

<b>Title</b>	<i>Slow Listening?</i>
<b>Conversationalist</b>	Carolyn F. Strauss
<b>Conversation number</b>	X
<b>Date</b>	9th of October 2023
<b>Place</b>	At a café at Refshaleøen, Copenhagen.
<b>Time of recording</b>	1 hour and 13 minutes
<b>Context</b>	The conversation happened in conjunction with a 12 hours and 25 minutes long performance by Jesper Norda of his piece: <i>The Goldberg Variation (Bach Clock)</i> and a following Listening Seminar two days after. The Conversation happened right after this seminar in the afternoon and right before Carolyn had to travel back to Amsterdam. Carolyn and I have for a long time agreed to have such a conversation for (slow) listening.
<b>Note for conversation</b>	The cafe's acoustics were rather loud, but the view was beautiful. Our minds were rather tired after the seminar and the intense days of listening and organizing, but also stimulated and attuned with the potential of slowness and listening. The conversation was furthermore in both implicit and explicit ways affected by the escalating and horrific situation in Gaza.

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- (Lukas Lund): [ ]

(Carolyn F. Strauss): [ ]

- [ ]

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[

] listening as a

tool of slow practice, [

]

- [ ]

[

] So it was an encouragement to people to say, to connect listening, someone listening to landscape, for example, to a completely different kind of listening from a different disciplinary perspective in another part of the book, and kind of encouraging people to find these dialogues and to use it, yeah, to use it as a tool for, as a way of navigating the book also. [

] that experience of extract, interpreting,

extracting, finding, and trying to then link together to other practices was the first kind of more robust kind of way of approaching listening somehow.

- [

definition?

] What would be a first

[

] I'm much more of a spatial person overall. And I hadn't thought about that, but I realized that I do think about things spatially a lot. [

] space is always there somehow. I mean, of course, listening... space is a conductor of sound if you think about it just purely from sound. But yeah. I think even if you're very intimate with someone and you're really listening into their body or to their experience or something. Yeah, the body and the space is always implicated in it somewhere, somehow. [

] this abstract in the concrete. I really like that a lot because the concrete, it makes, it makes a lot of sense for me. And I don't know if I'm getting too far out there if I say this, but like I've actually noticed that I think there's a lot more information that's being transmitted on the concrete level than the actual, what he termed the abstract level that the brain is making sense of. [

] What I'm saying, the abstract part, is the premise for which they're, under which they're listening to me. But actually there's a whole other level of listening and of receiving or exchanging that's going on.

- [

] who are perhaps the

conductor of the concreteness. The concrete is something more shared, more conditioned in some way, [

]

[

] it would

enter your cells and your, it would enter your body in a different way and find its way than it would maybe with someone else. And that's what's a beautiful, [

]

- It's a beautiful thing with the trust as this premise of interacting or protecting or gathering, [

]

[ ]

- [ ] but it's also with the more than humans interactions, like trust goes both within the realm of the known, but also in the realm of the unknown, and if you really want to reach far out, you need to trust, [

]

[  
] about the  
listener, was it the receiver, the written down, the effect of listening, like you have to, you  
know, this, the cup knows that I'm listening to it, and then...

- [ ]

[  
] so the cup can speak to me  
because it trusts that I actually am giving, it measures my quality of attention, and then it's  
going to continue to reveal information, I'm going to be able to listen and receive more  
information from it.

- [  
] it is like outscaling us, like we are just tiny pieces, but our tininess  
is still affecting back on the grandness that we cannot even comprehend, and that is a  
relationship that I really feel is also embodying trust, that you can be in that  
relationship is a sign of trust.

[  
] it's very linked to these ideas  
around not knowing, and I'm trusting that.

- [ ] your concept of not knowing?

Not knowing is just like... not knowing makes everything else possible.

- [ ]

I'm thinking about how to do it. [  
] when you move into a space of not knowing, which is different than a  
space of uncertainty, by the way, [ ] you're free. And  
you don't have to be, it's partly what I was saying about, you don't have to be the knower

anymore. So you get, you know, if you look at it in terms of the knower, the white Western colonial enlightenment, whatever thinker, knower, suddenly you don't have to be that person anymore, [

] but finding this, like, you know, creating this kind of, not even a rupture, just like slipping into another dimension of it. [

] which would be a kind of ambiguous, terror, or unknown, the potentiality of what lies in between, but it could be the potentiality of the difference, temporal distance between you know, between slightly different ones.

- [

] that the clock cannot govern humanity, cannot govern that spatial, social relationship, it would just fail.

[

] sort of breaking that persona of the performer or of the, yeah.

- But I'd like to return to the idea of the, of not being the knower, [

] in order to be the listener, to be that person who listens, you really need to let go of the knowing, both of the other, of the context of what you are listening into, because in the minute that you think that you do know, then you are projecting [

] the non-knower is also the listener.

[

]

because then you're listening, you're not, like you said, you're not projecting while the person is telling you, while a person is speaking, or even a situation is speaking to you, you're not projecting past, like, can you step out of that, projecting your own ideas, because you're not really listening, like you said, you're not really listening if you're coming at it from this state of, this state of knowing, or thinking you know better, or even thinking you know what the person's already talking about. [

] but something like humans get really uncomfortable with, like there being too much space around, [ ] people who like to fill up space with their voices, [

] enjoy just being in silence together. [

] the only other person he had that with was with his mother, just this feeling, and I think I have that with my son [

]

- [ ]

[

]

- Or just a kind of question, you would be asking.

[ ]

- [ ] I also feel we need to disclaim the idea of not knowing, because we are the kind of being that is in a knowing state. We do store, archive, some kind of knowledge, we cannot undo that completely, [ ] making yourself insecure about what you know, because you cannot let go of the knowledge, not completely, but you can be in this doubtful relationship to it, and you can offer... I don't know, cracks in it, you can offer something else to step in, step in through the walls of knowledge, because quite often I feel there's like this binary between knowing and not knowing, but you're always in this knowing state of not being able to know, [ ]

[

] it's not to negate knowing in any way, [ ] this freedom of entering into this field. For me, not knowing is a field of potentiality that might not ever be penetrated, like it may reveal small new things, and it may not, [

] certain scientists will say that humans really only know like 4% of what's going on around us, like we can only perceive 4%, [ ]

- [ ]

[ ]

- So we are really in some kind of limbo of knowledge.

[

] knowledge is like... it's the oppressor, [



] it's like this difference between transparency and opacity is to say like, like the oppressor always wants the oppressed to be transparent, because they want to know, because they're the knowers, [

] I don't I won't get into that. [

] it's just trying to get to like 4.0001%. We're just pushing, you know, like, something. Something happened. [

] while Gaza was bombed, you know, while this conflict was breaking out. I mean, yes, of course, it was in terms of the safety, the safety we all enjoy and the relative... like, you know, like privilege we do enjoy, but it's that's not what that's not what happened. What happened was really I think that we were holding space through that listening process through that spatial being in space together [

]

- [

] there's so many knowns in that, which we focus on. But there's also a lot of unknowns that hold a greater power over that conflict that we do not work with [ holding a space for that unknowingness to enter is a resistance [

]

[ ]

- [ ]

[

] what are the other practices? [  
] they are as they're less they're less tangible and  
they're less easy to quantify. So that's why, [ ] those anomalies that don't  
get discarded as opposed to being fed into the, [  
] cumulatively, they reveal  
something. [

] and it's maybe  
not even that people are getting it and then saying, oh, that's interesting. [

]

- I think it's important to underline that accumulation with the non-tangible elements.  
[

] you don't know, how to archive. [

] And I think that holding space  
of intangible elements is a kind of freedom and a kind of resistance and a kind of  
insisting on perhaps in many ways a truer sense of the world because you have this  
unknowingness as part of it, it is integrated. [ ] I  
think that's beautiful. But I also think it's politically important.

[  
] It's resisting, of course, capitalist accumulation, like what you're doing, what we're doing. It's resisting.

- [

] It's just a natural, in some sense of the word, natural way of being human. That we have these ways of gathering. We have these ways of being together and being with the unknown rather than constantly focusing on the known. [

] sometimes I have this feeling in my body that the idea of the known is like this very new, modern concept.

[ ] But that's what I'm saying. It is new. [

] how it is the  
separation between humans and the rest of nature, for example. [

] when knowing is separate from or a certain kind of knowledge, a certain kind of certain epistemologies are more privileged over others or given more weight than others.

- [

]

[  
] the Goethean way of knowing, [

] Everything I can observe about this piece of wood, bark, whatever it is that I'm holding for the purpose of the recording, and scientifically I can measure it. There are

all kinds of things I can do. And then I can kind of use my imagination to zoom out or I can also use, you know, here's a stone. So like a piece of stone or something, maybe it's concrete, actually, I don't know. But anyway, like I can also say I can understand processes over geological time that would have brought this and the movements of water and climate and all kinds of things that made a stone. So that you can also zoom out to this bigger picture of like it's not only quantifying. [

] by measuring it and the color and all these things. [

] And then you can also cast your imagination into other spaces. You can use the imagination then to zoom in and out [

] So you're kind of picking up on these other traces or picking up on these other pieces and then you're also maybe projecting a bit. But then you have a picture of the stone, the piece of wood, the flower, whatever it is that is like what he would say is part of these flowing. You're seeing it in terms of flowing processes.

- And those flowing processes resonate with me with the slowness of your work. [

]

What is slowness or what is slowness of listening?

- [ ]

Well, it's good you say what it is for me, because slowness is different for everyone.

[

] I can only speak in terms of, you know,

like I sound like a broken record like that. It's not, you know, it's, of course, literally slowing down, decelerating and all the things you notice or, you know, look at the clouds reflecting in the water. I mean, it's so beautiful. So all the things that you know, that all the things when you go more slowly that you notice the little details and and your body is different, your heart rate kind of slows down. And there's, you know, so there are those things about literally physically slowing down, decelerating also as a form of resistance, you know, like standing still really as a form of resistance. But then slowness to me is also like that... it's this I would say it's this kind of expanded lens through which then we can look at everything. [

] can you begin to imagine this place? What was here before? You can imagine who was sitting in these chairs before. What kind of traces have they left? What kind of DNA traces have they left? Where are they now? [

] oh, what was here before this house? What or what was this little house before it was this cafe? And then what was this what was here before this was here and what was here before this water was here or was it water, [

] you also gain the possibility to project or begin to imagine what it might become and how it might evolve into the future. [

] through slowness, choose to step out of the consensus of time and experience time or think about time differently [

] It has to do with scales of perception [ ] that for me is like applying a slow lens. [

] to get back to listening as an active intimacy, listening as sometimes very intimate. [ ] can you establish, I didn't say it in that way, but intimacy with with someone or something that's very far away, not just empathy, but can you intimacy across vast stretches of time and distance [

] it was very profound. I realized

that I was so happy that he and I were like alive on the planet at the same time. And then I thought, wow, actually everyone we meet in this lifetime is alive at the same time. [

]

- [

being wondering about that we are actually here, [

] It could have been

endlessly different. But this is what is. And I appreciate it. I'm wondering about it and

I take it in [ ]

[

] This is and you are an important person

who's asking the questions about it, about this moment, which is fascinating. It's super cool.

- [

] the whole idea of the conversation as a space for

listening and slowness and wondering. [

] in what way do you think about slowness

and listening in that space of the conversation?

Well, it's interesting because there's a difference between having a dialogue and having a conversation.

- [ ]

The difference is that a dialogue is where the conversation, the space of the dialogue... is where the conversation is opening up. It's a third space. It's a new space that's opening up within the conversation. [

]

- [

] but there's so much more at risk.

[

] you're not

necessarily in control [

]

[

] what will be the way to engage the listener to make the listening experience different, more textured, more rich, more doesn't have to be participatory. [

] Everybody has different, different ways of

being and expressing themselves and being present or speaking or not. [

]

- [ ]

[ ] it's like what's being said and what's also not being said. It's like allowing that's not-knowing or the unknown to be a dialogue partner in that space. [

] it's like an old friend I've known for a long time. But where does that come from? You know, like immediately comfortable, immediate, like a feeling of comfort. [

] they're always there, other things that are operating and we cannot know or we'll never know. We'll never know exactly what compelled you to... [

- [ ]

] There's still all the other things. And I don't know what they are, but I know that they are there. And that knowing of what I don't know.

And that's trusting. It's trusting what you don't know.

- [ ]



] But I think what we do know about each other is that all three of us know that and we are all right with that and we are inviting that in.

[ ]

- [ ]

[ ]

- But there are different ways of communicating that I'm all right with that.

[

] Many people will or would resist that, that's not only embracing the not-knowing, but like you said, it's you kind of just stating it in terms of consent in a way [

] they don't yet have the trust. [

] I definitely did not have that trust or that groundedness of wondering and wondering. [ ]

- [ ]

[ ]

- [ ]

[  
] being a curator, you know, it's also about making unlikely combinations of people or situations. [  
]

] implicitly trust the situation.

- [  
]

[  
]  
]

- [  
]

[ ]

- [  
]

That's a very dominant structure to adapt to.

[ ]

- [  
]

[

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- [ ]

[ ]

- [

] the study of philosophy as a discipline into not knowing, to have that privilege of actually being occupied with just not knowing and insisting on that actually being a possible discipline, whereas all the other disciplines, they have methods or boundaries for knowing specific things, which is, of course, nice. But they will never spend time dwelling on not knowing. That's not their mandate. [

]

And I think that's actually why I also have cultivated slowness as something that's not definable, because the point is to create a space in which people enter, people find themselves or learn, not find themselves, but it is intentionally kind of an ambiguous space, [

]

- [

] And I like to be

informed back by others. [

] for me not

occupying what things could be, like me not being the conductor. People really start conducting things for me. That's quite nice and beautiful.

[ ] I like to be the conductor, I have to say, but I like to be the conductor that invites other conductors in to conduct.

- [ ]

[

] maybe I'm less of that than you are, of that openness, I don't know if I think about it, but...

- [ ] I also have to admit a certain failure, because I don't know how to actually be a human with a body and a mind doing things and not projecting things, like I'm constantly doing, I'm constantly making, I'm constantly... Doing stuff that takes up space. [

] it's like this constant trying, failing, but then also succeeding in that failure, if that makes any sense.

[ ]

- [ ]

[

] I

mean, and the principles themselves are quite open. But at the same time, you wouldn't believe how many people, students in particular, you know, like fixate, find that the paper is still online, somewhere it was published, you know, and it's like fixate on this thing. They still come back to it. They still say there are six principles of being slow, [

]

- [

]

And that's the urge of knowing also.

- [ ]

[ ]

- [ ]

[ ]

- [

and keep doing that. ] But then the task is to let go again

[

] But it wouldn't have happened if there hadn't been the trust that you talked about, if there hadn't been this attention and deep care. [

] Somehow there was a flow in trust, but also a trust and the trust in not knowing. [

]

- [

]

[

]

- [ ] if you are allowed to prepare yourself, then you're also allowed to unknowingly fixate yourself. [

]

[

] then you're preparing and you want it to be clear and legible for people also. [

]

- [ ] whatever you have prepared will be challenged. Also by yourself. Yeah. But you will alternate at the last minute. [

] also not allowing a certain projection to stand on check is to really encourage the meeting and encounter in the moment.

[

] and standing on a foundation of not knowing as well, [ ] there can be an implicit trust. Trust also trust in myself, trust in the situation. [

]

- [ ] Is this something that you rarely share or rarely say out loud about both listening and slowness and being together? But that is for you a difficulty, something that you return to, but don't know what to do with. Something that you're in this conversation has secretly been holding back on. And we don't need to respond to it.

Just something to think about. Oh, but you do want me to respond.

- [ ] we don't need to fully understand it. Maybe it's really just a question for you to take with you.

[ ] maybe the thing it's not something I'm holding back, but that maybe there are still some things I don't trust, but I'm I'm more and more aware I'm more and more aware of them and I'm building. So it's it's like it's always constantly loosening, opening, like what I was saying about the inner dimensions of listening [ ]

- [ ] do you think there's a tipping point where you are too good at trusting, too good at what you do and too comfortable with what you do, whereas you might not know, but you're actually hindering it?

I don't think so.

- [ ]

[ ]

- [ ] Can you be too slow, too caring?



No, because there's always discernment for me. [

] I can tell where there's resistance or I can tell where there's friction or and not that friction is a bad thing at all. [

] the seed has been planted. So maybe that person is not like that or that or the situation is not exactly as beautiful and slow as you want it to be. But somewhere a seed has been planted and something else is going to germinate and generate something else. And you don't have to know. It's another thing that's very freeing when I talk about liberating. It's like you don't like that. I don't have to know where my ideas go when I publish a book and they go out and I don't know who's listening [

]

- [

]

But why did they use this word aggressiveness to describe it?

- [ ] They're attacking your ability to figure out stuff. [

]

[ ]

- [ ]

[ ]

- [ ]

[ ]

- The beautiful thing is that the transcript will be fragmented. [ ] But the sense of the unknowingness that we have been talking about will be very present in this conversation.

[

] And

I'll talk to them for like usually two to three hours, sometimes two conversations, whatever. And then I transcribe everything by hand. Like I listen, I transcribe takes like 30 hours, you know, for like three hours. And then I get into like this Dr. Frankenstein, like now I'm making the puzzle. Like how is the listener? What is the experience that I want the listener to have? [

] I would ever be a person to publish just like to have a talk, and we're just going to put this online for people to listen to, because I think there's an idea you want to cultivate. It is about cultivating or it is about for me, it's about respect for the listener. That's it.

- [ ] because how can you know what the listener needs and wants and what kind of care are you in a position of exercising?

[ ]

- [ ] I'm really trying to make a material that is not necessarily nice for the reader, but very confronting, it's fighting back. But for me, because it's poorly made in some way, because there's so many fragments and so many holes and blanks, the reader has all the power, or maybe not all. But at least I feel that I become the submissive and the reader is the only one who can decide if this makes sense or not. And whatever sense we have is lost for the reader and the reader have to recreate all the sense making, [

]

[ ] this goes back to your question about something I'm holding back, because maybe it is that I'm still too much trying to curate the experience.

- [ ] So there is a lot of care. [

] They are made so smoothly that you cannot really resist it. [

] sometimes things are edited so nicely that it just melts into you. You are unable to resist it.

[ ] because it's part of the attention economy or whatever they call it, because I want people to listen. And I know when someone is saying my guest is saying, 'you know', too many times [

] I don't need to know how, but I don't want people to get turned off by the audio quality or by some little piece of a conversation that's just like not that's like it was nice, but like, do they really need to hear that? Like so that's what I mean.

] it's a deep respect for the listener and a deep desire for the listener to like go the whole way, you know?

- [ ] what does it really mean to respect the listener? Because you can do that in so many different ways.

What does it mean to respect the listener?

- [ ]

[ ]

- [ ]

I'm curious.

- [ ]