls natural history: sensual contact with nonhumans that sparks the emergence of memory and reflection. How this sensual contact takes place can vary. It can involve digging spoons out of the ground, excavating dinosaur footprints, turning a pebble over in one’s hands, caring for a potted plant, dusting a picture frame, recording the voice of a chicken, translating seismographic readings into musical scores, perhaps even finding just the right combination of images and words with which to re-present a bombed-out landscape. The “crucial point is rather to become sensitive to the way things *articulate themselves* – and to our own somatic competence of listening to, and responding to, their call” (62). Olsen writes: “we all have such intimacy and familiarity with things, and in this sense are *all* fellow archaeologists” (18). Doing archaeology means finding some way to “activate” our implicit memories of *our* perennial intimacy with nonhumans whilst becoming “sensitive” to *their* “inherent qualities” (18).

Again, archaeology is tantamount to aesthetic appreciation: a reflective mode of perception that begins with sensual contact. The relationship between archaeology and aesthetics is not metaphorical. Field archaeology really is aesthetic experience. Archaeologists describe excavation as a matter of “following the cut”: obeying the feel, smell, sound, and shape of the ground as they dictate the movements of the trowel in your hand; obeying the artifact when you uncover it, as its inherent qualities tell you how to treat it (Edgeworth 2012: 79-80). If it exudes a smell, you sniff; if it rattles, listen and handle with care. All nonhumans issue nondiscursive imperatives that tell us how to dispose ourselves towards them. The painting demands that you stand before it and look, the installation summons you to explore it slowly, listening and thinking. When you find a jar and wonder what might fit inside, when you come upon a lonely lamb and wonder where its mother is, when you hear a strain of music and stop to listen, you heed their nonhuman imperatives (Lingis 1998: 60-8). Doing archaeology means allowing ordinary aesthetic appreciation – the sensual, thoughtful, and obedient

relationships that we depend on all the time – to do historical work by inspiring the emergence of memory.

The potential equivalence of history and memory didn't sit well with Foucault (1977: 14). But for Walter Benjamin, "To articulate the past historically ... means [precisely] to seize hold of a memory as it flashes up at a moment of danger" (Benjamin 1969: 255). Any encounter with a nonhuman or human other is a moment of danger, when we become subject to their imperatives. In such moments it can happen that the presence of the past becomes suddenly vivid and close, time and space seem to collapse. In his novel *Austerlitz*, Sebald's protagonist describes how coffins in a Welsh funeral procession put him in mind of a sketch by Turner: a memory that emerges with such force that Austerlitz finds himself drawn to Turner, even years later when he learns, first, that Turner once visited the site of that Welsh funeral, second that he and Turner visited the spot at the same age (Sebald 2001: 109-10). A similar thing happened to Sebald himself: struck by traces in the snow on a particular mountain, he later learned that Nabokov skied on that very mountain, probably at the same time as Sebald visited the place as a small boy. "That somehow then sets you thinking," Sebald says. "It's the reality of it. That he left traces in the snow on the same hills. These are different kinds of history lessons. They're not in the history books" (2007: 106). A chance encounter makes "the cut" – the sight of a bier, the feel of lines in snow – and Sebald follows as it leads him to connections. Like a live wire, a brush with the nonhuman sparks awareness of the past in the present with the force of a collision: one's own body collides with others strange, distant, and dead. For Sebald that is history: a personal, physical encounter with the past in the present, oftentimes by chance, possibly traumatic, probably indescribable. It is a *felt* memory with elements of both habit-memory (being a certain way) and recollective memory. History qua archaeology and the emergence of memory is affective memory.

"Affective memory" is Salomé Voegelin's term for what happens when we listen to sound art (Voegelin 2010: 184-5). Noticing a sound, being struck by a strange cry, "collapses" time and space, "intertwining" the listener's body with that of the cry and the entity who cries; so just as Sebald collided with Nabokov in the instant of a strange sight, sounding, sound, and hearer "intertwine ... beyond structural language in the affective action of our coincidence" (179). Any sound can make this happen, but sound art makes this affective coincidence *conspicuous*. Listening to Fontana's *Harmonic Bridge*, Voegelin describes the experience as the sense of her body, the bridge, the art gallery, and Fontana coming together "through the affective trigger" of memory, her own and theirs, which "extends [her] present perception" (184).

Sound art goes out of its way to make space for such strange meetings to occur. It makes coincidence – the mere presence of a bridge in a museum, of a piglet in a dining room – a significant object of attention. Sound art is always a site of contestation. It's where the borders between music and noise, sound and image, space

and sculpture fall away. Sound art defamiliarizes, denaturalizes, and disrupts our accustomed relationships with sounds and sounding bodies. Drum kits are familiar, until Christian Marclay makes their stands four meters tall; bridges we can live with, until they invade our art museums; chicken's just another sandwich, until it starts squawking in our ears. Sound is just the waving of the air – till it slaps you in the face and follows you around the room. Listening to sound art reveals that sounds are nonhumans who physically dig into our bodies, turning us into sites where, following their cuts, we encounter distant others, and their memories emerge with our own. To listen to sound art is to do archaeology and suffer archaeology. It is to handle sounds and sound-making nonhumans via our physical senses, and at the same time to be handled, summoned, affected and excavated by those same nonhuman beings.

Kathryn Eddy's *The Problematic Nature of Flatness* (PNF) and Steve Roden's *ear(th)* are exemplary archaeological sound artworks of natural history. Sounding their memories, the sounds in these artworks put listeners in contact with the nonhumans who made them; and by juxtaposing their memories with ours, they summon us to rethink how we relate to those nonhumans. Both installations call attention to nonhumans who tend to escape our notice.

In PNF, the voices of farm animals stalk you via loudspeakers placed around the room as you enter and sit down at a dining table. On the table are plates, menus, cutlery. Open your menu (to the screams of a lamb or the howling of a rooster), and instead of entrees you will see an annual report from ConAgra or some other agribusiness. Nowhere in PNF are animals or pictures of animals. Yet in their absence they are present; their bodies are present and persistent memories emerging from the sounds that press in on you. By listening, you bring your body into contact with a snuffling piglet; by reading the report, you meet the CEO smiling on the first page; sitting at the table, where normally you would anticipate sterile meat fillets and gutted vegetables, you are complicit in the dissemblance through which the CEO turns piglet into pork and profit. By staging a multisensory engagement with nonhumans that makes the ways in which they “attach us to one another” painfully conspicuous, even as we try to efface them from our consciousness, PNF does archaeology.

PNF realizes its critical potential when it sparks the emergence of memories that activate your conscience. You sit at the table, read the menu, listen to the squealing hens, and a memory emerges of your last visit to a restaurant, where animals and vegetables *qua* animals and vegetables are nowhere to be found, only Szechuan Grilled Flat Iron Steak with Potato Puree and so on. Disturbed by sudden awareness of the absence of the creatures whom capitalism conceals in sterile packages, dissimulating the body-to-body, blood-to-blood intimacy of eating; struck by those creatures' invasive presence, out of place, in the realm of art; you listen again to their present-absence/absent-presence, realize that you're never sure what you're hearing or eating. “Some things are untranslatable and I am okay with that,” Eddy says. “My work forces

us to stop and listen, not for the sole purpose of figuring out what they are saying, but instead to allow the animals the space and time to speak and be heard in their own language, with their own voice” (personal interview, November 18, 2013). As an affective, critical encounter with the presence of the past in the irreducible uncanniness of nonhuman materiality, PNF does archaeology.

For *ear(th)*, Roden translated seismic data from a 1999 earthquake into a kind of score, which he used to program eighty tiny robots to play glockenspiels. They live on the roof of an eight-foot-tall wooden tube, a resonant sculpture into which you step and listen. The robots and their instruments are beyond the ceiling, out of sight, their tiny motors sigh as their delicate arms glide; they touch the glockenspiels and *ping*. All is quiet in this mysterious tube, where wood and air fill themselves with subtle sounds.

By concealing the soundmakers and surrounding each sound with silent hollows, the nonhumans in *ear(th)* – the tube, the score made by the continents – nudge you towards an archaeological perspective. Each sound drops into your awareness like a snowflake onto your palm, so delicate that you hardly trust yourself to move as you marvel at this tiny thing come from who-knows-where. Like an ancient fragment from out of the ground, each sound is inexplicable: you can’t confirm its source (xylophone? wind chime? and at whose hands?). You enjoy its ineffable company, like that of a petal that you hold between your fingers. The installation summons you to do no more than that, summoning you to archaeology: to feel nonhumans express themselves and enjoy their evasion of explanation.

In the nonhuman physicalities that comprise the installation, *ear(th)* invites the emergence of nonhuman memories. The memories of each sound are robot, glockenspiel, and shifting landscape, which you could explore through research. But the robots and the score themselves do archaeological work, excavating the earthquake. Alongside Roden they bring forth, handle with care (translate), and articulate the memories of the shivering earth, which take material form as the sonic bodies that dribble into your ears: the sounds are memories of the earth as the earth is a memory of the sounds. Nonhumans remember in ways that humans can’t (Sebald 2001: 221). But like all memories, these recollections are also transformations. Roden says: “the whole thing felt like a kind of alchemy, because we translated the information of moving earth into an incredibly delicate and calming presence.” To “literally see (and hear) something transform completely, yet still having its integrity intact” is a paradox and a marvel: “experiencing an earthquake as something wholly unlike an earthquake” (personal interview, November 1, 2013). As a meeting of bodies, most of them nonhuman, that makes the presence of the past a mutually affective, *felt* experience, *ear(th)* does and is archaeology.

Eddy’s and Roden’s sound artworks – not just the artists but the nonhuman structures and sounds – bring us into intimate contact with nonhumans: a jarring, multisensory form of contact that invites the emergence of their memories and ours,

summoning us to rethink their presence and answer their cries. In both artworks humans are decidedly out of the spotlight; and yet the works prevent their listeners from standing altogether outside of them, regarding them and their constituent nonhumans from a safe and abstract distance. The sounds force themselves into our bodies – you cannot look away from sound – shoving the animals and the moving, creative earth into too-close proximity with our vulnerable subjectivities, imposing their imperatives on us. “No: we are not in the center of the universe, but we are not in the VIP box beyond the edge, either,” writes Timothy Morton. “To say the least, this is a profoundly disturbing realization. It is the true content of ecological awareness” (Morton 2013: 18). Morton calls it a “being-quake”: when we run smack into something that shakes us out of all the safe places and perspectives to which we’d always thought we were entitled (19). In a “double denial of human supremacy,” we come to realize that humans’ relationship with nonhumans is neither one of absolute sovereignty nor of absolute otherness and invulnerable distance (19). This realization is the ultimate promise of archaeology and natural history, and therefore a profound possibility for sound art.

Archaeology is not the only way to make or hear sound art. In fact objections abound to everything suggested here. Nonhumans may summon us to treat them in particular ways, but the truth is that we don’t always do so. The decision to listen or make art “archaeologically” is to an extent subjective and private. Whether or not archaeology ever happens is subjectively contingent.

So is art. It’s arguable that art requires some human participation and subjective decision-making, at least the decision that the phenomenon in question is indeed art. It’s for the artist to arrange the nonhuman components of the work according to their imperatives or not. It’s for each listener to allow herself an “archaeological” experience or not. These decisions boil down to neither epistemic conditions nor nonhuman imperatives, even though such factors are influential. Hence no form of archaeology can completely account for how artworks are created and perceived. This failure is not exclusive to archaeology. No single perspective can account for every aspect of any given work, especially its subjective aspects.

We could say the same of history: that history isn’t memory and the storing-up of experience but somebody’s subjective, selective gathering of remembered details into a sensible (and partial) narrative. On this view nonhumans like sounds and artworks cannot do history or archaeology, only store it. Because they lack “subjectivity,” nonhumans can’t be “historians,” only “archives.” Contrarily, Olsen and Sebald might argue that nonhuman actors, details, and events impose themselves on us, forcing us to remember them in their disorderly manner of appearing. On this perspective nonhumans determine which events we remember: they function as historians, we as archives in a sundry, nondiscursive history, even though they lack what we call “subjectivity.” Which view is correct?

What's most important is that sound art and archaeology call both views into question. Consequently, there's a lot at stake: the definitions of subjectivity, choice, memory, agency; the question of a difference between doing history and recording it. When nonhumans analyze events (as when a computer records a sound and makes a drawing of its wave-structure), does that analysis really constitute memory and history, *pace* Ernst, or is it more like science? Is history really the storing-up of experience in whatever manner one is capable of, or is it somehow a more "special" practice? If history is reflective, what constitutes reflection, self-reflection and -awareness? Is it necessarily the case that such things can be done only in the way that humans do them?

Only more questions can respond to these questions, since what it's like to be nonhuman can only be a question. Statements like this one are tempting: "Anthropocentric humanists will say that history is humans' special purview, de-anthropocentric radical-ecologists will say the opposite – this means history's definition is subjective." This statement seems to answer all our questions in one ideological swoop. But it's reductive; it forecloses further discussion and questioning. The goal of de-anthropocentrism, archaeology, and sound art is to invite questions, widen our perspectives on phenomena like history, ecology, aesthetics. Acknowledging nonhumans' historical agency cannot help but challenge longstanding practices and concepts.

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