

FREE PUBLIC LECTURE

Dr. Jaimie Baron (University of Alberta)

The Ethics of Sonic Appropriation in *Suitcase of Love and Shame* and *Shut Up Little Man: An Audio Misadventure*

Friday, November 18, 2016, 4:00-6:00 pm

SFU Harbour Centre

515 West Hastings Street, Room 7000

Free Public Lecture: Dr. Jaimie Baron

November 18, 2016

ABSTRACT:

The recorded voice functions as an indexical sonic trace of a human being, whose unique words, voice, and intonations may be heard far from the contexts in which they were inscribed. Indeed, once such recordings exist, they may become available to anyone for appropriation. While copyright debates concern the legal ownership of recordings, the question of the ethics of appropriation vis-à-vis the actual recorded subjects is often elided in discussions of intellectual property. In this paper, I seek to elucidate some of the structures by which we may evaluate the ethics of a reuse of an actuality – as opposed to staged, fictional – voice recording, particularly one that may be described as in some way private or intimate. Since informed consent cannot always be obtained and – even if obtained – is often ethically insufficient, other approaches to ethical evaluation become necessary. I argue that appropriation of previously recorded material creates a multilayered structure based on our perceptions of the film subjects, of the ethical stance of the original maker toward those subjects, and of the ethical stance of the maker who has appropriated this recorded material, editing and reframing its images and/ or sounds to a new end. It is the relation between these three perceptions that will determine whether we read the reuse as ethical. This constitutes the structure that I call the “multilayered gaze.” Moreover, I argue that it is the particular filmmaking strategies deployed in a given film that constitute – at least in part – our experience of this gaze. In Jane Gillooly’s *Suitcase of Love and Shame*, by anonymizing her subjects and occluding their visual representation, our sense of ethical trespass may be mitigated by the fact that although we can hear, we cannot see. Meanwhile, in Matthew Bate’s *Shut Up Little Man: An Audio Misadventure*, it is the act of uniting voice with previously unseen image that may constitute the ethical gesture of the film.

Jaimie Baron is an Assistant Professor of Film Studies at the University of Alberta. Her work on documentary, experimental film and video, audiovisual appropriation, and digital media has been published in *The Velvet Light Trap*, *Discourse*, *Spectator*, *Eludamos*, *Maska*, *FRAMES*, *Framework*, *Projections*, and several anthologies including *Global Visual Cultures*, *Sampling Media*, and *Contemporary Documentary*. Her first book, *The Archive Effect: Found Footage and the Audiovisual Experience of History*, was published by Routledge Press in 2014. She is the founder, director, and cocurator of the Festival of (In)appropriation, a yearly international festival of short experimental found footage films. She is also a Co-Chair of the SCMS Documentary Scholarly Interest Group and co-founder of Docalogue, an online space for scholars and filmmakers to engage in conversations about contemporary documentary.

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