N° 19 | 2024
Voix sur les ondes : enquêtes orales et témoignages dans le reportage radiophonique (XXe-XXIe siècles)

Introduction (english version)

Aurélie ADLER

Maud LECACHEUR

Anna SAIGNES

Édition électronique :
URL : https://komodo21.numerev.com/articles/revue-19/2603-introduction-english-version
DOI : numerev_2411
Date de publication : 08/08/2024

Cette publication est sous licence **CC BY-NC-ND** (Attribution - No commercial - No derivatives).

Pour **citer cette publication** : ADLER, A., LECACHEUR, M., SAIGNES, A. (2024) Introduction (english version). *Komodo 21*, (19). https://doi.org/10.34745/numerev_2411

This introduction presents the articles collected in issue XX of the journal *Komodo 21*, which aim to initiate a an intermingling of the fields of radio and literature around the aesthetic, ethical and political issues raised by the increased use of testimonies and interviews. Since the 2000s, at the intersection of journalism and literature, books containing investigations, long-term reports and collections of testimonies – acclaimed by both critics and the public – have proliferated. This dossier explores the ways in which the medium of radio replays and influences the many issues that run through literary collection and investigation. Its originality lies in its testing of such hypotheses within several linguistic and cultural spaces (English-speaking, French-speaking, German-speaking, Russian-speaking and Ukrainian-speaking), thus offering the beginnings of a transnational panorama – and one that does not focus on the Anglo-Saxon domain – of the practices of investigative radio.

Mots-clés :
Radio reportage, Radio and literature, Creative sound documentary, Enquiry, Testimony

---

1. Books of voices and voices on the airwaves

This dossier is devoted to radio reporting practices in the 20th and 21th centuries, and aims to perpetuate a certain number of recent reflections[1] whilst initiating an intermingling of the fields of radio and literature around the aesthetic, ethical and political issues raised by the increased use of testimonies and interviews. Indeed, since the 2000s, at the intersection of journalism and literature, books containing investigations, long form journalism and collections of testimonies – acclaimed by both critics and the public – have proliferated; this is evidenced by the success of Jean Hatzfeld's Rwandan narratives, and those of Roberto Saviano and W. T. Vollmann, as well as the recognition granted to the polyphonic frescos by Bylorussian writer Svetlana Alexievitch who was awarded the 2015 Nobel Prize for Literature for her interviews on the subject of the former Soviet Empire. Such "field literature[2]", which frequently takes the form of "documentary narratives[3]", has been the subject of numerous studies that have revealed its interdisciplinary content: Laurent Demanze, Mathilde Roussigné and Dominique Viart[4] have in fact demonstrated how such forms and practices help to renew the links between literature and social science, from which they borrow methods,

tools and protocols such as the demand for fieldwork, participant observation, interviews and also a concern for reflexivity[5].

Whilst taking note of such research, this dossier proposes shifting the viewpoint to another field. Indeed it appears to us that contemporary forms of investigation and reporting belong to another tradition and have other parallel lives in sound documentary and radio creation. In France, numerous programmes (“Sur les docks” (“On the Docks”), “Creation on air” (“On-Air Creation”), “Les Pieds sur terre” (“Feet on the Ground”) and “La Série Documentaire” (“The Documentary Series”)), platforms (Arte Radio, Louie Media, Binge Audio) and community online radio stations (Radio Grenouille and Canal Sambre), festivals (Longueur d’Ondes and Sonar), hit podcasts and original documentaries demonstrate that, far from being the prerogative of contemporary literature, the desire to investigate and the art of the encounter are also to be found on the airwaves and are an invitation to explore radio’s counterpart to such literary polyphonies. Indeed we are putting forward the hypothesis that the act of seeking out groups or individuals in order to gather and transmit their words is profoundly transdisciplinary and transmediagenic. This dossier therefore explores the ways in which the medium of radio (the history of its practices, the technical devices it invents, the institutions that surround it and the stakeholders that drive it) replays and influences the multiple issues that run through collection and literary investigation. Its originality lies in its testing of such hypotheses within several linguistic and cultural spaces (English-speaking, French-speaking, German-speaking, Russian-speaking and Ukrainian-speaking), thus offering the beginnings of a transnational panorama – and one that does not focus on the Anglo-Saxon domain – of the practices of investigative radio.

2. Documentary practices and the art of listening

In fact the boom in non-fictional forms at the turn of the 21st century extended far beyond the literary sphere: Aline Caillet studied the emergence of new documentary devices in film and contemporary art[6], whilst Christophe Deleu observed that the notion of the radio documentary, which was imported from film in the aftermath of the Second World War then fell out of fashion, has been making a comeback since the 2000s with the development of the podcast which tends to be free of editorial constraints and traditional formats[7]. Both “catch-up” and “native” podcasts have played a major role in transforming the medium of the radio, to the extent that Silvain Gire and Laurent Frisch speak of entering the “post-radio era[8]”, in which sound production flourishes in the form of investigations, reporting and collections of life stories.

Far from impeding analysis, the terminological variation that continues to surround such practices – “report podcast”, “sound documentary” or the more general “radio creation” – probably constitutes an invitation to regard the documentary as a specific report on reality rather than a generic category, and as such capable of crossing disciplinary boundaries and combining genres. Consequently, one of this piece of work’s challenges

consists in pondering what this deluge of radio reporting may be a symptom of, by setting this question in various historical, geographical and cultural contexts: the desire to decipher the opacity of the social body, highlight relegated conflicts, create a space for speaking and listening for population groups with no voice, enable speakers of minority languages to be heard and resist the dominant media portrayals in minor mode.

Lastly, beyond the upheavals caused by the emergence of the podcast, the return to the medium of the radio appears to us to be all the more stimulating since the specificities of this sound medium echo a broader paradigm shift in modes of understanding reality. Indeed certain anthropologists and philosophers suggest that an epistemological inflection is at work in our ways of understanding the world, which is taking the form of a shift from viewing to listening, from observation to auditory connection, from image to speech, and from strategies involving "*showing*" to the arts of "*telling*"[9]. This constitutes an invitation to revisit what, according to Christophe Deleu, is radio's primary challenge[10]: to replace the visual portrayal of the world offered by documentary films with a world of sound based on voice telescoping, the polyphonic editing of narratives collected by authors and the experience of sharing time.

Because although radio studies have benefited from the boom in *sound studies*, by perpetuating the phono-centrism of western thought[11], the radio also makes it possible to tackle the role and use of the voice in media coverage of reality. Where collections of testimonies need to find literary equivalents of the voice, sound reporting makes vocal polyphony and audio recordings the very subject matter of its writing. Its authors exploit this vocal physicality, which oscillates between imaginary fidelity (capturing the essence of the naked voice) and an exploration of the potential of the voice designed as an instrument or device, the effects of which on the auditor are measured. This is the bias of the dossier published in 2023 in the journal *Hermès*, "la voix, force de la radio" ("The Voice, the Force of Radio"), which maps the landscape of contemporary sound creation through the prism of the voice[12]. According to Brigitte Chapelain and Zhao Alexandre Huang, the continuity of radio today lies specifically in the voice, "the essential component of sonic writing[13]", despite the mutations this medium has undergone: hence the need to question the relationships that the voice develops with its audience within the context of the radio[14].

3. Radio/literary porosity

Although investigations, reporting and documentaries are therefore central to this piece of work, our contributions are not limited to the study of such forms, but offer explorations of other methods of capturing the voice, modes of portraying languages in sound documentaries and, more generally, the bridges between literature and radio: collaborations between writers on the airwaves, radio adaptations, intermedia genre experimentation, etc. In so doing, this dossier extends research into the links between

literature and radio, from Pierre-Marie Héron's programme "Les écrivains et la radio en France" ("Writers and Radio in France")[15] to the *Textyles* journal's edition devoted to the same issues in Belgium, from the inter-war to the ultra-contemporary period[16]. In terms of methodology, in many respects the articles gathered here subscribe to the approach advocated by Manon Houtart and Florence Huybrechts in their study of the radio-literary corpora: adopting a view that comes under *close listening*, according to Charles Bernstein's formula, we are urged to pay attention to a work's or radio programme's multiple components, from the use of voices to the world of sound and the art of editing. Where Manon Houtart and Florence Huybrechts call for a mobilisation of the resources of audio-narratology and phonostylistics in order to make the process of "radiomorphing" literature more responsive, the articles by Fanny Dujardin, Alexandra Wiktorowska and Madeleine Martineu set out the sound documentary's enunciative methods, analyse how podcasts incorporate the codes of narrative journalism, and probe the issues of voice editing.

The question of the medium also invites us to consider the phenomena of circulation and porosity between radio and literature, by studying a few writers' trajectories and intermedia projects: either radio reports lead to the publication of books (Studs Terkel's *Histoires orales* (*Oral Histories*) are derived from radio programmes; in 2012 Actes Sud published Sonia Kronlund's "nouvelles du réel" ("Real News"), a selection of reports from "Pieds sur Terre" ("Feet on the Ground"); in 2022 Charlotte Bienaimé published *Un livre à soi* (*A Book of Your Own*) based on the programme "Un podcast à soi" ("A Podcast of Your Own")); or books of voices become initiators of radio projects, as did *Dans ma zup (In my ZUP[Priority Urbanisation Zone])* by François Beaune (2019), who returned to Chambéry-le-Haut to produce "La vie ordinaire dans nos cites" ("Ordinary Life in our Housing Projects"), a series of podcasts broadcast in "LSD" ("La série documentaire", a French documentary radio program broadcast on France Culture) in 2020. Although it is often a question of gambling on the durability of the physical book, such projects oscillate between anthological preoccupations and adaptation logic.

4. The audio investigation: histories and territories

The first section focuses on retracing a pluralistic history of radio reporting within various cultural areas. This genealogical approach is an invitation to sketch out a history on several levels: firstly, a physical history of the evolution of recording techniques. Although, according to Jean-Pierre Martin, the first half of the 20th century is associated with an "amplified world sound system[17]", where the invention of "talking machines" transformed the imagery of the voice, the radio documentary was mainly dependent on technical changes in the second half of the century, which led from Nagra to the podcast. These recording devices resulted in the democratisation of such practices, as regards both production (lower costs, access to editing software, low-cost hosting solutions that fostered an auto-production dynamic in the digital era[18]) and reception (changes in listening modes and temporal reporting on the radio). Added to this history

of techniques, which encouraged leaving the studio, is that of premises and institutions: the development of cultural production policies for public radio, the emergence of community radio, Internet radio and podcast platforms.

This dossier's opening article by Fanny Dujardin retraces the history of the links between phonographic practices and investigative radio. From the making of the first ethnographic recordings (that focused on the picturesque aspect of accents and dialects) – that constitute a reference "virgin world" – to the more intense development of contemporary practices in the 1970s in France, this collaboration has a long history. In the 1990s, which were characterised by a "bias towards the document", investigative practices diversified to a point where the investigation's "narrative paradigm" (Laurent Demanze) rapidly spread to radio production. Fanny Dujardin focused on three examples that illustrate the various "facets" of today's audio and radio investigations, whilst questioning the ethical issues they raise when this involves collecting the voices of subjects exhibiting some form of social vulnerability. By studying editing choices and the presence of the author's voice within the documentary, Fanny Dujardin demonstrates how Pascale Pascariello's *Un micro au tribunal* (*A Microphone in Court*) (2019) can be classified as an "observation documentary". This type of documentary, which paradoxically produces the impression of transparency through the artifice of its recording methods and the introduction of a subtly-constructed "omni-audient" "listening point", aims to highlight the violence of the trial system for those accused and presumed guilty. Julien Cernobori's approach in *Cerno, l'anti-enquête (Cerno, the anti-investigation)* (2019) seems more intrusive. Based on the (*cold case*) crime serial genre, the narrative reopens officially closed cases that the author reopens in order to "pay tribute to the victims" of two 1980s serial killers. However, this "restorative" aim is called into question by the extent to which Julien Cernobori takes for granted the predatory behaviour of the interviewer towards his interviewees. Although it aims to form links with and between the living, the author also appears to be promoting himself by seeking to artificially generate an investigation that requires crowdfunding in order to continue to exist. Lastly, in *La ferme où poussent les arbres du ciel (The Farm Where the Trees of Heaven Grow)*, Kaye Mortley, who investigates her homeland (Australia), develops an aesthetic of radio as "*mind movie*". A "listening walker" (Michel Chion), Kaye Mortley develops a piece that can be classified as a "poetic documentary" that is no longer based on a quest for truth or the requirement to document a specific topic, but instead on producing an impression of defamiliarisation with reality: through memories and unanswered questions, this radio investigation suspends meaning and scrambles voices, affirming an openness to a world free of moral imperatives.

Mirroring Fanny Dujardin's article, Tudi Crequer (a bilingual journalist, reporter and Breton-language news presenter), begins by noting an "archival void" where minority languages are concerned: the Breton language is an example of such a silence in the sound and radio archives. The phonographic archives attest to this: in the early 20th century, primarily the voices of illustrious men, speaking in the French language, were recorded. Sound documents were certainly collected by folklorists and ethnomusicologists but, as Florence Descamps notes, such collecting took neither history nor witnesses' "biographical depth" into account. Breton-language programmes

did not emerge – and Breton sound archives were not created – until the sixties and seventies. This movement has tended to grow since the 1980s thanks to the production of Rémi Derrien's programme, "Bonjour village", which reports on the daily life of Breton speakers who discuss their perceptions of the world and of history. Tudi Crequer ponders how to free minority languages from their marginality: he demonstrates that broadcasting a programme incorporating testimonies in Breton on a national channel – broadcast as part of "Pieds sur terre" – may contribute to such decompartmentalisation. *In fine*, the issue raised is that of maintaining radio space – community radio being the most hospitable – and its fragility.

The two following articles move the cursor to Germany and Ukraine, questioning the challenges of sound investigation in these two countries. In his article on reporting and radio programmes in Ukraine, Oleksandr Volkovynskyi offers a comparative study of these two journalistic genres as they exist today within the Ukrainian media landscape, in a country where the average listening time (over four hours per day) reveals the considerable impact reporting and programmes have on the population's cultural, social and political practices. The researcher points out that the context of the war has contributed to an increased demand from listeners for reporting (news and investigative journalism) to the detriment of the programme. However – according to the article's author – contrary to written reporting, radio reporting constitutes an invitation to highlight the role of sound processes in its composition, which through their powers of suggestion tend to blur the line between the genres of reporting and the programme. Indeed the facts themselves are less important than the portrayals they inspire. By looking at both the productions of the *Urban Space Radio* platform and the programmes broadcast by the *Tvoye Radio* station, Oleksandr Volkovynskyi analyses the relationships between facts that are reported or commented on and the sounds that accompany or evoke them: at a time when current productions tend to replace sounds recorded in the field with sounds taken from an audio library, the author stresses the need to continue to incorporate sounds recorded first hand during the making of a report, in order to create archives for the future.

Without limiting himself to the genres of the programme and reporting, Hendrik Michael reconsiders the journalistic podcast's prominence within the German media landscape. From a synthetic consideration of theories of intermediality, broadcasting channels and arrangements for receiving podcasts, the researcher analyses the way in which such hybrid narrative media combine a number of pre-existing journalistic forms and practices in order to produce items with aims that oscillate between providing news and entertainment. He outlines the dual legacy of the journalistic podcast which incorporates both the codes of narrative journalism (that combine literary forms and journalistic methods of investigation) and sound media procedures, from oral narratives to radio pieces. Through his study of two examples of German podcasts, *Danke, Ciao !* by Dominik Schottner (2016) and *Paradise Papers : Im Schattenreich der Steueroasen*, by Benedikt Strunz and Philip Eckstein (2017), Hendrik Michael highlights two representative patterns in the use of *storytelling* in contemporary podcasts. Where the intimate framing of Dominik Schottner's podcast – which questions the role of alcoholism in his father's death – allows a societal and public health issue to be

addressed, Benedikt Strunz and Philip Eckstein's series recognises the importance of narration when reporting on an investigation, in order to render palpable the collective dimension of an international investigation which enabled a scandal to be unveiled.

5. Literature and radio

The second section of this volume focuses more specifically on exploring the links between literature and radio, which have embraced a variety of forms since radio broadcasting began. Writers immediately recognised the possibilities offered by the new media as regards safeguarding speech, broadcasting and also the particular expressiveness of sound, whether this involved the physical voice or nonverbal sounds, frequently tiny and seemingly insignificant. Exchanges between the fields of literature and radio were established rapidly and over time: the same participants alternated between literature and radio; literary productions found the radio, where they were read, adapted or discussed, to be an outstanding means of dissemination; events covered during reporting inspired the works of journalists when they became novelists; reporting and radio documentaries borrowed literature's codes and narrative techniques. Vladimir Maïakovski even believed that the radio was replacing literature and in particular factual literature, the only type regarded as valid in the new world born of the October Revolution. Note that this idea is still current, since a number of researchers consider that nowadays podcasts are taking the place of literary journalism[19]. Lastly, it is tempting to regard the history of the radio documentary as a gradual retreat from a fantasy that lent it the power to capture raw reality, like a newspaper without distance or paper. Over time, the radio documentary – even in its variants that resembled *storytelling* – seemed more and more inclined to question its own methods and its protocols for recording reality. But is this not imposing literary history on that of the sound documentary? For it must not be forgotten that literary theory made remarkable progress in Russia around 1920, just when recording and broadcasting gained decisive momentum; this suggests that radio played a major role in changing the idea of literature and literature itself, and that it probably continues to do so[20]. There are many interactions between literature and radio, and not just one-way traffic.

This was demonstrated at the beginning of this section in Pavel Arseniev's study devoted to interactions – during the decade following the October Revolution – between the development of recording techniques and the broadcasting of speech on the one hand, and on the other, literary theory developed by formalists and futurist poets. He begins with a reminder of the extent to which radio played a central role in the establishment of Soviet authority. Lenin used a radio station in St Petersburg to announce his victory in the Revolution to the whole world even though, at that time, only the Russian navy possessed the technical means to receive the message. This was nothing less than a political revolution. The radio consequently became a powerful resource for the revolutionary imagination. First of all, the fantasy of immediacy

appeared to have been realised through radio broadcasting since, in Lenin's own words, it provided a newspaper "without distance or paper" that ignored boundaries between states and barriers erected by the ruling classes. However, the new possibilities created by the radio stimulated – and in addition even revolutionised – thinking about literature, which led to the protracted theorising with which we are familiar. It is no coincidence that Shklovski's famous text on "Art as Technique" [Isskustvo kak priem] was published in 1917, or that in 1924 the journal *LEF*'s first issue – which contained foundational analyses by Shklovsky, Tynianov, Eikhenbaum and Jakubinsky – bore the title "The Language of Lenin" [Iazyk Lenina]. P. Arseniev explains that the term *priem* that appears in the title of Shklovsky's essay, the French translation of which is usually *procédé*, also signifies *technique* or *device* and should be understood not only as a metaphor for rhetorical persuasion but also in its most literal sense. Art is a question of technique, and more precisely the technique of recording and broadcasting speech. The other key concept formulated by Shklovsky, that of *defamiliarisation* [ostranienie] may be linked to the experience of repeatedly listening to recorded speech, when words ultimately lose their meaning. Lastly, as a few of Mayakovsky's texts demonstrate, the Revolution removed poets from their institutional environment and material culture. The shortage of paper and the dismantling of media institutions incited them to create something new, for example by reading their poems and thus writing directly "from the voice" and "for the voice".

The formalists and futurists were not the only men of letters to have recognised the significance of radio broadcasting. Olga Plaszczewska undertook an exploration of the archives left by an eminent figure from the Polish cultural landscape – who was, however, overlooked during the second half of the 20th century – whose career allows us to understand the close and varied links that were created between literature and radio within the first hours of radio broadcasting for mass audiences within a very different political context. Olga Plaszczewska first offers us a brief history of Polish radio, highlighting its rapid development in 1925 and also its specificity within a country that had just been reborn following a hundred and fifty years of partition by Russian- and German-speaking neighbouring powers. The radio thus found itself entrusted with the mission of promoting the Polish language and culture within a state that was seeking lost unity. Although radio enabled literature to be of service to politics, the great majority of writers enthusiastically agreed to collaborate with the new media, the significance of which they rapidly recognised. A few main points emerge from A. Jesionowski's career. Note that this man of letters became a man of the radio: A. Jesionowski – initially a journalist, reporter and literary critic for a cultural magazine – naturally crossed the threshold of the new media, where he got his voice heard as a presenter then programme quality controller; this prompted him to write down his thoughts on the practices of radio, currently a rich source of information. It is not surprising to find that he accorded literature a prominent place in the programme listings, between the news and music. However, it should be noted that his preferred form was the travelogue, a practice similar to in-depth reporting where literature and journalism intersect, then popular with the general public. Lastly, A. Jesionowski considered that the secret of success was to seek to interact with listeners whose voices

should also be heard if a common (Polish) world was to be built: in each programme, he devoted a few minutes to answering his readers' letters.

Céline Pardo's article focuses on the travelogue; it is devoted to listening to foreign voices within four French-language radio creations produced by travel writers and radio professionals: Philippe Soupault's *Instantanés de Perse* (*Snapshots of Persia*) (RTF, 1950); José Pivin's *Le Transcamerounais* (*The Transcameroonian*) (France Culture, 1977); *Souvenirs d'en Flandres* (*Memories from Flanders*), a series produced by Franck Venaille as part of the programme *Nuits magnétiques* (*Magnetic Nights*) (France Culture, 1987); and *(S)no(w) borders*, an independent documentary by the French-speaking Belgian artist and writer Anne Penders (2006). All these creations involve the listener, as A. Jesionowski wished, but it is no longer simply a matter of relaying and broadcasting text that has previously been written by a travel writer. Céline Pardo demonstrates that these four "poetic documentaries" – to use the convenient terminology suggested by Christophe Deleu – may be interpreted as four milestones in a threefold story: that of a growing understanding of the potential of the physical voice; that of an increasingly problem-solving approach to the Other and, lastly, that of an understanding of radio mediation. By voicing fragments of a poem and a Persian-language song within a creation which is dominated by the poet's impressions in French, Philippe Soupault plays with 1950s stereotypes of Persia without subverting them. In the late 1970s, José Pivin led his listeners to Cameroon and confronted them with a radically different world, through a combination of sound sequences recorded in the field along with fiction sequences in the form of dialogues recorded in the studio. Ten years later, Franck Venaille amplified a foreign language for its own sake, getting French-speaking listeners to listen with their senses rather than their intellect, which required an active imagination. At the dawn of the 21st century, by intertwining voices speaking different languages immediately translated by a translator, Anne Penders appeared to showcase an interlinguistic fluidity; however, this ultimately gave listeners an impression of the irreducible depth of all languages and all thought. Paradoxically, an awareness of the potential of physical voices is accompanied by a growing concern about radio's power to "break into reality[21]". However, such a gradual deconstruction of the myth of radio as an immediate presence only serves to emphasise the similarities between radio and literature: like writers, producers of radio documentaries produce portrayals of reality, the challenges of which are also aesthetic.

Concerns regarding conditions of perception and the expression of reality on the radio are not unrelated to the sound production analysed by Alexandra Wiktorowska, *Pig Iron*. At first glance, this seven-episode native podcast differs radically from the creations analysed by C. Pardo. From the outset, A. Wiktorowska places it within a separate category to literature: narrative journalism or literary journalism, i.e. a practice with a decidedly informative primary aim that, without losing sight of its truth-telling objective, introduces processes generally associated with literary fiction so as to gain listeners' attention and support. Moreover, *Pig Iron*'s links to journalism emerge on a number of levels: its production by a journalistic start-up, its producer's professional career, its focus on interviews with witnesses and document mining (newspapers and written or

recorded notes), and the subject itself since it is about the death in 2016 of a young freelancer who joined forces with rebels in South Sudan. Lastly, in general *Pig Iron* forms part of a process of journalistic revival, conspicuous in various media, that is reflected in independent, long-format productions with assumed subjectivity. In the domain of sound, this process has been marked by the success of the *Serial* and *S-Town* series in the United States. We should not lose sight of the fact that the theoretical framework of A. Wiktorowska's analysis is different to that of the preceding article, not only in that it assigns its subject-matter to the field of the media but also because it follows in the tradition of English- and American-language works on literary journalism and non-fiction novels, the model for which remains Truman Capote's *In Cold Blood*. It is undoubtedly this difference in approach that conceals the convergence of the podcast being studied with the preoccupations that inhabit contemporary literature. However these do indeed exist. Firstly because podcasts impose a critical distance regarding the practice from which they derive: the quest is less concerned with the circumstances of journalist's death than with the path that led him from journalism to armed combat. Thus history acquires a symbolic dimension, echoing the producer's search – in which she is full of misgivings that are shared by her listeners – for the issues and an ethical dimension in her work. Secondly, podcasts render audible the tiny sounds recorded in the field (footsteps, doors banging, etc.), breathing, voice inflections and even prolonged silences – even more evident when listening through earphones – that contribute to an aesthetic experience. Finally, the investigation yielded no clear results, leaving listeners struggling with a fragmented and opaque reality.

Finally, by moving the focus to the processes whereby cultural practices are legitimised, Julian Preece demonstrates how a study of the relationship between journalism, radio and literature may intersect with a history of the relationship between the sexes. His article is devoted to Ingeborg Bachmann (1926–1973), a major Austrian author and leading feminist figurehead. From Rome, where she lived from 1954–1955, Bachmann wrote a series of features on Italy for Radio Bremen. Julian Preece's article highlights the details of this collaboration (the texts were prepared by Bachmann, dictated over the telephone then read on the air), its economic basis (at that time, many German-speaking writers made their living from the radio), as well as the practice's long invisibility within literary and cultural history (found by chance in the late 1990s, these texts had never come to researchers' attention). Moreover, Bachmann herself had always distanced herself from her radio productions for which she used a pseudonym. Yet a review of these texts, regarded as minor in terms of a leading writer's work, sheds a great amount of light on her novel *Malina*, published in 1971 and regarded as Bachmann's greatest success. According to Julian Preece, the complex narrative device that made this novel famous had its roots in the "Montesi affair" which had shaken Italy in the mid-1950s: the body of a woman who had been the victim of a rape involving high-ranking figures was washed up on a beach near Rome. Bachmann provided wide coverage of the affair in her features but, curiously, she did not wish to regard it as anything more than a news item, and adopted a point of view similar to that of the Italian government which sought to cover up the affair. According to Julian Preece, Bachmann herself thus stifled her female perspective on the affair in order to comply

with the expectations of her listeners. This gesture continued to haunt her work. Admittedly, here its minor format is associated with a deceptive conformity that Bachmann was to abandon in her literary work, but no doubt her writings for the radio should be taken into account if we wish to fully understand the author of *Malina*'s literary works.

6. Ethics and politics in radio reporting

Although a special relationship exists between literature and radio, the purpose of their association within the context of radio reporting – which borrows its techniques from literary narrative – is not only to meet the desire for "beautiful radio" mentioned by Pierre-Marie Héron and Christophe Deleu. The history of the radio documentary and its new two decade-long boom is being written to reflect social crises and political strife. It is not merely a question of recording reality, but of getting the world to listen so that voices seldom represented in the public space are heard, and challenging current audibility and visibility regimes. This final strand hence offers an exploration of the political challenges of audio reporting: elucidating and deciphering a complex society; experimenting with a form of democratic narrative in the hope of weaving – according to Pierre Rosanvallon's wishes – "multiple life stories and speeches into the threads of a common world[22]"; and making the radio documentary a vector for the demands of activist groups. The history of radio reporting demonstrates this in a number of ways: representing voices, particularly those of the "invisible", constitutes a major challenge that is central to community radio programmes, as Tudi Crequer points out, and more generally to public service radio. But this politically virtuous intention, with its clear democratic concern, raises numerous issues relating to technical devices, recording methods, voice editing and script choices. What should a radio reporter's setting be – should reporters be in evidence or take a back seat – and what effects are created? Between contextualisation and a refusal to provide testimonies with an accompanying discourse: here we are studying differing editing approaches and their ethical and political implications, with greater or lesser emphasis on polyphonic disintegration or narrative immersion, a return to mimetics or the quest for an alternative language.

How are the subject-matter and field chosen? How do investigators make contact with their interviewees? What kind of relationship do they establish with the people they meet? How are their words chosen? Such questions, common to the disciplines of the field and the relational arts, involve going behind the scenes at the reporting factory, so as to reveal investigation methodology and the issues raised at each of these stages. From the act of recording to the reproduction of the interviewee, and including the enunciative processing of words and the ways of organising them[23]: the practices of the radio documentary involve technical choices and ethical bias that are examined by the articles gathered in this last section.

Here Christophe Deleu, a specialist in the radio documentary, analyses the specificities

of the relationship established between interviewer and interviewee within the context of journalistic reporting, by comparing it to other types of relationships involving dialogue that is more or less convivial, detached or which involves an interplay of power. Compared in turn to a friend's familiarity or a sociologist's, psychologist's, police officer's or magistrate's methods, radio journalists are required to feel their way since ethical risks are involved – the transgression of public and private boundaries and those between asking for information and bringing pressure to bear on a witness – that reflect the "hybrid and incomplete" nature of the relationship between interviewer and interviewee. Although he highlights the limitations on voice recording, Christophe Deleu distances himself from the ethical inflation that besets the contemporary practices of contemporary investigation: for the radio journalist, what counts is the production of a programme. In other words, the background to the interview remains pragmatic and professional, which highlights the boundary between the radio documentary and the relational practices that are redefining art and literature by relegating the very concept of the work as a finished product.

Such a discrepancy is increasingly evident in the practice of publishing that accompanies certain programmes. Madeleine Martineu thus analyses the issues involved in publishing a collection of episodes from the well-known programme "Les Pieds sur terre"("Feet on the Ground") created by Sonia Kronlund on France Culture in 2002. The book's publication in 2012[24] resulted in feedback on a radio project – the aesthetic and political aims of which are examined by Madeleine Martineu – that combines a penchant for *storytelling* with a desire to offer a space for addressing a lack of political representativeness. Whilst reinstating Sonia Kronlund's project in the wake of similar programmes ("Là-bas si j'y suis" in France, as well as "Strip-Tease" and "This American Life" in the United States), the researcher demonstrates that the coverage's flow from the radio to the printed book (published by Actes Sud, the French publisher of Svetlana Alexievitch's works) reinforces this type of programme's similarity to the boom in books of voices. By retracing the respective histories and backgrounds of the documentary and radio reporting, the researcher elucidates the terminological variation that surrounds the programme: if this in fact serves to perpetuate the act of leaving the studio, refusing to go live in order to offer the most diverse geographical and social cover possible, its claim to be broadcasting "Thirty minutes of commentary-free reporting" reflects the tension between reporting and testimony, and between a genre traditionally characterised by the presence of a journalist and the fantasy of words delivered without mediation. The study of project thresholds nevertheless demonstrates that this vow of humility is offset by the episodes' introductions and the book's preface, in which the investigation's protocol is explained and warnings are given, providing listeners with background. Incorporating Sylvie Servoise's analyses, Madeleine Martineu ultimately demonstrates how the programme, which has gained momentum in the context of the rise of the Far Right in France, is re-establishing the democratic imagery promoted by polyphonic narrative: this consists, to incorporate Pierre Rosanvallon's formula, in establishing radio space as a "Parlement des invisibles" (Parliament of the Invisible), and reporting and books as places where discordant groups are represented. For Madeleine Martineu, such political issues are however an invitation to highlight the

differences between books of voices and Sonia Kronlund's project which distances itself from the outpouring of empathy that characterises the attitude of numerous contemporary authors, and reaffirms a belief in the power of *storytelling* from which contemporary literature distances itself, preferring to be regarded as a place for counter-narratives.

This confidence in the powers of narration on the airwaves can be found in an article that Aurélia Kalisky devotes to the radio documentary *Rwanda 1999 : revivre à tout prix* (*relive whatever the cost*) produced by Madeleine Mukamabano for France Culture in collaboration with the radio producer Mehdi El Hadj. But as regards the history of genocide in Rwanda, this confidence is subject to the position adopted by and status of a Rwandan journalist exiled in France. Presented in five episodes, as part of the "Carnets de voyage" ("Travel Diaries") programme, Madeleine Mukamabano's feature traces the genealogy of ethnicist thought and genocidal violence, and paints a portrait of Rwandan society in the immediate aftermath of the event. In contrast to Western third-party approaches to genocide in Rwanda – we are referring of course to the journalist and writer Jean Hatzfeld – aimed at Western audiences, the documentary *Rwanda 1999* owes its high quality to the set point of view of Madeleine Mukamabano, a Diaspora intellectual, some of whose family – regarded as Tutsi by ethnicist ideology – were killed during the massacres and genocides. Her view of genocide in Rwanda, from the position of an exile, is also a view informed by human and social science. Aurélia Kalisky recalls how the journalist rose from the position of assistant and expert on Rwanda amongst French journalists – who consequently became the victim of a form of "epistemic injustice" since knowledge is publicised by Western third parties who exploit the resources of Rwandan specialists on the subject – to the position of producer within a tense media and political context – the French State's involvement in the genocide is still a burning issue – where the "Western perspective is omnipresent and omnipotent". During a one-and-a-half-week trip, Madeleine Mukamabano interviewed survivors and killers, then completed her collection of voices with other interviews with intellectuals (historians, chercheurs en social science researchers, etc.) and exiled Tutsis. This multiplicity of points of view reveal the feature's similarity to a travelogue (the feature offers a poetic introduction and strives to immerse its listeners in the Rwandan sonic landscape), and also to an oral history and ethnographic investigation, from which it appears to have borrowed its methodology and historiographical and political ambition. Aurélia Kalisky focuses on the specificity of the relationship established between the journalist and the genocide survivors: both insider and outsider, involved and seeking objectivity, Mukamabano – in the position of a Diaspora third party – collects voices whilst at the same time protecting herself, watching herself reflect what these voices relate, since the post-genocidal traumas featured in her reporting refer to her own history, even if this personal history is blurred and kept at arm's length within the context of the documentary.

As an extension of this analysis of the links between the practices of collecting voices and traumas, Lucie Kempf's article constitutes an invitation to further question the use of voices in contemporary production by sidestepping towards documentary theatre; the researcher provides an overview of its history whilst the media evolved. Implicit in this

parallel history is a political ambition to use documentary theatre to counter dominant narratives through the device of editing. This political ambition is behind the KnAM project, a Russian theatre exiled to France, the impetus for which comes from a town in Eastern Siberia constructed by prisoners of the Gulag. Lucie Kempf studies the founding protocol and aesthetic principle of this polyphonic field theatre that combines sound and video: by drawing on the oral testimonies of Russians from the past – the victims of the violence of History – and the present, Tatiana Frolova's company attempts to revive a buried past by working backwards from spurious memories. Centred on the voice, KnAM theatre re-establishes the phonocentrist legacy shared by numerous contemporary creations: experimenting with vocal techniques for freeing the voice in the hope of entering their spectators' subconscious, and exploring voice modulation in contrast to the uniform diction of *speakers* in the media. Playing on the polysemy of the term, Lucie Kempf demonstrates how the company is engaged in restoring the voice (in the sense of returning what has been stolen), thus connecting with the restorative aim that certain critics regard as one of the salient features of contemporary artistic practice.

---

[1] We are thinking in particular of a number of symposia that gave rise to the following publications: Christophe Deleu & Pierre-Marie Héron (dir.), *Komodo 21*, No.18, 2022, "Le désir de belle radio aujourd'hui : le documentaire" ("The Desire for Beautiful Radio Today: the Documentary"); Laurent Demanze & Anna Saignes (dir.), *Recherches & Travaux*, No.98, June 2021, "Raconter, décrire, intervenir : la politique du reportage" ("Telling, Describing, Intervening: the Politics of Reporting"); Frédérique Leichter-Flack & Alexandre Gefen (dir.), *Colloques Fabula*, 2022, "Les Livres de voix : narrations pluralistes et démocratie" ("Voice Books: Pluralist Narratives and Democracy").

[2] V. Alison James & Dominique Viart (dir.), *Fixxion*, No.18, June 2019, "Les littératures de terrain" ("Field Literature").

[3] V. Lionel Ruffel, "Un réalisme contemporain : les narrations documentaires" ("Contemporary Realism: Documentary Narratives"), *Littérature*, No.166, 2012, pp. 13–25.

[4] V. Laurent Demanze, *Un nouvel âge de l'enquête : portraits de l'écrivain contemporain en enquêteur (The New Age of Investigation: Portraits of the Contemporary Writer as Investigator)*, Paris, José Corti, "Les Essais", 2018; Mathilde Roussigné, *Terrain et littérature : nouvelles approches (Field and Literature: New Approaches)*, Saint-Denis, Presses Universitaires de Vincennes, "L'Imaginaire du Texte", 2023.

[5] V. également Éléonore Devevey & Jacob Lachat (dir.), *Contextes*, No.32, June 2022, "Anthropologie et études littéraires : contacts, transferts, imaginaires" ("Anthropology

and Literary Studies: Contacts, Transfers and Imagination").

[6] Aline Caillet, *Dispositifs critiques : le documentaire, du cinéma aux arts visuels (Critical Devices: the Documentary, from Film to the Visual Arts)*, Rennes, Presses universitaires de Rennes, 2014 and Aline Caillet & Frédéric Pouillaude (dir.), *Un art documentaire. Un art documentaire : enjeux esthétiques, politiques et éthiques (A Documentary Art. A Documentary Art: Aesthetic, Political and Ethical Issues)*, Rennes, Presses universitaires de Rennes, "AEsthetica", 2017.

[7] Christophe Deleu, *Le Documentaire radiophonique (The Radio Documentary)*, Paris, L'Harmattan/INA, "Mémoires de radio", 2013.

[8] Quoted by Brigitte Chapelain & Zhao Alexandre Huang (dir.), *Hermès*, No.92, 2023, p. 14.

[9] See Johannes Fabian, *Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes its Object*, Columbia University Press, 1983 and Aline Caillet, *Dispositifs critiques (Critical Devices)*, op. cit.

[10] Christophe Deleu, *Le Documentaire radiophonique (The Radio Documentary)*, op. cit.

[11] Jacques Derrida, *De la grammatologie (Of Grammatology)*, Paris, Minuit, 1967.

[12] Brigitte Chapelain & Zhao Alexandre Huang (dir.), op. cit.

[13] *Ibid.*, p. 15.

[14] On this point, see in particular this piece of work's article by Olivier Thuillas and Louis Wiart, "Podcasts natifs : de nouvelles voix à écouter ?" ("Native Podcasts: New Voices to listen to?"), *Hermès*, No.92, 2023, pp. 93–97. These researchers demonstrate that the boom in podcasting is accompanied by a boom in life stories and the sharing of experiences, the success of which can be explained by an ideal of intimacy that plays out on three levels: non-studio recording conditions within an interviewee's home; the close involvement of the documentarian, who speaks in the first person and explains his/her link to the podcast's theme; listening is through headphones which makes for a more solitary experience.

[15] V. Pierre-Marie Héron, Marie Joqueviel-Bourjea & Céline Pardo (dir.), *Poésie sur les*

ondes. La voix des poètes producteurs à la radio (Poetry on the Airwaves. The Voice of Poet-producers on the Radio), Rennes, Presses universitaires de Rennes, 2018 and Céline Pardo, *La Poésie hors du livre (1945–1965). Le poème à l'ère de la radio et du disque (Poetry Outside the Book (1945–1965). Poetry in the Era of Records and the Radio)*, Paris, PUPS, 2015.

[16] Manon Houtart & Florence Huybrechts (dir.), *Textyles*, No.65, 2024, "Littérature et radio" ("Literature and Radio").

[17] Jean-Pierre Martin, *La Bande sonore (The Soundtrack) : Beckett, Céline, Duras, Perec, Pinget, Queneau, Sarraute, Sartre,* Paris, José Corti, "Les Essais", 1998.

[18] Olivier Thuillas & Louis Wiart, "Podcasts natifs : de nouvelles voix à écouter ?" ("Native Podcasts: New Voices to listen to?"), *Hermès*, No.92, 2023, pp. 93–97.

[19] This applies, for example, to Siobhan McHugh, in her article "The Narrative Podcast as Digital Literary Journalism: Conceptualizing *S-Town*", *Literary Journalism Studies*, No.13 (1 & 2), 2021, pp. 101–129.

[20] Céline Pardo, "Penser la radio en littéraire : quelques questionnements de radiolittérature" ("Thinking about radio in literature: some questions about radio literature"), *Elfe XX-XXI* [Online], No.8, 2019, URL: http://journals.openedition.org/elfe/1025, visited on 04 April 2024.

[21] To use the title of a collective work on the work of the writer and journalist Emmanuel Carrère, v. Laurent Demanze and Dominique Rabaté (dir.), *Emmanuel Carrère : faire effraction dans le reel (breaking into reality)*, Paris, P.O.L, 2018.

[22] Pierre Rosanvallon, *Le Parlement des invisibles (The Parliament of the Invisible)*, Paris, Seuil, "Raconter la vie", 2014, p. 23.

[23] Fanny Dujardin has drawn attention to these issues in her article: "Écrire avec les voix des autres : quels enjeux éthiques derrière le 'beau documentaire'?" ("Writing with the voices of others: which ethical issues lie behind the 'beautiful documentary'?", *Komodo 21*, No.18, 2022, op. cit.

[24] *L'Homme aux mille visages* (*The Man with a Thousand Faces*) (Paris, Grasset, 2024), has now been added to this collection; in this book Sonia Kronlund pursues the leads of an investigation carried out as part of a single radio feature produced in 2017.