



gilles aubry

the amplification
of souls

adocs



Fire!

Fire!

Fire!

May my enemies be burnt!

Fire!

Everywhere Fire!

Shout Fire!

Start shouting!

Acclaim, applaud, turn

Behind, in front, to the left

and to the right!

Fire!

Follow them!

You can even run!

Follow them!

They are behind you!

Throw the fire!

Everywhere!

Behind you! Fire!

Come on!

May fire follow them!



PHONIC

POWER ON

+6	+6	+6	+6
+3	+3	+3	+3
0	0	0	0
-3	-3	-3	-3
-6	-6	-6	-6
-9	-9	-9	-9
-12	-12	-12	-12
-15	-15	-15	-15
-18	-18	-18	-18
-21	-21	-21	-21

L R CUE/AUX

AUX 1 AUX 2 AUX 3



My brothers and sisters!
To be human is difficult
and very dangerous.
Without the Holy Spirit
you can't do anything.
Look at what's given
us the strength
to enter the forests, the villages
where there are many sorcerers,
in the houses in which
many things are happening,
to preach the Word of God.

When the Holy Spirit
will come to you,
he will descend on your heads.
You will rise on your feet
and you will speak on God's behalf.

When we will have said
seven times the name of Jesus,
you will see how
the Holy Spirit operates
Beware! There are people
who will speak in tongues!

Let's shout for the first time: Jesus!





When we will shout
the name of Jesus this time,
for the third time,
this is for the blocked situations.

You are not finding
your way through life,
You are hindered.

At night they do it to you,
They give you the sad look.
They say: our brother was helping us,
look now how much ground he's lost!
Now you are blocked.

He is speaking in tongues,
he is receiving from God.
Hallelujah, this is the pastor
speaking in tongues

In the name of Jesus! Receive!
Now he is touching other people.
You are the one
who will help your family!
Your star is shining,
but a barrier was put in front of you.
Blocking spirit!
Leave my children's body!
In the name of Jesus! Hallelujah!





COMMUNIQUE

Sixth time Jesus! Be careful!
The sixth time is the spirit of death.
All those who follow you, your family,
you are about to lose some people,
you have troubles in your family,
even if you are sitting on your chair,
even if you are outside,
even if you are inside,
even if you are the neighbor,
even if the spirit of death
is threatening your family,
the spirit of God will
follow you wherever you are.

Come on! I order!
May the spirit descend on you!
In the name of Jesus!
The fire of the Holy Spirit!

Spirit of death! Go away!
In the name of Jesus!
Spirit of death
who is with these people!
Fire! Descend!
Spirit of death!
Leave this body!
You who was chosen to die this year,
you are released! Now!
Depart! Spirit of death! Go away!
In the name of Jesus!
Spirit of death!
It cannot be confused
with the spirit of God!

My dear friends,
I can see how the spirit is
leaving the bodies of these people!

Don't let yourself be distracted!
We are going to shout,
we are going to applaud,
we are going to sing, here!
Shout!
To chase away the spirit of death...
Spirit of death!
Go away now!
The Fire of the Holy Spirit
will burn all that
is not good in you.
Leave!
Go away!



Ghee-Zuss: The Sonic Materialities Of Belief

**Johannes S. Ismaiel-Wendt on the Multichannel Sound Essay
L'amplification des Âmes by Gilles Aubry¹**

This is no faint noise, no brittle noise. It is a sonorous noise, one that demands to be heard. This unrelenting noise—heard not only metaphorically—is already more the envelope of an amplitude, or the motivated form of an intrinsic line, rather than something shielded or mantled, which somehow remains involuntarily perceived. The humming of static itself proves that something is there.

Composition and Spatialization Practices I

I am walking around an eight-track sound »installation« by the sound artist Gilles Aubry. In February 2012, Aubry places speakers in a rectangular corner in the foyer of the Haus der Kulturen der Welt and gives a concert. It is no ordinary concert—one in which the audience can applaud the virtuosity of an artist on stage—but neither is it a typical sound installation. The manner of its opening suggests a unique performance, a one-off event—as reflected in its billing in the program:

Friday [February 24, 2012] 6.30 pm. to 7 pm.

L'Amplification des Âmes

Live Performance by Gilles Aubry (Sound Artist, Berlin)

In Summer 2011 Gilles Aubry collected impressions from Kinshasa's religious soundscapes: a mix of the technically-amplified sounds of street preachers,

evangelization campaigns, and film soundtracks from slum cinemas. Aubry's performance emphasizes the influence of audio amplifiers on the city's religious sound cosmos.

The arrangement is clear: I am not being invited to pay a fictitious visit to some soundscape or other. The focus is not on the acoustic fittings required for imagining another space—for there are no props here. It is on the acoustic equipment itself.

Is this mike on? Somebody taps it. »Pulok, pulok,« yes, it is working. Then a voice: »A!« Again a staccato: »A! A!« Of course, someone is running a soundcheck and the noise is coming from a medium-sized PA. A voice is articulating various phonemes into a microphone as a test: »Gheee!« Cut and pause: »Gheee, gheee!« And finally we hear something suggesting the semantic resolution of the check »A! A! (H)allelujah! Gh, gheee, Jesus,« None of the usual »one, two—testing, testing ...« soundcheck gibberish, but instead the »making of« the spoken message: »Jesus is the King!«

The volume is spiked up: a somewhat louder speech impulse and then the PA squawks. Feedback is generated when the voice rises on the syllable »Gheee.« The fall in pitch on the second syllable »zuss« is not a problem. Now it sounds fine—the feedback is at an optimized minimum level. Through the PA even the sharpest »s« is molded into a beautiful hissing sound: »Gheeezussssss.«

The Sound Corpus and the Corpus of Sound I

A microphone and pick-up from an electric guitar undergoing a soundcheck, airborne sound and electroacoustic converters which are being tested for the service. It is vitally important that the congregation is furnished with acoustic proof that Jesus is among them. Even if a »Jesus Hallelujah« soundcheck may at first sound a little odd, it is maintaining one of the oldest traditions. After all, Jesus himself mediated his body acoustically.

During the Last Supper, he took the bread and said: »This is my body« (Matthew 26: 26). In the various translations of the Bible and in the equally diverse Christian concepts of the Eucharist, there is at least consensus that Jesus explained the forms of his being in a spoken, and thus, in an acoustic transubstantiation.

The tracks are now heard together in time-lapse. The approaching voices and footsteps of several people walking over loose ground in flimsy footwear meld into the soundcheck. It is quite a realistic scene—the congregation arrives while the sound system is still being tested. The layering of the soundtracks with crisp, hard edits remains, however, artificial. The theme »soundcheck« is still being played. A guitar is being tuned: e b G D A E, E A D G b b b e ... getting there, and then some more fine tuning: e b G D A E, E A D G b e. Someone is singing. How can one tell whether someone is rehearsing, preparing something, or performing in front of an audience? Well, quite clearly, this »someone« is rehearsing and testing—as the echo effect is being adjusted.

Composition and Spatialization Practices II²

This soundcheck is probably a field recording which Aubry made in one of the new Pentecostal churches in Kinshasa. The term »church« should not be confused with the European Catholic stone architecture. The checking of the sound system is taking place outside—that is clearly audible. Perhaps there is just one large roof raised on steel beams, without any sidewalls. But to reiterate: no closed space is being created here, either by the church, or by Aubry. The objective is to merge the soundscapes on all sides. Soon the babble of voices flows into static and the soundcheck itself.

The Sound Corpus and the Corpus of Sound II

The sound conversion is not only a medium, it is the corpus itself. Sound is immaterial, just as belief is immaterial. Belief and sound are, however,

always mediated materially. The significance of the acoustic mediation of faith becomes particularly evident in technically mediatized practice. As paradoxical as it may appear, belief and sound in particular intrude into our lives as invisible objects through the material forms of our culture (cf. Straw 2012: 227, 228):³, including sound systems (ranging from large PA systems to car hi-fis), cassettes, CDs, DVDs, audio archives (private and public). In his audio performance Gilles Aubry renders audible forms of such mediatization and material amplification of belief.⁴

Coalescing with the singing, footsteps, and voices is the sound of car engines passing slowly by. Someone is chanting into a megaphone. Perhaps the megaphone is mounted on top of a car. Within a minute the sound artist presents us with various registers of speech and his modes of documentation. Firstly, Aubry's microphone picks up numerous voices: audio recordings (cassette?) being played back on some device. Then a voice speaks directly into the microphone. Evidently Aubry is interviewing someone. Having read a text on Aubry's work, I'm aware that he has accompanied pastors from the New Pentecostal churches in Kinshasa. I assume a pastor is explaining the linguistic context to him. I can just hear something about »en allemand« and »magic.« Finally, some pre-produced/recorded voices can be heard. A distorted-sounding sermon, a »hallelujah,« and a murmuring ripple through the congregation. An impassioned sermon to an audience who respond with equal urgency. Are these recordings from the pastor's archive which he is commenting on? Is Aubry documenting a documentation?⁵

Signifying the City I

Or: Whose Urban Lo-Fi Soundscape?

When, in 1977, Murray Schafer attempted to characterize soundscapes using the prefixes hi- or lo-fi, this distinction still referred to issues raised by the acoustic qualities of urban spaces where discrete sounds may or may

not be discernible from one another (ibid.: 43). Under Schafer's analytical categories, lo-fi soundscapes are those in which all the sound symbols are either drowned out or merge with the post-industrial din and background noise of machines and engines (ibid.: 71). Since then, during the course of the decades, urban soundscapes and, above all, awareness of the »technology and symbolism of sound« (Bijsterveld 2001) have been transformed. In European and North American cities it has become clear to diverse players and planners that even if every technological invention is accompanied by new sounds, at the very least rate control over noise still has a (symbolic) significance. Or conversely, not controlling the sound of the technologies is vulgar (cf. ibid.: 61). Are the soundscapes we are listening to here, »lo-fi«? Is audio production really uncontrolled?

Some five minutes have elapsed since the start of the audio performance. Another change to the recording range: the humming of static, as if someone were scanning the longwave band of a radio. It is the same humming we heard during the intro—only this time, however, there are interruptions and a change in tone-color. The shapes and the static migrate: radio, PA system, megaphone sound, guitar amplifier—everything is now being registered simultaneously. The guitar is still being tuned. The car engines are purring quietly. Someone—man or woman—is scoring a lambent guideline into the soundscape by tapping out a rapid rhythm against a bottle with a spoon or something similar.

Signifying the City II

With the hi-fi vs. lo-fi dualism still ringing in my ears, I listen to Gilles Aubry's distorted and static-laden recording from Kinshasa. It is not necessarily the sound artist's production itself that is distorted, but the players originally recorded, who supply him with at times heavily distorted and static-laden original material. We are, of course, able to distinguish between the sonic urban soundscapes and arrive at the conclusion that Kinshasa is

awash with the sound of crackling, banging, howling, and distortion. Old engine noises, be they from electricity generators or cars (the great age of the latter can be recognized from the characteristic hooting of their horns) reverberate through the streets. PA systems, TVs, and radios blare out from the uninsulated houses. In contrast, in Western metropolises intellectual resources have become available to focus a »Tuned City«. Rather than reducing noise, high-tech trains begin their journeys in harmonic intervals of a third, their passengers sitting with closed headphones capable of transporting the cleanest trendy sub-basses, devoid of subculture.

A crowd of people has gathered. I estimate there to be some several hundred believers. Of course, I cannot know that it is a religious gathering, but my ears have been alerted by the announcement and the »Hallelujah« soundcheck. Occasionally a lone voice rises above the babble of voices engulfing me, although not one wishing to address the gathering, I sense. Everyone clearly has something to contribute. Initially I gain the impression that this babble of voices is being generated by a dialogue between groups of people. To me it sounds like this myriad hum of voices is actually impacting on each and every individual who is perhaps praying, beseeching, proclaiming, and singing here. This sea of voices, tongues, and words also arouses in me the impulse to join in and give verbal expression to something. I could get something off my chest without being identified, yet it would still be heard, amplified, replicated, and mediatized. And just like my reflections in a cabinet of mirrors, it would be difficult to identify the original.

This is an achronistic narrative: Once again the soundcheck is fed into the chorus of voices. I can't tell whether this has been done by Aubry or occurred during the actual course of the gathering. This time the snare is being optimized—beat for beat. Or is it a hammer? Whatever the case, something is being struck repeatedly and, either way, these are constructions—sound and building. A few seconds later, it becomes clear that it was a soundcheck for the snare, because then it's the turn of the tom-toms. For

a few minutes, the acoustic mode of construction is transported into the composition. Although the church service is in full swing, the loudspeakers blare out the pastor's message, replete with echo and distortion, into the area filled with people.

Composition and Spatialization Practices III

After having walked around during the first few minutes of the audio performance and attempted to gauge the size of the space which Aubry has created, I decide to take one of the chairs scattered around and sit down somewhere. It doesn't matter where. Perhaps some sense of orientation is important and it is helpful to identify from which of the eight channels each sound is emanating, but sooner or later the signals flow into each other anyway—so the direction becomes meaningless. And besides, the orientation provided by the loudspeakers is both unrealistic and impossible.

The chairs in the space are white, so-called monoblocs, and they too partly serve as props for imagining a specific, different space (a terrace or an open-air service in Africa). Clustered and haphazardly stacked together, they allude only to their own materiality—without being presented in the manner of a »White Cube« exhibit.

The voice of the pastor is amplified electronically. He is preaching and admonishing. Although I cannot understand his language apart from the occasional interjection of »Hallelujah,« I know this to be the case. It is the incredible distortion, the over-drive in his voice, which is exhorting me. The sound is unrelenting, and penetrates my ears with much greater intensity than mere portentous words. He screams into the microphone: »Hallelujah! Hallelujah, Hallelujah!« And the congregation responds with cries and ululations: »Hallelujah! Hallelujah, Hallelujah!« How should I express this unrelenting sound in text form? My inability to articulate the impact of this distorted materiality demonstrates the completely different level of experience generated by distortion—one which defies written description.

Distortion is Truth I

In »Distortion is Truth« (Poss 1998) distortion is perceived as enriching sound (ibid.: 47). Distortion creates sound, the enriched broadcast, the well-intended gift, which the charismatic movements have quite appropriated for themselves as a matter of course. The noise and distortion envelop everything with a patina, which also generates an aura (cf. Mersch 2004: 83). Static and distortion have always highlighted the mode of construction. It is obvious that charisma as a function of a characteristic sound and an act of speaking is culturally charged. Žižek contends that, were it to be discovered that the charisma of the king is a performative effect of a symbolic ritual, a »fetishistic inversion« as it were, then the performative power (1997: 55) would be lost. Yet when the performative charge, however, is so obviously part of the symbolic ritual, what is there left to be revealed?

Distortion is not a failure but a (physical) enrichment. Non-linear distortion is, for example, an enrichment of the oscillations which comprise whole-number multiples of the sound's fundamental frequency. Distortion enables new combinations of overtones to be generated which, in turn, create something like an »inherent pattern« (cf. Schloss 2004: 137). This results in the creation of sound shapes which, despite being »there,« are not actively played. And if I am focusing here on the technology, and appear to be avoiding religion and spirituality, then it is because of the rhetorical question which I posed in reference to Mark Hulsether (2005: 503): Are religious sound practices (in the city) less or »more cultural than anything else«?

Fade-out here and fade-in to another soundtrack, a moderately distorting loudspeaker, and a more everyday setting can be heard. The crowing rooster; followed a second later by another crowing rooster. It is an acoustic symbol, which for me, briefly serves as a sound logo for Africa—in concert with the hooting of ancient car horns, the chirping of crickets, and the babble of voices. All that is missing are the strains of women singing to the pounding of cassava in the mortar, as the sound marker for Africa. For I learned this long ago: the rapper Pee Froiss from Senegal

has dubbed the crowing of a rooster into his intro on the track »Africa for Africans« (2004)—in the same way as Amadou and Mariam do on the track (»La Fête Au Village«) from their album *Dimanche a Bamako* (2004). But in the meantime Aubry's *L'Amplification de Âmes* has hypersensitized me to something different, and recalibrated my hearing. I am actually waiting for the third crowing to once again prove acoustically the existence of Jesus and to expose Peter as a traitor.

Signifying the City III

Usually »Sonic Cityness« is equated with noise, polyphony, and cacophony, and also with polymetrics. Aubry's *L'Amplification de Âmes* gives audible expression to the fact that religiously motivated sounds or religious motifs can be isolated from the ostensible acoustic confusion of the city. Aubry records how the New Religious Movements are conquering cities. His recordings capture the significance of sound systems and amplification for New Religious Movements in making the sermons and deliverance audible across the city, beyond the walls of the location. Furthermore, the audio performance enables me as a listener to experience how the street-sound itself is an aesthetic foundation or effect of the New Religious Movements, that is, it is not only the street politics of the New Religious Movements which are at issue here, but the appropriation of the city and street aesthetics by the Religious Movement.

Once again, the humming of an electrical device fills the air. Its surging crescendo evokes fear or anxiety—like an old horror-film score trick. I identify the source as a TV. Initially I hear another »unmotivated« soundscape from my immediate vicinity, namely the tweeting of a bird. And crowing rooster? Then I hear a through-composed soundscape. There is much shrieking. And amidst everything I constantly hear a crowing rooster, the granular synthesis of the auditory grains of the crowing rooster, probably mixed with something quite different. Woven into the filmic,

intentionally arranged sound are excited, high-pitched human voices and a squealing. As if something is being slaughtered. The gaggle of voices softens again into French dialogue, which—and I'm convinced of this—derives from a film.

From these panic-inducing filmic noises and voices, the piece switches to the spatial sound of a—loosely defined—»first-hand« recording. Somehow we are experiencing what at this juncture appears to be the climax of the gathering. Not in terms of the kinetic and tactile experience, but rather the sound source appears to indicate that we are approaching some sort of finale. During a Christian service peppered with the preacher's cries of »hallelujah« and »Jesus« (probably) a woman's voice can be heard, exclaiming, almost at shouting pitch, syllables rhythmically and extremely rapidly. It sounds like: »arrarrarue lurra, lurra, rrattutu rattattut, allaloi, arrarrarue lurra, lurra, rrattutu rattattut, allaloi allaloi...« From a distance I gain the impression that the woman is likely to collapse sooner or later for lack of breath—as she enunciates the syllables in an endless torrent lasting several minutes. Everything bursts forth from her, as if evil spirits or demons were being exorcised.

From its rhythmical structure, I discern a deliverance, which I can only guess at. The person is chanting with a fervent zeal. It appears as if she is liberating herself from some dark spell cast upon her. With a complex periodicity, she acoustically shakes off the curse. And the pastor stands there, contributing: mollifying, yet animating, and offering praise to Him who shall bring redemption: »Gheee-Zusss.«

Within the call-and-response between the congregation and the pastor, there is a third voice/second microphone voice for the »Hallelujahs.« Voices rattle into the microphone—literally, because the pastor is firing off a »Ratatata« like a machine-gun, and looping his words and phrases.

Composition and Spatialization Practices IV

In my opinion, Aubry does not over-exert himself in endeavoring to conjure an ecstatic experience for the audience during the possible climax of the performance. Perhaps he is deliberately creating distance. For the first time I have the impression that it is only a recording playing here, a recording in the sense that we are not hearing a composition, but merely the sounds captured by a microphone held out arbitrarily. No cuts, no multi-layering, or hollow-sounding audio voyeurism between the eight loudspeaker channels in the HKW. Hitherto in the performance, virtually no audio recording has been allowed to play alone for so long. The so-called act of »deliverance« seems as if it has been simply thrown at my feet by Aubry: »Well now you have your topos. Or haven't you been waiting all this time to encounter the Christian religion in Africa in this way?«⁶

I find the transition, the egress from this imaginary reenactment through the association to the drum'n' bass track *Cybergen* from *A Guy Called Gerald*. The title of the album flashes before my mind's eye: *Black Secret Technology*. Once again, Aubry offers me a gentle humming noise in which voices sound almost like radio messages from space. Sizzling and buzzing, mid-tone voices are switched on and off and on again—once more sounding like someone scanning the station dial of a radio also capable of receiving extraterrestrial signals. Slowly and successively from out of this thunderous din, there emerges once again an earthly soundscape and human conversation.

Distortion is Truth II

»What is this Black in Black Sound?« (cf. Hall 1993). Only at this moment of the performance do I find a reference to »outaspace« and it would be much too imprecise and, at the same time, racist to subsume the sound events of *L'Amplification de Âmes* and the Afro-futuristic sound of more popular music together under the label of »black sound technology and

aesthetics.« Perhaps there is a black desire for distortion, which should be read as sonic and strategic positioning. If this is the case then it is to be taken as being highly diverse. The sound productions by the pastors in *L'Amplification de Âmes* differ in this respect to that, say, produced by the musicians of the Kasai Allstars or the group Konono No. 1, who also live in Kinshasa. However, there is an intentional production of static, distortion, and overdrive. One just has to observe how carefully and expertly the skin of the drum is glued together with a rubber-like substance for the performances of the Kasai Allstars and Group Konono No. 1 and how batwings are hung from its sound hole to ensure the drum vibrates perfectly. The drum crackles and buzzes with every beat, no matter how lightly it is struck—as if there were an electric short-circuit. These sound practices of the band or those of the preacher recorded by Aubry are very distinct from the numinous white desire for stillness in music and art contexts. As evidence of this white desire for stillness, Dieter Lesage and Ina Wudtke allude in their book, *Black Sound White Cube* (2010), to the flirtation with John Cage and his piece *4'33* (ibid.: 59).

Until, finally, a more peaceful sermon is to be heard. This is amplified by a PA system over so many widely distributed loudspeakers that echos are generated due to the sound delay. Now I can believe: »This is how it really sounds.« Now I realize: the other recordings of the sermons heard previously must have, in part, been recorded somewhere within the amplification process itself. For they did not always allow this logical multisound and echo to be heard through the loudspeakers positioned around the large hall. The distorted sounds described were more direct. What is more real here?

Composition and Spatialization Practices V

Aubry is developing a material-based artistic form of analysis. This has a different connotation to the ethnographic »thick description.« It is a highly

receptive, clearly audibly, dense composition in the literal sense—layered, classified, augmented, compiled. The basic materials are perhaps both soundscape and field recordings, but Aubry's mode of composition cannot be equated with this. And here composing should not imply that Aubry imparts, for example, rhythmitizing the audio material. The structure of the audio dubbing remains in every regard irregular, and ambient sounds are not excluded.

The echos of the sermon on the ground have something of the dub aesthetic about them. They sound ethereal. Yet the soundtexture remains earth-bound. There is no striving towards »outspace«. Neither idiomatic nor idiosyncratic spaces can be heard. And acoustically one can also observe that Roy Wallis' typology of the forms of the New Religious Movements is both reductionist and generally inapplicable here (1978: 6, 7). Wallis differentiates the various stances of the New Religious Movements into »world affirming«, »world rejecting« and »world accommodating« (ibid.). The constructed soundscapes and the missionaries' approach to technologies can be simultaneously described using all three categories.

Apropos authenticity: for the first time music can now be heard—drums, singing, and a rhythmical guideline is being clapped. However, Aubry does not allow me to slip into the groove or swing my hips to my African music cliché. Just four or five seconds later he plays this marker, and the humming and buzzing of the electrical equipment remain so present that it is obviously only a recording. This is no invitation into a different world, even though children's voices can be heard and once again musicmusic is being played; although incidental conversations are being conducted and it sounds as if someone is preparing a meal and frying something in the pan; and even though there is a noise which sounds like an airplane or a helicopter flying from one loudspeaker to another.

The humming gives way to a heavily distorted voice which I recognize: »Gheee-zuss.« An amplified call and response: »Gheee-zuss« and then

another voice and voices: »... Gheee-zuss.« A sense of alarm: cars are hooting with frequent regularity. The speed of the exchanges between the pastor and the congregation grows in intensity. I hear the preacher shouting amidst the din: »Fire! Fire! Fire!« Everything is now only fuzz: engines humming, amplified voices. Fuzz, fuzz, fuzz.

In my judgment, the acoustic climax only takes place now—a few minutes after the deliverance. In the meantime, some twenty minutes have elapsed. At this juncture Aubry's concert is an »extreme distortion performance.« The pastors are virtually experimenting with distortion. It sounds as if they are holding the microphone not in front of their mouths, but in their mouths. »Uaaarrghh,« there is feedback: performative-distortion-feedback-excess.

Distortion is Truth III

It is a proven sonic fact: if you want the signal to burn, then use a distorter. If you want to animate people to run out, if you want to inspire people to rapid transformation and to spread the gospel, then do not use a laidback, saturated sonorous sound texture. The latter only works when—as in the morning devotion on Deutschlandradio—the aim is to incite a deep emotional response. Amplification, distortion, and echos are co-composers. They dynamize, replicate, and complete the motivational ideas to form a holistic entity (cf. Maierhof 2005: 132, 136).

The sound marker for the gathering comes from horn loudspeakers. In physical terms, horn loudspeakers possess a strong directional character, culturally speaking, they arouse alarm. With the megaphone one always addresses the broad masses. Hi-fi is something for the living room with a couch.

There is an air of alarm, or to be more exact: a sense of emotional alarm is being intentionally produced—by the preachers and by Gilles Aubry. It is obvious that it is not a warning of earthly fire, but an intellectual, spiritual

slash-and-burn. Aubry dubs various distorted tracks over each other which radiate from various *directions*. Perhaps it is the wind which is making the microphone membrane flutter. I hear an image such as *Christ Carrying the Cross* by Pieter Bruegel the Elder, in which the people appear to moving very quickly, scattering apart, and in which a storm is brewing.

Fade out. An impossible finale—simply allowing these streams of sound to melt away into a tranquil space—one which conjures in me the image of someone sitting in front of his house playing a mellow hip-hop beat at walking tempo—for himself and for others. Even if he has only put on a cassette or a CD, he/she is the owner of this music and the performer. I feel as if I am on the road with Gilles Aubry. He is making his recordings and asking the owner the name of the group. It is the first time in this HKW performance that Aubry has taken me to an unknown place. It is a place where I can even hear the very step on which the owner of the music is sitting. I glean this from the fact that edited soundscapes are no longer being presented, but instead Aubry is correlating his questions on music with the hook lines of the tunes. He asks during a pause. At this moment we are in this soundscape.

Signifying the City IV

Distortion is Truth IV

The sub-complex characterization of a post-colonial urban ambience as a lo-fi soundscape has something »victimizing« about it. For the categorization appears as a chronology orientated towards the level of technical development. That which perhaps (with good intentions) is prematurely perceived as a lo-fi sound-scape, can and should be read as an autonomous sound concept in which noise and distortion serve as the aesthetic devices.⁷

In their chronological perception, these pieces of humming equipment sound like a legacy from hi-fi cultures. But they are not simply a post-colonial or a symptom of post-Christianization. From Gilles Aubry's audio performance, in contrast, I hear distortion as an aesthetic or deliber-

ately conceived practice intended to reduce the soundspheres of Kinshasa to more than a tragedy of colonialism.

I need this music, this hip-hop beat as a respite from my own associations in order to forge a real presence. Throughout the entire composition this »canned« beat serves as a kind of bridge. It forms a transition to the theme of the production, which can be summarized and repeated as follows: soundcheck, soft humming of equipment.

Someone is singing something to himself in a comical falsetto. Someone else is playing a slide guitar into a gigantic artificial echo-chamber, or into the open air. It is not a song, or a structured composition, but the strumming of a cliché Hawaiian guitar—truly an overdose of the »Other.« In his audio performance, has Aubry granted any other audiotrack such free range as this risible strumming on a slide guitar or steel-pedal guitar, or the track with the guy singing happily to himself? The theme introduced at the outset is now reprised: »A! All! ... Gheezuss, Jesus. A! All! A.«⁸

Signifying the City V

(New) Religious Movements and their acoustic occupation of space in the city can be read as a soundcheck. The interaction between city, religion, and sound cannot only be loudly and regularly heard—as in the form of bell-ringing, the cries of the muezzin, or parades. An internal texture of references with aesthetic symbols functions like a stress test (Eco 1972: 154, 166). If sound symbols are initially understood as empty or indeterminate entities, then there are various groups in the city who show an interest in freighting them with meaning, codifying or religiously re-codifying them. Everything can then be related to the omnipresence of God. The appropriation of space is not only accomplished through the cry for »Gheee-Zuss« ringing out across the entire city; the tuning of a guitar and distortion can also be charged with meaning. Just as the bread, the wine, and the special acoustics on the Mount of Olives evoke associations with »Jesus.« It is, of course, particularly effective to infer meaning from ubiquitous noise.

Therefore, if the impact of the (New) Religious Movements on urban soundscapes is at issue here, then it is not only concerned with hearing how missionizing is conducted, but also with how faith is inverted into every invisible materiality. The cock again becomes the admonisher,⁹ the horror video a proof of the evil stalking us at every turn.

The composition itself illustrates, once again, its narrative structure: preparation; arrival of the guests; service; preparation for the next time. I am being prepared for an end to this narrative by the removal of its intensity, and by being reminded once again of the tranquil humming of the intro.

The soundcheck, the humming of the equipment, and the slide guitar meld into everyday noises and conversations. Someone is scrubbing something, a choir is singing softly in the background. It sounds like a rehearsal. I listen to the quotidian theme: preparations. Things are being washed and wrung dry. Water is splashing. The guitar is being tuned again E A D G b b e. Perhaps there is some sports event on the TV, as one can just make out the roar of cheering spectators as if in a stadium. Perhaps this is also a recording of some massive Christian gathering. Be that as it may, there is no soundscape which I don't hear as being religious. Birds twitter, chickens cackle. Minutes pass. The humming of static gives way to a »bourdon« tone, a specific tone. Mortars are pounded in preparation of a meal. Far into the background we hear again a short, distorted preacher's exclamation of ecstasy through the loudspeakers. At its center remains the tone—literally a tonic, which is sustained until the end.¹⁰

Translated from the German by John Rayner.

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1 Author's Note: In this essay I am applying a slightly modified, multistage analytical technique which I developed in my study *tracks'n'treks. Populäre Music und Postkoloniale Analyse* (Münster: 2011). In addition to adopting an associative and impressionistic approach to data collection, which »listens« to musical movements and motion simulation (so-called »audio-treks«), I also describe performative spaces, which, for example, are forged and perceived with the use of reverb and echo chambers. In a further step I listen on a more technical and musicological level and in reference to the scientific discourse. Although in this present text on Gilles Aubry's *L'amplification Ames*, the analytical categories form the basis for the compilation, they are no longer clearly differentiated from each other. Only two main text modes remain, which essentially draw a distinction between spatial and movement associations and the technical and discursive debate. However, I have endeavored to ensure that any data furnished are of the same validity or vagueness. Thus, for example, elements of Aubry's recording situation are to be found in both texts modes. Reference to the other scientific sources should be also read as an associative and aesthetic practice.

2 With »Composition and Spatialization Practices« I am describing both Aubry's modus operandi as well as the sound production of the players in his recording.

3 Reference sources marked with »cf.« should not imply a paraphrasing, but rather the associations of the author triggered by the cited sources.

4 Addendum by Gilles Aubry: due to the spatialization of the various sources I have in part really endeavored to deploy spatialization as an instrument for the spatial representation of the various kinds of sound documents: my own field recordings, church archives, film soundtracks, music, audio tracks from the mixing console ... Here spatialization is not, as is usually the case, being used as an additional musical parameter or for the sake of realism ...

5 Addendum by Gilles Aubry: here I also find it interesting that the pastor is not simply commenting but translating: the confessions of the street kids who, during earlier campaigns, were accused of being witches before being liberated. In this sense the pastor is »playing« the role of one of these kids ...

6 Addendum by Gilles Aubry: this passage is important. I am not an unmotivated bystander, nor am I only motivated by the music (or the dramaturgy), but by documentary considerations, focusing particularly on certain aspects: the voices, the bodies, the space, and the tension between the direct and the mediatized sounds, i.e. on the elements which could be significant from a specifically cultural and media perspective. This »distance« may have something to do with the fact that the ceremony has been also recorded simultaneously directly from the mixing console (two-tracks), and on my own stereo microphone... it is a synchronous juxtaposition of the »mixer perspective« and my own perspective ...

7 My aestheticization of distortion in *L'amplification de Ames* should not, however, be romanticized—as is the case with distortion in punk music—nor glorified nostalgically as an expression of rebellion. Neither is it to be confused with campy lo-fi deluxe concepts, the »Aesthetics of Failure« (Cascone 2002), nor the cuts, clicks, and glitches of popular music production to denote an anti- or pseudo- stance (Jauck 2010: 209, 210).

8 Addendum by Gilles Aubry: please note that I recorded the vocals and the slide guitar during the long and impromptu soundchecks... as I had the feeling that the musicians had the room for a time to play music »just for themselves« ...

9 cf. *the unpublished degree thesis* by Constanze Trieder (2013).

10 Addendum by Gilles Aubry: a fundamental tone, yes, an »electric earth-tone« even (50 Hz).

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Look at this man,
he's coming toward us,
what does he want?

Eh! Mama Mukambu!
You heard him, right

He doesn't even understand
what we're saying. Them,
the whites, they record anything.

He's going to say:
look at these poor people!

Are you still recording?

Yes, I want to record the sound of
the bubbles.

Wait then.

He says that it smells good,
what you are cooking.

Ah! It proves you are not
recording images. We don't want
you to record images.

I was afraid he would
take pictures of us and then
show it back home saying:
Look at these girls, they are poor.

Ok, since it's only the sound,
he can record.



Work-in-Between

**Noise Music and Sound Art, Artistic and Scientific Research,
Neo-colonial Representation and Ethnological Field Research**
Gilles Aubry in conversation with Christoph Haffter

Christoph Haffter Does the distinction between noise, »bruit«, as opposed to music or musical sound, matter for your work as a musician?

Gilles Aubry For my work as a musician this distinction doesn't actually matter. But it's an important issue for my work as an artist. I don't simply regard myself as a composer or a musician – I'm a musician and an artist. I make this distinction because my artistic work is often about the cultural and material interpretation of sound phenomena. That is, the interpretation of music as well as non-musical productions or sound emanations. In this sense, I'm interested in the way different people talk about these aspects; if and when they perceive something as noise. I take the position of a researcher or observer and try to pursue different discourses on sound production and the materiality of the music, i.e., its amplification, fixation, storage and distribution or dissemination. This in turn helps me to organise the various sources of sound in a composite way that not only considers the formal elements of sound, but at the same time recognizes the sounds as possible forms of discourse, that is, as sounds that are linked to specific intentions, meanings, people and situations. This connection between abstract sounds and the people who create these sounds, is decisive for me.

CH That is, your work doesn't consist primarily in musicalizing recorded noises; your acoustic documentation of different situations is subsequently not about turning this material into music.

GA No, at least not in the classical sense. Naturally, I'm very interested in the question of the definition of music. But for years now, I haven't really felt at home in the domain of music. I very spontaneously positioned my-

self outside the musical area: in anthropology, in cultural history, and in the visual arts, which for historical reasons are probably much more familiar with reflecting on their works. The conscious positioning of art over the course of history, in the variety of practices, ideas; it's very important for me to understand this reflection as such as part of the artistic practice. I define my work/activities as a combination of different approaches to dealing with sound. Naturally, the musical approximation is still important; it provides good access to the results of artistic work; people get together when there's a concert or a performance or an installation, thus it's still a format I really appreciate. Yet, in general, one could say that my work contributes to a kind of deconstruction of music. In my opinion, it's rather difficult today to define yourself as a composer without also initiating some kind of music reform. If you actually want to do something avant-garde, you should definitely integrate a certain form of self-reflection into your musical creativity, that is, address your work in composition.

CH You describe your work as artistic research incorporated into a larger research project, where the music, the performance *Les Âmes Amplifiées*, forms just one of the various outputs. How does your work contribute to this project and how does it differ from scientific research?

GA You really have to distinguish between the various formats and versions of this work: *Les Âmes Amplifiées* is a performance based on the material of an audio documentation of a Christian spiritual deliverance service in Kinshasa. But the CD doesn't feature the concert version, just the documentation of the research itself. During the concert, this documentation is subjected to additional operations: spatialization, further distortions, feedbacks—performative strategies in a manner of speaking. But there is a difference between what I publish and what I play during a concert. The sound documentation, almost in ethnographical terms, is accompanied by a multitude of ideas, strategies, which I develop over the course of time and try to reflect. These considerations are expressly represented in the audio essay *L'Amplification des Âmes*.

What is scientific and what is not? There is no strict, no absolute distinction; it rather depends on the context in which these different outputs are presented. In concert situations, there's usually not a lot of discussion taking place. In the process, I'm interested in learning and observing simultaneously: how does the audience deal with this concert situation, how is it received and perhaps even enjoyed? In the case of a lecture situation, I have the possibility to articulate conceptual and scientific aspects, ideas that are connected to this practice, whereas the concert is about reappropriating the material, something that has to take place in real-time.

The context of this work was one of artistic research in the framework of the *Global Prayers* project, which invited me as a sound artist. It was about studying the influence of new religious movements in urban space, not necessarily from the perspective of religious studies, but rather urban studies. Within this scope, I was interested in analysing the function of sounds in taking possession of space, and in the construction of new religious places in the urban context. This major project took place simultaneously in various big cities. I had already started to work in Berlin with the sociologist Gerda Heck because there are some Congolese churches there too. Thanks to one of these churches, whose head office is in Kinshasa, this connection to the Congo came about. I went there twice. The first time to get a general idea: we went to various churches and did a lot of observation, established the contacts. The second time I went there on my own to cooperate precisely with one of these churches, the *Libambu Ministry Church*. At this time, an evangelization campaign was taking place, that is, a campaign was being organised to win new members. I followed and documented this process. At the time of the recording of *Les Âmes Amplifiées* I was already very familiar with the parish, Pastor Libambu, and the people. I was accepted, a bit like a family member, and they were very hospitable. I was at liberty to move freely in this situation. This specific recording is the peak moment of my research because I kind of surprised myself in the process: it was strong and intense, hence for me it really had

the character and aesthetics of a noise concert. I experienced the same sentiments and emotions that I had become accustomed to and felt in Europe, especially in Berlin. It had simply given me great pleasure, not due to the similarity — this is not about brotherhood — but because it showed that such aesthetics can also emerge elsewhere, within a completely new context. My understanding of the specificity of noise concerts changed.

CH How do you transform this experience in your performance? Unlike noise music, you must know what resounds in your work: it seems vital for your art to know and co-experience the context of the recordings.

GA Exactly, I'm playing with that. An important aspect of this performance is that I try to present the recording context in a sufficiently transparent way without providing much background information — except for a few lines in the performance's title and in the program, which convey the place of recording and some general information. But the essentials are there during the performance as such. There's the sound documentation, which in this case is playback from the computer using four tracks. I allow myself some transformations, but don't want it to become too abstract so that it's impossible to discern the original recording situation. I try to maintain some clear elements during the course of the performance. In this case, it starts with a sound check, which indicates a very clear, identifiable moment, the preparation of the performance. Naturally, you wonder if this sound check is happening live, or if it's part of the original recording. This consistently leads to elements of confusion, which I instrumentalize to create reflexive listening. Once these things are established, when this kind of reflexive attitude has been triggered, it's a matter of musicality, of a different temporality and other modes of listening. There is an introduction, which I present as transparently as possible, not too much manipulation, you can hear voices, distortions, feedback, the essential aspects of the recorded situation. You can also hear the audience. These are simple, but important elements, which in the best case should be identified to raise awareness of the fact that this is a documentation. In the beginning there is thus some

uncertainty: what's going on now? Is this now practically a film projection? Or is the performer playing some additional stuff? Is it animated, amplified, dramatized? Then you recognise the features of a live performance, my operations and the two aspects are combined over the course of the performance up to a point where they fuse with each other. There is such a turning point where the audience is addressed simultaneously as both the participants in a performance and as the recipients of a documentation. I present something that sounds like the ›usual‹ noise concert, but actually there's already an audience on the tape. This insinuates that you, as an audience, are a bit redundant—this is something you must address: what do you want to be?

CH The end of the recording is brilliant too, when the audience in the recording applauds, and you don't really know whether to join in or not...

GA That is kind of hijacking the concert situation as well as commenting it. At the same time, it's an affirmation and not a rejection of this form. It's a confirmation presented, however, in a more complex and reflexive way.

CH Working with field recordings, the main difference between noise and music shifts (maybe) towards another distinction, which Murray Schafer denotes with the terms hi-fi and lo-fi, i.e. acoustic surroundings, where different sources of sound are individually perceptible, or where individual events can come to the fore, sort of representing the musical. And then again in surroundings where the basic level of noise is so high, or where the various elements of the recording overlap, you can only perceive undifferentiated chaos. So, when you as a musician no longer follow a traditional definition of music as organised sound, does your work consist instead in combining the various recordings in a way that creates a hi-fi situation? That is, do you augment rather monotonous basic material with differences/distinctions/nuances?

GA That certainly plays a role. Schafer's ideas and theories are references that I've been reflecting for years; but today it seems almost too easy to contradict them, especially his romantization of the ideal sound of nature

as opposed to the less pure sounds, such as the sound of the city. This separation is obviously problematic. At this point, I'm even more interested in a new interpretation of Schafer, which not only focuses on this statement, but also on the actual practice Schafer and his colleagues exercised at that time by spending a lot of time with field recordings. I believe that this composition practice in the field is much more substantial for me than, for instance, the resulting composition. Today, art is defined above all as practice, and if you look at what they did at that time, it still remains valid—much more so than what was written about it afterwards.

Regarding my work, this is once again a matter of ambiguity. Because for me it's important to present the soundscape of this church, which according to Schafer is lo-fi, thus offering the documentation of a very loud, distorted, chaotic situation—but at the same time presenting it as hi-fi as possible. My interpretation of hi-fi focuses on the perceptibility of differences, of nuances and, above all, of complexity. This complexity may also be contained in a soundscape, which initially sounds like a lo-fi surrounding. In *Les Âmes Amplifiées*, this can be discerned specifically in the recording technique: I double-recorded the situation, or rather allowed two different perspectives to complement each other in four simultaneously recorded sound tracks. One perspective is a stereo field recording with a mobile directional microphone. The two other tracks, however, originate directly from the mixing console and represent an impossible perspective: nobody in this situation has actually heard what I recorded there, because the signal was not recorded via loudspeakers—the electronic signals actually come from the mixing buses. The combination of directional microphones and mixer recordings is a rather conventional technique for live recordings, but in ethnography it's not very common.

CH Could this double recording be understood as a musical interpretation of the participant observation often-discussed in ethnology?

GA Yes, actually the intention goes in that direction. Today, in reference to the post-colonial discourse, you can no longer deem it possible to take a

cold, distanced and invisible observant position. It seems absolutely necessary to somehow reflect oneself in the documentation process; and this is easiest to achieve using the mobile, subjective recording perspective directly in the situation.

CH By taking the microphone in your hand and moving through the crowd?

GA Yes, this is exactly how it happened. I also played with people's reactions: they talked louder when they saw me with the microphone. The other two tracks directly from the mixer are called backup tracks in the music industry, which you can use to amplify instruments if they're too weak. In my case, however, they provided the opportunity to simultaneously take another perspective. Above all, the microphones of the pastor and sometimes also his assistants fed directly into the mixer, that is, the voices of spiritual authority. It's a kind of dry documentation of this higher voice and, at the same time, it also documents how the microphone arrangements were managed because you can hear how the microphones are frequently switched on and off. And suddenly there really is a silence, or only the static of the electronics. Space, which the microphones make tangible as a background of voices, suddenly vanishes. In this respect, these sound tracks have a very direct, stable and unreflected, non-subjective quality.

CH During your performance, three essential connections between noise music and church service have caught my attention: amplification, distortion and glossolalia, that is, speaking in tongues that lack any comprehensible meaning. First, regarding the amplifier, which also provides the working title: it's striking that the voice is primarily amplified to cross the boundaries of the room. The amplification carries the voice outside the church into the street, to reach a wide audience there. Then again, in noise music a connection seems to exist between the extreme volume and the religious idea of a voice independent of body and space, an overwhelming, omnipresent sound.

GA Yes, this is how voice is employed in the religious context. I would not say that this is also used in noise concerts. In a religious context, it's a mat-

ter of outward radiation and directly seducing people in the street so as to lure them into church. In contrast, noise music is less about a centrifugal movement than an insider story. First of all, it takes place mostly indoors, because immersion is so much more difficult to produce outdoors.

This was different in Kinshasa. What they call church there is a *parcelle*, that is, a parcel of land, a kind of courtyard without a roof, a patio church. The room was so small that they opened the door and put more chairs outside on the street. Plus there were two additional loudspeakers on the street. Nevertheless, they managed to create an immersive mood and a corporeal character. Noise music, however, is like the simulacrum of a ritual: there is always a kind of priest, a frontman or at least the band, followed by the faithful, the audience, who would like to join in. You see similarities, but it's not the same because you don't try to win new followers. In noise music, you just make sure that your neighbour doesn't complain!

The situation in Kinshasa was quite specific. In this ritual, Jesus' name is called seven times, each time to liberate the followers from a problem. A liberation service, a healing practice—the audience goes there to be liberated.

CH What are the problem categories?

GA These are existential issues: disease, infertility, money of course, death, »blockages«. Hence, each call for Jesus is accompanied by a call for an evil spirit depending on the kind of problem. Those who feel affected start jumping and speaking in tongues, as a sign that they truly suffer from this problem. When this happens, the pastor comes and liberates each person from the evil spirit by laying his hands on the person's head and saying: *Evil spirit! Leave this body! You have no right to be there!* More or less like that, there are variations too, *intermezzi*. The church parish is very active. I felt like I'd attended a collectively orchestrated performance.

CH Only the voice of the pastor is amplified, and partly those of the assistants. This causes an interesting difference: the religious difference between priests and laymen is marked technically (the difference) between the voice

of the representative of the divine, God's language and the people, who are not amplified. There are also moments of dialogue between the cantor and the choir, like in a Kyrie elision.

GA The voice of the pastor conducts the whole ceremony, but sometimes the person treated is also amplified, especially when she/he is speaking in tongues, which you can hear in the recording. The pastor then holds the microphone in front of the person's mouth. In this way, he can prove the possession of the person: there he is, the spirit, I identified him! And then he takes the microphone again and performs a liberating operation.

CH How does this glossolalia work? Your work is always about media reflection, and schematically speaking one could say that, on the one hand, there is distortion, the static, the sound check, where the medium as such becomes intrusive and even replaces the message. And on the other hand, the reverse happens with the glossolalia: the language of God is so overwhelming, the message so powerful, that the medium, the natural language, explodes.

GA Glossolalia is an old practice that came to Kinshasa from America with the Pentecostal movement. It may have different functions and meanings, and indicate good things as well as bad, evil as well as good spirits. It may also be the rendition of a message of God. In this parish, everyone may receive something from God, the notion of gift is very important. Some speak in tongues, other have the gift of interpreting glossolalia, still others find their gift in music, for instance by singing. Also interesting is the case of composition. It has often been said that God was the only composer, that is, people who compose are not really composers. The lyrics of a piece leading to composition are »received« at night, and their authenticity is subsequently discussed by a panel. They must be accepted in order to become musical pieces. Melody and rhythm are not as relevant, but the text composition originates from God. Glossolalia is a more complex manifestation, but mostly evil spirits were expressed.

The ceremony is held in Lingala, a local Bantu language that has many

borrowings from French. It's essential that the pastor's liturgy is relatively traditional—and by no means exotic. This is an aspect that is important to me because the character of the aesthetic is unusual due to amplification and distortion, and one could believe the whole thing was a crazy African ritual. Yet it's absolutely conventional, as in the Pentecostal church where it's customary to speak in tongues. In the 1970s, American evangelists arrived who at that time deeply impressed these people. As a result, local pastors adopted their methods. Hence it's a relatively new phenomenon there.

That is what is so complex about the situation: domestic traditions are fought by such churches and at the same time addressed over and over again. This is a church strategy: one must point out the superstition in order to set oneself free. Belief, for instance, in a World of the Dead, in a world of spirits, is quite prevalent.

CH How about the third aspect, distortion. The voice of the pastor is extremely distorted. That has technical reasons, but certainly goes beyond that...

GA Whether this distortion is an unintended byproduct or whether it's intended as part of the aesthetic or as a strategy? I don't feel in a position to answer that; there is no certainty. The technical elements, the equipment, is of rather bad quality. The pastor builds his own loudspeakers—which he is very proud of. There are videos showing him building his loudspeakers. It's an additional gift that only he possesses: he knows how to build something like that. Other church members help him in the process. Some completed loudspeakers are then wrapped in a plastic cover. Not to protect them, but to give the impression that they are brand new, still in their packaging, as if they'd been purchased. This is right out in the open and no secret. It's a great achievement for the pastor. He also related how he used to hold the sermons without loudspeakers and in doing so wore out his voice until he drew blood. The loudspeakers cannot be powerful enough, the more watts the better. There's great rivalry among the churches, a kind of competition concerning the demonstration of status: the bigger and more expensive the sound system, the better the church.

The distortion symbolises the supernatural power of the pastor and it's a very potent medium. It allows the pastor to change his pitch; he screams and is able to structure the different moments of the ceremony with stark contrasts. He thus creates a dramaturgy. With distortion and volume the pastor can achieve effects—especially in glossolalia which he practices as well—that are quite impressive and with which he consolidates his power. Loudness is a power, which is also inscribed in the continuity of local traditions. It has the effect of stupefaction; loud drums or chants have always affected our perception in a particular way. Religious discourse, however, is about challenging local traditions.

CH One might actually think that this bad sound quality—the distortion and over-modulation—would diminish the pastor's persuasive power precisely because it makes the transmission conspicuous: his voice is merely a product of technology. At the same time it seems as though the distortion was the result of a struggle, in which voice and faith are pushing at the limits of technology: the resistance of worldly materiality is overcome, transcended by the power of faith.

GA Yes, the pastor himself said that the loudspeakers, the volume itself should never be considered as an end, but always as a means. This is about transcendence. I would suggest that the technology also works like a mask. The distortion is reminiscent of other rituals that work with masks, in which the human body, in this case the voice, takes on another character, becomes more mysterious, monstrous: it plays with fear and seduction. In any case, the pastor must be a consummate showman!

CH In your performance these interfaces between noise and service lead to ambiguity. It plays with the two spaces: the actual space of the audience, where you participate in an event, and the space represented, which is envisioned from a distance. When the distortion and volume become extreme, the two spaces fuse into one another.

GA I focus on the issues of post-colonial representation, and due to the volume and distortions, the problem is ultimately transformed. The ques-

tion arises if noise music could also be a colonial representation. In communication theory, noise is always considered to be a disruption in the path of communication, as if noise could perhaps represent nothing but itself. And that may also be the case with this work, which is situated in a border area: you can interpret this work differently, depending on whether you listen to it distanced, softly or live and loud. It's my hope that the objectifying, representational character of the documentation will be either completely removed by the performative recontextualisation—at this volume it's no longer a matter of representation—or, if an objectifying character does remain, that it will at least be challenged by the extreme situation. Because you can no longer behave as a subject towards an object, you can no longer keep a distance, or differentiate between the subjective observer and the strange, exotic, African »study objects«. This is an attempt to confuse this object-subject relation: in the specific, bodily involvement you yourself become an actor in the performance, and become a kind of co-composer. In this sense—and this would be my objective—the work could then no longer be interpreted as another neo-colonial representation.

CH Is this the reason why you work without images? You use archive footage, you use a lot of sound tracks, even from films: why do you reduce the documents to the audio?

GA This is an experimental approach that is very closely linked to my desire to avoid neo-colonial representations. Though obviously I know this cannot be accomplished simply by deleting images. But it's a way of exploring the representative potentiality of audio recordings, which is not customary. There are classical formats or strategies like, for instance, television documentaries, where the image plays an essential part and which obviously welcome exotic images: especially in a soul-liberating ritual, the pictures of faces are very impressive, for instance those of women possessed, whose facial expressions can be tragic and moving. That is exactly what I did not want to show. It has already been done quite often.

CH Showing such an image runs risk of the audience seeing only a long sedimented interpretation.

GA Yes, and retrieving stereotypes of pity and condescension, paternalism. There are plenty of representations of this kind. Documentaries have been made about these churches in which difficult cases were also pursued and this has had tragic repercussions: *Marchands de miracles*¹ is one example of a movie that reduces the churches to deceptive businesses. I wanted to bring other aspects to the fore that are introduced together: the appropriation of technology on the one hand and religion on the other. The missionaries also arrived with sound machines, and over the years the populations have appropriated both, the religion as well as the machines: these they accepted and then transformed so they could recognise themselves in them.

CH Pictorial documentation and audio documentation: Friedrich Kittler provides the idea that whereas film has reproduced time and again the ideals of the imaginary, and text the reductions of the symbolic, the audio recording, just sound, was capable of making the real tangible, that is, allowed immediate access to reality.

GA Yes, this notion holds some truth. But in this project I rather intended to show or query the extent to which listening too is culturally constructed and part of modern, capitalist, colonial history. The audio essay *L'Amplification des Âmes* combines many different sound documents, which have been produced from multilateral perspectives with different objectives and technologies.

The absence of the camera is obviously an important aspect of my work. To begin with, it's easier to work without a camera! You can move more easily, even when large microphones are visible. The question is, should you be discreet, invisible or very visible; active while conducting a ethnographic study. The method adopted by Jean Rouch, who very decidedly stages the shooting situation, so that people appear as they want to be seen. Which kind of images do audio recordings represent then? Can one speak of images? Or are these traces/tracks? It's often said that audio recordings

appear as traces because they do not have a sharp iconic character. But they do have the indexical character of a trace/tracks: an event that has come into contact with the recording material. For experimental reasons, I feign that sound images are possible. That is obviously a provocation. There are realities too, which do not make sound, and which cannot be documented through a sound recording—hence, it's a strategy of failure. As Judith Butler puts it, representation must not only fail, but it must »show its failure« thus leading to a critical approach to pictorial representation.²

CH Michel Chion has often polemicized against this notion: a fountain in Kinshasa sounds the same as a fountain in Paris, the indexical of the sound track is not tangible after all. The only thing that counts is the concrete sound on the tape. He cannot take people seriously who go into the desert to record the sound of a stone falling to the ground, because they resort to magical qualities and transportation.

GA I would like to discuss that with him. Michel Chion has certainly made very few experiences like this! He talks from behind his table in the studio. And I believe that something like the aura of an object is not really conveyable through a recording. Yet there is a difference in recording a sound here or there: because you never record just the sound. For instance, the fountain in a film studio sounds completely different than in a public space, whether in Paris or in Kinshasa. Chion has written a lot about sounds in connection to images, especially cinematic images. These are relevant texts, but the cultural aspects cannot be found directly in the manifestation of sound. I believe this starts already in the conditions of the recording situation. Whether the recording succeeds, how it's facilitated, in all of the effort that goes into a recording. It's the wrong discussion, I think. A simple sound may be the same here or there, but they are still different documents with different functions.

CH Of course, for Michel Chion, the only thing that matters is what is perceptible in the artistic outcome, in the work of art, whereas your work does not find completion in the individual works/pieces.

Here, you have said »evil spirit«?

Yes, Evil spirit! Leave this body!

In the name of Jesus Christ!

You are not allowed
to settle here!

You have to get out,
you have to set

this woman's body free

in the name of Jesus Christ!

This is the video of the baptism.

What we are about to watch

took place after the evangelization

campaign we had preached in

Ngiri-Ngiri last year.

One day after, we brought them

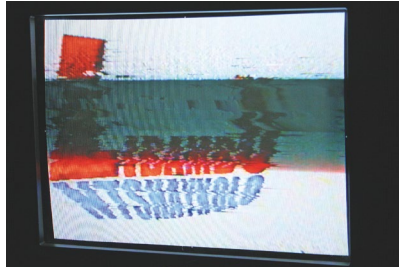
to the river and we baptized them.

We also need a lot of equipment
in the studio, in order to conserve
all these images.

When brother Alain will come,
with the 1,000 Gigabytes thing,
we'll also be able to keep
more images. Or we will buy
some good blank tapes
to copy everything,
because it can help many people,
many churches, all these tapes.

When a pastor sees things like that,
watches the ceremony,
the predication, the deliverance,
it can help him too.

N° 989	✓	- journaliste Faridatt - predicateur: Fr Kumu	no 105	- Cantique: Sr the the - Cantique: Sr ermeline - Cantique: sr. mireille madiens Cantique: Fr. Patric 1994
C2003 N° C0/09		Chansons: - Fr. NKUMU - Sr. TINA Pour GÉNÉRIQUE		
N° 913	✓	Delivrance de la Sœur de Notre Fr. NKUMU - NOBESO	N° 644	- sr. Rachel: journaliste * Interview: prophete par des evenements politique * Cantique: Sr Chimei * <u>Prophete sur une sœur qui avait l'esprit de mort</u>
N° 906		Tournée de Collation academique ainsi que la reconnaissance d'enlèvement de la jeunesse de Kinshasa Prophe		
N° 121	✓	* Cantique: Fr. Christian à Kimbondo 1994 * Cantique: Fr. Patrice - Herilage Cantique: Kuonga Predication	N° 360 ✓	- predicat°: Alain Makomba
N° 690	✓	- nouvelle équipements de musique que le prophete acheta en Europe - interview: prophete sur le surnaturel	N° 917 ✓	- les delivrance des possedés
			N° 1149 ✓	- predicat° et priere
			N° 914	- quelques delivrance - journées de la plie
			N° 273	- Berlin 2 ^{eme} fois 1995.
			N° 267	Preparatif de Croisade d'holanda Zuidharen



Audio sources

For L'Amplification des Âmes (CD track 1)

The following locations and situations in Kinshasa have been documented (all recordings by Gilles Aubry):

- Soundcheck at the Libambu Ministry Church, Ngiri-Ngiri, 11.7.2011
- Lebanese food shop, Matadi, 23.7.2011
- Radio Makongo broadcasted at the Matadi Market, 7.7.2011
- Visit of the Libambu Ministry audiovisual archive, Libambu Ministry office, Kasavubu, 15.7.2011
- Pastor Libambu commenting on the VHS-video-documentation of a previous evangelization campaign by the Libambu Ministry church in Ngiri-Ngiri (July 2010), 15.7.2011
- Manioc mill, Matadi market, 7.7.2011
- Market preachers, Gambela market, 25.7.2011
- Libambu church member advertizing on the street about an upcoming evangelization campaign using a megaphone, Ngiri-Ngiri, 21.7.2011
- Gombe market, 28.7.2011
- Praying crowd, sunday celebration, Centenaire Church area, 3.7.2011
- Sound-check at the Centenaire Church, 15.7.2011
- Spiritual deliverance service, Libambu Ministry church, Ngiri-Ngiri, 20.7.2011
- Various action and horror movie soundtracks recorded in a market cinema, Matadi, 7.7.2011
- Soundtrack recordings from a VHS-video-documentation of Pastor Okito visiting several Libambu churches in the northern Equator region of the Democratic Republic of Congo, Libambu Ministry office, Kasavubu, 15.7.2011
- Soundtrack recordings from a VHS-video-documentation of Pastor Libambu building loudspeakers, Libambu Ministry office, Kasavubu, 15.7.2011

- Botanical Garden, Gombe, 28.7.2011
- Hip-hop track inside a record shop at Victoire, 25.7.2011
- Soundwalk in Kitambo, 8.7.2011
- Hawaiian guitar sound-check, Libambu Ministry Church, Ngiri-Ngiri, 20.7.2011
- Internet café, Matadi, 7.7.2011
- Stonecutters in Mbudi, 30.7.2011
- Women cooking at the back of the church ›Le Rocher‹, Matadi, 9.7.2011
- Kids playing football video-games, Deux-Eglises, 24.7.2011
- Hairdresser shop, Matadi, 23.7.2011
- Libambu church members' meeting for the preparation of the evangelization campaign, Ngiri-Ngiri, 21.7.2011

For Les Âmes Amplifiées (CD track 2)

Stereo-mixdown of a 4-track recording by Gilles Aubry of a spiritual deliverance service at the Libambu Ministry Church, Ngiri-Ngiri, Kinshasa, 20.7.2011. Tracks 1 & 2 have been recorded with a mobile MS-stereo microphone and tracks 3 & 4 have been recorded simultaneously using auxiliary outputs of the mixing-desk of the church sound-system.

The two original recordings are freely available online under: http://archive.org/details/spiritual_deliverance_service_Kinshasa

Photographic sources

Cover & P. 44: Member of the Church »La Fraicheur« building a loudspeaker, Matadi-Mayo, Kinshasa, 9.7.2011. Photo by Gilles Aubry

P. 4-7, 10-13, 16-19, 75: Sound-check situation at the Libambu Ministry Church, Ngiri-Ngiri, Kinshasa, 20.7.2011. Photos by Gilles Aubry

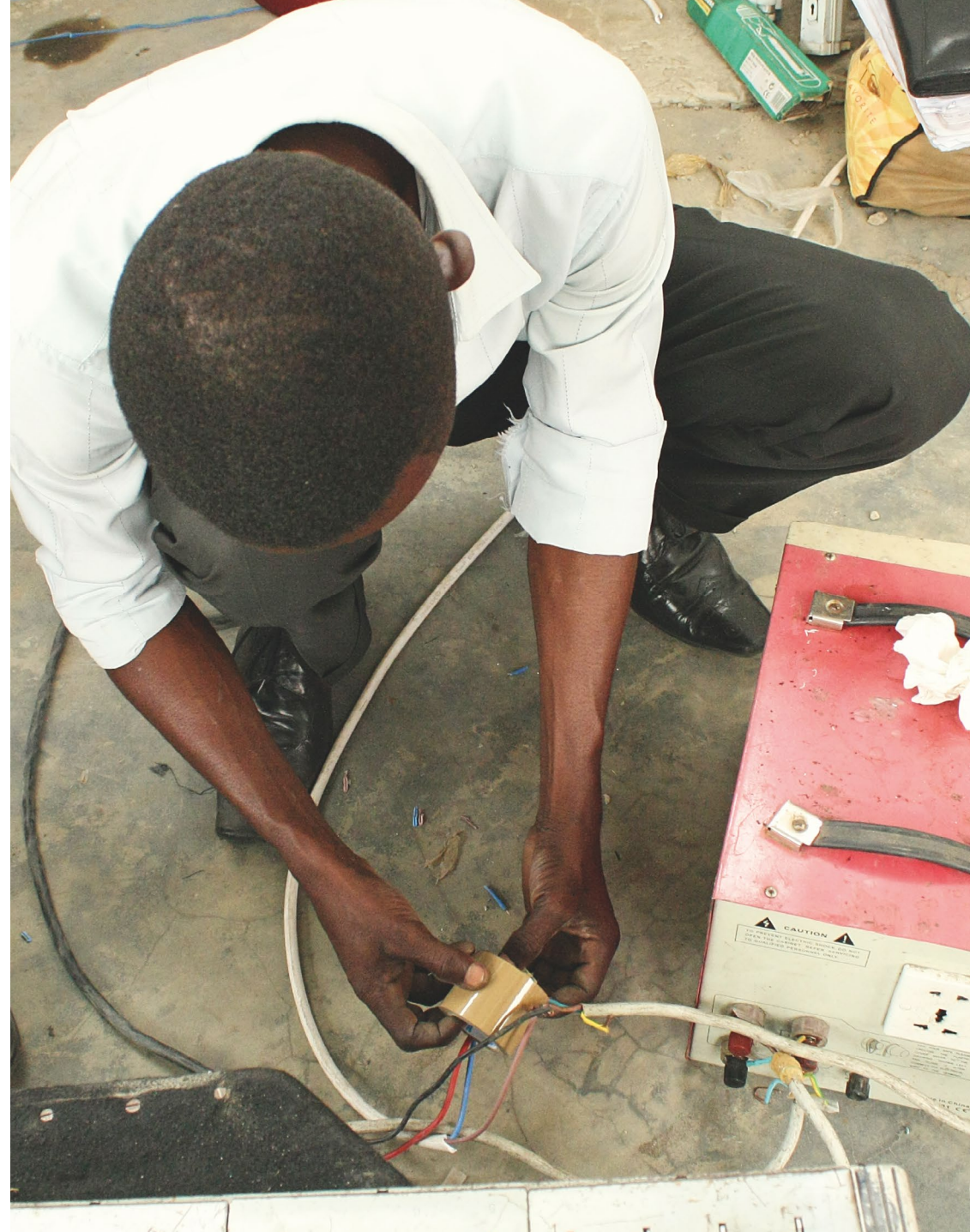
P. 23, 65, 68: Video-editing studio of the Libambu Ministry Church, Kasavubu, Kinshasa, 20.7.2011. Photos by Gilles Aubry

P. 70/71: Video-stills from the Libambu Ministry Church VHS archive. The images show evangelization campaigns in the Equator region in Congo, in Berlin and in Kinshasa.

P. 48/49: Preparation of an evangelization campaign, Libambu Ministry Church, Ngiri-Ngiri, Kinshasa, 21.7.2011. Photo by Arnold Maluam-yangila

Additional text sources

P. 3, 8/9, 14/15, 20-22, 46-47, 66/67: Excerpts from the English subtitles of the movie *Pluie de Feu* by Gilles Aubry, which relates to the spiritual deliverance service documented on the CD contained in this publication. (English translation: Claire Perryman-Holt). The movie is freely available online under: <https://archive.org/details/PluieDeFeu>



Global Prayers

The present publication is a result of Gilles Aubry's participation to the research and cultural project *Global Prayers: Redemption and Liberation in the City*. <https://globalprayers.metrozones.info/>

Global Prayers is an international and trans-disciplinary project exploring the manifestation of religion in urban space, which asks how new religious movements change the city and how urban everyday practices influence religion. A central aspect of Global Prayers has been the discussion about the trans-disciplinary approaches by artists and scientist used in its realization through a series of excursions and workshops in Berlin, Lagos, Beirut, and Mumbai.

As an artistic fellow of the project, Gilles Aubry carried out research on the amplified religious soundscape of African neo-pentecostal churches in Kinshasa (Democratic Republic of Congo), together with migration sociologist Gerda Heck. Parts of his research were presented as performances, audio essay and publication at the exhibition *The Urban Cultures of Global Prayers* (NGBK, Berlin 2012) and *Thementage Global Prayers* (Haus der Kulturen der Welt, Berlin 2013).

About the authors

Gilles Aubry, sound artist, Berlin. Holding a Master's degree in sound studies, Gilles Aubry works as a producer of art installations, audio essays, musical compositions, and live performances. His artistic practice is based on an auditory approach to the real informed by researches on cultural, material and historical aspects of sound production and reception. Combining ethnography, critical discourse and formal experiments, his works frequently address problematic aspects of visual representations. As a musician and composer, Aubry is a member of experimental noise band MONNO and has released several solo CD's on labels such as Winds Measure, Cronica Electronica, Gruenrekorder and Absinth Records.
www.earpolitics.net

Christoph Haffter studied philosophy and musicology at the Universität Basel, the Université Paris VIII and currently at the Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin. He writes on contemporary music for journals and radio stations such as Dissonance, Deutschlandradio Kultur and SWR2. He also works for the contemporary music festivals *Internationale Ferienkurse für Neue Musik Darmstadt* and *Donauessinger Musiktage*.

Johannes Salim Ismaiel-Wendt is professor for musicology at Stiftung Universität Hildesheim. He teaches and gives sound-lectures on aesthetics and sociology of electronic music, and his research focuses on music as/and postcolonial knowledge production. He studied cultural anthropology and cultural studies, sociology and musicology at the University of Bremen, Germany. Between 2010 and 2012 he was academic advisor at Haus der Kulturen der Welt Berlin for *Global Prayers* and *Translating Hip-Hop*.

Kathrin Wildner is an urban anthropologist who did ethnographic fieldwork in New York City, Mexico City, La Habana, Istanbul and other urban conglomerations. As an urban researcher she teaches, publishes and participates in trans-disciplinary projects and international exhibitions. She is a founding member of metroZones – Center for Urban Affairs e.V. and coordinator of the interdisciplinary, artistic and scientific project *Global Prayers*. Kathrin Wildner teaches at the HafenCity Universität, Hamburg and at the master program »Raumstrategien« of the Weißensee School of Art, Berlin. www.kwildner.net



Track 1 L 'Amplification des Âmes
(The Amplification of Souls), 30:00, 2012



Track 2 Les Âmes Amplifiées
(Amplified Souls), 34:00, 2012

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The Amplification of Souls
Gilles Aubry

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