



City of Noise: Sound and Nineteenth-Century Paris (Studies in Sensory History)

Aimee Boutin

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Beloved as the city of light, Paris in the nineteenth century sparked the acclaim of poets and the odium of the bourgeois with its distinctive sounds. Street vendors bellowed songs known as the Cris de Paris that had been associated with their trades since the Middle Ages; musicians itinerant and otherwise played for change; and flâneurs-writers, fascinated with the city's underside, listened and recorded much about what they heard.

Aimée Boutin tours the sonic space that orchestrated the different, often conflicting sound cultures that defined the street ambience of Paris. Mining accounts that range from guidebooks to verse, Boutin braids literary, cultural, and social history to reconstruct a lost auditory environment. Throughout, impressions of street noise shape writers' sense of place and perception of modern social relations. As Boutin shows, the din of the Cris contrasted economic abundance with the disparities of the capital, old and new traditions, and the vibrancy of street commerce with an increasing bourgeois demand for quiet. In time, peddlers who provided the soundtrack for Paris's narrow streets yielded to modernity, with its taciturn shopkeepers and wide-open boulevards, and the fading songs of the Cris became a dirge for the passing of old ways.

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