The Sound of Nostos: On The Calculation of Volume Vol. III

I love these books because they make time and temporality feel alive, turning philosophy, ethics, and ecology into a living mythology, where presence, relation, and care resonate across human and more-than-human worlds. As soon as I read that the third volume was available I called PerfectBooks to reserve a copy, picked it up and devoured it in an evening. To read my thoughts on the first two volumes, click here.

In the third volume of *On the Calculation of Volume*, measurement becomes an irreducibly social practice. Where earlier volumes traced abundance and then the density of the present, here measurement is less a technical operation than a mode of ethical and ontological attunement. Volume is no longer simply a quantity or the thickened texture of time; it is the relational space in which multiple consciousnesses resonate with one another, structuring the conditions under which shared existence emerges, persists, and becomes perceptible.

This transformation is registered most subtly in the protagonist's listening. Tara does not dominate the loop through vision or analysis; she listens. Sound becomes the primary index of co-presence between her and her husband, the most immediate evidence that the world exceeds her own repetition. In a day that returns upon itself, the visual risks hardening into sameness; the auditory remains evental. A distant crash, the hum of infrastructure, the cadence of footsteps; loose floorboards, each sound marks variation within recurrence. Listening functions as a negative measurement; it does not divide or impose form, but receives. It inhabits volume rather than segmenting it. Through listening, she calibrates the relational density of her world, the world, sensing disturbances before they become visible, registering the existence of others before she fully encounters them. The social volume is first heard.

The appearance of her fellow traveller Henry D and his desire to travel to Ithaca New York extends this acoustic and relational logic into mythic form. Ithaca, also the destination of Odysseus, no longer signifies resolution but orientation. It becomes a vector of longing within suspended temporality, a coordinate that cannot be reached yet continues to organise desire. Henry's wish to see his son and ex wife does

not culminate in arrival; it is transposed into ethical practice. Longing becomes calibration for Henry; care becomes the measure. The impossibility of return does not nullify obligation; it intensifies it. Ithaca persists as an orienting principle, not a conclusion.

As others in the same time as Tara and Henry accumulate and coalesce into a discernible alignment, the logic of listening extends beyond individual perception into an architecture of collective attunement. Each consciousness carries a fragment of the temporal field; together, these fragments constitute a provisional aggregation, a social volume that is simultaneously bounded and permeable. The earlier reflections on the modius and Annona demonstrated that measurement is never neutral, that every quantification implicates governance, obligation, and ethical accountability. In the third volume, what is measured is no longer grain, nor even the density of the present, but the relational intensity of co-existence. The community resembles a foam of adjacent spheres; multiplicity without totalization, proximity without fusion. Listening functions as the operative medium of this foam, an attunement to the reverberations that circulate across shared time, registering both presence and absence, action and potential.

In this context, listening emerges as a mode of ethical measurement, one that does not reduce or assimilate but attunes to relational difference, much as one might enter a forest and allow its subtle currents, the rustle of leaves, the tremor of branches, the distant call of birds, to shape the rhythm of attention. Each sound becomes a vector of orientation, a metric of co-presence and interdependence, a delicate register of the living field in which consciousnesses move. Attunement entails a form of temporal governance that is non-coercive; it sustains the provisionality of the social volume while allowing individual fragments to retain their distinctiveness, as if each awareness were a tree within a shared grove, distinct in form yet inseparable from the ecology it inhabits.

Through listening, the boundaries of relational space are continuously negotiated. Echoes of action, intention, and perception circulate like currents in an undergrowth, generating feedback that is both formative and interpretive. The social volume is not fixed but a dynamic ecosystem of ethical and perceptual interrelations, expanding and contracting with the entry and withdrawal of participants, responsive to perturbations yet

structured by shared attentiveness. In this sense, listening becomes the principle through which the collective is measured, inhabited, and morally constituted, a practice that foregrounds relational responsibility over mastery, resonance over imposition, and shared temporality over isolated calculation. Just as immersion in a forest can transform perception and recalibrate the sense of self in relation to others, the attentive ear situates consciousness within a network of co-presence, rendering the social volume both perceptible and generative, contingent yet alive.

Responsibility arises less from mastery than from attunement. Each action alters the acoustic field in which they exist, reverberating through what others can hear, sense, and respond to. Ethical practice is measured in the capacity to remain present within this reverberation, to notice the subtle shifts that signal connection or tension. Ithaca remains unreachable, yet it functions as a point of orientation within an unresolvable temporal loop, a guide that shapes desire and care. Measurement, once the regulation of abundance and then the ordering of time, becomes here a practice of listening, a continual calibration of shared volume that holds the social and temporal field together.

The novel transforms calculation into attunement, showing that the excess of human temporality, like the overflow of grain or the saturation of the present, cannot be mastered. It can only be navigated through careful attention and shared presence, through the practice of inhabiting volume together. Ethical and temporal space emerge in this sustained listening, and the world takes shape not through arrival or conquest, but through the ongoing work of attending to one another. Ithaca is less a destination than a principle of resonance; it marks the measure of care, attention, and relation that shapes the delicate architecture of the common time they construct.

I just got back from PerfectBooks with Volume IV!!

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