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“Reminiscing in the Rain:” Our Relationship with Mobile Sound

Mobile audio has opened a lot of doors when it comes to understanding and being connected to our environment. The unique aspects of mobility and flexibility allow us to absorb more information about the people and places around us without even moving. We can access all this information wherever we are, whenever we want. While this certainly has its positives, de Souza e Silva also mentions how it can be more pervasive (2013, p.118). Because we can be reached anywhere, at any time, this sometimes makes it hard to escape, and we’re left feeling reliant upon our mobile media. Regardless, the emotional connection you develop with mobile audio is greater than other types of audio content. As Felicity Ford states in an interview with Angus Carlyle, “field recording and listening are so key to understanding the physical world, the materiality of a place, the surfaces that surround you, the textures, the size and dimensions...” (2013, p.87). Therefore, with the help of geolocation technologies, mobile media allows us to both temporarily escape our reality, while also developing deeper connections with our physical surroundings as is shown in my audio project.

My mobile audio project, *Reminiscing in the Rain*, explores the idea of emotional states and memories triggered by objects in a space. The space I explore is my place of work, but also my mind. I work alone as a security guard in a small guardhouse surrounded by the media. The only company I have, besides the passing visitors, is a stray cat who decided the guardhouse was going to be her home. *Reminiscing in the*

Rain takes place during a storm while the cat and I hide away in the guardhouse. Similar to the episode of *99% Invisible*, I move through this space and, in my solitude, find my thoughts wandering. Objects around the room start to trigger certain memories and stories. At first, the sound of the rain itself transports my mind to a recent camping trip. Then, I go to turn the air conditioner on in the guardhouse and the sound of the button reminds me of a certain background pitch in the loudspeaker of another memory. Finally, I try to play some music on the computer to distract myself, but a certain song that pops up on the screen reminds me of the last time I heard that song. Once the rain finally stops, we get to explore the guardhouse a little more, getting a feel for how far the door is, hearing the door open, and listening to the surrounding sounds of the meadow.

The goal of *Reminiscing in the Rain* is to invoke a feeling of nostalgia and reminiscence in a safe space. It's meant to feel like a cozy, rainy day with the same feeling you get sitting around a campfire with friends, telling stories. In this case, the listener is meant to put themselves in the place of the cat, who is sitting in the guardhouse with me listening to me retell my memories. This was achieved through the editing of the piece. My voice stays the same; it doesn't change in tone or distance. It's the one constant throughout the whole piece to show that I'm physically still in the guardhouse. The background noises transition smoothly into each other to show the change in location in my thoughts. Using geolocation technologies, one can place themselves in my shoes and in my thoughts from wherever they are. The location they're in will affect how they view my piece. *Reminiscing in the Rain* could be further connected to the geolocative elements of mobile media if the listener could physically

place themselves in the same spots, I recorded my audio clips. If I were to put the exact locations where I recorded them and created a more advanced map, the listener experience would be a lot deeper. The only issue with this is that it would be a lot of traveling for the audience, so an easier way to do this would be to either pick locations in certain areas where a listener could experience similar sounds without going too far or creating my own simulation for people to walk through.

While planning my project, I was inspired by the ideas of three different authors we read this semester so far. These three authors include: Adriana de Souza e Silva, Jason Farman, and Sarah Murray. In "Location-aware mobile technologies: Historical, social and spatial approaches," Adriana de Souza e Silva argues that geolocation technologies shape three things: privacy, sociability, and spatiality (2013, p.117). I touched on privacy a little bit in the beginning of this essay, but I used the idea of spatiality to think of how my viewers can connect to my space while still being in their space, which is why I added the cat. Additionally, Jason Farman inspired me with his writing in "Storytelling with Mobile Media." Farman states "stories impact a place and a place impacts a story" (2014, p.534). I utilized this idea in my piece by using the physical space of the guardhouse to guide the story. The story then also added to the place by connecting these other memories, sounds, and places back to the guardhouse. Finally, in "Coming-of-age in a coming-of-age: the collective individualism of podcasting's intimate sound work," Sarah Murray discusses "intimate sound work" and the idea of a "personal journal" (2019, p. 302). She explains that these two things refer to "deeply personal creative sound" and the specific style a creator has. I tried to incorporate this into my own project by using field recordings I took in some of my

personal moments of joy, peace, and fear. These field recordings show a bit of my specific style, and my narration helps to tell my “personal journey” (2019, p. 302).

Overall, the use of geolocation technologies within our mobile media helps us to connect with each other and our environment on deeper levels from anywhere, at any time. My mobile audio project, *Reminiscing in the Rain*, helps us to explore this connection in a nostalgic, sitting-around-a-campfire-together kind of way. The ideas of spatiality (de Souza e Silva), stories and places impacting each other (Farman), and creating my own personal journey (Murray) all helped to advance my project's critique of mobile media. Who knows, maybe a few more doors will be opened in the future to help further this understanding.

References

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