

# From Body Narratives to Cultural Identity: A Study of Ritualised Representations in Modern Sound Media

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## Abstract

For modern people who have been under the hegemony of visual picture for a long time, the sensory balance in the Internet era is the key to releasing body appeals and getting rid of individual heterogeneity. The unique sense of imagination, immersion and companionship created by modern sound media to the audience can directly arouse emotional resonance, so as to achieve the group identity of sound field culture. Based on the perspective of ritual view of media, this paper analyzes the ritualized representation mode of modern sound media from two dimensions: the morphological evolution of body narrative of sound media and the deep aggregation of auditory culture, and thus corresponds to the dual aspects of ritualized representation: the embodied presentation and landscape modeling of sound media. By clarifying the subject's holistic and differentiated identity cognitive thinking in media practice and the social auditory cultural aggregation phenomenon, the ritualized signs of modern sound media are deeply investigated in order to provide a theoretical perspective for the cultural research of modern sound media.

**Keywords:** modern sound media, ritualised research, body narratives, auditory culture, group identity

## 1. Introduction

Sound, as a communication medium, shapes the auditory space around life from the first cry of human beings, and by causing a series of auditory experiences in the subject of perception, it builds up his auditory behaviours, and ultimately makes the evolution of the human state of being integrated into the structure of the complex and diversified acoustic field. Yang Baojun once proposed that the essence of the complete media form is composed of both present and hidden elements, rather than simply referring to the combination of the media ontology and a certain symbolic system that the public can see with the naked eye or intuitively perceive.<sup>1</sup> This kind of “hidden” media state in fact is specifically manifested in the maintenance of the media form of technology, symbols, medium of the three non-directional matching relationship, and therefore the structure of this relationship mode directly affects the internal state of the media field composition and its tendency to change. The modern sound media discussed in this paper focuses on this “hidden media state” from the perspective of the ritual view of communication, and analyses how the media ontology constructs meaningful values in the sound field constructed by the sound media so as to achieve the mode of ritualized representation. It also examines the body narrative structure of modern sound media and the anthropological phenomenon of modern auditory cultural aggregation correspondingly through the dual orientations of media ritualisation — media embodiment and landscape representational patterns, respectively. As a study of cultural significance in communication, “Analysis of Ritualisation Processes in the Media” is a good dissection of the behavioural characteristics in the current context of social relations, which makes the study of media communication shift from “effect research” oriented towards the theory of results to the “interpretation of meaning” hidden in the act of communication. Thus, in the modern era of the return of auditory culture, anthropological analyses based on the structure of the sound field can better supplement and enlighten the construction and practice of sound

anthropology in terms of perspective and methodology.

## 2. Ritualised Research: A Communication Paradigm as an Interpretation of Cultural Meaning

All along, the top priority of communication science has been to pay attention to the issue of media “information transmission”, which focuses on the communication process itself, and carries out research on the five major dimensions of subject, object, content, communication medium, and communication effectiveness in the whole process of information transmission. When human history entered the modern era, the industrialisation of capital continued to squeeze the space for culture to flourish, causing human society to face the crisis of alienation of traditional culture and beliefs. At this time, the academic study of the communication process ontology was obviously not adapted to the changes in human society, and to a certain extent exacerbated the decline of media culture. It was not until the 1970s that the rise of the Internet compensated for the lack of people’s identity in terms of culture and self-existence value, and the popularity of the new mass media made network applications gradually change people’s lifestyles, and the new humanistic ideals and social ideologies presented the characteristics of consumerism and analogy under the evolution of the human survival mode, and the field of communication research was thus shifted to the communication paradigm as a cultural research. The vision of communication research has thus shifted to the paradigm of communication as cultural research.

In 1975, James W. Carey first introduced the concept of “rituals of communication” in his book *Communication as Culture*, suggesting that “rituals of communication refer not to the diffusion of information through the air, but to the maintenance of a society through time; not to the act of conveying information, but to the representation of shared beliefs”.<sup>2</sup> It refers not to the act of conveying a message, but to the representation of shared beliefs. On the one hand, James pointed out that the focus of communication research should be shifted from the transmission and control of information to the hidden cultural drive and beliefs behind the communication behaviour, and then focus on the complex social relations reflected in the behaviour, which, to a certain extent, attacked the long-standing empiricism-dominated paradigm of communication and advocated a communication research paradigm as a means of interpreting the meaning of culture. On the other hand, James clearly classifies the definition of communication as “transmission view” and “ritual view of communication”. The former focuses on the process of information transmission itself, i.e., the empiricist school mentioned above, while the latter integrates the study of the cultural significance of communication behaviours as an entry point to the analysis of the representation of “shared beliefs” to the nature of human beings and the experience of daily existence. At the same time, since Carey identifies communication as a cultural activity, and the basic constituent element of culture is social reality made up of symbolic systems, based on such a context, the ritual view of communication focuses on the generation, processing and interaction of human cultural symbols. This point coincides with the theory of “ritual communication” put forward by Rosenberg, and both advocate replacing “facts” with “symbols” as the basic unit of knowledge and discipline.<sup>3</sup>

However, it should be made clear that the distinction between “ritualisation of communication” and “ritualised communication” is not very precise in the academic world. First of all, they do not share the same object of study or the same research perspective. Rosenbauer, in the beginning of his book *Ritual communication*, compares “ritual as a communication phenomenon” and “communication as a ritual phenomenon”, which corresponds to the currently used “ritual view of communication” and “ritual view of communication”. The former is a study of “ritual behaviour”, which includes not only formal activities such as religion and witchcraft, but also other informal activities with a ritual meaning, and when we use the methodology of communication to interpret them empirically, it is ultimately a quantitative study of behavioural effects. The latter, the object of study is “communication behaviour”, which includes a series of communication activities in social behaviours that can reach the interaction of social subjects and constitute ritualized symbols, and which, when interpreted from the perspective of cultural anthropology, belongs to the realm of critical cultural studies. Therefore, the scope of research objects of “communication rituals” is theoretically limited to the ritualised anthropological interpretation of social communication activities, while the study of ritual acts can be expanded to include personal and secular samples. In this paper, we choose modern sound media as a research sample, and make a specific analysis of the generation of ritual structure in its development, and ultimately focus on cultural anthropology, looking at the interpretation of cultural meaning behind the formation of sound media through its socialisation.

Benjamin, in his 1936 *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*, presciently pointed out that homogeneity had replaced uniqueness in modern art, and that the disappearance of artistic aura was accompanied by the increasing rise of mass culture.<sup>4</sup> Similarly, Adorno’s book *The Dialectic of Enlightenment*, published in the 1970s, suggests that the culture industry is hoodwinking the masses, and that human beings in the age of the culture industry are gradually losing their autonomy and are gradually being manipulated by consumerism.<sup>5</sup> With the advent of the Internet, modern media are encroaching on human daily life and even reshaping social ideology at an unforeseeable speed, and mass culture tends to be commonplace and programmed, while at the

same time eroding the so-called “human nature” of the true nature of culture. Therefore, in the modern society where the culture industry is in the ascendant, we need to return to cultural critique from the entertainment generation and commodity circulation of culture. While the study of the effectiveness of modern media communication is important and must be based on the interaction of information in the process of communication, the hidden cultural essence behind the phenomenon of communication also needs our attention. As a kind of collective behaviour with ritualized symbols, media communication emphasizes the sharing of spirit and value in terms of content, and reaches the generation of meaning and cultural identity in terms of goal, so if we can grasp the study of the ritualization of modern communication behaviour, we may be able to better interpret the social relations and cultural connections of modern human beings. From the Chicago School of Constructivism to the “interpretive anthropology” represented by Gertz’s “deep description”, to the communication theory of Raymond Williams, Carey tries to seek a cultural science of interpretation in communication research. As he himself puts it: the origin and culmination of communication does not refer to the transmission of intellectual information, but rather to the construction and maintenance of a meaningful and orderly cultural world that can be used to dominate and accommodate specific human behaviours.<sup>6</sup> The study of ritualisation, as a communication paradigm for the interpretation of cultural meaning, may be able to convey a deeper concern for individual human beings to the social collective, and open up an anthropological observation context with a humanistic spirit within the empiricist-dominated communication discipline.

### 3. Modern Sound Media: Ritualised Representation of the Sound Field

#### 3.1 Soundscape: A Medium for Sharing Cultural Values

The sound medium, i.e., the medium that loads and transmits sound, enables the listener (the recipient) to receive sound symbols and decode the medium’s message based on an auditory experience through the construction of a sound scene/soundscape. Compared to the intuition and orientation of vision, hearing is more inclusive, as sound emanates from the source in a radioactive three-dimensional form, so the lack of directionality of sound requires that our understanding of the sound medium can be based on analysing the structure of the overall soundscape in which the sound exists. The “acoustic space” proposed by McLuhan emphasises the fact that sound is always in a state of flow, and that the unique immersive characteristics of time point directly to the space in which people’s auditory action occurs. Compared with the transient sound in the oral transmission era, people’s auditory perception of sound in the electronic era has eliminated the absolute time, and the flow state of sound integrates time into a specific spatial structure, transforming the static space-time opposition mode into a dynamic space-time conversion mode.<sup>7</sup> Wang Jing has also advocated looking at sound as a medium from the perspective of “field”, as sound is closer to odour and temperature, more immersive, and more related to the field.<sup>8</sup> Studying modern sound media with the concept of field can more logically grasp the three dimensions of sound media form — the material state of sound, the way of constructing sound media, and the relationship between sound media and human beings. Among them, the relationship between sound media and human beings is based on the former two, sound media as a product of socialisation, its form and function reflects the evolution of the relationship between human beings and the media, and the construction of the sound field is directly oriented to the generation of the corresponding cultural significance, which in this paper is referred to as the ontology of the media grasped from the overall “sound field”.

Zhang Taofu has shown in his treatise that “Reform and opening up in its just-past 40 years has given the people of contemporary China a natural and cultural landscape rich in sound.”<sup>9</sup> The mobile internet technology of the digital age has enabled modern society to move into a new media scene, where the long-term dominance of the visual medium has prompted modern people to reflect on and retrieve the imbalanced sensory experience. Compared to the naturalistic tendency of traditional sound media, modern sound media has reached a technocratic artistic presentation. On the one hand, sound media can be widely used in virtual spaces and mobilise all senses with the aesthetic optimisation of the sound field and cross-media interaction; on the other hand, sound media integrate human experience to achieve intelligent effects, presenting a humanistic and aesthetic social landscape. According to Carey’s argument, the formation of sound media involves the sharing of multiple social concepts, which ultimately results in a culturally shared ritual, and as Thompson also points out, “the soundscape should be both a physical environment, and at the same time, a way of perceiving the environment and the cultural constructs it presents”<sup>10</sup>. It could be argued that the technological qualities of the media of modernity are the very representational embodiment of ritualised human behaviour.

#### 3.2 The Dual Orientation of the Ritualised Construction of Modern Sound Media: Embodiment, Landscape

James Lastra has asserted that “the experience we describe as ‘modernity’ is one of profound temporal and spatial displacement, often an accelerated and diverse onslaught of new social and experiential patterns.”<sup>11</sup> The use of media in the process of modernisation is like a ritualised celebration; it is about culture, about the shaping of new values, and is itself iterative. Combined with Paul Levinson’s theory of “media compensatory”, any succeeding medium is a kind of compensation for the inherent insufficiency of a certain medium in the past.<sup>12</sup>

Therefore, the ritualised presentation of people's media behaviour is also an aspect of human evolution at the social level, which makes the modern sound media itself increasingly show a trend of "humanisation". Traditional sound media often appear in the form of public and open soundscapes. Compared to the visual field where people can choose to "turn a blind eye", once the subject enters the soundscape, it is impossible for them to "turn a deaf ear", no matter whether they consciously identify the source of the sound or not, they will be directly wrapped up in the sound and be at the centre of the sound field. The emergence of modern sound media makes the subject's choice possible, and the control of the external environment is an important basis for the body's intervention in the media, and the interaction between the body and the sound field can be constructed by using the media's bodily narrative as a structural sample to achieve the communication effect of embodiment.

At the same time, the subject's auditory perception enjoys a common communication field with the media body, and directly participates in the generation and feedback of cultural meaning in the process of media physical narrative. The community of listeners connected by modern sound media, in turn, aggregates the auditory culture established in the process of media information transmission, and finally forms a modern media ritual landscape. Even John Dewey, a representative of the empirical Chicago School, recognised the congruence between "communication" and "shared values". In his own words, "There is a more than literal connection between the words common, community, and diffusion: people live in the same community because they have things in common; diffusion is the means by which they have things in common."<sup>13</sup> If we look at it from an anthropological point of view, all human behaviour is ritualised to a certain extent<sup>14</sup>, then the modern algorithm-based soundscape maintains the weak ties of modern humans, and the cultural space it creates is inevitably a field for the ritualised representation of individual and collective values, and the social ties linked by the act of mediated communication contribute to the shaping of a certain kind of shared cultural landscape. As Carey argues, mediated communication involving symbolic interactions allows for the description and reinforcement of particular worldviews, and for social validation through the transmission of rituals.<sup>15</sup>

Therefore, analysing the process of communication ritualisation from the perspective of social integration is an effective way of interpreting cultural values and meaning, where the analysis of the construction of media ritualisation focuses on the integration of the media into society, and on the original purpose of media communication ritualisation as a social bond. Starting from the individual and collective perspectives of society, we will later focus on the dual orientation of the construction of modern sound media ritualisation: the embodied embodiment of the media and the formation of the landscape. This dual orientation also explains two questions: how do individual human beings carry out bodily narratives through the medium? How do collective values and identities get moulded into an aural cultural landscape through the medium?

#### **4. The Embodied Presentation of Sound Media: The Morphological Flux of Body Narratives**

##### *4.1 Subject Identity Cognition: Body Narrative in Sound Media*

By explicating the body as the subject of perceptual experience, the phenomenologist Maurice Merleau-Ponty, in his book *The Eye and the Mind*, intends to interpret the painter's process of painting as an act based on the body's stance, rather than as a purely conscious or mental activity, and it is through lending the body to the world that the painter is able to turn the world into a painting.<sup>16</sup> This concept of "body-subject" perceptual experience proposed by Merleau-Ponty is in fact different from the dualistic relativity of "mind-body" recognised by traditional philosophy, in that the existence of the body is not stereotypically a pure substance of the objective world, but rather acquires a twofold nature: the body is both part of the objective material world and, as a subject of perception, has the capacity to see and touch the world.<sup>17</sup> Borrowing May's study of the problem of painting to analyse the modern sound medium, it is possible to conclude that there is a process of two-way degree of action between the body and the objective world, and that the body becomes an important consideration in the evolution of the medium. The process of transmitting information through sound media is the process of the media's body narrative, which means that on the one hand, the body is the implementer and bearer of the content of the media, and on the other hand, the body acts as the content of the media itself, and in view of this, the body acquires the dual identity of subject and object. In order to discuss more intuitively the characteristics of body narratives in sound media, the author will first briefly review the evolution of the form and function of mainstream sound media, so as to examine the overall ritualisation process of sound media in terms of the degree of body narratives in the media (as shown in Table 1 below).

Table 1. Morphological Flux in Modern Sound-Mediated Body Narratives

| Time Period | Dominant form of sound media | Sound-Mediated Approaches to Physical Narrative | Added functionality for sound media |
|-------------|------------------------------|---|-------------------------------------|
|-------------|------------------------------|---|-------------------------------------|

|                         |   |  |  |
|-------------------------|---|--|--|
| Late 19th Century       | Telephone, gramophone, etc.   | Communication and recording functions through the conversion of acoustic energy and wired/wireless energy.   | storability                                |
| 20th Century            | Broadcasts, radios, records, minidisks, Walkmans, CDs, etc.               | Communication and recording functions through the conversion of acoustic energy and wired/wireless energy.   | concomitant                                |
| 21st Century to Present | Computers, mobile smartphones, tablets, car audio, wearable devices, etc. | Through the mobile Internet of Things, big data algorithms, spatial audio, AI and other technologies to support users to record, upload, share, download multiple types of audio online at any time and any place and be able to achieve human-computer interaction, virtual experience. | Integration, Interactivity, Virtualisation |

The development of modern sound media began in the late 19th century with the invention of the telephone by Bell, the “father of modern communication”, and then with the acceleration of industrialisation, the phonograph was introduced, so that sound could be recorded and preserved. At the beginning of the 20th century, broadcasting, which is a mass media of sound as a language, began to be widely used in people’s daily lives, and people listened to a limited number of channels through radio and other terminal equipment receiving radio signals. In the 1930s, people entered a period of rapid development of recording technology, and the development of the music industry represented by the record industry entered a golden period, in which people could not only obtain complete sound content that could be played over and over again, but also immersively experience high quality sound with the support of the “surround sound” technology. People not only have access to complete sound content that can be played over and over again through records, but also have the ability to experience high-fidelity sound quality in an immersive way with “surround sound” technology. With the increasing sophistication of sound transcription technology, the birth of the Internet directly spawned a number of new sound media, including online audio playback software and supporting headset equipment became the mainstream standard in the Internet screen-reading era, and at the end of the twentieth century, the introduction of smartphones, mobile online audio software and Bluetooth headphones were introduced, and the liberation of the wires gave people more freedom of space to use the media. Special emphasis should be placed on the Walkman (Walkman portable tape player) developed by Sony in 1979, the digital audio carrier CD in 1980, and the MD mini disc in 1992 developed from the cassette tape as a music storage medium, using the audio compression technology of ATRAC as well as specific storage formats, which have a higher rate of music transfer, durability, and resource optionality. They have a high guarantee for music transfer rate, durability, and resource optionality, and both of them have become the predecessors of contemporary intelligent portable speakers. In today’s intelligent voice interaction technology and the Internet of Things algorithm support, human-computer interaction has become a reality, whether it is a smart phone or a smart speaker can easily realise the user’s instructions and make humane feedback. Looking at the overall shape of the sound medium, technology is the foundation, efficiency is the key, the sense of use is the purpose, and the presence of the subject is the final destination. If people want to be connected to the world, it is always through the connection of the body, and the alienation of human beings in the process of modernity needs to confirm the existence and value of the self through the presence of the body at all times.

Althusser refers to the notion of ideological enquiry in *Ideology and the Ideological State Apparatus*, where he emphasises that while the coercive state apparatus (army, courts, prisons) works through violence, the non-coercive state apparatus works on the subject through ‘ideology’ and that the subject will be summoned by the medium into a certain mediated ritual.<sup>18</sup> The sound medium as a non-coercive state apparatus in the process of information dissemination has apparently established a special relationship of identification between the audience and the medium, and the subject is smoothly transformed from the role of the summoned to the centre of the medium’s rituals when participating in the medium’s practices, thus establishing subjectivity. For the developing sound medium, the degree and status of the subject’s participation is directly reflected in its technological derivation, where the body is the mediator and the symbolic system of the medium is the body narrative.

#### 4.2 Wholeness and Differentiation: Two Dimensions of Identity Perception

In the media field centred on auditory experience, it is easier to mobilise one’s own perceptual thinking and embodied experience, and the subject’s identity cognition established by the media body narrative can be divided into holistic thinking and differentiated thinking.

Holistic thinking is first reflected in the social level, online audio software allows modern people to enter

different sound scenes without leaving home, surround sound, high fidelity AI noise reduction, BBE and other sound processing technologies create a more realistic and clear sound environment for the subject, even in the meta-universe world, echo cancellation, audio gain, and other 3A technologies, together with audio dual-channel, reverberation and other higher-order processing components will put users in the integrity created from the media field. The sense of interaction, immersion, and immersiveness created by the upgraded experience shortens the boundaries between the individual and society, and the user is more willing to empathise with the information scenarios portrayed in the medium, which leads to a constant reinforcement and identification with the mimetic reality.<sup>19</sup> Mobile terminals enable individuals to access the Internet, connecting social relationships that are limited by geography, and under the wrapping of the modern media soundstage, people's holistic knowledge of and participation in society will become more profound and comprehensive. Liao Xiangzhong, once proposed that based on McLuhan's vision of "media as message", we can foresee the future development trend of "media as air", and that the media is the real environment on which human beings rely on for their survival, rather than the virtual environment.<sup>20</sup> The widespread use of sound media then precisely takes advantage of the emotional attributes of sound, such as immersion and imagination, to create a media environment for auditory users that is both connected to reality and utopian in colour. Secondly, holistic thinking is reflected in the physiological level. In the process of using sound media, the sensual listening experience can awaken the empathetic resonance of other senses. The "sensory listening" proposed by Jing Wang in her monograph focuses on the context of sound listening, in which the subject relaxes the body to different degrees in order to avoid "setting up a frame", and the process of experiencing the sound environment is also a process of transformation of all the senses of the body, the ear is no longer a single cognitive organ, the body is no longer fixed, and the wholeness of the human body's faculties has reached an unprecedented fusion.<sup>21</sup> The rise of "music therapy" in modern society is a very important medical method of mobilising the human body's sense of communication through the medium of sound. In the process of being healed, the patient forms a whole with the therapist, the music, and the current sound environment, and the patient feels himself, others, and the context in the special listening experience, which ultimately reduces the psychological pressure and eliminates the psychological barriers. The modern sound media emphasises the sense of participation and experience, and holistic thinking is an important dimension of the subject's identity perception in media practice, and it is also the origin and destination of the body being included in the media narrative.

What modern people are trying to achieve is a concept of social interaction that is not detached from society but also keeps a distance from society. From the perspective of the market development of sound media, mobile audio has gone through three stages of UGC-PGC-PUGC-AIGC, and the personalised development of the subject is still the focus of the market for the development of modern media. This coincides with the concept of "mobile space" put forward by Manuel Castor, the essence of the information society is mobile, and the spatial form is no longer restricted by the geographical limitations but exists in a state of mobility.<sup>22</sup> Obviously, this space has changed with people's migratory state of existence, and the so-called "mobility" is precisely the privatisation, mobility, and even virtualisation of the auditory space. Compared with the public and holistic nature of the traditional auditory space, the modern sound medium provides people with a differentiated space of existence, and the boundaries between the imagination and the reality are no longer solidified, and the body can be withdrawn from or entered into at any time, so that people can acquire media information in a fragmented manner. Peter Handke has coined the term "fragmentation burnout", which refers to a kind of mental violence capable of destroying all community and intimacy, and even language itself.<sup>23</sup> This refers to a kind of avoidance mentality that people breed under the pressure of modern society, where people take off their social masks while urgently needing to obtain calm and non-social personal relaxation in the use of media. The ubiquitous "headphone people" are the best example of this, as the immersive soundscape is the most efficient way to distance individuals from society, allowing them to enter the media space where they can choose on their own. This kind of acoustic space split from the collective social discipline can better allow the subject to feel the vitality and variability, and it is only through the individual's moment that the body can truly stretch. The modern sound medium provides a place of refuge for the extension of people's split cognitive thinking, and better satisfying and listening to oneself is the first step in preventing homogenisation of self-cognition.

## **5. Landscaped Shaping of Sound Media: A Deep Convergence of Auditory Cultures**

### *5.1 Shared Voices: The Cultural Construction of Mediated Landscapes*

Under the threshold of the media's ritual view, communication emphasises participation and sharing, with the aim of "sharing beliefs and maintaining society".<sup>24</sup> Once people enter the media field, they will always interact with different degrees of cultural meaning through interpersonal or human-computer interactions. Collins refers to this complex social interaction as a "chain of interactional rituals", and believes that "physical presence", "common focus", and "shared affective states" are important factors constituting the ritual interaction chain.<sup>25</sup> Thus, when the subject intervenes in media activities, he is actually carrying out an ideological construction, which forms a unique media landscape — a landscape of cultural identity and cultural convergence.

Douglas Kellner, in his book *Media Spectacle*, extended the term “landscape” proposed by Debord, who narrowed the scope of landscape from alienated social reality to refer to a form of domination, a form of perceptual paralysis that capitalist societies use as a media spectacle for their audiences.<sup>26</sup> It has to be admitted that the landscaped shaping of media has the ability to sway or even dominate the ideology of the audience, but it is also such landscaped media that provides people with an opportunity for cultural aggregation, where the subject acquires a sense of belonging and a sense of ritual from the consumption of the media landscape. From the perspective of holistic thinking of identity cognition, on the surface, the sound medium provides the public with a private moment of immersive resonance, but the subject also enters a moment of cultural resource sharing. Audio sharing platforms represented by Himalaya achieve effective dissemination of sound culture by occupying the public’s fragmented time, and users are able to enter the corresponding sound culture community according to their personal preferences, use online information interaction to engage in social interactions and obtain social identity, and at the same time, with the help of the auditory senses, sound messages can be accepted by the subject in an extremely natural way, so as to expand people’s cognitive surplus. When talking about the construction of auditory culture, Wang Dun mentioned that human hearing is not objectively perceiving sound phenomena, but is driven by socio-cultural “software”,<sup>27</sup> which refers to the cultural aggregation brought about by sound media. If society and history are set aside to talk about sound, we may fall into a kind of absolute sound materialism, just as contemporary academics have criticised Schaeffer’s soundscape research: the dichotomy of nature and technology closes off the path that auditory culture research should take, and the so-called noise actually has its own cultural roots and developmental value of existence and development.

### 5.2 *Imagined Communities: Group Identity in Auditory Culture*

The modern sound medium often establishes an auditory community with labelling, and the emotional faculties mobilised by the auditory senses are always directed to the connotation of the cultural imagery associated with them under the non-visual subjective psychology, and the auditory practical experience actively sought by the subject with the help of the sound medium forms the unique cultural symbiosis phenomenon, which eventually coalesces into the community of the auditory cultural imagination. In *Imagined Communities*, Anderson focuses his attention on the formation of nationalist concepts, emphasising the importance of the medium of language, and the importance of people reconceptualising their own cultural identities through joint participation in media rituals, and arguing that it is easier for subjects engaging in the same media practices to develop an emotional tendency to be ‘one’s own’, and that this ultimately leads to the construction of a virtual imagined national intention.<sup>28</sup> What the modern sound medium creates for the masses is precisely a space for the staging of cultural community, an aural cultural field as opposed to a purely rational visual trial.

In his critique of art’s turn to the modern age, Benjamin pointed out that the “spiritual rhythm” had disappeared, leaving the viewer with a squeezed space for free exploration; the rise of mass culture had removed the original secrecy of the object itself, and modern photography had exposed the object to the space without any doubt, so that the imagination had become an extravagance.<sup>29</sup> Such also constitutes the regulated, trained body in Foucault’s writing. When the rational spirit of visualisation is about to take over the standard of human aesthetic judgement, the awakening of the ear may be able to become an important means of breaking the imbalance of the senses, and the concern and demand for auditory culture is precisely the call of the human instinct in the age of map-reading. Hearing is non-linear, it does not carry logical integration claims, in the auditory field created by the sound medium, people can feel the existence of sensibility that has not yet been erased, which is also the real embodiment of the spirit of the wine god in Nietzsche’s eyes. The ear’s perception of the outside world is extremely sharp, and the ear is at the centre of the practice of sound media, while vision retains a considerable distance from the presentation of reality. It can be said that the rise of auditory culture is a revolt of human beings against the heterogeneity and marginalisation of the ontology of existence. The modern practice of auditory culture is also a decentred cultural construction, which is an important cornerstone for the formation of the auditory cultural community. In the media field of the Internet era, modern listeners are able to independently choose one-way reception or two-way communication of information, and the professional mainstream mass media no longer dominate the direction of the public opinion field, while the general media field composed of media users is able to synergize with it and communicate and dialogue on an equal footing. In the modern era of the return of individuality, society has orderly entered the “re-tribalised” society predicted by McLuhan, and the vision of a global village is expected to become a reality under the process of sensory balance.

Looking back at the ecological development of modern sound media, the subject’s desire for auditory sensory experience is projected in the media, and the media’s bodily narrative creates conditions for people to deeply integrate with the media. Digital technology provides the feasibility of reproducing, producing, transmitting, and downloading sound, and the subject’s embodied knowledge of the medium is more often expressed as a sense of identity and cultural confidence in auditory culture. In the same ear context, the individual audience expands into a collective, the power of identity is strengthened, and the cultural carrying capacity of the media is also reinforced. As John Fiske puts it, rituals are “organised symbolic activities that define and express the

socio-cultural implications of particular moments, events or changes”.<sup>30</sup> The auditory culture that is constructed in imagination and resonance is the media landscape, and moreover, it is the group identity that is intentionally referred to, and the listeners who use modern sound media have already constituted the ritual itself in the generation of group consciousness and the degree of deep aggregation, in other words, the culture that circulates in the media field reveals precisely the collective discipline and cultural identity behind the media’s ritualised representations.

## 6. Conclusion

Malinowski states, “Culture is fundamentally a ‘means-end reality’ that exists to satisfy human needs in a way that is far superior to all direct adaptation to the environment.”<sup>31</sup> It is the deep integration of media and human beings that creates the development of social and cultural modernity. Along this path of research on the ritual view of media opened up by James Carey, it is possible to examine the generation of cultural meaning of media by cutting through the social relationship between media and people. In the era of “re-tribalisation” of the Internet, when auditory culture is increasingly returning to the mainstream vision, the wide application of modern sound media is an important carrier of group identity ritualization, and the dual aspects of ritualized representation range from the evolution process of the subject’s body perception experience projected on the media ontology to the construction of group culture in the landscape of sound media, the centre of sound media always revolves around “human” itself, which includes human existence, human social relations and human emotional tendencies. Finally, there are two points that need to be emphasised in the study of ritualised representations of sound media. On the one hand, there are still limitations in the research horizon of this paper, as the relationship between the media and the body is related to the complexity of social discipline and identity cognition behind the relationship of mutual reconciliation, and the dimension of self-identity cognition proposed in this paper is just one of the sides of it, which is based on the subject’s own perspective, and thus there is still an alternative perspective of the subject’s attributes waiting to be explored; on the other hand, this paper does not intend to stand in the way of the other side. On the other hand, this paper does not intend to stand on the wave of aural culture and promote the absolute use of modern sound media, which can indeed create a sense of resonance and a sense of belonging to a certain sensory culture, but can also create a sense of exclusion and isolation, and the use of the media not only enhances the sense of “I”, but also enhances the sense of “we”. The use of media should not only enhance the sense of “I”, but also the sense of “we”. As a part of the modern social network, we still need to continue to strengthen our sense of social responsibility.

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