

Book Review

Title: *Eavesdropping: A Memoir of Blindness and Listening*

Author: Stephen Kuusisto

Publisher: W. W. Norton, 2006

Cloth, ISBN: 0-393-05892-1, 244 pages

Cost: \$23.95 USD

Reviewer: Steven E. Brown

I have not yet read Kuusisto's earlier memoir, *Planet of the Blind*, so I picked up *Eavesdropping* only knowing that many of my colleagues have raved about the author's way with words. I agree. I found *Eavesdropping* delightful. Kuusisto writes prose like the poet he is. In two sections and twenty-nine essays he explains what it is like to spend moments and days in auditory "sight-seeing."

My self-perception is as a visual and tactile learner so I wondered how I would relate to a book called *Eavesdropping*? As it happens I read most of the book during a 2006 day Hawai'i experienced an earthquake and O'ahu lost all its electricity for many hours. At one point during that unusually quiet day I purposefully listened and realized I heard wind blowing through trees; pedestrians walking and talking; cars going by; neighbors' voices; and other sounds to which I generally do not attend. I also realized I did not hear the hum of a clock, refrigerator, TV, VCR, DVD player. I did not go on the computer all day, so I did not hear any of its sounds. We had no way to cook, so I missed all those sounds. But I did hear the following languages spoken: English, German, and Spanish. That is not unusual where I live. What is unusual is we all sat outside in the dimming light and conversed (including listening) for hours, while we awaited the return of electricity and our routine lives.

I found the descriptions of how Kuusisto listens to be fascinating. He describes his early delight, as a lonely boy, finding Caruso records in an attic. Caruso and his music continue to be a theme woven throughout the book. He also depicts what it is like to stand in a forest and listen to the sounds surround him. Kuusisto is adept at taking what many of us consider everyday sounds and exploring them in depth. The wind at a New York intersection is one such adventure. "I was working my way south on Fifth and eavesdropping as I walked... Then I was standing in the strange white noise of the west- going-to-east Hudson River wind" (p. 82). The narrative about this corner continues for the next two pages.

Much of *Eavesdropping* revolves around travel. Kuusisto describes travels as close by as the gift of a transistor radio and as faraway from his Ohio home as Iceland, among many other journeys. *Eavesdropping* is in many senses a travelogue—from learning as a young boy to travel outside of his apparently unhappy home; to physical travel as a blind man in venues as diverse as a concert hall in Reykjavik to a baseball game in Boston (and others in various cities); to a diner in Texas. Along the way, Kuusisto regales us with what he hears, imagines, and supposes.

Eavesdropping contains the kinds of stories that everyone wants to hear: informed, stylish, entertaining, and educational. The book belongs in libraries and at the very least in graduate programs about disability and literature.

Eavesdropping. A Memoir of Blindness and Listening. by Stephen Kuusisto. 0 Ratings. 0 Want to read. 0 Currently reading. 0 Have read. This edition published in 2020 by Norton & Company Limited, W. W. A Memoir of Blindness and Listening. This edition published in 2020 by Norton & Company Limited, W. W. Classifications. Library of Congress. ID Numbers. Open Library. OL29186862M. ISBN 13. 9780393349580. 3.2 Only Bread Only Light. 3.3 Eavesdropping: A Memoir of Blindness and Listening. 4 Essays and articles. 5 Kaleidoscope Connections. Planet of the Blind is the first of Kuusisto's two memoirs. It was published in 1998 by Dial Press and quickly became a New York Times "Notable Book of the Year". Planet of the Blind tracks Kuusisto's life from a fervent youth into his adulthood as a poet and writer. As a youth, Kussisto was willing to climb trees, ride a bike and submit himself to perils that tested his visual impairment. Kuusisto admits that his family was unprepared to deal with his disability. In Planet of the Blind he writes "There are no books about blind children or how to bring them up, no associations of par Eavesdropping: A Memoir of Blindness and Listening. ROBERT FRANK (B. 1924) , Paris, 1950. Paris, 1950. Dictionary of the Khazars (M). A national bestseller, Dictionary of the Khazars was cited by The New York Times Book Review as one of the best books of the year. Written in two versions, Robert Frank: the beauty and horror of 1950s America " in pictures. Eavesdropping book. Read 24 reviews from the world's largest community for readers. Blind people are not casual listeners. Blind since birth, Stephen Kuu... Goodreads helps you keep track of books you want to read. Start by marking "Eavesdropping: A Memoir of Blindness and Listening" as Want to Read: Want to Read saving | Want to Read.