

Listening with Lefebvre: The Sound of the Everyday in Postwar Radio Art

JANINA MÜLLER

Abstract

This paper traces sonic engagement with the everyday in postwar West German and French radiophonic culture. While the quotidian has been seen as a preoccupation of the French, a transnational perspective reveals cross-fertilization between political-artistic circles that occurred from the 1960s onwards. Central to this argument is French post-Marxist philosopher and sociologist Henri Lefebvre, whose seminal three-volume *Critique of Everyday Life* (published between 1947 and 1981) and related writings found resonance within both the French and German New Left and thus pushed the politicization of everyday life to the forefront of “1968.” The main concern of Lefebvre lay with the negative aspects brought about by modernity, where, despite technological advancement and increasing material comfort, daily life had lost its vital force and become subjugated under the forces of capitalist society. In France, his critical project tied in with the work of the *nouveaux romanciers* and their interest in what Georges Perec coined the “infra-ordinary.” At the same time, this group of artists was instrumental in the rise of the “Neues Hörspiel” (New radio play) in the 1960s, which further explored the sound of the everyday, and radio’s everydayness in particular. Using Lefebvre’s *Critique* and affiliated writings as a conceptual framework, I demonstrate through a number of analytical case studies, including Dieter Schnebel’s 1971 sound collage *Hörfunk (Radiostücke I–V)*, Ferdinand Kriwet’s *Radioselbst* (1979), and Mauricio Kagel’s radio play *Rrrrrr. . . , Hörspiel über eine Radiophantasie* (1982), how authors employed techniques of montage, stereophony, speech, and voice to stage the everyday as a site of sameness, repetition, and social alienation as well as to critically interrogate the spatial and temporal qualities of radio as an everyday medium.

“To know the everyday is to want to transform it.”

Henri Lefebvre, *Foundations for a Sociology of the Everyday* (1961)¹

In the 1960s, avant-garde composers Mauricio Kagel and Dieter Schnebel, along with other new left-leaning poets and writers, turned to radio to articulate current socio-political concerns. Their activities gave rise to the so-called “Neues Hörspiel” (New radio play), centered mainly, if not exclusively, around the West German radio station in Cologne and the local producer Klaus Schöning, who took a leading role as a promoter of acoustic art. Relying on the tape recorder, montage, and stereophony as prime radiophonic tools, artists sought to advance the medium into experimental territory while imbuing it with critical potential through strategies of self-reflexivity and interference.² The term “Neues Hörspiel,” coined in 1968, not only signaled a break with the literary radio drama of the 1950s, which—due to its lack of engagement with the technological affordances of the radio studio and the aesthetic constraints it

¹ Henri Lefebvre, *Critique of Everyday Life: The One-Volume Edition*, trans. John Moore and Gregory Elliott (Verso, 2014), 392.

² For a thorough discussion of these strategies see Michael Bachmann, “(1968) Ein Aufnahmestand. Klang/Körper und Ideologiekritik im Neuen Hörspiel,” in *Politik mit dem Körper. Performative Praktiken in Theater, Medien und Alltagskultur seit 1968*, eds. Friedemann Kreuder and Michael Bachmann (transcript, 2009), 193–208, <https://doi.org/10.1515/9783839412237-013>; and Bettina Wodianka, *Radio als Hör-Spiel-Raum: Medienreflexion—Störung—Künstlerische Intervention* (transcript, 2018), <https://doi.org/10.1515/9783839440469>.

had imposed on the integration of sound—seemed obsolete and ideologically tainted.³ But it also asserted affinity with the newly emerged genre of the *nouveau roman*, whose exponents, including Michel Butor, Robert Pinget, and Jean Thibaut, had paved the way for their German counterparts with several experimental radio plays produced by the Southern German radio channel (Süddeutscher Rundfunk) at the beginning of the 1960s.⁴

With the rise and reception of the *nouveau roman* movement, quotidian life became a main artistic preoccupation. It found its more critical underpinnings in the writings of postwar cultural theorists, and post-Marxist thinker Henri Lefebvre in particular, who raised the everyday to a subject of philosophical and sociological inquiry as well as political critique, geared towards the effects of modernization after 1945. Being closely aligned with revolutionary circles that gave momentum to the events of May '68, Lefebvre exerted influence on new leftist discourse in both France and West Germany. As his work stands at the crossroads of various paths into the quotidian, it provides me with a suitable point of departure for investigating sonic engagement with everyday life across borders and media. Though I do not assert any direct link between Lefebvre and the New radio play, I argue that the West German reception of his writings sparked a novel interest in the everyday among leftist intellectuals, as evinced by the fact that the main publicist outlet of the New Left movement, the journal *Kursbuch*, devoted an issue to the topic in 1975.⁵ Rather than merely focusing on the impact of Lefebvre's work, however, I use his *Critique* and related writings to develop a conceptual framework for studying how New radio plays acoustically probe into modern life in capitalist society. After outlining Lefebvre's political relevance for the New Left, this paper thus introduces selected aspects of his critique to throw the notion of "the everyday" into relief. I then turn to the French and German postwar art scene to explore key sonic strategies in attending to everyday life. Focusing on West German radiophonic culture, I demonstrate in a range of analytical case studies how avant-garde composers and artists envisioned everydayness in ways that resonate with Lefebvre's theme of alienation and his critical reflections on everyday space and time. "Listening with Lefebvre" thus allows me to carve out the role of radio art in negotiating and critiquing the everyday as well as to examine how sound serves as a site for critical knowledge production within the broader political climate of the time.⁶

³ As Bachmann has noted, the literary radio play of the 1950s adhered to an "ideology of the immaterial," i.e., it sought to suppress the presence of the medium as well as the corporeality of the voice. In that, it remained indebted to ideas put forward by Richard Kolb, a devoted National Socialist and author of the 1932 book *Horoskop des Hörspiels*. See Bachmann, "(1968) Ein Aufnahmestadium," 198. Caroline A. Kita has recently challenged this view, arguing that radio dramas, such as Günter Eich's *Träume* (1951) and Fred von Hoerschelmann's *Ich höre Namen* (1954), draw attention to the medium of the radio under National Socialism while using shifting audio perspectives to engage the listener in a critical way. See her chapter "Revisiting the Soundscapes of Postwar West German Radio Drama," in *A Companion to Sound in German-Speaking Cultures*, ed. Rolf J. Goebel (Camden House, 2023), 151–64.

⁴ Among the first to highlight this connection was Werner Spies, "Der *nouveau roman* und das Neue Hörspiel," in *Neues Hörspiel: Essays, Analysen, Gespräche*, ed. Klaus Schöning (Suhrkamp, 1970), 71–87. See also Stefan Bodo Würffel, *Das deutsche Hörspiel* (J. B. Metzler, 1978), 155–57, <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-476-03878-4>.

⁵ See Karl E. Klare, "The Critique of Everyday Life, Marxism, and the New Left," *Berkeley Journal of Sociology* 16 (1971–72), 15–45, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/40999912>.

⁶ My argument here dovetails with Beate Kutschke's observation that 1960s and '70s avant-garde music participated in political, social, and cultural discourses prevalent at the time and contributed to the dissemination of new leftist intellectual knowledge through musical and performative means. See *Neue Linke / Neue Musik. Kulturtheorien und künstlerische Avantgarde in den 1960er und 70er Jahren* (Böhlau, 2007), 22.

Politicizing Everyday Life: From Lefebvre to the New Left

Kristin Ross has charted the rise of interest in the quotidian in postwar France by pointing out how the theme of everyday life in its alienating guise emerged as a counterpoint to the rapid modernization and spread of American consumerist culture.⁷ It was at this historical conjuncture, as she remarks, that the everyday became a privileged site for ideology criticism and artistic resistance—from Roland Barthes’s *Mythologies* (1957) and the films of Jacques Tati to the writings of Lefebvre, the Situationists, and the *nouveaux romanciers*. For Lefebvre in particular, engagement with everyday life proved to be a life-long occupation. Its major outcome was the three-volume *Critique of Everyday Life*, published between 1947 and 1981, whose interconnected themes and concerns developed vis-à-vis the changing socio-economic and political realities of the French postwar period.⁸ To this, we can add the late work *Elements of Rhythmanalysis: An Introduction to the Understanding of Rhythm*, fleshing out ideas that were already sketched in the *Critique* as well as *Everyday Life in the Modern World* (1968), a book imbued with the revolutionary spirit of the student and protest movements. During the 1960s, while teaching at the Universities of Strasbourg and Nanterre, Lefebvre entertained ties with student activists and political avant-gardists of the Situationist International—a group with whom he had a productive, yet complicated relationship.⁹ Though his more active engagement soon came to a halt after the May events, his relentless impetus towards politicizing everyday life, paired with a critical stance on dogmatic Marxism as well as state politics, briefly made him a sympathetic mentor to the new leftist movement. Lefebvre’s call for a “cultural revolution” and a revitalization of the spirit of the “Festival” especially struck a chord with the younger generation in their ambition to implement change in the structures of everyday life and thinking via performative action:

The revival of art and of the meaning of art has a practical not a “cultural” aim; indeed, our cultural revolution has no purely “cultural” aims, but directs culture towards experience, towards the transfiguration of everyday life. The revolution will transform existence, not the state and the distribution of property, for we do not take means for ends. This can also be stated as follows: “Let everyday life become a work of art! Let every technical means be employed for the transformation of everyday life!”¹⁰

With such revolutionary rhetoric, Lefebvre not only gained popularity with the French New Left but also attracted the attention of political circles in West Germany, where translations of his writings appeared from the late 1960s onwards. As Michael Trebitsch has noted, it was “in Germany during the 1970s that the debate on everyday life which sprang up in the context of the alternative movement was the most firmly rooted in Henri Lefebvre’s thought.”¹¹

Though his influence on the West German New Left was less pervasive than that of the Frankfurt School, translations of *Everyday Life in the Modern World* and the first two volumes of *Critique of Everyday*

⁷ Kristin Ross, *Fast Cars, Clean Bodies: Decolonization and the Reordering of French Culture* (MIT Press, 1995), 5.

⁸ The introduction volume appeared in 1947, segued by *Foundations for a Sociology of the Everyday* [*Fondements d’une sociologie de la quotidienneté*] and *From Modernity to Modernism (Towards a Metaphilosophy of Daily Life)* [*De la modernité au modernisme (Pour une métaphilosophie du quotidien)*] in 1961 and 1981, respectively.

⁹ On the relation between Lefebvre and the Situationists see Ben Highmore, *Everyday Life and Cultural Theory: An Introduction* (Routledge, 2002), 138–42, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203464229>; and Michael Sheringham, *Everyday Life: Theories and Practices from Surrealism to the Present* (Oxford University Press, 2006), 158–74, <https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780199273959.001.0001>.

¹⁰ Lefebvre, *Everyday Life in the Modern World* [*La Vie quotidienne dans le monde moderne*], trans. Sacha Rabinovitch (Harpers Torchbooks, 1971), 204.

¹¹ Michel Trebitsch, “Preface,” in Lefebvre, *Critique of Everyday Life*, 24.

Life, published by the Suhrkamp and the Hanser Verlag in the first half of the 1970s, gave everyday life political currency and contributed to establishing it as a field of scientific inquiry.¹² In 1975, the new leftist journal *Kursbuch* devoted an issue to the topic of “Alltag” (the everyday), featuring a range of essays that embraced core themes of Lefebvre’s. In the opening piece, “Unser Alltag: Nachruf zu Lebzeiten” (Our everyday: an obituary during our lifetime), Karl Markus Michel, co-founder and -editor of the journal, addressed the decline of everyday life in connection with the “victory march of the clock” and the increasing specialization within work life.¹³ The issue further contained an article on “Alltags-Zeit” (Everyday time), referring to Lefebvre’s distinction between the cyclical time of nature and the linear, homogenous time of industrial capitalism.¹⁴

By the end of the 1970s, the notion of the everyday had gained widespread circulation in social science, too. In a seminal essay from 1978, Norbert Elias called it a key concept of some contemporary schools of sociology, while drawing attention to the varied meanings and connotations attached to the term.¹⁵ A predominantly negative understanding of everyday life had emerged from the Frankfurt School with their focus on the “culture industry” (Adorno and Horkheimer) and “false needs” instilled in people by media and consumerism (Marcuse). Lefebvre shared many concerns with his German counterparts, yet his approach remained distinguishable in its more nuanced as well as ambiguous understanding of everyday life as a source of impoverishment and potential social transformation alike.

The Programmed Everyday

While Lefebvre emphasized the peculiar double nature of everyday life, he devoted his main energies to uncovering how, with the advent of modernity, it had lost its fertile qualities. Reviving Marx’s concept of alienation from the 1844 *Manuscripts*, he argued that estrangement not only characterized modern labor relations but penetrated human existence on a much deeper level, to have become “constant and everyday.”¹⁶ With the emergence of the “private consciousness” (conscience privée), i.e., a self-centered, atomistic mode of existence, the individual had given up their identity as a political actor and public being.¹⁷ Passivity and false individuality were further reinforced by the mass media. Lefebvre scorned how radio and television cast themselves as life advisors, telling people “how they should live well and make the best of things; what they would choose and why; how they would use their time and space.”¹⁸ Instead of opening private life to politics, the mass media programmed the everyday and glossed over its alienating aspects by staging the world as a spectacle, or broadcasting fragmentary representations of it to be consumed as a commodity:

¹² Lefebvre’s writings prompted a number of German publications, including Thomas Kleinspehn, *Der verdrängte Alltag* (Focus, 1975), Thomas Leithäuser, *Formen des Alltagsbewusstseins* (Campus, 1976) and Rainer O. Neugebauer, *Alltagsleben: Zur Kritik einer politisch-historischen und didaktischen Kategorie* (Haag + Herchen, 1978). See Klaus Ronneberger, “Contours and Convolutions of Everydayness: On the Reception of Lefebvre in the Federal Republic of Germany,” *Capitalism, Nature, Socialism (CNS)* 13, no. 2 (2002), 42–57, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10455750208565478>.

¹³ Karl Markus Michel, “Unser Alltag: Nachruf zu Lebzeiten,” *Kursbuch 41*: “Alltag” (1975), 1–40.

¹⁴ Klaus Laermann, “Alltags-Zeit. Bemerkungen über die unauffälligste Form des sozialen Zwangs,” *Kursbuch 41*, 87–105.

¹⁵ Norbert Elias, “Zum Begriff des Alltags,” in *Materialien zur Soziologie des Alltags*, eds. Kurt Hammerich and Michael Klein (Westdeutscher Verlag, 1978), 22, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-322-83603-8_2.

¹⁶ Lefebvre, *Critique of Everyday Life*, 187.

¹⁷ Lefebvre, *Critique of Everyday Life*, 169.

¹⁸ Lefebvre, *Critique of Everyday Life*, 702.

At one and the same time the mass media have unified and broadcast the everyday; they have disintegrated it by integrating it with the “world” current events in a way which is both too real and utterly superficial.¹⁹

However, mass media not only created a mere simulacrum of reality, but they also showed an omnivorous taste for exploiting the trivial side of everyday life, turning the ordinary into something extraordinary simply through the act of presenting it.²⁰

Akin to the Frankfurt School theorists, Lefebvre saw homogeneity, fragmentation, and hierarchization at the heart of the modern everyday.²¹ Its homogenous character resulted from and became apparent through the rationalized character of Western capitalist society, commodification, the uniformity of reception generated by the media, the reign of clock time, and the predominance of linearly repetitive rhythms. Fragmentation, which he thought of as being contained within the overall sameness of modern society, pertained to the splintering of consciousness into ever more specializations and dissociated realms as well as the experience of time and space, manifesting itself in manifold separations, as, for example, between private and public, work and leisure, or center and periphery. Last of all, the everyday was thoroughly permeated by hierarchical relationships, from the sphere of labor and income to the world of objects.

Clock Time and Signals

For Lefebvre, the ascendancy of clock time and the proliferation of signals, both of which he saw occurring with capitalist industrialization, assumed a central role in programming the everyday. As Karl Marx had already noted, “the clock was the first automatic device to be used for practical purposes, and from it the whole theory of the production of regular motion evolved.”²² The distinction between clock time and lived time, as it originated in the nineteenth century, would resound through the discourse of modernity and beyond. Important shifts in the history of timekeeping were brought about by the rise of radio, which facilitated the dissemination of standard time, as well as the introduction of the atomic clock in the postwar period:

In the twentieth century, “clocks” changed from mechanical and astronomical-based systems to electromagnetic and atomic-based ones, while “life” was increasingly studied in terms of its microbiological structure and cellular movement. These changes, sustaining the binary split of clock time/lived time, depended on particularly modern technologies—from radio to film.²³

¹⁹ Lefebvre, *Critique of Everyday Life*, 371.

²⁰ In the chapter “The Media Day,” included in *Elements of Rhythmanalysis* [*Éléments de rythmanalyse*], Lefebvre elaborates on how mediatized reality only creates a false copy of presence, thereby effacing the immediacy of the here and now: “The present (representation) furnishes and occupies time, simulating and dissimulating the living. . . . Presence is here (and not up there or over there). With presence there is dialogue, the use of time, speech and action. With the present, which is there, there is only exchange and the acceptance of exchange, of the displacement (of the self and the other) by a product, by a simulacrum.” His argument bears resemblance to Jean Baudrillard’s concept of the simulacrum. See *Elements of Rhythmanalysis: Space, Time and Everyday Life*, trans. Stuart Elden and Gerald Moore, with an introduction by Stuart Eden (Bloomsbury Academic, 2013), 56, <https://doi.org/10.5040/9781350284838>.

²¹ Lefebvre, *Critique of Everyday Life*, 757–60.

²² Karl Marx to Friedrich Engels, “28 January 1863 [London],” in Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Collected Works*, trans. Richard Dixon et al., vol. 41: *Letters 1860–64* (International Publishers, 1983), 448.

²³ Jimena Canales, “Clock / Lived,” in *Time: A Vocabulary of the Present*, eds. Joel Burges and Amy J. Elias (New York University Press, 2016), 125, <https://doi.org/10.18574/nyu/9781479844401.003.0010>.

From the 1960s onwards, leading historians, such as Edward P. Thompson, Jacques Le Goff, and Reinhart Koselleck began investigating the historical evolution and social functions of clock time by contrasting it against other temporal orders, such as “church time” or the “natural” rhythm of pre-industrialized labor.²⁴ A similar binarism is introduced by Lefebvre. Proceeding from an initial distinction between the linear and the cyclic, he conceived of everyday temporality as an interference between natural rhythms and socially produced time systems. While, on the one hand, everyday time is marked by artificially imposed linear rhythms associated with clocks, watches, and industrialist labor,²⁵ it also remains inherently connected to cyclic patterns of the cosmic, nature, and human bodily existence:

Critique of everyday life studies the persistence of rhythmic time scales within the linear time of modern industrial society. It studies the interactions between cyclic time (natural, in a sense irrational, and still concrete) and linear time (acquired, rational, and in a sense abstract and antinatural).²⁶

However, as Lefebvre maintained, the empty repetition connected to clocks and machines fundamentally differs from the cyclical rhythms of nature:

Although they are repetitive, rhythms and cycles always have an appearance of novelty: the dawn always seems to be the first one. Rhythm does not prevent desire for, and pleasure of, discovery: hunger and thirst always seem novel. . . . In linear repetition, by contrast, the formal and material identity of each “stroke” is recognized, generating lassitude, boredom, and fatigue. . . . The closer productive activity approximates to industrial production using machines, the more linear repetition becomes, losing its rhythmical character.²⁷

Cycles are hence not reducible to identical recurrences of the same but can be perceived as novel, vital, and enriching—in contrast to the monotony of mechanized labor and the quantified time of clocks, to which modern work life has become fully subjected:

Everyday life is modelled on abstract, quantified time, the time of watches and clocks. . . . This homogeneous and desacralized time has emerged victorious since it supplied *the measure of the time of work*. Beginning from this historic moment, it became the time of everydayness, subordinating to the organisation of work in space other aspects of the everyday: the hours of sleep and waking, meal-times and the hours of private life, the relations of adults with their children, entertainment and hobbies, relations to the place of dwelling.²⁸

As space becomes dispersed and divided up into work life, commutation, domestic life, and leisure, linear time is experienced as discontinuous and fragmented.

²⁴ See Jacques Le Goff, *Time, Work and Culture in the Middle Ages*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (University of Chicago Press, 1980), 29–42, Edward P. Thompson, “Time, Work-Discipline, and Industrial Capitalism,” *Past and Present* 38 (1967), 56–97, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/649749>, and Reinhart Koselleck, “Time and History,” in *The Practice of Conceptual History: Timing History, Spacing Concepts*, trans. Todd Samuel Presner et al. (Stanford University Press, 2002), 100–14, <https://doi.org/10.1515/9781503619104>.

²⁵ As Dawn Lyon has pointed out with regard to Lefebvre’s shifting terminology: “In his early work, he reserved the term rhythm for the cyclical, and the linear was discussed in terms of repetition. However, later both the linear and the cyclical are presented as different forms of rhythm.” See *What is Rhythmanalysis?* (Bloomsbury Academic, 2019), 24, <https://doi.org/10.5040/9781350018310>.

²⁶ Lefebvre, *Critique of Everyday Life*, 343.

²⁷ Lefebvre, *Critique of Everyday Life*, 801.

²⁸ Lefebvre and Catherine Régulier, “The Rhythmanalytical Project,” in *Rhythmanalysis: Space, Time, and Everyday Life*, 82. Though Lefebvre found that cyclic time was becoming more and more threatened by the linear order of the work realm, he maintained that “the rhythmical cannot disappear; the repetitive cannot be reduced to the results of a combinatory, a prefabricated, imposed linearity. Although such a tendency exists in the modern world, daily life cannot be conceived exclusively in accordance with functional linearity.” Lefebvre, *Critique of Everyday Life*, 687–88.

Along with the predominance of linear repetition, Lefebvre detected another deprivation in the fabric of daily life, caused by the spread of signals.²⁹ The signal, as he defined it, is redundant, repetitive, and mono-sensory, i.e., either visual or auditory, and serves the main function of commanding or prohibiting actions. Each signal thus “programmes a routine, exactly like a calculator, regulating patterns of conduct and behavior.”³⁰ As such, it contrasts with the ambiguity and affective appeal of the symbol, which reinforces the sense of collectivity and connection between the members of a social group (Lefebvre’s prime example is the Christian cross).³¹ While symbols are archaic, assuming a vital role in the village of the past and surviving into the present in the form of monuments and cathedrals,³² signals originate with the process of industrialization (factories, railroads, etc.) and proliferate in modern urban life, engendering a loss of richness in communication:

Not only are signals ever more numerous, not only are they becoming more dense, but bit by bit they are dismantling the semantic field. As the “signalling” pole becomes more and more intense the magnetic power of signals is increased. They corrode symbols and lessen the tension between the poles of expression and signification to the advantage of the latter. The semantic field becomes simplified and unified. . . .³³

Everyday life thus saw a gradual emptying out of symbolic expression, leading from signification to the inflation of signals, leaving “the active ‘subject’ externalized and passive, like an inert object at their command.”³⁴

As Thomas S. Davis has pointed out, Lefebvre’s work on the everyday is full of reflections on modern art—ranging from Baudelaire and James Joyce to the Surrealists, Bertolt Brecht’s epic theatre, and film—which he considered “as an invaluable register of the changing realities of daily life under capitalism.”³⁵ In the opening chapter of his *Everyday Life in the Modern World*, he pays a critical tribute to contemporary French literature, remarking on how quotidian life, as depicted in the *nouveau roman*, appears “less and less bearable, less and less interesting. . . .”³⁶ However, while Lefebvre was right in detecting a shift in the treatment of the everyday, artistic engagements with the sphere of the quotidian were ultimately more varied than his reading suggests.³⁷

²⁹ Together with signs (language), images, and symbols, signals form a dimension of what Lefebvre calls the “social text” (texte social): “We all find ourselves constantly—on a daily basis—faced with a social text. We leaf through it, we read it. It is via this text and our reading of it that we communicate with the other, be it society as a whole, or nature. At the same time, we are all part of a social text. We are not only readers; we are also read, deciphered and explained (or not).” Lefebvre, *Critique of Everyday Life*, 600.

³⁰ Lefebvre, *Critique of Everyday Life*, 594.

³¹ Lefebvre, *Critique of Everyday Life*, 570–606.

³² In Lefebvre’s account, the daily life of former, pre-industrialized times figures as a somewhat nostalgically colored background foil. As Ryan L. Allen has noted: “Symbolic expression and cyclical recurrence were the twin pillars of Lefebvre’s revolutionary Romanticism. Rooted in precapitalist communities and the rural world, archaic symbols and cyclical social rhythms contested the modernizing imperatives that prevailed in the age of economic growth that the French call *les trente glorieuses*.” See his “Resurrecting the Archaic: Symbols and Recurrence in Henri Lefebvre’s Revolutionary Romanticism,” *Modern Intellectual History* 18, no. 2 (2021): 477, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1479244319000362>.

³³ Lefebvre, *Critique of Everyday Life*, 594.

³⁴ Lefebvre, *Critique of Everyday Life*, 572.

³⁵ Thomas S. Davis, “‘What True Project Has Been Lost?’ Modern art and Henri Lefebvre’s *Critique of Everyday Life*,” in *Modernism and Theory: A Critical Debate*, ed. Stephen Ross (Routledge, 2009), 67. See also Ben Highmore, “Awkward Moments: Avant-Garde and the Dialectics of Everyday Life,” in *European Avant-Garde: New Perspectives. Avantgarde—Avantgardekritik—Avantgardeforschung*, ed. Dietrich Scheunemann (Rodopi, 2000), 245–66, https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004449411_018.

³⁶ Lefebvre, *Everyday Life in the Modern World*, 11.

³⁷ See Lynn Gumpert, ed., *The Art of the Everyday: The Quotidian in Postwar French Culture* (New York University Press, 1997), 11–18.

Sounding the Everyday in French Postwar Art

Among the *nouveaux romanciers*, Georges Perec, inventor of the concept of the “infra-ordinary,” most thoroughly attended to the spaces and sounds of modern daily life. In 1969, he initiated a long-term project entitled “Lieux,” centered on twelve Parisian places that held autobiographical significance to him. Perec planned to visit each location twice a year for a period of twelve years in total and document his impressions by way of real-time written or recorded descriptions as well as from memory.³⁸ Though the project remained unfinished, it yielded several offshoots, including the radio work *Tentative de description de choses vues au Carrefour Mabillon le 19 mai 1978*, produced for the newly established Atelier de Création Radiophonique and broadcast on France Culture on February 25, 1979.³⁹

While Perec valued the quotidian for all its unexplored ordinariness and banality, his early novels *Les Choses: Une histoire des années soixante* (*Things: A Story of the Sixties*) from 1965 and *Un homme qui dort* (*A Man Asleep*) from 1967, respectively, bring its capitalist permeation to the fore. The latter has as its protagonist a young Parisian student, who seeks to escape from the humdrum of modern life through an existential act of withdrawal. The narration, using the second person “you” to involve the reader directly in the protagonist’s state of mind, draws attention to the repetition of micro-actions, gestures, and sounds that make up his everyday:

Drops of water are continually forming on the drinking-water tap on the landing. Noises drift up from Rue Saint-Honoré far below. The bells of Saint-Roch chime two. You look up, you stop reading, but you had already stopped long ago. You put the open book down beside you on the bed. You reach out your hand, you stub out the cigarette which is smoking in the ashtray, you finish your bowl of Nescafé: it is barely lukewarm, too sweet, on the bitter side.⁴⁰

After deliberately failing to show up for an exam, the student stays in his room during the day and strolls aimlessly through the city at night. His rebellious attempt against the social regime of time finds its expression in the motif of the arrested alarm clock on the bed table. Eventually, however, he comes to realize that his commitment to indifference and nothingness is but a futile illusion, as time always prevails. Throughout the novel, traffic sounds, bells, dripping water, and the noises emanating from the neighboring apartments inevitably sustain the rhythm of everyday temporality:

With each passing day your patience has worn thinner, the hypocrisy of your pitiful efforts has been laid bare. Time would have had to stand still, but no-one has the strength to fight against time. You may have cheated, snitching a few crumbs, a few seconds: but the bells of Saint-Roch, the changing traffic lights at the intersection between Rue des Pyramides and Rue Saint-Honoré, the predictable drip from the tap on the landing, never ceased to signal the hours, the minutes, the days and the seasons. You may have pretended to forget time, you may have spent nights walking and days sleeping. But you couldn’t ever quite get away with it.⁴¹

³⁸ On this project, see Marie-Pascale Huglo, “Georges Perec’s ‘Time Bombs’: About *Lieux*,” in *Time and Memory*, eds. Jo Alyson Parker et al. (Brill, 2006), 101–14, https://doi.org/10.1163/9789047411178_012; Johanne Mohs, *Aufnahme und Zuschreibungen: Literarische Schreibweisen des fotografischen Akts bei Flaubert, Proust, Perec und Roche* (transcript, 2013), <https://doi.org/10.14361/transcript.9783839424919>, and Alasdair Pettinger, “Perecquian Soundscapes,” in *Georges Perec’s Geographies: Material, Performative and Textual Spaces*, eds. Charles Forsdick et al. (UCL Press, 2019), 127–39, <https://doi.org/10.14324/111.9781787354418>.

³⁹ Perec began working for German radio in 1968. His first radio play *Die Maschine* (“The Machine”) from the same year was produced by the Saarland radio channel (“Saarländischer Rundfunk”). For a discussion of his radio plays, see Ariane Steiner, *Georges Perec und Deutschland: Das Puzzle um die Leere* (Königshausen & Neumann, 2001), 115–63.

⁴⁰ Georges Perec, *A Man Asleep*, trans. Andrew Leak, with an introduction by David Bellos (Collins Harvill, 1990), 137.

⁴¹ Perec, *A Man Asleep*, 219.

In the film adaptation of the novella from 1974, directed by Bernard Queysanne and Perec himself, the sound sphere of the infra-ordinary likewise assumes a prominent role (Figure 1).⁴² During the first ca. fifteen minutes, up to the point when the student (played by Jacques Spiesser) refrains from pursuing his studies, the ticking of the clocks is almost continuously present on the *musique concrète*-inspired soundtrack by Philippe Drogoz and Eugénie Kuffler. On a visual level, the sounds of alienation are complemented by images of sameness and circularity, such as when the camera pans along a line of identical chairs in the classroom.



Figure 1: Georges Perec and Bernard Queysanne, *A Man Who Sleeps* (1974), screenshots by author.

A Man Asleep thus echoed concerns that were central to the critical project of Lefebvre, for whom Perec had worked as a research assistant in the 1960s. In fact, the film nods to their common intellectual ground by placing a copy of *Everyday Life in the Modern World* in the hands of the protagonist. Another trace of the

⁴² On the film adaptation see Julia Dobson, “Vanishing Points: Shifting Perspectives on *The Man Who Sleeps* / *Un homme qui dort*,” in *Georges Perec’s Geographies*, 47–64 and Lisa Villeneuve, “The Urban Experience of Placelessness: Perceptual Rhythms in Georges Perec’s *Un homme qui dort*,” in *Rhythms. Essays in French Literature, Thought, and Culture*, eds. Elizabeth Lindley and Laura McMahon (Peter Lang, 2008), 111–18.

affinity of their thinking can be found in Perec's essayistic inventory of spaces entitled *Espèces d'espaces* (*Species of Spaces*) from 1974. Echoing one of Lefebvre's critical observations, Perec remarks how in modernity, "spaces have multiplied, been broken up and have diversified."⁴³ In the chapter devoted to the apartment, he furthermore points at the all-pervasive functionalism to which domestic space has been subjected:

It seems to me . . . that in the ideal dividing-up of today's apartments functionality functions in accordance with a procedure that is unequivocal, sequential and nycthemeral. The activities of the day correspond to slices of time, and to each slice of time there corresponds one room of the apartment.⁴⁴

Perec humorously illustrates the division of living space along the timely patterns of everyday activities in the form of a bureaucratically detailed schema (Figure 2).

07.00	The mother gets up and goes to get breakfast in the	KITCHEN
07.15	The child gets up and goes into the	BATHROOM
07.30	The father gets up and goes into the	BATHROOM
07.45	The father and the child have their breakfast in the	KITCHEN
08.00	The child takes his coat from the	ENTRANCE-HALL

Figure 2: Georges Perec, *Species of Spaces*, "The Apartment."

Putting modern functionalism in question, he, in turn, envisions alternative models of spatial organization that would be based "no longer on circadian, but on heptadian rhythms."⁴⁵

A number of other artists and researchers in the French postwar context developed an interest in everyday sounds and spaces that can be seen as intertwined with the work of Perec and Lefebvre, respectively. In the field of urban sociology, Jean-François Augoyard investigated the daily walking practices of inhabitants of the "new town" l'Arlequin, situated on the outskirts of Grenoble, the outcome of which was his study *Pas à Pas: Essai sur le cheminement quotidien en milieu urbain* (*Step by Step: Everyday Walks in a French Urban Housing Project*) from 1979. In the same year, he founded the *Centre de recherche sur l'espace sonore et l'environnement urbain* (*Research Centre on Acoustic Space and Urban Environment*) to advance research on urban sound phenomena and ambiances.⁴⁶

Composer Luc Ferrari, who opened electroacoustic music to incorporate recognizable sounds from everyday life—albeit one removed from the more fast-paced urban habitat of the city of Paris—likewise worked in aesthetic proximity to the *nouveaux romanciers*. For the preparation of his *Presque rien no. 1* subtitled *Le lever du jour au bord de la mer* (*Daybreak at the seashore*), the initial piece from the eponymous

⁴³ Perec, *Species of Spaces / Espèces d'espaces* (1974), in *Species of Spaces and Other Pieces*, trans. and ed. John Sturrock (Penguin Books, 2008), 6.

⁴⁴ Perec, *Species of Spaces*, 28.

⁴⁵ Perec, *Species of Spaces*, 32.

⁴⁶ For an overview of Augoyard's work see Jean-Paul Thibaud, "Jean-François Augoyard, an explorer of the sensory world," trans. Sophie Probst, *ambiances* (2020), <http://journals.openedition.org/ambiances/3126>.

cycle of tape compositions, Ferrari spent the summer of 1967 in the Croatian seaside town of Vela Luka. Placing a stereo microphone on the balcony of his hotel, he made several recordings of the local daybreak ambiance, thus becoming aware of “those sounds which repeated every day: the first fisherman passing by the same time every day with his bicycle, the first hen, the first donkey, and then the lorry which left at 6 am to the port to pick up people arriving on the boat.”⁴⁷ In condensing his material to a typical morning soundscape, Ferrari sought to create an environmental composition akin to a “photographic slide,” unmarked by any clearly perceivable traces of sound manipulation.⁴⁸ As Eric Drott has remarked, the composer’s agenda of transforming the highly specialized field of *musique concrète* into an amateur practice, which meant keeping technical interventions at a minimum, can be situated “within a range of movements and initiatives undertaken in France during the 1960s in order to promote cultural democratization.”⁴⁹ In the same way, *Presque rien* could be said to translate Lefebvre’s project of rhythmanalysis into tape composition by sounding a slice of rural life whose repetitive elements remain inherently connected to the cycle of nature. Unfolding as a continuous, rhythmically arranged flow of sonic events—from the hushed “petits bruits” (small sounds) accompanied by the soft lapping of waves to the crescendo of buzzing cicadas—*Presque rien no. 1* presents a soundscape that appears strongly aestheticized as well as untouched by the fragmenting and homogenizing tendencies endemic to the modern everyday.

Sounds of Sameness and the Mediatized Everyday in West German Radio Art

In 1960s Germany, engagement with everyday life gained prominence in various artistic contexts. Filmmakers in West and East, such as Helma Sanders-Brahms, Erika Runge and Klaus Wildenhahn, resorted to documentary devices in order to investigate the living and working conditions of lower-class social groups. Within the West German literary scene, the work of the *nouveaux romanciers* was echoed by proponents of “Alltagslyrik” (quotidian poetry), such as Wolf Wondratschek, as well as the new realist group of writers around the Cologne-based editor Dieter Wellershoff. In the vein of Freud’s 1901 *Zur Psychopathologie des Alltagslebens* (*The Psychopathology of Everyday Life*) and Marcuse’s *Eros and Civilization* (1955), New Realism, more specifically, turned to the private sphere and family life as the locus of pathological tendencies and repressed desires in West German society, as Carrie Smith-Prei has pointed out and linked to the agenda of *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* (coming to terms with the past), pushed forward by the New Left.⁵⁰ When the 1960s anti-authoritarian movement criticized the government’s policies, they targeted the family in particular as the stronghold of the perceived perpetuation of National Socialist values and repression.⁵¹ This criticism was especially directed against the conservative family and sexual policy upheld by the Adenauer government in the 1950s.⁵²

Mediated through the work of the *nouveaux romanciers*, the theme of the everyday furthermore found its way into experimental radio art. This influence becomes evident when comparing Michel Butor’s

⁴⁷ Luc Ferrari, qtd. in François-Bernard Mâche, “Entretien avec Luc Ferrari,” *La revue musicale*, no. 214–15 (1977), 68.

⁴⁸ Brunhild Meyer-Ferrari, “Said ‘Presque rien,’” in Luc Ferrari, *Presque rien n°1: Le lever du jour au bord de la mer*, ed. Maxime Barthélemy (Maison ONA, 2018).

⁴⁹ Eric Drott, “The Politics of *Presque rien*,” in *Sound Commitments: Avant-Garde Music and the Sixties*, ed. Robert Adlington (Oxford University Press, 2009), 146, <https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780195336641.001.0001>.

⁵⁰ Carrie Smith-Prei, *Revolting Families: Toxic Intimacy, Private Politics, and Literary Realisms in the German Sixties* (University of Toronto Press, 2013), 40–42, <https://doi.org/10.3138/9781442665538>.

⁵¹ Smith-Prei, *Revolting Families*, 30.

⁵² On the role of sexuality in postwar Germany, see Dagmar Herzog, *Sex after Fascism: Memory and Morality in Twentieth-Century Germany* (Princeton University Press, 2005), <https://doi.org/10.1515/9781400843329>.

Fluglinien (Airways) with the inaugural piece of the New radio play, Ernst Jandl and Friederike Mayröcker's *Fünf Mann Menschen* (Five men humans).⁵³ As Würffel has pointed out, Butor's play, which consists of bits and pieces of everyday conversations between anonymous passengers on a flight, abounds with formulaic patterns of speech while gradually undermining the individual voice to the point of being indistinguishable.⁵⁴ In the same manner, the title *Fünf Mann Menschen*, in referring to an anonymous group of people, is suggestive of the loss of individuality in modern society. The play presents a range of speech scenes, depicting a thoroughly standardized, bureaucratically "administered" life cycle, leading from birth to school and job counseling to the military and eventually death. Instead of individualized characters, it features as main roles a speaker and five male voices, passing through the stages from childhood to adulthood. As the authors note, their voices should sound "jeweils differenziert, doch nicht charakterisiert" (distinguishable, yet not characterized).⁵⁵ The birth clinic scene (Figure 3) opens and closes the piece circularly, thus evoking an endless loop of repetitive social acts, hierarchies, and behavior. The nurses' chorus comments "routinemäßig" (as a matter of routine) on the event of birth, "Ein Sohn, ein schöner Sohn!") (A son! A beautiful son!), followed by the laconic "aha" of the fathers, sounding five times in succession while moving from the left to the right position of the stereo field.

Szene 1

Gebärklinik

SPRECHER : Solange es Kinder gibt,
wird es Kinder geben.

5 schreiende Säuglinge Pos. 1–5
Chor der 5 Schwestern Pos. 1–5
M1–M5 (als Väter) Pos. 1–5
Geschrei der 5 Säuglinge, durchlaufend bis Szenenschluß

CHOR (routinemäßig) : Ein Sohn, ein schöner Sohn!
M1 (gelassen) : Aha.
M2 (ebenso) : Aha.
M3 (ebenso) : Aha.
M4 (ebenso) : Aha.
M5 (ebenso) : Aha.
(Geschrei der Säuglinge dauert noch einige Momente unvermindert an, dann jähes Abbrechen, kein Fade-out.)

Figure 3: Ernst Jandl and Friederike Mayröcker, *Fünf Mann Menschen*, scene no. 1, transcription.⁵⁶

Throughout the piece, stereophonic multiplication of voices, word repetitions, and the deadpan, matter-of-fact style intonation serve to evoke sameness, social uniformity, and routinization. In scene no. 5,

⁵³ Both Jandl and Mayröcker were Austrian poets and writers.

⁵⁴ Stefan Bodo Würffel, *Das deutsche Hörspiel* (J. B. Metzler, 1978), 156.

⁵⁵ Ernst Jandl and Friederike Mayröcker, *Fünf Mann Menschen*, in *Neues Hörspiel. Texte, Partituren*, ed. Klaus Schöning (Suhrkamp, 1969), 113.

⁵⁶ Jandl and Mayröcker, *Fünf Mann Menschen*, 115.

entitled “Berufsberatung” (job counseling), the speech delivered by the “Berufsberater” (job counselor) is recorded five times, “möglichst gleichartig und im gleichen Tempo” (as similarly as possible and in the same tempo), and the takes then sound simultaneously from the five stereo positions.⁵⁷ The dialogue between the counselor (BB) and the young men (JM) unfolds as an ironic commentary on the negation of freedom of choice in terms of self-realization (Figure 4). The counselor, who characterizes himself as a mouthpiece of the economy, tells the youngsters that their role in society will be chosen for them. Subsequently, he starts to list a number of professions, spoken “in gleichmäßigen Taktschlägen” (in a steady beat), while ignoring the desperate objections on part of the boys.

(BB1-5 pfeift die beiden Töne von JM5 nach)
 BB1-5 : – und seht mich jetzt an: bin doch schließlich was geworden! Durch mich spricht die Wirtschaft, durch die Wirtschaft die Gesellschaft, durch die Gesellschaft das Volk, durch das Volk die Welt, und sagen euch, was ihr werden werdet, und werdet es wollen wollen, und davon verbraucht werden:
 BB1-5 *(in gleichmäßigen Taktschlägen, laut, ohne sich von den Zwischenrufen des JM1-JM5 unterbrechen zu lassen)*
 : Tapezierer!
 Sattler!
 Markthelfer!
 Kanalräumer!
 Korbflechter!
 Gefängniswärter!
 Parkwächter!
 Abortwart!
 Straßenreiniger!
 Bügler!
 Heizer!
 Skontist!
 Fußpfleger!
 Möbelträger!
 Pfandleiher!
 Schulwart!
 JM1 *(in grotesker Verzweiflung, rasch, schreiend)* : Ich wär halt gern ein Tischler gwordn

Figure 4: Ernst Jandl and Friederike Mayröcker, *Fünf Mann Menschen*, scene no. 5, transcription.⁵⁸

Wolf Wondratschek, one of the main proponents of “Alltagslyrik,” provided another critical perspective on the everyday with his 1969 language play *Paul oder die Zerstörung eines Hörbeispiels* (Paul or the destruction of a listening example), based on the prose text *Also* (Thus) from the book *Früher begann der Tag mit einer Schusswunde* (In earlier times the day began with a gunshot wound). Its protagonist is an ordinary truck driver named Paul, who travels from Munich to Hamburg (Figure 5). The piece opens with a motor noise, announced by speaker 3 (Geräusch). Then follows a news announcement. As speaker 4 informs us a little later: “Paul sieht verschiedene Dinge, Paul denkt verschiedene Dinge; das wiederholt sich für Paul jeden Tag” (Paul sees different things, he thinks different things; that repeats itself for him

⁵⁷ Jandl and Mayröcker, *Fünf Mann Menschen*, 117.

⁵⁸ Jandl and Mayröcker, *Fünf Mann Menschen*, 119.

every day). Though reminiscent of a stream-of-consciousness technique, the speech montage does not offer us access to Paul's inner thoughts and feelings. What passes through his eyes and mind on the journey, is mostly not articulated by himself but distributed among several unspecified male voices, who refer to him in the third person in a laconic, matter-of-fact style, reminiscent of the *nouveau roman*. Through the voices' constant and abrupt switching between different stereo positions as well as various acoustics, including megaphone, telephone, and radio, the disjointed character of the montage is further enhanced.

- SPRECHER 3 Geräusch
(*Das Starten eines Lastkraftwagens, langes Motorengeräusch*)
- SPRECHER 3 Zitat
- A3 Zu einem Antibabyjahr hat der indische Minister für Familienplanung, Dr. Sripati Chandrasekhar, seine Landsleute aufgerufen. Zum Gedächtnis an den Staatsgründer Mahatma Gandhi, dessen 100. Geburtstag in diesem Jahr gefeiert wird, sollen sich alle indischen Ehepaare zwölf Monate lang des intimen Verkehrs enthalten. Der Minister erklärte, ein solcher Verzicht werde sowohl den Menschen als auch dem Lande nützen. Abstinenz sei noch immer die billigste und sicherste Verhütungsmethode, wenn auch vielleicht die schwerste.
Von dem asketischen Führer der indischen Freiheitsbewegung, Mahatma Gandhi, heißt es, er habe im Alter von 37 Jahren auf jede sexuelle Betätigung verzichtet. Mahatma Gandhi wurde 78 Jahre alt.
- SPRECHER 3 Geräusch
(*Das Klappern einer Schreibmaschine, dazu und daneben das Rascheln von Papier*)
- B2 5 Uhr früh und das Husten der Bauersfrauen.
Siebenprozentiges Gefälle. Geschwindigkeitsbegrenzung. Danach wieder Steigungen. Immer wieder liest man in den Zeitungen, daß übermüdete belgische Busfahrer auf der Autobahn gegen Brückengeländer fahren.
Schon der Großvater hieß Paul.
- SPRECHER 3 Zitat
- C4 Wer hat angefangen: die Araber oder die Israelis?
- SPRECHER 4 Paul oder die Zerstörung eines Hörbeispiels.
Paul fährt einen Lkw von München nach Hamburg. Paul sieht verschiedene Dinge, er denkt verschiedene Dinge; das wiederholt sich für Paul jeden Tag.
- D3 Wildwechsel. Dauerregen. Richtung Hamburg. An der Windschutzscheibe zerplatzt ein Vogel. Scheiße. Und mittlerweile wurde es Montag.
- SPRECHER I Geräusch
(*Schreibmaschinengeräusch synchron zum nachfolgenden Text*)
- SPRECHER I und mittlerweile wurde es Montag. Es war
- E2 einmal. Paul heißt Paul.
- SPRECHER 3 Das nenne ich Paul.
- F4 Paul zieht sein Wasser aus der Hose.
Einige wissen alles besser. Helmut behauptet, die Geheimnisse der Neger sind weiß. Peter sagt, natürlich haben die Araber angefangen.
- G5 Unter Politik stellt man sich am besten ein Leben ohne Politik vor.
- H2 Paul stellt sich unter dem Wort ›Autobahn‹ das Wort ›Politik‹ vor.

Figure 5: Wolf Wondratschek, *Paul oder die Zerstörung eines Hörbeispiels*, opening, transcription.⁵⁹

⁵⁹ Wolf Wondratschek, *Paul oder die Zerstörung eines Hörbeispiels*, in Schöning ed., *Neues Hörspiel. Texte, Partituren*, 302.

The entire text consists of a sequence of unrelated, deliberately trivial as well as partly nonsensical statements and utterances, which make up Paul's petty inner and outer reality. As voice D3 laconically remarks, "Wildwechsel. Dauerregen. Richtung Hamburg. An der Windschutzscheibe zerplatzt ein Vogel. Scheiße. Und mittlerweile wurde es Montag" (Deer crossing. Continuous rainfall. Direction Hamburg. A bird bursts on the windshield. Shit. And meanwhile it became Monday). The string of impressions evokes the ceaseless and monotonous passage of days. In the course of the play, certain phrases are repeated, varied as well as broken up into fragments. This technique establishes a web of motivic connections, while simultaneously enhancing the sense of empty repetitiveness that lies at the heart of Paul's existence.

In his analysis of the play, Hans-Edwin Friedrich rightly points out that the quotations serve to render audible the antithesis between society and the individual.⁶⁰ As the interspersed speeches stand out from their immediate context, the sphere of politics appears removed from Paul's everyday. Though he is constantly exposed to news coverage, he is not able to form a critical consciousness of his own. His understanding of politics narrows down to what concerns his life as a truck driver. As the voice H2 (see Figure 5) ironically remarks: "Paul stellt sich unter dem Wort 'Autobahn' das Wort 'Politik' vor" (When Paul thinks of the word "autobahn," he thinks of the word "politics"). On the other hand, the extensive use of media content—newsflashes, sports reports, advertisements, and television sounds—exposes the media's role in infiltrating and disintegrating the everyday. The individual seems but a passive container to be filled with haphazard content.

Radio's Everydayness I: The Alienated Listener

As radio art evolved in the 1970s, West German radio culture underwent significant changes. With the advance of television, radio had to wave goodbye to a golden past of unchallenged monopoly paired with high cultural ambition, as it declined from an educative tool to an entertaining time-filler. As radio portables became a common household accessory and with car radios on the rise, sound not only spread into space but also gained a sociable quality as a background companion to everyday activities. Programming, too, took new paths with popular formats designed for casual attentiveness. As a critical mirror of contemporary media culture, West German radio art took note of these developments and surrounding public debates. Television violence, for instance, which spurred a discussion about the harmful effects of media, found its echo in several radio plays, including *Fünf Mann Menschen*, Elfriede Jelinek's *Untergang eines Tauchers* (Sinking of a diver) from 1973, Mauricio Kagel's 1975 *Soundtrack, ein Film-Hörspiel* (Soundtrack, a filmic radio play) and Urs Widmer's 1976 *Fernsehabend* (Television evening). Kagel, whose (*Hörspiel*) *Ein Aufnahmezustand* ((Radio play) a state of recording) from 1969/70 can be regarded as one of the most original contributions to the New radio play, created several media-centered radio pieces in the 1970s and early 1980s.⁶¹ Both his *Soundtrack, ein Film-Hörspiel* and the 1982 *Rrrrrrr. . .*,

⁶⁰ Hans-Edwin Friedrich, "»Ein Satz über Paul ist auch ein Satz über das, was ich mir unter dem Wort ›Paul‹ vorstellen kann«, Wolf Wondratscheks *Paul oder die Zerstörung eines Hörbeispiels* (1969)," in *Pophörspiele: Interdisziplinäre Einzelanalysen*, eds. Stefan Greif and Nils Lehnert (edition text + kritik, 2020), 51–52.

⁶¹ On Kagel's radio plays see Hans-Joachim Neubauer, "»frei von Harmonie« Hörspiele von Dieter Schnebel, Mauricio Kagel und John Cage," in *Musik-Konzepte 81: Autoren-Musik. Sprache im Grenzbereich der Künste*, eds. Heinz-Klaus Metzger and Rainer Rien (edition text + kritik, 1993), 66–89; Rudolf Frisius, "Musik—hörspiel—akustische kunst: mauricio kagel und seine radiostücke," *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik* 162, no. 6 (2001), 38–45; and Björn Heile, *The Music of Mauricio Kagel* (Ashgate, 2006), 87–96.

Hörspiel über eine Radiophantasie (Rrrrrrr. . ., radio play on a radio fantasy) present domestic settings of television viewing and radio listening in ways that sound out the alienation of human existence and communication. While the New radio play initially aimed to break free from theatrical models, these later radio works revitalized features, such as setting, role, interior monologue, and dialogue to stage and interrogate the media's presence in and influence on everyday life.

The studio-created setting for *Rrrrrrr. . .* is a small apartment, comprising a living room with a television set and a radio, a kitchen, and a bathroom. Stereophonic sound provides a realistic sense of space and movement. The play, which unfolds in real time over ca. 38 minutes, features as its protagonist an anonymous, middle-aged man, "Er" (He), who spends his evening listening to the radio while flipping through the newspaper. The setting of the play mirrors key changes in the everyday life of West German society that took place in the 1970s, as the model of the nuclear family eroded and alternative living arrangements, such as the single household, emerged.⁶² The radio fantasy sounding in the play is Kagel's own imaginary composition, consisting of a diverse set of popular pieces for various instrumentations that start with the letter "R" (*Rheinländer, Rigaudon, Repercussa, Rumba*, among others). To infuse a dose of parody, he wittily violates their generic conventions.⁶³ For the most part, Kagel's "typical" listener is preoccupied with the prosaics of life and banal routines, such as eating, cooking, and going to the bathroom to which radio provides the humming backdrop. When the music does capture his meandering attention, it prompts spontaneous expressions of like or dislike. To make audible the constant switching between concentrated and distracted listening, the volume of the music changes accordingly in the course of the play. As Kagel states in his introduction to the play: "We are hence listening in the third person (since 'He' listens in our place). And ultimately, we hear the discontinuity of this listening likewise in a discontinuous manner."⁶⁴

However, *Rrrrrrr. . .* presents more than a mere reflection on domestic culture and listening behavior. Rather, Kagel shines a sad spotlight on the solitary individual and his alienated everyday existence. Now and then, noises from the outside world penetrate the confined space of the apartment. A baby cries behind the wall, and the telephone rings, engendering a short, monosyllabic conversation (Figure 6). "He" is waiting for a woman. However, when his doorbell eventually buzzes at the end of the play, it turns out to be a stranger looking for someone else.

⁶² See Christopher Neumaier and Andreas Ludwig: "The Individualization of Everyday Life: Consumption, Domestic Culture, and Family Structures" in *A History Shared and Divided: East and West Germany Since the 1970s*, trans. Jennifer Walcoff Neuheiser, ed. Frank Bosch (Berghahn, 2018), 293–347, <https://doi.org/10.3167/9781785339257>.

⁶³ On the role and function of the music, see Sara Beimdieke, "Mauricio Kagels Darstellung von Radiohören in *Rrrrrrr. . .*, *Hörspiel über eine Radiophantasie* (1982)," *Musiktheorie: Zeitschrift für Musikwissenschaft* 35, no. 2 (2020), 151–58.

⁶⁴ "Wir hören also in der dritten Person (da 'Er' stellvertretend für uns zuhört). Und letztlich hören wir die Diskontinuität dieses Hörens ebenfalls kontinuierlich." See Mauricio Kagel, *Worte über Musik: Gespräche, Aufsätze, Reden, Hörspiel* (Piper, 1991), 226. Translation is mine.

Na gut!
 Gut.
 Morgen ist auch noch'n Tag.
 Morgen ist n'...
 Nein. Ein neuer Tag, meine ich.
 Also. Bis Morgen.
 Gut.
 Tschüß.

Das Telefongespräch ist beendet. Bevor er die gleiche räumliche Position wie anfangs einnimmt, geht er zur Toilette. Durch die offene Tür: Wasserlassen und fröhliches Summen. Spülung. Schnelle Schritte nach vorne.

Kalter Kaffee. Für mich nichts Neues. (Pause)
 Das klingt gut. (Pause. Summt fehlerhaft zur Musik im Radio. Hört bald auf. Versucht es wieder.)
 Nicht übel. Manchmal klappt's. (Pause)
 Was war'n das? (Pause. Stellt das Radiogerät lauter. Lacht.)
 Teufel. Der kann blasen. Brrrrrrrrrr. (Pause)
 Die Stimme aus dem Jenseits.
 (Singt mit.)
 Stolze Leistung. (Pause)
 Ich sagte zu ihm: Die Zeit wird für mich arbeiten. (Pause)
 Donnerwetter. Die kommen in Fahrt und blasen sich die Lungen leer. (Pause)
 Wo fahren wir nächstes Jahr hin? (Pause)
 Hatte ich nicht recht neulich? Verdammt, alles wird teurer. (Pause)
 Stur muß man bleiben. Stur. Soviel steht fest. (Pause)
 Was ist das für ein Quatsch?! Schwach. (Pause)
 Das soll Musik sein? (Pause)
 Wie lange denn noch! Kommt schon. Ein Tag in der Woche genügt! (Pause)
 »Traumgrundstück, direkt am Meer. Bebauung sofort möglich. Alles notariell abgesichert.« (Pause)
 »Der Geheimtip: Bauen.« (Pause)
 »Tag für Tag steigt sein Wert. Unverändert, märchenhaft

Figure 6: Mauricio Kagel, *Rrrrrrr. . .*, Hörspiel über eine Radiophantasie, transcription.⁶⁵

⁶⁵ Kagel, *Worte über Musik*, 229.

Daily life, as staged in *Rrrrrrr. . .*, thus appears devoid of any meaningful human connections. Similar to Wondratschek's play, *Rrrrrrr. . .* exposes the fragmentation of the everyday and its "colonization" by the mass media, which keep the individual entangled in a web of distractions and trivialities. Through the technique of interior monologue, the intermingling of mind and media is brought to the surface. The protagonist's thoughts, voiced in an intimate, quiet tone, rapidly jump between his daily affairs, work, memories of the past, future vacation plans, newspaper headlines, horoscopes, dating ads, crosswords, and the music sounding from the radio. The man's private consciousness, as Kagel conceives it, is a "conscience privée," to speak with Lefebvre.

Radio's Everydayness II: Critiques of Broadcasting

In his *The Tuning of the World* (1977), Canadian composer and theorist Murray Schafer argued for the study of the rhythms and tempi of radio broadcasting as a central array of his soundscape project: "Radio programing needs to be analyzed in as much detail as an epic poem or musical composition, for in its themes and rhythms will be found the pulse of modern life."⁶⁶ As general tendencies, he found that with the rise of Western format radio "tempo of broadcasting . . . has been speeded up over the years, and its tone is moving from the sedate toward the slaphappy."⁶⁷ Akin to Schafer, New radio play creators of the 1970s turned a critical ear toward the patterns and contradictions of contemporary broadcasting. Belonging to the genre of the "original sound" collage, Dieter Schnebel's 1971 radiophonic entry piece *Hörfunk (Radiostücke I–V)* (Radio broadcasting (Radio pieces I–V)) and Ferdinand Kriwet's *Radioselbst* (Radio-self) from 1979 both use pre-recorded material from West German radio channels.

Schnebel's engagement with radio marks an extension of his interest in exploring listening as a compositional subject. In the 1960s, he created a piece called *Ki-No, Nachtmusik für Projektoren und Hörer*, for speaker, percussion, tape, and 2–4 slide projectors (Ki-No, night music for projectors and listeners). During the performance, the audience is stimulated to form sounds in their mind based on various verbal and visual stimuli as, for example, notational charts. As background accompaniment, Schnebel integrates a tape recording of environmental sounds. *Hörfunk* juxtaposes environmental sounds with broadcasting fragments from the second programme of the Hessian radio channel (hr2).⁶⁸ It comprises five individual radio pieces, which are framed by an introduction and a postlude, and interspersed with four short interludes, composed of time and interval signals only.⁶⁹ Schnebel, being a newcomer to radio technology at the time, created the collage with the help of a sound engineer, to whom he gave precise instructions regarding the stereophonic arrangement of sounds, their mixing, as well as other effects to be added. In the montage plan that was used to produce the collage at the facilities of the Hessian radio channel, Schnebel groups his material into four categories: (I) "Rf" (reflections) include sounds from the domestic sphere, the city of Frankfurt, exotic places, war, nature, and the human body, (II) "I" (indications of time

⁶⁶ R. Murray Schafer, *The Soundscape: Our Sonic Environment and the Tuning of the World* (Destiny Books, 1994), 93.

⁶⁷ Schafer, *The Soundscape*, 95.

⁶⁸ *Hörfunk* was jointly commissioned by the Hessian radio channel (hr) and the West German radio channel. It first aired on hr on February 25, 1971. Schnebel did not commercially release any of his radio works. For a general introduction to his radiophonic output see Gisela Nauck, *Dieter Schnebel: Lesegänge durch Leben und Werk* (Schott, 2001), 347–59.

⁶⁹ Every regional German broadcasting station had its own acoustic signal, as, for example, popular classical or folk music tunes. Until the late 1980s, these signals were used as breaks between broadcasts, allowing the listener to readily identify the individual radio stations.

and place) pertain to time checks and announcements of cities and places,⁷⁰ (III) “Rp” (reproductions) are documentary radio recordings of historical events, such as the moon landing, political speeches, and news coverage, and (IV) “P” (productions) comprise snippets from various hr2 radio broadcasts, organized along the daily broadcasting schedule.

Hörfunk not only recalls the genre of the 1920s documentary city portrait,⁷¹ but it also re-sounds tropes of the listening discourse that accompanied the rise of the medium and its integration into everyday life. As radio evolved into a key component of the twentieth-century media soundscape, anxieties soon arose as to its negative influence on the cultivation of taste and attentiveness. In the 1930s, alert observers like Rudolf Arnheim and Theodor W. Adorno warned about the precarious effects of broadcasting on susceptible listeners, the unruly mix of high and low culture and the “regression” of listening.⁷² However, as David Goodman has shown, their writings mark only the tip of the iceberg of a much broader public debate around the spread of distracted listening, radio’s increase of urban noise, and related issues of mental health.⁷³ Such negative notions about the medium persisted well into the second half of the twentieth century. In the West German radio debate of the 1950s, similar warnings against casual listening and mindless consumption were issued by leading radio officials.⁷⁴ Schnebel, too, disapproved of radio’s negligent treatment of esteemed “serious” music and other high cultural products and castigated the ubiquity and obtrusiveness of radio sound. As he remarked in his introduction to *Hörfunk*:

One is sitting over one’s work and sounds come through the wall—underneath, the monotonous beat of a piece of U-Musik (entertainment music) is stamping, whose higher frequencies have been filtered out by the ceiling. Or the obtrusive presence of a news speaker’s voice attacks from the right, breaks through the wall while shedding off comprehensibility.⁷⁵

At the same time, however, Schnebel acknowledged that listening practices had become pluralized and that concentrated hearing only marked a rare occasion within a broader spectrum of auditory modes. Among these, he included listening half-attentively to the radio, while simultaneously registering sounds from one’s surroundings as well as a vague, omnidirectional mode of listening, for example, when walking

⁷⁰ In radio piece no. 2, a radio speaker begins to recite a timeline running backwards from December 1971 to the origins of the universe.

⁷¹ On documentary forms and urban sound in 1920s Weimar radio art see Carolyn Birdsall “Sonic Artefacts: Reality Codes of Urbanity in Early German Radio Documentary,” in *Soundscapes of the Urban Past: Staged Sound as Mediated Cultural Heritage*, ed. Karin Bijsterveld (transcript, 2013), 129–68, <https://doi.org/10.14361/transcript.9783839421796.129>. The radio art of the Weimar era in many ways prefigured artistic tendencies, which would resurge in the New radio play. See Mark E. Cory, “Soundplay: The Polyphonous Tradition of German Radio Art,” in *Wireless Imagination: Sound, Radio, and the Avant-Garde*, eds. Douglas Kahn and Gregory Whitehead (MIT Press, 1992), 331–71.

⁷² See the chapter “Psychology of the Listener” in Arnheim’s seminal radio book from 1936 and Theodor W. Adorno’s 1938 essay “On the Fetish Character in Music and the Regression of Listening,” in *Essays on Music*, trans. Susan H. Gillespie, ed. Richard Leppert (University of California Press, 2002), 288–317, as well as his analysis of the radio speeches of the right-wing demagogue Martin Luther Thomas, published posthumously as *The Psychological Technique of Martin Luther Thomas’ Radio Addresses* (Stanford University Press, 2000).

⁷³ David Goodman, “Distracted Listening: On Not Making Sound Choices in the 1930s,” in *Sound in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*, eds. David Suisman and Susan Strasser (University of Philadelphia Press, 2010), 15–46, <https://doi.org/10.9783/9780812206869>. As Goodman points out, distraction was typically associated with women as well as the “lower” social strata of society.

⁷⁴ Benno Nietzel, “Culture, Entertainment and Listening Habits in the West German Discourse on Radio During the 1950s,” *German Politics & Society* 32, no. 1 (2014), 15–29, <https://doi.org/10.3167/gps.2014.320102>.

⁷⁵ Schnebel, “Hörfunk I (Radiophonien) (1969–70),” in *Denkbare Musik, Schriften 1952–1972*, ed. Hans Rudolf Zeller (DuMont, 1972), 375–76. “Man sitzt über seiner Arbeit, und es kommen Klänge durch die Wand—darunter stapft der einförmige Rhythmus einer U-Musik, deren Höhen die Decke weggeblendet hat. Oder die aufdringliche Präsenz einer Nachrichtenstimme attackiert von rechts, durchschlägt, Verständlichkeit abstreifend, die Mauer.” Translation is mine.

through the city, that can possibly conjure up and mix with involuntary acoustic reminiscences.⁷⁶ With the technical means at hand, i.e., through manipulation of volume and stereophonic movement, Schnebel sought to simulate such different types of listening behavior.

Fragmentation of Everyday Time and Space

While radio pieces no. 2 to 5 feature documentary historical material to insert a sense of pastness into radio's continuous flow of presentness, radio piece no. 1 (ca. 4:31–14:44) concerns itself with everyday listening in domestic and urban settings. On the upper left of the montage plan (Figure 7) Schnebel notes “Akustik eines Wohnzimmers” (acoustics of a living room). While someone is leafing through a newspaper, radio music and indistinct chattering come from behind the wall of a neighboring apartment. Noises of rumbling chairs from the adjacent kitchen and passing traffic are heard on the left and right sides of the stereo field. Our listening perspective is initially tied to that of the newspaper reader so that we become instantly aware of the radio's intrusive presence.

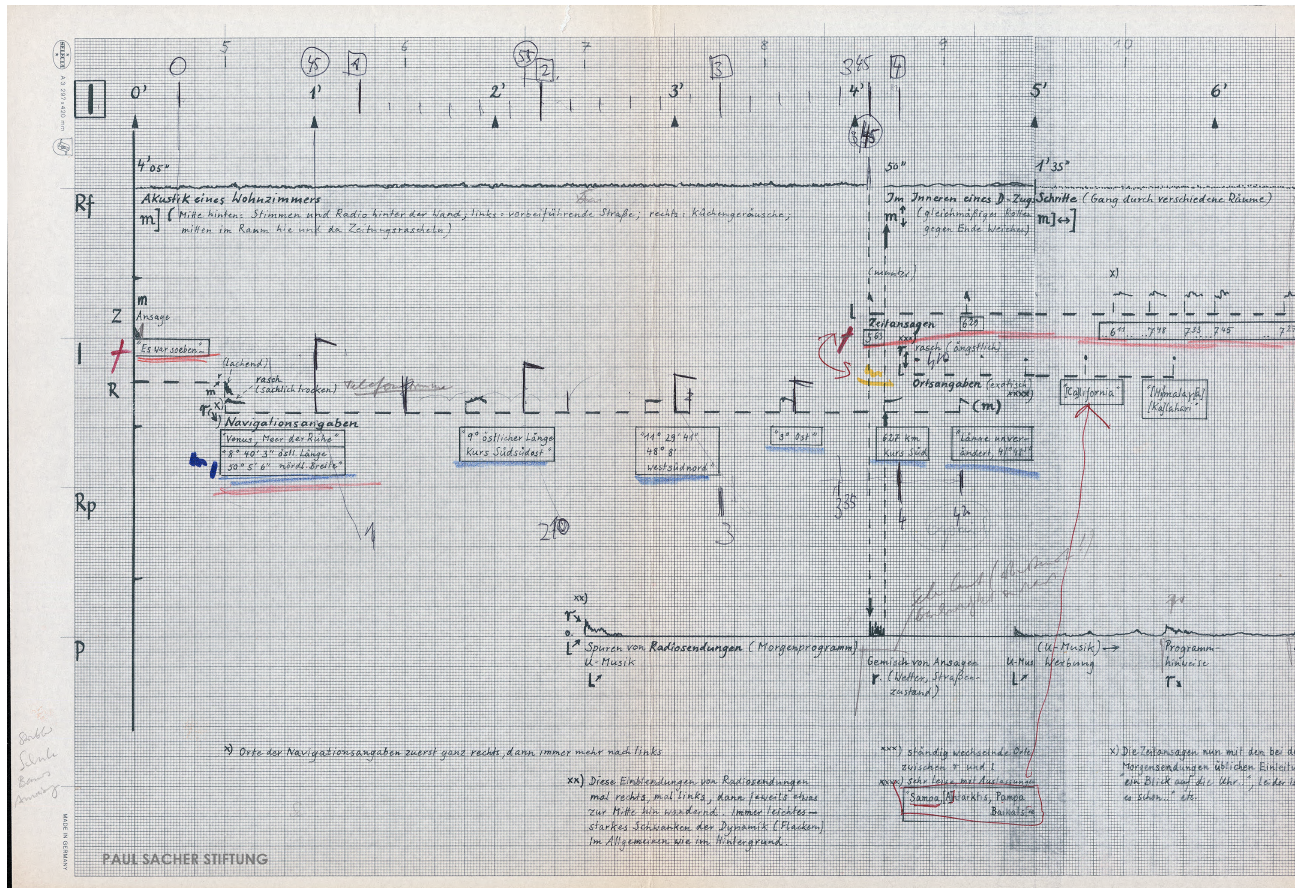


Figure 7: Dieter Schnebel, *Hörfunk (Radiostücke I–V)*, radio piece no. 1, montage plan (Paul Sacher Foundation, Collection “Dieter Schnebel”). Printed with permission.

⁷⁶ Schnebel, “Hörfunk I (Radiophonien) (1969–70),” 377.

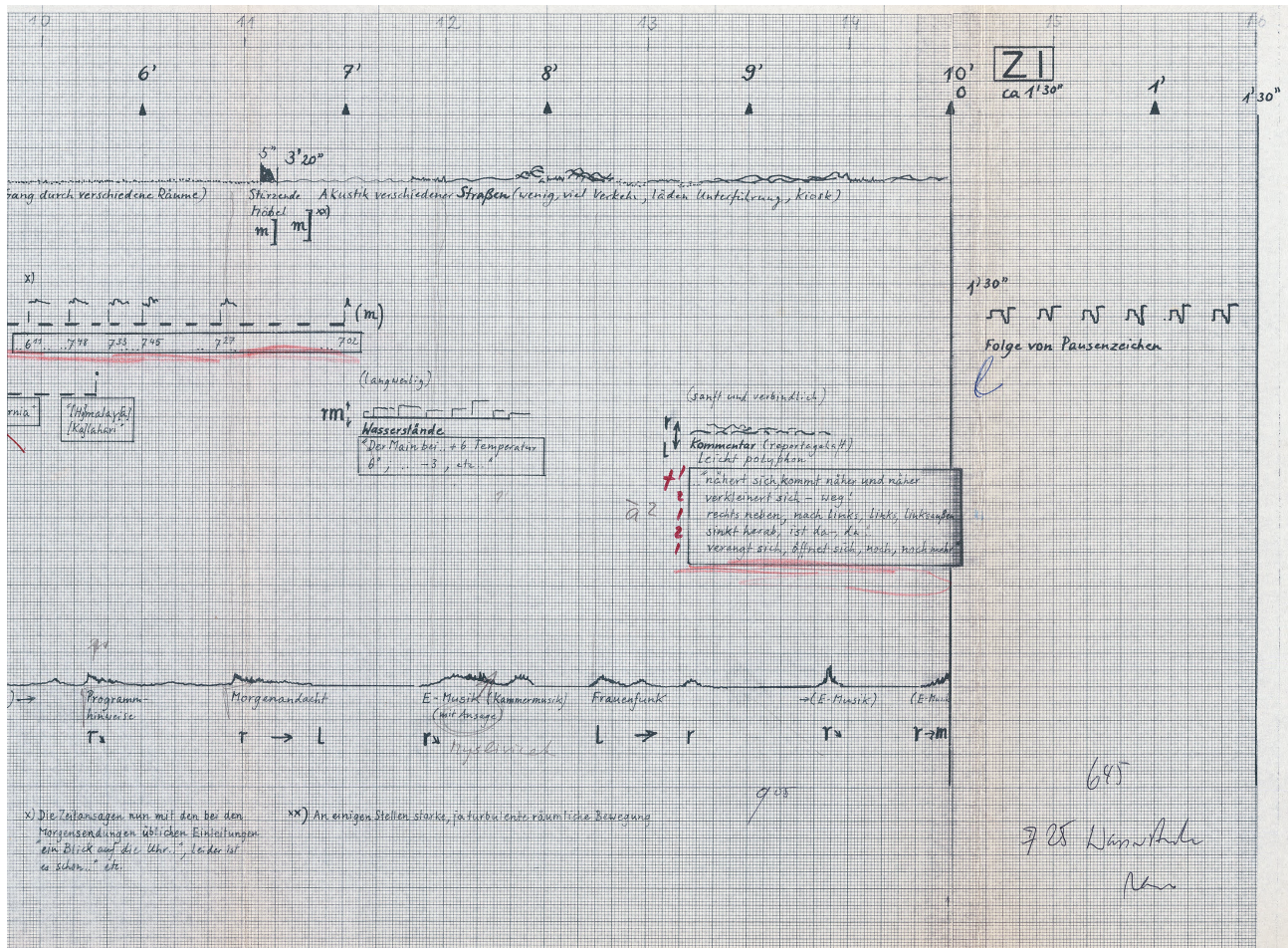


Figure 7: (cont.)

Gradually then, the collage builds in complexity, as further bits and pieces from broadcasts, such as navigational data (see indications, “Navigationsangaben”) are added. In a sudden manner, cheery music from the morning program of hr2 bursts forth (see productions, “Spuren von Radiosendungen”). By manipulating the sound volume and letting the music rotate in the stereo field, Schnebel evokes a fluid, unsteady mode of listening. As the music fades the living room scenario moves to the foreground again. After a cut follows a speedy montage of various fragments from weather and traffic reports. Then we hear a train in motion (see reflections, “Im Inneren eines D-Zugs / gleichmäßiges Rattern”). Snippets from morning broadcasts circulate. A female voice announces various exotic places. The listening space changes again to a domestic scene, with clattering footsteps busily walking around the room. A radio host comments: “So meine Lieben, der Alltag hat uns wieder” (So, my dear ones, the everyday has caught up with us again.). To this, another male radio speaker adds time announcements, arranged in a non-chronological manner:

Sprecher: Und gleich, meine Damen und Herren, wird es 6:11 sein
 So eben war es 7:48
 In einer halben Minute ist es 7:33
 Vor einer viertel Minute war es 7:45
 Die genaue Zeit: In zehn Sekunden ist es 7:27 Uhr

Speaker: And in a moment, ladies and gentlemen, it will be 6:11
 Just now it was 7:48
 In half a minute it will be 7:33
 A quarter of a minute ago it was 7:45
 The exact time: in ten seconds it will be 7:27

Next, traffic sounds from the streets of Frankfurt become audible. While a radio speaker recites weather data in a monotonous tone, the ending of a piece of chamber music fades in on the right, and a host announces a string quartet by Josef Mysliveček. Soon the sound is drowned out by the siren of a passing ambulance. A door gets shut, and we hear women chattering in a store. Finally, the chamber music fades in again, gradually becoming distorted before eventually breaking off.

Radio piece no. 1 thus unfolds as a series of listening scenarios that reveal radio's temporal integration into, as well as the structuring of, the everyday—from newspaper reading to commutation, and from household work to shopping in the city. Radio sound assumes a haunting and deliberately unnerving presence throughout. The montage style, which is characterized by harsh cuts between the individual locations and daily activities, makes us aware of the fragmentation of everyday space and the discontinuous listening it affords. The repeated time checks draw attention to the constant measurement of time in broadcasting. As the announcements are arranged in a non-chronological manner, they temporarily subvert the linear order of clock time. As we will see, Kriwet uses a similar, yet more elaborate radiogenic strategy of subversion in *Radioselbst* to undermine radio's obsession with temporal organization.

Radio Around the Clock

With the introduction of new broadcasting concepts that aimed toward mainstream popularity, casual listening, and day-long engagement of its target audience, radio established a yet closer relation to the sphere of everyday life. A pioneer of this development was WDR2, the second program of the West German radio channel. Featuring a homogenous, easy-to-follow stream of moderation, music, and infotainment, it addressed the listener in a relaxed and gentle tone, evoking an atmosphere of intimacy and sociability. Radio assumed the role of a friendly companion, helping with human day-to-day affairs. With his *Radioselbst*, Kriwet sought to provide a critical commentary on this type of radio format.⁷⁷ To this end, he subjected his sound material, taken solely from WDR2, to a range of montage strategies, exploiting the advanced technology of the eight-track recorder. Similar to Ferrari, Kriwet gathered his material over the course of a week in November 1978, after which he cut the recordings and pasted the snippets together to create a typical radio day, compressed into approximately 52 minutes. As in his previous radio works, he used fast and rhythmical cutting, thus rushing the listener through a rapid, staccato-like flow of bits and pieces of moderation, broadcasts, music, jingles, and news.

Some basic techniques employed throughout the piece are the repetition of phrases and words used by the hosts, occurring both in immediate succession as well as stretched over the course of the piece, the

⁷⁷ Antje Vowinkel, *Collagen im Hörspiel. Die Entwicklung einer radiophonen Kunst* (Königshausen & Neumann, 1995), 230. See also Bruno Franceschini, "Dieses Radio spricht von mir selbst: Ferdinand Kriwets Hörtext *Radioselbst* (1979) als Pop-Punctum," in *Pophörspiele*, 84–97. For Franceschini, the structure of the piece is reminiscent of a sonata form, organized around key motifs, such as traffic, like weather, pop music, time, and silence.

looping of phrases, and the doubling and clustering of voices articulating similar content. Such polyphonic textures regularly appear in connection with time indications, creating complex instances of simultaneous sound. Furthermore, the montage accentuates the recurring elements of the programme itself, with its fixed hourly components, such as news, weather, and traffic reports. A strong sense of repetitiveness and circularity emerges in the opening part of the “Radiowecker” (radio alarm clock).⁷⁸ The first sound we hear is a radio time signal consisting of a row of six beep tones, as it was typically used in pre-digital broadcasting to indicate the full hour. With the last beep sounding a little longer, music begins to play, i.e., the catchline from Daliah Lavi’s 1972 eponymous popular Schlager “Schalt dein Radio ein” (Turn your radio on), a song that self-consciously advertises the appeal of easy listening. Through its frequent quotation, it functions like a motto, bracketing the beginning and ending of the piece. In the exposition, the phrase “Schalt dein Radio ein” first sounds from the middle position, then subsequently from the left side and right positions, and both combined, as indicated in Kriwet’s montage plan (Figure 8). The table columns correspond to the five stereo positions.

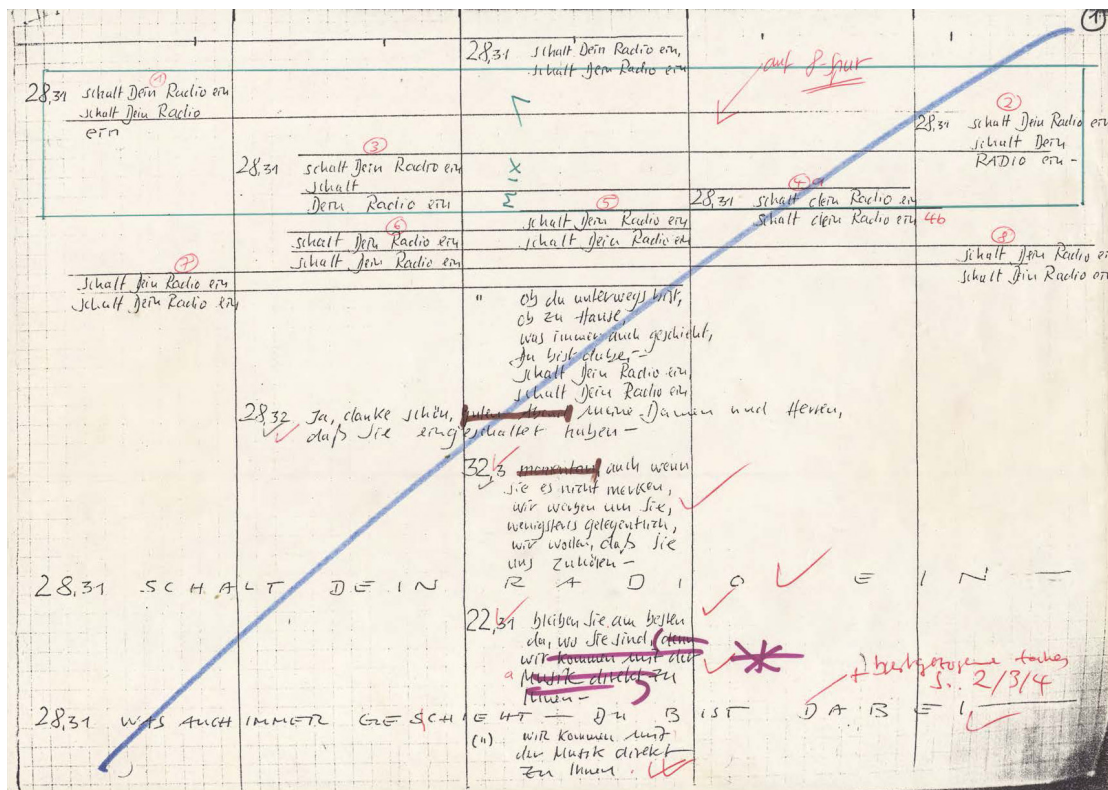


Figure 8: Ferdinand Kriwet, *Radioselbst*, montage plan, radio alarm clock exposition (Ferdinand Kriwet Estate). Printed with permission.

Twice the music is interrupted by the beep sounds, before returning in a looped version, spread over the full stereo field. By repeatedly juxtaposing the time signal with the song, the exposition sounds out the repetitive rhythm of everydayness. As listeners, we feel trapped in a time loop, as if we are being subjected to the same wake-up routine over and over again. The exposition thus introduces two interconnected themes that receive further development in the remainder of the piece: the signaling of time and radio's

⁷⁸ Audio examples of *Radioselbst* can be found on the website: <https://radiophonic.space/html/mindmap.html>, accessed January 12, 2025.

function in organizing and maintaining daily routines, such as getting up for work. In the remainder of the exposition, the appellative function of the radio voice is pervasively foregrounded through repetitive, formulaic speech, interspersed with jaunty bits of music. The hosts constantly seek to engage the listener's attention and induce motivation for starting the day.

However, *Radioselbst* not only abounds with indications of clock time in the form of beep tones, gongs, jingles, and announcements, it also playfully intervenes into the linear order and temporarily disrupts it by means of elaborate montage sequences and stereophonic placement. As these instances of simultaneous sound recur, they become more and more dense and complex. The section covering the morning time from 6 to 8 o'clock, which sounds at roughly nine minutes into the piece, can serve as a case in point (Figure 9). On the mid-left position, a female voice begins with: "Es kann ja ein paar Zuhörer geben, die gerne wissen, wie spät es ist" (There might be some listeners who would like to know what time it is).

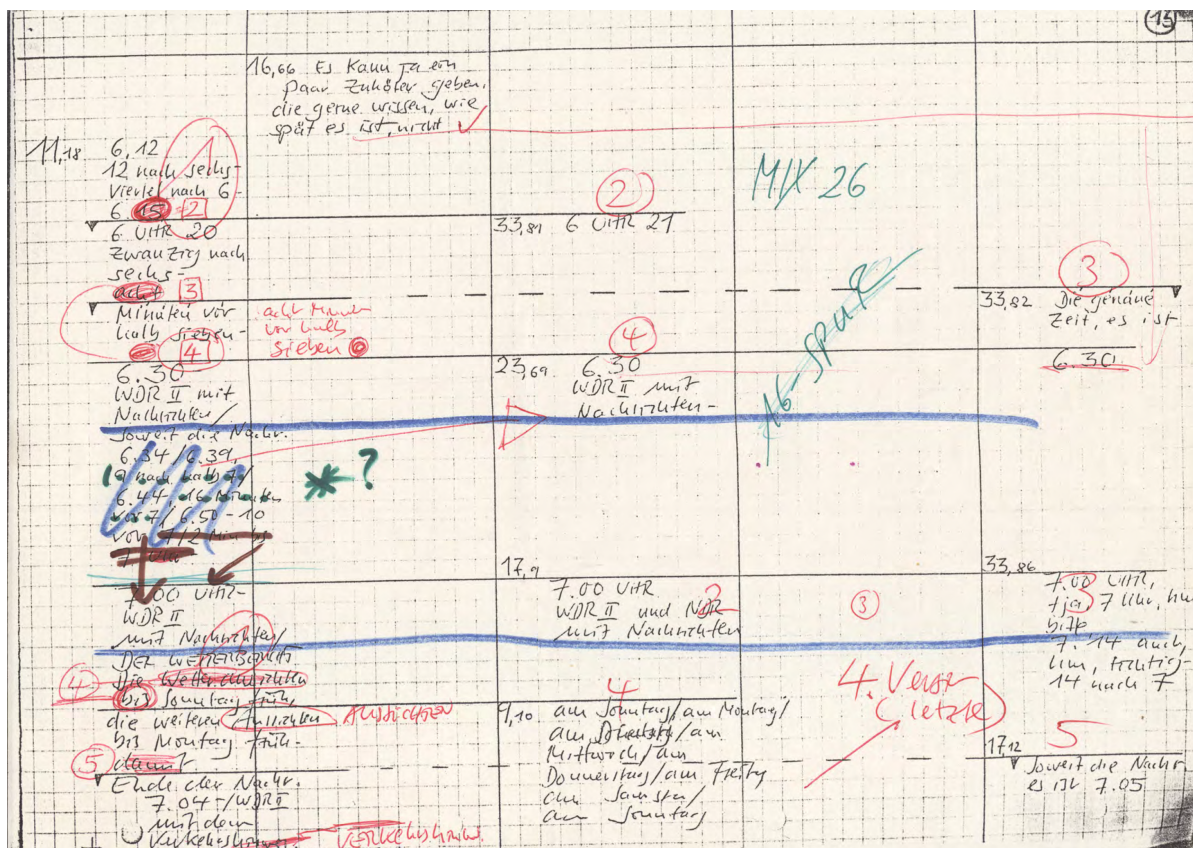


Figure 9: Ferdinand Kriwet, *Radioselbst*, sequence of time announcements, montage plan (Ferdinand Kriwet Estate. Printed with permission).

The first instance of voice doubling occurs as female and male speakers simultaneously state, "6 Uhr 20" and "6 Uhr 21," added by another male voice on the right position stating, "Die genaue Zeit, es ist 6 Uhr 30" (The exact time, it is 6:30). Similarly, three voices at once announce the seven o'clock news, succeeded by a cut to the weather report. The next instance of simultaneous sound (see the column at the bottom) again features two radio speakers on the left and mid-position, while combining polyphonic doubling of phrases and time indications with a loop-like enumeration of the days of the week ("am Sonntag / am Montag / am Dienstag / . . ."). With the indications jumping rapidly forward along the circle of the clock, the montage provokes an experience of accelerating time. A similar effect is produced a bit later through

a further compression of news content, as the montage cuts from the word “Autofahrer” (car drivers) to “Wetteraussichten” (weather forecast) to the title of the ensuing program. This is followed by a thick cluster of different time designations around the full hour 8 o’clock, distributed between three simultaneous speakers. At such prolonged moments of temporal confusion, linearity is suspended, as clock time is spinning out of control.

Radio, the Everyday, and the Politicization of Sound

Tracing the theme of the quotidian in French and German postwar culture has revealed the role of sound in exploring the rhythms of urban and rural daily life as well as articulating facets of estrangement across filmic, literary, and radiophonic forms. As demonstrated by the work of Perec and Ferrari, the turn to the everyday and its sonic dimension was not exclusively geared towards exposing negative features.⁷⁹ Yet, with Lefebvre’s theoretical groundwork and the entangled rise of the *nouveau roman* and the New radio play, concern with the ideological contours of modern daily life and its colonization by consumerist capitalism and the mass media became a dominant issue. Creating sound collages from pre-recorded broadcasting material and staging scenarios of home radio listening, artists affiliated with the New radio play registered the transformation of daily life vis-à-vis the changing media landscape of the time and presented the familiar in an unfamiliar way to confront the listeners with an acoustic critique of human existence as routinized, monotonous, and subjected to the incessant tick-tock of the clock. As we have seen, techniques of voice, stream-of-consciousness, montage, and stereophony became a central means for rendering audible tendencies of homogenization, fragmentation, and repetitiveness in the mediatized sphere of modern existence. Radiophonic sound thus gained political significance in communicating as well as negotiating critical knowledge around the everyday. While French film and radio compositions portrayed the everyday in nuanced terms, ranging from criticism to endorsement of its idyllic qualities, as seen in Ferrari’s *Presque rien*, New radio plays focused on the negative aspects of everyday life, thus echoing Lefebvre’s *Critique* as well as the works of the Frankfurt School of critical theory, which had a decisive influence on the new leftist social movement in West Germany.

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⁷⁹ This is also evident from considering the use of everyday sounds in radio features of the late 1960s and 1970s. For a side-glance on Danish radio feature production see Jacob Kreutzfeldt, “The everyday,” in *The Bloomsbury Handbook of the Anthropology of Sound*, ed. Holger Schulze (Bloomsbury Academic, 2021), 427–42, <https://doi.org/10.5040/9781501335402.ch-033>.

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List of New Radio Plays Discussed

Author(s)	Title/Duration	Premiere/ Radio Channel	Production
Ernst Jandl/Friederike Mayröcker	<i>Fünf Mann Menschen</i> (14:29 min)	11/14/1968 (WDR 2)	SWF, Dir.: Peter M. Ladiges
Mauricio Kagel	<i>Rrrrrr. . ., Hörspiel über eine Radiophantasie</i> (37:31 min)	10/19/1982 (WDR 3)	SWF/WDR, Dir.: M. Kagel, Asst.: Peter Behrendsen
Ferdinand Kriwet	<i>Radioselbst</i> (53:22 min)	05/21/1979 (WDR 3)	WDR, Dir.: F. Kriwet
Dieter Schnebel	<i>Hörfunk (Radiostücke I–V)</i> (56:57 min)	02/25/1971 (HR)	HR/WDR, Dir.: D. Schnebel
Wolf Wondratschek	<i>Paul oder die Zerstörung eines Hörbeispiels</i> (25:17 min)	11/06/1969 (WDR 3)	WDR/BR/HR/SR, Dir.: Heinz Hostnig

Recordings

Fünf Mann Menschen: LP recording, supplement to *Neues Hörspiel. Texte, Partituren*, ed. Klaus Schöning, Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1969. A digitized copy is available on YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ERKxRh2GBfU#>, accessed January 12, 2025).

Rrrrrr. . ., Hörspiel über eine Radiophantasie: Recording of the first broadcast (unpublished), provided by WDR.

Radioselbst: Recording of the first broadcast (unpublished), provided by WDR. Audio examples of *Radioselbst* can be found on the website: <https://radiophonic.space/html/mindmap.html>, accessed January 12, 2025).

Hörfunk (Radiostücke I–V): Recording of the first broadcast (unpublished), provided by WDR.

Paul oder die Zerstörung eines Hörbeispiels: LP recording (2574 006) by Deutsche Grammophon, Luchterhand Verlag, Berlin 1973 (together with Gerhard Rühm, *Ophelia und die Wörter*).