TWO LOGICS OF REMEDIATION IN LO-FI: THE INVERSION OF IMMEDIACY IN THE CASES OF SOUNDSCAPE AND INDIE ROCK

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Abstract

Amid other uses, the term "lo-fi" (a corruption of "low fidelity") appears both in soundscape studies and in indie rock. Even though it is associated to negative qualities in the former and positive ones in the latter, these apparently antagonistic postures reclaim conditions of sonic production and contemplation that might have been lost in the past—if not in a pre-industrial era, at least in a moment prior to the culture industry. Nevertheless, both emerge from the same idea of "fidelity" that hatched from the stereophony phenomenon. Such a case seems to defy the pertinence of Bolter and Grusin's double logic of remediation, so as to deal with sonic processes. That happens due to conceptions of lo-fi which demonstrate that by making media perceptible does not always result in the absence of presence, nor does it block a sense of immersion.

Keywords: *media theories; sound studies; stereophony; soundscape; indie rock.*

The number of disparate connotations for one single term may be intriguing. That is what happens with "lo-fi", a corrupted form used to convey the notion of "low fidelity". Both in soundscape studies and in the indie rock music genre, cases that will be discussed here, lo-fi is the starting point to qualify the aesthetics of that which is classified (in diametrically opposite ways).

First, let us focus on soundscape studies. Murray Schafer (1994), author of its most widely spread conception, originally established that a soundscape may be hi-fi or lo-fi. Having assumed low fidelity as an "unfavorable signal-to-noise ratio", he indicates that environments have gradually grown noisier after the Industrial Revolution, particularly in cities. He postulates that the favorable signal-to-noise ratio would be found in countryside areas, especially in those before the deep transformations of modern ways of production that have been spreading around the world since the eighteenth century.

A hi-fi soundscape would be silent but, at the same time, it would also retain some clear and distinguishable sounds, overlapping one another less frequently. There would be a form of background sound (BG) in low volume behind all these unique sounds, conceived as "separate". They could be heard more clearly, generating a "perspective", which the author explains using figure-ground perception. In its turn, "a lo-fi environment is one in which signals are overcrowded, resulting in masking or lack of clarity" (Schafer, 1994, p. 272).

"The pellucid sound—a footstep in the snow, a church bell across the valley or an animal scurrying in the brush—is masked by broad-band noise. Perspective is lost" (*idem*, p. 43). Schafer wishes that the contemporary soundscape was mixed while somehow also equalised (particularly from a differentiated, orchestrated listening). Thus, the over-density of sounds is corrected, becoming audible under more "favourable" conditions, with some of their particular signals being "obscured"—human sounds, for instance.

However, there is a degree of contradiction in this aspect of Schafer's thinking, since he prefers to hear sounds that are, allegedly, human, and at the same time he does not seem to comprehend that the sounds he calls "unnatural" stem from human activity proper to the urban environment. "On a downtown street corner of the modern city there is no distance; there is only presence," writes the author (Schafer, 1994, p. 43). According to him, a distance that generates the auditory perspective that is characteristic of a hi-fi soundscape is necessary. From this we conclude that the proximity with a larger number of people in dense urban environments is undesirable.

However, despite the setbacks that resulted from the Industrial Revolution, the city still allows relations to develop in a much more complex manner than in countryside regions, providing loopholes for ways of resistance and expressions of solidarity. According to Milton Santos, the city, more than the countryside, can generate horizontality in relations: "this mechanism of horizontalization (...) is as much as rich as is the division of labor interior to cities" (Santos, 1999, p. 24). The dense presence of people, which would greatly damage the appreciation of the urban soundscape, lo-fi par excellence, "has a potential of political awakening" (*idem, ibidem*).

Schafer's approach is also criticised, for the author could be belittling the capacity of inhabitants of modern cities to distinguish signals; they are surrounded by what is, for him, nothing more than broad-band noise (Arkette, 2004). People can become acoustically oriented in urban space and may essentially become so because of this noise, despite what Schafer generally assumes as noise. It is not by chance that new electric urban means of transportation, for instance, could be quieter than they are projected, but it is essential that some of their characteristic sounds are kept so that pedestrians are not caught by surprise and end up being run over.

It is clear that some negative effects of this "overcrowd of sounds" can be observed; yet the question is more complex, not a simplified relation following the models of figure-ground perception. Moreover, even if the question is limited to aesthetics, we cannot forget other affiliations that consider the contemplation of that which would be understood as a lo-fi soundscape and as a pleasant one. Luigi Russolo, an artist associated with the Futurists, had previously written about this matter a century ago.

> The ear of an eighteenth-century man could never have supported the dissonant intensity of certain chords produced by our orchestras (with three times as many performers as those of his day). Our ear instead takes pleasure in it, since it has already been trained by modern life, so teeming in different noises. Not, however, that it is fully satisfied: instead it demands an ever-greater range of acoustical emotions. (Russolo, 2009, p. 134)

It was the mid-eighteenth-century years that might have observed the incubation of a modern auditory culture, around which sound has become "an object and a domain of thought and practice." By means of listening techniques, capacities of aural perception have begun to be mobilised and shaped "in the service of rationality" (Sterne, 2003, p. 2). It is this culture, as pivotal to modernity as regimes of visuality, that offers the conditions for the possibility of the emergence not only of Russolo's "The Art of Noises" manifesto, but also, prior to that, of sound recording and reproduction techniques which had appeared from the mid-eighteenth century on.

Schafer's ideas about hi-fi and lo-fi soundscapes cannot be considered outside of the context of this auditory culture that emerges along with the Industrial Revolution. Regardless of his declared distaste of sonic consequences of the mechanisation of the world, his own thoughts stem from dispositions incorporated with modernity, from the *habitus* related to this culture (Sterne, 2003). Schafer goes as far as indicating that the parameter to define his use of hi-fi comes from electro-acoustics (Schafer, 1994, p. 272). His way of conceiving sonic environments cannot be dissociated particularly from a constituent phenomenon of a wider picture: stereophony.

Manifested at first during the post-war years, stereophony can be described as "a set of relations between audio technologies, acoustic spaces (physical and virtual), listening techniques, scientific and commercial discourses, economic conditions and reception contexts" (Théberge, Devine & Everett, 2015, p. 3). Stereophony's foundation implies that the listener is being offered an experience of immersion; an illusion of realism provided by a sound system.

> [H]i-fi was predominantly tied to musical recordings, whose value was also judged based on an aesthetic of audio realism, sonic immersion and mental transportation. The listening experience was to be enhanced by the approximation of aural 'reality', an illusion of presence ideally indistinguishable from the 'live' real thing. (Keightley, 1996, p. 152)

Hearing, following this conception, is as dependent on perspective as sight is, and that leads to the centralisation of processes as a subject in the position of a listener, around who sound is organised (Théberge, Devine & Everett, 2015, p. 4). It is produced for the listener who is the occupant of this audio position, but it must be understood that, in the ambit of this phenomenon, that such a position and such a hearing subject are equally produced. According to Sterne (2015), the soundscape is an artefact of hi-fidelity culture, being secured audio-technical discourse of stereophony. When Schafer affirms that perspective is lost in what he understands as lo-fi soundscape in cities,

> the interdependence of the soundscape concept and a kind of audio position begins to become clear. The soundscape requires a coherent, unified, singular listening subject to hear it, to apprehend it, to criticize it, to shape it, to transform it. The subject of soundscape needs stable footing. Anything else is a potential crisis. (Sterne, 2015, p.76)

According to Kelman (2010), what lies behind Schafer's soundscape is a project with an ideological bias. "Schafer's soundscape is not a neutral field of aural investigation at all; rather, it is deeply informed by Schafer's own preferences for certain sounds over others" (Kelman, 2010, p. 214).

However, it is not only in soundscape that the notion of presence in stereophony results in detachments. Stereophonic culture relates to escapism for middle-class men. Men who have grown isolated from their very familiar nucleuses from the moment home stereos appeared, which in itself can present a wider problem in the ideal of high fidelity. "Immersion permits transportation into the world of music, away from domestic realities" (Keightley, 1996, p. 150)[1].

Before we begin to discuss lo-fi in indie rock, it is important to state that it is not possible to establish a direct parallel between the genre and soundscape studies. Even though the soundscape has eventually also been consolidated as a genre of composition, it has been treated in a more relevant way as a concept being offered for application in academic investigation, in diverse disciplines. Indie rock, however, is not located within a disciplinary, scientific sphere. Nevertheless, that does not mean that it does not produce any knowledge: learning plays an important role as it frames the very musical genre itself, as shall become evident.

> Indie music has been considered by insiders to be: (1) a type of musical production affiliated with small independent record labels with a distinctive mode of

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1)   Adding to this study, we could insert Tim Anderson's (2006) book, *Making Easy Listening: Material Culture and Postwar American Recording*, quoted by Théberge, Devine & Everett (2015), and Sterne (2015).

independent distribution; (2) a genre of music that has a particular sound and stylistic conventions; (3) music that communicates a particular ethos; (4) a category of critical assessment; and (5) music that can be contrasted with other genres, such as mainstream pop, dance, blues, country, or classical. The indie community's arguments over membership deal with the nature of the ownership of musical recordings and their mode of distribution to a larger public, the nature of musical production practices and their relationship to musical forms, and the relationship between audience members and the music. I consider indie to be precisely this discourse, and the activities that produce and are produced by this discourse, as well as the artistic productions and community members who participate in and contribute to this discourse. (Fonarow, 2006, p. 26)

Members of the indie community demand of themselves and of others a knowledge of music that makes them apt to establish what does or what does not have any value in music. This allows the forming of a cultural capital that places them in power to evaluate not only the music that is judged as the most valuable, both inside and outside of the genre. Through Bourdieu's sociology, it is possible to comprehend indie as "a complex circulation of signs employed in negotiations of social status" (Hibbett, 2005, p. 56), in which the distinction is not applied to musical genres but rather extended to listeners.

Indie is openly moved by ideologies, some of them conflicting even internally. Still there is a central posture to it, which has to do with the fact that it is one of a few genres composed of designation that does not report to any movement, rhythm, mood, ethnic character, or has any references to particular instruments or even to predecessor genres. "Indie" is an abbreviated form of the term "independent," and it references its relation with the phonographic industry, which has hegemonic methods that are, in theory, opposed by indie[2]. "No music genre had ever before taken its name from the form of industrial organization behind it". (Hesmondhalgh, 1999, p. 35).

Indie has incorporated the ideals of the punk movement, conceived in the late 1970s by holding the motto "do it yourself" (DIY[3]) to wider consequences: networks of distribution were established in a detached manner from commercial structures of transnational corporation. It was initiated from specialised small local shops and independent labels that, according to the discourse that provides indie with its foundation, serve to support local talents and offer an environment of creative freedom that was deemed non-existent in major record companies. In this sense, the genre has "its roots in punk's institutional and aesthetic challenge to the popular music industry" (idem, p. 34).

Many of these organisations were guided by democratisation and horizontality (some of them even working as cooperatives). If they would be the institutional expression of indie's assault, aesthetically, the genre can be manifested under

many forms, displaying diversity but also showing some observable patterns.

> The DIY ethic of punk stood in stark contrast to the lavishly produced studio bands of the 1970s, the contemporaries of the punks, who would often take months to record an album and utilize all forms of technical wizardry during production. Punk's bias against elaborate production was inherited and embraced by the indie community. Indie opposed mainstream's many stylistic flourishes, such as studio overdubbing or pre-programmed dance rhythms, hence indie's persistent lo-fi production style. (Fonarow, 2006, p. 63)

Before we cruise into lo-fi as an indie subgenre, it is important to understand how Fonarow uses Lévi-Strauss's anthropological method of opposite pairs as a conceptual tool to identify indie's modes of definition from what it declares not to be. Indie is not the mainstream, for it defends an image of itself as local instead of global, for instance. Other mapped oppositions by the author include: personal-impersonal; simple production-elaborate production; absence of guitar solos-presence of guitar solos; modest-self-indulgent; live-pre-fabricated; raw-technical; not professional-virtuoso; homemade-made by somebody else; authentic-impostor; original-generic; specific-general; austere-extravagant; substantive-empty; art-commerce. Finally, from the intimate-distant opposition, it becomes clearer why lo-fi, in the indie rock context, presumes presence as something positive, in opposition to the lo-fi in soundscape studies.

Lo-fi in indie rock connects to stereophony by way of tendencies before punk. For instance, in 1969 proto-punk band, the Velvet Underground's third studio album was released, a self-titled record. The final mix, signed by Lou Reed, became known as "Closet Mix." "I thought it sounded as if it had been recorded inside a closet," affirmed guitarist Sterling Morrison, author of the famous comment. According to the musician, that technically meant a subtle emphasis on voices, placed a little "on top" of the instruments. That contrasted his perception of the Rolling Stones' records, for instance: "the voice was always back in the mix," said Morrison (quoted in Fricke, 1995, p. 63).

"The Velvet Underground [the record] is a primarily introspective experience, a record that captures in its hushed sonic detail that quality of one-on-one conversation that Reed prized so highly in the Velvets' music" (Fricke, 1995, p. 62). The effect would be an instability given "by the naked drama and dangling resolution" (idem, p. 63), leaving implicit that a part of what makes the album special lies in a certain state of incompleteness.

> 'Rock does this thing to you,' Lou Reed told me in 1987. 'You get directly to somebody, unfiltered. This person doesn't have to go to a movie theater. This person will be listening, alone, maybe at five in the morning. 'What was important,' he said of the Velvets' real agenda, 'was the records going out, going to people. These people were going into their homes and apartments with these records and really listening to them. And we were always writing on a one-to-one level. So

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2) For this analysis, we shall consider the production of meaning in indie in a moment prior to its arrival to the mainstream in the 1990s, defined by Nirvana's success in the United States, and the Britpop phenomenon in the United Kingdom.

3) DIY is an acronym of current and frequent use.

if you listen to the record, it's like somebody sitting across from you. (Fricke, 1995, p.7)

In the same year of 1969, an early bootleg (unofficial) rock record would circulate extensively, with some recordings made informally by Bob Dylan and The Band in a basement, two years prior. Registers were effectively released in 1975, in the album *The Basement Tapes*[4]. Both in the "Closet Mix" used in the first pressing of the *Velvet Underground*[5] record and in *The Basement Tapes*, there is a straightforward reference to small recondite spaces that would lend these recordings (if metaphorically, in Velvet's case) an intimate atmosphere. Sonority and symbolic binding were being forged, which later would be assumed by indie, both aesthetically and politically.

However, previous to that, it was necessary for the industry to provide means of production for homemade low fidelity recordings (or of low fidelity due to their domesticity?) to become possible. After all, not everyone was Bob Dylan and had access to a studio in their basement in the 1970s. In 1979, TASCAM Company released, the first portable four-track recorder, which registered in cassette tape. Modest prices of recording media collaborated for devices of the Portastudio series and brands akin to become standard in the production of demo tapes[6] from the 1980s. Evidently, there had been a considerable number of "artists recording homemade cassettes" (Berger, 2007) when, in 1986, DJ William Berger used the term lo-fi to name his half-hour weekly show in WFMU, an independent community radio from New Jersey. This usage of the term would have been the first time that it was used in the sense through which it prospered in the indie context.

In the following year, Lou Barlow released along with Eric Gaffney the first cassette tape with homemade recordings under the name of Sebadoh, which would emerge as one of the exponents of the subgenre, indie lo-fi. According to Hibbett (2005, p. 61), "by challenging the worth of hi-tech recording equipment and studio engineering, Barlow offers the attractive facade of a 'pure' listening experience—an unadulterated exchange between artist and listener". Following his expulsion from the band Dinosaur Jr., of which he was a member at the time, Barlow assumed (not without some contempt) the raw, acoustic, and incomplete sonority for Sebadoh as something more authentic than the rigorous standards of authenticity self-proclaimed by indie up to that moment, and in doing so established new parameters.

The ambiance of these recordings gives the impression not only of proximity between listeners and artists, almost as if they shared the same room, but also the sense of being close to them in moments in which the music "happens" before receiving corrections, adjustments, alterations and other forms of polish that are assumed necessary to make it marketable. It is this stripping of the music that lo-fi is trying to preserve in indie rock; the discourse of artists, independent labels, alternative presses linked to music scenes, and the fans themselves will recursively contribute to establish.

> [W]hen one hears the crude "makings" of the song—the hiss, the pressing of buttons, technical glitches, distortion—one comes to trust it as both honest and real, or to read in its imperfections a kind of blue-collar integrity. In the strangest of ironies, the most direct evidence of production connotes its absence, and a claim for artistic distinction is forwarded through an aesthetics of working-class deprivation. (Hibbett, 2005, p. 62)

This aspect of lo-fi in indie rock subverts the ideas of immediacy and hypermediacy as a double logic of remediation, in the work developed by Jay David Bolter and Richard Grusin (2000) in the ambit of media theory. Confessedly thought from a mostly visual referential by the pair of authors, such logic deals with transparency and opacity of media.

In immediacy, media would become transparent and imperceptible, favouring a feeling of immersion on the spectator's side. That would work, for instance, when the technique of visual perspective produces the illusion that the space of a two-dimensional painting extends beyond the painted surface, thereby giving the impression of depth. In hypermediacy, media are showing, displaying themselves abundantly, charming the spectator by offering them a myriad of possible stimuli and extensions. Cabinets of curiosities, precursors of museums, and the initial pages of internet portals, with their implicit chain of hypertexts, exemplify the hypermedial logic. In immediacy, the idea is that of a unified space, analogous of the emblematic audio position of stereophony, while hypermediacy would create the illusion of a multiplicity of spaces open for exploration.

While lo-fi disrupts the contemplation of the soundscape, debasing the ideal perspective of stereophony through "masking or lack of clarity" (Schafer, 1994, p. 272), in indie rock's lo-fi, the exhibition of media (hisses, abrupt cuts, feedback, sounds of the handling of devices, inadvertent coughs) cannot be understood as dispersive elements of a single centralised attention. It is the very expression of media, the aspect that is responsible for providing the listener with a sensation of immersion in rooms, bedrooms, basements, and closets, a perceptive passage that takes them to places where, in intimacy, artists produce their music. This space is not the controlled environment of the studio, where technicians are "perfecting sound forever,"[7] erasing traces of their overproductions to obtain a limpid, clear, transparent record. For the indie listener, this transparency is opacity itself. "From the indie perspective, mainstream production is understood as one that masks" (Hibbett, 2005, p. 62).

However, this subversion is effective within insiders, between those who share the indie ethos. For it is within it that the association between low fidelity and a sense of presence and immersion shall make sense. Whoever did not know indie's anti-establishment endeavor, before it became a part of establishment, could simply consider such works as poorly

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4) The bootleg version is called *Great White Wonder*.

5) The album's re-issue in the mid-1980s has another mix ("Valentin's mix"), in which a "a brighter, snappier, groove-friendly sound was used" (Fricke, 1995, p. 63).

6) Demonstration tapes sent to record companies, music press, or sold directly to the public.

7) "Perfect sound forever" was the slogan used in the release of media technology, Compact Disc (CD) in 1982, and it entitles an EP by the band Pavement as well, during an era when they were more connected to lo-fi.

recorded and unfinished registers; nothing more than rehears-als. The indie member would say that these people do not un-derstand what is real about music, they do not own the key for a less mediated experience[8].

The devotional element is important, for it touches on other aspects of mediation. According to Fonarow's (2006) analysis, with an anthropological imprint, based on ethnography with audience members, low fidelity in recordings is praised in indie rock as a valuable attribute because indie defends the most immediate possible contact with the experience of music. It holds no pomp or grandeur, without any hierarchical regimes to affect such mediation. That is why indie shows do not usu-ally happen in arenas, but mainly in small spaces where band members, when not on stage, oftentimes can be found amid the audience, wearing clothes that are not quite different from what the audience in general wears.

The author even relates the members of the indie community to the Puritans, radical Calvinists who appeared in the wake of the Protestant Reform, opposing the centralising, hierar-chical, and extravagant way through which they considered that the Catholic Church intervened in the mediation with the divine. Puritans' relation with the institution that represented Catholicism, in this analysis, establishes a parallel with the relation of the indie community with the phonographic in-dustry. To preserve an immaculate contact with the object of devotion, the adhesion to rigid conduct codes, the election of local representatives, among other practices of religious

reformists that, according to Fonarow, are analogous to the indie ethos.

Nevertheless, we may observe the opacity of low fidelity work-ing as well as a way to unveil the processes of production. The declaration, be it explicit or implicit, that "this is a record" would work as "this is not a pipe". Thereby, substituting the alleged realism of stereophony for something that edges on surrealism, a juxtaposition of dream and reality in which a ma-nipulation being offered to the listener's perception is prefera-ble to a hiding manipulation.

"It is impossible to press down the play button and the record button at the same time so that my sounds may be record-ed while my buttons are not pressed by my own finger while I'm pressing it so they could record": these are the opening lines of the track "Take an Aspirin II + I", from the record *The Original Losing Losers*, by Sentridoh, Lou Barlow's (1995) solo project. Such work "refers back to itself as a recording—a char-acteristic strangely at odds with the previously stated notion of a 'pure' artistic exchange, and a contradiction that may be attributed to the inverted logic of the restricted field" of indie (Hibbett, 2005, p. 62).

In case that the precedent notion concerns stereophony, it is mandatory to return to the idea that there is something pri-or to this established purity by this post-war phenomenon. Indie rock's lo-fi would not be the first time when recordings that are considered rough for high-fidelity standards are

experimented as loyal to what they came to represent. When it was introduced to the public for the first time, the sound of the gramophone was reported by the press of the time as something that could not be distinguished from the projec-tion of the human voice in a face-to-face situation, a reaction that may sound surprising in the present day. The perplexity before the novelty helped to perpetuate that impression, but audio-technical discourses have also had a fundamental role in contouring this perception. Nevertheless, any mention to low fidelity in the nineteenth century cannot go much further than a heuristic exercise, since such an idea did not exist yet; it is fatally anachronic to qualify those sonic recordings and reproductions in such a way.

In the same way, the cultivated nostalgia in the indie ethos to-wards an artistic experience not mediated by the phonograph-ic industry (Fonarow, 2006) perhaps has no past reference. This is once it is likely that there is no past for rock itself in a context previous to the emergence of the cultural industry, and, more specifically, the phonographic industry (Adorno and Horkheimer, 1985; Attali, 1996)[9]. Even though the production of recordings in domestic environments may be understood as an "aesthetics of shortage," the proliferation of means of production in the household ambit also reflects an abundance of means of production. A fundamental condition for the emergence of lo-fi as an expression of indie rock.

Indie may, in institutional or aesthetic terms, genuinely rep-resent a subversion of industrial logics in certain aspects. However, if in the past the limitation of storage capacity of

sonic register in phonography contributed towards the con-solidation of song patterns framed within the interval of only three minutes, it is due to the decrease in cost and increase in accessibility to sound recordings and reproduction media that, in homemade lo-fi indie homemade recordings, "the de-marcations between actual 'songs' and just 'messing around' are blurred throughout" (Hibbett, 2005, p. 62). The availability of blank cassette tapes and four- or eight-track cassette re-corders appear as conditions for the possibility of a distortion of the format of the "song," one that was largely influenced by previous generations of phonographic media.

It is equally necessary to return to the critique of the very no-tion of fidelity produced within the scope of stereophony, from which many authors depart as an analytic parameter.

"Fidelity" is a particularly problematic term in sound studies, and we want to emphasize a strong episte-mological break with emic understandings of it. For us, "fidelity" is more of a misnomer than a measure-ment of the degree to which a recording is "faithful" to a source, or any sense of "absolute sound quality"; is it not an overarching "logic" in the history of sound re-production. (Théberge, Devine & Everett, 2015, pp. 3-4)

According to Sterne (2003), the very division between original and copy would be an ideological project that would lie in the nucleus of the Hegelian promise of synthesis and suppres-sion, in which the perfect mediator disappears completely. "But that moment of perfect correspondence never comes,

9) Adorno and Horkheimer's quoted work was originally published in 1947, and Atalli's, in 1985.

and, because it never comes, theories of mediation posit sound reproduction as a failure, a sham, and a debasement of a more fundamental live presence" (Sterne, 2003, p. 286). However, the author advocates that what came previous is precisely reproduction and not originality, for the first would generate the latter. That provides us with new clues to reflect on authenticity and nostalgia; be them on the indie rock context or on soundscape studies, or even on Walter Benjamin's discussion of auras in his classic essay on the technical reproducibility of the work of art.

Benjamin immediately qualifies his definition of *aura* in a note: "Precisely because authenticity is not reproducible, the intensive penetration of certain (mechanical) processes of reproduction was instrumental in differentiating and grading authenticity." In *this* formulation, the very construct of aura is, by and large, retroactive, something that is an artifact of reproducibility, rather than a side effect or an inherent quality of self-presence. Aura is the object of a nostalgia that accompanies reproduction. In fact, reproduction does not really separate copies from originals but instead results in the creation of a distinctive form of originality: the possibility of reproduction transforms the practice of production. (Sterne, 2003, p. 220)

Phonography would highlight a social-spatial and social-temporal network, in which the medium does not mediate the relation between singer and listener, or between original and copy. Rather, the medium is the very nature of the connection between them.

Sounds themselves come to exist in the first place in order to be reproduced through the network. They are not plucked from the world for deposit and transmission. This is a crucial distinction. The medium is the shape of a network of social and technological relations, and the sounds produced within the medium cannot be assumed to exist in the world apart from the network. The "medium" does not necessarily mediate, authenticate, dilute, or extend a preexisting social relation. (*idem*, p. 226).

It was this social-spatial and social-temporal network, the pivotal point of sound reproduction practices, that was being referred to by Lou Reed when he recorded the Velvet Underground albums. Such works do not exist detached from this network: band and listeners gather in an intimate space, a form of juxtaposition of the closet and the room equally collected from homes and apartments to where people bring their records. Where they can be as if they were sitting in front of each other, in listening communion.

Despite indie's internal contradictions, this adjacency of networks is also captured by lo-fi rock aesthetics. We are left with the question of whether indie's fierce quest for the detention of the right to tell what the real musical experience is[10] would, in fact, deviate it from a more integrated experience with phonography. The latter is, in turn, when analysed through different conceptions of lo-fi, apparently hazarding the pertinence of the double logics of remediation—particularly immediacy—for the analysis of sound processes.

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10) "Life is really different, I mean, it is much worse live." (Belchior, Brazilian composer, 1946-2017)