The Recorded Voice and the Mediated Body in Contemporary Canadian Electroacoustic Music

by

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Abstract

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow once declared: “the human voice is the organ of the soul.” As a powerful signifier, with deep links to human presence, the voice can indicate psychological, emotional and physical states. In the works of contemporary Canadian electroacoustic composers Christian Calon, Robert Normandeau, Tanya Tagaq, Barry Truax, and Hildegard Westerkamp, the mutability of the recorded voice initiates an aesthetic process that constructs this human presence and expresses the composer’s own preoccupation with the body, namely the ageing, social, and erotic (homosexual and heterosexual) body. Through an application of research on electroacoustics, studio technology, gender, sexuality, linguistics, epistemology, and human physiology, I examine how specific works incorporate and modify the voice, and thus construct or conceal its physical origin (i.e., the body); I consider how composers variously highlight, re-construct, or even disentangle the expressive and communicative associations between the voice and the body.
Rather than summarize numerous electroacoustic works, this dissertation focuses on the aesthetic, technological, and expressive elements of a small number of contemporary Canadian electroacoustic works. I first examine Normandeau’s Onomatopoeias cycle as an artistic exploration of the ageing process that considers both emotional and physical aspects specific to certain developmental stages, including childhood, adolescence, and old age, all with a lens of ironic nostalgia. Next I explore social and sensuous relationships, the unseen interactions between bodies as heard through the recorded voices in Barry Truax’s homoerotic Song of Songs (1992) and Tanya Tagaq’s two studio albums, Sinaa (2005) and Auk/Blood (2008). Finally, I consider how the voice is employed as a vehicle for storytelling and constructing identity in Christian Calon’s Minuit (1989) and Hildegard Westerkamp’s Für Dich – For You (2005) and MotherVoiceTalk (2008). The works are varied, but from the young girl in Éclats de voix (the first work in Normandeau’s Onomatopoeias cycle [1991-2009]) to the grown child and her elderly mother in MotherVoiceTalk, they find a link in human experience.
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Chapter 1
Canadian Electroacoustic Music and the Voice: Musical, Theoretical, and Methodological Frameworks

1.0 Introduction

Our voice is our primary expressive instrument. We all recognize vocal sources and it is nearly impossible to disentangle vocal and human associations. The voice is an indicator of complex emotional states as well as a carrier for communication (Collins and d’Escriván 2007, 239).

Because of the voice’s role as “primary expressive instrument,” composers and performers alike have been drawn to an exploration of its expressive possibilities on multiple levels. Twentieth-century performers pushed the limits of the voice’s expressivity through varied and often astounding extended vocal techniques. Sound poets challenged the equivalency of language and semantic meaning by using phonemes as abstract sound.

Composers combined these elements (i.e., the expressive and the communicative) with the emerging electronic technology to further explore the limits to this potential of the voice. This realm of creativity encompasses varied aesthetics and technologies, such as the earliest experiments by Pierre Schaeffer and Pierre Henri in Paris (including their seminal work *Symphonie pour un homme seul* of 1950), the work of composers at the Westdeutscher Rundfunk (WDR) Studio in Cologne, Steve Reich’s deconstruction of syntactic convention by manipulation of tape technology in *It’s Gonna Rain* (1965) and *Come Out* (1966), and the experimental duo Matmos’s use of contact microphones to transduce whistles and kisses alongside sounds from the body (e.g., human hair). The voice, and its physical origin (i.e., the body), offers electroacoustic composers in particular, with the absence of visual cues, an
opportunity to explore, or “disentangle,” such associations between the voice and the expressive and communicative elements of its human source.

The voice is a marker of the body. It may reveal aspects of an individual, such as age, gender, and race. When the physical body is unseen, the voice may be the only marker to portray these aspects that are essential to one’s identity. Frith (1996) suggests that because “the voice is the sound of the body” (192), we often instinctively assign imagined bodies to recorded voices: “...we imagine their physical production. And this is not just a matter of sex and gender, but involves the other basic social attributes as well: age, race, ethnicity, class—everything that is necessary to put together a person to go with a voice” (196). Although I have frequently imagined what popular radio announcers look like (and have been often astonished at the disparity between my imagination and reality), I do not believe we always assign bodies to recorded voices. While the initial reaction to sound reproduction technology, especially for mass consumption (e.g., gramophone), may have been mystifying and at times unsettling, as some people struggled to reconcile a human sound (i.e., a voice) to its invisible source, by this second decade of the twenty-first century, Western culture has become entirely accustomed, and some might say, immune, to the recorded voice because of its ubiquitous presence in elevators, grocery and clothing stores, household radios and stereos, and restaurants (Kassabian 2002).

Jonathan Sterne (2003) rejects the assumption of a “sensory cohesion” between sight and sound as an ahistorical notion of the human body: “For instance, the claim that sound reproduction has ‘alienated’ the voice from the human body implies that the voice and the body existed in some prior holistic, unalienated, and self-present relation” (21). Many
scholars writing about electroacoustic music and the idea of recorded sound (e.g. Bossis, d’Escriván, Hewitt, Katz, M. Young) focus on “disembodiment” and claim that at the moment the sounds were captured onto the phonograph cylinder, or tape, or compact disc, they became disembodied, or cut off from their physical origin. Thus, the voice has been removed (violently?) from the body and captured. This “disembodied” voice is forever inferior to the “embodied” voice. Only the “embodied” voice is authentic because it comes from the live/concert exchange, the only authentic site of musical exchange, according to the intellectual and philosophical legacy left by Theodor Adorno and Walter Benjamin in their “debate” about music recordings (Hodgson 2006, 3). Philip Auslander insists that this opposition does not “[derive] from the intrinsic characteristics of live and mediatized forms but, rather, as determined by cultural and historical contingencies” (2008, 11). According to Hodgson, “both the ‘embodied’ voice and the ‘disembodied’ voice are constructs of Recording Practice. They are things made, not things made present or absent, by it” (41). They exist within a dialectical framework, in which one cannot exist without the other. Most commentators, however, “study ‘disembodiedness’ per se as though it were a fundamental constituent of Recording Practice” (41).

In my discussion of the voice’s expressive and communicative possibilities in Canadian electroacoustic music, certain connections between voice and body persist. In his discussion of the voice in popular music, Frith outlines four main facets: 1) voice as a musical instrument, 2) voice as a body, 3) voice as a person, and 4) voice as a character (1996, 187). While the works I discuss in the upcoming chapters use the recorded voice to varying degrees of abstraction, I stress that all of these voices originated in a particular body.
Each person’s voice contains a particular timbral, registral, and technical range (some of which is influenced by biological sex). The voice emerges from a physical body through the vocal apparatus (lungs, vocal chords, throat, and articulators). Just as technology limits the range of possibilities, voice physiology limits what sounds a person can make. The limiting factors of the human vocal apparatus (comprised of the lungs, the vocal folds, and the articulators) include age, gender, and health. For example, each work in Robert Normandeau’s *Onomatopoeias* cycle uses the voice of a different age group, beginning with childhood and ending with old age. I discuss the performance of certain culturally constructed biological realities about vocal physiology in my analysis of these works. For example, Western culture emphasizes that the sounds of the teenage boys’ voices in *Spleen* demonstrate changes from puberty, namely the enlarged thyroarytenoid muscle that results in a register change; also, during this period of growth spurts, adolescent boys have trouble controlling their vocal register.\(^1\) During the pubescent stage, the registral difference between male and female expands. During maturity and old age, though, the male register tends to rise, approaching the female range (Titze 1994). These changes in the vocal apparatus and its resulting sounds impact the works in the cycle.

Frith relates voice as person and character specifically to performers whose names are known and whose performances are observed in live concerts and videos (i.e., pop singers). The voices in electroacoustic works effectively forfeit their individual identities in the process of transduction, excepting identification in program notes. However, expressions of sincerity may be implicit in the declamation of the voice, or constructed by the composer in

\(^1\) Suzanne Cusick (1999) insists that “there is nothing in the physical chain of events that requires a young boy to abandon the register that he might share with young girls when he accepts his new access to the registers called Tenor and Bass that would perform his identity as a man” (32).
the studio; in addition, the composer creates his own characters out of the voices, fashioning lovers (discussed in Chapter 3), narrators (discussed in Chapter 4), and so on.

Thus, while I propose that the voice-body connection is not implicit in the recorded medium, composers can intentionally construct this connection, using elements that emerge from the voice and vocal performance themselves and studio techniques. In my research I emphasize that the presence of the body in the voice is a construction rather than reality per se. During the process of transduction, in which one kind of energy (in the case of music, acoustic energy) is converted into another kind of energy (analogue or digital, in the case of music), the transducer collects data (e.g., in the form of ridges for a phonograph, or numbers for a digital recording), not an actual voice. But “embodiment and “disembodiment” remain useful constructs in the analysis of the human voice. Performance, studio, and editing techniques can construct a sense of “embodiment” or “disembodiment” by limiting or drawing attention to the body.

In the following chapters, I address some of the expressive and communicative possibilities of the manipulated recorded human voice in works by two Vancouver soundscape composers (Barry Truax – *Song of Songs*; Hildegard Westerkamp – *Für Dich – For You* and *MotherVoiceTalk*), two Montreal acousmatic composers (Christian Calon – *Minuit*; Robert Normandeau – *Onomatopoeias* cycle), and one innovative Inuit throat singer (Tanya Tagaq – *Sinaa; Auk/Blood*). My analyses are situated within particular historical, theoretical, aesthetic, and methodological contexts, which I outline below.

I begin by defining two key terms that distinguish the chosen works from the broader repertoire: electroacoustic music and fixed medium work. Both terms imply certain aesthetic
and ideological perspectives that must be scrutinized and delimited before I can freely use them. I then place the discussion of contemporary Canadian electroacoustic music within the context of acousmatic music and soundscape composition, two approaches most widely associated with Canadian electroacoustics. After tracing this musical lineage, I summarize the scholarly lineage, focusing on four categories with increasing relevance to my research: general electroacoustic music research such as historical surveys; analysis of electroacoustic music; Canadian electroacoustic music; and voice and gender in electroacoustic music.

The analysis of electroacoustic music is “still in its adolescence” (Emmerson 2007, 81), and as I explain below, many of the models are composer-centric, focusing on technological details. In contrast, my analysis draws on several methodological approaches that facilitate a listener-centric perspective. I begin by outlining the legitimacy of the listener’s perspective and suggest several essential performance and production elements that can be heard in close listening. I then describe two analytical paradigms that articulate sounds and their internal and external motion: Denis Smalley’s spectromorphology and indicative fields, and Jay Hodgson’s mix compass. The former becomes particularly important in Chapter 2 as a model for analyzing abstract sound and connecting it to human agency. Using the latter, I articulate both the placement and movement of sound in Chapters 2, 3, and 4.

An analysis of expression and communication through the recorded voice engages several specific approaches to gender, language, and the construction of intimacy. I highlight the work of several scholars that models engagement with these issues. Finally, I discuss the complexity of incorporating the composers’ own (biased) thoughts into my research through
their writings and my interviews and other ethnographic work, which I conducted over the
course of several months. These ethnographies offer an alternative viewpoint to my largely
listener-centric discussions.

1.1 Conceptual Background

1.1.1 Electroacoustic Music

While electroacoustic music may broadly mean any music for which loudspeakers are
the principal mode of transmission (Emmerson and Smalley 2009), the music I discuss in this
dissertation intentionally uses the capabilities of electronic technology to mediate acoustic
sound sources and produce new sounds. Many authors have highlighted the ideological
implications of certain terminology (e.g., electronic music, computer music, tape music,
acousmatic music) within electroacoustic music (Cox and Warner 2004; Emmerson and
Smalley 2009; Landy 2007). Emmerson and Smalley (2009) summarize the main distinctions
in the Grove Music Online article “Electro-acoustic Music.” The term elektronische Musik
was used by German composers (initially based in Cologne) in the 1950s to describe music
on magnetic tape based entirely on synthesized sounds (generated electronically by
oscillators, for example). The work of these composers was seen as an extension of serialist
composers; the Cologne composers’ focus on control and precision extended the serialist
principles to “the structure of sound itself.” Musique concrète, on the other hand, was
associated with Pierre Schaeffer and his “French” school. Though the term originally referred
to the direct (“concrete”) technological manipulation of recorded sound, the term musique
concrète became associated with the aesthetic principle of exploring the intrinsic qualities of
found sounds “rather than being attached to meanings or narratives associated with their sound sources and causes” (Emmerson and Smalley 2009); in other words, *musique concrète* prioritizes the intrinsic quality of sounds rather than any referential meaning. Though the term “electronic music” eventually lost some of its connection to the German school, it cannot rid itself of its history completely. Beginning in the 1950s, “electro-acoustic” was used as an alternative for describing music that combines the aesthetics of *musique concrète* and *elektronische Musik*.

Leigh Landy’s work with the Electro-Acoustic Research Site and his book *Understanding the Art of Sound Organization* (2007) explore the problem of terminology more deeply. This term—“organised sound”—was first adopted by Edgard Varèse to describe his music, which he hoped would expand the sound “palette” of the concert hall. While Varèse’s term embraces purely electronic and recorded sounds, these sounds are not present in all “organised sound” *per se*.

“Sonic art” is a term that has been gaining momentum, notwithstanding the brevity of its inclusion in the Grove article. Rather than being an equivalent of “electro-acoustic,” it suggests a wider umbrella under which “electro-acoustic” may fit. As “the art form in which the sound is its basic unit” (Landy 2007, 10), the term suggests an ambiguity in both the types of created works and the creators themselves. “Sound art” is a sub-set of “sonic art” because, though it is “an art form in which the sound is its basic unit” (10), it suggests specific types of works and venues such as sound installations and sound sculptures in art galleries, museums, and public spaces.
Landy highlights that the ambiguity of the term “electroacoustic music” is owed in part to its continuing evolution since the 1950s, and to the various groups using the term (e.g., academics vs. technicians). For example, in audio engineering, the term describes the process of transduction from acoustic signal to electronic signal. For academics and composers, the term suggests deliberate intervention of the electronic technology beyond mere transduction. Because my research focuses on the human voice (an acoustic sound) as a main sound source for electronic mediation, I feel the term best captures this creative juxtaposition. Also, the term is commonly used in both Canadian research and composition. The Canadian Electroacoustic Community (CEC) uses the term “electroacoustics” to apply to many types of activities; the CEC’s website declares its commitment “to promoting this progressive art form in its broadest definition: from ‘pure’ acousmatic and computer music to soundscape and sonic art to hardware hacking and beyond” (Canadian Electroacoustic Community 2009). Landy (2007) opts for neither of his favourite terms—“sonic art” and “electroacoustic music”—but rather he chooses “sound-based music.” Landy “opted against sonic art because it allows critics to claim, ‘So it isn’t music after all,’” and against “electroacoustic music” because it did not include works of purely acoustic sounds in the discussion. Because I am not discussing any works with purely acoustic sounds, I will use “electroacoustic music” throughout this dissertation.

1.1.2 Fixed Medium Work

In this dissertation, I discuss only fixed electroacoustic musical works. By fixed I mean works that exist in their final and complete form on some fixed medium, such as tape, compact disc or mp3. Because of its wide-ranging sonic abilities, which I will highlight later
in this study, the human voice is frequently included in live electroacoustic works. These live works, though, present many difficulties to the analyst, particularly for the type of analysis that I will be doing, which is based on repeated listening. In addition, often the voice in these live works is not electronically mediated in any substantial way. I am specifically interested in the acousmatic aspect (i.e., without visual source). What traces are left when all you have is the sound and not the source?²

The studio has become a site not only for simple transduction of acoustic energy into electronic energy, but also for sound modification and manipulation. Before the development of tape technology, little could be done with a recording beyond conventional playback on a phonograph.³ With the advent of tape technology, though, the studio was transformed into an instrument (Emmerson 2000). The result was a tangible conceptual shift. Producer and composer Brian Eno describes this shift:

The move to tape was very important, because as soon as something’s on tape, it becomes a substance which is malleable and mutable and cuttable and reversible in ways that discs aren’t. It’s hard to do anything very interesting with a disc - all you can do is play it at a different speed, probably; you can’t actually cut a groove out and make a little loop of it. The effect of tape was that it really put music in a spatial dimension, making it possible to squeeze the music, or expand it (quoted in Cox and Warner 2004, 128)

The studio had become a place where sounds could be edited and modified, a fact we often take for granted, given our current ease with how sounds and other data can be edited via computer.

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³ Records could be played backwards or at varying speeds.
Electronic technology expands the variety of possible sounds by transforming existing sounds or creating new ones. Technology has the potential to emancipate two things: sound and the composer. Whereas dodecaphony led to the “emancipation of the dissonance,” electronic technology led to the emancipation of sound, leading composers to believe in infinite options: now any sound imaginable could be created with technology. Similarly, the composer was emancipated from the performer. Because the work could be completely created and realized on a fixed medium in the studio, the composer was no longer at the mercy of an interpreting performer.

In many ways, studio work has changed little. Editing techniques, such as cutting and splicing, now ubiquitous in the professional studio and on personal computer programs (such as GarageBand), have their origins in the tape studios of the 1940s and 50s. The capabilities of the technology, such as cutting and splicing, had direct results on the kinds of music being made in studios. For example, the ease with which one could create loops on tape correlates directly with the development of musical minimalism. The “cut and paste” approach used in tape splicing, while it is also an essential feature for any word document editor using a personal computer, remains intimately connected to the music world. Computer programs, such as Logic, give composers the ability to isolate a fragment of a given track and then move it to a desired location. This “cut and paste” approach, ingrained in our habits as computer users and built into computer programs as an editing tool, often leads to a collage effect in musical works.

Any given piece of technology prescribes a range of possible options for its use. As Jay Hodgson explains, “One must communicate however sound reproduction technology
enables [one] to engage in Recording Practice .... The limits of Recording Practice are the limits of sound reproduction technology, the limits of what sound reproduction can be made to do” (Hodgson 2006, 17).\(^4\) For example, the initial musical purpose of the phonograph record was to play back recorded music. Paul Hindemith and Ernest Toch experimented with the phonograph and its recordings, realizing that one could alter the recorded pitch by slowing down or speeding up the rotation; they discovered that phonograph technology could be used as a compositional tool as well as a playback tool (Katz 2004).\(^5\) But it could not vacuum the carpet: technology determines a wide but limited range of possible uses and outcomes, however experimental its users may be.

One of the outcomes of composers’ dedication to the studio as a site of composition was a fundamental change in two relationships: composer/performer and composition/performance. In the world of Western art music before the twentieth century, the roles of composer and performer were delineated, as were the notions of composition and performance. With the development of tape music, though, these roles were no longer distinct. Before tape music, the composer worked creatively outside of musical real-time to create a score whose content would be meaningful and understandable to the performer. The performer took what the composer had written (i.e., the score) and interpreted it in real-time in front of an audience. Though frequently the composer and the performer were the same human being, they were never considered to be conceptually equal. Tape music and all other

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\(^4\) I use Hodgson’s term “Recording Practice,” which he defines as “using sound reproduction technology for musical purposes” (4), or making and hearing music recordings. Recording Practice exists only within the Network of Recording Practice, which is a fully integrated communications system of making and hearing music recordings. See Hodgson 2006, 2010.

\(^5\) Hindemith & Toch - *Originalwerke für Schallplatten* (1930); Hindemith - *Gesang über 4 Oktaven* (1930); Toch - *Gesprochene Musik* (1930).
fixed media forms (compact discs, mp3s) remove the performer as an intermediary between the musical work and the audience. The music is projected through loudspeakers, which may or may not be set up intentionally in the performance venue. If any object were to be designated the “performer,” it would perhaps be the tape player, or the loudspeakers. But that seems nonsensical.

Fixed media compositions, such as those existing purely on tape, on compact disc, or in mp3 format, also remove the distinction between composition and performance. The composition, existing in abstract representation in the score and in the mind of the composer, may be understood as a real object only in its presence as a score. The composition has an eternal aspect to it; because it is abstract (i.e., an idea), it cannot cease to exist. A performance, on the other hand, is a single musical occurrence. It can never be repeated exactly as it was; any attempt is simply another performance (Ingarden 1986). With fixed medium compositions, the composition and each presentation (“performance”) of it are the same. A performance is an interpretation of the composition because the tools of composition (i.e., the symbols and signs that can be used in a score) cannot dictate all aspects of performance. In contrast, fixed medium compositions leave nothing to be interpreted, except decisions regarding spatial distribution within the performance venue: the content on the recording medium is all it ever was and will be. What the composer completes and what the audience hears are equivalent. In live presentations of electroacoustic music, then, there may be no humans on stage.

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While performers may be recorded during the creative/compositional process, purely fixed media works, with no live performance component, remove this intermediary position that is essential to most Western art music.
The issue of human agency and presence in electroacoustic music is highlighted in live performance, where audience members often find it difficult to trace human causality in the array of sounds emitted through the loudspeakers. This issue is not only relevant for live performance, but also in fixed medium works. Even in fixed medium works, which are encountered only through various loudspeakers (including home stereos and headphones), issues of agency and “liveness” are still relevant. I will address these issues by using the human voice as the connection to human agency.

In the early years of electronic technology, the role of the human in the creative process was still generally one of power, control, and artistic authority. But as computer technology developed, more power was afforded to the machine. A greater interactivity now exists between the human and the machine. This interactivity can result in a decrease in perceived human agency. In contemporary music, the notion of “live” needs to be reconsidered because the presence of humans in electroacoustic music may be hidden behind the technology. Prior to the development of digital technology and the prevalence of personal computers and real-time interfaces, the concept of “live” was clearer. Particularly since the 1980s, though, this concept has become nebulous. Simon Emmerson’s *Living Electronic Music* (2007) grapples with this issue:

We produce and receive physical, psychological and social cues continuously—they are not always distinguishable. But the boundaries of “the live” have been eroded and extended through audio technology.... I hesitantly move towards the conclusion that there is no clear boundary between the sentient and non-sentient soundworlds. It is ironic that such a dissolution has been enabled and encouraged through technology (xvi).
At the core of this issue is agency. Before the development of recording technology, musical sounds had a clear and direct relationship to the human agent creating them, namely, by playing instruments or singing.\footnote{Exceptions include music boxes, player pianos, and other early mechanical instruments.}

We become accustomed to cause-and-effect sound relationships as children, but we cannot always perceive a clear, or even real, cause-and-effect relationship in performances of electroacoustic music. As children, we learn to understand sounds through their sources: we see someone walk with heels on the ground, and we hear the clicking; we see a spoon hit a pot, and we hear a clang. Because of the way that we learned this cause-and-effect relationship to sounds, hearing sounds without sources can confuse us. In our everyday sound world, the listener often cannot distinguish between human or non-human causation of sound. This same ambiguity exists in electroacoustic music. For Emmerson, the question remains: “do we want or need to know what causes the sound we hear?” (5). Emmerson pushes the issue further with the following questions: “Does there have to be a thinking and feeling agent? If we cannot distinguish between a machine-generated and a human-generated sound then how do we respond? And does it matter?” (2007, 28).

In the live concert setting, a listener may or may not find it easy to trace causality between physical gestures and sounds. In a similar manner, fixed medium works cannot guarantee that a listener will perceive that a sound was caused by a human’s action. The composer can create real and imaginary relationships through cause-and-effect chains. Perceiving causality, though, is entirely up to the listener: “What sounds causal is effectively
causal. The distinction of truly real and imaginary lays with the composer and performer, not the listener” (Emmerson 2007, 93).

A human presence may manifest itself in electroacoustic music in less obvious ways than those perceived in traditional Western art music because we cannot see (in the case of fixed medium works) and often cannot hear human causality. Emmerson suggests, though, that the use of models, such as language or social behaviour, which are based on aspects of human behaviour, expands the notion of “liveness” in the music. These models, which “help us to understand the world by presenting the unknown in terms of the known—a known entity which appears to behave in the same way as the unknown” (Emmerson 2007, 40), help to connect the sounds heard by the listener to a perception of human presence.

1.2 A Musical Lineage: Acousmatique and Soundscape Musics in Canada

The composers and works that I discuss in this dissertation belong to a rich history of electroacoustic music in Canada. Since the 1950s, Canada has maintained a high reputation among the other leading countries producing electroacoustic music (France, Germany, England, United States) through innovative technological developments, strong presence of institutional studios, and highly esteemed works, many of which have won top international prizes at competitions such as the Prix Ars Electronica and the Bourges International Electroacoustic Awards. The Canadian electroacoustic legacy began with Hugh Le Caine (1914-1977), scientist, inventor, and composer. Already in the 1930s, Le Caine was experimenting with electronic instruments. He worked on these projects in his free time away from his job at the National Research Council (NRC), and he even constructed a home studio
in 1945 (Young 1989); in 1954, the NRC gave Le Caine permission to work on his instruments at the NRC facilities where he was named the director of the Electronic Music Laboratory (ELMUS). Due in large part to assistance from Le Caine and his dedication to and development of electronic instruments, the University of Toronto opened the first studio in Canada (second in North America) in 1959, under the directorship of Myron Schaeffer (1908-1965). McGill University followed suit in 1964, opening the McGill Electronic Music Studio under the direction of István Anhalt with the assistance of Le Caine (Young and Ford 2009). Over the next twenty years, university studios opened across the country, allowing composers the opportunity to experiment with technology that would otherwise be beyond their financial means to acquire (Denis 2001). Composers across Canada were eager to form groups dedicated to their music, many of which provided opportunities for the presentation and promotion of electroacoustic works. François Guérin (2009) identifies three types of organizations that have fostered electroacoustic activity in Canada: performance ensembles for concert works (e.g., Canadian Electronic Ensemble); concert societies who organize concert seasons (e.g., New Music Concerts); and associations with member services, the most important of which is the Canadian Electroacoustic Community (CEC), whose mandate is to unite “like-minded people—those interested and active in electroacoustics and computer music... the CEC provides a clearly-defined network for the flow and exchange of information and ideas” (Canadian Electroacoustic Community 2009). Indeed the CEC “was the first truly pan-Canadian organization for electroacoustics” (Guérin 2009).
Canadian composers have made considerable contributions to two major approaches that are connected geographically and culturally to Quebec and the West Coast: acousmatic music and soundscape composition, respectively.\(^8\)

### 1.2.1 Schaeffer’s *Musique Concrète* and Quebec’s *Acousmatique*

Acousmatic music emerged from Pierre Schaeffer’s *musique conrète*, an approach that prioritizes the intrinsic quality of sounds rather than their referential quality.\(^9\) In the 1970s, François Bayle felt that the more general term “electroacoustic” music did not capture the particular situation of listening to music on tape (Bayle 1993, 2003). The term acousmatic music (from Pythagorus' concept of *akusmatikoi*) “has focussed attention on how we listen to sounds and to music, and what we seek through listening” (Emmerson and Smalley 2009). *Acousmatique* differs from *musique conrète* in that it does not insist on the complete divorce of sound from meaning: referential sounds are suitable. *Musique acousmatique* is largely associated with France, but it has had a significant presence in Quebec. One explanation for this France-Quebec connection is the pragmatic one of language. Because of the lack of a language barrier, many of Quebec’s francophone composers went to Paris to study: Gilles Tremblay with Schaeffer; Micheline Coulombe-Saint-Marcoux and Marcelle Deschênes with the Groupe de Recherches Musicales; François Guérin with Jean-Ettienne Marie; Bernard Bonnier with Pierre Henry; Yves Daoust and Philipe Ménard with the Groupe de musique expérimentale de Bourges (Dhomont 1996). Many of these, along with other immigrant composers demonstrate tensions within and similarities across the approaches.

\(^8\) While my discussion here seems to indicate a clean and consistent distinction between these two main approaches, throughout the dissertation, and particularly in Chapter 5, I examine ways in which the music and musical practices of these composers demonstrate tensions within and similarities across the approaches.

\(^9\) Research, including Schaeffer’s own writings, on *musique conrète* is extensive; see the following: Bayle 1990; Chion 1982a, 1982b, 1983, 1991, 1998; Schaeffer 1952a, 1952b,1967.
French composers, worked in the universities and colleges in Montreal and Quebec City, fostering a second generation of acousmatic composers such as Robert Normandeau and French-born Christian Calon. Due to both the language accessibility and the ease of cross-Atlantic flights (Normandeau 2011; Woloshyn 2011b),10 Quebec acousmatic composers frequently return to France, interacting with several key new music organizations. For example, in 1991, Calon was appointed musical director of the Groupe de musique expérimentale de Marseille (GMEM).11 His La disparition (1988) was commissioned by and partly composed at the GMEM studio; parts of Minuit (1989) were also realized at GMEM. Normandeau has been involved with GMEM as well, through commissions for works such as Éden (2003); Normandeau has also received commissions (e.g., Jeu – 1989) from the Groupe de musique électroacoustique de Bourges (GMEB), now called L’Institut International de Musique Electroacoustique / Bourges. Éclats de voix (1991) was partly realized at another famous French institution, the Groupe de Recherches Musicales (GRM).

Unlike in France where composers debated the relative suitability of abstract versus referential sounds, Quebec composers felt free to combine these two elements. Normandeau explains:

There was a big debate in the 70s in France about whether we should do that or not. Pierre Schaeffer was completely against the use of referential sounds in electroacoustic music and there was a big debate. And Luc Ferrari arrived one day with Presque rien, where he put just a sunrise of 20 minutes on the harbour in the south of France. And everyone was shocked. It was a big debate: Was that music? Where does it stop? Where are the boundaries? But when I arrived here, it was in the mid-80s, ... maybe not in France, but here clearly this debate was closed. Use

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10 I published my interview with Normandeau in eContact! (2011b). The reference list includes both the original interview and the published interview. From now on, I will only cite the published interview.

11 Based on the information provided on his website, it is not clear for how long he maintained this position.
whatever you want. ... After years of abstract and computer music, difficult computer music, I think it was a liberation to be able to use whatever. (Woloshyn 2011b)

Many of these composers subscribe to the cinéma pour l’oreille aesthetic, in which sound and meaning are both essential to the expressive outcome of the work. The composer must find a way to incorporate the listener’s tendencies for sound identification while not reducing the work to a mere incidental narrative (Normandeau 1993). Normandeau describes the importance of sound recognition and meaning in this aesthetic approach:

*Cinéma pour l’oreille* is really when I work on a piece in which I will use daily life sounds, for example: sound recognition. And I will use them especially for that, because they have a meaning for me, and I don’t suppose it has a meaning for everyone. If I use the sound of a train whatever it means for you, it will have a meaning. It will put a reference of something in the piece, however you imagine it. Just like when you read a novel. This is probably the best example. When you read a novel, you imagine the characters, you imagine the landscape, you imagine the buildings, everything, because there’s only descriptions. ... I think that cinéma pour l’oreille has a similar power. (Woloshyn 2011b)

1.2.2 World Soundscape Project and Soundscape Composition

In contrast to the acousmatic approach, soundscape studies (Schafer 1977) advocate a preservation of environmental sound sources in their original contexts; the composer then creatively engages with these sounds. This approach began as The World Soundscape Project (WSP), started by R. Murray Schafer at Simon Fraser University in the 1960s with a mandate “to document and archive soundscapes, to describe and analyze them, and to promote increased public awareness of environmental sound through listening and critical thinking” (Truax 1996, 54). Soundscape composers emancipate environmental sounds from their perceived status as unmusical or artistically uninteresting and recognize the inherent complexity of the spectral and temporal shape in these sounds. Important Canadian
soundscape composers include Barry Truax, Hildegard Westerkamp, and Andra McCartney. Truax (2000) outlines four principles that guide soundscape composition: 1) the source material is recognizable, 2) the listener’s knowledge of the material’s context is essential to the work, 3) aspects of the external context shape the use of the material, and 4) the listener is led to greater awareness of his/her environment (124-6). These principles connect intrinsic and extrinsic elements (or sound and meaning) and integrate sound and structure (e.g., timbre as an organizing principle).

Despite their often divergent aesthetic goals, both acousmatic and soundscape composers frequently incorporate the human voice into their works. Even as purely electronic sounds and recorded real-world sounds became malleable and desirable sound materials through the impressive and rapid technological developments and stylistic evolutions, composers have not been dissuaded from employing the human voice in their works. If anything, these changes encourage composers to examine the human voice even more as they explore the limits of language, expression, and identity afforded them through the technological capabilities, as well as the artistic potential in the juxtaposition of acoustic and electronic sound sources.

### 1.3 Literature Review

#### 1.3.1 Electroacoustic Music: General

The main body of scholarship on electroacoustic music thoroughly addresses the early stages of the genre, including the first electronic instruments and the first European institutions in France and Germany (Appleton and Perara 1975; Chadabe 1997; Deutsch...
Joel Chadabe’s monograph *Electric Sound: The Past and Promise of Electronic Music* (1997) presents the important technology, composers, and works relevant to any electroacoustic research. His work, though, provides a foundation for detailed analysis, rather than analysis itself.

More recent sources effectively expand on the discussion started by Adorno (2001) and Benjamin (1968) regarding changes in the relationship between the ubiquity of sound reproduction technology and human modes of existence, with particularly emphasis on the impact of the digital revolution of the 1980s, which has resulted in considerable changes in agency in the human-machine interface (Bosma 2003; Chanan 1995; Cox and Warner 2004; Eargle 1995; Eisenberg 2005; Emmerson 2007; Greene and Porcello 2005; Katz 2004; Lysoff and Gay, Jr. 2003; Postman 1993; Théberge 1997). In the existing research, discussion of Canadian electroacoustic repertoire is limited, due perhaps in part to the geographical location of contemporary scholars: England (Chanan, Emmerson, Smalley, Toop) and the United States (Chadabe, Eargle, Eisenberg, Katz, Taylor).

### 1.3.2 Analysis of Electroacoustic Music

Analysis is an important and relevant body of scholarship to my research. A quick glance at *Analytical Methods of Electroacoustic Music* (Simoni 2006) and *Electroacoustic Music: Analytical Perspectives* (Licata 2002) reveals a focus in electroacoustic analysis on technological details of creation. This composer-centred approach seems unsurprising, given that the majority of electroacoustic scholars are also composers of the genre. The experiential side of analysis is often relegated to spectral analysis. As *Analytical Methods of Electroacoustic Music* (Simoni 2006) demonstrates, computer technology allows the analyst
to graphically represent sound, using tools such as the Acousmographe, fast Fourier transform (FFT), and sonograms for spectral analysis. Though these tools for spectral analysis can provide analytical information, I feel that they often serve more as illustrations; they graphically support what the analyst has observed already through a prior analytical approach. The human ear does not always hear sounds as they actually exist; we can hear frequencies that are not actually sounding, and we cannot hear other sound details that a sonogram might pick up. When I visited the Simon Fraser University studio, Truax showed me spectrograms for *Song of Songs*, in real-time as the work played. The images confirmed for me certain aspects that I was hearing, especially with granular time stretching, but the image alone could not communicate the experience of the sounds. The chapter by Mara Helmuth on Truax’s *Riverrun* (Simoni 2006) provides a stronger example of integrative analysis. She uses text description, graphic indications of events, pitch analysis, and sonogram images to provide a thorough analysis that combines the technical aspects of the piece and its processes with composer insights and listener perception.

Stéphane Roy’s monograph *L’analyse des musiques électroacoustiques: modèles et propositions* (2000) is an impressive undertaking in which he summarizes all then-current theories and methods of electroacoustic analysis. He also includes his own analytical approach, functional analysis, or *l’analyse du niveau neutre* (analysis of the neutral level) between poeisis (creation) and aesthesis (reception). Drawing upon Nattiez’s semiotics (1987), his process involves transcription of the morphological units without judgment or placement of them in either the poeisic or aesthesic category. This approach is based on perception, but not on the perception in real-time of a listener; the transcription is a result of repeated listenings of the analyst.
1.3.3 Canadian Electroacoustic Music

I perceive a gap in the research of Canadian electroacoustic music in three main areas: currency, language, and focus. Many of the articles and book chapters devoted to the Canadian electroacoustic scene are relatively outdated (Denis 1988; Keane 1984a, 1984b; Maheax 1993; Olds and Barriere 1993). The mostly French-language journal *Circuit: Revue nord-américaine de musique de XXe siècle* focuses typically on works by French composers, and Quebec composers in particular.12 While *eContact!*, the online journal for the Canadian Electroacoustic Community, frequently publishes about Canadian composers and their works the journal’s focus is not specifically Canadian.13 Andrea McCartney’s recent scholarship (1994, 1995a, 1995b, 1999, 2002, 2005, 2006) has made substantial progress in disseminating information and research about Canadian works, particularly on female composers and gender issues. Her research informs my discussion of gender in electroacoustics in general and female electroacoustic composer Hildegard Westerkamp in particular.

To complement McCartney’s research and expand scholarship on other Canadian electroacoustic music, I have looked at recent composers and their works in order to highlight some of the significant musical contributions that have not been discussed in the literature, including examples by both Anglophone and Francophone composers. My work also supplements the more summary-style approach of much of the scholarship with detailed close readings of musical works. Even before his significant monograph *Acoustic*

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13 Many articles are written by the composers themselves.
Communication (1984), Vancouver’s Barry Truax had published numerous articles in Interface and Computer Music Journal, among others. These articles deal primarily with technological aspects of electroacoustic composition, particularly his own advancements in real-time synthesis (especially frequency modulation, or FM, and granular synthesis), which were enabled by his POD and PODX systems.14 In the early 1990s, Truax’s writings begin to expand to address broader aesthetic issues in electroacoustic music, particularly in relation to soundscape and homoeroticism. I discuss these more recent writings in Chapter 3 as they relate to his Song of Songs.

A quick glance at Hildegard Westerkamp’s website (2011a) reveals the parallel between her creative and scholarly work. These scholarly contributions all relate to at least one of her self-labelled roles as composer, radio artist, and sound ecologist. Many of these writings focus on the soundscape, either incorporated into a work or encountered through a soundwalk. I discuss those writings of particular relevance to my research in Chapter 4.

The two Quebec composers whom I discuss, Normandeau and Calon, have published very little. Normandeau completed his dissertation in 1992 on the acousmatic aesthetic cinéma pour l’oreille as enacted in four of his works. He reworked his discussion of this approach in the article “... et vers un cinéma pour l’oreille” in Circuit: Revue Nord-Américaine de Musique du XXe siècle (1993). His interviews with David Ogborn and myself, as well as his own detailed program notes, grant the researcher insight into his background, compositional aesthetic, and oeuvre. I discuss these specific details in relation to his Onomatopoeias cycle in Chapter 2. Calon, however, remains an obscure figure; his

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14 See http://www.sfu.ca/~truax/pod.html
biography (Calon 2011) offers few details about his background and training; he seems to have been largely self-taught. His only publication (2003) elucidates some aspects of his compositional aesthetic and goals; however, like his program notes for works such as Minuit, the article remains somewhat of a maze of poetic musings. I discuss specific elements of this article in Chapter 4.

1.3.4 The Voice and Gender in Electroacoustic Music

Karen Sunabacka (2008), Miriama Young (2007), Donna Hewitt (2006), and Bruno Bossis (2004, 2005) are recent scholars who have investigated the human voice in electroacoustic music. Their writings are a useful background to my research, but my work is divergent in three main areas: 1) repertoire choice, 2) definition of “voice,” 3) theoretical focus. First, Canadian electroacoustic compositions are not discussed in Young, Hewitt, or Bossis’s research; while Sunabacka does discuss two Canadian works, there are many important Canadian works featuring the human voice that are not addressed by her research. Second, as opposed to my focus on the technological mediations of the real human voice, Young and Bossis are both more concerned with the artificial, synthesized voice. Hewitt, in contrast to Young, Bossis, Sunabacka and myself; defines her notion of “voice” more metaphorically, which leads to discussions outside the purview of my research. Finally, Sunabacka and Hewitt incorporate several live electroacoustic pieces, where issues of vocal manipulation by technology take on a different set of aesthetic, technological, and theoretical issues.

The contributions of Hannah Bosma and Andra McCartney provide some essential context for my consideration of voice, a topic that is largely inseparable from gender.
Bosma’s early research (1998a, 1998b) quickly established her as an authority on gender and technology, specifically female vocalists and composers in electroacoustic music. In “Gender and Electroacoustics” (1998a), Bosma interrogates three key perspectives in feminist studies. First, men and women have to be equal. A feminist musicologist thus tries to articulate the limiting circumstances of female composers within its broader social inequality. Bosma suggests that this social inequality remains as women often change in order to include traditional male domains (e.g., holding a full-time job), but the reverse (i.e., men including traditional female domains, such as housework) rarely happens. Second, the “difference” in “feminine” values is to be celebrated. Some may insist that the female body is the essence from which a feminine musical style or compositional approach may arise. Bosma points out, though, that this perspective often only reinforces traditional stereotypes and disregards “otherness” within the feminine (e.g., race, sexuality, class). Third, dualisms are deconstructed in favour of plural differences. The research must ask why and how women do or do not make electroacoustic music. How does electroacoustic music relate to masculinity? Bosma emphasizes the tension in feminist studies surrounding Barthes’ “Death of the Author.” For musicologist Joke Dame (1994), this death frees the female listener (or reader) from gender entrenchment, while for others, the author has been killed just when the female author/composer has finally emerged. She recognizes that gender constructions are of varying importance to composers’ work: “Some women and men prefer to ignore this; others choose to do something with it. Some composers, more women than men, relate some of their work to gender issues” (1998a). Bosma suggests that this variance within composers is paralleled more broadly within society where, despite people’s frequent inclusion of
“masculine” and “feminine” traits, “it is undeniable that in society at large there are different gender patterns in many fields, that are often being felt on a very personal level” (1998a).

In “The Death of the Singer” (1998b), Bosma continues to examine gender and technology in electroacoustic music by focusing on the use of the female voice. Traditionally, electroacoustic music involved a male composer working with a female voice. Despite limited status given to the ubiquitous female voices in electroacoustic music, Bosma insists that “a singer now can become an author of a permanent creative object with a recording of a performance or an improvisation” (1998b). Bosma (2006) uses the example of Cathy Berberian, an unnamed source in Berio’s published discussion of Thema (Omaggio a Joyce), to demonstrate the low status of the female voice as “sound material” rather than as co-composer or vocal author, that is, as essential creative agent in the final product (1998b).

Bosma (2000) examines the work of female singer-composers like Joan La Barbara, Diamanda Galás, and Laurie Anderson who use extended vocal techniques and sound recording technology to extend their timbral capabilities. They are evidence that Bosma’s dream to have electronic sound technology create a positive change in the status of the vocalist, who is often female, is possible. Certainly Tanya Tagaq (Chapter 3) is empowered as both a vocalist and a composer by electronic technology on her two studio albums, as I will discuss. Bosma insists that the authorial status of singer-composers will change if “the status of their work [shifts] from evanescent performance to reproducible, durable, distributable object” and their extended vocal technique is viewed “as a basis and inextricable part of a composition” (2000).
To examine more thoroughly the gender relationship between composer and vocalist, Bosma (2003) sought out musical artifacts (i.e., recordings). She wondered: “Do sounds have a gender? Voices do, mostly” (5). She selected CD series from three organizations (Computer Music Currents, the Computer Music Series of the Consortium to Distribute Computer Music, and Cultures Électroniques), with each series including several different composers. She investigated the gender of both composer and vocalist. The results were as follows: 1) Composers of electroacoustic and electronic music are mostly male. 2) Works involving voice most often use female voices in a non-verbal singing style, while works with male voices often use speech. This disparity is most noticeable in works for live performing vocalist and sound tracks or electronics. 3) In works for recorded voice, male and female voices are more equally represented. However, the song vs. speech binary persists. The male voices maintain an authoritative status as disembodied voice-over as opposed to female embodied cries and other extended vocal techniques, an embodiment that “is not a visual display (as in the films discussed by Kaja Silverman), but the resonance of the vocal sound in the body, a singing style” (14; see Silverman 1988). I relate Bosma’s gender distinction here to the narrator-as-authority role in Chapter 4.

Bosma (2006) examines the suitability of applying concepts from the literary movement known as écriture feminine to electroacoustic music. This work in many ways parallels McCartney’s (1994, 2006) research into alternative modes of engaging with electronic technology, or conceptualizing this engagement. Electroacoustic music is caught in an interesting tension: since Barthes’ “Death of the Author,” the composer’s intentions are irrelevant to interpretation. Many female electroacoustic composers themselves don’t want to
define themselves as *female* composers. However, cultural gender constructions persist in electroacoustic music as the genre is “a culmination of two male domains, composition and technology” (Bosma 2006, 101). Bosma observes that many women in the electroacoustic world combine the male domain of composition and electronics with the female domain of performance and “natural” (i.e., acoustic) sound. Also, these women often incorporate other media, combining theatre, music, literature, performance, radio, and the like. I discuss these “alternative” creative engagements in relation to Barry Truax (Chapter 3) and Hildegard Westerkamp (Chapter 4).

Andra McCartney’s research considers gender and technology within the electroacoustic genre, with focus on female composers and on Hildegard Westerkamp in particular. Her research on Westerkamp is referenced throughout my analysis in Chapter 4. Her more general research on female electroacoustic composers informs aspects of the entire dissertation, and it is these broader writings that I summarize now.

For her master’s thesis (1994), McCartney interviewed fourteen female electroacoustic composers largely centred in Montreal, Toronto, and Vancouver.15 She situates their work within the masculine language of electroacoustic music—the metaphors, images and myths—found in magazines, textbooks, and software jargon. In addition, she outlines the institutional structures of electroacoustic music. She suggests that these two elements place women in a male-gendered environment in which they must position themselves as both women and composers. McCartney examines the women’s alternative metaphors for technology and how they engage with it. This research was revised for the

15 Montreal: Claire Piche, Lucie Jasmin, Pascale Trudel, Monique Jean, Helen Hall, and Kathy Kennedy; Toronto: Gayle Young, Sarah Peebles, Wende Bartley, Elma Miller, Ann Southam, and Carol Ann Weaver; Vancouver: Hildegard Westerkamp and Susan Frykberg.

In “Gender, Genre and Electroacoustic Soundmaking Practices” (2006), McCartney returns to the foundations of electroacoustic music—musique concrète and elektronische Musik—to illustrate the embedded priorities of abstraction and control. She contrasts these priorities with the works of several electroacoustic soundmakers, including composers, artists, and mixers, who demonstrate alternative conceptualizations of electroacoustic genres, such as the soundscape model of Truax and Westerkamp’s works, which I discuss in Chapters 3 and 4.

Tara Rodgers’ recent publication Pink Noises (2010) builds from the work of Bosma and McCartney by reflecting on the gendered assumptions regarding technology and working with technology (and specifically how women work with technology) with hopes to “open possibilities for imagining relationships of sound, gender, and technology differently” (2). As I will explain, both Westerkamp and Tagaq engage actively with sound reproduction technology, and by doing so, they place themselves within a growing group of women producers, DJs, and electronic composers whose music and musical practices are both confronted by and challenge gendered discourses (Balsamo 1996; Doane 1999; Hinkle-Turner 2003, 2006; Marsh 2006, 2009a; Marsh and West 2003; Oldenziel 1999; Pegley 2006).
1.4 Methodology

1.4.1 Listener’s Perspective: Hearing Performance and Production

My research on the voice in Canadian electroacoustic work considers two aspects that affect the final work: performance and production. Performance elements originate in the individual sound source, that is, a specific human being. While the listener often has little knowledge of this particular person, this person and his/her voice offer a specificity that impacts the composer’s compositional process and final outcome. For instance, gender, race, vocal timbre, declamation of text, and use of extended vocal technique (e.g., laughing and grunting) are all performance elements that impact a work and one’s experience of it.

Production elements include those involved in both the transduction of sound (e.g., microphone placement, the natural reverberation or echo of acoustic space) and the manipulation of sound, including spatial, timbral, and temporal modifications. These two aspects affect the possible range of sounds in the final product, as well as the listener’s experience of these two elements. For instance, more extensive production processes that hide, distort, or contradict the performance elements—treating vocal sounds more like pure sound sources that can be fragmented and filtered—can create a feeling of distance from the human sound source, or a sense of discomfort over its vulnerability to manipulation.

In contrast, close microphone placement and extended vocal technique can draw attention to the body producing the sounds (Gagnard 1987; Manning 1987, 1998). This “closeness” or “distance” between the body and sound informs my analysis of interacting bodies; for example, “intimacy” of the recorded voices, indicated possibly by close
microphone placement, may suggest physical intimacy. Aspects of space are also essential to my analysis of interacting bodies in Chapter 3.

As I explained above, the majority of electroacoustic analysis privileges the composer’s perspective, offering detailed descriptions of the technology used in the creation of the works. Electroacoustic scholarship needs to find a balance between poiesis, or creation, and aesthesis (terms applied to music by Nattiez [1987]), or reception, of a work. Recent scholarship has attempted to explore the aesthetic nature of the work, including recent doctoral research on listening as analysis (Cox 2006; Hewitt 2006; Reed 2008; Sunabacka 2008; Windsor 1995). Similarly, my analysis also focuses on the experiential aspects of the works.

My analysis largely has no recourse to score analysis, excepting Normandeau’s listening score for Éclats de voix and Truax’s score for the oboe d’amore and English horn in Song of Songs. An expanded variety of sound possibilities that privileges timbre and texture, and compositional processes that take place via electronic technology rather than manuscript paper, present obstacles to the analysis of electroacoustic music. The scores that do exist are often limited to graphic representations of pitch, texture, timbre, and motion, with few precise or quantifiable indications. As I discussed above, attempts have been made (Licata, Simoni, Roy) to establish useful analytical tools, but there is no standardized method in this “adolescent” field. The expanded variety of available sounds and the increased focus on timbre are challenges to the analyst, whose previously acquired tools for analysis (e.g., Schenkerian and harmonic analyses, set theory, transformational theory) are largely ineffective. From the current approaches to the analysis of electroacoustic music, I have
chosen those most useful to understanding and commenting on my repertoire. To address the abstract treatment of sound, particularly in Normandeau’s acousmatic *Onomatoepoeias* cycle, I will combine sound identification with Smalley’s spectromorphology and indicative fields (Emmerson 1986; Smalley 1996). To address the spatial distribution of the sounds, I will use Hodgson’s mix compass (2006).

Because very little can be accessed through the eyes (i.e., through score analysis), analysis of electroacoustic music must be accomplished primarily by the ears. Despite their frequent focus on technical elements, composers across electroacoustic genres have conceptually prioritized listening. For instance, Pierre Schaeffer created music designed for *écoute réduite* (reduced listening) through which the listener concentrates on the sound object, ignoring the context of the sound and any associated meaning. The listener is also at the centre of Schafer’s soundscape philosophy in which “listening is the primary interface where information is exchanged between the individual and the environment” (Truax 1996, 58). Soundscape compositions that contain recognizable environmental sounds and contexts “invoke the listener’s associations, memories, and imagination related to the soundscape” (54).

As was stated earlier, all possible sound source treatments (soundscape, acousmatic, electronic) produce sounds that fall somewhere in the range of sound classification from abstract to referential. Sound identification is the first approach to sound classification. If a sound can be identified through listening alone, then the sound is relatively referential. Many sounds can only be identified properly in general (e.g., rain), and thus require the aid of the composer to share specific information (e.g., rain on Salt Spring Island). The voice is one of
the most easily identifiable sounds. We hear a simple “hello” on the other end of the telephone, and we know immediately who has called us (Frith 1996). Parents asleep down the hall can hear their young child softly call to them in the middle of the night. Composers and analysts agree that one of the hardest sounds to disguise is the human voice (Bossis 2005; Collins and d’Escriván 2007; Hewitt 2006). Despite extreme modifications and alterations one may make in the studio to a recorded human voice, traces of its human source will often remain.

1.4.2 Denis Smalley’s Spectromorphology and Indicative Fields

In The Language of Electroacoustic Music (Emmerson 1986), Smalley first introduced his notion of spectromorphology. Spectromorphology describes structural relations and behaviours by focusing on three aspects:16 1) spectral typology: how sounds are combined to form sound types; 2) morphology: evolution of sounds through time; and 3) motion: directions of movement. Spectral typology considers the spectrum, or “totality of perceptible frequencies” (65), as a wider concept than “pitch” or “timbre.” Smalley suggests three spectral types, which lie along a continuum: note, node (i.e., “band or knot of sound which resists pitch identification” [67]) , and noise (i.e., no internal pitch structure). This continuum is particularly relevant in analysis of extended vocal techniques; vocal sounds like growls, sigh, and grunts (such as those used in Tagaq’s Inuit throat singing) will move variably along this continuum, depending on the context.

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16 I do not classify sounds as systematically as Smalley’s book outlines, but his focus on typology and morphology influences my discussion, for example, as I distinguish between sounds that are pitched, noise, or something in between (what he calls “node”).
Morphology, the second component, describes the energy input of sound. Smalley uses the three temporal phases (onset, continuant, and termination) to outline possible morphological models, which may then be linked, merged, shifted, and so on. These morphologies can be applied to small- and large-scale events, as Harchanko (2003) demonstrates in his analysis of Gilles Gobeil’s (b. 1954) *Le Vertige Inconnu* (1993-1994) in which the small-scale and large-scale temporal designs mirror each other. Motion, the third component, refers to particular sounds, entire sections (sound relationships), and actual spatial movement. According to Smalley, “spectro-morphological design on its own ... creates real and imagined motions without the need for actual movement in space” (Emmerson 1986, 73).  

Discussion of spectromorphology’s three aspects is guided overall by Smalley’s notions of gesture and texture. Gesture traces “the spectral shapes and shape-sequences created by the energy of physical and vocal articulation” (Emmerson 1986, 62), or the action away from or towards a goal. This external shape of a sound is heard through the motion of the sound, which “always implies a direction...” (72), whether or not this expected direction is achieved or denied. By contrast, texture traces the internal activity of a sound; it is “concerned with internal behaviour patterning, energy directed inwards or reinjected, self-propogating” (82). Ferreira (1996) and Harchanko (2003) demonstrate the usefulness of gesture and texture in describing various sections of works, as one section may be gesture-carried, while another may be texture-carried (Smalley’s terms). No two electroacoustic works are the same and each requires a flexible approach to analysis. Though Smalley’s

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17 I will use Hodgson’s mix compass to analyze the actual spatial movement of sounds because it is better suited to the discussion of the three-dimensional mix.
spectromorphology does not provide the analyst with quantifiable tools, it provides terminology and a qualitative set of structural processes that can be applied to wide range of electroacoustic music.

Growing out of his development of spectromorphology in the 1980s, Smalley articulated nine indicative fields (1996) that can be used in the compositional or analytical process:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NAME</th>
<th>DEFINITION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gesture</td>
<td>Traces the energy-motion trajectory achieved through tension and release</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Utterance</td>
<td>Linked to the human body; communication and expression</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behaviour</td>
<td>Dominance/subordination, conflict/coexistence, causality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Energy</td>
<td>Creation and release of tension</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motion</td>
<td>Connected to temporal experience; external contour and internal behaviour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Object/Substance</td>
<td>A physical metaphor for a sound’s ‘materialness’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environment</td>
<td>Human and animal utterance; sounds and textures of the environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vision</td>
<td>A product of a sensory appreciation of the world</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Space</td>
<td>The physical and psychological dimensions; intimacy/immensity</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1.1 - Smalley’s Nine Indicative Fields

These indicative fields “explain the links between the human experience and the listener’s apprehension of sounding material in musical contexts” (83). Any given field naturally connects to another (such as gesture, energy, and motion), thereby creating an indicative network. The fields are precise enough to grant descriptive value, but their flexibility on their own and in their network of relationships allows for differing perspectives. These fields are models of physical and mental structures. Though some electroacoustic compositions are based on scientific, mathematical, statistical and other theoretical models, music that incorporates the voice indicates some kind of human model *per se*; almost immediately the
utterance, behaviour, energy, and environment fields are all invoked before even analyzing a piece of music. Because Smalley’s fields are based on human experience, they are useful in my analysis of the highly abstracted use of the human voice in Normandeau’s cycle, in particular.

1.4.3 Jay Hodgson’s Mix Compass

Every recording presents its listeners with a mix: “...all that one may ever hear by record reception is a mix—that is, sound arranged in space somehow” (Hodgson 2006, 172). The mix, or spatial distribution, has the capacity for meaning, for in “Arranging sound in space to make some kind of ‘musical’ sense, every music recording constructs a particular listening position whenever it is given a record reception” (174). With current technology, spatial distribution is refined through mixing. Mixing allows the technician to create certain spatial effects, ending with a three-dimensional configuration of the sounds. Composers, or separate technicians, use mixers to create this aural perspective. These mixers may be physical objects (hardware) or virtual (software) on computer programs such as Pro Tools. During mixing one can control the volume of individual tracks and the main volume (including the gradual increase or decrease of volume: fading); determine frequency ranges (equalization); and send signals from certain tracks through various effects such as chorus and delay. The distribution (or placement) of sounds along the vertical and horizontal planes constructs spatial boundaries that are meaningful aspects of the listening experience. Also, the placement of sounds in or out of the auditory horizon (or out of “earshot”) can construct absence and presence of the human voice, and often by extension, its bodily source. Spatial movement in the mix can shift the perception of a sound from absent to present, or vice
versa. Distribution of sounds in the mix is also used to differentiate timelines, as in Westerkamp’s *MotherVoiceTalk* and the multiple vocal sources on Tagaq’s *Sinaa*. The use of panning can express a sound’s energy profile, an aspect that becomes important in my discussion of the ageing body in Normandeau’s *Onomatopoeias* cycle, for example.

A mix is three-dimensional, incorporating vertical and horizontal space and depth. I will use Hodgson’s mix compass (2006, 195-201; 2007) to articulate the three-dimensional spatial distribution of a mix. The mix compass consists of six elements (see Table 1.2 below). The mix compass is an important tool for analyzing electroacoustic music, which often places importance on spatial distribution and spatial movement. Similar to the importance of sound diffusion in live performance for the listening experience, the mix of works on a fixed medium is an important aspect of reception. Using the mix compass, I articulate ways in which a mix delineates spatial boundaries and constructs presence and intimacy.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>NAME</strong></th>
<th><strong>DEFINITION</strong></th>
<th><strong>EXAMPLE</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Auditory Horizon</td>
<td>The mix’s “earshot” or geographic reach; it is indicated through dynamic mixing techniques (e.g. fading).</td>
<td><img src="" alt="Diagram" /></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Horizontal Plane | The horizontal position of a sound within a mix; it is achieved through panning from left to right, or right to left in various motion types (e.g., Leaping from left to right; oscillating from right to left).                                                                                                                                                                            | ![Diagram](High bell 0:09)  
1:23  
0:54  
1:35 |
| Horizontal Span  | The total width of a mix’s horizontal plane; can specify which channels create the HS (e.g., Male voice and bell – farthest reaches of the HP on each side of the centre).                                                                                                                                                                                                 | ![Diagram](Male voice  
Bell (2:53)  
(5:22)) |
| Proximity Plane  | The relative closeness or distance of sounds achieved by using the fader to increase or decrease certain channels. In the example, the high bell moved along the HP while also increasing in volume (and in proximity).                                                                                                                                                                         | ![Diagram](High bell (0:09))  
1:35 |
| Vertical Plane   | The vertical position of a sound in the mix; it is achieved through a lack of Horizontal Plane and Proximity Plane motion.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              | ![Diagram](Laughter (7:33)) |
| Vertical Span    | The total area of Vertical Plane; can specify which channels create the VS.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | ![Diagram](Scream (0:45)  
Laughter (7:33)) |

Table 1.2 - The Mix Compass (Hodgson 2006).
1.4.4 Controlling Gender and Language

Electroacoustic music that features the human voice will almost invariably present some sort of linguistic content. As I demonstrated in my preceding overview of foundational electroacoustic works, this content may range from isolated building blocks of language (i.e., phonemes) to complete semantic content, drawn from pre-existing or pseudo-languages. According to Trevor Wishart,

Where (human) beings are heard to produce sounds, then we will tend to impute intention to the sonic event. We will hear it at some level as an Utterance. In particular, whenever the human voice is used as a source of sound in whatever context, the concept of Utterance will enter at some level into our apprehension of the event (Wishart 1996, 240).

In electroacoustic music, though, these utterances may not be semantically clear. Many twentieth-century vocal and choral works, strongly influenced by contemporary trends in literature and poetry, began to incorporate pseudo-languages or no languages at all, relying rather on phonemes, or on sound effects (i.e., onomatopoeic sounds). Similarly, contemporary electroacoustic works often create syntactically meaningful texts from pre-existing languages, pseudo-languages that create the impression of syntax, or no languages.

In his volume Alternative Voices, composer István Anhalt effectively analyzes pre-existing, pseudo-, and non-existent languages in vocal and choral works. For example, his analysis of Ligeti’s Nouvelles Aventures demonstrates that a pseudo-language can still communicate impressions of syntax, and therefore, of meaning. Anhalt also addresses the final possibility (i.e., no language); he illustrates that even phonemes alone can contain meaning. From Iván Fónagy’s Die Metaphern in der Phonetik, Anhalt explains that people in various cultures have believed in the associative and descriptive powers of phonemes:
allusions to darkness and light, various degrees of sharpness, femininity and masculinity, strength, fineness or roughness, highness or lowness, aggressive or reserved, etc. Individual phonemes, then, may carry little semantic meaning; that is, the sound /t/ is not in itself a linguistic sign. Still, these phonemes may carry meaning through association and metaphor, similar to the meaning of vocal tone and dynamic (harsh, shrill, soft, loud).

Cathy Lane (2006) examines the use of recorded speech, especially when it is deliberately mediated by technology. While she considers a large range of genres, including sound poetry, her categories contextualize the ways in which the works in my dissertation use and explore language, particularly with regard to Normandeau in Chapter 2, and Calon and Westerkamp in Chapter 4, who combine words with technological manipulation to create electroacoustic stories. Lane’s categories, many of which apply to my discussion, account for the dissolution, accumulation, and retention of meaning—semantic and/or expressive—through specific compositional techniques. Dissolution occurs in the works of this dissertation through the following: 1) Processing (e.g., layering, extreme reverberation); this technique is essential in Normandeau’s *Onomatopoeias* cycle, Truax’s *Song of Songs*, Calon’s *Minuit*, and somewhat in Westerkamp’s *MotherVoiceTalk*. 2) Deconstruction, particularly through fragmentation; both Normandeau and Calon make particular use of this approach. Meaning in these works is enhanced, or accumulated, by the following: 1) Sonic association (e.g., using a soundscape element that relates to the text); soundscape elements contribute to meaning especially in Truax’s *Song of Songs*, while the use of orgasmic sounds enhances the semantic meaning of erotic texts in Tagaq’s “Hunger” and “Want,” and Calon’s *Minuit*. 2) Performance, as the emotive aspects of the voice surpass specific semantic
meaning; emotion and expression are essential to the final results in Normandeau’s *Onomatopoeias* cycle and Truax’s *Song of Songs*, in particular. 3) Structural association (e.g., manipulating and structuring text to reinforce meaning); the text becomes an essential structural element in Truax’s *Song of Songs* (with a refrain), while Calon’s manipulation of the voice in *Minuit* parallels the shift in poetic structure. 4) Massing of voices or montage; Lane explains that “meaning is reinforced by the way that different voices come in saying either the same words or different things which build up and reinforce a total picture” (6). This approach is essential to the creation of meaning in Truax’s *Song of Songs*, Tagaq’s traditional Inuit songs on *Sinaa* and “Hunger” on *Auk/Blood*, and Westerkamp’s *Für Dich – For You* and *MotherVoiceTalk*. Meaning is retained when there is no apparent processing, such as in parts of *MotherVoiceTalk*.

**1.4.5 Intimacy on the Recorded Medium**

Composers and performers are aware of the connection between the sounds of the human voice and their physiological origin. Composers will often ask performers to amplify certain physiological behaviours or actions, such as exaggerated inhalation and exhalation, and overly precise pronunciation. Extended vocal techniques in general draw more attention to the body because of their unusual use of the vocal folds and articulators. Some studio techniques, which can be applied to live performance, also enhance the relationship between sound and the body. Close microphone placement at or near the mouth, especially if used without a microphone foam or windscreen, will “hear” sounds superfluous to the actual pitched sounds produced: inhalation or exhalation, the slight pop of the lips when they open, the articulations of the tongue. These elements are essential in the transduction of Tagaq’s
voice, for example, as these extra-vocal aspects are intrinsic expressive elements of her Inuit throat singing. In contrast, an elimination of extraneous sounds (such as inhalation) through microphone placement, use of foam or windscreens, and elimination of unwanted frequencies during transduction or in post-production can distance the vocal sounds from the body. In the editing stage, the fragmenting and filtering of vocal sounds disintegrate semantic content, abstracting the vocal sound source, such as in Normandeau’s *Onomatopoeias* cycle and Calon’s *Minuit*. Though the sounds may never be completely without their human reference, through technological modification and mediation, they can certainly be difficult to recognize. The extent to which a vocal sound evokes the human body behind it depends largely on particular nuances of the performance, and studio and editing techniques.

Truax, Tagaq, Calon, and Westerkamp in particular participate in what Serge Lacasse describes as a “deliberate practice whose aim is to enhance a vocal sound, alter its timbre or present it in a given spatial and/or temporal configuration with the help of [a] mechanical or electrical process” (2000, 4). Lacasse calls this practice “vocal staging” and its outcomes directly impact the listener, resulting in certain connotations regarding presence, intimacy, movement, and emotion.

Of particular relevance to my analysis of intimacy in vocal staging is the relative construction of closeness or distance. This can be manipulated through the presence (or absence) of reverberation and the loudness of the voice (Dibben 2009a). The presence of heavy reverb on the voice communicates distance to the listener, between him and the voice; a listener who is closer to a sound source will hear a larger proportion of direct sound than reverberate sound: close microphone placement ensures a high level of direct sound. The
loudness must be sufficient to place the voice in the auditory horizon; with increasing loudness, the voice approaches the listener on the proximity plane.

1.4.6 Composers’ Perspectives

While my research is generally listener-centric as opposed to composer-centric, it is enriched through an inclusion of the composers’ writings regarding their aesthetic agendas, technological approaches, and commentaries about specific works. In the literature review above, I briefly mentioned key publications that inform my discussion in Chapters 2, 3, and 4. However, including interviews and composers’ publications as a means of accessing meaning or interpretation is complex, if not problematic, since the post-structuralist movement beginning in the 1960s began to question all authorial intent and hegemony. 18

Roland Barthes’ essay “The Death of the Author” (1988; reprint of 1977 English translation of 1967 original) declares that the Author is not the sole source of meaning for a given text; the Author’s intention does not circumscribe meaning. Rather, the Author “is in no way equipped with a being preceding or exceeding the writing” (1988, 145). Instead, a text presents multiple layers of meaning that are subject to change over time and depend on the knower. As I will discuss in Chapter 4, Lorraine Code’s (1991) challenge to traditional conceptions of knowledge acquisition falls within Barthes’ trajectory, in which the identity of the knower is essential to interpretation and meaning.

Barthes suggests that certain nineteenth-century poets such as Stéphane Mallarmé deliberately grant authoritative power to the language itself, so that the language itself performs rather than being dictated by the Author. But electroacoustic music seems to give the composer ultimate control over the final work such that this distancing from the Author appears more difficult, or even impossible. Indeed, when electroacoustic composers write about their music—and often they are the only ones to write about this music—the focus is on the technological details, the creative process. This composer-centric discourse challenges the freedom that Barthes wishes to impute to texts, or in this case musical works, and that some listeners may want to experience. In later chapters, I discuss the role of agency and control and interrogate the status of electroacoustic composers. Barthes claims: “We know now that a text is not a line of words releasing a single ‘theological’ meaning (the ‘message’ of the Author-God) but a multi-dimensional space in which a variety of writings, none of them original, blend and clash” (1988, 146). I would argue that electroacoustic music, like a poem or a novel, is also “a tissue of quotations”; the composer is able “to mix writings, to counter the ones with the others, in such a way as never to rest on any one of them” (146). Electroacoustic works emerge from a common language of gesture and texture, sign and signifier, a language continually evolving from its early development. Quotation becomes all the more literal with electroacoustic music: works incorporate recordings of nature, text, voices, and behaviours. But the distance between composer and work is difficult to keep separate when very often the recorded voice of the composer is included in the work (e.g., the works of Hildegard Westerkamp). Her voice and her words keep the listener chained to her intentions and meanings.
Some caution against a complete erasure of the author such as Barthes seems to advocate. In the introduction to a collection of essays devoted to the role of the author in today’s poststructuralist analysis and postmodern world, Maurice Biriotti (Biriotti and Miller 1993) claims that neither is the author dead—which Foucault (1977) foregrounds through his discussion of “author-function”—nor is it completely desirable that the Author be dead. In traditional Western thinking, the author maintained the subject position, a position constructed as the bourgeois white male. Significant strides have been made to grant subjectivity to those previously denied it because of race, gender, sexuality, and class. If the author, and the subject position, is dead, then there is no opportunity for these previously suppressed groups to seize their own subjectivity. Nancy Miller’s essay “Changing the Subject: Authorship, Writing and the Reader” (Biriotti and Miller 1993) suggests an exception:

The postmodernist decision that the Author is Dead and the subject along with him does not, I will argue, necessarily hold for women, and prematurely forecloses the question of agency for women. Because women have not had the same historical relation of identity to origin, institution, production that men have had, they have not, I think, (collectively) felt burdened by too much self, ego, cogito, etc. (23).

As stated above, Bosma (1998b) highlights this frustration that many feminists have with the idea of the death of the author when the author could finally be a woman. For Westerkamp and Tagaq as women, Westerkamp and Truax as soundscape composers, and Truax as a homosexual, some status as author must be maintained if their alterity is to have any bearing on their musical output. Truax in particular emphasizes his homosexuality as not only an essential motivation, but also an inherent musical feature of his works. If the author is dead, then the subjectivity of Westerkamp, Tagaq, and Truax is irrelevant.
While some might suggest that author and intention have little bearing on aesthetic value, James Young (2010) foregrounds identity and intention as central to aesthetic judgments. His discussion of cultural appropriation suggests cases in which it is defensible on both aesthetic and moral grounds; the authenticity of the artist is central to this discussion. The idea of authenticity, particularly in popular music studies, is problematic; authenticity is largely something constructed or performed and is often based on genre expectations (for example, the notion that a singer-songwriter’s lyrics must and do reflect his personal experiences and emotions). This dissertation is not a debate about cultural appropriation; I reference Young merely to illustrate that for some—composers, musicologists, philosophers, and critics alike—the author still bears on the meaning of his works.

In some electroacoustic music in particular, the treacherous balance between Wimsatt’s and Beardsley’s (1954) internal, or public, evidence (i.e., that which is contained in the work itself) and external, or private, evidence (e.g., biographical information) becomes difficult to navigate. As I have stated already, the vast majority of scholarship on electroacoustic music is written by electroacoustic composers, many of whom publish about their own works. Thus, the scholarship and discourse rely quite exclusively on the composer’s perspectives—his intentions—with little to challenge the status quo. The task becomes all the more complex for me when I choose specifically to research composers who I can interview. Their words can’t help but shape the meanings I examine and propose in my analyses.

Electroacoustic composers tend to frame discussions of their works around the technological processes involved in their creation. Topics such as algorithms, real-time
synthesis, sine waves, and digital interfaces fill the pages of *Organised Sound* and *Computer Music Journal*. A scan of the session themes and paper topics at the latest Toronto Electroacoustic Symposium meeting (2011) reveals a similar bias, with only one session devoted to analysis. Even articles and conference papers on space and spatialization, an essentially *experiential* and potentially *expressive* aspect of electroacoustic music, often focus on software for controlling spatialization, loudspeaker setup for various diffusion models, or new spatialization controls. I am not suggesting that these topics should not be discussed; however, the creative—that is, technological, in the genre of electroacoustic music—is often foregrounded to the detriment of reception. I must again recognize the growing literature that interrogates perception (e.g., abstract vs. referential) and the influence of Smalley’s spectromorphology and indicative fields, both of which offer a language through which one can describe and analyze the listening experience (Andean 2010; Bregman 1990; Dusman 2000; Ferreira 1997; Hoopen 1997; Reed 2008; Smalley 1996; Windsor 1995).

Normandeau and particularly Truax demonstrate this tendency towards technological writing. Truax’s extensive archives of his compositions (hosted on the Simon Fraser University server) also have numerous pages devoted to his compositional techniques. Only one of these—“The Use of the I Ching”—is neither technological nor based on complex mathematical equations. In contrast, Westerkamp rarely frames her work in technological terms. But this deviation is due in large part to her lack of mathematical or computer training.¹⁹ I will elaborate on her background more in Chapter 4, but I will point out here that

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¹⁹ Of course her gender may also contribute to this lack of mathematical or computer training. Young women who see few female models in the world of music and technology might hesitate moving in that direction (Hinkle-Turner 2003, 2006; Malloy 2003; Marsh 2006; McCartney and Waterman 2006; Moisala and Diamond 2000; Rodgers 2010; Woloshyn 2009).
Westerkamp completely eschews a techno-centric compositional approach, preferring to view technology as an aid to exploring the soundscape rather than a means for self-serving experimentation. McCartney (1994, 2006) would likely attribute Westerkamp’s deviation to her gender, as her research has shown that many female electroacoustic composers are less techno-centric than their male counterparts. As a pop singer, essentially, Tagaq frames her music mostly in terms of emotional authenticity, much like her musical mentor Björk (Dibben 2009b). A technological focus would undermine this emotional focus. Through her interviews, live performances, and publicity material (e.g., photos), Tagaq constructs herself and her music as sincere and unique. To focus on the details of songwriting or studio work would reduce their sense of immediacy, an aspect she claims is essential to her performances.

I have done much to undermine the authority of the composers, by interrogating their biases and employing the poststructuralist rejection of authorial intention. But what of my biases? Biriotti cautions against the reader (or the listener, in my case) becoming the new authority: “how does one attack authority, even one’s own, without becoming an authority figure oneself” (1993, 14). However, feminist scholarship insists that the reader’s identity is essential to any reading.

Lorraine Code’s (1991) feminist epistemology prioritizes identity, specifically gender identity, in the acquisition of knowledge. Traditionally, knowledge has strived for objectivity: “S knows that p,” regardless of who “S” is. But Code claims that some relativity must be

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20 I do not wish here to suggest that technology-focused composers are somehow “self-serving” or egomaniacal. Rather, I contrast Westerkamp with some composers who find the experimentation with technology, the development of new technology or software, and the extensive manipulation of sound a satisfying creative end.

21 I discuss the role of improvisation in greater detail in Chapter 3.
embraced as epistemologically significant, especially when the traditional Cartesian construct of the pure inquirer is the unspoken (and often unrecognized) perspective of the bourgeois white male. Thus, if the knower is also the reader, Code would champion a reader whose subjectivity comes to bear on interpretation. Alongside her caution against completely removing the author, Miller (Biriotti and Miller 1993) also identifies the precarious status of the reader’s identity:

...the shift that moves the critical emphasis from author to reader, from the text’s origin to its destination, far from producing a multiplicity of addressees, seems to have reduced the possibility of differentiating among readers altogether...” (21)

As I mentioned above, Stéphane Roy (2000) has attempted to access the space between intention/creation and reception/perception through l’analyse du niveau neutre (analysis of the neutral level). However, as Code suggests, such neutrality is almost impossible. Even to sketch a score for the neutral level (an activity Roy outlines in his monograph) incorporates a listening bias based on not only the listener’s previous listening experiences and possible compositional training, but also physiological restrictions (e.g., presbycusis: age-related hearing loss; tinnitus: a noise-induced hearing loss).

My goal is to aim for enough neutrality that my listening experiences find a broader resonance, but also to recognize not only the biases of these composers, but my own as a listener, analyst, and observer. However, even relying on experience is complex and poses a danger to creating a new hegemony (as Miller warns against above). The categorical subject-status of “the listener” is misleading: subjects are not unified and each one has agency. As Joan Scott insists, “[e]xperience is at once always already an interpretation and something that needs to be interpreted. What counts as experience is neither self-evident nor
straightforward; it is always contested, and always therefore political” (1991, 797). I hope that my analyses of these electroacoustic works demonstrate not only my listening experiences as interpretation, but also my critical interpretation of those experiences.

1.4.7 Ethnography

One of my central motivations for researching contemporary electroacoustic music is that it is just that: contemporary—works by living composers that reflect today’s culture. Because of this opportunity for access to the creative forces behind my chosen works, I attempted to interview all five composers discussed in the dissertation.22

I first interviewed Truax on September 1, 2010. During this skype interview in which he clarified several details about Song of Songs, Truax invited me to Vancouver in November 2010 to attend two momentous retrospective concerts devoted solely to his works. Truax explained that any concert in Vancouver devoted solely to his works was a rarity, so I felt I should try to go. I was in Vancouver from November 14-20. In addition to attending these two concerts, I was invited to dinner at his Barnaby home, visited the studio at Simon Fraser University, and attended his public lecture at the Canadian Music Centre. My week in Vancouver gave me a glimpse of Barry Truax not only as a composer, but also a teacher and a person. The home he shares with Guenther Krueger, his partner of more than thirty years, is filled with the evidence of Truax’s compositional work (records and CDs framed on the wall), travel (photographs and souvenirs), competitive Scottish Terriers (a plethora of ribbons), and interest in art (paintings, sculptures). He was eager to point out the sculptures collectively titled “The Shaman Ascending” by the Inuit artist John Terriak that provided

22 Although many would not consider Tagaq a composer given her genre, she is the creator of her songs, and the use of the term facilitates the writing flow.
inspiration for his work of the same name. He enthusiastically shared stories of his travels, compositions, students, and dogs over dinner and while we sat in the Simon Fraser University studio in Burnaby. As his many published articles, books, and detailed website demonstrate, Truax is also a dedicated researcher. As I witnessed from his interactions at the CMC lecture, a pre-concert talk on Friday, and his conversations with current and past students, he uses his own compositional output to engage listeners and researchers regarding the possibilities of computer technology and electroacoustic techniques. Truax’s willingness to share with me his home and personal life, his stories, and his documentation, have helped me to deepen both my insight into his music and appreciation for his contribution to the Canadian and international electroacoustic scenes. These Vancouver experiences permeate my discussion of Song of Songs in Chapter 3.

In order to interview Calon, Normandeau, and Tagaq, I arranged a trip to Montreal in February 2011. Although Calon never responded to my email requesting to finalize a specific time and location for our interview, I was able to spend two hours with Normandeau in his office and touring the studios at the Université de Montréal. Normandeau’s affable personality enabled a lively discussion about not only the Onomatopoeias cycle, but also acousmatics, his theatre music, and arts funding. Information and ideas he shared with me are invaluable to my analysis in Chapter 2.

I attended two shows by the Tanya Tagaq Trio at the Théâtre La Chapelle in Montreal. Tagaq invited me to interview her in the dressing room before the second show, but she was unfortunately delayed, and we postponed the interview until we could talk over skype. This small, but fierce (at least on stage), woman graciously apologized and thanked me for my
patience; her soft and kind manner was exhibited not only to me, but to all audience members who waited outside the dressing room to express their enthusiasm for her music. On April 19, 2011, Tagaq and I were able to converse over Skype while she was at home in Yellowknife between shows. Both the concert experiences and interview allowed me to augment my analysis of her music in Chapter 3, especially regarding her blend of innovation and tradition, and the corporeality of her music. This last aspect in particular was an element I had observed in both the sonic elements of her music and the live performances I had watched in videos posted online. In comparison to the videos in particular, the energy and power of her physical presence was significantly more compelling than I had anticipated.

Since contacting Westerkamp over email, she has been very willing to share information with me as well; for instance, she mailed me a copy of MotherVoiceTalk at my request and emailed me an unsolicited copy of her forthcoming chapter about the experience of creating MotherVoiceTalk and getting to know Roy Kiyooka through his works. Her answers to my email questions have been incorporated into Chapter 4.

1.5 Chapter Overviews

Chapter 2 – “The Ageing Voice and Body in Normandeau’s Onomatopoeias Cycle” focuses on Montreal composer Robert Normandeau’s (b. 1955) four-work Onomatopoeias cycle that highlights four different age groups: childhood (Éclats de voix – 1991), adolescence (Spleen – 1993), adulthood (Le renard et la rose – 1995), and old age (Palimpseste – 2005, 06, 09). This chapter examines Normandeau’s Onomatopoeias cycle as an artistic exploration of the ageing process, an exploration that considers both emotional and
physical aspects specific to certain developmental stages. I discuss Normandeau’s inclusion of both abstract and referential sounds (all from the voice). Referential sounds powerfully evoke their bodily sources; the more abstract sounds, however, rely on other indicators to construct human agency. I also explore Normandeau’s construction of expressive bodies in the *Onomatopeias* cycle; both physical and emotional expressions emerge as Normandeau uses extramusical references (i.e., titles), gestures, morphology, rhythm and distinct sonic markers to construct bodies that move, feel, and interact. In particular, I discuss Normandeau’s evocation of anger and intimacy and his use of rhythm to construct physical and emotional expressions in the cycle. Then, I examine how Normandeau constructs the infirm, weak, exhausted, and dying body, particularly in the final work, *Palimpseste*. The final section considers Normandeau’s representation of the various life stages, particularly through what I perceive as a process of ironic nostalgia.

Chapter 3 – “The Voice and the Body as the Studio’s Social and Sensuous Game” explores social and sensuous relationships, the unseen interactions between bodies as heard through the recorded voice. In Barry Truax’s *Song of Songs* (1992), eroticism abounds as multiple bodies are heard and constructed through the text, the voices and their spatial placement, and the technological modifications of both the vocal and soundscape elements. I examine both the sensuality of the original biblical text and Truax’s extension of this sensuality to polyamorous and homoerotic meanings. Truax’s use of granular time stretching creates an increased sensuousness through the emphasis on erotic text, the blurred boundaries between song and speech, and the accentuation of the grain of the voice. These elements combine with Truax’s soundscape elements, situating the lovers near nature, which is itself a
biblical metaphor for love. Sensuality and the body also emerge on Tanya Tagaq’s two recorded albums, *Sinaa* (2005) and *Auk/Blood* (2008), in which Inuit throat singing is removed from its original social context and reconstructed in the studio—a social and sensuous play between technology and human, both of which construct something evocative of the original context. My analysis considers how Tagaq both continues and challenges the origins of her vocal style and performance approach. I highlight the increasing distance from tradition on *Auk/Blood*, wherein a more experimental and spacious vocal style emerges and a new kind of body develops: a sensuous body that expresses its sexual, even autoerotic, desires and fulfillment in lyrics, rhythm, and extended vocal technique.

Chapter 4 – “Playing with Words: Electroacoustic Storytelling” explores the voice as a vehicle for storytelling and constructing identity. In this chapter I discuss Montreal acousmatic composer Christian Calon’s *Minuit* (1989), a forty-minute work that incorporates voices, text, soundscape material, and synthesized sound to construct a narrative. This narrative is not autobiographical, but rather its often-fantastical story speaks to Calon’s reliance on Georges Bataille’s concept of *erotism*; Bataille’s notion of a “leap” continuously performed through the sexual act pervades Calon’s poetic texts and his manipulation of texture, and most importantly, the timbral and spatial elements of the human voice. In *Minuit*, Calon narrates a universal story of humanity’s attempts to transcend its discontinuity. In the second half of the chapter, I focus on Vancouver soundscape artist Hildegard Westerkamp, and her incorporation of her own life story into her works. In *Für Dich – For You* (2005), she relies on a poetic text of Rainer M. Rilke to reflect preoccupations in her own mind about love, connectedness, and home. To highlight the personal aspect of this narrative, she
includes the voices of friends, family, and colleagues, as well as sounds from her two homes—northern Germany and the West Coast. She expands this autobiographical element in *MotherVoiceTalk* (2008). By paralleling Japanese-Canadian artist Roy Kiyooka’s own reflections in his *Mothertalk* project, Westerkamp explores her immigrant identity, an identity defined by language, place, and her mother. In all three works, the resulting narratives combine text, soundscape elements, and synthesized sounds to create stories that are situated on constructed continuums between reality and fantasy, and private and public.

Chapter 5 – “Conclusion” summarizes the previous chapters and reflects on the relationships among them. As will emerge throughout this dissertation, aesthetic, technological, and musical elements connect composers and works across the chapter divides I have constructed. In this final chapter, I consider these alternative groupings and observe larger, overarching themes that unite the works discussed.

1.6 Conclusion

In the following chapters, I trace the human presence as constructed through the voice in order to articulate ways in which electroacoustic aesthetics and compositional procedures create works that extend, enhance, or contradict our experience of the voice as a mode of expression and communication. The works are varied, but from the young girl in *Éclats de voix* (the first work in Normandeau’s *Onomatopoeias* cycle) to the grown child and her elderly mother in *MotherVoiceTalk*, they find a link in human experience.
Chapter 2
The Ageing Voice and Body in Normandeau’s
Onomatopoeias Cycle

2.0 Introduction

I once heard a professor make a sage, though somewhat morbid, observation: “One day you are going to die.” This word of warning reminded me to keep all things in perspective and remember the mortality of the human body. The ageing process is a unique experience for each person, as various factors unite to impact one’s physical, mental, and emotional well being. But certain factors, such as gender and health, can manifest more broadly applicable “symptoms” of ageing. Montreal composer Robert Normandeau created a cycle of works that offers a glimpse into his own notions regarding ageing, and even though it does not address the ageing body in any universal or scientific sense, the cycle will strike a chord with many listeners as they reflect on their own experience of growing older.

This chapter examines Normandeau’s Onomatopoeias cycle as an artistic exploration of the ageing process, an exploration that considers both emotional and physical aspects specific to certain developmental stages. Following an introductory section on Normandeau’s biography and artistic oeuvre, I provide background information on the cycle, including the role of technology and Normandeau’s aesthetic approach of cinéma pour l’oreille in constructing this ageing process.1 Next, I discuss how Normandeau constructs the body, allowing the listener to combine the abstract and referential sounds with her own experiences to imagine the body. Then I explore Normandeau’s construction of physical and emotional expressions that emerge through Normandeau’s use of extramusical references (i.e., titles),

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1 I contrast Normandeau’s use of cinéma pour l’oreille with Calon’s in Chapter 5 and demonstrate in both cases how this aesthetic and its musical outcome are often similar to some soundscape compositions.
gestures, morphology, rhythm and distinct sonic markers. In particular, I focus on three aspects. First, I describe the various depictions of anger across the different ages in the cycle, using Smalley’s indicative fields and Wallace Berry’s element-actions (1987). Second, I examine Normandeau’s use of rhythm as an expression of vitality and a construction of adolescent physicality. Third, I discuss Normandeau’s use of “intimate” sounds and space as a means of both emotional and physical expression.

The next section addresses the somber side of ageing and the mortal body. I examine how Normandeau constructs the infirm, weak, exhausted, and dying body, particularly in the cycle’s final work, *Palimpseste*. Normandeau achieves this impression of vulnerability through specific sounds (e.g., coughs), a reference to an over-worked character in *Le petit prince*, and several elements of *Palimpseste* that construct elderly, infirm bodies. The final section considers Normandeau’s representation of the various life stages, particularly through what I perceive as a process of ironic nostalgia. First, I contrast the seeming innocence of the child’s voice and the vivacity of teenagers and onomatopoeias with the dark and somber character suggested by the “states” and conveyed in the sonic environments. Second, I consider the contradiction between sincerity and irony in Normandeau’s reference to *Le petit prince* in *Le renard et la rose*. Finally, I discuss nostalgia as a melancholic reflection on life, particularly in *Le renard et la rose* and *Palimpseste*.

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2 For a fuller explanation of Wallace Berry’s notion of form in Normandeau’s *Onomatopoeias* cycle, see Woloshyn 2011a.
2.1 Biography and Background: Robert Normandeau

Normandeau is an integral part of the Canadian electroacoustic scene. Born in Quebec City in 1955, he now resides in Montreal where he is a professor of electroacoustic music composition at the Université de Montréal. He received a BMus in Composition (with a specialization in electroacoustics; 1984) from the Université Laval, an MMus in Composition (1988) and the first PhDMus in Electroacoustic Composition (1992) from the Université de Montréal. He has worked under other important Canadian electroacoustic composers such as Marcelle Deschênes and Francis Dhomont (both of whom worked with Pierre Schaeffer), and is a founding member of the Canadian Electroacoustic Community.

His works have received frequent accolades and numerous awards: Éclats de voix was awarded the Premier Prix du jury and tied for the Prix du public at the second Prix international Noroit-Léonce Petitot (Arras, France, 1991) and received First Mention at the Bourges International Electroacoustic Competition (France, 1993); Spleen was awarded the Prix du public at the third Prix international Noroit-Léonce Petitot (1994); Le renard et la rose won the Golden Nica at the 1996 Ars Electronica competition (Linz, Austria); Palimpseste was a finalist at the 2005 Musica Nova competition (Prague).

The onomatopoeic cycle sits within a broader context of Normandeau’s oeuvre. Three main preoccupations characterize his output:

• Interdisciplinary projects, most particularly music for theatre productions; much of this music is re-worked into independent musical works such as the following: Le cap de la

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3 Some may debate the validity of calling Francis Dhomont a “Canadian” composer. He was born in France and lives there now. But he lived and taught in Montreal for many years; he is an Associate Composer of the Canadian Music Centre, and he was a founding member of the Canadian Electroacoustic Community.


- Use of the human voice as a sound source. Bédé (1990) was not Normandeau’s first work to use the human voice, although it was the first work to use onomatopoeias. He used onomatopoeias again in recent works other than the onomatopoeic cycle: Claire de terre (1999), Erinyes (2001), and Puzzle (2003).

2.2 The Onomatopoeias Cycle

In 1990, Normandeau created an electroacoustic work whose sound source consisted solely of vocal onomatopoeias: Bédé. This work inspired Normandeau to begin a cycle of works entitled Onomatopoeias that explore the recorded human voice at different ages:

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4 Normandeau composed one work prior to Bédé that featured the human voice: La chambre blanche (1985-86). However, Normandeau explained that the work “was not especially about the voice; it was about poetry, so I didn’t work that much with the voice at the time” (Woloshyn 2011b). Similarly with Chorus (2002) Normandeau uses the human voice, but not merely as a means to what he calls “sound” (i.e., intrinsic qualities) as opposed to “sources”; the piece incorporates sounds from Judaism, Christianity, and Islam as a sonic appeal for unity in love following the tragedy of September 11, 2001. Both of these works take inspiration from outside the sound source—poetry in the former, a religion-inspired terrorist attack in the latter—rather than transforming the inner sound.

5 It is worth mentioning that in the original program notes for Erinyes, the work is identified as the fourth work in the onomatopoeic cycle. Other documentation, including personal correspondence from Normandeau, does not include Erinyes in the cycle and identifies Palimpseste as the fourth and final work of the cycle. Erinyes does not follow the timeline of the other works in the cycle, but it does use onomatopoeias.

6 For more information regarding Normandeau’s compositional and aesthetic approaches, see the interview by Paul Steenhuisen (2009).

« L’idée de la pièce était de travailler cette matière sonore de manière à couvrir tout le registre et tout le spectre sonore sans l’aide d’aucune source sonore étrangère »\(^8\)

(Normandeau 1992, 57).

*Bédé* was Normandeau’s first work to focus on the human voice and onomatopoeias. The piece was originally created for an empreintes DIGITALes release entitled *Électro Clips: 25 Electroacoustic Snapshots*. The co-producers of the project, Jean-François Denis and Claude Schryer, asked for three-minute works, the length of the typical popular song played on the radio (Austin 1991), but significantly shorter than the typical electroacoustic work at the time; Normandeau explains:

"It was very original at the time because electroacoustic music pieces are usually quite long. Especially in the 70s, 80s, you could find easily pieces of two, three, or four hours, for example. To commission pieces for three minutes was kind of a challenge for electronic composers." (Woloshyn 2011b)

The work was produced at the composer’s studio in Montreal and at the Groupe de recherches musicales in Paris (Normandeau 1994). Normandeau used recordings of eleven-year-old Marie-Hélène Blain saying sounds that come from children’s comic books, sounds

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\(^7\) Normandeau completed five versions of *Palimpseste* before finding satisfaction with the sixth and final version in 2009.

\(^8\) “The idea of the piece was to work with this sonic material in order to cover the whole register and the whole sonic spectrum without the aid of a single foreign sound source.” (All translations are mine unless otherwise stated.)
collected in Trait and Dulude’s book.9 The reference to comic books led to the name of the piece: Bédé is a pun on the abbreviation of the French word for a comic strip, bande dessinée (often referred to by its acronym BD, pronounced “bay day”).

While composing Bédé, Normandeau recognized the potential of the human voice and onomatopoeias for musical exploration; Normandeau exclaims:

...with onomatopoeias, you work with sounds, but you are not working only with sounds. Because you’re working with the voice, you are working with emotions. And because you are working with onomatopoeias, things that don’t say anything by definition. They represent things by sound, but they don’t say abstract things. ... I have a sound material completely involving emotion and, not really but almost, universal. Because it has nothing to do, or almost nothing to do, with the abstract structure of the language or my specific mother tongue, for example. (Woloshyn 2011b)

Because Bédé was relatively short (due to technological constraints), Normandeau decided to use the same samples to create a longer work. In 1991, Normandeau completed Éclats de voix, a fifteen-minute work in five sections, each with a particular sonic quality. Thanks to the success of Éclats de voix, his first large-scale work with onomatopoeias, Normandeau decided to use the same timeline to create more works:

After the completion of that work [Éclats de voix], I realized that it was the first time for me, as well as in the history of electroacoustic music, that we were able not only to keep a trace of our recorded and treated sounds, but also to keep the gestures that were used to make them. (Ogborn 2009)

The result was a four-work cycle: Éclats de voix, Spleen, Le renard et la rose, and Palimpseste.

Éclats de voix is substantially longer than Bédé, and thus, it explores more thoroughly the sounds of onomatopoeias and a young girl’s voice. Éclats de voix was produced at the

9 Blain was the daughter of a woman with whom Normandeau was living at the time (Woloshyn 2011b).
The title Éclats de voix contains a double meaning: a translation of each word renders the phrase “fragments of voice” (appropriate for the electroacoustic compositional approach), but it is usually translated as “shouts”—a translation Normandeau feels is suited to typical emotions of children; he explains: « Puis, en second lieu, éclats de voix pour le sens second, celui de la colère, celle des jeunes enfants qui apparaît et disparaît très soudainement, comme une tornade » (Normandeau 1992, xv).

Normandeau divided the work into five sections that he believes represent childhood “states”; each state is coupled with a “sonorous parameter” (Normandeau 2009a). The five sections are as follows: 1) Jeu et rythme (Play and Rhythm), 2) Tendresse et timbre (Tenderness and Timbre), 3) Colère et dynamique (Anger and Dynamics), 4) Tristesse et espace (Sadness and Space), and 5) Joie et texture (Joy and Texture). Normandeau intends that each of the five sections could be stand-alone works for radio broadcast or concert programming. Though each section is distinctive and independent, unity remains across the

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10 Normandeau was able to make use of the equipment at the GRM. For more information, see Daniel Teruggi, “Technology and musique concrète: The Technical Developments of the Groupe de Recherches Musicales and Their Implication in Musical Composition,” *Organised Sound*, Vol. 12, No. 3 (2007): 213-231.

11 The work was conceived for multi-track presentation, with live sound diffusion of the sixteen tracks, depending on the performance space. Jean-François Denis and Normandeau re-worked the sixteen-track version to a stereo version that “simulate[s] a concert setting” (Normandeau 1994, 16).

12 “Then, secondly, éclats de voix in the second sense, that of anger, that of young children that appears and disappears very suddenly, like a tornado.”

13 Normandeau uses the word “sonorous” rather than “musical” perhaps to avoid expectations of some of the traditional musical parameters, including melody and harmony, two parameters that do not exist in this work in any conventional sense.

14 This third section is entitled “Colère et dynamique” in all of the four works in the cycle.

15 The program notes for Éclats de voix and Spleen make specific mention of the possibility of isolating sections for radio play; the program notes for Le renard et la rose and Palimpseste do not mention this possibility. When asked to clarify this statement, Normandeau explained: “Each section is almost self-contained or self-sufficient up to a point. But I never play an excerpt of these pieces personally…” (Woloshyn 2011b). He felt that only the first and fourth sections would lend themselves most naturally to isolated performances.
five sections through the use of the same sound source (the young girl) and common textures and processing methods (Berezan 1998, 2).

Figure 2.1 - Listening Score for Éclats de voix. © Robert Normandeau, 1992. Used by permission of the composer. 16

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16 Normandeau explained (Woloshyn 2011b) that the score was made for diffusion purposes, to remind him (or whoever is behind the mixer) of significant sounds and gestures. Reproduced with permission from Normandeau; originally published in Normandeau’s dissertation (1992).
The score above includes the five sections and incorporates graphics that provide a level of sonic representation.

*Spleen* was composed in 1993 in Normandeau’s studio. From *Éclats de voix*, Normandeau kept the same timeline, using the dynamic profiles, filterings, levels, spatializations, and so on, but removing the actual sounds. He then recorded the same onomatopoeias as *Éclats de voix*, but this time with four sixteen-year-old boys (Marc Gilbert, Laurent-Josée Sainte-Marie, Nicolas Thériault, and Patrick Virar) saying the onomatopoeias; the boys selected some of their own onomatopoeias from *Le dictionnaire des bruits*, so *Spleen* does not contain exactly the same onomatopoeias in the exact same locations as *Éclats de voix*. Normandeau insists that rather than exactly replicating the sounds of *Éclats de voix*, he allowed the sounds of the teenage boys—the emotion, the energy— to trigger his imagination:

I tried to make a kind of an equivalence. If there was an “ouch” onomatopoeia somewhere, I tried to find an “ouch” onomatopoeia said by the boys. But it’s not necessarily exactly the same thing; so you have to compose. I tried to make it as far as possible very close to the original. But there are some differences. The energy is not the same; the emotion is not the same. (Woloshyn 2011b).

The word “spleen” in French refers to a state of melancholy, a mood Normandeau claims is “one of the most significant moods of the adolescent: this kind of sudden melancholy which surfaces for no apparent reason” (Normandeau 2009a). *Spleen* is also divided into five sections, each with an emotion or idea paired with the same “sonorous parameters” from *Éclats de voix*: 1) *Musique et rythme* (Music and Rhythm), 2) *Mélancolie et timbre* (Melancholy and Timbre), 3) *Colère et dynamique* (Anger and Dynamics), 4) *Frustration et espace* (Frenzy and Space), and 5) *Délice et texture* (Frenzy and Texture).
In 1995, Normandeau completed the third work in the onomatopoeic cycle: *Le renard et la rose*. He composed it in his studio as a commission from the Banff Centre for the Arts for the 1995 International Computer Music Conference. *Le renard et la rose*, like all works in this cycle, lasts about fifteen minutes but is based exclusively on the adult voice. As with the previous two pieces, *Le renard et la rose* is divided into five sections, each named for a feeling Normandeau associates with the particular age (i.e., adulthood) and a sonorous parameter. The sonorous parameters remain the same throughout the cycle, but as Normandeau changes each feeling that is paired with the sonorous parameters, the parameters are explored in new and various ways. The five sections are as follows: 1) *Babillage et rythme* (Babbling and Rhythm), 2) *Nostalgie et timbre* (Nostalgia and Timbre), 3) *Colère et dynamique* (Anger and Dynamics), 4) *Lassitude et espace* (Weariness and Space), and 5) *Sérénité et texture* (Serenity and Texture). The title of the work refers to two main characters from Antione de Saint-Exupéry’s 1943 novella *Le petit prince*; for a 1994 radio adaptation of the novella produced by Odile Magnan, Normandeau created incidental music made from recorded onomatopoeias. Normandeau retained two aspects of *Le petit prince* for *Le renard et la rose*: the musical themes associated with particular characters (also based only on vocal sounds),\(^{17}\) and the actors’ voices.\(^{18}\) Because the actors were already in the recording studio for their parts in the radio adaptation, Normandeau asked them to stay a bit longer to record the onomatopoeias, both as a group and individually. The sounds from *Le

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\(^{17}\) He presents them chronologically: the King, the Businessman, the Conceited Man, the Flock of Wild Birds, the Well in the Desert, the Rose, the Baobabs, the Lamplighter, the Little Flower, the Merchant Who Sold Thirst-Quenching Pills, the Fox, and the Geographer.

\(^{18}\) The actors in *Le petit prince*: Pierre Bourgault, Françoise Davoine, Cynthia Dubois, Michel Dumont, Gilles Dupuis, Luc Durand, Monique Giroux, Jacques Languirand, Jean Marchand, Jean-Louis Millette, Guy Nadon, Martin Penséa, Gérard Poirier, Claude Préfontaine, and Christine Séguin.
*petit prince* are like a secret layer, almost like an inside joke for Normandeau and any listener who can hear the sounds from the radio adaptation. Normandeau wanted to highlight “where the sound comes from. And it also adds a specificity to this third work that the first two didn’t have” (Woloshyn 2011b).

Following a ten-year hiatus from the cycle *Onomatopoeias*, Normandeau composed the fourth and last work in the cycle: *Palimpseste* (2005, 06, 09). The work was commissioned by the Zentrum für Kunst und Medientechnologie Karlsruhe (ZKM) in Germany. Having set up the chronological timeline of the other three works (i.e., childhood, adolescence, adulthood), Normandeau had to fit in the last piece of the age puzzle: old age. He used the voices of Andrée Lachapelle (French Canadian actress), Christiane Pasquier (French Canadian actress), Christian Gressier, Eberhard Geyer, and Gabriela Lang. The age range of these participants was 55-75. As with the first three works in the cycle, *Palimpseste* consists of five sections, each dedicated to a musical parameter and associated with a particular emotion, feeling, or mood associated with old age:19 1) *Furie et rythme* (Fury and Rhythm), 2) *Amertume et timbre* (Bitterness and Timbre), 3) *Colère et dynamique* (Anger and Dynamics), 4) *Fatigue et espace* (Tiredness and Space), 5) *Sagesse et texture* (Wisdom and Texture). However, Normandeau makes contrasts from the previous three works by focusing less on the sounds themselves and more on the contours:

So technically speaking I was just using the same structure with the same onomatopoeias as the first three pieces, but these onomatopoeias were only controlling another layer of sustained sounds. So they were just shaping the sustained sounds. But the original onomatopoeias are not heard. It’s a fake thing. I just put a

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19 To reiterate, each section in each work of the cycle focuses on the same sonorous parameter. Because each works uses the same timeline (modifications), the parameters remain the same.
shape on something that doesn’t have any shape, but the shape is coming from another source... (Woloshyn 2011b)

The result is a softer sound overall. I discuss the expressive implications of this approach below. Table 2.1 demonstrates the relationships between the four works, outlining the various titles for each section and key sonic elements that distinguish them.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Spleen</th>
<th>Le renard et la rose</th>
<th>Palimpseste</th>
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<td>1993</td>
<td>1995</td>
<td>2005, 06, 09</td>
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<td>Adolescence</td>
<td>Adulthood</td>
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<td>(0:00-4:02)</td>
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<td>Amertume et timbre</td>
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<td>(4:02-6:42)</td>
<td>(4:03-6:41)</td>
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<td>• vertical gestures indiscernible</td>
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<td>• song fragment (6:12ff)</td>
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Table 2.1 - Overview of the formal divisions in Robert Normandeau’s Onomatopoeias cycle (1991–2009).
Keeping in mind the general timeline of the cycle and the unique moods of each work, I now explore this cycle as it relates to broader themes of ageing outlined in the introduction above.

### 2.3 Identity: Something’s Lost and Something’s Gained

By what gaze do I name myself?
How do I translate the many movements that have shaped me?
(From *A New World Poem* – Connie Fife)

Transduction separates the source of the acoustic signal from the transduced code, which is in analogue or digital form. It is through the deliberate and artistic manipulation of this code that the composer constructs new sonic environments. The composer uses elements of the transduced code: manipulates it to draw out certain frequencies, to stretch out certain portions, to place it at certain points within the mix, and so on. For this cycle, Normandeau has taken real human bodies, their voices and movements, and transduced them into digital code so that he can construct new “bodies” that are imagined by the listener through the presence of conspicuous human sounds that reference both gender and age, and inconspicuous sounds whose timbres and gestures indicate human agency. I first place this cycle within the context of Normandeau’s *cinéma pour l’oreille* aesthetic; the interplay between referential and abstract sounds is essential to the expressive power of the cycle, particularly in the unsettling disjuncture between human and technological agency. I then highlight several instances in which the age and gender of the vocal sources impact both abstract sonic elements of the cycle and clear human sounds; in particular, age and gender are physiological elements that leave certain developmental traces in this cycle.
Normandeau approaches his constructed sonic environments through a particular ideology of acousmatic music: *cinéma pour l’oreille*. In contrast to Schaeffer’s *musique concrète*, Normandeau’s works embrace both the intrinsic sound qualities and their associations (Normandeau 2009a). In his 1992 doctoral thesis, Normandeau explored his idea of the “cinema for the ear,” a term first used in the 1960s to denote diffused electroacoustic works designed to offer a “sound spectacle” to the audience. Sound and meaning combine to create a meaningful listening experience.\(^{20}\) For Normandeau, *cinéma pour l’oreille* involves drawing upon elements of cinematographic grammar and language for the purposes of composition and analysis.

While the approach of the “French” school with Schaeffer’s *musique concrète* sought to remove all referential aspects of sound in order to focus on only the nature of the sounds themselves, *cinéma pour l’oreille* emphasizes both sound and meaning (Ogborn 2009): « les sons, dès origine, racontent déjà quelque chose... » (Normandeau 1992, 2).\(^ {21}\) Normandeau’s goal to explore both sound and meaning demonstrates that he considers the listener’s perspective when composing: listeners seek to identify the “found sounds” and relate them to their own lives (8). The composer must find a way to incorporate the listener’s tendencies for sound identification while not reducing the work to a mere incidental narrative.\(^ {22}\)

\(^{20}\) Other Quebec acousmatic composers also subscribe to this theoretical framework, including fellow Dhomont student Gilles Gobeil.

\(^{21}\) “...sounds, from their beginning, already say something...”

\(^{22}\) Sur le plan sonore, le niveau de « réalité », c’est-à-dire la reconnaissance des formes, souvent assimilée à la reconnaissance des causes d’un son, pose un problème délicat, car si on s’intéresse à la nature typomorphologique des sons, comme l’a fait Schaeffer par le biais de l’écoute réduite (ce qui demeure une attitude valable pour le spécialiste), on risque d’ignorer le désir (légitime après tout) des auditeurs d’identifier les « faits sonores » afin de les situer par rapport à eux-mêmes. Par contre, l’attitude inverse consiste à ramener tout le sonore autre qu’instrumental à un aspect anecdotique et, par conséquent, à réduire l’art acousmatique au niveau du bricolage (cela c’est vu...). En effet, si en acousmatique le degré de « réalisme » est supérieur à celui de la musique instrumentale, cela ne signifie pas pour autant que ce soit toujours le but recherché. En fait, au-delà de la polémique entourant l’identification de la cause du son (source potentielle d’avilissement du musical...), je
I suggest that Normandeau’s composition of the *Onomatopoeias* cycle is shaped by this “cinema for the ear” approach. It is not a documentation of the ageing process, but an artistic glimpse into that process. The work’s sonic impressions construct bodies, spaces, and environments that the listener imagines. In his dissertation (1992), Normandeau illustrates the *cinéma pour l’oreille* aesthetic and compositional approach through *Éclats de voix*. However, in our interview, Normandeau explained to me that he does not consider the cycle to be *cinéma pour l’oreille* because it contains no real-world sounds other than the human voice (Woloshyn 2011b). Despite this contradiction, I believe that the aesthetic principle permeates the work, particularly through the emphasis on sound and meaning. Without a listener hearing some connection to sounds and gestures from his real-world experiences, the cycle would lose expressive possibilities. As Smalley’s indicative fields demonstrate, connections to real-life experience can be found even in abstract sounds. Thus, I believe that Normandeau uses some approaches laid out in the aesthetics of *cinéma pour l’oreille* to construct sonic environments that allow the listener to imagine the human agency behind the sounds.

“On the sonic shot, the level of “reality,” that is, pattern recognition, often compared with the recognition of the causes of a sound, poses a delicate problem, because if one is interested in the typo-morphological nature of sounds, like Schaeffer did by the means of reduced listening (which remains a valuable approach for specialists), one is likely to be unaware of the listeners’ desire (legitimate after all) to identify the “found sounds” in order to situate them in relation to themselves. On the other hand, the opposite approach consists of bringing the sound (other than instrumental) to the anecdotal angle and, consequently, reducing acousmatic art to the level of *bricolage* [i.e., junk art] (we’ve seen this...). Indeed, if in acousmatic music the degree of “realism” is higher than that of instrumental music, that does not mean that this is the sought-after goal. In fact, beyond the polemic surrounding the identification of the cause of sound (a potential source of musical depreciation), I believe that this dimension should be considered an asset of this new sound art.”

Normandeau begins with the voice and constructs bodies for the listener to imagine. These “bodies” are not always human; sometimes Normandeau’s sonic environments suggest exotic jungles, filled with wild creatures and birds, and other times mechanical jungles, filled with automatons whose regular rhythms and metallic timbres provide an eerie parallel to our contemporary world. But my analysis concentrates on the constructed and imagined human bodies in the cycle, their emotions and experiences, and what they express about Normandeau’s view on the ageing process.

It all began with a voice. Normandeau composed many other works over the fifteen years it took to complete the *Onomatopoeias* cycle. As is reflected in the many pieces above that use the human voice, though, Normandeau is drawn to the potential of the vocal sound source:

> Je compose à partir d’une interaction très étroite entre la transformation du matériau et ce qu’il me donne en retour. C’est pour ça que le travail avec la voix est toujours très stimulant. J’ai fait d’autres pièces entre chacune des pièces du cycle, mais chaque fois que j’y revenais, c’était une bénédiction.  

(24) (Olivier 1999)

For a listener who is unaware of the original sound sources, an eleven-year old girl, sixteen-year-old boys, and adults will not come to mind. But the vocal sounds one can hear clearly are much more about the body than pure sound. From *Éclats de voix*’s wet mouth sounds (0:47) and phonemes (6:34), to the closed-mouth laugh of *Spleen* (4:05) and nasal French vowel [c˜] (5:01), Normandeau presents vocal sounds that emphasize the human vocal apparatus, namely the parts in the mouth (tongue, lips, teeth, saliva) and other non-verbal vocal sounds (e.g., laughter, coughs, kissing, breathing). These moments create strong sonic

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24 “I compose from a very close interaction between the transformation of material and what it gives me in return. It is for this reason that my work with the voice is always very stimulating. I wrote other works between each work of the cycle, but each time that I returned to it, it was a blessing.”
impressions, as they are unexpected surprises in a sonic environment seemingly designed to hide the body and voice. And these surprising sounds all create images of the body as it moves, suffers, and enjoys both the sounds it creates and the impetus for creating them.

The voice is a unique element of identity. Speaker recognition software exists because of the particularity of the voice, its cadence, tone, and articulations idiosyncratic to the individual. As I have mentioned earlier, this distinctive quality of the voice, both in general (i.e., a real human voice) and in specific (e.g., Bob’s voice) terms, can be difficult, and almost impossible, to disguise. Normandeau is a sound artist who can sculpt extraordinary sounds into previously unknown and unrecognizable states, all through the use of his technology: fragmenting, layering, filtering, stretching; these are only a few of the techniques Normandeau can use to transform the human sound source into something new, something unworldly at times. Normandeau erases the unique vocal identity of his human sound sources. The original gender and age are hidden at times, leaving new sonic impressions. However, Normandeau does retain aspects of the original sources’ identity, namely gender, allowing this aspect to influence the manipulated sounds. Not everything is lost in Normandeau’s technological game. Some human traces remain, and therefore, the listener can imagine these new possible identities.

While it is possible that some may encounter the works of this cycle without any knowledge of their sound source, this ignorance seems highly unlikely. Most listeners will not “happen” across these works while shopping at the local grocery store or attending a dinner party. The first work, Éclats de voix, suggests the human sound source in its title, both

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25 Controlled listener response settings in classrooms or test audiences in which program notes are not supplied with the goal of analyzing listener perspectives without prior background knowledge are perhaps the only types of settings where ignorance would exist.
as “shouts” and as “fragments of the voice.” So the listener is left to wonder, if the sole sound source is a human voice, where is it? Why can’t I hear it? A listener may feel unease, as I did, over this disjunction between what one knows and what one hears. The listener’s own self-identity feels precarious when the cycle seems to so easily remove the individuality, the humanness of the voice. Normandeau has silenced the voices of those he has recorded, thereby erasing their identity. Whose are these voices? These actual people are strangers to the listeners in any case, but the listener could imagine who they are. Their names are written in the programs, and they can be searched online, but once they give up their voices to be transferred into digital code, they forfeit all claims to their own stories, the presentation of their own identities. But in exchange the composer constructs new stories, new identities, and the listener combines his own experiences and memories with the sounds encountered to decode the music:

A record can’t limit the voice’s meaning; a voice, once recorded, doesn’t speak the same meanings that it originally intended. Every playing of a record is a liberation of a shut-in meaning—a movement, across the groove’s boundary, from silence into sound, from code into clarity. A record carries a secret message, but no one can plan the nature of that secret, and no one can silence the secret once it has been sung. (Koestenbaum 1994, 51)

Normandeau begins his “game” with the human voice in Éclats de voix. Given that the sound source is the voice of a single eleven-year-old girl, it is apparent that the vocal sounds have been greatly modified by technology. The humanly impossible tessitura and timbres, and the mechanized repetitions of loops announce the mediation by technology throughout the work. If one did not know that Éclats de voix used only the human voice for all of its sound material, one would not easily assume that as the case. Through the various treatments and modifications (filtering, granular processing/synthesis, spectral analysis,
fragmentation, reverberation, flanging, and delay), the child’s voice is often left completely unrecognizable. Certain sounds are clearly vocal (from whole words to individual phonemes), but one might assume first that vocal sounds have been combined with other non-vocal sounds rather than the reality: all of the varied sounds in *Éclats de voix* come from the recorded voice of an eleven-year-old girl.

The first section of *Éclats de voix* is aptly named *jeu*: Normandeau early on establishes the “game” of technological modification that he has created for himself as a composer and for the listener. The sonic environment of the cycle cannot hide its technological source. Though some sounds may resemble nature, most suggest a level of modification. Once the listener is aware of the real sound source, the knowledge of the level of modification required to create the end result is astonishing. Children are growing up in a time when the absence of cell phones, wi-fi, and mp3 players seems unthinkable. Interaction with and dependence on technology is a hallmark of the Western world. So while it may be astonishing, or perhaps disturbing, the amount of modification Normandeau has applied to the voice only echoes the ubiquity of technology in society and its impact on our bodies, voices, and behaviours.

Normandeau explains that he does not consider these pieces particularly abstract:

> Because in the other works — except for *Palimpseste*, where things were a bit more transformed — the first three works, the sound is not transformed; it’s there: onomatopoeias — pure. Except one thing: transposition. Because I needed very low frequency or higher pitch. But usually there’s only octave transposition, that’s it. Nothing more, nothing less. (Woloshyn 2011b)

Despite this assertion, as a listener I find the pieces largely abstract. As John Dack (2002) explains, these two terms—concrete and abstract—rely on context to elucidate their potential
meaning. For a composer in the lineage of Schaeffer’s *musique concrète*, the compositional process begins with sound (i.e., concrete) and moves towards its intrinsic qualities (i.e., abstract); composers of *musique concrète* and acousmatic music work with sound like sculptors, slowing peeling away layers and transforming the sound materials into sound art. This is in contrast to traditional composers who begin with the idea (i.e., abstract) and only after the piece has been written in a score will the music be played and heard (i.e., concrete).²⁶ So when Normandeau describes the *Onomatopoeias* cycle as “concrete,” he betrays his compositional bias: he hears his process and can recognize the original source because he guided its sound from unmediated to heavily transformed. For the listener, though, “abstract” often reads in opposition to “representational,” or reference to everyday life, or between what Emmerson (1986) calls “aural” and “mimetic” discourses; the former refers to conventional musical characteristics (e.g., pitch or rhythmic intervals) while the latter refers to the potential for sound to signify an extrinsic attribute;²⁷ the listener hears only the final product, not the process that created it, and so is not privy to all the complexities of the concrete/abstract dualism in electroacoustic music. Furthermore, perhaps Normandeau’s disappointed reaction to my “abstract” classification stems from the Schaefferian resistance to music deemed “too abstract” or “intellectual” (i.e., pure electronic music). My experience

²⁶ I acknowledge that this comparison is simplistic. Some composers composed at an instrument (e.g., piano), minimizing the gap between abstract and concrete. Other compositions arise out of improvisation; these works are concrete before they are ever abstract (i.e., written in a score). Finally, MIDI technology reduces the need for composers to remain in the abstract as they can easily hear a digitized rendition of their symphony, string quartet, or gamelan piece.

²⁷ Pierre Schaeffer (1952) in fact drew a parallel between *musique concrète* and abstract painting; the abstractness of the painting (with no depiction of specific objects) is the final goal of *musique concrète*. Schaeffer describes his goal: «...poursuivre la recherche musicale à partir du concret, certes, mais tout entière vouée à la reconquête de l’indispensable abstrait musical» (1966, 24). Translation: “...to persevere with the musical research from the concrete, indeed, but all together dedicated to the recapture of the indispensable musical abstract.”
of the cycle is not that it is purely “intellectual”; rather, I believe that Normandeau successfully portrays many of the emotions ascribed to the various section titles. However, as I have suggested above, overt “humanness” is often absent; the human sound source is rarely made explicit. But Normandeau’s intention, from his own words, program notes, and section titles, is to express (part of) the human experience. Smalley’s indicative fields account for the sometimes subtle ways that the human presence permeates electroacoustic music. Thus, the presence of overtly human sounds and human gestures (which I can describe using Smalley’s indicative fields) helps me to negotiate the expressive meaning of the cycle.

The clear modification of human vocal sounds (e.g., laughter, coughs) highlights the tension between the natural and artificial. While other sounds (e.g., those imitating wild birds, regular metallic pulsing) also contain some of this tension, it is through the gradual and obvious modification that Normandeau draws attention to the process, his control as composer, the vulnerability of the body and voice in the hands of technology and its master. For example, Normandeau draws deliberate attention to his technological processes in *Le renard et la rose* as the laughter is modified through heavy reverberation, frequency modulation, and time stretching (0:00-0:06).

Normandeau uses the technology, in often not-so-subtle ways, to indicate the blurred boundaries between human, natural, and synthetic sounds, at least to the listener’s ear. We hear the vocal sounds transformed into robotic regularity; the burning wood (fifth section) becomes rippling water as Normandeau increases the reverberation. The apparent ease of these transformations could leave the listener with a sense of unease regarding her own

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28 Recall that all the sounds heard were manipulated from the recorded voice of a young girl. These are descriptions I have given the sounds, based on the often non-human associations I made.
identity as a human. On the one hand, this seemingly easy and seamless loss of identity (through the disguise of the voice and the body) is a disconcerting reminder of the impermanence of our bodies. On the other hand, hearing a sonic blend or intertwining with other constructed sound sources (i.e., nature, machine) could function as a metaphor for the interconnections of the modern human between nature and machine. It is not so much about separate and contrary categories, but about continuity and connection.

The listener experiences cognitive dissonance when she attempts to reconcile the known sound source (e.g., a young girl in Éclats de voix) with the sounds heard. We are culturally conditioned to associate particular vocal ranges with particular genders: the female alto, mezzo and soprano, the male tenor and baritone; we experience a similar dissonance with the countertenor who sings in the range of a soprano, but with a distinctive timbre, one associated with this male vocal range. The recorded voice, manipulated at will in the studio, creates opportunity to shift or disguise these common relationships between vocal range and gender: “the pitch of a voice, which we take to be an indicator of gender, can be changed once sound passes into the home listener’s magic cabinet” (Koestenbaum 1994, 61), or in this case, when it passes through the composer’s computer software and studio equipment. Certain physiological realities of biological sex are difficult, or perhaps undesirable, for a composer to hide. For example, each work in the cycle is greatly influenced by the natural vocal ranges of the human sound sources. This cycle makes apparent certain cultural understandings of physiological truths regarding development. Children have a higher vocal range, due to their smaller vocal tract. The listener hears a lack of gender specificity, particularly in Éclats de voix. At this stage in physiological development (pre-puberty), the
voices and bodies of boys and girls are minimally different. Their voices are in a similar vocal range.

Increases in height and the onset of puberty foster significant changes to the adolescent body, especially for males, whose vocal ranges tend to lower substantially. Cusick suggests that this increasing divergence is a “vocal enculturation of middle-class North Americans [that] exaggerates the audible performance of sex difference for both men and women” (1999, 45). This great divide between male and female vocal ranges lessens in old age as they both move closer to the middle range. The bodies, as well as the voices, are weaker and suffer a quality loss. These aspects are clear in an experience of the entire cycle. Particularly in *Spleen* and *Le renard et la rose*, when vocal range disparity is more obvious, the resulting frequency ranges are lower than in both *Éclats de voix* and *Palimpseste*, despite Normandeau’s ability to manipulate the original recorded frequencies to great extremes. Because the recorded voices for *Spleen* are those of sixteen-year-old boys, it is probable that they are post-pubescent, with voices lower than in early adolescence. Puberty in boys results in more obvious changes to the voice than it does in girls. Because of increased testosterone production, the larynx grows; in particular, the membranous vocal fold lengthens, leading to the protruding Adam’s apple. Also, the thyroarytenoid muscle enlarges, which results in a more rectangular glottis; this shape affects vocal fold vibration, in turn leading to a richer vocal timbre (Titze 1994, 182). Although Normandeau treats the sounds in such varied fashion in both works that the vocal sounds are presented in registral extremes outside those physiologically possible by the original girl and boys, the physiologically possible and
culturally conditioned lower range of the boys’ voices leads to an overall deeper sound in *Spleen*.

In *Le renard et la rose*, the low frequency sounds have an increased depth leading often to lower and fuller sounds. Male adult voices are distinct. Throughout their 20s and 30s, men see their vocal ranges lower and gain a richer tone, reaching their fullness in their 30s. As men continue to grow into their early 20s, their vocal tract also grows. A longer vocal tract leads not only to a lower fundamental formant frequency (i.e., the resonance of the vocal tract), but also a darker tone (Titze 1994). Women’s voices do not change as much, but with the onset of cartilage ossification in the 30s, their voices can become even more stable.

As the age of the vocal sounds increases with each subsequent work of the cycle, the frequency range seems to deepen, with an emphasis on the lower ranges. These lower frequencies seem to be a result of developmental changes, particularly in adolescent boys and adult men. The shift back towards middle- and high-register frequencies in *Palimpseste* creates a new sonic world. Vocal range discrepancy loses much of the gender distinction acquired during adolescence and solidified during adulthood, due to the decrease in testosterone production in males during advanced age and the decrease in estrogen production in females following menopause. The body’s hormonal changes are evident in the voice. This shift may be due to a gradual decrease in vocal range distance between males and females during old age. For example, in *Palimpseste* (3:56), Normandeau introduces two laughing voices, one on ‘ah’, the other on ‘oh’. The voice on ‘oh’ is clearly male (because of the vocal range); the other voice, though, is less obviously gendered.
In some ways Normandeau maintains the notion that “voices stand for the bodily imperatives of biological sex” (Cusick 1999, 29) by emphasizing the registral differences. But by simultaneously ignoring the cultural and physiological limitations on the voice, by conspicuously manipulating (i.e., constructing) the vocal ranges, Normandeau also demonstrates Cusick’s belief that “voices are culturally constructed. Voices are always performances of a relationship negotiated between the individual vocalizer and the vocalizer’s culture” (1999, 29).

*Le renard et la rose* is the first work in the *Onomatopoeias* cycle to combine both male and female voices. Perhaps it is for this reason that Normandeau seems to draw more attention to the gender of the voices, rather than allowing the technological capabilities of the studio to disguise and drown out this important aspect of bodily identity. The clear presence of both genders creates significant images for the listener. While Normandeau artistically disguised many of the characteristics of the original recorded voices in *Éclats de voix* and *Spleen*, the program notes reveal their gendered origins. In *Le renard et la rose*, without even needing to be told, the listener hears both genders; their vocal ranges indicate their gender. The layering of their laughter constructs a social space; they are interacting and having fun, perhaps enjoying a common joke. It is irrelevant whether the people in the studio were together, laughing. Only the constructed environment matters.

Normandeau has constructed bodies that exist only in the composed sonic environment of the *Onomatopoeias* cycle. He provides the listener with gestures, sonic markers, textures and timbres with which to imagine these bodies. Some traces of the original
bodies remain (age, gender), but most are hidden. In the following sections, I explore how these bodies move, interact, and express themselves.

### 2.4 Expressive Bodies

And yet it is our heartbeat, intimate and human. Here, my wrist – its pulse is yours for the taking, yet it is not yours. We share a heartbeat, share lub-dub, lub-dub. All race, genders, share that little drum and share its Drummer and its mysteries. This quiet clock, unnoticed day by day, our ghost attendant, is invisible, untouchable, perhaps sublunary,

*but wild in our breast for centuries*

(from *Coal and Rose: A Triple Glosa* – P.K. Page)

Gesture is central to Normandeau’s formal processes; he uses strong gestures to delineate sectional divides, and these strong gestures continually lead the listener to perceive, or construct, the origins—the source. Who or what is causing these sounds? We naturally go through this process of perceiving and imaging a sound source, even though, as Smalley discusses, the cause-effect relationship is several times removed in fixed medium electroacoustic works. Although this work has been presented to live audiences, it is a fixed medium work that was released on compact disc; as a result, listeners can encounter the piece completely cut-off from any visual performance. Thus, causality cannot be perceived visually; rather, it must be surmised from the sounds heard. Smalley suggests four types of surrogacy: first order, second order, third order, and remote. Third-order surrogacy, “where a gesture is inferred or imagined in the music” and remote surrogacy, which contains only “gestural vestiges ... [as] source and cause become unknown and unknowable as any human
action behind the sound disappears” (Smalley 1997, 112) are at work in this cycle; but even remote surrogacy contains “some vestiges of gesture” (112). Aspects of gesture, such as effort and resistance, remain, linking the sounds to the primal gesture. These sounds are linked to gesture and to human agency through Smalley’s indicative fields.

Growing out of his development of spectromorphology in the 1980s, Smalley articulated nine indicative fields (Smalley 1996) that can be used in the compositional or analytical processes: gesture (which traces the energy-motion trajectory achieved through tension and release), utterance (which is linked to the human body; communication and expression), behaviour (dominance/subordination, conflict/coexistence, causality), energy (the creation and release of tension), motion (which is connected to temporal experience; external contour and internal behaviour), object/substance (a physical metaphor for a sound’s ‘materialness’), environment (human and animal utterance; sounds and textures of the environment), vision (a product of a sensory appreciation of the world), and space (the physical and psychological dimensions; intimacy/immensity). These indicative fields “explain the links between the human experience and the listener’s apprehension of sounding material in musical contexts” (83). Any given field naturally connects to another (such as gesture, energy, and motion), thereby creating an indicative network. Though the human body is not a clear presence overall in Normandeau’s cycle, some agent is. Gesture, or the momentum towards a goal, is felt at the lowest level (individual sound) and higher level (section). As I explained earlier, the gesture field is concerned with causality, for every action must have an impetus, a doer that instigates the gesture (in this case the gesture creates sound). Though Normandeau has carefully hidden the original human sound sources in this
cycle, through the emergence of clearly human sounds in combination with particular indicative fields (namely, gesture, utterance, energy, and motion), the listener still perceives human agency, a body expressing its movements and emotions through sound and space. Smalley’s indicative fields are based on the ease of perception with “which we identify and associate with ... motion, despite the possible difficulty in defining the imagined actor...” (Andean 2010, 111 n.12).

As Andean (2010), Emmerson (2007), and Smalley (1996), among others, would assert, when a listener encounters an electroacoustic work, he will often seek to understand the sounds in a manner similar to sounds in his everyday life, that is, to find the source, a fact that counters the goal of Schaeffer’s écoute réduite:

As a result, no matter how focused the creative act might be on the purely musical qualities of the sound, in practice, the listener—although also fully capable of appreciating this musical level—is almost certain to simultaneously create, perhaps unwittingly, an evolving mental image constructed from the reemergence of the sounds’ previously denied role as signifiers. (Andean 2010, 108)

Through a combination of the section titles and sounds, the listener encounters bodies that express themselves through emotion and physicality. In the following paragraphs, I first discuss how anger is constructed in all four works in Normandeau’s cycle, principally through a gesture network that relies on several textural activators (e.g., dynamics, articulations, and colour). The listener’s experience of anger changes with each work, creating different associations between age and anger. Second, I examine the central role of rhythm in the cycle, particularly as a signifier of physical movement and sensuality and of self-expression through music, and as a representation of physical vitality. Finally, I consider intimacy—intimacy between the constructed bodies in the sonic environment through the
inclusion of “intimate” sounds (e.g., laughter, kissing, a heartbeat), and intimacy between the constructed bodies and the listener through a blend of private and public space.

What is the one constant throughout the cycle? The third section: *colère et dynamique* (anger and dynamics). This is the only mood that Normandeau keeps for all four stages. Perhaps he had written himself into a compositional corner in *Éclats de voix*; its montage effect (highlighted mainly through dynamics, timbre, and texture) with its sudden shifts and unpredictability would be hard to associate with many other moods—perhaps only other variants of anger; e.g., rage, fury, wrath. This recurring mood, though, allows me to consider how Normandeau constructs anger in the various age ranges.

In all four works, *colère* begins suddenly with sharp mouth sounds (many of which resemble *Bédé*). The increasing sharpness of the sounds in each subsequent work until *Palimpseste* is noticeable to the listener. The mouth speaks words, which are unintelligible here. In each subsequent work, the mouth sounds become more abstract, perhaps suggesting the kind of interiority anger takes on as we develop into adults. We may no longer scream, but our anger thrives in the emotional and psychological realms.

Normandeau combines several element-actions, namely in the realm of texture (including density and dynamics). Normandeau (1992) describes this section as a montage, a concept borrowed from cinematography. The expressive capacity of the montage lies in the juxtaposition of images, or in this case, sounds. Normandeau uses the juxtaposition of often intensely disparate textures to create a disjunctive temporal experience. Each sonic image lasts for an inconsistent and unpredictable length of time. Normandeau visually represents the montage effect in the listening score. Starting around 7:15, Normandeau drew small
blocks, delineated by thick black vertical lines, indicating a strong gesture. The blocks are visually dense—a visual parallel to the sonic density. As the section progresses, the blocks become smaller and smaller: in less than one minute, Normandeau indicates twelve vertical gestures. The result on the ears is disjunct and aggressive. The size (in area) of the boxes also indicates relative dynamic level, both in volume and density. Wallace Berry (1987) highlights several “textural activators,” including dynamics, articulations, and colour. Textural intensities do not change based solely on density-numbers, that is, the number of sounding events, but also on these “activators.” Normandeau makes particular use of dynamics and articulations as textural activators in order to create a powerful expressive effect. We can see visual representations of these activators in the listening score, namely the thick vertical lines and different box sizes.

The same activators that Normandeau uses to shape the textual processes in section three also construct particular spatial boundaries and movement. Breaking out of the relative stasis of the second section, the third section immediately reminds the listener of the space constructed in the first section. As sounds pan quickly from left to right, and right to left, the broader spatial boundaries are reestablished. The biggest spatial shift is achieved through an increase in dynamics. While not always a direct activator of the vertical span, these sudden dynamics raise the vertical span, contributing to a vigorous sonic experience. The constant changes in dynamic levels, and rapid and seemingly sporadic left-right panning create spatial uncertainty. The listener has no sense of stable space as it grows and shrinks without warning.
Each unanticipated burst begins a new external motion that is then cut off by a new unanticipated burst in this section, whose gesture-network consists of the following fields: gesture, behaviour, energy, motion, and space. All of these indicative fields, which are based on human models of physical and mental structures, affirm Normandeau’s chosen state: anger. The montage is a carefully chosen cinematographic technique used here. The listener is assaulted by unpredictable and sudden changes in dynamics, timbre, texture, and space. The listener experiences the anger of the music, or the anger of the creator of the music. These various sonic elements combine to create an aggressive gesture-network. This gesture-network draws attention to its need for a cause, a source. It is the listener’s tendency to seek this source and imagine it if one is not easily detected.

The shift to the third section of Éclats de voix is sudden with abrupt mouth sounds (all based on phonemes, similar to Bédé) breaking the silence and calm established at the end of timbre: we hear eight “instances of a ripping or splashing sonority derived from mouth sounds” (Berezan 1998, 6) using various phonemes, such as ‘s’, ‘sh’; they are somewhat reminiscent of the mouth sounds at 0:47. Space plays an important role in the opening portion of this section (6:34-7:14) as it uses the mix to create a sense of instability. For instance, we hear sounds panning quickly and others oscillating rapidly between the far left and right.

In this section of Éclats de voix (7:15-8:51), Normandeau exploits the dynamics permitted by the new recording technology. Using the maximum dynamic range allowed by

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29 Recall that Smalley’s indicative networks are created through connected indicative fields; any given indicative network is named for the dominant indicative field, which in this case is ‘gesture’ (1996).

30 These phonemes may be from ‘Sss’ and ‘Serchh’.
the equipment, we encounter the loudest sound at 7:55 and the quietest is at 9:15; the range between the two is 60dB (Normandeau 1992, 64). The main sound layer during the short dense bursts resembles an organ with a metallic stop. The pitched sounds are dissonant, creating an ominous effect. Over the ominous organ we hear various loops of quieter flanged, looped sounds panning, some unidirectional (left to right, or right to left), others back and forth. By 8:40 the dynamic level has been greatly reduced and remains subdued until the end of the section. The section slowly dies away, with the fading of the eerie organ sound.

Certainly children are known for unpredictable displays of anger (i.e., tantrums!). The opening sounds of the section suggest a human presence. The spatial movement conveys anger in both the physical and mental senses. Finally, the dense bursts with dynamic shifts are as erratic and violent to the listener’s ears as a child’s tantrum can be to a parent’s. Almost as quickly as the anger escalated, it dissipates. These abrupt shifts, including the sudden dissipation at the end, create a structure that corresponds to our conception of a child’s often-fleeting expression of anger.

By contrast, the increased intensity of many of the sounds in Spleen establishes a darker, and sometimes more aggressive, mood. Normandeau perceived an aggressiveness in the voices themselves, which fits well with the stereotype of teenaged boys. As one may recall from my discussion of Éclats de voix above, the sonic landscape and the gestures of section three fit well with the idea of anger. Because teenagers are also known for their fits of anger (i.e., rebellion), it seems appropriate to keep this same state. The dynamics of the two works are similar in this section. The sounds in Spleen at 6:43, though, are a bit sharper and somewhat more corporeal (one can hear the teeth, tongue, and saliva). The sudden gesture at
7:25 is more intense than in *Éclats de voix*, with an increased lower frequency range due probably to the naturally lower voices of the teenaged boys. The various sound layers seem more prominent in *Spleen*, which, as a result, leads to a greater montage effect. This section more clearly invokes the human sound source, allowing the listener to construct a corporeal association with the emotion of anger. The aggressive sounds, spatial movement, and sudden dynamic shifts act as sonic analogies (or perhaps counterparts) for the physical and psychological experience of anger. The montage approach effectively portrays the kind of mental and emotional instability one experiences as both the one who is angry and the one who receives the anger. With specific reference to the body in *Spleen* (e.g., teeth, tongue, saliva, breath), the listener is again drawn to imagine the body whose anger results also in physical agitation and aggression. Normandeau extends this increased aggression into the fourth section. Though it starts in a similar manner to *Éclats de voix*, with the ascending slide up to droned pitches, in *Spleen*, Normandeau introduces a thunder-like low frequency growl (9:48, 9:57) that has no sonic parallel in *Éclats de voix*. The presence of this new sound constructs a darker and more aggressive character.

As one might expect, the third section of *Le renard et la rose* retains the sharp gestures established first in *Éclats de voix*, then reinforced in *Spleen*. The gestures are sharper than those in *Spleen*; their energy creates an echo effect not heard in the previous two works. Alongside discernible phonemes and words, one can hear breath. Between the breathing and other obvious phonemes, the presence of the human voice is more palpable in this opening part of section three. Until this third section, *Le renard et la rose* has presented itself as an intensified version of *Spleen*. But at 7:24, with a gesture that signals the beginning of the
juxtaposed dense blocks, the montage approach is less dramatic, with lower dynamic levels in particular. In comparison to this moment in *Spleen*, the effect is weaker. In fact, the intensity of this section overall is less than what *Spleen* presents. Each vertical gesture in the score that indicates a new dense block of sound feels less jarring than the ones in *Spleen*. One effect, however, is more apparent. Beginning with the dense blocks at 7:24, there is a low pulsing sound, like a heartbeat, beating with the regular lub-dub rhythm. At first the pace of this heartbeat is relatively slow, but, starting at 8:03, the heart rate increases at semi-regular intervals (8:13, 8:23, 8:31, 8:38). As the energy of the dense blocks dies away, so too does the heart rate decrease (8:47, 8:59) until the sounds fade to nothing. While perhaps dramatic in isolation, in comparison to *Spleen*, the anger constructed here is less jarring, less extreme. Perhaps adults’ anger is no longer the uncontrolled extreme emotion of adolescence. Adults must learn to control their anger. This internalization emerges in the heartbeat-like low pulsing sound, with the regular lub-dub rhythm. As *Colère* progresses, the heartbeat increases its rate—the tension is rising; the anger is growing. But as any rational adult would experience, the anger fades: the dynamic levels decrease, textures thin, and the juxtaposed blocks end. The internal physiological counterpart is a slower heart rate.

For reasons that will be emphasized throughout this chapter, it should not come as much surprise that this section is not as dramatic in *Palimpseste* as the previous three works. The opening mouth sounds maintain the aggressive feeling first established in *Spleen*. However, while one might expect significant textural changes (namely in dynamics) starting at 7:23, as indicated by the vertical lines in the listening score, we hear nothing of real significance until 8:01. Again, Normandeau constructs an ageing body that, while perhaps
angry, has resigned itself to this reality. This ageing body does not “Rage, rage against the
dying of the light.”

Normandeau’s ageing voices and bodies are also constructed through his use of
rhythm. As the title for the first section suggests, rhythm is an essential parameter in this
cycle. As a listener, I was immediately struck by the presence of rhythmic patterns, unlike
Normandeau’s earlier piece Bédé. In Éclats de voix at 1:00, Normandeau introduces rhythmic
loops whose basic pulse is 134 beats per minute. This tempo is used throughout the work,
creating rhythmic unity. The regularity of the rhythms creates a sense of the mechanical, of
technology, rather than of the human. This was the first time Normandeau incorporated a
regular pulse into his works, a decision that was not easy for him:

I remember when I composed Éclats de voix... I was afraid to show the work to some
of my friends and colleagues. But Francis Dhomont, my supervisor at the time, told
me that it was the best and most personal piece I had ever done! (Ogborn 2009)

The use of a steady pulse has aesthetic associations with the popular music world,
particularly various genres of electronica and dance music. For many electroacoustic
composers, it has been essential to distance oneself from the “popular” scene in order to gain
respect and recognition as “serious” composers. Normandeau asserts the contrary:

...we are at a stage in the history of electroacoustic music where the genre has reached
maturity. We do not have to put a daily statement declaring how different and original
we are from the rest of the music on the planet! Rhythm is a part of life and music
and it can be used by us too! (Ogborn 2009)

31 From Dylan Thomas, “Do Not Go Gentle Into That Good Night.”
32 The Onomatopoeias cycle does not have a score in the traditional sense of notated pitches and rhythm. I will,
however, refer to this basic pulse as a quarter note when outlining specific rhythmic patterns so that they can be
easily understood.
Though the listener often cannot distinguish the original onomatopoeias used in this first section, according to Normandeau’s documentation, he used many with the phoneme ‘k’. This is a forceful phoneme produced only by obstructing airflow in the vocal tract (i.e., plosive). The sound is created by a sharp gesture of the back of the tongue against the soft palate (i.e., velar). Perhaps its mode of articulation drew Normandeau to explore this rhythmic potential.

Rhythm plays an important role, not only in each work, but also across the cycle, as we explore the ageing body. Rhythm manifests itself in varying degrees, with the strongest presence in *Spleen* and *Le renard et la rose*. What is significant about these two works? Normandeau articulated an increase in the energy of the teenage boys whose voices he recorded for *Spleen*; they inspired him to intensify the rhythmic aspect of the work. Perhaps the voices of adult actors in *Le renard et la rose* displayed even greater articulation and vivacity, which inspired another increase in rhythmic presence; or perhaps Normandeau himself was growing more comfortable with the presence of a steady rhythm in his electroacoustic music.

Though *Éclats de voix* and *Spleen* are similar, the latter has a more lively mood; as Normandeau explains: “...because the boys were so much more energetic and rhythmic in the studio, I decided to push the boundaries a little bit: the sound is raw, the rhythms are more evident, more ‘in the face’” (Ogborn 2009). Pulse is a key feature throughout *Spleen*. Sections of the work present layers of rhythms reminiscent of club dance music. Rhythm does not make a significant appearance in *Éclats de voix* until the second subsection (0:47), but in *Spleen*, we can already hear a regular pulse (pulse=134) beginning at 0:09 when three
different rhythmic loops maintain the pulse. As stated above by Normandeau, the rhythmic quality of *Spleen* is more intense and aggressive. These characteristics are apparent from the sudden gesture at 1:10 that triggers the rhythm; this gesture is much deeper and more vigorous than at 1:00 in *Éclats de voix*. This subsection has even more of a dance music style with three levels of rhythm (half notes, quarter notes, eighth notes) all at the same tempo (pulse=134). The third subsection (2:25-4:04) brings back the pulse from 1:10 (still at 134). This pulse is also present in *Éclats de voix*, but here Normandeau reinforces the pulse for thirty seconds through the regular inclusion (every 16 pulses) of the low frequency sound used to begin this subsection (sounds like “rah”) before shifting (at 2:53) to a stress every two pulses.

The importance of rhythm early in *Spleen* (0:09) makes the listener aware of both her own body as the pattern and pace create a groove, and also imagined bodies—in this case, teenagers—who may be dancing to the beat. Perhaps images of young love, emerging sexuality, and physical interaction come to mind as these young bodies move to the beat. Just as Normandeau seems to be growing more comfortable with the presence of rhythms in his music, so too do the imagined teenagers grow more comfortable with their bodies, using this time to explore, experiment, and enjoy. The pervasive rhythms allow them to move their bodies, in isolation or in unity with other bodies. The power and vigour that Normandeau draws from these teenagers’ voices produce strong associations with physical vitality. The strength and range of their male teenage voices pervade all of the sonic material, regardless of the levels of modification.
Through the evocation of dance music, Normandeau draws the listener into the teenage world. To similar ends, the absence of anything resembling traditional musique requires the listener to explore new possibilities, just as the teenager does. Normandeau himself as an electroacoustic composer has a broader notion of “music” than traditional Western art music and popular music, with their emphasis on melody and harmony. For an electroacoustic composer, one does not require melodies and cadences to have “music.” And Normandeau asks the listener to have a similarly open mind to his work. While to the unaccustomed listener this work may resemble noise more than music, there remains other essential musical parameters, or what Normandeau refers to as “sonic” parameters (e.g., texture, timbre, space, dynamics), which are thoughtfully and artfully explored. Alternatively, Normandeau may wish to poke fun at the so-called “music” of teenagers. To adults, it might sound like cacophonous fast beats, but to adolescents it is the sound of self-expression. Music is an important part of adolescence; teenagers often use music as a means for forging self-identity and sense of community (Campbell 2007). Normandeau opens *Spleen* with a reference to his own music-listening habits as a teenager; he explained that the opening sound combines the energy profile of a coin spinning, which gradually picks up speed before falling, with the voice; it is a reference to the opening of progressive rock band Gentle Giant’s song “The Boys in the Band” from *Octopus* (1972), a band that was among his favourites when he was a teenager (Woloshyn 2011b).

Rhythm pervades later sections of *Spleen* as well, further emphasizing the body and its movement. For example, a gesture shifts to the second space (intime) at 10:15 and triggers a new rhythm (dotted quarter note, eighth note, half rest, whole rest; pulse=120). During the
whole rest, Normandeau inserts what sounds like kissing noises in the same rhythmic pattern. For this brief section, Normandeau invokes dance music and physical intimacy. But the experience of this space is short-lived. At 10:30, Normandeau introduces a new rhythmic pattern (2 against 3) at the same tempo (pulse=120).

Not unexpectedly, this final section of *Spleen* also has a greater presence of pulse than that heard in *Éclats de voix*: first, beneath the shifting dynamic levels from 11:56 to 12:42, there is a low frequency rhythm (dotted eighth, sixteenth, two eighths, quarter rest in 3/4 time; pulse=approximately 58); second, we hear rhythmic breathing starting at 13:04 (sixteenth, dotted eighth, quarter, quarter rest; pulse=108) above the low frequency rhythm; finally, near the end of the work, we return to the tempo of the first section (pulse=134) with pitched sounds resembling throat singing (also heard at 13:26).

Rhythm is ubiquitous in *Le renard et la rose* also; this may seem redundant given that the first section’s sonorous parameter is rhythm. While the rhythmic aspect was present in the previous two works (with an especial increase in *Spleen*), rhythm pervades this entire work. In an interview with Dominique Olivier (1999), Normandeau describes the main differences in *Le renard et la rose*: « C’est *Le renard et la rose* une pièce plus orchestré, où l’énergie est plus à l’état brut, le rythme plus affirmé que dans les deux autres. »

The rhythm is intense in the first section, even in comparison to *Spleen* (which already showed an increase in intensity from *Éclats de voix*).

In stark contrast to all three previous works, *Palimpseste* exhibits an almost complete absence of pulse and drive. In the first 50 seconds, the drop in energy is unmistakable. It is in

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33 “It is a more orchestrated work, where the energy is more at the noise state, the rhythm is more assertive than in the other two.”
comparison to the previous works that this work suggests lethargy. In *Spleen* and *Le renard et la rose*, the fourth section includes a few stretches of assertive rhythmic patterns, with all (or most) sounds clearly aligning with an underlying consistent pulse; in *Palimpseste*, we hear a steady pulse within repetitive rhythmic patterns (10:11), but these patterns are dynamically softer, creating an impression of a weak rhythmic drive, as opposed to the previous two works: they don’t set up a “groove” as in *Spleen*.

Rhythm is an essential aesthetic and metaphorical presence in the *Onomatopoeias* cycle. The steady rhythm acts as a metaphor for the pacing of life—at times regular and seemingly perpetual. In *Éclats de voix*, it suggests a vitality in the young body. In *Spleen* and *Le renard et la rose*, the rhythm references dance music, which draws attention back to the body. The body moves to the rhythm, moves along with other bodies that came to dance, release stress, and express sexual energy. The rhythm is an indicator of the sexual desire and vibrancy of youth and adults. The diluted or absent rhythm in *Palimpseste* constructs a dreary view of the elderly body, one in which vitality, vibrancy, and sexual energy are weak and fading.

Certain passages in the cycle that use rhythm suggest elements of intimacy. Normandeau further explores physical intimacy through several clearly human sounds, namely, laughter, kissing, breath, the heartbeat, as well as through his construction of space. *Le renard et la rose* is the first work of the cycle to present the human sound source with minimal modification from the beginning. In the opening seconds, the listener hears laughter, first unmodified, then increasingly modified with reverb and distortion.\(^{34}\) Because of the

\(^{34}\) Normandeau explained to me that this laugh comes from a female radio speaker who is famous for her laugh.
timbre and range of the sound, the listener can easily imagine male and female bodies laughing into the microphone. The opening gesture is the sound of several adults laughing, first without any modification, but then with increased technological modification, which distorts the sound. Laughter is often an involuntary response that engages the whole body. The belly can shake; the shoulders may lift up and down; hands may shoot up to cover the spontaneous and large smile. Laughter engages the entire vocal apparatus, through deep inhalation and quick bursts of sounds. Laughter is a social sound. While one may laugh while alone, it is typical for one to laugh because she heard a funny story or joke from a friend, while visiting with a group of people. Normandeau’s opening gesture certainly confirms this social aspect by including several distinct voices simultaneously laughing. This opening segment of laughter is the first time Normandeau clearly constructs multiple bodies. Though the listener may have imagined multiple bodies moving together on a dance floor, or kissing in private, here we hear more than one laugh, from both genders. Because of this simultaneity, the power of the image of the social aspect is heightened. With the inclusion of laughter in the opening of *Le renard et la rose*, Normandeau creates a tone that contrasts with the previous two works. The mood overall in this cycle is dark, somber, and intense, but as a sonic motif that emerges throughout the work (for example, at 10:11), laughter is a release and a relief as joy is brought to the fore. Laughter releases emotional and physical tension.

As mentioned above, Normandeau inserts kissing noises in *Spleen* in the second space of the fourth section, which he has called *intime*. These sounds allow the listener to image amorous bodies expressing their affection through this physical mode. Interestingly,
Normandeau also introduces breathing near the end of *Palimpseste* (13:30), whose “ahs” and “ohs” create an orgasmic rhythm that further constructs physical bodies.

Throughout the cycle, Normandeau retains the sounds of breath, remnants of the original recordings that transduced inhalations, exhalations, and aspirations. The presence of breath is a strong sonic marker for the listener, leading the listener to imagine a bodily presence. As I will discuss below, breath is used in *Palimpseste* in particular to convey an infirm body. But in other works, breath, in combination with regular low-frequency, pulsing sounds resembling heartbeats, is used to construct physical intimacy. This intimacy arises between imagined bodies, but also between the listener and the body she imagines.

In the second section of *Éclats de voix (Tendresse et timbre)*, Normandeau inserts a low range, steady pulse that resembles a heartbeat. This sound connotes warmth, love, and security, as it resembles what fetuses in the womb or children laying on a parent’s chest might hear. Normandeau again uses a low, steady pulse to suggest a heartbeat in the fourth section (*Tristesse et espace*). The closeness of the heartbeat acts as a symbol of intimacy. One must be physically close to hear it. This heartbeat is joined by the presence of breath. Together they confirm a sense of intimate space, as if the listener were in the body of the child, or maybe were the child herself.

Normandeau creates four spaces that he associates with the human experiences in the fourth section, *espace: salle, intime, pièce, extérieur*. Not merely divided into private and public spaces, Normandeau suggests a more nuanced approach. Both *intime* and *pièce* suggest a private space, but *intime* connotes the ultimate privacy: closeness, intimacy. Intimacy immediately connotes physical bodies in close proximity, sharing and trusting.
Alternatively, *salle* and *extérieur* both suggest public spaces, despite the former being an indoor space and the latter an outdoor one. These four spaces suggest a thin and complex divide amongst the spaces where humans, their bodies and voices, live, share, and interact. Normandeau creates subtle contrasts between these four domains, namely through the varied use of reverberation and filtering. Just as the boundaries between our private and public lives can be difficult to maintain, with crossover, so too do Normandeau’s four spaces—two of which are private, and two public—transition into each other, granting the listener access to them.

### 2.5 Bodies in Crisis

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We’re at
the mercy of any stray
rabid mongrel or thrown stone or cancerous
ray, or our own
bodies: we were born with mortality’s
hook in us, and year by year it drags us
where we’re going: down.
(from *Owl and Pussycat, Some Years Later* – Margaret Atwood)
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The voice can be used as an assessment of health. Is the tone strong, or weak and breathy? When someone is choking, we are trained to ask them if they need help; we evaluate the quality of tone and flow of air in their spoken response to indicate the severity of the situation. In early parts of his cycle Normandeau uses child and teenage voices, presumably from bodies in vigorous healthiness. And the voices in *Le renard et la rose* and *Palimpseste* are no ordinary voices. These vocal sound sources are actors, people who have spent years training their bodies and voices to achieve expressive perfection—people who are devoted to the upkeep of their bodies and voices in order to survive in the “business.” As they train and
maintain their voices, they fight the natural ageing process, delaying its progression but never reversing or erasing its effects. Perhaps then, these “professional” voices and bodies only further draw attention to the inevitable: deterioration, decay, and death. The listener does not have the opportunity to experience these original bodily sources, but rather must imagine new bodies based on the sonic environments in the cycle. Despite the assumed healthiness of the original bodies, the final part of Normandeau’s cycle constructs bodies that are fragile and vulnerable to sickness, exhaustion, and finally, death.

In this section I discuss Normandeau’s construction of the vulnerable and infirm body. I begin with two uses of coughs that construct this feeble body; then I describe Normandeau’s inclusion of a sound from *Le petit prince* that speaks to physical exhaustion over senseless work. In this section, I focus on several elements of *Palimpseste* that connect this final work with elderly, infirm bodies: the opening sound of a squeaking door; the lack of rhythmic vitality in the first section; the silence and lack of energy in the fourth section; the slow internal motion of sounds throughout the cycle; and the prevalence of breath as an indicator of fatigue.

Normandeau uses coughs twice in the earlier parts of the cycle, first in the fourth section of *Éclats de voix* and later in the fifth section of *Le renard et la rose*. The sound is a strong sonic gesture drawing the listener’s attention immediately to a human sound source. The coughs also construct human bodies: weak and ill. The listener imagines a delicate body whose tender cough scratches the throat, continually weakening her as each new cough depletes her dwindling strength.
In *Éclats de voix*, Normandeau uses the gesture of a child’s cough to trigger new sounds and a new space (*intime*). The child’s cough is close miked and has minimal use of effects on it, creating a sense of close proximity, and therefore, of intimacy. Then, through the addition of reverberation and echo, Normandeau constructs a much larger space than those heard in the previous three “spaces.” To confirm this shift in space, at 11:08, we hear the cough again, this time with a great deal of reverb. This little girl is no longer in close and intimate quarters; she is outside, exposed to the elements, vulnerable and alone. These two coughs are the only clear indicators of human presence in this section. The texture is sparse, creating an impression of emptiness, loneliness, and, appropriately, sadness.

Early in *Sérénité et texture* (fifth section) of *Le renard et la rose*, with the first sudden decrease in texture following the gradual build-up at the beginning of the section, Normandeau inserts two coughs (11:59) that align with the rhythm of that section. These coughs remain throughout this section, although they are harder to discern when the texture suddenly thickens (e.g., 12:08, 12:24). This cough is taken directly from the radio adaptation of *Le petit prince*. The cough is heard during the chapter in which we first meet *la rose*. She is quite proud, and to divert attention from her embarrassment at having said something naive, she coughs so that the Little Prince should feel some remorse for her pain. The voice of the rose comes across as delicate, fragile, naive, and almost immature. Her pathetic cough pierces through the sonic environment. Because of its clearly human reference, it is a strong sonic gesture that leads the listener to imagine a weary and sick body.

In the fourth section, *Lassitude et espace*, Normandeau makes another clear reference to the radio adaptation of *Le petit prince*. *L'allumeur de réverbère* (lamplighter) has become
thoroughly exhausted from a life obediently devoted to lighting and extinguishing the lamp each day on an unpopulated planet whose rotation lasts only one minute, leaving him to constantly light and extinguish the streetlamp without rest. Throughout this section of the radio adaptation, the sound effect of the lamp lighting and extinguishing represents the lamplighter’s relentless duty, which is both comically absurd and utterly pathetic. The lamplighter’s situation is important for the emotional interpretation of *Lassitude et espace.*

Starting at 9:38, we hear two medium-pitched articulations, followed a few seconds later by two higher-pitched ones. These are the exact sounds used to represent the lighting and extinguishing of the streetlamp by the lamplighter, creating a sonic inside joke for both Normandeau and anyone who knows the radio adaptation. This section is appropriately entitled *lassitude* (weariness). After a lifetime of work, one is bound to be a little exhausted. But perhaps Normandeau is commenting on more than the lamplighter’s physical exhaustion. The French notion of *ennui* is also often described as *lassitude,* weariness about the pointlessness of life. Just as the lamplighter toils day and night without rest to the point of utter exhaustion, all because it is his job and he feels an obligation to continue, so too does modern man toil away at work, wasting life on pointless pursuits that carry no lasting significance. Normandeau seems to suggest that we are the lamplighter, totally exhausted but too blind to find a way out of our weariness; each extinction of the lamp’s flame seems to signal the ever decreasing flame of life. Normandeau further establishes this element of *lassitude* in other sonic parameters, particularly at the end of the section. He decreases the

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If a reader follows the book along with the radio adaptation, he can hear these pitched sounds when the book indicates “Et il le ralluma” or “Et il éteignit son réverbère.”
tension and process of all the sonic elements: the dynamics decrease, the pitch descends, and motion gradually slows.

While the presence of the lighting and extinguishing pattern may not bring every listener to imagine an exhausted body, Normandeau uses other sonic processes to construct exhaustion and deterioration. As Normandeau did with *Spleen* and *Le renard et la rose*, he inserts a sound unique to *Palimpseste* in the opening six seconds before proceeding with the established timeline. *Palimpseste* opens with a sound that resembles a creaking door (or perhaps creaking bones); the sound creates the impression that the moving of this door requires incredible effort. This impression of effort sets the tone for the rest of the work; the work makes the listener really hear the effort required in these sounds. When the section begins with the cycle’s timeline at 0:07, it is already readily apparent that the energy and vitality expressed in the previous three works (with increasing effect in *Spleen* and *Le renard et la rose*) is either gone or greatly diminished. While on its own this work may seem active, in the context of the cycle, I found myself drawn to one word: lethargy. Normandeau explains that this feeling was both desired and intentionally created through his compositional procedures:

The idea actually was to try to simulate the way I imagine old people perceive life. Through some filters, I can imagine, because they don’t see that much, they don’t hear that much, they don’t feel that much. So probably everything is softer than for young people where everything is very on the edge. ... It’s a bit like if you see things through a dirty glass; you’re not quite sure what you’re seeing on the outside, because it’s not quite clear. ... The recordings themselves didn’t show up that much the fact that it was recorded with old people. So I tried to find a way in the process to give the listeners the impression that the sound is not that solid. (Woloshyn 2011b)

36 Normandeau explained that this sound is from the voice of Andrée Lachapelle, a talented Quebeccois actress who simulated exhaustion in her voice during recording (Woloshyn 2011b).
The pervasive pulse and drive of Spleen and Le renard et la rose is essentially absent in the first 50 seconds of Palimpseste; near the end of this section (0:42), deep breathing suggests an exhaustion after this first minute—the breather needs to take some time to catch his breath. At 1:10, when the pulse was aggressive in the previous two works, the pulse and rhythmic patterns are present again here, but they are subtler and certainly not the focus. The drop in energy is unmistakable: again, it is the comparison with the previous two works that makes the lack of driving pulse here seem all the more indicative of lethargy. The panning motion at the end of the section (from right to left) is also slower than in the previous works.

The fourth section of Palimpseste (Fatigue et espace) begins with a gesture, like a surge, that triggers the sounds and motions to follow. Normandeau inserts five of these surges (9:30, 9:38, 9:46, 9:54, 10:03); before each succeeding surge gesture, the sounds die away, providing a brief moment of silence just before the next articulated gesture. This use of silence contrasts with all three previous works. As one can see in the listening score, Normandeau used a sort of pedal (or drone in Spleen) as a constant texture in the first 40 seconds (the salle space). Here in Palimpseste, there is no low drone. The brief moments of silence highlight this omission. The surges of intensity in Fatigue et espace suggest attempts that die away because of exhaustion. The elderly body is trying to move in the private, public, interior, and exterior spaces, but momentum is lost each time. Instead, the listener hears silence, a sonic mark of failure of the body to do something, anything. The final space (extérieur) demonstrates again the decreased amount of energy in this work, as the body makes three final attempts. At 10:42, we hear a sudden increase in reverberation as a low growling sound descends in pitch and decreases its internal motion. At 10:58, this sound
enters again with a new gesture, but each gesture immediately loses intensity through a
descent in pitch and decrease in motion. When the sound is presented one last time at 11:15,
its lack of energy, combined with the previous two presentations, leaves the listener in silence
as the once great body collapses, utterly exhausted. The previous three works do not
completely end this section in silence, but rather keep a low hum of noise that blends into the
gradual build at the beginning of the fifth and final section. In *Palimpseste*, though, we hear
silence for almost three full seconds before the fifth section begins. The aged body needs just
a few moments of repose before it can begin again.

The decrease in overall energy suggests that the vocal source seems unable to sustain
the vocal energy of the adolescents and adults. Sounds move more slowly, both internally and
externally. The whole work seems to fade to nothing, as opposed to the previous works that
each demonstrated an increase in momentum throughout. The exhausted body of *Palimpseste*
suggests an ultimate kind of exhaustion that leads to death. The body’s health and strength
fades, a sense constructed here through attack-decay profiles whose onsets are weaker,
continuants are briefer (or non-existent), and terminations are quick yet subdued. The “fury”
of old age begins with a creaking door, opened only with great exertion; the contradiction
between the section title and the sonic experience is palpable. The physical superiority of
youth and adulthood has faded. All that remains is this weak body. But this old body cannot
even muster up the energy for the aggression often associated with “fury”; instead, the brief
passages of active, thick textures are sonic metaphors for a fury that only exists in the mind
and can never fully be expressed or reconciled. Then in the second section, the internal
motion of the various textures is slower than what we heard in the previous works. At 5:53
(the final vertical gesture), the motion slows down even more. The energy dies away slowly over the next 50 seconds, ending in silence by 6:38, although the section does not actually end until 6:41. This silence, which is unique to *Palimpseste*, is a sonic reminder of the inevitable and eternal silence to come.

Breath becomes a significant sonic marker in *Palimpseste*. Throughout the whole work, we can hear the sounds of breath, alone or accompanying the articulation of phonemes. The sounds of breath seemed to have been disguised (or omitted) in the previous works by their intense textures, but the overall sparser texture of *Palimpseste* allows for subtler sounds, like breath, to emerge. The aged and dying body betrays its physiological weaknesses through the breath. As one ages, one gradually loses lung capacity, requiring one to inhale more often and with greater effort. Also, atrophy (particularly in the thyroarytenoid muscle fibres) produces weaker and breathier sounds; vocal tone quality decreases as a result (Titze 1994, 184). Heavy breathing is used to signify exhaustion, which an elderly body may feel after climbing a flight of stairs, walking down the street, or after living a long, hard life. The listener hears, and therefore imagines, this kind of “last act” exhaustion. Time has run its course; only a few more tired breaths remain until it’s all over.

2.6 Gaining Perspective: Irony, Nostalgia, and the Cynical Composer

And the seasons they go 'round and 'round
And the painted ponies go up and down
We're captive on the carousel of time
We can't return we can only look behind

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37 I use the word “cynical” despite Normandeau’s insistence that the work is not cynical. I experience several aspects of the cycle as a pessimistic and often ironic view of innocence, vivacity and ageing.
From where we came
And go round and round and round
In the circle game. (From “Circle Game” – Joni Mitchell)

Though perhaps unintended, Normandeau’s *Onomatopoeias* cycle reveals much about
the ageing body via the ageing voice, as well as his own preconceptions about the various life
stages. The moods and their resultant sonic environments are not always what one might
expect, with designations like *joie, délire*, and *tendresse*. But they communicate something to
the listener, at the very least perhaps some of Normandeau’s ideas about childhood and
ageing. In the discussion that follows, I first suggest that childhood is used as a lens. I explain
how images of childhood play and innocence are both constructed and challenged,
particularly in *Bédé* and *Éclats de voix*. *Le dictionnaire des bruits*, the source text of the
cycle, instigates the irony that will persist throughout the four works, particularly in *Le
renard et la rose* and *Palimpseste*. Then I discuss Normandeau’s despondent portrayal of
adolescence in *Spleen* and its impermanence. Next, I highlight the contradictions of irony and
sincerity through Normandeau’s reference to *Le petit prince* in *Le renard et la rose*. Finally, I
discuss nostalgia in *Le renard et la rose* and *Palimpseste*, and how, in the latter especially,
nostalgia quickly turns to bitterness.

In Kate Douglas’ monograph (2010) on trauma and memory in autobiographies of
childhood, she highlights the shift in the binary between child and adult that occurs when
trauma is inflicted on and/or by a child (6). While *Bédé* and *Éclats de voix* do not depict any
particular trauma,38 their section titles (e.g., *La vallée des fantômes* – *Bédé; Colère et
dynamique* and *Tristesse et espace* – *Éclats de voix*) and constructed sonic worlds suggest a

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38 I believe that the details of Normandeau’s own childhood are unnecessary for successful expressions of these
emotions and may in fact prejudice the analysis to perfectly line up with biographical details (Wimsatt, Jr. and
Beardsley 1954).
similar breakdown in the child-adult binary. Douglas suggests that since the nineteenth century, childhood has become an important lens through which one views the past:

“Childhood is [a] recognizable synecdoche for history—a means for explaining and interpreting the past, revising and correcting the mistakes of history” (2010, 9). Similarly, childhood acts as the lens through which we interpret the other life stages of the

*Onomatopoeias* cycle. *Éclats de voix* establishes the timeline for the whole cycle through the manipulation of the young girl’s voice, creating a specific sonic and emotional world that represents childhood (or some aspect of it). The remaining works of the cycle were created, and are heard by listeners, through this lens of childhood created in *Éclats de voix*.

The cycle begins innocently enough: a child’s voice reading French onomatopoeias. Onomatopoeias are an infantile language, associated with childhood and play. They are the sounds of comic books (recall, the title *Bédé* comes from B.D. for *bande dessinée*). The carefree world of the child emerges at seemingly sporadic moments. In the first section, *Jeu et rythme*, elements of “play” appear in sounds whose internal morphology and external motion resemble those of toys. For example, at 0:18 we hear what sounds like a wind-up toy hopping along in a regular rhythm; it runs back and forth across the Horizontal Plane, until it slowly moves farther away, fading in dynamic level and becoming more muffled as the perceived distance causes a lack of precision. As the first section in the first work of the cycle (though at this point I don’t believe he had the whole cycle planned), *Éclats de voix* establishes the “fun” that both Normandeau and the listener can have with recorded sound. It is not only children that get to play, but also composers and listeners.
Beyond this sonic portrayal of “play,” Normandeau’s depiction of childhood is far from happy, untroubled, and innocent. *Le dictionnaire des bruits* by Trait and Dulude foretells the ironic conflict between childhood innocence and Normandeau’s constructed sonic environments. The entries are funny, shocking, ironic, self-deprecating, and witty. Many entries are not suitable for young readers, with offensive language, and sexual and violent content. This is neither an objective scholarly collection of French onomatopoeias nor a children’s read, though the book is filled with humorous drawings.

Normandeau highlights this irony in the title *Bédé*, the piece that inspired the whole cycle. While the title originates from comic books, the narrative of the work is not a light and happy children’s story; darkness, doubt, cynicism, and irony prevail. Normandeau’s titles for each of the three sections are telling: *Le monde de l’enfance* (The Realm of Childhood), *La vallée des fantômes* (The Valley of Phantoms) and *La quête de la voix* (In Search of the Voice).  

The title *Bédé* is deceivingly optimistic and fun. The sonic environment, on the other hand, is filled with uncertainty, fear, and noise, perhaps, as Normandeau reflects, “the result of a bizarre childhood” (Woloshyn 2011b). Normandeau confesses that he does not associate childhood with conventional notions of innocence and joy; he explains:

> Je n’ai jamais cru, contrairement à certaines idées reçues, que celle-ci était une période heureuse peuplée de choses merveilleuses et parée d’insouciance. Elle est plutôt le siège de toutes les luttes, celles qu’il faut mener au monde extérieur des adultes et celles qu’il faut soutenir contre le monde intérieur des démons et des fantômes.  

(Normandeau 1994, 7)

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39 Because I did not consult Normandeau regarding these sectional divides, and the timings of the divisions are not indicated in program or liner notes, I cannot be sure that my sectional divides correspond with his. But I perceive three sections nonetheless.

40 “I have never believed, contrary to certain popular beliefs, that this [childhood] was a happy period filled with marvelous things and adorned with unconcern. Rather it is seat of all struggles, those that one must carry out in the external world of adults and those that one must uphold against the interior world of demons and phantoms.”
This childhood realm is isolating in both texture and timbre. This is not a safe and warm world. Images of phantoms do not portray a happy childhood scene. Though a quest may ring of adventure and excitement, *Bédé* presents a search for a voice. While the work contains only the modified sounds of a young girl’s voice, this child’s voice is still lost to the listener. Perhaps she has been silenced by the adults around her. The powers that be, in this case, Normandeau and the computer, have taken away the voice’s ability to speak. The listener hears only shadows of the voice, creating more desire for the human presence.

This dark and ironic portrayal of childhood continues in *Éclats de voix*. The title of the second section, *Tendresse et timbre*, connotes emotional warmth, love, and security, like the feeling between a mother and the child she holds close to her. Normandeau includes a low frequency layer sustained throughout the section whose steady rhythm suggests a heartbeat, which is supposed to have a soothing effect on fetuses in the womb and children when they rest their heads on a parent’s chest (Sansone 2004). However, Normandeau’s childhood scene of tenderness is not all soft blankets and sweet puppy dogs. The metallic timbre of many of the sounds suggests a conflict with, or perhaps a cynical perspective on, *tendresse*. Not all is good and safe in the child’s world Normandeau has constructed.

Though this section opens with the work’s first full word (“oops”), thus clearly invoking the human sound source, the rest of the section does not maintain this human quality. While the sounds are softer and subtler than the first section, they also seem mechanical and manmade. The sounds in this section may be soft and devoid of sharp gestures, but the metallic qualities of many of the sounds still create an eerie and alienating effect.
Tristesse et espace is the fourth section of Éclats de voix, and the third section to indicate a somber portrayal of sadness. Normandeau may have arbitrarily selected five “states” that could apply to childhood. But his choices are nonetheless telling of his thoughts, and they certainly construct particular perspectives for the listener. Indeed sadness is a part of every stage of life, not only childhood. What significance is there in associating tristesse with this particular sonic environment and the sonic parameter of space? It seems that no aspect of a child’s life, public, private, interior, or exterior is free from malady and sadness. This is a bleak perspective. Even the meditative drone consisting of two layers a perfect fifth apart (the lower pitch at 9:25, the fifth above at 9:28) that emerges from the silence at the beginning of the section is not strong enough to sustain any religious connotations of comfort, calm, and peace from a divine being. The infirmity of the child and the sparse textures express loneliness and sadness.

As with many of Normandeau’s other titles and subtitles, Joie et texture (fifth section) is misleading, setting the listener up for disappointment as the sonic environment is not filled with the energy and optimism of joie, but rather the work ends in defeat and exhaustion through a lack of defined gestures and a final gradual decrescendo. Through the carefully constructed sonic environments of Bédé and Éclats de voix and their somber section titles, Normandeau explores themes of disillusionment and loss of innocence, themes that pervade the rest of the cycle. The remaining three works consider the ageing process through the lens of nostalgia for youth and innocence, as well as a cynical questioning of that innocence in the first place.
What kind of meaning can the use of onomatopoeias in this cycle hold for life stages after childhood? Perhaps they represent nostalgia for childhood. They could also represent an immaturity. And finally, they could refer to some kind of regression, particularly in old age, to childish behaviours. Perhaps for Normandeau, childhood is a central life stage, with all other experiences radiating from it, orbiting around it, and being defined by it (see quotation on p. 109).

While much of *Spleen* sonically highlights the vitality of youth, the fifth section, *Délire et texture*, reminds the listener that youthfulness, like all things must end. It begins in a “frenzy” with crowds of muffled voices and rhythmic patterns. Each subsequent rhythm increases in tempo (pulse=58; pulse=108) until we hear a return to the *tempo primo* (pulse=134). The subtle dynamic and textural presentation of this increase in tempo builds tension across the section, particularly when combined with the sudden shifts in dynamics and rapid internal motion of sounds (from 11:56-12:42). But even this increasing tension dies away without reaching a climactic denouement. The piece ends in exhaustion and complete surrender to the body’s limits. The human body is not a robot; it tires and will eventually die. The anti-climactic ending only further serves to highlight an ironic view of adolescence and ageing. There is no such thing as perpetual youth.

Normandeau’s *Spleen* conveys several aspects of the stereotypical teenager, including “teenage angst.” The title *Spleen* refers to a state of melancholy. Nineteenth-century poets such as Baudelaire and Verlaine often referred to this mood in their poetry. The spleen’s black bile, an ancient Greek humour (body fluid), led to its association with melancholy. Baudelaire popularised the association in his poetry with titles such as *Spleen, Le Spleen de*
Paris, and Spleen et Idéal. Such melancholy is an emotional state in which defeated hope weeps and anguish stakes a claim: « L’Espoir, / Vaincu, pleure, et l’Angoisse atroce, despotique, / Sur mon crâne incliné plant son drapeau noir »⁴¹ (Baudelaire, Spleen : Quand le ciel bas et lourd pèse comme un couvercle). Further, “spleen” refers to a deep feeling between ennui (beyond mere boredom) and weariness over mortality. Baudelaire makes specific connections between “spleen” and adolescence in Les Limbes, which he claims represent “les agitations et les mélancolies de la jeunesse moderne” (Leakey 1996, 579). Normandeau continues the connection in Spleen, most obviously through three of the five chosen moods: mélancolie, frustration, and colère. As discussed previously, Normandeau presents an aggressive and almost violent view of teenage emotions in the third section, Colère et dynamique.

It is quite telling of Normandeau’s conceptions about childhood and ageing that the third work, Le renard et la rose, which is about adulthood, references the children’s story Le petit prince in several ways. First, Normandeau uses the voices of most of the actors of the radio version for which he composed the music. Second, he copies exact sounds used in the radio version in this work; for example, the rose’s cough and the lamplighter. Finally, the title refers to two main characters in the story: the fox and the rose.

Though Le petit prince is a children’s story, in many ways it is a children’s story for adults. The sage advice of the fox applies to adults’ choices, behaviours, and priorities. Saint-Exupéry created several adult characters whose personalities and behaviours, while they resemble real people, characters, and behaviours, are exaggerated in such a way as to

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⁴¹ “Hope, / Vanquished, cries, and despotic, atrocious Anguish/ On my tilted skull plants her black flag.”
highlight their ridiculousness. Take, for example, the man who spends all his time counting
the stars, which he claims he owns because he decided it first, writing down the number and
putting the number in the bank. The novella points out the ridiculous in the “grown up”
world, insisting that love and other such “invisible” things are really the most important.

It is against this backdrop that Normandeau created Le renard et la rose. But it is a
work filled with similar irony and suspicions over “adulthood.” Normandeau’s sonic
portrayal of this stage suggests that it is a period of life in which the purity and goodness of
childhood seem forever lost. What did Normandeau lose? What does he wish to remember?
These are questions one can never truly answer (nor needs to answer), but Normandeau’s
cynical portrayal of adulthood through the eyes of a child may lead the listener to ask similar
questions.

With reference to sonic material from Le petit prince, Normandeau makes an ironic
commentary on adulthood: the low pulsing hum that accompanies the subject-less le roi and
the clapping that affirms the egocentric quest of le vaniteux. These sonic markers reference
two of many characters in Le petit prince who “babble” on about their vain and ridiculous
lives and meaningless goals. They do not realize the absurdity of their behaviour. Only the
outside observer (i.e., the Little Prince) can discern it. In Le renard et la rose, Normandeau is
this outside observer who ironically portrays his own kind (i.e., adults) and creates a space
for listeners to do the same.

Perhaps, though, all is not hopeless for adults. This work’s title refers to two central
characters: le renard and la rose represent the novella’s deep themes of devotion and
wisdom. The rose comes as a surprise to the Little Prince one day as he tends to his small
planet; she grows slowly, almost hesitantly from the earth. The Little Prince loves this little rose, despite her melancholy and demanding requests, for he believes that he loves « une fleur qui n’existe qu’à un exemplaire dans les millions et les millions d’étoiles » and « ça suffit pour qu’il soit heureux quand il les regarde » (21).42

Throughout the Little Prince’s interactions with the fox, the fox distills many sage insights. The most important, and most well-known, comes at the end of their time together. The fox calls it his secret: « on ne voit bien qu’avec le coeur. L’essentiel est invisible pour les yeux » (Saint-Exupéry, 65).43 It is the fox who finally opens the Little Prince’s eyes to the deep connection he has with his rose. While the sonic connections between Le renard et la rose and the radio adaptation of Le petit prince are ambiguous at times, a philosophical connection may be the key: love and wisdom as the centerpieces of adult life.

Nostalgia plays an important role in both Le renard et la rose and Palimpseste. Nostalgia attempts to traverse the limits of both time and space to return to a past that no longer exists, and likely never existed in the form of its nostalgic construction. According to Svetlana Boym (2001), “nostalgia is rebellion against the modern idea of time, the time of history and progress ... [it refuses] to surrender to the irreversibility of time that plagues the human condition” (xv). The sonic evocation of nostalgia in Le petit prince and Palimpseste allows the listener to experience this same suspension, or reversal of time. We hear the passage of time, but with electroacoustic music, we are not given the cues of tension, release, and closure we expect in music from the common practice period: no V-I cadences,

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42 “a flower that is the only example in existence amongst millions and millions of stars... that is sufficient for him to be happy when he looks at them.”

43 “It is only with the heart that one sees rightly. That which is essential is invisible to the eyes.”
suspensions, or leading tones. Though Normandeau builds in tension and expectations for closure with other sonic parameters (namely, texture), the listener is left to sit in musical time and space with minimal indication of when this time will end.

In the second section of Le renard et la rose, which is actually entitled nostalgie, Normandeau inserts a descending motif (B-A-G-E) that resembles a carousel song (5:54). The fragment triggers a reminiscence of the past. Until the end of the section (6:42), the motif remains, dying away slowly like a ride winding down. The fragment acts as a sound post, drawing the listener into some memory of childhood. The density of the sonic environment suggests an abundance of memories. Nostalgia: a sadness—a mourning over lost innocence or opportunity—overwhelms the listener. There is too much to come to terms with. And one particular memory breaks through the cacophony of regret: a carousel song.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, then, Normandeau selected less than positive “moods” for his final work, Palimpseste: furie, amertume, colère, fatigue are four of the five moods. The composer has already betrayed some of his thoughts regarding the ageing process and old age through these selections. He sets up the listener to perceive this final stage of life in a particular way. The focus is on the negative and frustrating aspects of old age: physical deterioration and the inevitability of death.

Nostalgia has turned to bitterness (amertume) in this second section of Palimpseste as Normandeau uses mid-range, female, pitched sounds at 6:12 to signify a song fragment. The source—the memory—is unknown to the listener. Perhaps even the imagined old woman or man forgets the exact context of the song—but the effect remains palpable. This bitterness

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44 The fifth, sagesse, is not inherently negative or dark.
over the past is blended with a calm resignation, with slow internal energy and continuous textures. The aged body, while bitter about unfulfilled dreams and a failing physique, is resigned to reality. Songs can be powerful memory indices, drawing out forgotten or repressed experiences and emotions. Whatever this song is about, the listener feels the burden of bitterness about the past. While some may aim for reconciliation with the past, such a quest is not achieved here. Perhaps, though, something can be acquired: wisdom. Finally, after a long life (and a long musical work and an even longer cycle), the elderly body gains wisdom (*Sagesse et texture*, fifth section). This wisdom is shared among the people (the crowd of stutterers; 11:32). Normandeau gives the listener no wisdom for herself, but only the hope that despite a bleak perspective on the ageing process, one may gain wisdom.

The title of the final work, *Palimpseste*, captures much about Normandeau’s ideas about ageing: that our lives are like a palimpsest on which memories and experiences are inscribed. Some are copied over older ones that are forgotten or repressed. Others can only bear traces of the original. But each new experience or memory carries with it the traces of the previous, whether forgotten or vibrantly lived. The work is also a palimpsest of the previous three works, whose sonic journeys are inscribed in the timeline and gestures of *Palimpseste*, and in the memory of a listener who encounters the *Onomatopoeias* cycle.

The nostalgia evoked in the *Onomatopoeias* cycle references no specific childhood memories, no particular past, but rather references only the sentiment of nostalgia and the memory of the other works in the cycle. This absence of real-life referentiality only serves to highlight the suspension of time and space intrinsic to nostalgia. As Boym (2010) explains:
Nostalgia itself has a utopian dimension, only it is no longer directed toward the future. Sometimes nostalgia is not directed toward the past either, but rather sideways. The nostalgic feels stifled within the conventional confines of time and space. (xiv)

2.7 Conclusion

The Onomatopoeias cycle takes the human voice and explores it through technological extremes. The variously aged sound sources deployed in successive works offer new perspectives on the original timeline. As a result, the listener is offered an opportunity to explore the ageing process. While neither a thorough nor objective overview of the ageing process, the cycle presents the listener with gestures, sonic markers, and abstract and referential sounds, allowing him to combine Normandeau’s constructed sonic environment with his own experiences to imagine the body and the ageing process.

Through technological modification, these imagined bodies retain aspects of their original human sound sources, while others are hidden, modified, and re-conceived. The listener hears these imagined bodies expressing their emotions and physical selves through gesture, rhythm, space, and clearly human sonic markers. The ageing body demonstrates its vulnerability through sonic signifiers of sickness, weakness, and decay. The perspective Normandeau constructs of childhood, ageing, and old age is cynical; nostalgia over the loss of childhood and bitterness over ageing dominate the sonic environment. The key to experiencing the ageing body in this cycle is to let the aural experience guide the listener. And after four works, the listener will hear the kind of journey and development that Normandeau experienced as a composer. Beginning with discovery and experimentation (Bédé and Éclats de voix), Normandeau explores his own desire for energy and vitality.
(Spleen), depth and love (Le renard et la rose), and finally a sort of artistic wisdom gained only through a lifetime’s worth of experience (Palimpseste). As the energy dies away in this final work, so too does Normandeau’s journey with the voice and onomatopoeias. The life cycle is complete.

Normandeau’s Onomatopoeias cycle may seem incongruent with Schubert’s Die schöne Müllerin, Schumann’s Dichterliebe, or Mahler’s Kindertotenlieder; however, these acousmatic works belong to the lineage of “individually complete songs designed as a unit” (Youens 2011) whose varied modes of coherence contain such flexibility as to allow for cycles of works that contain no singing or poetic texts. While the Onomatopoeias cycle was not initially intended as a cycle, once Normandeau finished Éclats de voix, the idea for the cycle emerged. Youens (2011) identifies coherence as a requisite; of the varied ways to achieve coherence, I believe the Onomatopoeias cycle contains many. Like many other traditional song cycles, this cycle is united by a central theme, that of the ageing process; it also draws upon a single text: Le dictionnaire des bruits. Finally, like the musical-formal procedures that unite some song cycles, each work in the Onomatopoeias cycle contains the same, or similar, gestures, across the same timeline.

While the individual songs of song cycles are often performed in isolation, the intention is often for a complete performance. Youens (2011) relates the nineteenth-century song cycle to the “concept album” of the twentieth century, where the album is considered a cohesive unit and optimal listening is from start to finish. On this topic, the Onomatopoeias cycle does not correspond. I am not aware of any concerts that have included all four works;
neither has any CD been released with all four works. In fact, Normandeau suggested isolating particular sections of Éclats de voix and Spleen, in hopes of encouraging more radio play. If Normandeau is seemingly indifferent to cohesion within individual works, then how much less so is this the case across the entire cycle. Its potential as a song cycle, then, seems reserved to the experience of the composer and the analyst.

45 Re-publishing electroacoustic works could be considered financially unwise when the consumer demographic is already relatively small.
Chapter 3  
The Voice and the Body as the Studio’s Social and Sensuous Game

3.0 Introduction

3.0.1 Social and Sensuous Interactions

While it might at first seem odd to place an electroacoustic work that engages with homoeroticism in music and an Inuit throat singer in the same chapter, one theme unites them: bodies interacting in the time and space constructed in a fixed medium. In one work, homoeroticism abounds as multiple bodies are heard and constructed through the text, the voices and their spatial placement, and the technological modifications of both the vocal and soundscape elements. In the other work, Inuit throat singing is removed from its original social context and reconstructed in the studio—a social and sensuous play between technology and human, both of which construct something evocative of the original context. The amorous (i.e., sensual and erotic) interactions of Barry Truax’s *Song of Songs* (1992) and social interactions on Tanya Tagaq’s two recorded albums, *Sinaa* (2005) and *Auk/Blood* (2008), both demonstrate how composers and artists, through technological capabilities, can construct both the body and its social and sensuous interactions.

In *Song of Songs*, Truax constructs homoeroticism through text, voice, soundscape and electroacoustic modification. I examine his setting of the Old Testament text as he largely disregards the traditional gender roles connoted by the text in favour of polyamourous implications. He exploits eroticism most specifically through granular time stretching, a technique that allows Truax to exaggerate, and therefore highlight, the intrinsic sound quality of the voice; this technique often draws attention to the sensuality of the original text and the
voice. Truax’s use of soundscape elements blurs boundaries between music and noise, and speech and song; this blurring is a metaphor for the blurred sexual boundaries he depicts in *Song of Songs*. This piece arises from Truax’s growing preoccupation with finding an “alternative viewpoint” in electroacoustic music: homoeroticism. As I discuss below, Truax resists the rigid boundary separating portrayals of heterosexuality from portrayals of non-heteronormative sexual encounters. However, I suggest that Truax’s own discourse surrounding homoeroticism focuses too much on the text, rather than a queer coding of the sounds.

On stage and in the studio, Tagaq divorces herself from the Inuit vocal game tradition, choosing instead to interact with other musicians and, in the studio, with herself. I highlight several aspects of the vocal tradition that persist in Tagaq’s music, albeit in recontextualized forms. She finds a new ideal partner in herself through studio production, particularly on *Sinaa*. On *Auk/Blood*, Tagaq further distances herself from Inuit vocal tradition in musical style and vocal technique. Instead, she draws attention to the physicality of her voice; I demonstrate how the extended vocal technique recalls its bodily source and, further, how Tagaq uses specific sounds and lyrics to create an autoerotic interaction between twin selves. Tagaq’s juxtaposition of a “traditional” musical practice and modern studio technology creates several problematic tensions, tensions that Tagaq claims have led to criticisms from some members of the Inuit community. However, Tagaq seems to both embrace and actively construct these tensions in her “star image.” This construction, which is based on both the musical and extra-musical discourse, emphasizes an emotional authenticity similar to that of her mentor, Björk.


3.0.2 Constructed Social Spaces

As I discuss below, the sensual bodies of Truax’s *Song of Songs* seem to delight in the presence of not only each other’s bodies (male and female), but also of at least one other male and female body. In the second section, I discuss Tagaq’s vocal style, which imitates the two-woman Inuit vocal game; but it is she alone who produces the sounds. In addition to her own vocal ability to imitate two voices, the studio’s technology allows her to layer her transduced voice to present even more voices, and thereby to construct multiple bodies, all of whom participate in the social, and sometimes sensuous, game.

The magic lies in the illusion that both Truax’s and Tagaq’s studio work creates in constructing sonic realities that never existed in real life: these are not lovers in real life; Tagaq cannot sing with herself. Truax relates the “truth” regarding the lovers in *Song of Songs*:

> The little anecdote I can tell you, here they are speaking, not singing, speaking what you might call a love duet, and actually at that moment in 1992, they’d actually never met each other [laugh]... I brought them both into the studio, and recorded, and then processed. And actually at that moment their paths had not crossed [laugh], and actually they didn’t know each other. But here they are, they’re both speaking this highly sensual love duet kind of thing. (Truax 2010a)

The successful construction of intimate erotic and social spaces in these works relies on several sonic parameters, namely space (i.e., spatial placement and movement in the mix), texture (including recorded traces of the body achieved through close microphone placement), and timbre (for example, whispers and clear voices). Intimacy in the fixed medium works relies on the modification, manipulation, and creation of sounds to construct a sonic world in which the listener hears traces of these interacting bodies.
3.0.3 Intimacy

The studio is an instrument, or tool, at the disposal of the composer and musician. Manipulation and synthesis construct and extend sounds encountered in the natural (i.e., non-studio/live/real) world. Truax and Tagaq both participate in a “deliberate practice whose aim is to enhance a vocal sound, alter its timbre or present it in a given spatial and/or temporal configuration with the help of [a] mechanical or electrical process” (Lacasse 2000, 4), a practice Serge Lacasse calls “vocal staging.” The results of this vocal staging directly impact the listener, resulting in certain connotations regarding presence, intimacy, movement, and emotion.

In the real world, humans are attuned to small details in the sonic environment that communicate essential information. As I mentioned in Chapter 1, the voice communicates multiple pieces of information including gender, age, health, mood, and proximity. In addition, vocal tone and timbre help to accurately communicate humour, irony, sarcasm, and sincerity (Frith 1996). As Smalley explains, “The voice’s humanity, directness, universality, expressiveness, and wide and subtle sonic repertory offer a scope which no other source [...] can rival” (1993, 294). Technology allows the composer and musician to either affirm/extend or reject/contradict the voice of the real world. These new voices exist within constructed sonic environments created by spatial (i.e., placement and movement), temporal (i.e., use of reverberation and echo), and timbral modifications.

Drawing the listener’s attention towards the centrality of the voice can create a perceived intimacy with the voice and, by extension, the body, particularly when sonic traces of the body (e.g., tongue, lips, breath from lungs) are included. Intimacy on the recorded
medium is established through two main aspects: shared space and close proximity. Once those two aspects have been constructed the music can use other elements, such as text or emotional expression, to connote intimacy. The development of sound reproduction technology, the microphone in particular, allowed entirely new vocal genres to emerge in the 1930s, namely crooning. No longer did a singer have to “belts” in order to be heard over a band or an orchestra. Rather, a voice singing in a softer style could be heard clearly: all details of the voice could be amplified. According to Dibben, “this electrical amplification and recording allows forms of vocal expression which are intimate” (2009a, 319).

Two key elements from real-life experience influence the listener’s perception of closeness on the recorded medium: reverberation and loudness. Reverberation is a key tool in spatial modification. Its presence connotes particular spaces, such as caves or cathedrals. Reverberation is “the result of an interaction between a sound source and the environment in which it is sounding” (Lacasse 2000, 117, n. 263). The presence of heavy reverb on the voice communicates distance to the listener, between him and the voice. According to Dibben’s research in musical cognition and psychology, reverberation “differs according to the proximity of a sound source to reflective surfaces” (2009, 320); a listener who is closer to a sound source will hear a larger proportion of direct sound than reverberate sound: close microphone placement ensures a high level of direct sound. This close microphone placement results in a “flat” voice, which is “close-up sound, sound spoken by someone close to me, but it is also sound spoken toward me rather than away from me. Sound with low reverb is sound that I am meant to hear, sound that is pronounced for me [...]” (Rick Altman 1992, 61; italics in original).
Close proximity is also inferred in the relative loudness of the voice. Recordings indicate proximity through amplitude in a parallel way to sound sources in real life. Dibben explains, “sounds which are louder in the mix in a recording tend to be heard as being nearer the listener than sounds which are quieter” (2009a, 320). Whispers are an exception. They sound at a lower dynamic level, but whispers are private communications between people in close proximity. In order to hear a whisper, one must be close. In the studio, the closeness of the whisper is often strengthened through close microphone placement. The microphone is positioned right at the source, like an ear bent towards a live whisper.

William Moylan (1992) and Adam Krims (2007) have both discussed the possibility of “unrealistic” or “abstract soundstages” in electronically modified music. For example, a close-miked voice (constructing close proximity) with heavy reverberation (connoting distance) is a sonic contradiction—there is no real world equivalent. The listener must then negotiate what she hears, reconciling elements that either affirm and extend or contradict reality. In these sonic situations, intimacy becomes intricate and complex, as some elements construct physical or emotional distance while others construct physical or emotional closeness.

In the works I discuss below, both Truax and Tagaq construct spaces with varying levels of intimacy, owing in large part to reverberation and loudness. For both Song of Songs and Tagaq’s two albums, I discuss specific modifications of space, texture, and timbre that lead to a sense of intimacy, and thus help the listener to imagine the amorous and social interactions suggested by the music. I begin with Truax’s Song of Songs, whose sensual
source text inspired Truax to explore erotic potential in sound—and not only the voice—through electroacoustic manipulation.

3.1 Sensuality and Homoeroticism in *Song of Songs*

Let us get up early to the vineyards, let us see if the vine flourish, whether the tender grape appear and the pomegranates bud forth: there I will give you my love. (Song of Solomon 7:12)

3.1.1 Introduction

In the following section, I discuss the intimate and erotic interactions constructed in Barry Truax’s *Song of Songs* (1992). I begin by situating *Song of Songs* within Truax’s compositional output and aesthetic approaches and providing background information on the work’s creation. Then I discuss four main ways that this collaborative work uses text, recorded voices, soundscape elements, electroacoustic techniques, and acoustic instrumental sounds—oboe d’amore and English horn—to construct homoerotic interacting bodies. First, I examine the sensuality of the original biblical text. Second, I explain how Truax both confirms and expands this sensuality by using both a male and female voice to utter the text without changing any pronouns. Third, I consider how Truax’s use of granular time stretching increases the sensuousness through the following: prolonging certain words and phrases in order to emphasize their linguistic content and, thus, their erotic significance; blurring the boundaries between song and speech, turning the vocals into sonorous pleasure; and hearing the grain of the voice through the prolonged words, as each articulation and breath constructs a slow, sensuous exploration of the lovers’ bodies. Finally, I explain how the soundscape elements situate the lovers near nature—a metaphor for love—and structure the work around
the times of day. Within this natural scene, multiple lovers, both male and female, are constructed variously as present and absent through the use of simultaneous and call-and-answer vocal settings. These four main aspects in *Song of Songs* combine text, recorded voices, soundscape elements, electroacoustic techniques, and oboe d’amore and English horn to construct multiple homoerotic interactions.

### 3.1.2 Compositional Output and Aesthetic Views

Barry Truax (b. 1947) is Director of the Sonic Research Studio and Professor at Simon Fraser University’s School of Communication and School for the Contemporary Arts. Truax is often associated with R. Murray Schafer’s World Soundscape Project, an educational and research group started at Simon Fraser University in the late 1960s. The SFU studio was where Truax developed his soundscape aesthetics. Even today as he works and teaches in the studio, Truax remains immersed in the World Soundscape Project: the studio contains two tall bookshelves filled with numerous recordings, including all of the original and digital versions of Schafer’s World Soundscape Project. Truax joined the Project after studies in physics and math at Queen’s University, in music at the University of British Columbia, and in electronic studio composition at the Institute of Sonology, Utrecht under G.M. Koenig and Otto Laske. His background in science and math has naturally been integrated with his compositional life, as his electroacoustic works rely on procedures, programs, and hardware based in math and physics.

Truax is an acclaimed composer and researcher. His published writings, including *Acoustic Communication* (1984)—an essential book about the role of sound in communication—and several important articles continue to shape the discussion of
contemporary electroacoustics both in Canada and abroad. His works have won awards at the International Competition of Electroacoustic Music in Bourges, including the Magisterium (1991) for *Riverrun* (1986), an award open only to composers with more than twenty years of experience. Because of its importance to his oeuvre, *Riverrun* opened the Vancouver New Music’s retrospective concert *Barry Truax – A Portrait* on November 19, 2010.¹

Truax’s works are often based on the process of granulation, in which a recorded sound is divided into ‘grains’ of sound—from 100 to 2000 grains per second. Because “each grain [has] a separate defined duration and position within the original sound sample” (Truax 1994a), the composer may then manipulate the envelope, duration, stereo placement, amplitude, and pitch of the grain independently. As a “pioneer of granular synthesis,” Truax has focused particularly on real-time granular synthesis and granulation in the studio,² an approach he believes helps him create highly integrated music that seems interactive. His science background has given him a comfort level with both using and programming computers for compositional purposes. For instance, he programmed a digital signal processor into the PODX system, which allowed for real-time use.³ Thus, despite his “outsider” identity as both a soundscape composer and a homosexual man in the heteronormative computer music world, Truax gained access to that world through his

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¹ I attended two retrospective concerts in November 2010 in Vancouver: Barry Truax: A Retrospective Concert (14 November 2010) held at SFU Woodward’s and Barry Truax – A Portrait (19 November 2010) held at the Scotiabank Dance Centre. I discuss this visit in great detail in Chapter 1.

² While the term “real-time” may suggest the necessity for live performance, Truax sees his approach in the studio as a sort of studio performance. His work for some pieces could not be reproduced in live performance because he manipulates each track separately. In the case of *Song of Songs*, he manipulated one track in real-time while listening to the previously set tracks.

³ *Riverrun* (1986) was his first composition to make use of granular synthesis; *Wings of Nike* (1987) was his first composition to feature granulation of sampled sound. The programs required for these two works (GSX and GSAMX, respectively) were added to PODX in the 1980s.
programming skills, skills that still remain largely underdeveloped in women due to their relative absence in computer science disciplines.\textsuperscript{4} Truax has composed for a variety of media, including traditional instruments, electronic music, electroacoustics, soundscape composition, and for live and fixed media. He often collaborates with live musicians, graphics or video, and dance,\textsuperscript{5} a collaboration that occurs easily in the artistic environment of both the Simon Fraser University and the Vancouver art scenes. Truax has sought modes of artistic expression alternative to the ones established by traditional Western music, which, he suggests prioritizes abstraction.\textsuperscript{6} In “The aesthetics of computer music: a questionable concept reconsidered” (2000), Truax outlines two main compositional approaches he uses to challenge this extreme abstraction: 1) electroacoustic music theatre,\textsuperscript{7} and 2) soundscape composition. Truax believes that once sound is in the form of an audio (i.e., digital or analogue) signal (i.e., has been transduced from an acoustic signal), “it places all forms of sound, whether speech, music or the soundscape, on a continuum where the traditional distinctions between these forms of acoustic communication are blurred” (120). His two main compositional approaches generally focus on one end of this continuum, although at times he attempts to further blur the boundaries by combining all components of the spectrum simultaneously.\textsuperscript{8} In both


\textsuperscript{5} For example, see his multi-media opera \textit{The Power of Two} (2004).

\textsuperscript{6} Even Truax admits (2000) that Western music does contain elements of the imitation of reality, for instance with the use of metaphor, symbolism, quotation, and imitation of “aspects of the real world, both in sound and pattern” (119).

\textsuperscript{7} Truax coined this phrase (2000, 121).

\textsuperscript{8} I discuss this blurring in \textit{Song of Songs} in the sections to follow.
approaches he attempts to balance the internal complexity of sounds (i.e., an abstraction in
the Schaefferian mode of reduced listening) with the external complexity of their real-world
associations.

His electroacoustic music theatre works focus on the human voice, particularly the
spoken voice.9 Truax views the presence of electroacoustics as inherently dramatic, and thus
a natural partner to traditional dramatic media (e.g., opera, theatre):

All electroacoustic sound, unless performed live on some electronic instrument, is
disembodied—it comes from a hidden virtual source. As such it creates an immediate
link with the imagination, memory, fantasy, the world of archetypes and symbols,
especially the internal world of human consciousness. (2000, 122)

Truax enhances this inherent drama through various technological tools, namely granular
time stretching and resonators.10 The former permits the sound to be stretched without
affecting the pitch, enabling the listener “to hear the ‘inside’ of the sound in slow motion, as
it were, thereby allowing it to work on the listener’s imagination” (122). The latter
foregrounds certain frequencies by expanding the space, or to use Truax’s term, the
“volume.” Through the use of digital resonators,11 Truax creates “hyper-resonating” spaces
(Truax 2010b). Truax believes that these two techniques are “the most powerful to evoke the
symbolic level of sonic material” (2000, 122). New worlds, created first by the composer,
and then imagined by the listener, are the key to Truax’s artistic creations. *Song of Songs* is
no exception; Truax combines soundscape recordings, the human voice, and technological

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9 Selected works with the spoken voice include: *The Blind Man* (1979), *Song of Songs* (1992), *Wings of Fire*
(1996), and *Androgyne, Mon Amour* (1997). Selected works with the singing voice include: *Gilgamesh*

10 Truax does not use resonators in *Song of Songs*. Selected works using resonators: *Powers of Two* (1995-9),

11 These digital resonators are based on the Karplus-Strong model. For more information, see Truax 1994.
manipulation (namely, granular time stretching) to create a sonic drama that richly inspires the listener’s imagination of exotic and erotic spaces.

Soundscape composition, Truax’s second main approach, prioritizes the original context of sound material, with its associated meanings and experiences, as a direct guide for a work’s creation and reception: “soundscape composition is context embedded” (2000, 124). By embracing the soundscape’s original context, Truax seeks to retain some recognizability of the source material and allow space for the listener to explore meanings and associations. While *Song of Songs* is not a pure soundscape composition, certain principles remain; the sounds of a monk singing, church bells, cicadas, birds, and fire are heard intact. Though sometimes they are modified, principally through granular time stretching, their sources remain clear. Truax uses the listener’s knowledge of those sounds, along with their associations, to impact the experience of the whole work. In the sections below, I discuss how Truax applies many of his electroacoustic music theatre and soundscape composition principles to contextualize and explore homoeroticism in *Song of Songs*.

### 3.1.3 Background to *Song of Songs*

*Song of Songs* was commissioned by founder and artistic director of Soundstreams Lawrence Cherney, and was written for oboe d’amore and English horn combined with an electroacoustic element (two digital soundtracks). Cherney premiered the work at Simon Fraser University in 1993. The idea for the specific content of the work began with Theo Goldberg. Goldberg, a composer and frequent collaborator with Truax, first approached

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12 Soundstreams was founded by Cherney in 1982 with the objective to program music by living composers, with a particular focus on Canadian composers. The programming includes various genres, such as chamber and choral music, opera, and music theatre. Soundstreams regularly commissions new works by Canadian and international composers. See <http://www.soundstreams.ca/>
Truax with the idea of working with the Song of Songs Old Testament text. Truax recalls Goldberg pondering the theme of *la belle jardinière*, a beautiful female gardener. When that idea proved unfruitful, he decided in favour of the *Song of Songs* text. Goldberg explained in a letter to Truax:

> As I realized now having previously only cursory acquaintance with the Song of Songs, there is all the *jardinière* in Solomon’s beloved that one could search for; she is a metaphor of the garden, her body and her existence. And it’s constantly made an allegory of the garden; her physical features are called lilies, Rose of Sharon, pomegranate, henna, the most delicious spices, the garden itself is sometimes the beloved. (read by Truax 2010a)

Goldberg selected the twenty-one different verses from various chapters of *Song of Songs*. He also created graphics using an algorithm that produced wave-like images. Goldberg aims for his images to be “visual analogies to sound” (Truax 2010c); the images for *Song of Songs* are sensual and evoke the female figure (see the album cover of *Song of Songs*), which is a central focus in the biblical text. These abstract evocations and images of the King James Version text were originally projected from slides onto a screen behind the performer.

Because Truax and Goldberg had collaborated on four previous projects, and Truax had collaborated with Lawrence Cherney on two previous projects, the partnerships for *Song of Songs* were natural. Truax recalls:

> And of course at that point, I was working with sampled sound and with Lawrence Cherney already, and so the idea came quickly together that we would do a piece for Lawrence that would involve computer graphics, the oboe d’amore and English horn

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13 Truax has recently digitized the material so that future performances of the work can use them. The slides for *Wings of Nike* (1987), which were also designed by Goldberg, were digitized for a concert in Vancouver on 19 November 2010. The success of this digitization meant Truax and his colleagues would continue to digitize other slides. The digitized slides for *Song of Songs* have not been published yet.


15 *Tongues of Angels* (1988) and *Beauty and the Beast* (1989) predated *Song of Songs*. 
that Lawrence played, and that I would process the text just as he [Goldberg] was processing the text visually, and that I would create a soundscape. And by that point I could use environmental sounds, as well as the voices; and so the idea came together quickly that what I was doing and what he [Goldberg] was doing and what Lawrence was doing—that would all come together. (Truax 2010a)

The work combines several elements, both live and fixed. In its original context, *Song of Songs* involves live oboe d’amore and English horn, computer graphics, and two digital soundtracks; the digital soundtracks contain both soundscape and spoken word that have been modified through various processes, particularly granular time stretching. Truax released the work on CD in 1994 with the oboe d’amore and English horn tracks recorded.\(^\text{16}\)

Truax brought two friends into the studio to record the *Song of Songs* text: Norbert Ruebsaat and Thecla Schiphorst.\(^\text{17}\) He had previously worked with both people because he was drawn to their voices.\(^\text{18}\) About Ruebsaat, Truax explained: “I was always very attracted to his poetry and his reading voice, and so when I needed a male voice to read the part, he sprang to mind because he was my favourite male voice” (Truax 2010a). Truax was attracted to Schiphorst’s vocal tone: “She recorded the vocal parts of the narrative parts for *Beauty and the Beast*. And I liked her very poetic way of speaking things. It was very highly inflected, and very sensual, and there’s something about her voice that has a certain timbral edge to it” (Truax 2010a). One can certainly perceive a song-like quality to her speaking, as her voice rises and falls, pauses and advances in the unmodified original recordings. Truax’s desire to

\(^{16}\) The CD *Song of Songs* also includes the work without Cherney’s parts: *Morning* and *Afternoon* are combined into *Prelude* (first track); *Evening* and *Night & Daybreak* are combined into *Coda* (last track). Truax felt that listeners could better hear the relationship between Cherney’s parts and the text on the digital soundtracks if they were first accustomed to the digital tracks alone (Truax 2010a).

\(^{17}\) Ruebsaat is a Vancouver-based poet and former partner of soundscape composer Hildegard Westerkamp. Schiphorst is a faculty member in the School of Interactive Arts and Technology at Simon Fraser University.

\(^{18}\) Norbert Ruebsaat’s voice is used in *The Blind Man* (1979) and Thecla Schiphorst’s in *Beauty and the Beast* (1989).
make the speech more song-like through granular time stretching was facilitated by her intrinsic song-like approach to the text (Truax 2010b).

The work is divided into four sections, grouping verses into the cycles of the day:

*Morning, Afternoon, Evening, and Night & Daybreak.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Text</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Morning</strong></td>
<td>Return, return O Shulamite, return, return that we may look upon thee. Who is she that looketh forth as the morning, fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army carrying banners. Look not upon me because I am black, because the sun hath looked upon me. I am my beloved’s and my beloved is mine, he feedeth among the lilies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Afternoon</strong></td>
<td>I am the Rose of Sharon, the Lily of the Valley. As the lily among the thorns, so is my love among the daughters. A garden enclosed is my sister, my spouse, a spring shut up, a fountain sealed. A fountain of gardens, a well of flowing waters, and streams from Lebanon. Let my beloved come into his garden and eat his pleasant fruits. I am my beloved’s and my beloved is mine, he feedeth among the lilies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Evening</strong></td>
<td>He brought me to the banqueting house and his banner over me was love. I sat down under his shadow and his fruit was sweet to my taste. Thou art all fair my love, there is no spot in thee. The joints of thy thighs are like jewels, the work of the hands of a cunning workman. This thy stature is like to a palm tree, and they breasts to clusters of grapes. Until the day break and the shadows flee away, I will get me to the mountains of myrrh and the hill of frankincense. I am my beloved’s and my beloved is mine, he feedeth among the lilies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Night &amp; Daybreak</strong></td>
<td>Until the day break and the shadows flee away, be thou like a roe or a young hart, upon the mountains of Bether. My beloved spoke and said to me: Rise my love, my fair one and come away. Let us get up early to the vineyards, let us see if the vine flourish, whether the tender grape appear and the pomegranates bud forth: there I will give you my love. And our bed is green. How fair is thy love, my sister, my spouse! How much better is thy love than wine!</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.1 - Text to *Song of Songs.*
The first three sections all end with the famous refrain “I am my beloved’s and my beloved is mine...” (6:3). The voices read the text, sometimes simultaneously, other times in a call-and-answer format. The oboe d’amore and English horn parts are thoroughly integrated into the text through an imitation of the rhythm and cadence of the voices. In the instrumentalist's score prepared for Cherney, Truax includes the text under numerous portions of the two instrumental parts, indicating specifically how the rhythm of the text and instruments are linked; Cherney does not play along with the voices, but is almost a musical echo after they speak.

**SONG OF SONGS**

for Lawrence Cherney

1. MORNING

BARRY TRUAX

Figure 3.1 - Excerpt from *Song of Songs* - “Morning” for oboe d’amore

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19 The liner notes for "Song of Songs" mistakenly present the text as follows: “I am my beloveds and my beloved is mine.” Throughout the chapter, I will use the correct grammar for this refrain.

20 This interconnection is readily apparent following the first phrase: “Return, return, O Shulamite.” The cadence of the text is shortly thereafter imitated by the oboe d’amore.
The work’s soundscape elements include church bells, a singing monk, cicadas, birds, fire, and water. All sonic elements, excluding the oboe d’amore and English horn, were processed using digital signal processing, which allowed Truax to stretch and harmonize the sounds and “[bring] out their inner voices and colours” (Truax 1994b). The musical (i.e., pitched melodic) content is based on both the Christian and Jewish traditions: the monk’s song references Western Christianity while the oboe d’amore and English horn parts incorporate a Hebrew cantillation melody for the Song of Songs text.21

*Song of Songs* was the first of many works Truax has composed with the specific intention of countering heteronormative portrayals of sexuality. He seeks not only to portray characters with a wider range of sexual preferences than he claims is found in most electroacoustic works (and even opera, a dramatic genre from which he gains inspiration), but also to celebrate and examine this diversity. These works are specifically “‘about’ being gay” (Gatchalian 2004). Truax asserts that this sexual diversity explores a new normality and beauty that counters previous depictions of sexual diversity as depraved and isolating (such as in Britten’s operas), or as an incidental inside joke (such as the gender joke surrounding ‘trouser’ roles). Truax suggests that operas since the early twentieth century have made significant strides in this area, starting with Alban Berg’s portrayal of the Countess Martha Geschwitz, the only genuine love for the troubled Lulu.22 But as Truax explains:

> The heterosexual norm as exemplified in romantic love remains central and inescapable well into the 20th century, if not beyond. Alternative viewpoints, as in other areas of society, have to be indulged in subtexts, understood by initiates while preserving the veneer of normality. (Truax 2003, 118)

21 In actuality, the monk is singing an Italian Christmas song, but his style of singing combined with the church bells references a religious context.

22 I examine Truax’s discussion of opera and homosexuality in greater detail below.
Truax laments that these “alternative viewpoints” are even rarer in the electroacoustic world, with little diversity amongst composers—few are female, and even fewer are openly homosexual. *Song of Songs* was the beginning of Truax’s quest for an “alternative voice” in electroacoustic music. In this work the bodies of the lovers are hidden from view. In the succeeding works, the sexual body is highlighted:

1) *Powers of Two* (1995-9) is an electroacoustic opera (or “music theatre”) for six singers, two dancers, videotape, and eight digital soundtracks. According to Truax, the work “explores the symbolism and dynamic tension between various pairs of opposites: the visual and auditory, the real and virtual, male and female, gay and straight. Although the characters are only partly realistic, they enact various human emotions in their search for spiritual, psychological and sexual unity.” (Truax 2009)

2) *Androgyne, Mon Amour* (1996-7) is a music theatre work for amplified male double bass player and two digital soundtracks. The piece is a setting of six poems by Tennessee Williams; the text celebrates gay love through an intimate and erotic enactment between the player and his instrument, which represents his lover. A video version was also made, with the dancer moving in mirror image to himself over a faint image of the double bass player and his instrument. At *Barry Truax – A Portrait*, the performance included a live double bassist (Toronto’s Peter Pavlovsky) and the video. As the dancer on the video moved gracefully over and around the faint image of a double bass, Pavlovsky stroked, strummed, bowed, and caressed his double bass—his amour.

3) *Thou and I* (2003) is based on material from *Powers of Two*. The work presents the two male singers (tenor and baritone) as lovers, not only through the intimacy and sensuality of the texts by Lord Tennyson, Rilke, Whitman, Katherine Philips, and Jalal al-Din Rumi, but
also through the physical intimacy enacted on stage: the work begins with a tight embrace and ends with a tender kiss.

4) *Enigma* (2010) is a five-scene opera for three singers and a dancer about the British mathematician Alan Turing (1912-1954). Despite concerns that it would not be ready, *Enigma* had two scenes premiered at *Barry Truax – A Portrait*. This most recent homoerotic work was the last work on the concert program, and it drew the audience into the tragedy of Turing’s life. Based on the biography by Andrew Hodges and poetry by Tennyson and Katherine Philips, the opera focuses on Turing’s infatuation with two young men, both of whom are represented by a single male dancer. Scene I - “Mother and Christopher” depicts the death of his friend and object of youthful infatuation, Christopher; Scene V - “Witches Brew” portrays the 40-year-old Turing’s conviction of “gross indecency” with a male working-class youth, humiliation over the injections of female hormones, and ultimate death after eating an apple laced with cyanide.

While sensuality and eroticism are not physically enacted on state in *Song of Songs*, the work contains several significant elements of sensuality and homoeroticism, which I examine below. I first explore the sensuality and gender roles in the original text as well as the extended metaphor of nature as sensuous love. Second, I discuss how Truax both extends and counters the sensuality of the original text, namely through homoerotic associations of the taped voices and text. Third, I discuss how Truax’s use of technology, particularly granular time stretching, allows the listener to hear and explore the “grain” of the voice, that is the texture of the voice, and by extension, the body. Finally, I analyze the particular soundscapes of *Song of Songs*, which not only invoke times of day, but also place the lovers
(in various numbers and genders) in proximity to nature, which, in the original text, is both a gift of love from God and a metaphor for love.

3.1.4 Source Text: Sensuality in Metaphor

The text and subject matter were originally chosen by Goldberg, though he had been communicating with Truax regarding la belle jardinière theme. Truax supported the idea to use the Song of Solomon text and saw Lawrence Cherney as a natural fit due to his Jewish heritage. Once Goldberg handed Truax the final chosen verses, Truax was left to set them as he desired. Truax arranged them into four sections and decided to use a refrain. While the original text is filled with erotic and sensual imagery, it was only through Truax that the text was transformed into a homoerotic scene, namely through his decision to have the male and female voices record the text without any pronoun changes.

The original text is from the Old Testament book Song of Solomon (or Song of Songs), and, as such, belongs to both the Jewish and Christian traditions.23 The title of the biblical book in its original Hebrew is “Solomon’s Song of Songs”; there remains an ambiguity as to whether the song is by, for, or about Solomon. While he is named several times and several verses mention the “king,” debates continue regarding authorship (Tischler 2007). Despite this ambiguity, one aspect remains plain: this text is a love song, filled with metaphor, passion, and sensuality. The Song of Solomon has long been considered an allegory: in Judaism, the love relationship exists between God and Israel; in Christianity, the love relationship exists between Christ and the Church, or between Christ and an individual soul. The poem’s extensive use of sensuous imagery from nature transcends cultural

23 Recall that Truax incorporates music from both traditions.
boundaries, with ancient Egyptian and Babylonian love songs following a similar model (Tischler 2007, 87-8). Truax’s work expands the notions of love, sensuality, sexuality, and meaning in *Song of Songs* by both integrating cultural boundaries and breaking down conventions of sexuality and eroticism.

The text is widely known for its “explicit and lusty sexual imagery” (Tischler 2007, 88) of the body, both male and female. When asked about the superiority of her lover, the beloved describes him:

His hands are as gold rings set with the beryl: his belly is as bright ivory overlaid with sapphires.
His legs are as pillars of marble, set upon sockets of fine gold: his countenance is as Lebanon, excellent as the cedars.
His mouth is most sweet: yea, he is altogether lovely. (5:14-16a).

*Song of Solomon* is perhaps more famous for the lover’s erotic descriptions of his female beloved:

Thy lips are like a thread of scarlet, and thy speech is comely: thy temples are like a piece of pomegranate within thy locks.
Thy neck is like the tower of David builded for an armoury, whereon there hang a thousand bucklers, all shields of mighty men.
Thy breasts are like two young roes that are twins, which feed among the lilies (4:3-5).

Thy navel is like a round goblet, which wanteth not liquor: thy belly is like an heap of wheat set about with lilies (7:2).

This thy stature is like a palm tree, and thy breasts to clusters of grapes (7:7).

While not all of these verses are in Truax’s setting, they are famous passages sure to come to the mind of any listener, and to the minds of Goldberg as he chose the text and Truax as he set it. The tone of the original text is laden with sensuality and sexuality, although
celebrated within a monogamous, heterosexual relationship. Truax takes this original context and explores new possibilities.

3.1.5 Beyond Heterosexuality: Enacting Homoeroticism in Voice and Text

As an openly homosexual electroacoustic composer, Truax has consciously and plainly decided to explore sexuality in electroacoustic music, namely through homoeroticism. *Song of Songs* is an early example of this exploration, and homoeroticism has become a central theme in many of his other works. In interviews and scholarly writings, Truax has expounded on the theme of homoeroticism in his electroacoustic music, a theme that comes out of his own identity as a gay man; in an interview publicizing a 2004 production of *Powers of Two* Truax explained:

I’d be hard pressed to find 10 [gay electroacoustic composers] worldwide. I’m just wondering if gays have been filtered out in some way. It’s what I call the ‘techno-macho mystique’. Jazz had a similar macho mystique—it was an extremely homosocial milieu, where issues of gender and sexual identity were never discussed. It’s prevalent in all of the technological fields, not just music. (Gatchalian 2004)

The scarcity of female electroacoustic composers and the impact of this “techno-macho mystique” have also been considered in the work of Andra McCartney and Hannah Bosma, and in the collection of interviews in Tara Rodgers’ *Pink Noises* (2010).

Bosma (2000, 2003) focuses on the use of the voice in both live and fixed form in electroacoustic works. She highlights the predominance of male composers working with female voices; this typical arrangement only furthers the dichotomies of male vs. female, technology vs. nature, and civilized vs. savage, particularly as the male controls the female voice, whose “text” is often a pseudo-language or phonemes (suggesting a pre-linguistic—that is, primitive—mode) through the manipulation of technology. Furthermore, the
processed female voice is often aggressively deconstructed and shattered, a violent removal of power, identity, and meaning. As I discuss below, Truax generally does not mutilate the recorded voices of either Ruebsaat or Schiphorst; their words are coherent before any extreme manipulation (e.g., stretching), and Truax aims to enhance the voice rather than deconstruct it.

McCartney (1995a, 1995b, 1996, 2006) examines how female electroacoustic composers construct metaphors for their work in the studio. Rather than rely on the male heteronormative metaphors of domination and violence, these women speak of their work in metaphors of wilderness, dancing, and breathing. McCartney also highlights the use of multimedia and collaboration as “alternative” modes of electroacoustic composition used by female composers. In addition to his use of multimedia (e.g., Powers of Two) and emphasis on collaboration, which are alternate creative modes embraced by female electroacoustic composers, Truax established his “alternative voice” primarily with soundscape composition.

Truax can be placed alongside the many female DJs, electronic musicians, and sound artists Rodgers (2010) interviews; she aims to demonstrate the variety of technological, creative, and aesthetic approaches in their musical practices. These women variably encounter and react against “the trenchancy of associated gendered stereotypes [that seem] to gain force when these fields [technology and music] converge in electronic music” (2). Though he is a man with computer programming experience, Truax’s homosexuality and soundscape compositional approach similarly situate him on the fringes of electroacoustic composition.
In “Homoeroticism and Electroacoustic Music: Absence and Personal Voice” (2003), Truax bemoans the scarcity of gender and sexual diversity in the electroacoustic scene. He then makes a case for the great potential of electroacoustic music to explore sexual diversity, illustrating this potential through brief descriptions of his own homoerotic works. Truax dismisses the viability of attempts to separate one’s sexual identity from one’s art. Truax explains:

The musical establishment claims that its artistic choices are devoid of discrimination because musical quality is all that matters. Women and gay composers often are heard to echo this sentiment by denying they are any different from their male or heterosexual counterparts. They are simply composers who happen to be women or gay or whatever other category. (118)

Truax suggests that composers, particularly those working in instrumental genres, “[aspire] to a level of abstraction where issues such as gender or sexual orientation play no role” (118). By this statement I do not believe that Truax rebuffs the groundbreaking work of new musicology in examining gender in the Western canon, including instrumental works. What Truax suggests here is that the espoused “neutrality” of instrumental music simply cannot persist in opera, a genre where “voice, text and drama render every aspect ... highly gender specific” (118), and in electroacoustic music overall in which the absence of the body “creates an uneasiness of gender identification” (118). Thus, Truax brings his sexual identity to the fore in his compositions; he no longer accepts that his gayness should be separate from his work. He moralizes the gayness of his compositions, explaining:

If it’s that important a part of your life, I think you want to incorporate it directly into your work. I suppose I can say that I’m established enough that I’m not taking any big risks. But there comes a certain point where you’re willing to make certain fundamental choices about art, and you feel you want to make statements about it. (Gatchalian 2004)
He aims to implement his own gay identity into several homoerotic works. In his discussions, Truax seems to focus on three main aspects that enact homoeroticism:

1) Text: Truax uses homoerotic or homosocial poetry, most frequently by poets Katherine Philips, Lord Alfred Tennyson, and Jalal al-Din Rumi, but also from poets such as Tennessee Williams, Charlotte Lennox, Walt Whitman, R.M. Rilke, and Aphra Behn.

2) Homosexual characters: both male and female.

3) Visual enactment or representation: Truax provides a strong visual element through the live dancers in *Enigma* and *Powers of Two*, clips of female models and male and female dancers in *Powers of Two*, the live double bass and dancer in the accompanying video in *Androgyne, Mon Amour*, all of which are objects of homoerotic desire.

However, these elements are extra-musical elements, namely text, plot and characters, and staging, all of which could be implemented by any composer, gay or otherwise. He has yet to articulate a “gay” way to compose electroacoustic music beyond these extra-musical elements. As I will discuss in a later section, it is his soundscape approach that seems the most “alternative” to heteronormative computer music, and, thus, a potentially “gay” mode of electroacoustic composition.

Despite frequently discussing homoeroticism in his scholarly writings, program notes, and public talks, Truax only superficially aligns himself within the lineage of opera, a genre he considers an appropriate foundation for exploring homoeroticism without engaging with opera’s own troubled past. For instance, his inexplicable avoidance of the parallels between Benjamin Britten’s operas and Truax’s own homoerotic works in particular, despite Truax’s frequent use of a silent male dancer as the object of homoerotic desire, is problematic. He
decries the portrayal of homosexuals as “generic (but sympathetic) outsider[s]” (2003, 118), but offers little insight into how his Turing, for example, is any different. Nevertheless, Truax retains several aspects of opera in his electroacoustic works: the voice, text, and a dramatic sensibility he claims is inherent to the electroacoustic medium (see p. 132). Many of his electroacoustic works depart from opera in one significant way: the absence of a physical body creating the sound. Truax explains (from Dusman 2000) that, “it is the very absence of the body in electroacoustic music that creates an uneasiness of gender identification with its abstract sounds.” (2003, 118).24

In *Song of Songs*, gender identification of the two voices is relatively straightforward; Truax has done little to hide or transform their original vocal ranges or manipulate their timbres beyond recognition.25 Instead, it is the absence of the body receiving the declarations of love that causes the uneasiness. As I will explain below, it is not enough simply to conclude that the two voices are merely speaking to each other. The text, namely with its gender-specific pronouns and physiological descriptions, indicates there are other lovers in the constructed space.

*Song of Songs* goes beyond suggestions of homosexual bodies interacting (i.e., male-male; female-female): the physical relationships created in the work are polyamorous, incorporating hetero-, homo-, and bi-sexual encounters. The two voices do not change: the expressive lovers remain the same female and male we imagine through their voices. But the bodies receiving their amorous declarations and gestures change. The male speaker loves the

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24 Artists like Pamela Z and Laurie Anderson intentionally blur gender boundaries through the use of vocoders and harmonisers. See Balsamo 1996; Bosma 2003; Doane 1999; Lewis 2007; Marsh and West 2003.

25 Truax applies harmonizations to the original voices, adding voices both below and above the original range. The “normal” range always remains alongside the harmonized versions, allowing the listener to still hear the original voice’s biological sex.
female speaker, but also some other male body and another female body; the female speaker loves the male speaker in return, as well as some other female body and another male body.

The original text suggests three main speakers, though with some “ambiguity regarding speakers’ identity” (Tischler 2007, 87): 1) The beloved—a female who is the central voice of the book; her experiences are described most often in Song of Solomon, both as she loves and receives love. 2) The lover—a male (perhaps Solomon or some other king) who enjoys the beauty and presence of his beloved. 3) The friends—maidens (1:3-8:5), and the beloved’s brothers (8:8-9), though at some points their identity is ambiguous. Beyond some ambiguity regarding the gender of the friends, the gendered roles of the beloved and the lover are clearly established in the original text.26 Even in allegoric interpretations, the gendered roles remain fixed, as God and Christ are both gendered male in the Judeo and Christian theologies, and Israel, the Church, and the soul are gendered female.

Goldberg’s arrangement of the text seems to show little concern for its original gender associations. He took twenty-one different verses from all three speakers. Eleven verses originally belong to the beloved, seven to the lover, and two to the friends.27 Truax, however, rearranged the selected verses into four movements based on the cycle of the day rather than on any gendered roles. He then decided to have both the recorded male and female voices read the text, regardless of the original gender roles with no change to pronouns.28

26 The New International Version labels “Beloved,” “Lover,” and “Friends” according to convention.

27 Whether intended or not, these numbers are similar to the distribution of verses in the whole book in which the beloved is the dominant speaker.

28 As I will discuss later, the two voices do not speak the text simultaneously throughout the work.
The original text relies principally on particular pronouns to lead to an expectation of certain heteronormative amorous interactions. For instance, in the first section, *Morning*, the text references both a female and male object of desire:

Who is *she* that looketh forth as the morning, fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army carrying banners (6:10; emphasis mine).

I am my beloved's and my beloved is mine, *he* feedeth among the lilies (6:3; emphasis mine).

Because the majority of verses come from the beloved’s perspective, the remaining pronouns in the final three sections are male (e.g., he, his). But the text refers to gender in other ways as well: 1) a gendered noun: “sister” in *Afternoon* (4:12) and in *Night & Daybreak* (4:10a); 2) a gendered name: “Shulamite,” meaning “Solomon’s girl,” in *Morning* (6:13); and 3) female physiology: “breasts” in *Evening* (7:7).

Traditional heterosexual interactions remain in *Song of Songs* when we encounter one or both of the following: first, the speaker uses pronouns that refer to an oppositely gendered lover. For instance, in the second verse of *Morning*, the male voice ponders a female lover (“Who is *she* that looketh forth as the morning...”); while this text is originally stated by the friends, the male speaker and the female pronoun for the object of desire reinforce a heterosexual relationship. Second, the speaker declares a verse originally intended for his or her own gender in the source text. For instance, while the third verse of *Morning* contains no gendered references to her lover, the female speaker expresses a verse originally declared by the female beloved. Thus, heterosexual amorous expressions remain in *Afternoon* when the female speaker declares: “I am the Rose of Sharon, the Lily of the Valley. As the lily among the thorns, so is my love among the daughters”—a verse spoken by the beloved that infers a
female speaker—and in *Evening* when she explains: “I sat down under his shadow and his fruit was sweet to my taste”— a verse containing male pronouns that refer to her lover.

However, Truax early on hints that this *Song of Songs* will not depict the traditional heterosexual amorous encounter. The opening line—“Return, return, O Shulamite”—is stated by both the female and male speakers. While their combined presence may be an intentional compositional decision to introduce the listeners early to the two voices, it also begins to subtly blur traditional sexual boundaries. As I stated above, Shulamite is a woman’s name, defined most often as “Solomon’s girl.” But this blurring is subtle as the opening verse contains no blatant sexual or sensuous content, and Shulamite is not an overtly female name, especially to listeners who may be unfamiliar with the original text or Hebrew names. The first strong suggestion of the departure from heterosexual norms is in the closing refrain of *Morning*: “I am my beloved’s and my beloved is mine, *he* feedeth among the lilies” (emphasis mine). As a refrain, this verse claims structural and homoerotic importance: both the male and female voices state this verse.

Truax continues to construct male homosexual expressions in *Afternoon* when the male speaker states: “Let my beloved come into *his* garden...” and in *Evening* when he exclaims: “*He* brought me to the banqueting house and *his* banner over me was love” (emphasis mine). Truax uses harmonizations to blur gender boundaries in the second iteration of “I am the rose of Sharon, the Lily of the Valley.” Truax explains that this passage is in fact only the female voice: she speaks simultaneously with three transpositions that sound in the male vocal range (Truax 2003), but the result sounds like both the female and male voices. These harmonizations signify more than a mere gender identity game for the
listener. On the one hand, they reference the tendency of electroacoustic composition, particularly in its early history (e.g., Berio, Ligeti, Babbitt), to violently sever the female voice from her identity. In this example, Truax has not so aggressively disguised the voice or the words of the female speaker, but through his technological manipulation, he has stripped her of her female voice, the only signifier of her gender available in this electroacoustic medium. Alternatively, these harmonizations challenge our cultural notion that “our voices [are] they way they are because of our bodies’ structures, [and] we assume our voices [are] among the inevitable consequences of biological sex” (Cusick 1999, 28-9). Similarly to Normandeau’s *Onomatopoeias* cycle, these harmonizations perform a woman’s voice that is not restricted to the culturally ingrained belief that girls’ voices do not “change”—a belief that suggests “women are unfinished persons who do not change from childhood to adulthood (just as Aristotle and Galen thought)” (33).

The constructs of female homoeroticism emerge later in the work, namely in *Evening*. After the female speaker has stated two verses in which she talks about her male lovers, she states a verse originally spoken by the male lover, a verse that connotes a female recipient: “Thou art all fair my love, there is no spot in thee.” Previously, in *Morning*, the male speaker described his female lover as “fair as the moon” and later in *Night & Daybreak*, the male speaker again describes his female love as his “fair one.” Females have historically been referred to as the “fairer sex.” This text’s association of “fair” with “female” is further confirmed in the closing verse of the work, which both the male and female speakers state: “How fair is thy love, my sister, my spouse!” Thus, in *Evening*, this female speaker has a pure female lover, whose virginal qualities contain “no spot”—no sin. Truax makes this
lesbian love most explicit in *Evening* when she tells her lover that her breasts are like “clusters of grapes.” This statement shifts any more conservative notion of this female-female love as platonic or innocently sensual to physical and erotic. The look and feel of the breasts, expressed in the text and heard in the granular stretching of “grapes,” renders an imagined physical encounter of the two female lovers.

As I will discuss below, Truax uses many other approaches, both blatant and nuanced, to further create the homoerotic (or polyamorous) space of *Song of Songs*, a space in which male and female interact in hetero-, homo-, and bi-sexual ways. As I have described above, Truax begins with a more basic parameter—text—in order to both confirm heterosexual norms and challenge these norms. The original gendered associations of the text, gendered pronouns, and physiological descriptions are used to explore numerous erotic possibilities, which allow Truax to “encourage and facilitate alternative voices to emerge and be heard...” (2003, 119). It is interesting to note that despite the polyamorous interactions constructed in this work, the refrain suggests exclusivity and commitment: “I am my beloved’s and my beloved is mine.”

Truax explores the more complex aspect of timbre to draw out further elements of sensuality and sexuality. He refers to John Shepherd’s description of the centrality of timbre: “The texture, the grain, the tactile quality of sounds brings the world into us and reminds us of the social relatedness of humanity” (2003, 119; from Leppert and McClary 1987, 157-8). The main process Truax uses to explore the timbre of not only the voice but also elements of the soundscape in *Song of Songs* is granular time stretching.
3.1.6 The Grain of the Voice

Truax began experimenting with granulation techniques in the late 1970s and by the 1980s he was focusing almost exclusively on this approach.\textsuperscript{29} The process of granulation begins by dividing a sound into “short enveloped grains of 50ms duration or less” (Truax 2009); each grain has an attack-decay envelope to ensure no clicks. By dividing a sound into smaller units, or “grains,” with high densities and shimmering textures, the composer can independently manipulate duration, pitch, volume, speed, or phase. Once this granulation has occurred the composer can “stretch” the sound without altering the pitch. In this way, time stretching becomes like “slow motion sound.” Truax achieved the capacity for real-time granular synthesis in 1986; granulation of recorded sound was the next step, which he first applied in \textit{Wings of Nike} (1987). Then Truax moved on to time stretching of the granulated sound, which he first applied in \textit{Beauty and the Beast} (1989).

The composer decides by what factor to stretch the sound: anywhere between a doubling to several hundred times slower is possible, depending on the desired sound. Truax outlines three significant results of time stretching:

1) The effect “create[s] drones ... [and also allows] the inner timbral character of the sound to emerge and be observed as if under a microscope” (Truax 2009).

2) The technique enhances “the volume or perceived magnitude of the sound”; the result is a sound that “seems larger than life” (Truax 2009).

3) The technique transforms “both the morphology [from Smalley] and the associated imagery of the resultant sound” (Truax 2009).

\textsuperscript{29} Truax explained that he goes through phases of using different technology, spending many years exploring its capabilities. For instance, he spent much of the 1970s working with FM (frequency modulation), the 1980s and 1990s working with granulation, and in the past decade has been working with convolution (Truax 2010c).
Truax considers this last result to be of great significance in *Song of Songs* as the vocal sounds become more environmental in their long and steady prolongations and the environmental sounds become more song-like, “thereby creating a constant interaction of all the material and further blurring the distinction between voice and environment” (Truax 1994a, 46). Also of significance to *Song of Songs* is Truax’s belief that “granular stretching of the voice, by adding a great deal of aural volume to the sound with the multiple layers of grain streams (Truax 1998), often seems to create a sensuousness, if not an erotic quality to the sound” (2003, 119). Each word emerges not only as an utterance, but also as a gesture. By manipulating and re-constructing the voice filled with a multitude of “grains,” Truax draws attention to the physicality of the voice, constructing the voice as an embodied utterance—the kind of rare voice marked with Barthes’ “grain.” For in the voices of these two lovers, we hear not only their bodies, but also the bodies of their lovers, male and female.

French literary critic and semiotician Roland Barthes theorized the idea of “grain” in his essay “The Grain of the Voice” (1988) as “the encounter between a language and a voice” (181); the grain is the “materiality of the body speaking its mother tongue” (182). Barthes’ “grain” and Truax’s “grain” are not synonymous: the former is an aesthetic concept, while the latter is a technical term. However, I suggest that through Truax’s granular time stretching, the listener can encounter Barthes’ grain; this grain of the voice is emphasized—even magnified—so that whatever “grain” may have been indiscernible before is now apparent and perceivable. Particularly when Truax stretches words at the end of phrases so that their meaning is indiscernible, or at least inconsequential, the “body in the voice as it
sings” (188)—or in this case, is made to sing through time stretching—becomes the focus.

Just as Barthes heard the voice “from deep down in the cavities, the muscles, the membranes, the cartilages...” (181), we hear the body, the flesh, of the voices in Song of Songs: “it has us hear a body which has no civil identity, no ‘personality’, but which is nevertheless a separate body” (182). In Song of Songs, it is of little consequence to the listener who the voices actually are; their lives and identities are not needed to experience “the voluptuousness of [the voice’s] sound-signifiers” (182). We hear the sensuality of their bodies through their time-stretched voices, and gain pleasure similar to that of the lovers in the work.

Truax uses time stretching to accentuate certain syllables and words, either to draw attention to the words themselves (i.e., linguistic content) or to explore the natural inflections of the text and the vocal timbre: “a word becomes a prolonged gesture, often with smooth contours and enriched timbre. Its emotional impact is intensified and the listener has more time to savour its levels of meaning” (2003, 119). For example, Truax uses time stretching on the phrase “I am the Rose of Sharon” (Afternoon) to draw attention to its significant imagery: a beautiful flower emerging from Sharon’s fertile land. Also, with the harmonizing of three other voices in lower ranges, this passage blends gender boundaries: who is speaking? Only a female? A female and a male? In reality, these multiple voices come from one recorded female voice, but it is the construction of new multiple bodies that shapes the listener’s imagination. Truax uses this time stretching to highlight the homoerotic potential of the work in Evening; both voices speak “thy breasts to clusters of grapes,” but the female’s voice is stretched out, prolonging the word “grapes” and allowing the listener to reflect on the
implications of the statement: the lesbian lovers themselves take time to explore and enjoy the “grains,” or textures, of their bodies.

As one can observe in a spectrogram of the work (Figure 3.2), Truax’s use of granular time stretching maintains the profile of the sound (e.g., frequency, envelope), but elongates our experience of it (i.e., stretching). Each attack, inflection, and spectral range is rendered more audible. Like a long slow gaze (or video slow motion), the listener takes in the sensuousness of the sound. Each vocal gesture is prolonged for the listener to fully experience every nuance, just as the text suggests the lovers explore and admire the nuances of each other’s bodies.

Figure 3.2 Spectrogram of Thecla Schiphorst stating “Thy thighs are like jewels, the work of the hands of a cunning workman” with no modification. The second phrase is then stretched and harmonized to create the lower subharmonics.30

30 Truax notes the following in his production score: Processing: (1:51-2:53) granulated with 12 voi., at speed 199, stretch 0:1, 1:1, 1:4, 0:1, 50:1, with 2x (4 4 3 2 1); return to 0:1 at “cun.”
The original biblical text uses the metaphor of nature to extol the beauty of the lovers’ bodies and the glory of their love. The speakers gaze on their “fair” lover, who is like a bountiful garden filled with streams; this “garden enclosed” again suggests a pure, virginal lover. As they gaze on the body (or bodies) of their lover(s), the listener, too, is able to imagine the glorious and precious body that exhibits sensual craftsmanship. The lovers enjoy the nude body of the lover whose exposed breasts bear their beauty. The fulfillment of their love (i.e., a sexual encounter) is compared to sustenance. In Afternoon, the female speaker invites her male lover into his garden to “eat his pleasant fruits.” She is his fruit, ripe for consumption. The lovers exclaim, “How much better is thy love than wine!” They are hungry to fulfill their sexual desire, for “the dominant theme is the desire of the lovers to cling to one another in erotic embrace” (Tischler 2007, 88).

Truax’s erotic love scene is staged first by the text. The intrinsic eroticism is enhanced by the granular time stretching of the voice in three ways: First, particular words and phrases are prolonged in order to emphasize their linguistic content (often in sensuous metaphors), and, thus, their erotic significance. Second, the natural inflections of the voice are expanded, resulting at times in a song-like style. The listener hears the nuances more clearly and hears the voice as a pleasing song. Third, the presence of the voice, which is enhanced through time stretching, helps the listener imagine the lovers’ bodies as the breath and articulations become exaggerated, the highlighted words contain specific physiological imagery, and the prolongation of the vocal textures evokes a slow and deliberate sensuous exploration of the lovers’ bodies. In addition to time stretching of the voices, the erotic garden scene is evoked through the presence and manipulation of soundscape sources. These elements establish the
lovers’ scene that, in combination with the constructed presence or absence of the lovers, becomes the site of erotic enactment.

3.1.7 The Lovers’ Scene: Absence, Presence, and Place

The use of soundscape elements, in combination with the text, situates the lovers in various locations (outdoor vs. indoor) and times of day. I consider how the layered use of the two recorded voices, whether presented simultaneously, in call-and-answer, or independently, constructs the absence or presence of certain lovers. As I described above, more than these two speaking lovers are involved in the lovers’ scene of *Song of Songs*: at least one other male and female are present here.

The text and the use of the female and male voices construct various modes of sexuality and at least two lovers beyond those recorded. But when are these lovers present? Who is in the lovers’ scene at any given point? I discuss Truax’s construction, first, of heterosexual love and, second, of homosexual love. Two conditions must first be met before these two voices—male and female—can be each other’s lovers (i.e., heterosexual): the text cannot contain any same-sex reference, particularly through pronouns; and the text cannot suggest an absent lover (e.g., referral to “his” or “he”). While it is possible for the absent lover to in fact be one of the recorded voices who is silent at that moment, the strong presence of their voices in the work (as opposed to only the imagined presence of other lovers) makes it difficult for the listener to imagine that the recorded lover is suddenly gone from the scene rather than merely silent. I suggest that two circumstances in particular reinforce the perception of two recorded voices as each other’s lovers: simultaneity and call-and-answer. First, when the male and female voices speak in unison, their simultaneity
suggests a kind of vow to each other, a dedication in word of their physical love. Similar to their unity in love, their rhythm and cadence unite. For example, while the third verse of Afternoon is a continuation of the metaphor of a female lover as a garden, only the male has spoken the second verse, and thus it is perhaps this “sister” and “spouse” who now joins him in celebrating the metaphor: “A fountain of gardens, a well of flowing waters, and streams from Lebanon.” Two of the more explicit statements regarding sexual acts are also stated simultaneously by the male and female speakers; they will give each other their love in the vineyards on their green bed (in Night & Daybreak). Second, when the male and female voices interact in a call-and-answer format, a dialogue between lovers is established. The interaction begun in the previous simultaneous recitations is extended through a call-and-answer in Night & Daybreak during which the female speaker states, “My beloved spoke to me and said to me...” and the male voice responds, “Rise my love, my fair one and come away.” Using only first- and second-person pronouns in simultaneous or call-and-answer statements, Truax constructs the male and female voices as those of heterosexual lovers.

Truax constructs homosexual love through his assignment of the text to certain genders (see pp. 146ff.), as well as how the voices are layered; these elements combine to construct diverse erotic encounters. For example, the use of same-gendered third-person pronouns constructs a homoerotic encounter in “Evening” when the male voice states: “He brought me to the banqueting house and his banner over me was love” (emphasis mine). Truax suggests a polyamorous relationship in the opening text: the work opens with both voices stating “Return, return O Shulamite, return, return that we may look upon thee.” These two voices call out to one female lover. Their simultaneity suggests proximity—they seem to
be calling out to the same female lover.\(^{31}\) While this indication is subtle for reasons explained above (i.e., the lack of gender specificity to the name Shulamite for the unfamiliar, and the lack of any sensual or sexual content yet), this passage is suggestive of the type of orgiastic possibilities in Truax’s setting.

The lovers’ scene unfolds within nature (which itself is an object of adoration) as both the setting and a metaphor for sensual love. Truax expands the original biblical metaphor through the time stretching of soundscape elements. Similar to the voice becoming song-like and at times resembling the birds and cicadas, through time stretching, the birds, cicadas, and crickets in turn begin to “sing.” All sounds blur together, a sonic metaphor for the boundaries surrounding hetero- and homoeroticism that Truax aims to blur.

Truax is famous for his soundscape compositions, in which he uses technological capabilities to explore original soundscape material. He sees this approach as an alternative practice to much of what is termed “computer music.” Truax laments: “Alternative viewpoints, as in other areas of society, have to be indulged in subtexts, understood by initiates while preserving the veneer of normality” (2003, 118). Thus he aims to be an “alternative” voice in the electroacoustic world. He outlines soundscape composition as one of two aesthetic approaches that allow him to blur boundaries between music and nature, sound and noise, intrinsic and extrinsic complexity, a contrast to the male heterosexual world of “computer music.” Just as Truax insists that “environmental sounds are ... inescapably contextual” unless one thoroughly and intentionally transforms them, so too does he insist that one’s gay identity cannot be separated from the musical works produced. This is an

\(^{31}\) The male and female voices do not state “Return, return, O Shulamite” in perfect unison, but by their arrival at “look upon thee,” their statements are in unison. I believe that, despite this slight delay in the female’s voice, the impression is of simultaneity.
ethical prioritization of context—particularly in contrast to “abstract” computer music—in soundscape composition that suggests its potential as a “gay” mode of electroacoustic composition, an “alternative viewpoint” that refuses to deny the importance of extrinsic meaning, that claims sound should be more than just sound.

Truax combines the external context—which is informed by the listener’s knowledge—with the intrinsic sonic qualities, using the former to guide the manipulation of the latter. His approach leads to a blurring of the boundaries between music and soundscape; the two become intertwined as the soundscape material’s timbral, melodic, and rhythmic qualities are explored and the manipulated material informs aspects of form and structure.

While *Song of Songs* is not a soundscape composition, it is informed by many of Truax’s principles for that approach (Truax 2000): 1) the source material is recognizable, 2) the listener’s knowledge of the material’s context is essential to the work, 3) aspects of the external context shape the use of the material, and 4) the listener is led to greater awareness of his/her environment. As I explain below, the first two criteria clearly apply to *Song of Songs*. However, because the work is also deeply informed by the text and the oboe d’amore and English horn’s music, the last two criteria play a less significant role.

While Truax also applies granular time stretching to the various soundscape materials, he often presents them initially rather unambiguously. The listener clearly hears a monk singing over church bells,\(^3^2\) birds, water, cicadas, fire (beginning with a striking match), and

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\(^3^2\) The church bells are also presented with some time stretching, but elements of their timbre and Truax’s intentional use to have them ring out the times of day help the listener hear them as bells.
Their recognizability is essential to the work’s meaning: first, the soundscape elements establish the setting by placing the lovers in either immediate or near proximity to the outdoors; second, the soundscape material affirms the metaphor of nature as love or as the lover’s body—la belle jardinière is surely present. In addition, Truax uses the various soundscape elements to punctuate the times of the day, which allows for a formal structure that is based on nature (i.e., daily cycle). Nature is thus central not only for establishing a place, but also for creating a timeline and formal structure and furthering the metaphor of love as nature.

Time stretching also allows Truax to blur the boundaries between not only the female and male vocal ranges, but also the various sonic aspects, namely the voices and the soundscape elements. Truax explains:

I had this granular stretching technique where you could stretch the human sounds, the spoken version became more song-like, and when you stretched the insect and bird sounds, they begin a little bit more on the human scale. That the sounds are blended together, everything is singing basically: the song of songs. (Truax 2010a)

In particular, Truax blends the vocal and soundscape elements together in the interludes between the sections. He stretches the final words of the refrain and approaches the textures and timbres of the soundscape elements present at those moments (Morning: monk singing, bells, birds; Afternoon: cicadas, water; Evening: fire, crickets; Night & Daybreak: monk singing, crickets, cicadas). Even the live instrument parts blend into the recorded material.

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33 Truax outlines the sources of the recorded material in the liner notes of the album Song of Songs (2004) as follows: “The soundscape of the work is derived from ... recordings I made of a monk singing with the monastery bells at SS. Annunziata, near Amelia, Italy, along with cicadas and crickets in the afternoon and night. These sounds are supplemented by recordings of the Dawn Chorus in Brittany made by the World Soundscape Project, and digital recordings made by Robert MacNevin of a stream and a crackling fire.”

34 While it is possible for the lovers to be indoors, they would need to be near open windows or doors that would allow the outdoor soundscape to seep into their space.
The oboe d’amore and English horn parts are derived from the rhythm, cadence, and pitch inflections of the voices, in all levels of time stretching, and from the Hebrew cantillation melody. The whole work is unified in pitch and rhythm; in fact, at times the voices are stretched to create a drone whose pitches fit exactly into the mode of the live instrumental parts. Boundaries are blurred in sound—a sonic metaphor for the type of open-minded and diverse love Truax constructs in *Song of Songs*: “So the whole thing became this celebration of life and love and nature and culture without being totally specific to any one approach to it. So everything is singing, and everything is a celebration of life” (Truax 2010a).

3.1.8 Reflection

In this section, I have discussed Truax’s earliest exploration of the homoerotic potential of electroacoustic works in *Song of Songs*. He combines a sensuous biblical text with recorded voices whose time stretching expands their intrinsic sensuality and constructs a polyamorous and homoerotic scene. The soundscape elements and oboe d’amore and English horn parts further blend the boundaries between music and environment, speech and song, Jewish and Christian traditions, and hetero- and homosexuality.

Truax frames *Songs of Songs* as the first of several works that incorporate his own homosexual identity. He suggests that to do otherwise is both ethically undesirable and musically impossible, given the electroacoustic medium and use of voice and text. However, Truax’s challenge to heteronormative compositional approaches and musical structures in electroacoustic music remains superficial in *Song of Songs*. Or perhaps “subtle” is a more appropriate adjective. The homo- or bi-sexual text settings are not pervasive, and many of these moments could pass by the listener’s ear without much thought. The text is central to
this work, and thus, perhaps, the body is buried beneath the familiar text. Even the
instruments imitate the cadence and contour of the text, reminding the listener of the text he
just heard. I wonder if by framing so much of the discourse (Truax 2003, 2009) around his
homoerotic works on the text, Truax might be underestimating the potential breadth in
discourses surrounding homoerotic potential in electroacoustic works.

In several key ways Truax’s homoerotic works demonstrate the potential to disrupt
the often problematic portrayal of gender and sexuality in opera. For example, unlike
operatic voices, the voices of *Song of Songs* do not sing in a literal sense; so they are
somewhat freed from the history of voice type associations that forever condemn the soprano
to death and entitle the bass to a seat of power. In addition, harmonization of the recorded
voices extends their ranges beyond their physiological limits. Perhaps *Song of Songs*’s
ambiguity (through the lack of vocal performers on stage, some ambiguities in the text, and
multiple sexualities presented by only two voices) manifests one of the strengths of opera to
be, as Catherine Clément describes, “elusive,” to contain “expressive slipperiness” (Smart
2000, 19). By resisting portrayals of rigid homo-, hetero-, and bi-sexual roles, Truax instead
transcends the tendency towards strict binaries, in this case between homo- and
heterosexuality. Instead, the voices occupy multiple and amorphous spaces within the broad
categories of gender and sexuality.

I suggest that one should be cautious about replacing the subjugated female in opera’s
history with a subjugated homosexual character. For if Smart (2000) and Susan McClary
(1988) accuse opera of often “smoothing over the awful fates of female characters” (Smart
2000, 5), then what is the verdict on Truax’s portrayal of homosexual characters? For
example, Turing’s fate in *Enigma* offers the electroacoustic genre an opportunity to not merely smooth over his awful fate.

Smart (2000) highlights the trend of recent opera scholarship on the “voice” to restore “the centrality of performers to the experience [of opera]” (7); she points toward Abbate’s focus on “opera’s physicality” (7) as a possible overthrowing of composer’s single voice with the multiple performers’ voices. In Truax’s homoerotic works, whose voice should dominate? If the performers’ voices in his live homoerotic works are allowed to overthrow Truax’s “single voice,” does this help or hinder the aim of homoerotic electroacoustic music? If the source of the homoeroticism is Truax’s own homosexuality, then the composer’s voice cannot be overthrown without risking erasure of its homoerotic potential. Or perhaps without complete domination, multiple voices (i.e., composer, performers, characters, electroacoustic music) can find a way to share the sonic space and challenge the norms of both electroacoustic music’s and opera’s problematic pasts.

In the next section, I explore another intersection between the past (the Inuit vocal game tradition) and new possibilities with electronic technology as Tanya Tagaq constructs her own interacting bodies.
3.2 “All By Myself”: Re-imagining a Social and Erotic Game in Tagaq’s Music

We are sealed together. You are deep in my core
and I hope you know that there is no coming back out.
(from “Hunger” – Tanya Tagaq)

3.2.1 Introduction

Inuit throat singer Tanya Tagaq is unlikely to consider herself an electroacoustic composer. And yet her albums make use of studio capabilities to construct sonic environments that have no real world equivalence. She does not merely transduce her live performances to the fixed medium. Rather, her albums construct social and sensuous interactions between impossible clones of herself; she explains:

I find it’s really wonderful because I can achieve things in the studio that I can’t on stage... . And I think that that’s a part of one of the stems of an album that might be coming through is the bridging the gap between the two and/or breaking down the bridge between those two and letting them be as separate as possible. (Tagaq 2011)

In the following section, I examine these constructed bodily interactions, both social and sensuous. First, I summarize her career and artistic output. Second, I place her artistic approach and output within its original context of Inuit vocal games; I outline several ways in which the vocal and corporeal origins persist in Tagaq’s music. Third, I draw principally upon her first album, Sinaa, to demonstrate Tagaq’s new vocal game with herself, an interaction made possible only through the studio. Finally, I focus on how Tagaq constructs twin bodies by duplicating herself in the studio; these twin bodies enact sensuality and, in particular, autoeroticism, through extended vocal technique, spatial placement (i.e., the mix), and lyrics, especially on her second album, Auk/Blood.
3.2.2 Career and Artistic Output

Tanya Tagaq Gillis (b. 1977) is an Inuit throat singer from Cambridge Bay, Nunavut. She currently lives in Yellowknife with her daughter, Naia Tategak Ugarte Gillis, whom she had with former partner Felipe Ugarte, a traditional Basque musician who plays txalaparta on several tracks on *Sinaa* and was a part of the collaborative group “Iluani.” While she was studying at the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design University Tagaq’s mother sent her *katajjaq* (Inuit vocal game) music “to remind her of her roots” (Prasad 2010). Tagaq was astonished at the sounds of the recordings; she then wanted to learn them herself. She first rehearsed in the shower, but was soon performing publicly, a transition she found easy. Tagaq explains: “I’ve never been shy. Like even as a kid I was never shy to do things in front of people. I think it just came naturally” (Tagaq 2011).

While Tagaq’s vocals have been divorced from the traditional partnership of the Inuit vocal tradition, she has sought partnerships in other collaborative ways. Her first public performances involved her unique solo style accompanied by DJ tracks filled with electronic sounds and soundscapes. Then in 2003, she was part of a group called “Iluani” that released an album entitled *Erren*. In 2005, she collaborated with Sum 41, Arcade Fire, and Sonic Youth on a UNICEF-fundraising track entitled “Do They Know It’s Hallowe’en.” In 2009, Tagaq collaborated with Cannes-winning filmmaker Zacharias Kunuk in a short film in which Tagaq is both hunter and hunted; she also provides the soundtrack. Recently (2011), she joined Kunuk again and musicians Andrew Whiteman and Dean Stone to create a short film and music about Sirmilik National Park in Nunavut as part of a large project by the
National Parks Project.\footnote{For more information or to watch any of the thirteen films, see www.nationalparksproject.ca.} Two other key collaborators have helped Tagaq grow her fan base and expand her creative approaches: Björk and the Kronos Quartet.

In 2000 Tagaq exhibited her paintings at the Great Northern Arts Festival in Canada; when the organizers needed more performers, Tagaq agreed to perform her throat singing. After two Icelandic audience members asked Tagaq to sing into their recorder so they could show it to Björk, she was invited to join Björk’s 2001 Vespertine tour. Tagaq then collaborated with Björk on her fourth album, \textit{Medúlla} (2004), and the soundtrack for Björk’s partner Matthew Barney’s film \textit{Drawing Restraint 9} (2005). In return, Björk collaborated with Tagaq on her debut album, \textit{Sinaa} (2005). Tagaq performed mostly to the complete ignorance of the broader public until her work with Björk. Her presence on an album of the popular and idiosyncratic Icelandic electronica artist catapulted Tagaq into public knowledge. Björk’s \textit{Medúlla} focuses on the human voice; she invited unique vocal artists, such as beatboxers Rahzel, Schlomo, and Dokaka, to create the multi-layered tracks. Tagaq’s unique skills fit well with Björk’s vision for the album. When asked what it was like to record with Björk, Tagaq explained:

\begin{quote}
It was really good. It taught me a lot, set a standard of what I should demand when I’m working with people because she’s so great to work with. I’ve worked with people before that didn’t let me really do what I felt like doing but more with their idea of what I should be doing. (Lux 2008)
\end{quote}
Tagaq found a similarly effective partnership with the San Francisco-based Kronos Quartet.\(^{36}\) In 2005, the Kronos Quartet approached Tagaq, inviting her to collaborate on a commissioned work entitled *Nunavut*, named for the Canadian territory where Tagaq was born and raised. The result was a 15-minute work that was premiered at the Chan Centre in Vancouver in 2006. These musical forces united again in Los Angeles in May 2008 to premiere *Tundra Songs*, a 30-minute work by Canadian composer Derek Charke. Tagaq confesses that working with the Kronos Quartet was challenging:

> Those guys made me get my shit together, because they’re so structured, and I’m way too open. They helped me find a little stream that I’m starting to follow and it will result in creating music with a lot more structure to it. I think for my next album, I’ll actually write some music and not be afraid to sing along with it, and put that together with throat singing (Prasad 2010).

Her quest to connect these two elements—her heritage and these collaborative relationships—has shaped Tagaq’s musical output, which includes her two studio albums:

*Sinaa* and *Auk/Blood*.

### 3.2.3 Background to *Sinaa* and *Auk/Blood*

*Sinaa*, meaning “edge” in Inuktitut, was first released in 2005 on Tagaq’s website. Many of the tracks include only her throat singing. “Still” and “Breather” include programming by Jose Trincado “Triki,” Michael Red and Juan Hernández (who also produced, mixed, and mastered all tracks except “Ancestors”); four tracks, “Quijaviit,” “Seamless,” “Suluk” and “Breather,” include txalaparta performed by brother duo Ugarte

\(^{36}\) The Kronos Quartet was founded by violinist David Harrington in 1973. Its current members are Harrington, John Sherba (violins), Hank Dutt (viola), and Jeffrey Zeigler (cello). Kronos specializes in contemporary classical music, but they also seek collaboration with diverse performers and ensembles from around the world, including Tom Waits, Bollywood “playback singer” Asha Bhosle, and Chinese pipa virtuoso Wu Man. They have more than 45 recordings and have commissioned more than 700 works and arrangements for string quartet. See <http://kronosquartet.org/>.
Anaïak (with Felipe Ugarte and Imanol Ugarte); “Ancestors,” co-written with Björk and appearing on Medúlla, features piano and Björk’s vocals. The album is a “homegrown” project, with cousin and throat singer Celina Kalluk providing translations, and ex-boyfriend Felipe Ugarte as photographer and musician. This album received five nominations and three wins at the Canadian Aboriginal Music Awards (Best Producer/Engineer, Best Album Design, Best Female Artist), and a nomination for Aboriginal Recording of the Year at the 2006 Juno Awards.

Tagaq’s image, including promotional material (the album art in particular), performance costumes and style, conveys certain themes that are ubiquitous in the discourse and reception surrounding her music: raw and primal, open and direct, emotional. This connection between image and artist situates Tagaq within the popular music genre (Ahonen 2006). The intertextuality of the star image establishes that “the emotional content of the song is associated not only with the singer’s voice but with his/her body, media image, and biographical details as well” (167). The images on the cover and in the liner notes of both albums create a consistent image of “the one who has created the music and whose feelings and intentions the songs of the album are about” (171).

Sinaa’s album cover features a headshot of a seemingly naked Tagaq (note: the photo includes her right shoulder and décolletage). Her mouth is open and her eyes look out to the viewer. Thick interlocked armoured cables cross her face. Her hair is largely invisible as all but the exposed skin fades into the black background. The album title is red while her name is white. The bare skin and open mouth suggest a kind of primality; similarly, the vocals on

37 The covers of both albums can be seen on Tagaq’s website: http://www.isuma.tv/hi/en/tagaq/discography.

38 As will be discussed in greater detail below, Tagaq’s second album uses a similar design and colour scheme.
Sinaa are “raw” as they are largely unprocessed, have no vibrato and little reverberation; as well, the use of extended vocal technique and incoherent texts is often associated with the primal (Bosma 2000, 2003; Weber-Lucks 2003). The eye contact and unadorned face connote openness towards the listener and directness of emotional expression. This directness is key to Tagaq’s style with the often-aggressive grunts, groans, and pants heard both on her albums and in live shows and the way she talks about herself and her music. For example, in interviews she has no problem calling certain questions stupid, referring frequently to sex and less frequently to bodily functions, and telling PETA to “kiss [her] motherfucking ass, those bastards” (Prasad 2010). A quick glance at Tagaq’s promotional photographs reveals these constant themes. The photographs focus on her face and often include eye contact with the viewer.\(^{39}\) In her live shows and post-concert interactions, Tagaq maintains direct eye contact. In the small Théâtre La Chapelle (with a room capacity of around 120), Tagaq attempted to make eye contact with audience members, especially those in the first few rows;\(^{40}\) she commented on their reactions in between songs, and after the show, I heard her tell particular people that she had noticed them during the show. For the audience members who were already ecstatic from the brief, but intense performance, Tagaq’s awareness of them and willingness to talk with them only increased their excitement.\(^{41}\)

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\(^{39}\) Though perhaps a pure coincidence, there is a similarity to Björk’s own promotional photographs. All but two of her album covers feature direct eye contact and focus on her face; critical and fan discourse about Björk’s music also often uses words like raw, emotional, and direct.

\(^{40}\) I attended the Tanya Tagaq Trio shows at Théâtre La Chapelle in Montreal, Quebec on February 8 and 9, 2011. For a more detailed discussion, see Chapter 1.

\(^{41}\) Both shows I attended lasted about 70 minutes; they both included three extended songs and one encore. After the first show in particular, audience members were euphoric; I recall two women who were screaming into a cell phone after the show, attempting to share their excitement with a friend and convince the friend to attend a show later in the week. Tagaq talked to the elated women and made plans to smoke marijuana with them outside the venue.
Musically, *Sinaa* is relatively sparse and confirms the image projected in the cover and liner notes: Tagaq sings alone on six tracks; Björk and a piano join her on one track; four tracks include txalaparta duo Ugarte Anaiak; two songs include programming. The focus is on Tagaq’s voice and her use of the Inuit vocal tradition’s sonic features. Alongside several original tracks, Tagaq includes two traditional Inuit songs: “Qimiruluapik”\(^{42}\) and “Qiujavitt.”\(^{43}\) She was excited to include these songs and thought her community would feel similarly. She describes her motivation:

I thought that by me putting some traditional songs on my album that people would be so happy [laugh]. You know it would be like: ‘Yeh. How lovely: an Inuk person promoting traditional stuff and doing new things.’ (Tagaq 2011)

Following the success of *Sinaa*, Tagaq released *Auk/Blood* (2008); it received two nominations at the 2009 Juno Awards, including Instrumental Album of the Year and Aboriginal Album of the Year. Visually, the album is similar to *Sinaa*. The cover is a black and white image of her face and upper chest. Instead of cables covering her face, Tagaq stands among barren tree branches; the two images have a similar visual effect. One significant difference is the lack of eye contact in all the album photographs (seven in total). But the focus remains on her unadorned, naturally beautiful face, a focus that affirms the raw and open quality found on *Sinaa*. The inside panel contains a full-length image of Tagaq on an outdoor wooden platform. With arms outstretched, head back and mouth open as if to scream, Tagaq’s emotional desperation speaks loudly. Her once-white gown (as depicted in the booklet image opposite the lyrics to “Hunger”) is covered in blood.\(^{44}\) This is the Tagaq

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\(^{42}\) Diamond (2008) refers to this throat song as “Qimmirualapik.”

\(^{43}\) “Qiujavitt” is not a throat song, but a traditional Inuit melody.

\(^{44}\) Tagaq is barefoot in this photo. At both shows I attended, and in many videos I have seen of Tagaq, she performs barefoot.
one sees on the live stage. She is aggressive and free as she uses her body to emote in
performance. She performs barefoot and moves freely around the space, taking the hand-held
microphone with her.\textsuperscript{45} Tagaq’s performances demonstrate her physical power and endurance,
as she stomps, jumps, and crouches on stage. She is seldom still; when I saw her in
performance, even when she kneeled on the ground, her chest heaved with each deep
inhalation or growl. These gestures of heaving, stroking her womb, or sobbing demonstrate
the physicality of her performances. The body is as central to her expression as her voice.

Sonically, \textit{Auk/Blood} differs significantly from \textit{Sinaa}. The textures are overall more
varied and denser as layered string parts (Jesse Zubot, violin; Cris Derksen, cello) and
electronics fill the sonic environment. While Tagaq’s voice is the central focus on \textit{Sinaa}, on
\textit{Auk/Blood}, Tagaq’s voice often becomes background material while other voices are
highlighted, or her voice becomes one of many in a polyphonic texture. Versatile vocalist
Mike Patton (from “Faith No More”) sings on “Fire-Ikuma”; Canadian hip-hop artist and
CBC Radio 2 host Buck 65 (aka. Rich Terfry) raps on “Gentle” and “Want”; Canadian beat-
boxer Shamik Bilgi performs on “Force,” “Burst,” and “Constellation.” The songwriting
credits indicate the collaborative nature of the album: all songs except “Growth,” “Growl,”
“Burst,” and “Construction” share songwriting credits with other musicians.

Tagaq again kept the project close to home. She worked with people from her
previous album: Oscar Oliva provided some photography, graphic design, and computer
graphics for \textit{Sinaa} and is credited with information graphics on \textit{Auk/Blood}; Felipe Ugarte,
musician and photographer on \textit{Sinaa}, is listed as an assistant on \textit{Auk/Blood}; Juan Hernández,

\textsuperscript{45} Dibben (2009b) describes Bjö rk’s performance elements that are similar to Tagaq’s, including performing
barefoot and using a hand-held microphone.
who mixed, mastered, and produced all of *Sinaa* except “Ancestors,” mixed and produced *Auk/Blood*. The musicians are all her friends. Tagaq explains:

> All of the people that worked with me on the album are my friends, except Mike Patton, who I didn’t know before, but I really love what he does. The rest of the contributors are people I want to hang out with and go for coffee with, and they just happened to be amazing musicians as well. (Prasad 2010)

While her two albums are quite different, they have one main aspect in common: Tagaq’s throat singing. She breaks from tradition by singing solo; however, in the studio she constructs new vocal games as she layers her voice. The result leaves the impression of multiple voices. She also gains new partners in the other musicians. Just as they interact in live performance, on the albums their rhythms, melodies, and timbres seem to respond and feed off each other. Elements of this interaction are an illusion. Many songs were the final results of Tagaq and her producer, Hernandez. Tagaq explains:

> ... we’d take excerpts from what they [the musicians] did and put songs together when the musicians weren’t around. There are also some songs that were recorded when we were all together too. So it’s a kind of Frankenstein album built from different parts. In fact, there were five albums worth of material created through this strange process of picking things out, cutting them up and putting them together. (Prasad 2010)

Tagaq’s musical practice combines the sounds of a traditional vocal game with studio technology and her unique style. In order to trace Tagaq’s integration of the Inuit vocal tradition with her own musical aesthetic, I first examine traditional Inuit vocal games.
3.2.4 Inuit Throat Singing

While Tagaq’s music is in many ways far removed from its Inuit origins, several elements remain, albeit in re-contextualized forms. Tagaq learned the throat singing sounds from recordings of katajjait; these vocal games (Nattiez’s term) are found throughout the central Arctic regions of Canada, namely Northern Quebec and South Baffin Island. Katajjait⁴⁷ (sing. katajjaq) are vocal games between women who “sing” patterns back and forth in a call-and-answer format. These vocal games are easily recognized for their “panting” style; the “panting” is a result of the constant rhythmic inhalation and exhalation. Breath plays a unique role in Inuit vocal technique. As Charron explains, “Instead of using breathing only as a punctuation or as a means for filling the lungs and activating the vocal cords, the Inuit also use it melodically” (1978, 251). Breathing reinforces the rhythm by creating sounds on both the inhalation and exhalation. This continuous sound generation is a “discernible, regular feature” (252) of Inuit vocal games. “Throat” singing refers both to the source of the sound production (i.e., the throat) and the signature throat “growls” people have come to associate with this vocal style. “Musical” elements of vocal games are unlike those in traditional Western music: fixed pitches and fixed intervals are irregular features of the patterns (245). While transcriptions generally outline only voiced pitch, that is, pitches that are produced when the vocal cords vibrate, Charron explains that these vocal games also

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⁴⁶ In the context of Tagaq’s music and in any general sense, I will refer to this vocal style as “Inuit throat singing.” Though others prefer terms such as “Inuit throat games” or “vocal games,” and the term “singing” is a bit of a misnomer, the designator remains well known, leading to a general understanding of the topic of inquiry. Also, because Tagaq has largely removed her practice from the “game,” “Inuit throat singing” seems best suited; Tagaq also refers to her vocal style as such. When I discuss specific elements of the tradition, I will call it “vocal games.”

⁴⁷ While many kinds of vocal games exist, given the style and geographic location of Tagaq’s sources, I will refer to it as katajjaq. Other types include pirkusirtuk and nipaquhiit, not to mention the numerous names of specific games.
include voiceless (or unvoiced) pitches, that is, pitches produced when the vocal cords are apart and not vibrating, as well as “a very wide range of intermediary positions between these two extreme points of voiced and voiceless sounds” (251).

Traditional Inuit vocal games consist of songs or games (associated with specific “composers” or entire communities) that use patterns of sound that are varied as singers create voiced and unvoiced, pitched and nonpitched, and high and low sounds during inhalation and exhalation. Formal traits of each song also include intonation contours and basic rhythmic patterns (Nattiez 1983). As two women chant motifs, with the second woman often in imitation to the first, we hear two homogenous lines of sound: low (“throat”) sounds and high sounds. It is an illusion of homogeneity: the two women alternate high and low, but the sounds are cohesive. As Nattiez notes, “people from the audience should not be able to discover who is doing what” (1999, 403), and indeed, it often seems like one person is perhaps constantly singing the low throaty growls rather than two alternating.

As an activity mostly for women and sometimes children, katajjaq can be used as an educational tool, entertainment, training in breathing, or a friendly competition. Close physical connection is essential: as they hold each other’s arms and sway together, they stay together rhythmically; the respondent in the duo listens attentively to her partner’s patterns, carefully imitating each detail and responding to changes in the patterns (sanguagusiit). The “loser” is the one who runs out of breath, or makes a phrasing or pronunciation error.

Charron (1978) outlines four types of katajjaq texts: 1) names, particularly of elderly people, animals, toponyms, various objects in the performers’ vicinity; 2) vocables that imitate animals sounds or archaic words; 3) incoherent word play; and 4) ambiguous lines
from prose or poetry. Despite many of the “playful” contexts, “Virtuosity and aesthetics are not foreign to Inuit vocal games” (Nattiez 1983, 461).

Tagaq’s approach is rooted in the Inuit vocal tradition, but also deviates substantially from it. She applies many similar principles to her own music, and it can thus perhaps be considered an “authentic” extension of the traditional form. However, Tagaq has received some criticism for her use of her culture’s traditional practice. By performing solo with other genres of musicians (e.g., hip hop, classical) and by not using the traditional games (or songs), Tagaq has been accused by some of diluting and misrepresenting the traditions:

People are upset about what I do at home. Some traditionalists feel I am trying to suck the culture dry or change it. I’ve been branded a heretic, and I find that completely ridiculous. ... Why are they so violently against what I do? I don’t care what they’re doing. If they’re really that concerned about it, then learn traditional Inuit throat singing and teach your kids. (Prasad 2010)

Tagaq maintains a complicated relationship with the Inuit vocal tradition. While she uses the sonic repertoire within new and diverse contexts, she has learned some traditional songs and has performed them. Her cousin Celina first taught her traditional throat games and Tagaq wanted to incorporate her Inuk identity into Sinaa, but it was not well received. Tagaq exclaimed: “I was stupid. ... I was just really naive. I thought people were going to love it. And then there was this huge wave of these you know possessive arse wipes that were like mad that I put songs on there” (Tagaq 2011). Tagaq’s motivation was to celebrate her heritage. At the opening of her concerts, she encourages people to learn about traditional Inuit vocal games; she claims that when she has enough money, she will tour with a “real” throat singer to share the tradition with her audiences. Despite rebuffing the criticism from some members of her culture, she recognizes an inconsistency in her reasoning: “It sounds
stranger to me if someone was doing Inuit throat singing, but not from the traditional region, that might bother me. To me it’s still sacred and nestled in the culture” (Geologist 2010). At the concert on February 8, 2011, Tagaq wore a dress resembling a traditional Inuit amauti (parka) with a fur trim and the tail shape at the bottom of it, but this silk dress was fitted. Tagaq frequently wears clothing in performances and photo shoots that reinterprets the traditional clothing in a more modern, sexy way. Her clothing exemplifies this continuing tension between tradition and innovation. Her own songwriting is a blend of tradition and innovation with new Inuit songs, written by her, on *Auk/Blood*; she explains:

That’s why on *Auk*, Tiriganiak, the fox song. I wrote my own traditional songs for the second one. Like look, I’m an accomplished throat singer. I can do what you do in my own way and even make new songs because that’s done in traditional format. But it’s written by me. (Tagaq 2011)

Tagaq is not unique in her deviation from the traditional vocal game (and its associated performance practice). Tagaq removes herself from the traditional vocal games by performing solo non-traditional songs with a microphone on stage in front of large audiences. Tagaq and the other Inuit throat singers who remove this cultural game from its original context create new *performance* contexts. For example, though no longer performing, cousins Madeleine Allakariallak and Phoebe Atgotaaluk performed together as “Tudjaat.” Ottawa-based Inuit group “Siqiniup Qilauta” is a quartet of women who demonstrate traditional drumming and throat singing; while their focus is on sharing the traditions of their culture, the throat singing is a performance that is separated from its original context. One member of the group, Tracy Aasivak Brown, has also performed with Canadian rock singer Lucie Idlout, who often incorporates elements of her Inuit heritage in her music. Sisters Karin and Kathy Kettler perform as “Nukariik”; they often maintain the traditional stance,
with microphones on stands placed close enough to the women to capture their sounds.48 As Beverley Diamond notes, “a physical intimacy has now given way to a sonic intimacy” (2008, 58). While the partners may no longer hold each other’s arms and sway together to the rhythm, the listener hears great detail in the close-miked voices of the performers. In traditional contexts, closeness was also used to create resonant sounds: when the women would stand so close together, often they could use the natural resonance of their partner’s mouth to enhance their own sound; sometimes they would also hold a large pan beside their mouths to increase resonance. Despite having no partner, Tagaq similarly uses her own body to help create resonance; during both concerts I attended, she frequently cupped her hand at the side of her mouth, attempting to create a space similar to the oral cavity of the lost partner. In the studio, however, Tagaq can rely on processing techniques to create the desired sound.

Tagaq removes the intimacy of the original context even further than the women mentioned above by performing solo, without a vocal partner. But intimacy emerges in other ways. First, the close-miking in both live performance and studio recording allows the listener to hear the details in each sound, the texture and timbres of her voice, each inhalation and exhalation—the details and “flat” voice make Tagaq sound near to the listener. Second, Tagaq creates a new musical intimacy with her fellow musicians, responding to their sounds as partners in a sonic game, feeding off the energy and rhythm of their music. In the traditional game, a successful close partnership is often achieved through close personal

48 See <http://www.nukariik.ca/>.
relationships (Diamond 2008, 52). Although Tagaq performs solo throat singing, she embraces a similar philosophy in her working relationships. She explains:

I think my number one collaboration thing is they can’t be a jerk. I need to like people because I firmly believe if you get along with someone than you’ll make good music. Anytime I’ve tried to work with someone that I don’t like, it feels wrong. It’s very intimate for me. It’s a sharing and something very sacred; you know like breaking bread at a really good meal that you spent a long time making. Or having sex with someone. (Callen 2010)

While Tagaq was certainly the reason most people attended her collaborative concerts in Montreal, Tagaq tried to emphasize the centrality of collaboration by verbally giving credit to her musical partners Jean Martin and Jesse Zubot, as well as allowing them space to improvise alone or together before she added vocals.

Not surprisingly, given that Tagaq learned throat singing by listening to tapes, “her vocal gestures draw upon but substantially change the traditional patterns” (Diamond 2008, 56). She includes some traditional songs on Sinaa, but Tagaq’s vocal approach is led by her emotional instincts rather than strict adherence to traditional technique. She explains: “My own style of Inuit throat singing is different from the traditional style because the stories that I’m telling comes from what I’m feeling. It’s emotionally driven” (Geologist 2010). Tagaq maintains the textual ambiguity of Inuit vocal games in her own songs because she “find[s]
lyrics to be confining” (Geologist 2010). She prefers to leave her music on an emotional level, allowing the listener to construct her own meaning:

I think of my music in the same way as when someone reads a book that says “A beautiful woman walks in the room.” Everybody will have a different image in their mind, as opposed to a movie in which it’s put out there in concrete terms for the viewer. As with a book, people should fill in what they need through the experience of listening. (Prasad 2010)

This priority on emotion aligns naturally with Tagaq’s emphasis on improvisation. She claims that her live performance is “90% improvised, 10% composed. Recording is different, more like 50/50” (Geologist 2010). I suggest this element is also an extension of the traditional approach. While each game may incorporate set rhythmic patterns, intonation contours, and voiced/voiceless sounds, each performance is different. Vocal timbres of participants and tempo depend on the individuals; some games have a warm-up introduction, and the ending depends on the endurance and focus that may falter at any moment—how long the game will last before it breaks down into laughter is never certain. Tagaq’s own improvisation captures the immediacy of the traditional approach, as she responds to her fellow musicians and her own sounds and emotions: “If I’m having a good day I can dive very very deep into it and if I’m having a bad day it usually just sounds like sounds!” (Lux 2008). Tagaq also interacts with the perceived energy and response of the audience; Tagaq explains: “It’s so funny how people think that when you’re a performer, you’re just giving. Who’s in the audience and how they react makes such a huge difference as far as performance goes” (Lien 2010).

Because I wanted to observe this emphasis on improvisation firsthand, I attended two concerts in Montreal. While both concerts had a similar structure—three songs and one
The songs themselves were very different. Each song began with Tagaq or Zubot gradually creating a texture over which the other members would improvise, growing and decreasing in intensity over the next twenty minutes or so. Tagaq confessed to the audience during the first concert and then again to me after the concert that she was dealing with several personal tragedies, including the suicide of a cousin and the recent death of her grandmother. She seemed to translate these emotions into the concert, particularly in the first piece as she vocalized loud sobs and reached her arms out to the audience. In concerts, Tagaq feeds off of the audience and her fellow musicians. In the studio, with its more structured approach, Tagaq interacts with her recorded self, creating a new vocal game.

3.2.5 Tagaq’s New Game

Tagaq’s attempts to ease her homesickness and connect with her culture while she studied in Nova Scotia presented one crucial challenge: traditional Inuit throat singing is for two women and Tagaq was learning alone. Furthermore, because Tagaq was not raised hearing or performing the throat songs, she did not know the actual patterns. Instead, she imitated the sounds as best she could, formulating her own patterns. She explains: “in traditional throat singing the songs are very strict, you have to do certain, exact patterns, exact sounds perfectly and that’s how it’s so different from what I do because I’m just doing anything!” (Lux 2008). Her vocal virtuosity allows her to create dense textures consisting of the components of traditional Inuit vocal games: voiced and unvoiced, pitched and nonpitched, high and low sounds; rhythmic inhalation and exhalation; and the signature “growls” and “pants.” The rapidity with which she shifts between these contrasting elements,

51 Tagaq has since learned some vocal games, including “Qimiruluapik” on Sinaa. Several videos posted on YouTube feature her performing traditional Inuit vocal games.
with complex rhythms and fast tempos, can often lead to the impression that more than one vocal line exists simultaneously. For example, listen to the growing intensity in “Surge” (*Sinaa*, track 5) as she accelerates the shift between high and low sounds (starting at 1:35 in particular) and increases the complexity of the rhythm (starting at 1:22 in particular). The homogeneity of the low and high lines remains as she alternates with astounding facility (starting at 2:35 in particular). The veridic placement of the voice at the centre of the mix, rather than splitting it between the two channels, communicates a single vocal source to the listener. Despite this clear aural sign, the intricacy and briskness of the vocal sounds leave the listener dumbfounded at the seemingly impossible single source.

In the studio, Tagaq has the opportunity to interact with herself. The illusion enabled by the studio and the recording process is that relationships and interactions that never existed in real life can exist on the recorded medium. Similar to the studio’s illusion of an amorous interaction on *Song of Songs*, Tagaq’s albums create an interaction between Tagaq and herself (and sometimes multiple selves). The studio environment thus creates a new game for Tagaq, where she can interact and respond to the capabilities of the technology and sing with herself. Not only can Tagaq layer multiple takes with varying material, she can also layer the same take multiple times, in unison (i.e., chorus effect) or staggered iterations.

“Qimiruluapik” is one example of this new game, in which Tagaq performs a traditional Inuit vocal game with herself. “Qimiruluapik,” then, is a blend of the traditional context and studio capabilities. In keeping with the traditional structure, Tagaq sings the correct patterns of the song. But owing to the magic of recording technology, she is both leader and follower. By singing with herself, Tagaq gains an ideal partnership: in traditional
Inuit vocal games, the partners aim for similar vocal timbres so that it is even harder to discern the source of the varied shifting sounds. The mix is a key element that helps the listener hear two separate sources. The left channel sounds the track of the leading vocals while the right channel sounds the track of the respondent vocals. In this song, both the layering and spatial placement in the mix create the studio’s illusion of an Inuit throat singing duet.

Placement of the voice in the mix can construct the presence of multiple vocal sources. For example, the opening track of Sinaa, “Sila,” begins with staggered entrances of several voices singing a similar pattern: long tone on “ah,” sliding up a minor third. While the small differences suggest they are not all exact copies of each other, certain tracks seem like duplicates. As well, the opening “ah” could have been copied and pasted throughout the introduction, as some voices sing only the first “ah” and do not ascend. Tagaq selects the unspecified number of original takes and layers the voices in separate tracks. By placing them differently within the mix, Tagaq further constructs separate voices. The voices at the far left and right of the horizontal plane in particular allow the listener to imagine multiple vocal sources.

In other works and performances, Tagaq removes herself quite distantly from the traditional vocal games. Rather than imitating the intricate alternations of sounds within a constant pulse, she allows for more space. She uses the sonic vocabulary to explore, particularly as she interacts with other musicians. From the earliest performances, Tagaq has mostly collaborated with other musicians, including DJs, violinists, and other vocalists. She takes the principle of the Inuit vocal game interaction (i.e., proximity, close listening, call-
and-response) and applies it to these alternative musical relationships. For instance, in the
video documentation of her first collaboration with the Kronos Quartet, Tagaq explains that
she suggested that she and the cellist perform high-low patterns in alteration, in a manner
similar to two throat singers. On the track “Burst” from *Auk/Blood*, Tagaq creates a similar
relationship with beat-boxer Shamik as they create an intricate call-and-answer with
Shamik’s vocalized beats and Tagaq’s grunts and breaths. During the shows in Montreal,
Tagaq was often silent as she listened to the textures and timbres being improvised by Zubot
and Martin; she would add her vocals sparingly at times, while at other times she would
dominate the texture. In turn, Zubot and Martin would listen to Tagaq, particularly when she
was starting a song, and they would gradually join in, building intensity slowly. Zubot’s style
is particularly spacious (both in live shows and on the album), with short motives that he
repeats with heavy reverberation. Zubot and Tagaq work well together; Zubot creates patterns
whose repetition and stable tonal centres offer Tagaq space to experiment and create contrast
through her varied vocal textures. While *Auk/Blood* is a studio album that compiles materials
outside of real time, selecting, cutting, and layering takes at will, the sonic impression of the
album is similar to the live shows I observed: Tagaq experiments over the tonal stability of
Zubot’s motives and their heavy reverberation. Then, a piece builds intensity (in both live
shows and on the album) through the partnership between Tagaq and Zubot’s playing, with
faster rhythmic passages and increasing dissonance.

The studio allows Tagaq not only to construct a social game with herself, but also to
explore the sensuality, and, thus, physicality of her vocal style. Through extended vocal
technique and erotic lyrics in particular, Tagaq constructs copies of herself that lead to autoerotic interactions.

3.2.6 Tagaq’s Twin Bodies

While the designation “vocal games” seems to reference only the vocal apparatus, the body is an essential component to the tradition. As discussed above, the partners stand close together while holding each other’s arms; their faces are often less than a foot apart. This bodily positioning enables the partners to keep rhythmically together and to hear the nuances of each pattern, and the changing patterns in particular, more clearly. In addition, the extended vocal techniques used in throat singing, such as grunts and growls, and the constant rhythmic breathing reference the bodily source by creating sounds beyond pure vocal ones. These sounds carry the grain of their physiological creator—the throat, the separated vocal cords, the lungs. The listener hears the body through these sounds. Tagaq, however, is a solo throat singer. And the fixed medium format of her albums removes the physical body completely. But in the process of transduction, the microphone picks up details that help the listener to imagine a bodily source. Tagaq also uses spatial placement in the mix to construct multiple sources, and thus multiple bodies. They call back to one another, like real partners.

Tagaq mostly performs new songs rather than traditional Inuit throat songs or vocal games. As she has explained, she learned the patterns as sound rather than as strict elements that belong to a certain context or song, whose patterns and sounds have a particular meaning. Her sounds express her creativity, which she claims comes from an emotional

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52 She has performed with other throat singers, including her cousin Celina Kalluk, and with Métis alternative hip-hop/rock singer Kinnie Starr. In these performances, Tagaq holds her partners close, with an arm tightly wrapped around the waist, so she can be connected to them. Even in an interview with Kalluk, Tagaq sits close, her face right beside Celina’s as she talks. See <http://thepuredrop.com.au/ep_extreme/default.htm>
place. The result is many songs with vocal material whose sounds, rhythms, and intensities invoke sexual images. Tagaq is quite forthcoming about not only the importance of sex in her life, but also its relevance to her music. Tagaq declaims:

What’s the big shame with sex and nudity? Before Christianity came through, in Inuit culture, having sex was as natural as pooping. There was no-one saying “Oh, you’re dirty because you’ve done this.” Sex is one of the most beautiful things you can be a part of.” (Prasad 2010)

As her nudity in the short film Tungijuq (2009) can attest, she is indeed comfortable with her body. She has received criticism for her openness regarding sex:

I keep hearing them [traditionalists] say “Why does it have to be so sexual? It’s because sex sells, doesn’t it?” My reaction is “Should I do what the rest of Inuit women do and wait until I’m drunk and then throw myself at someone? That’s better, isn’t it?” [laughs] Sex is a huge part of my life. And I’m just expressing my life.” (Prasad 2010)

My discussion of sexuality in Tagaq’s music begins with lyrics. “Hunger” (Auk/Blood) takes its lyrics from an email Tagaq sent to her lover after a month of “not getting laid” (Prasad 2010). While she has often shied away from concrete lyrics, choosing rather to leave her music open to interpretation, she decided to include this email. Poetically and ravenously, she speaks out to her lover, as her other selves breath, gasp, sigh and grunt in the background: “Hunger. Calm hunger. Consumption. A solid wall of need. Impaled by you. Slippery with sweat. That mouth. That beautiful mouth. That tongue want to suck it dry. We are woven tightly together.”

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53 Tungijuq (“What We Eat”) stars Tagaq and includes a soundtrack by her and Jesse Zubot; this 6-minute film is “about shape-shifting, the circle of life and the seal-hunt and what it means” (Prasad 2010). Tagaq shape-shifts into the wolf (the hunter) and the caribou (the hunted), and then later the seal (the hunted) and the Inuit hunter eating from the freshly killed seal’s entrails. The film was directed by Félix Lajeunesse and Paul Raphaël, and produced by Zacharias Kunuk.
Tagaq uses multiple voices and violin tracks (performed by Jesse Zubot) to create a sensuous atmosphere. Zubot creates harmonic stability that contrasts with the increasing intensity of the other vocal tracks and Tagaq’s vocals as the song progresses. The song opens with layered violin tracks, which are placed primarily far left and right in the mix. Two violin tracks establish a c-minor tonality through the following motif: C  [Eb D C F]  G  C. The brackets indicate the two tracks, one that outlines a I-V-I root motion and one that includes the lowered third; despite the placement of these tracks at different locations in the mix, together they form this central motif. The motif recurs quite regularly in the first minute, reinforcing c-minor. Its regularity and strength diminish subsequently as other motivic embellishments in multiple violin tracks diverge from the original tonal centre. The song, though, always returns to the final two pitches of the motif: G  C. It is against this fairly consistent tonal centre that Tagaq expresses, both vocally and lyrically, intimacy and sexual release.

The text, which is included in the liner notes of *Auk/Blood*, is stated by two different tracks on the recording.\footnote{The subtle differences in the second voice are italicized.}
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Voice One:</th>
<th>Voice Two:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lover, lover, tryst. I have fallen into the abyss of us. Where are those eyes taking me? Sliced through and through. A hot knife through butter. A slice of longing numbing my skin. Open me. Throw my shame away. Gentle and heavy handed. Loose and flowing. The softest touch and heavy bruises. Sore. So Sore. For you. Loving being hurt and hurting for your love. I am coming to you. I am coming back to that smell. The smell of you. The smell of us. I am coming back to those sideways glances and that crooked smile. Flower petals and bolts of lightning. Smooth juice. Slip sliding into oblivion. My body taken by yours. Hunger. Calm hunger. All consuming. A solid wall of need. Impaled by you. Slippery. Slippery with sweat. Come with fire. That mouth. That beautiful mouth. That tongue. We are woven tightly together. Cotton candy and razor blades. Boiling blood. I’d drink your blood if you would let me. I will take anything you give me. I want to be yours in any way I can. I want to be your slave and your master. Your lover and your equal. I would starve for you. I would eat thorns for you. I would walk naked in winter if it would make you happy. I would welcome your seed in me. Splurging forth. I want you to live in me. In my womb and in my bones. I want to embrace our hot twist of fate. Climb a staircase of pleasure. Undulation. Our bodies in deep conversation. Swim through dark waters. Drowning each other. I am an army of feathers. You are the wind that blows through them. Your goose bumps are like Braille for one blind to love. I’ll travel with my tongue just to read them. I want you to melt when you see me. My heart pumps your name. The purest of love is born. And you hold me in the palm of your hand. I am full of syrup. I am full of ire. You are sweetly burning me. Untying the knots in my stomach. We are sealed together. You are deep in my core and I hope you now that there is no coming back out. I am going to face you with dignity and longing and lust and love. I am going to let myself fall forever into you.</td>
<td>Lover, lover, tryst. I have fallen into the abyss of us. Where are those eyes taking me? Sliced through and through. A hot knife through butter. A slice of longing numbing my skin. Open me. Open me. Throw my shame away. So gentle and heavy handed. Loose and flowing. The softest of touches and bruises. Sore. So Sore. For you. Loving being hurt and hurting for your love. I am coming to you. I am coming back to that smell. The smell of you. The smell of us. I am coming back to those sideways glances and that crooked smile. Flower petals and bolts of lightning. Smooth juice. Slip sliding into oblivion. My body taken by yours. Hunger. Calm hunger. All consuming. A solid wall of need. Impaled by you. Slippery with sweat. Fill me with fire. That mouth. That beautiful mouth. That tongue want to set it on fire. We are woven tightly together. Cotton candy and razor blades. Boiling blood. I’d drink it if you’d let me. I will take anything you give me. I want to be yours in any way I can. I want to be your slave and your master. Your lover and your equal. I would starve for you. I would eat thorns for you. I would walk naked in winter if it would make you happy. I would welcome your seed in me. Splurging forth. Uncontrolled rhythm. I want you to live in me. In my womb and in my bones. I want to know that you are always with me. I want to embrace our hot twist of fate. Climb a staircase of pleasure. Undulation. Our bodies in deep conversation. Swim in dark waters. And drowning in each other. I am an army of feathers. You are the wind that blows through me. Your goose bumps are like Braille for one blind to love. I’ll travel with my tongue just to read them. I want you to melt when you see me. Because my heart pumps your name. Purest of love is born. And you hold me in the palm of your hand. I am full of syrup. I am full of ire. You are sweetly burning me. Untying the knots in my stomach. We are sealed together. You are deep in my core and I hope you now that there is no going back. I am going to face you with dignity and longing and lust and love. I am going to let myself fall forever into you.</td>
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Both are placed in the front of the mix, with one slightly to the left and one slightly to the right of centre; this spatial differentiation allows the listener to distinguish between the two voices. The front-left voice begins: “Lover, lover, tryst.” At first the front-right voice seems to be only an echo of the first, but as the space between them grows, the two voices become
independent, like a two-voice motet; they speak to each other, and, because they are both Tagaq, the song becomes an auroerotic declamation and enactment. The second voice makes subtle changes to the original text. One aspect remains constant: the listener is brought into an intimate space with Tagaq, not only because of the text’s subject matter, but also because of her central placement in the mix and the close-miked “flat” voice. Tagaq speaks the text carefully and intentionally, articulating each word slowly and allowing for space between words and phrases. The close microphone placement allows the listener to hear the details of her enunciated consonances, particularly as she slowly slides through each “s”:

Slippery with sweat.
Smooth juice.
Slip sliding into oblivion.

Heavy reverb on the other voices and violin tracks, as well as a minimal amount of reverb on the second speaking voice, creates a dream-like quality. In “Hunger,” Tagaq expresses her fantasies, her longing to reunite with her lover, or unite with herself. The other voices (placed variously within the mix) punctuate this erotic scene by providing sighs, grunts, and inhalations and exhalations (pitched and nonpitched) that build in intensity until climactic releases during the final 75 seconds. While certainly not the first to suggest a parallel between musical climaxes and orgasm, Tagaq here presents this parallel conspicuously. Many of her vocal sounds are those associated with the orgasmic climax: increased breath, sighs, gasps. The violin blends well with these varied vocal timbres and techniques, particularly in the sections with increased intensity: Zubot uses reverb, harmonics, *sul ponticello* and pizzicato to create a varied backdrop to the voices.
The first, and longest, climax occurs from 5:17 to 5:38. The left-centre voice exclaims: “and longing and lust and love. I am going to let myself fall forever into you.” This first speaker, who has been more prominent in the mix through most of the song, finishes her sensual declaration near the end of this first climax. The right-centre voice is now more prominent in the mix during this section, and it becomes the only speaking voice for the remainder of the song. Thus, her words are no longer disguised or hidden by another voice, allowing her proclamation to sound clearly: “You are sweetly burning me.”

A sudden shift in the violin at 5:17 signals this first climax: a low G-C, which is usually sustained in heavy reverb, is cut off abruptly, and the violin shifts to the upper register. The violin creates tension by using sul ponticello and accelerating the bow strokes; heavy reverb and echo soften some of the tension, but the screeching timbre intensifies until finally achieving release at 5:38, when the violin suddenly drops to the middle register, slows down the bowing speed, and uses pizzicato.

Three other Tagaq voices contribute to the climactic build of this section. Each occupies a different place in the mix, thereby allowing each voice to be distinct and evocative. The first voice is placed in the far right. It begins as breath; as the inhalations and exhalations quicken, the voice shifts to longer pitched exhalations. The second voice is in the far left. It also consists of accelerating inhalations and exhalations, but this voice is in a lower range than the first. When the far-left voice reaches climax at 5:38, it expels one long exhalation. The final voice, placed in the centre of the mix, consists of the traditional “throat” sound often associated with Inuit vocal games. Rather than accelerating, this voice has fast, yet rhythmic and steady inhalations and exhalations. Like the second voice, at 5:38, this
voice expels a long exhalation. The long exhalations are a release: musically, physiologically, and sexually.

In this section of the song, Tagaq uses accelerated breathing patterns and bow strokes to convey an increase in sexual intensity. The sounds of breath themselves can be sonic signifiers of sexual ecstasy. Her text confirms these associations of the background vocal sounds with sexual desire and release.

The next climax is briefer. In the seconds leading up to it, breath has been a particularly strong element in the mix. At 6:00, two voices, one in the far right and the other in the left centre of the mix (in the same place as the first speaker), whimper, their high-pitched accelerating breaths alternating in call-and-answer. At 6:04, their speed decreases: the far right voice maintains her whimpers, but with more space between each one; the left-centre voice shifts to exhalations that end with quivering sighs. The violin matches the high-pitched whimpers by playing *sul ponticello* softly in the higher range, evoking a sort of siren effect.

The song ends with one final climax. The violin and left-centre voice gesture together at 6:10; the violin aggressively bows D E-flat, followed by an ascending portamento from E. The voice proclaims four almost painful groans. This final climax fades quickly (starting at 6:15), and the song fades into serenity and one final iteration of the central motif (C Eb D F G C) brings tonal closure. Its heavy reverberation vanishes into silence as the dream ends.

In “Hunger,” Tagaq creates an intimacy with the listeners through the text, background voices, close microphone placement, and mix. This six-and-a-half-minute song flies by as the listener is drawn into the breath and space of her sexual longings. The bodies
of the lovers are evoked through the imagery in the text: eyes, skin, mouth, tongue, blood, bones, hearts, hand. The use of extended vocal technique, particularly breath, draws further focus to the bodily source of the sounds. By then combining the text and background with sonic signifiers of sexual climax (i.e., orgasm), Tagaq constructs sexual bodies; by using her own voice in multiple tracks, she constructs an autoerotic experience.

In “Want,” it is Tagaq’s good friend and musical collaborator Buck 65 who expresses his sexual desire: “Build a fire until the sky blows or disappear completely when our eyes close. The warm sun, the most beautiful sound til I cry. Further on like time. This is how I want to die.” Similarly to “Hunger,” Tagaq uses her vocal technique to create an evocative scene. Her sharp inhalations every two beats integrate into the steady rhythm of the song. Other voices move more freely within the groove. The voices gasp, inhale, and whimper, particularly when Buck 65 raps, “Let it go. All over the walls and the ceiling too.” When Buck 65 finishes his rap, the final minute and a half consists of Tagaq’s multiple voices’ pitched exhalations, rapid inhalations and exhalations, sighs, and groans, which evoke la petite mort Buck 65 craves as the groove continues. This groove adds to the sexual charge of the song: “Rhythm ... is ‘sexual’ in that it isn’t just about the experience of the body but also (the two things are inseparable) about the experience of time” (Frith 1998, 144). According to Frith, a steady rhythm helps the listener “feel (like sex itself) intensely present” (144). Time stretches; the present is expanded. This prolonged present tense creates a “corporeal presence” (126). This corporeal presence that Frith suggests is innate in the rhythms and grooves of popular music is further constructed through Buck 65’s text:

The feeling of profound hunger as sex position.
See with your hands this time. Swallow it whole.
Add to those elements Tagaq’s extended vocal technique and orgasmic groans and gasps; the result is a song that evocatively constructs the sexual body.

3.2.7 Reflection

Tagaq emerged onto the world music scene early in the new millennium with a unique, and sometimes unsettling, vocal facility and vigour. While her dynamic stage presence is absent from her fixed-medium albums, traces of the body remain in four main ways: extended vocal technique, as the unusual sounds reference the body more strongly than pure vocal sounds; spatial placement of various vocal tracks, evoking the presence of multiple bodies; reference to Inuit vocal games (and the classic image of Inuit women in close proximity with arms embraced) in her sound repertoire, which thus calls the body to the listener’s attention; and corporeal references in the lyrics.

On her first album, Tagaq remains close to the origins of her vocal style. She includes some traditional Inuit songs and uses vocal patterns that closely resemble the strict patterns of the original vocal games. The songs are largely unaccompanied, and she uses spatial placement to position her multiple voices in an interactive space. On Auk/Blood, Tagaq diverges greatly from this style, allowing collaborative musicians to take equal, and sometimes dominant, roles within songs. These other musicians and vocalists become her new partners. Her own vocal style has evolved; there is less imitation of vocal game patterns and more space. As she grows more confident in her style, Tagaq has become more freely expressive, incorporating lyrics (and including them in the liner notes) although she has generally avoided anything so concrete. A new kind of body emerges on Auk/Blood: a
sensuous body that expresses its sexual, even autoerotic, desires and fulfillment in lyrics, rhythm, and extended vocal technique. In her performances, Tagaq’s use of her body enacts a kind of primitive savagery; her howls and barefooted stomps characterize her as pre-modern.

This portrayal is problematic, though, given Tagaq’s identity as both a woman and an Inuit. Her community suggests she is exploiting her feminine sexuality, but the alternative is repression. And despite her use of technology, Tagaq self-essentializes as a savage who exists on a corporeal rather than rational sphere; even her songs typically have non-discernible lyrics or contain sound effects (e.g., imitations of natural sounds). She further attempts to portray herself as a sexual being within the tradition-modern tension by frequently wearing a tighter, skimpier version of an amauti (traditional Inuit parka). Of course, this essentialization is also problematic, but not necessarily for the reasons given by Tagaq’s community.

The juxtaposition of the Inuit vocal tradition and innovation in Tagaq’s music is both enabled and enhanced by studio technology. This juxtaposition, though, has not been without its critics in the Inuit community. Often Aboriginal art is criticized when it is not traditional enough, when an Aboriginal artist moves away from the techniques and aesthetics of the previous centuries (Kermoal 2010). Tagaq has suffered from similar criticism, but not from the music world. Rather, her own community accuses her of harmful appropriation. While the non-native cultural industry has been accused of stealing Native religion, land, and language, Tagaq was accused of stealing songs—Inuit songs—that she did not realize had community ownership. Community elders fear that because of her use of the vocal game tradition, the original tradition will be lost. But Tagaq insists that as an Inuk musician, she is as justified in writing “new” traditional songs as other singers are justified in chanting the games. Tagaq’s
reinterpretation of the Inuit vocal tradition is not without precedence. Étienne Bours (2000) explains that several vocal games bear evidence of recent inspirations, including songs about more modern topics or that borrow kids’ song melodies.

In *Cultural Appropriation and the Arts* (2010), James Young notes that artistic works with a new perspective on a culture’s art should be encouraged and praised for what he calls “innovative content appropriation” (36). Such an appropriation is different from imitating or misrepresenting one’s work as if it were the original culture’s, or, in Tagaq’s case as she uses her own culture’s tradition, misrepresenting it as the traditional cultural practice. Indeed, by her own confession and in the music itself, Tagaq seeks to re-imagine her culture’s musics within the context of the other genres or performance practices, resulting in works that “would not be found in the culture in which [they] originated” (36). Tagaq asserts herself as an Inuk artist whose music is enriched by, but not limited to, the Inuit vocal game tradition.

### 3.3 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have considered the output of two very different musicians: electroacoustic composer Barry Truax and Inuit throat singer Tanya Tagaq. Truax uses the recorded human voice to explore the sensuous aspects of not only the voice, but also the body it constructs. His homoerotic treatment of the Song of Solomon text combines with granular time stretching, soundscape elements, and oboe d’amore and English horn to create a polyamorous scene that blurs the boundaries between male and female, hetero- and homo-

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55 The notion of “tradition” as pure and “isolated from the affects of colonialism, diaspora, globalization, and transnationalism” (Marsh 2009b, 111) is problematic and only becomes increasingly treacherous when communities believe that artists and musicians are diluting, stealing, or expunging their traditional cultural practices.
sexuality, nature and music, sound and speech, and Jewish and Christian traditions. Lovers’ bodies interact in boundless pleasure as Truax’s music blurs these sexual, religious, and musical boundaries.

Tanya Tagaq’s music first removes the bodies of the original social Inuit vocal games. But on her albums, she does not have to remain alone: she constructs a new game with herself and with other musicians. Her extended vocal technique and spatial placement of the various voices construct a sense of corporeal presence. On her first album, *Sinaa*, Tagaq’s new vocal game is largely with herself, an interaction only made possible because of the studio. On *Auk/Blood*, Tagaq further constructs sensuous interactions, including an autoerotic interaction between two Tagaq’s, through extended vocal technique, spatial placement (i.e., the mix), and lyrics.

While I have focused my analysis on the music (i.e., the sounds) of *Song of Songs*, *Sinaa*, and *Auk/Blood*, both Truax and Tagaq incorporate a visual element that contributes to the expressive goals of their works. Truax’s mentor R. Murray Schafer has lamented that contemporary Western culture is too visual, and, thus, indifferent to our sonic surroundings. However, before the age of sound reproduction technology, music always had a visual counterpart: the performer. Even in electroacoustic music, as Smalley’s (1997) concepts of causality and surrogacy demonstrate, the tendency of the listener is to ascribe a source to a sound, even sounds with such a remote relationship to a possible source that the ear is left only to imagine.

By including slides with *Song of Songs*, Truax is not only seeking a collaborative relationship with the artist Goldberg but also providing the listener with a visual counterpart
to the sounds. Also included in the live premiere was Lawrence Cherney and his oboe d’amore and English horn. Thus, while the actual bodily sources of the voices (i.e., Thecla Schiphorst and Norbert Ruebsaat) were not on the stage, Cherney and his instruments stood in for the male voice while the curves, waves, and soft colours of the slides stood in for the female voice. The private listener, at home with the CD of *Song of Songs*, does not have access to this same visual counterpart. Rather, the sounds create a visual counterpart for the listener (Chion 1994); these images emerge from the evocative text and Truax’s erotic text setting.

Popular music, in contrast to electroacoustic music, is rarely without a visual counterpart. Even CDs come with liner notes filled with images of the pop star, and teenagers’ rooms are hung with large posters of their favourite singers. Live shows are essential to sustaining a career. The consumers of the sounds of popular music are simultaneously consumers of the visuals of popular music: all texts of the star image unite to create a uniform product, particularly with the mode of singer-songwriter (Ahonen 2006; Keightley 2001; Moore 2002).

Tagaq’s image (based on various texts, including promotional material, music, lyrics, and biographical information) conveys certain themes that are ubiquitous in the discourse and reception surrounding her music: raw and primal, open and direct, emotional. This connection between image and artist situates Tagaq firmly within the popular music genre (Ahonen 2006) where the intertextuality of the “star image” establishes that “the emotional content of the song is associated not only with the singer’s voice but with his/her body, media

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56 The *Song of Songs* page on Truax’s SFU website includes one of Goldberg’s slides. This same image is the cover of the album *Song of Songs*: http://www.sfu.ca/~truax/songs.html.
image, and biographical details as well” (167). The images on the cover and in the liner notes of both albums create a consistent image of “the one who has created the music and whose feelings and intentions the songs of the album are about” (171).

Through this star image, including promotional material (the album art in particular), performance costumes, and style, Tagaq constructs an emotional authenticity, which Dibben (2009b) suggests is “one of the most prevalent ideologies of music creation and reception” (132). Dibben makes this statement in reference to how Björk constructs emotional authenticity. I find its inclusion here appropriate not only given the past collaboration between Björk and Tagaq, but also in the striking similarities between certain musical elements, promotional materials, and critical and audience reception.

The tension between the Inuit community and its vocal game tradition and Tagaq’s representation of the style lies in her conflicted, and often contradictory, “star image,” which is constructed by both external (e.g., performative) and internal (i.e., musical) elements. Her performance style and promotional material suggest a clear affinity to the pop world, and her studio albums (especially Auk/Blood) demonstrate a creative approach to recording, rather than a purely veridic production style that seeks to preserve the live musical exchange of traditional Inuit vocal games.

“Authenticity” in popular music is a complex (and often contested) concept. Pop music scholar Allen Moore (2002) explains: “‘Authenticity’ is a matter of interpretation which is made and fought for from within a cultural, and thus, historicised position. It is ascribed, not inscribed” (210). For Moore, an authenticity of expression (or “first person authenticity”) “arises when an originator (composer, performer) succeeds in conveying the
impression that his/her utterance is one of integrity, that it represents an attempt to communicate in an unmediated form with an audience” (214). Tagaq’s album art and live shows create a sense of directness and immediacy that is essential to the perceived authenticity of expression. On her second album, Tagaq increases the association listeners will make between her star image and her biography by including a real email to an ex-boyfriend; “Hunger,” with its erotic lyrics, vocal staging, and biographical source, leads the listener to feel an intimacy and connection with the “real” Tagaq, to hear her music as sincere and authentic. By prioritizing her artistic expression through a diversified vocal style and instrumental collaborations on her second album, Tagaq further distances herself from the Inuit vocal tradition and asserts herself as authentic pop performer.

While a visual component remains important to both Truax and Tagaq, the amorous (i.e., sensual and erotic) interactions of Barry Truax’s Song of Songs (1992) and social (and auto-erotic) interactions on Tanya Tagaq’s two recorded albums, Sinaa (2005) and Auk/Blood (2008), demonstrate how composers and artists, through technological capabilities, can sonically construct both the body and its social and sensual interactions. They both construct a physicality from the sounds: Truax through granular time-stretching and Tagaq through her unique vocal abilities.
Chapter 4  
Playing with Words: Electroacoustic Storytelling

4.0  Introduction

4.0.1 Chapter Overview

Composers have a long history of using not only the pitch and timbre of the voice as inspiration and expression, but also language: phonemes, words, and poetry. Cathy Lane’s recent book *Playing with words: The spoken word in artistic practice* (2008) attempts to capture some of the central aesthetic and creative elements of working with language and the spoken word, in sound poetry, live voice with electronics, and studio composition, among other genres and media.

This chapter discusses three compositions that focus on working with language. Following a section that contextualizes the use of words and language as a means of storytelling in electroacoustic works, I discuss Montreal acousmatic composer Christian Calon’s *Minuit* (1989), a 40-minute work that incorporates voices, text, soundscape material, and synthesized sound to construct a narrative. This narrative is not biographical, but rather its often-fantastical story speaks to Calon’s reliance on Georges Bataille’s *érotisme*; Bataille’s notion of a “leap” continuously performed through the sexual act pervades Calon’s poetic texts and his manipulation of texture, and most importantly, the timbral and spatial treatments of the human voice. In *Minuit*, Calon attempts to narrate a universal story of humanity’s attempts to transcend its discontinuity; however, to some extent this story remains largely male-centric with the conspicuous use of female orgasmic sounds—the result of male penetration. In contrast, by also granting a narrative (i.e., authoritative) voice to a female,

In the second half of the chapter, I focus on Vancouver soundscape composer Hildegard Westerkamp, and her incorporation of her own life story into her works. In Für Dich –For You (2005), she relies on a poetic text by Rainer M. Rilke to reflect her own preoccupations in her own mind about love, connectedness, and home. To highlight the personal aspect of her work’s narrative, she includes the voices of friends, family and colleagues, as well as sounds from her two homes—northern Germany and the Canadian West Coast. Rather than remain a purely personal sound document, Westerkamp frames this work within universal ethical statements regarding the environment, international relations, and the immigrant experience that leave little room for contradiction. As a woman electroacoustic composer, she avails herself of the electroacoustic studio’s technological capabilities to explore her stories, and ultimately, to express her personal identity. She expands the autobiographical element in MotherVoiceTalk (2008). Through a technologically constructed “conversation” with Japanese-Canadian artist Roy Kiyooka, Westerkamp reflects on an essential second-person relation: that with her mother. By paralleling Kiyooka’s own reflections in his MotherTalk (1997) project, Westerkamp explores her immigrant identity, an identity defined by language, place, and her mother.¹

¹ In Chapter 5 I compare Truax’s and Westerkamp’s application of soundscape composition. While both composers ultimately construct their soundscapes, Westerkamp frames her works within a discourse of authenticity (i.e., “letting the soundscape speak for itself”) that is necessary for her ethical stance regarding her work.
4.0.2 Private vs. Public Space in Electroacoustic Music

The development of transportable recording equipment has contributed to the erasure of the boundary between public and private spaces in electroacoustic music. The soundscape of nature—the outdoors—signifies a public space with (mostly) free and (relatively) easy access—of course depending on which specific natural environment one wishes to explore. Alternatively, the sounds of the home—of friends and family conversing, sharing life stories, or engaging in sexual acts—signify a private space, where intimacy is a privilege granted or earned: access cannot be assumed. These activities remain in the private sphere through convention and, in some cases, government regulation (Blatterer et al. 2010; McKeon 2005).

In the work of soundscape composers like Westerkamp, the blurring of public and private becomes an essential mode of expression. The conversations between mother and son (*MotherVoiceTalk*), whispered confessions of ardent love (*Für Dich – For You*), and the private and imagined meeting of two artists—Westerkamp and Kiyooka (*MotherVoiceTalk*)—are shifted from the impermanent personal into the permanent public realm through transduction. Once the material becomes malleable sonic material for the composer, those private sharings shift towards public space. Diffused in live performance, and/or distributed on compact disc, these sounds become public, and yet they retain dual status as both public and private, for without the referential meaning/experience of these sounds as *private*, their expressive power is lost.

The balance between once private and now public sounds must be delicately negotiated by the composer. Sounds that are deemed *too* private for a public listening space

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2 I refer here to “nature” as opposed to soundscape in general, which refers to the sonic qualities of any space, public (e.g., a mall) or private (e.g., home).
can alienate the listener. For instance, in her discussion of Westerkamp’s *Moments of Laughter* (1988), McCartney (1999) discusses numerous audience responses that express a discomfort with the private realm evoked of labour sounds and parent–baby/child interactions. This intimacy of the private sounds is often foregrounded through techniques such as close microphone placement, which, as discussed in the previous chapter, creates a “dry” voice that expresses directly to the listener; the details construct closeness. In addition, manipulating certain aspects of the mix can result in sounds that “hear” close, particularly on the auditory horizon, and the vertical and horizontal planes. As I will discuss in this chapter, both Westerkamp and Calon make use of traditionally “private” sounds (in Calon’s case, erotic sounds, such as accelerated breaths, moans, and groans). These sounds demonstrate the public-private tension as the sounds of sexuality, relegated by social conservatism and government control to the home, are heard through loudspeakers (public) or headphones (private, but not the private space of the original sexual act).

One aspect of Westerkamp’s private life that shifts frequently into public space through deliberate inclusion in her works is personal relationships, particularly those that relate to her female identity. In the section on Westerkamp, I discuss her deliberate inclusion of private family and friend relationship in her public works.

Sounds can also extend from public to private. Soundscape elements are central to Westerkamp’s works and are also used to construct reality and fantasy in Calon’s *Minuit*. Westerkamp uses soundscape elements to signal both specific places (e.g., the Canadian West

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3 I do not know how audiences react to these sounds, but electroacoustic works frequently incorporate “private” sounds.

4 Hodgson (2006) describes the mix as a way of hearing (8).
Coast) and general spaces (e.g., a beach). It is in these latter spaces—the general—that the shift from public to private is most important. Reference to specific places may not always be heard, understood, and appreciated. But Westerkamp expects that each listener’s personal (i.e., private) life experiences will allow him or her to relate to these general spaces in a meaningful way. One may not have been by the river on Salt Spring Island, but certainly most, if not all, have experienced rivers, lakes, oceans: water. Calon also includes real-world sounds (e.g., birds, wind, clicking heels); while not extensive in their application in Minuit, these sounds are still used to bring public sounds to the listener’s private memory.

In addition to the experience of public spaces through private memory, soundscape elements shift to private spaces through private listening experiences—the home stereo and personal listening devices. Nicola Dibben’s work (2009a) on intimacy in the recorded medium insists that intimacy is intrinsic on some level to all fixed medium works that are designed to be, or can be, experienced in private space, at home or through headphones. This private listening space creates an automatic intimacy: the sounds heard are just for the listener; voices heard, even of crowds, seem inside his head when heard through headphones, and extraneous noises are shut out to allow a more intensified, detailed listening experience (Stern 2003). The sounds of nature fill the private space, creating an intimacy perhaps only rarely experienced in the original public space.5

Through transduction, Westerkamp and Calon both establish control over these formally public spaces. Their compositional choices—manipulating, juxtaposing, fragmenting, and so on—turn these spaces into means for their expressive, and for

5 I could imagine that being alone in a secluded natural environment may elicit similar feelings of intimacy with the soundscape.
Westerkamp particularly, ethical (and thus political) ends. Westerkamp and Calon take these public spaces unto themselves, into their private space (i.e., the studio). So the result for the listener is not a direct public-private shift from public soundscape to private listener, but rather a mediation through another private space: the composer’s intention, control, and manipulation.

This blend of public and private, which I suggest is essential to the expressive meaning of Calon’s *Minuit* and Westerkamp’s *Für Dich - For You* and *MotherVoiceTalk*, begins in the studio, with the composer making choices, exerting control over the sound material. The use of the voice in particular also raises issues regarding authority and agency.

### 4.0.3 The Voice and Storytelling in Electroacoustic Music: Authority, Agency, and Gender

The authoritative position of the narrative voice has been theorized in cinematic studies since the emergence of the voice-over (Silverman 1985). This often-male voice is imbued with omniscience—a god-like figure that knows all, sees all, and communicates knowledge to the listener. Take, for instance, the nature documentary; as images of the African jungle or Amazon River predators flash on the screen, the authoritative voice—usually a deep, resonant male voice (e.g., James Earl Jones)—shares knowledge with the listener. As movie trailers and Morgan Freeman’s narration of Disney’s recent *Earth* series can attest, cinema has made little movement away from the *male* voice as narrative authority. In films, the male narrator, who is all voice (and thus mind, intelligence) and no body, is often layered above the image of the female body, serving only to affirm the entrenched
binary oppositions between male and female, mind and body, culture and nature, and civilized and primal/savage (Silverman 1988; Sunabacka 2008).

In her study of electroacoustic works for live voice and electronics (e.g., tape, vocoder), Hannah Bosma, project manager of contemporary music at Muziek Centrum Nederland (Amsterdam), noticed similar binaries persisting in electroacoustic music. In addition to recognizing, as others have, that most electroacoustic composers are male, Bosma highlights the seemingly disproportionate number of works by male composers for live female voices, whose extended vocal techniques are manipulated and accompanied by sounds controlled by the male composer. The majority of pieces for live voice with electroacoustic tracks are for female voice using non-verbal (or pre-linguistic) sounds and extended vocal technique. Bosma noted a difference in gender distribution in fixed medium works. The presence of manipulated male and female voices in works was more equivalent. But a gender divide remained when considering the type of vocal style used by male and female vocalists. Female vocalists still frequently used extended vocal techniques and their voices were often highly processed. Male voices were often those of the composers themselves, and they retained the narrative role by primarily using speech rather than any song-like or extended vocal techniques; thus, they established a sense of authority (akin to the “voice of God”) and rationality.

Bosma (2006) observes that scholarship and discussion centre on the composer as sole creator (who is most often male), who works in the studio, using the technology (also associated with the male-dominated world) to manipulate the sonic material—in this case,

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the voice. The source of the voice, even with a distinctive timbre and specific performative elements, is inconsequential to the composer’s creative authority. Thus, Bosma explains, “stereotypically, the female voice is presented as ‘sound material,’ and the male composer, who orders this material, is considered the authoritative creator” (104). The increase in access to sound recording technology, though, has fostered a new generation of composers who can work outside of the institutional electronic studios. Many composers use their own voices, and many vocalists create their own works. Pauline Oliveros has been a model for many women composers through her experimentation with her own voice. Other female composers who use their own voices include Laurie Anderson, Wende Bartley, Diamanda Galás, Meredith Monk, and Westerkamp herself. Bosma (2003) suggests that gender is one of the most easily identifiable aspects of the voice. However, Chapter 3 discussed works whose use of technology (e.g., granular time stretching and harmonization in Song of Songs) or extended vocal technique (i.e., Tagaq’s low grunts and growls) demonstrates gender-ambiguous voices, not to mention a long history of gender blurring in particular voice types (e.g., castrati, countertenors, and contraltos) in opera and popular music (e.g., Prince, Tracy Chapman, and Annie Lennox), that challenge Bosma’s claim. Nonetheless, in the works discussed below, gender ambiguity is minimal. Calon and Westerkamp’s use of the voice as a

7 In Berio’s own discussion of Thema (Omaggio a Joyce), he does not mention Cathy Berberian. Rather Berio appropriates her vocal work, transforming her into a “suppressed Other” (Bosma 2006, 104); see Luciano Berio,"Poesia e musica--un'esperienza," in La musica elettronica, ed. Henri Pousseur (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1976), 124-135.

8 Westerkamp claims she felt a freedom to explore at the Simon Fraser University studio. This openness seems appropriate, given that the World Soundscape Project was already a divergence from traditional approaches to electronic technology. As Simon Water notes in “Beyond the Acousmatic”: “Perhaps uncoincidentally, Canada has produced a considerable number of electroacoustic composers whose work has drawn attention to landscape and the environment through a relatively untreated documentary style recording, in which the presence of the composer as sound gatherer is quite explicit” (Emmerson 2000, 78). Take for example, Claude Schryer – Les oiseaux de Bullion; Christian Calon – Temps incertains; Hildegard Westerkamp – Breathing Room; Dan Lander – I’m Looking at My Hand.
narrative vehicle to enact and construct identity both affirms and contradicts the historically entrenched gendered voice that Bosma studies.

Through sound technology, composers can now use and manipulate the voices of others. Westerkamp, in particular, with her use of interview recordings, invokes a Bakhtinian double-voiced discourse as she uses them “for [her] own purposes by inserting a new semantic intention into a discourse which already has, and which retains, an intention of its own” (Morris 1994, 105). Similarly, Calon includes quotations from French poet Arthur Rimbaud (1854-1891); these passages acquire new meaning within the context of Calon’s text while simultaneously relying on the recognition of their original “semantic intention.”

In the following discussion, then, I will first examine Calon’s *Minuit* (1989) and then Westerkamp’s *Für Dich - For You* (2005) and *MotherVoiceTalk* (2008) in order to interrogate more closely the implications of the private-public divide as it relates to authority, agency, gender, and sexuality.

et du silence de la raison
filtrent des chants antiques
remontant du creux des os
du fond de la chair⁹
(from *Minuit* – Christian Calon)

4.1.1 Introduction

Montreal acousmatic composer Christian Calon (b. 1950) conceives of his compositional method as a process that relies on a fragmented approach to electroacoustic material; in *Minuit* (1989), a 40-minute work that incorporates voices, text, soundscape material, and synthesized sound, this fragmentation affects both the poetic texts and the sound material, particularly the manipulated voice. Calon’s narrative is an often-fantastical story influenced by Georges Bataille’s concept of *érotisme* (1957), a continuously performed sexual act that Calon evokes in his poetic texts and, most importantly, in the timbral and spatial treatment of the human voice. My discussion of *Minuit* is contextualized first through an overview of Calon’s biography and acousmatic aesthetics. Next, I summarize *Minuit*’s history, structure, and sound material. Following this overview, I discuss the work in three main sections. First, I discuss the role of storytelling and narrative in *Minuit* through the use of Calon’s texts, which are themselves based on the works of other poets and writers, and are related by two main storytellers, one male and one female. Calon makes specific contrasts between linear and fragmented or cyclical texts. These narrative shifts signal a breakdown in gender expectations of the voice in electroacoustic music, particularly through the dramatic

⁹ “and from the silence of reason filters ancient songs rising again from the hollow of bones from the root of flesh”
manipulation of the male voice. Second, I position Calon’s texts, quotations, and sonic manipulation as a representation of Bataille’s notion of the erotic. I discuss Calon’s direct quotation of Bataille in the program notes for *Minuit* and the deep assimilation of Bataille’s concepts into Calon’s poetic texts. Finally, I analyze Calon’s treatment of the sound material as an enactment of Bataille’s erotic leap, a momentary uniting of two discontinuous beings through a sexual peak (i.e., orgasm).

4.1.2 Background and Aesthetics: Creative Motivations

According to David Olds (2010), Calon’s style is “expressionist and narrative” with an artistic intention of “the expression of the human condition.” Calon explains:

> The architectural dimension of sound and a reflection on the narrative processes are the main focus of my present work centered around the ideas of Time, presence and transformation. Through various forms including spatial sound installations, acousmatic or radio pieces, my recent pieces explore the modality of the audible and of the listening experience. (Calon 2011)¹⁰

Calon refers to himself as a sound and radio artist; currently, he works freelance in Montreal. Though he is largely self-taught, Calon considers Francis Dhomont a mentor and fellow champion of *cinéma pour l’oreille*. Calon’s output exhibits influence from other arts, especially literature and the visual arts, and this influence has led to many collaborative

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¹⁰ Limited biographical information exists on Calon. Unlike Hildegard Westerkamp and Robert Normandeau, he did not complete a master’s or doctoral thesis on his work – indeed, he has no formal university training. Whereas there are many interviews of all of the other composers and artists in this dissertation, I have found only one interview with Calon, which in fact is more of conversation between Dhomont and Calon mostly on the topic of Dhomont’s aesthetic. I wished to compensate for this lacuna of biographical context by interviewing Calon myself. While he expressed a willingness to meet with me when I went to Montreal, Calon did not respond to my emails that asked for a specific meeting date and time. His works are frequently referenced in
projects. For example, emerging from his concern for *conversation sonore*, Calon also participates in the improvisation collective Theresa Transistor.\(^{11}\)

In the biography on his album *Ligne de vie: récits électriques*, Calon provides a sincere, if somewhat idealistic, view of his goal as a composer: « Dorénavant [mon travail] tendra à la création d’une *machine à metamorphoses* dont la fonction est de révéler le monde et de questionner et organiser mon rapport avec lui. »\(^{12}\) In his article « Aujourd’hui = hier + demain » (1993), Calon suggests that this “metamorphosis” signals a change in the notion of the “work”; *la Forme* is an illusion in the postmodern fragmentation of thought and structures (131). He believes his current work is necessarily based on a model and a language that is modern (as in “modernist”) because the electroacoustic medium emerged during the modernist period; however, he believes that in his current post-modern context, such a modernist language is unsuited to his needs and he seeks to challenge it. Calon now aims to work “en dehors du cadre” (136) with little concern for “the work,” focusing instead on the process, on experimentation. He arrives at his position by interrogating four main propositions: 1) « L’œuvre existe : rien n’est moins certain », 2) « L’acousmatique n’a pas de passé », 3) « La matière n’a pas de mémoire », and 4) « À qui parlons-nous ? ».\(^{13}\) Calon encourages electroacoustic composers to embrace the possibility that a “work” may never be.

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\(^{11}\) Theresa Transistor (Christian Calon, Christian Bouchard, Mario Gauthier, and Monique Jean) first performed as a collective on January 25, 2005 at Monument National (Montreal) as part of the Akousma festival; this concert won an Opus prize for concert of the year in new and electroacoustic music.

\(^{12}\) “From now on [my work] will aim for the creation of a *metamorphosis machine* whose function is to reveal the world and to question and organize my connection to it.”

\(^{13}\) 1) “The work exists: nothing is less certain,” 2) “Acousmatic music does not have a past,” 3) “The [sound] material does not have a memory,” and 4) “To whom are we speaking?”
For Calon, there is a gap between what the creator would like to create—his design of the world—and reality. The creative gesture, or act, is the leap that crosses le vide and results in a work, which is not reality, but an exception to the gap. This creative leap is similar to the erotic leap he portrays in Minuit. Calon believes that his creative gesture must find a mode that does not use a modernist language, a language developed by the first generation of acousmatic composers, which is no longer adapted to his needs or the needs of the contemporary audience. Rather than abandon this inherited musical or creative language, Calon uses it in a fragmented form, embracing juxtaposition (i.e., montage) over synthesis. This approach can be plainly heard in his treatment of the voice and of sound in Minuit.

Calon’s aesthetic parallels that of Normandeau’s cinéma pour l’oreille: in contrast to the first generation’s predilection towards abstraction, Calon believes composers must construct memories from, or referents for, raw sonic material, so that the material can be understood. Calon incorporates memory in Minuit, first, by referencing soundscape material (which requires the listener to access his memory) and, second, by enacting the memory of the narrator and storyteller in their texts.

While his aim to “reveal the world and to question and organize [his] connection to it” remains a lofty and perhaps impossible goal, Calon’s output, including Minuit, is constructed with this aesthetic goal in mind. So the task for the analyst is not to interrogate the grand universal truths Calon reveals about the world, but rather to consider what he constructs as truths and how he constructs them. Calon’s aesthetic approach to Minuit creates an expressive channel for his concepts of the word, life, death, and sexuality.
4.2.3 Overview: \textit{Minuit}

\textit{Minuit} (1989) is dedicated to Francis Dhomont, and it took first prize at the 17\textsuperscript{th} Bourges International Electroacoustic Music Competition (France, 1989). Calon composed the work in his studio over a span of almost four years. He incorporated elements completed at the studio of the Groupe de musique expérimentale de Marseille (GMEM) and at the SYTER studio of the Groupe de recherche musicale (GRM). Unlike the essentially textless work \textit{La disparition} (1988), which is, in many ways, a companion to this piece, \textit{Minuit} consists of several texts written by Calon; he traces inspiration for the words and ideas of his texts to the following: surrealist poet Antonin Artaud (1896-1948), symbolist poetry forefather Charles Baudelaire (1821-1867), influential twentieth-century novelist Louis-Ferdinand Céline (1894-1961), and “stream of consciousness” writer James Joyce (1882-1941). Calon’s texts are paired with three central narrative voices: the storyteller, the actor (both portrayed in the voice of Quebec actor Benoît Dagenais) and the narrator (voice of actor and comedian Suzanne Lantagne). Several other voices fill the sonic space with their whispers, breaths, and incoherent mutterings: French composer Philippe Le Goff, Ghislaine Dubuc,\textsuperscript{14} Quebec actor Danièle Renaud, Christopher Lea, and Calon himself.\textsuperscript{15}

The work consists of three main sections (Prologue, Minuit, Immémorial) comprised of seven fragments:

\textsuperscript{14} Calon dedicated \textit{La disparition} to “Ghislaine.”

\textsuperscript{15} Calon includes his own voice in \textit{Minuit}, but never in a prominent narrative role. Similarly, Normandieu does not use his own voice. Rather, these two men benefit from the abundance of Quebecois actors living in Montreal. Their trained and expressive voices lend themselves well to the dramatic nature of electroacoustic music. For Normandieu (and perhaps also Calon), his interaction with actors derives from his theatre work; he has created numerous acousmatic (soundtracks) to theatre works. In contrast, Westerkamp makes frequent use of her own voice. Her voice articulates her sound walks (e.g., \textit{Kits Beach Soundwalk}, 1989) and other personal experiences and works, which, as will be discussed below, establishes a narrative authority.
Part 1: Prologue – “Obscurité” (Darkness); “Prologue”
Part 2: Minuit (Midnight) – “Minuit” (Midnight); “Enfer” (Inferno)
Part 3: Immémorial – “Traversée” (Passage); “Immémorial”; “Épilogue”

The influence of Artaud, Baudelaire, Céline, and Joyce is plain in both the structure and style of Calon’s text. “Prologue” and “Minuit” begin with texts that suggest traditional story structures (e.g., “vieille histoire”), but soon the text becomes a series of phrases or words, like the loosely structured poetry of the symbolists. The text focuses on images of night (i.e., minuit) and the body. While “Prologue” only infers a certain amount of eroticism, “Minuit” begins to describe the act: «il y aurait un pâle miroir qui renverrait l'image grotesque et nerveuse d'un couple enlacé cela se passerait à cet instant, dans cette chambre, avec le corps de cet homme et le corps de cette femme». This sections ends with a hint of the extreme textual fragmentation to come in the next section. Similar to the beginning of the previous two sections, “Immémorial” begins with a text containing complete sentences and correct punctuation:

C'était simple d'être vivant. Il suffisait d'être là, debout sur la terre, en train de respirer, avec le soleil qui tapait sur la tête ou bien la pluie tombant goutte à goutte, et les yeux fixés vaguement sur quelque chose. Tout le reste suivait.

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16 Obscurité (Darkness) (0:32) is presented only in the concert version. I have been unable to ascertain the reason for this omission.

17 The repetition of section titles as fragment titles (Prologue, Immémorial) and the title of the work (Minuit) as a section title and a fragment title can lead to confusion. To help clarify the multiple titles, I will italicize the work’s title, underline section titles, and place fragment titles in quotation marks.

18 The French text and English translation can be found on Calon’s website: http://www3.sympatico.ca/klong/.

19 “there would be a pale mirror reflecting the grotesque and nervous image of an entwined couple it would happen at this moment, in this room, with the body of this man and the body of this woman” (English translation on website).

20 “It was simple to be alive. It was enough to be there, standing on the earth, breathing, with the sun beating down on the head, or the rain coming down drop by drop and the eyes vaguely staring at something. Everything else followed” (English translation on website).
And with that signal (“Tout le reste suivait”), what follows is complete fragmentation of the text into single words and phrases, without punctuation. As I will discuss below, the textual fragmentation is mirrored in the fragmented treatment of the vocal sounds. The juxtaposed images are vivid (e.g., tombeau des lumières; poudre d’os; corps flottant à l’envers\footnote{tomb of lights; powder of bones; inverted bodies floating (English translation from website).}), but meaning is as ambiguous as Calon’s use of punctuation. Finally, in “Épilogue,” structure returns to the text; the text again frames the work as a story.\footnote{As I will discuss below, Calon’s text and musical setting construct a story that enacts Bataille’s erotic act, a “rupture” that is central to the story of humanity.} But the return to structure is short-lived as the text (and the piece) is suddenly cut off.

My discussion of Minuit focuses on three main areas. First, I discuss the construction of narrative, particularly through Calon’s use of storytelling. I begin by examining the three kinds of textual writing Calon identifies (linear, fragmented, and cyclic). Then I discuss how his treatment of the voice variably positions the story within reality and fantasy. Next I discuss the gender implications of the storytelling in Minuit, which both confirms gender norms in electroacoustic music and contradicts them. Then I highlight significant intra- and intertextual elements that link Minuit’s narrative to itself and to other historical texts, respectively. Second, I place Calon’s texts within the context of Georges Bataille’s notion of eroticism, specifically as it relates to death and sexuality. I begin by summarizing Bataille’s discussion of discontinuous beings, and then highlight the main ways that Calon enacts eroticism and the quest for continuity in his texts, liner notes, and quotations. Finally, I focus on Calon’s sonic treatment of the voice, particularly in “Immémorial”; the fractured words and the cyclical treatment of the voice (its text and sound) become Calon’s sonic
performance of Bataille’s “rupture,” a term used to describe the momentary erasure of the discontinuity between human beings that occurs during the erotic act, the result of which brings temporary continuity. Because this continuity is only temporary, the erotic act must be repeatedly enacted.

4.1.4 Storytelling and Narrative in Minuit

Each of Calon’s three divisions has a text that requires a particular setting. Calon explains (1990) that each text has its own type d’écriture that in turn determines un mode de mise en situation de la voix (or what he calls fonction de la voix) and un type d’écriture sonore (or type of sonic writing). He provides an outline for the textual writing and its resultant staging mode (or fonction de la voix) and sonic writing.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Écriture textuelle</th>
<th>Fonction de la voix</th>
<th>Écriture sonore</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>“Prologue”</td>
<td>narrative: linéaire</td>
<td>contour</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>ponctuelle, trames, arrière plan au texte</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>“Minuit”</td>
<td>narrative: linéaire</td>
<td>narratrice</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>orchestrale, hétérophonie, intégration texte-son</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>fragmentée: bribes de phrases</td>
<td>commentaires, situations</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>“Immémorial” and “Épilogue”</td>
<td>narrative: linéaire</td>
<td>narratrice</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Immémorial”</td>
<td>parcellaire-cyclique: atomisation</td>
<td>acteur: délirante</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>(matériologique)</td>
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Table 4.1 - Outline of textual writing and staging modes for Minuit.

The vocal staging (Lacasse’s term, not Calon’s “fonction de la voix”) of the male’s voice in particular constructs and then shifts between reality and fantasy. The piece opens

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23 “Enfer is not included in Table 4.1 because it contains no text. Though he uses “fragmentée” to describe “Minuit” and “parcellaire-cyclique: atomisation” to describe “Immémorial” (suggesting the processes are unalike), I frequently describe the latter as fragmented. As I have emphasized throughout this dissertation, often the way a composer creates and conceives of his work is different from the way it is perceived by the listener.
with birds chirping high in the vertical span; this placement helps construct a realistic outdoor scene with birds high in the trees. Below we hear rhythmic creaking, like that of an old rocking chair or porch swing. The creaking stops, leaving the listener to wait for the voice of the man on the rocking chair. He begins: « vieille histoire ». Reality, constructed by the birds and the dry vocal staging, fades into fantasy as the storyteller finishes setting the scene:

« le jour s’égare là-bas
dans la forêt triangulaire
au crépuscule ».

As his mind recedes into deeper thought and memory, the birds’ songs sink heavier in reverberation until they disappear off the auditory horizon. The storyteller continues his story above a consonant harmonic progression of soft choral harmonies, but his voice is awash in reverberation. During the remaining text in the Prologue, the voice stays in the distance, with varying levels of reverberation.

Calon uses traditional modes of constructing the voice to return to reality. For instance, to contrast the voice’s varying levels of reverb and often distant placement on the auditory horizon throughout the “Prologue,” the vocal staging shifts suddenly to a dry voice (4:08); with this dry voice very near the listener on the auditory horizon, the man charges the listener: « mais ne nous leurrons pas ». Calon applies a similarly dry vocal staging to the woman’s voice throughout all of Minuit; this “realistic” vocal staging contradicts the other sonic elements, as high-frequency synthesized chords sustain for extended passages, and the crackling of fire pans across the horizontal span. Calon continues to exploit the difference

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24 “The day loses itself over there in the triangular forest, in the twilight”

25 “but let us not delude ourselves”
between reality and fantasy through contrasting vocal staging, which in *Immémorial* is especially important for highlighting key texts and expressive goals.

In contrast to the dry vocal staging of the woman’s voice at the start of “Immémorial” (21:24), the man’s voice enters with its heavy echo and stretched utterances; at a significantly higher dynamic level, its heavy processing signals an important textual, aesthetic, and expressive change. The textual setting is based on an atomization of language into single words. The echo and stretching emphasizes their role as sound material rather than linguistic signifiers. At two key moments in this section, the man’s voice emerges from such heavily modified treatment (which has included fragmenting, repeating, and stretching words and phonemes) to a relatively dry vocal staging. In these moments, Calon inserts two passages (28:01, 34:26) that contain syntactic and linguistic meaning. To highlight their importance, Calon makes sure they are presented clearly, free from the heavy reverberation and manipulation of the words surrounding them.

After a return to the fantastical narrative of swirling words and phonemes, Calon finishes the work in the realistic realm. Following a stretched and harmonized statement of the text and hysterical laughter, Calon inserts the text again, but without any overt manipulation. The laughter is left untouched as it fades and grows as if the man is moving away from and towards the microphone. This vocal staging pulls the listener out of the fantasy of the story to the mechanism of storytelling: the storyteller who sits in front of the microphone, recounting his story. Reality persists when the woman returns (39:26) to

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26 Their meaning will be examined later in this section when I discuss intertextual references.
complete the story with a final moral and reference to the act of storytelling: « je n’ai jamais écrit que pour fixer et perpétuer la mémoire... ».27

By using a male and female storyteller in this narrative constructed as reality and fantasy, Minuit both adheres to and breaks from the traditional gendered use of the voice as discussed in Bosma’s research. The narrator (female) and storyteller (male) roles communicate the only texts that Calon describes as “linear.”28 Calon’s Minuit opens with a male voice (Benoit Dagenais) stating clearly (and thus authoritatively) « vieille histoire ». Like the classic fairy tale opening with “once upon a time,” Calon’s opening phrase initiates an expectation for a story, a narrative, of which the male voice is the teller. The man’s voice remains central until 14:25 (over a third of the piece). The text reinforces the male perspective as le trafic des corps de la semence29 creates a leap (le saut) that grants clarity to man: « ce que l’homme a cru voir ! ». Not what a woman believes she saw. Some would argue for the universal implication of l’homme as “him or her”; but as Ruth Solie mentions in her introduction to the influential Musicology and Difference (1993), such language models the focus on the male perspective as universal, rather than the female perspective as “particular and, thus, oppositional. ... [T]he everyday terms we use for human subjectivity (one, he, everyone, mankind) make universal claims but are nonetheless situated as male within cultural practice” (1). The text emphasizes this male perspective when the man repeats « des hommes » three times (10:35) rather than the more gender neutral « des gens ».

Furthermore, during this long “Prologue,” Calon frequently inserts the sounds of female

27 “I have only written to clarify and perpetuate the memory...”

28 It remains unclear why Calon uses conteur and narratrice instead of conteur vs. conteuse or narrateur vs. narratrice.

29 “the traffic of bodies of semen”
sexuality—the accelerated breaths leading to orgasm: heavy breathing (6:45ff; 10:47ff), moaning (7:18ff; 11:31ff), and groaning (12:43ff). But the woman is not given a voice with which to articulate *le saut, à la bordure*. Rather the man maintains power, both semantic and physical.

Finally, at 14:25 (during Partie 2: *Minuit*), Calon grants narrative authority to a female voice (Suzanne Lantagne). He affirms her authority particularly in the opening seconds of this section by paralleling the man’s opening words from the Prologue. She explains:

```markdown
au loin, dans la profondeur
o nocturne des temps oubliés, il y
aurait un pâle miroir qui
renverrai l’image grotesque et
erveuse d’un couple enlacé
```

First, she imitates the narrative with a similar storytelling trope: “Au loin,” like “vieille histoire” serves as a signifier to an archetypal story. Second, they both establish a similar setting: the “Prologue” scene was twilight (*le crépuscule*) in *la forêt triangulaire*, while “Minuit” uses the adjective *nocturne* to refer to nighttime. Finally, following both of these introductions, there is a long pause before the next line of text. This sonic delineation of the introductions asserts both the male and female voices’ roles as narrators of their respective stories. However, in the second part (*Minuit*), the woman is now narrator. She states the female presence explicitly, rather than inferring it as in the previous section, so that

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30 Some male breathing can be heard, but it is relatively unobtrusive, especially in comparison to the frequent inclusion of women’s erotic breathing.

31 “far away, in the nocturnal depths of forgotten times, there would be a pale mirror that reflects the grotesque and nervous image of an intertwined couple”
Bataille’s *fête*\(^{32}\)—the ecstasy of death (both physical and sexual)—belongs not only to man but also to woman. In the woman’s story, the *couple enlacé in cette chambre* is *le corps de cet homme et le corps de cette femme*.

The traditional role of male narrator as authority is further deconstructed in “Immémorial” (fragment 6, second fragment of the third part of the same title: *Immémorial*). When the man’s voice returns after the woman’s linear (i.e., syntactic) statements, its textual setting has substantially changed; rather than the poetic passages of the “Prologue,” he is restricted to single words or phrases whose discontinuity is highlighted by frequent pauses.

\[
\text{nuit` eau` parole` lumière couteau de}
\text{lumières` vents sables tam-tams}
\text{feux` vipères` tombeau des lumières}\(^{33}\)
\]

The breakdown in narrative content signals a rupture in authoritative status. The male voice is no longer the keeper of knowledge. His voice is the consequence of the *divisant* (splitting up) described, or perhaps initiated, by the female narrator at the end of the previous section.

She foretells:

\[
\text{puis, tout se divisant en fragments,}
\text{morceaux, morceaux de morceaux,}
\text{éclats des lumières, particules}
\text{tournoyantes, poussières de}
\text{poussières}\(^{34}\)
\]

Calon extends this textual splintering and swirling through electroacoustic processes.

Words and phonemes are stretched until their semantic content, which was already limited by

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\(^{32}\) I discuss Bataille’s notion of eroticism in greater detail below.

\(^{33}\) The text in the liner notes juxtaposes the words and phrases without punctuation. I have indicated where the voice pauses with ‘: “night’ water’ word’ light knife of lights’ winds sands tam-tams fires’ vipers’ tomb of lights”

\(^{34}\) “then, everything splitting up into fragments, pieces, pieces of pieces, bursts of lights, swirling particles, dusts of dusts”
the juxtaposition of words without thought of syntax, is indiscernible—only sound remains. The processed words feed the écriture sonore as the stretching, reverberation, and panning disorient the listener. The narrative remains suspended as the text and its manipulation create a texture based on derivation, repetition, and variation. The male voice has lost all control as the machine of the composer, now obviously at work, dismantles the voice. The voice emphasizes the cyclic nature of this question by returning to the opening text twice (35:16; 38:12). As if in response to the ridiculousness of returning to a meaningless text, the voice breaks down into hysteric, the laughter uncomfortably processed through harmonization until what is usually a natural and joyful expression becomes the distorted automatized utterance of the machine-possessed voice. The voice tries again to begin: « nuit eau parole lumière ». But all that is said has already been said and the delirious voice breaks down into hysterical laughter (the second time, unprocessed).

Rather than the stereotypical woman’s voice in electroacoustic music that fragments into hysteric and primitive semantic nonsense under the master’s hand, here we encounter a gender reversal. The once authoritative man has succumbed to the master’s machine. Out of this fragmentation emerges the female voice (39:26). She delivers the final word, the message of the work. Her voice is not servant to the male master:

\begin{quote}
De temps de temps la vie fait un
saut, mais cela n’est jamais écrit
dans l’histoire, et je n’ai jamais
crit, que pour fixer et perpétuer la
mémoire de ces coupures, de
ces scissions, de ces ruptures, de ces
chutes brusque et sans fond qui
\end{quote}

\footnote{“From time to time, life makes a leap, but this is never written in history, and I have only written to clarify and perpetuate the memory of these breaks, of these schisms, of these ruptures, of these sudden and bottomless falls that”}
Using diverse modes of textual writing to create a narrative that constructs reality and fantasy, and that both affirms and contradicts gender roles in electroacoustic works, *Minuit* also brings in another narrative voice through intertextuality. The work incorporates several significant intertextual features, both musical and poetic. Despite making no mention of it in his liner notes, Calon quotes from Arthur Rimbaud’s famous poem “Le bateau ivre” two times, once in the “Prologue,” and later in “Immémorial”:

1) « ... ce que l’homme a cru voir ! » is the second half of the fourth line in the eighth quatrain of Rimbaud’s poem. Its inclusion here is appropriate, given the full quatrain:

Je sais les cieux crevant en éclairs, et les trombes
Et les ressacs et les courants : Je sais le soir,
L'aube exaltée ainsi qu'un peuple de colombes,
Et j'ai vu quelque fois ce que l'homme a cru voir !

*Minuit* is set during the night, during the time leading up to Rimbaud’s *l’aube exaltée*. It is during this point-*Minuit* that man gains *la plus transparente clarté*.

2) Calon inserts the final two lines of the twenty-second quatrain near the end of a long series of fragmented phrases, juxtaposed and intensely manipulated. As indicated in the original poem by dashes at the beginning and end, this question is an interjection into the poem’s narrative. Similarly, Calon also uses this question to interrupt the fractured imagery. The original quatrain is as follows:

J'ai vu des archipels sidéraux ! et des îles
Dont les cieux délirants sont ouverts au vogueur :
—Est-ce en ces nuits sans fond que tu dors et t’exiles,
Million d’oiseaux d’or, ô future Vigueur ? —

---

36 “I know the heavens bursting in flashes, and the watersprouts, / And the undertow and the current: I know the night, / The exalted dawn like a flock of doves, / And sometimes I have seen that which man believed he saw!"

37 “I have seen the astral archipelagos! and islands whose delirious heavens are open to the sailor: / —Is it in these bottomless nights that you sleep and exile yourself, / Million golden birds, O future Vigor? —”
Perhaps unsurprisingly, Calon inserts (9:58) the opening passage of Beethoven’s “Moonlight” Sonata during “Minuit.” Calon also referenced Beethoven in another work of this period, La disparition (1988). There, he used short extracts of the Grosse Fuge, Op. 133 in addition to traditional music from Africa, Melanesia, and the Far East and natural environmental sounds (e.g., crickets, birds, water) to connect the past and the present: « À la source de cette oeuvre, il y a le désir de voir s’élever dans un chant commun ces voix multiples et profondes, ces racines qui dorénavant appartiennent à ce que nous nommons l’Histoire » (6). This quotation suggests that Calon aims to comment more broadly on the human experience, an experience that traverses our “History,” uniting all humanity in death (both physical and sexual). I suggest that the use of the Beethoven quotation in Minuit serves not only to reinforce the nocturnal setting, but also to connect the piece with a historical legacy—a legacy of not only music, but of human beings attempting to reconcile life and death, an important philosophy to Calon that emerges both sonically and textually in Minuit.

4.1.5 Bataille and Eroticism

According to Calon’s text, Minuit centres on midnight and nighttime as the scene in which humans enact their erotic passions in un rite indestructible; this repetitious act brings clarity by bridging the discontinuity between human beings, resulting in a leap towards an “other” (Calon 1990). These sentiments reference Calon’s frequent reliance on Georges

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38 While the album makes no clear delineation between the fragments, the listening excerpts on <www.electrocd.com> show that even though the woman’s text does not begin until 14:24, the downbeat and wolf howl at 5:09 signals the second section.

39 La disparition was released on the same album as Minuit. The liner notes, including quotations, contain remarkably similar sentiments.

40 “At the core of this work, there is a desire to see lifted up in a shared song, these multiple and deep voices, these roots that now belong to what we call History.”
Bataille’s (1897-1962) writings on eroticism. In his program notes for *Minuit*, Calon includes this quotation from Bataille: « La sexualité et la mort ne sont que les moments aigus d’une fête que la nature célèbre avec la multitude inépuisable des êtres... » (Bataille 1957, 69). Bataille’s writings suggest that death becomes erotic through our experience of *la petite mort*; this *petite mort* « fait de l’érotisme une figure métonymique de la mort et de la violence fondatrice, dans la mesure où l’érotisme exalte le sentiment d’une fête exubérante dans l’abîme enfiévré de la mort glorifiée par la nature » (Papanikolaou, 39). Certainly Bataille was not the only writer to link sex and death. It has a long history in French philosophy and literature, including the Marquis de Sade’s (1740-1814) controversial writings and the poetry of Baudelaire (e.g., *Les Fleurs du mal*); indeed *le petite mort* is the French phrase often used as a metaphor for orgasm.

Calon’s adherence to Bataille’s writings permeates *Minuit*, from his introductory descriptions of the work and of each section in the liner notes, to the text—which he wrote himself—and the treatment of the voice. According to Bataille, we are all discontinuous...
beings until the moment of death. Bataille (1986) explains: “Between one being and another, there is a gulf, a discontinuity ... Continuity is what we are after” (12, 18). This continuity is only achieved in death, when all human beings share in a universal continuity. However, the erotic act can also challenge this discontinuity, rendering “a total blending of two beings, a continuity between two discontinuous creatures” (20). Bataille suggests that eroticism “substitute[s] for the individual isolated discontinuity a feeling of profound continuity” (15). It is through the continuous return to la petite mort that one attempts to bridge this gap; but the experience is only temporary, and thus requires repetition. Bataille’s ideas and expressions permeate Calon’s poetic text, from the references to the erotic, to the insistence on textual repetition. Calon also frequently returns to the concept of a “rupture” or gap in Minuit (also using various similar connotations, such as leap, skid), a concept frequently emerging in Bataille’s writing. Bataille uses the word “rupture” to refer to death: “the rupture of discontinuous individualities” (19).

One example of Bataille’s influence on Calon can be observed in his notes about Immémorial. Calon describes a sensation of « l’autre »; this “other” refers to Bataille’s continuous being, as opposed to discontinuous beings. Calon identifies this fragmented section as the “nucleus” of this idea. He explains that it is both a physical nucleus because « c’est de la chair des mots, du son de la voix même, dont ce matériau est dérivé » (1989,

45 “entre un être et un autre, il y a un abîme, il y a une discontinuité” (1957, 19); “Il y a recherche de la continuité...” (1957, 25).

46 “...la plein confusion de deux êtres, la continuité de deux êtres discontinus” (1957, 27).

47 “...substituer à l’isolement de l’être, à sa discontinuité, un sentiment de continuité profonde” (1957, 22).

48 “rupture de cette discontinuité individuelle” (1957, 26).
8), and conceptual nucleus, as the fragmented words “spring” out of the sound material, like the « bonds, ruptures, dérapages et répétitions » (8) that humanity continuously makes—that is, Bataille’s erotic leap of death and sexuality. Calon has attempted to “write” this corporeal pursuit by bringing the fragmentation and cyclical treatment of the voice and surrounding sounds to a climax in “Immémorial.”

4.1.6 Calon’s Discontinuous Beings

Bataille suggests that as discontinuous beings until death, humans strive to make the leap into continuity. This leap (le saut) is Bataille’s metaphor for sexuality and death—peak moments that « revenir sans cesse », « répéter encore et toujours inlassablement ». Textually (i.e., the text setting) and sonically, Calon constructs a cyclical perspective that enacts this repetition, this ceaseless returning. Themes, images, and specific words and phrases return throughout the work: « la même faille, la même blessure et y revenir sans cesse ». The derivation of the sonic writing in “Immémorial” du son de la voix même (8) and the multiple returns of previously stated text accrue significance across fragments and sections, as meaning is established not only through isolated moments, but also through multiple enactments of tirelessly repetitious “leaps.”

Sonically, Calon constructs the discontinuous being through the fragmented language of “Immémorial.” He constructs the eternal repetition of the sexual gesture through the treatment of the text, which is based on derivation, repetition, and variation. Calon identifies

49 “it is from the flesh of the words, the sound of the voice itself, that the material is derived”

50 “leaps, ruptures, skids and repetitions”

51 From “Prologue”: “to return continually,” “to repeat tirelessly again and forever”
these three textual treatments as ways to enact the repetitious leaps. Repetition is the most basic textual treatment, with certain words or sounds recurring multiple times. For example, the voice repeats the word “miroir” several times (30:10; 30:30). When the man first states « rivage inversée » (32:10), his voice is relatively dry above a dense synthesized cacophony. But thirty seconds later, the phrase returns; this time, though, the voice has been stretched and harmonized, and multiple iterations are placed throughout the mix. This example also highlights Calon’s tendency to combine repetition and variation; in this case, on the subsequent iterations, Calon varies both spatial and timbral elements. A similar example occurs beginning at 28:25, but the variation of the repeated text (« les remparts tombent se dissipent là pas très loin même un peu plus près encore oui ici exactement »\(^{52}\)) transforms from heavily modified words so bathed in reverberation, stretched, and harmonized that they are largely indiscernible, to a less intensely modified voice whose text is clear.

The third type of sonic writing, derivation, occurs when Calon extracts individual phonemes in order to highlight the “flesh of the words.” The “c” of couteau (23:25) and the “r” of rousseau (25:15) repeat several times, creating a percussive texture before the rest of the words are stated. Calon extends this treatment (32:21) by isolating the phonemes completely from their original words, deriving a rich sound world based on “c,” “s,” and “do.”

It is this repeated sonic return to sounds and words that enacts Bataille’s erotic leap, a rupture to our discontinuous selves. To highlight Calon’s important connection to Bataille,

\(^{52}\) “the ramparts fall disperse there not too far even a bit closer still yes here exactly”
during the final fragment (“Épilogue”) he cuts off the woman’s voice mid sentence. The voice has failed to cross the great divide.

4.1.7 Reflection

Calon’s compositional aim is “to reveal the world and to question and organize [his] connection to it.” His textual and sonic choices demonstrate an obvious affinity for the writings of Bataille, writings that “reveal” a particular understanding of the world. To enact Bataille’s erotic leap, Calon constructs a narrative that includes two storytellers, male and female. Their stories describe the erotic encounter that must be continuously repeated to satisfy the desire to break away from the discontinuity of our beings. But Calon’s narrative breaks down the story: in “Immémorial,” the man’s voice is subjected to the control of the machine; its fragmented text leads to a process of derivation, repetition, and variation. This cyclical treatment of text and sound both constructs the continuous leap and contradicts the traditional gender role of male voice as authority.

Despite *Minuit’s* challenge to the traditional gendering of narrative roles, this work, through its reliance on and frequent reference to Bataille’s erotic leap—or orgasm—suggests a male-centred view of sexuality: *le petit mort*, the single orgasm, achieved only in the context of female penetration by the male. Bataille’s erotic leap simply parallels the Freudian conception of sexuality, which sees orgasm “as the end of the sexual encounter, its final culmination and moment of conversion towards death or dissipation” (Grosz 1995, 293). So despite the dominance of the female’s erotic sounds in the mix, it is not her sexual subjectivity that is enacted through Calon’s text and music. Rather, as queer feminist theorist Elizabeth Grosz explains:
All of Freud’s works can be understood as a generalization of and abstraction from the model of the male orgasm to the fundamental principle of life itself. ... male orgasm has functioned as the measure and representative of all sexualities and all modes of erotic encounter. (Grosz 1995, 292)

I am not passing judgement on either Freud or Bataille for these male-centred conceptions of sexuality. Rather, I join with more recent feminist and queer theorists who point out the problematic perpetuation of this male subjectivity in film, literature, art, and in Calon’s *Minuit*.

Through his telling of the “universal” story of humanity’s quest for continuity, his “expression of the human condition” remains problematic, not only in its reliance on Bataille’s concept of *erotisme*. Previously, I mentioned Calon’s attempts to invoke universality through his inclusion of traditional music from Africa, Melanesia, and the Far East and natural environmental sounds (e.g., crickets, birds, water) in *La disparition*. While I did not discuss this work here, I mentioned some details that I believe highlight central aesthetic elements of Calon’s compositional intent. Both *La disparition* and *Minuit* sample fragments from Beethoven (*Grosse Fuge*, Op. 133 and the “Moonlight” Sonata, respectively). However, I suggest that the quotation in *Minuit* remains expressively weak, due mainly to its painfully obvious connection to the title and text of *Minuit*. Rather than engage with the quotation, to offer some new perspective through juxtaposition or transformation, Calon merely inserts the short fragment. I have no sense that Calon intends any irony or parody with its use. The seeming sincerity and brevity of the quotation is its downfall. Calon includes no other musical quotation, and this fragment never returns. While topically it fits, its inclusion leads me to question its aesthetic success. Perhaps an attempt at universality robs this work of meaningful specificity. Alternatively, this quotation might act
as another sonic rupture, another example of Bataille’s érotisme (all the more so because of its brevity); in addition, it reminds the listener of Minuit’s dreamworld in which moods shift and vary throughout.

As I will discuss below, the themes of fantasy and reality, and universal and particular also emerge in Westerkamp’s works. In the next section, I discuss Für Dich - For You and MotherVoiceTalk, two works that exhibit themes that are central to Westerkamp’s oeuvre. I will also highlight the private-public divide present in these works, and discuss their aesthetic and political implications.


I know where I am
my feet stretched out in front of me
still, a part of me is over there
(from Kyoto Airs – Roy Kiyooka)

4.2.1 Introduction

Hildegard Westerkamp’s output is large and varied, but certain themes persist through her use of soundscape material and human voices, and the autobiographical nature of her oeuvre. The sound materials of her electroacoustic works grant the listener an intimate encounter with the places, people, and stories of Westerkamp’s life. Beyond the sounds of the final products, the aesthetic approach to the material also indicates her attitude towards the
environment—an attitude shaped by her acoustic-ecological principles—and the creative process as a woman and a German-born Canadian immigrant.

A self-designated soundwalk artist and researcher, Andra McCartney has extensively studied Westerkamp’s aesthetic approaches and output, and has highlighted several key themes that will emerge in my discussion below. She contextualizes Westerkamp’s situation within the male hegemonic world of electroacoustic composition, in which she must navigate her own path and prioritize her own aesthetic goals. Two important themes arise: the role of soundscape studies and acoustic ecology, and the importance of second-person relations (from Code 1991), particularly with other female composers who act as mentors. McCartney also highlights the importance of Westerkamp’s immigrant experience in her approach to sound collection (i.e., field recording) and studio work, as well as stories, concepts and languages that emerge in specific works.

The analysis below focuses on two recent works that McCartney has not discussed, but that exhibit many of the themes she highlights as central to Westerkamp’s oeuvre. First, I discuss Für Dich – For You (2005), a twenty-minute work featuring the German poem “Liebes-Lied” by Rainer M. Rilke and its English translation by Norbert Ruebsaat. The poem is recited in both German and English by twelve people: Westerkamp herself, friends, family, and colleagues. Soundscape elements from northern Germany and the Canadian West Coast punctuate the poetic text. My discussion focuses on how Westerkamp constructs her identity through these two main sound sources: first, the friends, family, and colleagues that sonically surround the listener represent important “second persons,” individuals who have helped Westerkamp learn how to be a person and, thus, who have contributed to her construction of
identity as a composer, wife, mother, daughter, and friend. Second, the soundscape elements highlight the importance of Westerkamp’s repeated reflection on her own identity as a German-Canadian.

Then I discuss *MotherVoiceTalk* (2008), a fifteen-minute work that was commissioned to celebrate the artistic output of Japanese-Canadian Roy Kiyooka. Westerkamp combines narratives from Kiyooka’s book *MotherTalk* and recordings of his interviews with his mother, Mary, with her (Westerkamp’s) reflections on similarities she perceives between herself and Roy. I focus on two main similarities: the importance of their mothers as a source of identity, and the impact of immigrant experiences on both the relationships with their mothers and their artistic output. She combines the multiple voices to create a musical narrative that encapsulates past and present through the manipulation of space and vocal timbre; she also reflects on the complicated notions of home and identity for immigrants through the inclusion of German and Japanese voices, traditional Japanese instruments, and West Coast soundscape material.

### 4.2.2 Biography, Aesthetics, and Output

Hildegard Westerkamp (b. 1946) was an early and influential member of the Vancouver-based World Soundscape Project. Following undergraduate studies in music at the University of British Columbia (1972), Westerkamp worked as a research associate (1973-80) with R. Murray Schafer with the World Soundscape Project at Simon Fraser University. Her early work was influenced by the World Soundscape Project’s focus on noise and the acoustic environment, the possibilities of electronic technology in the studio, and avant-garde composers such as Pauline Oliveros and John Cage. Her role as a researcher

Westerkamp has composed for a variety of forces, including traditional instruments with tape, but most of her pieces incorporate environmental sounds. Many of them also include the voice: adults and children, talking, laughing, and reading poetry. She often uses her works to reflect on her own experiences: *Familie mit Pfiff*, commissioned for a family reunion; *Moments of Laughter*, featuring the voice of her daughter; and *Breaking News*, a personal reaction to September 11, 2001. Many of her works show a particular concern with feminism: in *Women Voicing* (1985), which was created for for *Musicworks 31* (Toronto, 1985), Westerkamp reflects on women’s music; it includes excerpts from several Canadian

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53 McCartney (1999) states that Westerkamp and Ruebsaat were separated by 1990.
female composers, including Wende Bartley, Ann Southam, Gayle Young, and Westerkamp herself, and American composer Pauline Oliveros. That particular issue of *Musicworks* was devoted to women, mostly Canadian women composers. *His Master’s Voice* (1985) creates a collage of the “macho voice” of everyday life; by recontextualizing it, Westerkamp tries to first highlight the messages of these voices and subsequently resist and challenge those messages. *école polytechnique* (1990), dedicated to the fourteen women killed in Montreal by Marc Lépine on December 6, 1989, was a commission from New Music America for presentation in Montreal in 1990. She explained:

“as a woman and a composer I cannot remain silent about this event and the impact it has had on myself and many others. I want to ‘talk back’ to it. I also want to make room to remember it, to feel what needs to be felt, to breathe, to heal, to hope, to transform energies, and to understand the work that is ahead of us.” (Westerkamp 2011a)

This theme of reflecting on women’s experiences is an important thread in Westerkamp’s compositional output, including *MotherVoiceTalk*, which will be discussed below.

All of Westerkamp’s electroacoustic works incorporate the environment in its context (McCartney 2006; see also Steenhuisen 2009), that is, with moderate processing so that the original “real” sounds remain recognizable. For a soundscape composer like Westerkamp, this aesthetic approach to sounds, namely maintaining their recognizability, stems from an ethical stance that developed in Westerkamp’s work with the World Soundscape Project and

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54 On December 6, 1989, Marc Lépine shot twenty-eight people at the École Polytechnique in Montreal. The attack, which was motivated by his intense hatred of women, killed fourteen women, injured ten other women and four men. Lépine turned the gun on himself, committing suicide less than twenty minutes after the shooting spree began. To commemorate the victims, December 6 is now the National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women.
later with acoustic ecology. Through the WSP, Westerkamp became passionate about “issues of environmental listening and active engagement with our soundscapes” (Westerkamp 2002, 51). She insists that acoustic ecology, or soundscape studies, as “the study of the interrelationship between sound, nature, and society” (52), was first initiated by composers and musicians: “We are the ones that make listening and working with sound and music our profession. ... If we—who are specialists in listening and soundmaking—are not concerned about the acoustic environment, then who will be?” (52). From her acoustic ecological standpoint, soundscape composition must deepen both the awareness and understanding of “relationships between living beings and the soundscape” (52). Soundwalking is one way to deepen this awareness and understanding before or during composition, and it is an essential practice for acoustic ecologists (Westerkamp 2006). For Westerkamp, a successful soundwalk begins with the attitude that “the environment is worth listening to during every second of the soundwalk” (Westerkamp 2006). As the listener walks along any chosen soundwalk path and heightens his aural perception, he will find himself in the creation of “a living connection between listener and place” (2006). For Westerkamp, the soundwalk is more than hearing; rather, through deep listening, one should increase understanding of “environmental, social, political and spiritual contexts of any given place” (2006). Ideally, soundwalking would be an agent of change, not only in the world of acoustic ecology, but also in the social, cultural, and political realms.

55 McCartney explains (1999, 150) that Westerkamp’s direct work with R. Murray Schafer in the World Soundscape Project lasted only about a year. Due to pressure from Schafer’s wife regarding the close working relationship between him and Westerkamp, Schafer fired her from the project, but helped her find a researcher/coordinator position with the Noise Abatement Project at the Society Promoting Environmental Conservation (SPEC).

Please note: the pdf of McCartney’s dissertation (1999) that is available on ProQuest does not include the original pagination. I will refer to the pagination as noted by the pdf software.
Thus, Westerkamp believes that in the studio she must only subtly transform sounds in order to highlight them, not conceal them:

I do feel that sounds have their own integrity and feel that they need to be treated with a great deal of care. Why would I slow down the cricket’s voice [in *Cricket Voice*] but not my daughter’s? If the cricket had come from my own garden, had a name and would talk to me every day, would I still be able to slow it down? Would I need to? It did take me two years to dare to compose with that cricket’s recording, as it had been such a magical moment of recording, such a gift. I could not just “manipulate” it. It had to be a new sonic discovery journey to retain the level of magic for me. And I remember a moment at which I said “Stop.” The journey was beginning to turn into electronic experimentation and the cricket was being obliterated. Same experience with the raven in *Beneath the Forest Floor*: I tried to make it into a regularly beating drum ... it simply wouldn’t let me. So I returned to the shape of the original full call, slowed it down and received from it a drum-like sound. It took a whole day to fly off into electronicland and return to the raven call. (Westerkamp 2006, 33)

Westerkamp approaches her field recordings and studio work as a dialogue; she expresses herself creatively through her choices as a recordist in the field and in the studio using processes that explore the sounds that fascinate her. But she also insists that the soundscape elements can, and should, “express themselves” (Westerkamp 1996, 19). This dialogue begins even during her soundwalks, as she indicates that the first step in a soundwalk is to listen to the sounds of one’s own body while it moves through the environment: “with your voice or your footsteps for instance, you are ‘talking’ to your environment which then in turn responds by giving your sounds a specific acoustic quality” (Westerkamp 2001).

Westerkamp acknowledges that her listening bias, both in the field and in the studio, conditions and transforms the way the sounds are presented and heard in her compositions. Of her field recordings, she explains: “the recordist’s position and perspective, the physical, psychological, political and cultural stance [shape] the choices when recording” (Westerkamp
The process of documenting a soundwalk or gathering sound material cannot escape “the subjectivity of the recordist [that] is heard in how the recording moves through a space, leaving traces of the recordist’s pacing and gestures in her walk” (McCartney 1999, 80). Similar to Truax’s soundscape aesthetic that prioritizes the intrinsic qualities of a sound, looking for ways that studio processing can accentuate them, Westerkamp aims to “transform sound in order to highlight its original contours and meanings” (Westerkamp 1996, 20). Her aesthetic goals remain close to those of soundscape studies and the related creative genre, soundscape composition: “Studio transformation ... is intended ... to emphasize certain aspects of the sound, to enhance the listeners’ apprehension of, and their engagement with, the context of the work” (McCartney 1999, 143; emphasis mine).

This “context” is inseparable from a sense of place. McCartney refers to Westerkamp’s aesthetic goal of “knowing one’s place,” which she explains is Westerkamp “trying to understand as much as possible about the social, political, ecological and acoustic aspects of a location before creating a piece based on sounds recorded in that place” (2006, 34). This desire is possibly a significant factor in her frequent choice to use sounds from her own home soundscapes—Vancouver, the Canadian West Coast, and northern Germany. Her intention to “know” the place and to respect the sounds’ self-expressions certainly impacts the final product. The analyst thus questions what aesthetic and expressive perspectives have been constructed in her works. Based on her assertion that “place” remains central while the sounds speak, what does she allow them to say? Of course, Westerkamp has acknowledged her bias from the minute she decides where to go, and how and where to hold the microphone, not to mention certain processing that will occur in the studio. In
MotherVoiceTalk and Für Dich – For You, then, “place” is established on the one hand by what the sounds themselves can, or cannot, express (for instance, in general, moving water, isolated wilderness, but no specific river or forest). On the other hand, “place” becomes that which is constructed by Westerkamp, what she believes the sounds express.

A sense of place is intrinsically entwined with her sense of home and identity. Identities, just like narratives, are not set and can only be inferred by the observer and constructed or performed by the individual. Westerkamp, then, does not express an objective identity in her works, but a performance of self whose inscribed code is there to be “read” by the listener. Her identity as a German-Canadian (she immigrated to Canada in 1968) is enacted in many of her works, such as Moments of Laughter (which includes children’s songs in German) and Familie mit Pfiff. The cultural, linguistic, and sonic markers of her German heritage and how it relates to her familial identity, and to her immigrant Canadian identity as heard in MotherVoiceTalk and Für Dich – For You, will be discussed below.

By combining soundscape elements and the voice, Westerkamp creates a unique “sense of place” in each work that blurs the boundaries between public and private space. One aspect of Westerkamp’s private life that shifts frequently into public space through deliberate inclusion in her works is personal relationships, particularly those that relate to her female identity. McCartney’s research (1994, 1995a, 1995b, 1996, 2006) on women electroacoustic composers articulates how they negotiate working in the twice-gendered world of electroacoustic composition: composition in general has been a male domain, a paradigm historically entrenched, while electroacoustic music has also been designated a “male” discipline because of its technological emphasis and its origins in engineering,
science, and research contexts, not musical ones. Women electroacoustic composers have thus had to persevere in male-dominated (both in the gender distribution of people and in the language) electroacoustic composition classes, conferences, departments, and the like, finding ways to conform and/or negotiate new methods of approaching technology and electroacoustic composition.

In *What Can She Know?* (1991), feminist epistemologist Lorraine Code evaluates the objective, autonomous view of epistemology, favouring instead a more relative epistemology that considers the identity of the knower (which includes the knower’s sex) as essential and recognizes the often processual nature of knowledge acquisition. Code aims to ask questions about knowledge:

... questions that bear not just on criteria of evidence, justification, and warrantability, but on the ‘nature’ of cognitive agents: questions about their character; their material; historical, cultural circumstances; their interest in the inquiry at issue. These are questions about how credibility is established, about connections between knowledge and power, about the place of knowledge in ethical and aesthetic judgments, and about political agendas and the responsibilities of knowers. (7-8)

In her discussion of Westerkamp, McCartney applies the notion of “second persons,” or “someone with whom we interact in order to learn the important characteristics of personhood” (McCartney and Waterman 2006, 6), which, as Code herself asserts, poses a strong alternative to autonomous notions of knowledge (Cartesian) or to certain feminist conceptions of subjectivity, such as Sara Ruddick’s “maternal thinking.” The relational perspective of knowledge acquisition in “second-person relations” counters the male-associated focus on individuality. McCartney suggests that this is an important way to foster

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56 Code criticizes Ruddick’s “maternal thinking” because it “[posits] an ideal of ‘wholeness’ with prescriptive dimensions that have the potential to oppress women by inducing as much guilt as older, autonomy-prescriptive positions have done” (1991, 93).
women electroacoustic composers; through partnerships and mentoring, women learn how to be electroacoustic composers. But beyond this application, Code’s “second persons” appears to be an important theme in Westerkamp’s oeuvre. In *Für Dich – For You*, Westerkamp surrounds herself with the voices of friends and family, and with poetic words that have also performed the role of second person, teaching her how to create her own identity and approach to the world. The people after whom we first model personhood are our parents, and traditionally, our mothers in particular. *MotherVoiceTalk* is a sonic meditation of this second-person relation, the importance of which we can observe in Roy Kiyooka’s words and Westerkamp’s compositional choices.

Several of these important aspects of Westerkamp’s biography that permeate her aesthetics and output—namely, the creation of a sense of place through soundscape material, the importance of her immigrant experiences, and the inclusion of significant second-person relations—arise in *Für Dich – For You* and *MotherVoiceTalk*.

### 4.2.3 *Für Dich – For You*

#### 4.2.3.1 Background to *Für Dich – For You*

The compositional process of *Für Dich – For You* began with Rainer Maria Rilke’s poem “Liebes-Lied.” Westerkamp explains:

[It was] an intense encounter with Rilke’s words, not unlike an encounter with the experience of love itself and all its unsettling, complex emotional states. Love, like birth or death, tears us out of the routine of daily life, wakes us up, alerts us to what is, creates moments of truth, often stirs us to make changes to take new risks. (Westerkamp 2011a; underlining in original)

Following a commission by Zentrum für Kunst und Medien (ZKM) in Karlsruhe, Germany, she began the piece while in residency at the ZKM, and then finished the piece at Simon
Fraser University’s studio and in her personal studio. It was premiered at the ZKM on February 11, 2005. On eight digital soundtracks, the sonic material consists of two main sources: the poem read in both German and English (translation by Norbert Ruebsaat), and soundscape material from northern Germany and Vancouver.

Through her “intense encounter,” Westerkamp shifted her concept of “love” to “an inner state of life and the world as a whole” (Westerkamp 2009). She confesses that her ethical commitment to soundscape studies and composition resonated with this project; she explains:

In the face of ecological disasters and global economic imbalances, as well as widespread practices of terror, war, and hate, it suddenly seemed to be a matter of survival to learn more about love and about how to act from the heart. (Westerkamp 2009)

She reflects on the relational and environmental elements of Für Dich – For You in two key ways. First, Westerkamp surrounds herself with important “second persons”: friends, family, and colleagues who contribute to her construction of identity. Their poetic recitations in German and English highlight Westerkamp’s own immigrant identity. Their layered entrances, placed and moved throughout the mix, surround the listener as a symbolic gesture of their significance in her life. Second, Westerkamp includes soundscape elements from Germany, and Vancouver and the West Coast. This sonic material again highlights the importance of Westerkamp’s repeated reflection on her German-Canadian identity.

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57 Westerkamp recorded the following people reading the poem in German or English: Wendelin Bartley, Susan Benson, Anne Bourne, Louie Ettling, Peter Grant, Andra McCartney, Norbert Ruebsaat, Sonja Ruebsaat, Susanna Ruebsaat, R. Murray Schafer, Agnes Westerkamp, and Hildegar Westerkamp. I will elaborate on their relationships to Westerkamp below.
4.2.3.2 The Source Text: Rainer Maria Rilke’s “Liebes-Lied”

When Westerkamp began to examine Rilke’s poem, she found herself drawn to notions of love, identity, and home:

To open oneself to one’s original language and culture again, after having lived as an immigrant in the country of one’s choice for a long time, is like opening oneself to an almost forgotten deep love and connection to that past place. At the same time, one has lived and functioned in the country of one’s choice for many years, one has established one’s very own home, one’s family, one feels at home here, it is the right place to be. It also is a place of belonging and love. Thus, the piece is an exploration of the heart, an exploration of where the heart is located in connection to culture, language and people. In a globalized world where millions of us are on the move, whether as refugees, immigrants or just as travelers, this has emerged as a widespread and relevant theme, as we are all in some way searching for home and connectedness. (Westerkamp 2011a)

“Liebes-Lied” is the third poem in the 1907 collection Neue Gedichte. Its brief but compact form depicts an overwhelming love; the speaker is powerless beneath its force:

Wie soll ich meine Seele halten, daß
sie nicht an deine rührt? Wie soll ich sie
hinheben über dich zu andern Dingen?\(^{59}\)

The speaker desires to hide his/her soul in a “foreign becalmed place” where the movement of her/his beloved has no effect:

Doch alles, was uns anrührt, dich und mich,
nimmt uns zusammen wie ein Bogenstrich,
der aus zwei Saiten eine Stimme zieht.\(^{60}\)

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\(^{58}\) On Westerkamp’s website, this poem’s source is cited as *Der ausgewählten Gedichte erster Teil*; Bücherei Nr. 400, Verlag Wiesbaden 1951, p. 61.

\(^{59}\) Ruebsaat’s translation: “How shall I hold my soul so that it / does not touch yours? How shall I lift it / up over you so it reaches other things?”

\(^{60}\) Ruebsaat’s translation: “But all that touches you and touches me / contracts us like a bow / that from two strings draws forth a single voice.”
The poem has served as inspiration for numerous songs and choral works since its publication, including two drafts by Arnold Schoenberg in 1917 (Ewans et al. 2004). Westerkamp often uses Ruebsaat’s poems and translations, so his recent English translation likely inspired her to consider the poem in a new electroacoustic context.

I will now discuss how Westerkamp applies Rilke’s poem to her own life story. I highlight her construction of identity through her soundscape and voice choices.

4.2.3.3 This is My Story: Gendered and Immigrant Identities and Second-Person Relations

Unlike Calon’s work in general and Minuit in particular, Westerkamp’s oeuvre, including both Für Dich – For You and MotherVoiceTalk, is filled with her personal biographical stories: of motherhood and childhood; of friends, family, and colleagues. These are the important second-person relations that Westerkamp acknowledges have shaped her identity as mother, daughter, wife, friend, and composer. And as a composer, she controls her own voice and her own stories, like trailblazing female composers before her, including Pauline Oliveros, and contemporary colleagues such as Anna Rubin, who is a co-composer and storyteller in Family Stories, and Diana McIntosh, who used her own voice in the tape parts of Doubletalk. The recorded voices of Für Dich – For You also highlight Westerkamp’s immigrant identity as both the original German text and an English translation are recited.

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61 Other selected settings: Liebeslied for soprano and large orchestra (1968) – Baron Raffaello de Banfield Tripovich; Liebeslied for mixed a capella chorus (1975) – Dennis Riley; Liebeslied for soprano (1993) – Harald Hielman; Beloved, Thou Hast Brought Me Many Flowers (song cycle) for mezzo soprano, cello and piano (1994) – Libby Larsen; Becoming a Redwood (song cycle) for high voice and piano or chamber orchestra (2003) – Lori Laitman.

62 To read more about these works, see Sunabacka 2008.
Westerkamp identifies twelve readers, including herself. Four people are family, including her mother Agnes Westerkamp, her daughter Sonja Ruebsaat (whose voice is often used in Westerkamp’s works), her ex-husband Norbert Ruebsaat, and former sister-in-law Susanna Ruebsaat. These are people who have been essential second persons, teaching Westerkamp about various parts of her identity: daughter, mother, and wife. Four voices belong to colleagues. R. Murray Schafer gave Westerkamp her start in the world of soundscape studies and composition, and acoustic ecology. She has stressed the importance of the World Soundscape Project philosophy both explicitly in her articles and interviews and implicitly in the sonic material and her treatment of it in her works. The supportive environment at Simon Fraser University, with its advanced technology and open attitude towards scheduling and composition techniques, allowed Westerkamp to become comfortable with composing. Access to modern field recording technology allowed her to explore her new environment as a Canadian immigrant and find the sounds of the West Coast that would become essential to her works. Wendelin Bartley, Anne Bourne, and Andra McCartney are female composers, a status that McCartney (1994) suggests binds them all together with Westerkamp, as they seek alternative models and mentors in the male-dominated world of composition, and electroacoustic composition in particular. Bourne in particular relates to Westerkamp through Bourne’s own teaching of Oliveros’ Deep Listening (2005) in a women’s improvising choir. Westerkamp was also influenced by Oliveros, and incorporated

63 Westerkamp confirmed that Susanna is Norbert’s sister, with whom she remains a close friend (Westerkamp 2011b).

64 Westerkamp explained to McCartney that Barry Truax’s six-week studio course helped her to understand the equipment when first learning about electroacoustic music (McCartney 1999).

65 I will talk more about her approach to field recording in the section on MotherVoiceTalk.
Deep Listening into her teaching. Oliveros’ Deep Listening involves not only a listening engagement with the soundscape, but also “inner listening,” or “an altered state of consciousness full of inner sounds...” (Oliveros 2005, xv). Her *Sonic Meditations* (1971) involve a series of pieces that require the participants to concentrate closely on the sounds around them, and to also create sounds, such as clapping or singing long tones; participants in the group listen closely to each other and are often required to imitate or respond to sounds created in the group. In the studio, Westerkamp’s students began to create sounds similar to those in the Deep Listening session; and in return, students began to imitate sounds created in the studio in Deep Listening sessions. Westerkamp also included the voice of Louie Ettling, a yoga instructor in Vancouver.66 Susan Benson is a Canadian scenographer; one of Westerkamp’s close friends, Benson is another important example of creative Canadian females, another important mentor, or second person. Peter Grant has been Westerkamp’s partner since the early 1990s.

All of these important second-person relations surround the listener in *Für Dich – For You*, as their entrances are staggered, layered on top of each other, and variously placed throughout the mix. The poetic text is first (2:04) clearly spoken by a woman (sounds like Westerkamp); her voice is placed in the centre of the mix, but soon begins to pan between the left and right channels. Similarly, when the man’s voice begins to speak in English, his voice pans back and forth, as if it is encircling the listener. Throughout the piece, Westerkamp uses this gradual panning to encircle the listener with the voices and the soundscape.

66 I can only speculate that Westerkamp finds certain resonances between her experiences with Deep Listening and yoga, based on their similar emphasis on breath, stillness, and “inner listening.”
Her vocal staging confirms the intimacy of this circle of friends, who in life are her significant second-person relations, and who, in Für Dich – For You, sonically surround the listener, speaking words of love and passion. The voices are mostly dry, with little reverberation, creating the impression that they are speaking directly to the listener; this closeness enhances the intimacy of the poetic text. In several instances, the voices whisper the words of Rilke’s text, reiterating the intimacy of the voices with the listener and Westerkamp with the work.

Westerkamp’s personal connection to the work is also evident in the presence of both German and English recitations of the text. She immigrated to Canada as an adult, and has since incorporated her immigrant identity, with two languages, two cultures, and two homes, into her works. Her early years as an immigrant were also her early years as a composer; she speaks often about field recording in particular as a way of adjusting to and learning about this new culture. Perhaps its powerful presence during her foundational compositional years is one reason why Westerkamp’s immigrant experiences often emerge in her work: “home” is an essential theme for her.

4.2.3.4 Soundscape of a Home

“Home” and community are essential parts of Westerkamp’s search for identity (recall quotation on p. 239). Memory is central to identity. Memory is our access to events in the past; these events, or memory of these events, in turn construct our identities, both as individuals and members of broader communities (based on gender, language, class, nationality, and other such shared experiences). Similarly, memory is essential to soundscape

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67 The importance of her immigrant experience in her work will be discussed in greater detail below in the section on MotherVoiceTalk.
composition, which succeeds only when sound can connect the listener to particular places through memory. Referential meaning is impossible without these memories of, or references to, lived experiences.

The piece opens with a soundscape scene, which reinforces the significance the natural environment holds in Westerkamp’s oeuvre and aesthetic. She claims the soundscape elements come from “specific sounds from two places that have created a sense of belonging in [her]” (Westerkamp 2011a): northern Germany, and Vancouver and the West Coast. These “specific sounds” are not identified, but in the hands of this experienced soundscape composer, the sounds retain referential meaning that can be understood by all listeners.68 A sound resembling the seaplane motors, a sound recognized by Vancouverites and bemoaned by Schafer and the WSP, immediately references Westerkamp’s current home. Similarly, the raven call (10:55ff.) connects the piece to its West Coast roots.69

The deluge of rain heard in the opening seconds immediately places the listener in a wet and stormy environment. The various opening soundscape elements—rain, thunder, and birds—both accompany Westerkamp’s meditation on the Rilke text and punctuate the structure. Westerkamp uses extended soundscape passages to delineate the sections of the poem. She explores the poem in sections, focusing on one or two statements, each followed by an “interlude,” which allows for a meditation on the text; she returns to the same section of text before moving onto the next section. She groups the lines of the poem as follows:70

68 Westerkamp has previously attempted to reconcile these two homes through their soundscapes. In Beneath the Forest Floor, Westerkamp confesses that she aimed to connect “her experiences of forest as a child, with German romantic notions and west coast Native mythology about forest” (McCartney 1999, 174).

69 The raven call is an important sonic signifier in MotherVoiceTalk.

70 The piece includes both the German original and English translation; because the English text is often used to “introduce” the next portion of the poem, I will use the English translation here.
[opening prelude from 0:00-1:19; whispering voices from 1:19-2:04]

[2:04-6:48; interlude from 4:36-5:46]
How shall I hold my soul so that it does not touch yours? How shall I lift it up over you so it reaches other things?

Oh, how I long to store my soul with something dark and lost in a foreign becalmed place that does not vibrate when your depths vibrate.

But all that touches you and touches me contracts us like a bow that from two strings draws forth a single voice.

[17:19-18:16; interlude from 17:49-18:16]
Upon which instrument are we two strung? And who, pray, is the fiddler who holds us in his hand?

[18:16-20:56]
Oh sweetful song.

Notwithstanding the scattered bird songs (0:23; 13:51ff.) and the sound of a child running (6:02), the majority of the non-vocal elements of the piece create a dark, foreboding atmosphere. Thunder and heavy rain are accompanied by tolling bells and sustained synthesized chords with varying degrees of dissonance. These elements seem to speak to the “ecological disasters and global economic imbalances” that Westerkamp laments: a context in which “survival” is achieved only through “love”—love that comes from her friends and family. But by the end of the work, as the various voices repeat “Oh sweetful song,” the violent storm has passed; only gentle rain remains until it too fades into a sweet silence.
4.2.3.5 Reflection

Westerkamp’s *Für Dich – For You* includes several elements that are central to her oeuvre, such as including the use of voices of people she knows (including herself), incorporating soundscape elements, and referencing her immigrant experience in both language and soundscape. Their sounds surround the listener, creating the “home and connectedness” Westerkamp craves. While Westerkamp uses voices, sounds, and a text that have a specific meaning for her, she frames *Für Dich – For You* in quasi-universal terms. Her sweeping statements essentially claim that her work is about everything: love, the environment, war, terror, culture, language, home, family, and so on. The impression is that her work is significant because it reflects on and elucidates these essential topics of humanity rather than acknowledging the specificity of the work. Certainly, her discussion of immigrants and “home” is problematic:

To open oneself to one’s original language and culture again, after having lived as an immigrant in the country of one’s choice for a long time, is like opening oneself to an almost forgotten deep love and connection to that past place. (Westerkamp 2011a)

While this experience might apply to Westerkamp’s life, it is certainly not as broadly applicable as she suggests. Take, for example, another Canadian immigrant composer István Anhalt (b. 1919) who specifically chose not to be open to his original Hungarian language or culture. In contrast to Westerkamp’s frequent inclusion of German soundscapes and poetry, Anhalt consciously avoids reference to his Hungarian heritage in his works.

Westerkamp’s grandiose words seem to inflate the meaning of her works, and certainly lead to a perception of her authority on such matters. In her statements regarding place, in the notes for this work, and in her work on acoustic ecology and soundwalking, her
perceived authority is central. “In the face of ecological disasters” (Westerkamp 2009), Westerkamp offers little alternative to her conception and creation of “place.” Within the language used to describe soundwalking, Westerkamp similarly leaves little room for criticism: “Genuine ecological consciousness”; “the environment is worth listening to” (Westerkamp 2006); “a balance between listening and soundmaking” (Westerkamp 2001). Such phrases can distract from the specificity of Westerkamp’s compositional and ecological (and thus political) agendas.

In the next section, I continue to discuss the tension between universality and specificity in *MotherVoiceTalk*, a work that demonstrates the importance of people and place in defining Westerkamp’s identity as composer and woman.

4.2.4 *MotherVoiceTalk*

4.2.4.1 Background to *MotherVoiceTalk*

*MotherVoiceTalk* (2008) is a fifteen-minute work that examines Westerkamp’s affinity to Roy Kiyooka (1926-1994), a Japanese-Canadian artist and poet. Along with compositions by Jocelyn Morlock, Stefan Smulovitz, and Stefan Udell, *MotherVoiceTalk* (2008) was commissioned by Vancouver New Music to engage with the artistic output of Kiyooka, in a project entitled *Marginalia, re-visioning Roy Kiyooka*.71 It was premiered at the Vancouver

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71 The other works presented at the concerts: Jocelyn Morlock – *Scribbling in the Margins* (clarinet, percussion, string quartet, and piano); Stefan Smulovitz – *Triptych K* (cello and live processing); Stefan Udell – *Lattices of Summer* (chamber ensemble, including live electronics); Kendrick James – interspersed sound poetry.
East Cultural Centre on February 20, 2008. The two digital soundtracks contain sonic material consisting of excerpts from tapes that Roy Kiyooka made himself; these tapes include his spoken voice, his zither and recorder playing, and his mother Mary Kiyoshi Kiyooka’s voice. In addition, Westerkamp includes the German-speaking voice of her own mother, Agnes Westerkamp.

In “An Imaginary Meeting: The Making of MotherVoiceTalk (2008),” Westerkamp describes her approach to the piece: “My task as I perceived it, was to ‘listen’ to Kiyooka’s artistic and personal voices on all possible levels and bring them into dialogue with the musical, sonic tools of my own composition and personal voices” (Westerkamp forthcoming, 4). Westerkamp explains her struggle to find connection to and inspiration from Roy Kiyooka, a person she never met, and from his varied output:

I wanted to find points of resonance with his work that would somehow enable and inspire me to find my way into a composition, to find its instruments and sonic materials. How would I transform my dialogue with his writings, visual arts, and musical/sonic improvisations into a sound piece? It is one thing to like or even to be passionate about another artist’s work. It is another to internalize his work to such an extent that his artistic inspiration and process can inform my own and vice-versa, that my compositional process can become the medium through which his voice and work is made audible and meaningful to the listener. I experienced this task as utterly enormous. (3)

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72 Although the event was advertised from February 20-23, 2008, and Westerkamp identifies February 20, 2008 on her website as the premiere date for MotherVoiceTalk, in her forthcoming chapter “An Imaginary Meeting,” she states the event took place three times: February 21-23, 2008. Westerkamp graciously shared this chapter with me after I emailed to request a copy of MotherVoiceTalk, which has not been released yet.

73 I listened to the work in a stereo version designed for private consumption (the piece will be published alongside her forthcoming chapter in The Art of Immersive Soundscapes). A five-minute excerpt can be heard on her website: http://www.sfu.ca/~westerka/program_notes/mothervoice.html.

74 The recordings from Mary’s voice are from interviews Roy arranged between his mother and Matsuki Masutani. Roy felt too insecure about his own Japanese proficiency to interview his mother directly.

75 This essay will be published in the forthcoming book The Art of Immersive Soundscapes, Pauline Minevich, Ellen Waterman, James Harley (eds.) (Regina: University of Regina Press). Page numbers are from the document Westerkamp sent to me as an individual document, not the final page numbers in the unpublished book.
Of all of Kiyooka’s life and work, Westerkamp was most drawn to his Japanese-Canadian past (in particular his young adulthood during World War II) in the context of his role as a prolific and respected artist in the English-Canadian cultural scene. She remarked: “Like me, Kiyooka grew up in another cultural context. ... Kiyooka and I---in common with all immigrants---carried within us another culture and learned more or less to integrate it into the cultural environment of the new world” (4-5).

In MotherVoiceTalk, Westerkamp weaves multiple narratives that address several similarities in Kiyooka and Westerkamp’s artistic and personal lives, including the importance of mothers as life givers and “second persons,” and the immigrant experience, where the search for home and identity is etched in the body’s memory (King 2000). My discussion of MotherVoiceTalk considers three main issues: storytelling and multiple narratives, mothers and identity, and the immigrant experience. First, I discuss the multiple narratives layered in MotherVoiceTalk. I begin by discussing the principal source for MotherVoiceTalk, Kiyooka’s book Mothertalk. Then I discuss Westerkamp’s incorporation of Roy’s and his mother Mary’s narrative voices into MotherVoiceTalk. This leads to a consideration of Westerkamp’s use of space and vocal processing as a means of maintaining time, space, and perspective in the multiple narratives.

Second, I examine both Roy Kiyooka and Westerkamp’s preoccupations with their mothers, whose memories and non-English identities are essential to their own construction of identity. I begin by contextualizing MotherVoiceTalk as a meditation on motherhood, a meditation that resonates with Westerkamp’s previous work, including Moments of Laughter (1988). Moments of Laughter demonstrates an early preoccupation with the mother-child
relationship, which McCartney relates to Lorraine Code’s (1991) “second-person” relations. The importance of their mothers, whose bodies gave life and whose stories shape identity, lead both Kiyooka and Westerkamp to feel urgency about preserving their elderly mothers’ stories. Then I discuss Westerkamp’s sonic treatment of these ideas in *MotherVoiceTalk*; in particular, she highlights the “second-person” role through symbolic treatment of their voices: their voices “stand in” for motherhood.

Finally, I consider the central narrative of the immigrant experience in both Kiyooka’s and Westerkamp’s constructions of identity. I focus on the use of language as a reference to their immigrant experiences. Both Kiyooka and Westerkamp had to negotiate their bilingualism in a mostly English country; their mothers’ uses of other languages (i.e., Japanese and German) served as constant connections to the non-Canadian aspects of their respective identities. It is this “otherness” that connects these four people’s experiences during and after World War II. Beyond the sonic presence of English, Japanese, and German in *MotherVoiceTalk*, Westerkamp also constructs the polyphonous immigrant identity through specific soundscape elements.

4.2.4.2 *Storytelling in MotherVoiceTalk: Multiple Narratives in Time and Space*

In *MotherVoiceTalk*, Westerkamp weaves multiple narratives within her own musical narrative. This musical narrative is based on a linguistic narrative constructed by the voices of Hildegard, her mother Agnes, Roy and his mother, Mary. With the voices of Roy and his mother comes the narrative of *Mothertalk*, which itself is an amalgam of narratives—individual and collective—that tell the stories of Mary, her family, her children, and aspects of the Japanese immigrant identity. *Mothertalk* was published in 1997, three years after Roy
Kiyooka’s death and one year after that of his mother, Mary Kiyoshi Kiyooka. Roy Kiyooka sought to explore and preserve his mother’s life stories about a childhood growing up in Tosa, Japan, an arranged marriage leading to immigration to Canada in 1917, a forced relocation during World War II, and a lifetime of adjusting to the emotional and financial hardships of living in Canada as an Issei (first-generation Japanese-Canadian). Kiyooka arranged interviews with his mother, first in 1986 and then later in 1991. Due to Kiyooka’s insecurity about his Japanese and his mother’s limited English, Matsuki Masutani interviewed her in Japanese, transcribed the recordings, and translated them into English. Kiyooka intended *Mothertalk* to be an interpretive presentation of his mother’s life. Unfortunately, he died before completing this *Mothertalk* project, and thus, the final product was arranged and edited by his ex-wife Daphne Marlatt. In the introduction to this book, Marlatt claims that she “unwove the stories he had rewoven” (Kiyooka 1997, 6); by this she refers to Kiyooka’s own reworking of his mother’s stories into “a free floating succession of stories that jumped around in time and place” (5). Instead of maintaining this degree of structural openness, Marlatt decided to reinstate some chronology to the book; people unfamiliar with Mary’s life could perceive the outline while still engaging with Kiyooka’s interpretive rewriting of his mother’s words into an English voice that he felt best reflected his mother’s native voice. Thus, voice and identity are convoluted in *Mothertalk*, as they traverse several filters: Mary’s stories are filtered by her own in/accurate memories, and then filtered through a translator; Kiyooka then filters the story through his own conceptions of his mother and her “voice”; finally, Marlatt filters the story through her notion of Kiyooka’s intentions and the needs of the reader. This is not a book in which “truth” is clear or definite.
Its process testifies to the non-autonomy of identity and the performative nature of narrative. Each person’s story is experienced and then expressed through several filters of language, emotion, and experience.

Westerkamp expands the multifaceted narrative intrinsic to *Mothertalk* into the sonic realm. Westerkamp uses Mary’s narrative—which, as a “life story,” is a “locus of expression, construction and enactment of identity” (De Fina 2003, 11)—as a performance of her polyphonous (both German and Canadian) immigrant identity. In comparison to non-fixed medium music (e.g., instrumental music), electroacoustic music has the technological, and thus aesthetic and expressive, privilege to sample recordings of people’s conversations, speeches, and such. Thus, without requiring the individual to be present, in real time, her life—the stories—can be offered as a narrative through language, which “displays its power to voice experiences, to bring about shared understandings of life events, [and] to shape and transform individual and collective realities” (De Fina 2003, 1). An electroacoustic work can communicate not only the narrative (linguistic and/or musical) of the composer, but also that of the sampled voice. In *MotherVoiceTalk*, Westerkamp incorporates recordings of Roy Kiyooka talking about the *MotherTalk* project, interviews between Mary and Masutani, Westerkamp’s interviews with her mother, and Westerkamp discussing the project both in field recordings (at Salt Spring Island) and in the studio. Her use of Roy’s words in particular—both inserted samples and imitation (e.g., “What was I letting myself in for?”)—reflects a Bakhtinian double-voiced discourse (Bakhtin 1981) as she uses them “for [her] own purposes by inserting a new semantic intention into a discourse which already has, and which retains,  

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76 Roy was known for using this same phrase.
an intention of its own” (Morris 1994, 105). The intertextuality of the narratives, voices (meant literally) and texts (i.e., numerous recordings) is appropriately highlighted in this electroacoustic medium.

Westerkamp attempts to sonically engage with Roy’s story by paralleling it in several key ways. First, she includes an introductory “creative agenda” from both herself and Roy. Near the opening of *MotherVoiceTalk*, Westerkamp includes a recording of Roy explaining his plan to interview his mother, followed by Westerkamp’s own statement of intent.77

In the summer of 1986, my mother came out to spend the summer with me in Vancouver; um so she was 90 years of age at the time. And we decided that summer that we would record her conversation about her life. It was spoken in Japanese. When my mother and I speak to each other, we have always spoken in Japanese, rarely in English.

Westerkamp’s own stated agenda includes a field recording of her “meeting” with Roy on Salt Spring Island and other layered voices that state her purpose “to have a meeting with [Roy Kiyooka]” and her quest to “[get] to know the artist” and “[find] a connection...”78

Second, she imitates his phrase “letting myself into,” creating a parallel between their lives as artists. In her forthcoming article, Westerkamp explains this affinity:

His inner struggle between the artist Kiyooka and his private self as husband/partner and father of his three daughters accompanied him throughout his life... . ... I also know intimately the struggle of combining the life of an artist with that of a private family person, the wife/partner and mother. Perhaps it was precisely this knowledge that drew me to search for the deeply personal aspects that underlie the artist Kiyooka. (7)

77 Westerkamp also included a similar introduction in *Moments of Laughter* (1988), in which the speaker explains the context, purpose, and/or methodology of the unfolding work. The presence of a statement of intent as part of the finished piece recalls Alvin Lucier’s *I Am Sitting in a Room*.

78 I will discuss her elaborate layering of these voices, whose spatial placement constructs multiple timelines, below.
Finally, she constructs an imagined conversation through the recordings. Kiyooka and Westerkamp never met in person, but at times in *MotherVoiceTalk*, Westerkamp edits their voices to imitate the back-and-forth of a real conversation.

*MotherVoiceTalk* transcends the immovable boundaries of space and time to bring together Roy, Mary, Hildegard, and Agnes. But the layering of stories, times, and places is complex; for example, in Mary’s stories alone, there are layers of time: events (past), memory of the past (past, but closer to present), and the telling of (the memory of) an event (King 2000). Westerkamp sonically preserves impressions of past and present primarily through placement on the auditory horizon, a placement that is achieved through a manipulation of dynamics, varied use of reverberation, and equalization (e.g., filtering out low and high-frequency bands). The equalization of the mothers’ voices probably already occurred naturally to some degree by nature of the recording; it is unlikely that Roy and Hildegard placed a microphone close to their mothers’ mouths. The distance created in the initial acoustic “mix” would be transduced in the original interview recordings. But Westerkamp intentionally constructs a temporal distinction with Roy’s voice in particular, through the use of reverberation and filtering to produce a fuzzier sound. He sounds distant from the listener, just as he was distant in time and space from Westerkamp during this process. Westerkamp varies her manipulation of his voice, but it is never “dry” and close; his voice, and thus his presence, is always relegated to the past. By contrast, Westerkamp’s voice is almost always “dry.” As in a documentary, her voice seems to be narrating a process of reflection that is ongoing, in the present; and though the listener knows this reflection took
place in the past, the vocal staging of Westerkamp’s voice invites the listener to reflect in his own present.

Even Westerkamp’s voice, though, constructs both past and present experiences. Through a layering of her multiple voices, Westerkamp attempts to create some temporal distinction in her opening statement:79

I went here to have a meeting with you.

I’m on Salt Spring Island.
And today is an absolutely beautiful sunny day.
You, you is Roy, Roy, Roy Kiyooka, Kiyooka.
You can hear the ocean in the background.
Roy whom I have never met, whom I do not know.

Will you join me?
I had no idea what I was letting myself in for.
What have I let myself in for?
Well, somehow, somehow I got myself into this.
Getting to know the artist.
Roy Kiyooka.
Finding some connection...

As Westerkamp describes her project (to “meet” with Roy Kiyooka), she uses varied placement on the horizontal and vertical planes, and on the auditory horizon, to differentiate between the event of the far past (November 30, 2007), the reflection on or memory of the event in the more recent past (“I went here to have a meeting with you”; emphasis mine) and the listener’s present (“Will you join me?”).80

79 The italicized text comes from her field recording on Salt Spring Island; the non-italicized text is presumed to be from a studio recording. I have also indicated the mix placement in the left, centre, and right.

80 This question could be posed to Roy Kiyooka as a follow up to “I went here to have a meeting with you.” However based on placement, with a significant break from the opening second-person reference to Roy (“I went here...”), this question is more readily heard as an invitation to the listener.

81 On all recordings, however, this experience of the question as “present tense” is an illusion. Sound reproduction transduces the data on the fixed medium in the past tense because there is no present tense musical communication through sound reproduction (Hodgson 2006, 190).
While on Salt Spring Island, Westerkamp recorded various raven calls. In the call of two ravens on her first morning there, Westerkamp identified a conversation, not unlike the one she wished to have with Roy on that same island. She explains that “a deeply sonorous two-tone call” (Westerkamp forthcoming, 4) sounded like Roy’s intonation of “my mother.” To emphasize this parallel, Westerkamp includes this raven call near the beginning of MotherVoiceTalk during which we hear Roy state “my mother” repeatedly. Westerkamp uses another raven call to imitate Roy’s dry laugh (“ha ha ha”) heard throughout the piece. Westerkamp repeats the raven call “three times in a certain tempo and [it sounds] more typically raucous” (5). Like the shape-shifting raven of Native American mythology (Lynch and Roberts 2010, 93), these raven calls become the voice of Roy, and, for Westerkamp, who is searching for a way to meet with Roy on Salt Spring Island, the raven comes as his reincarnation, a means to a private encounter.

At first, Roy’s voice (including in the metaphorical use of the raven call) is the central sound, or focus, of MotherVoiceTalk. With her statement of intent, Westerkamp includes herself in the sonic picture. The mothers’ voices are heard mostly in the background, but their presence is essential to MotherVoiceTalk and is highlighted in certain parts of the piece when Roy’s and Westerkamp’s voices are not present. The importance of the mothers’ voices in MotherVoiceTalk signifies a recurring theme in Westerkamp’s oeuvre.

4.2.4.3 Mothers as Second-Person Relations

In her master’s thesis (1988), Westerkamp considers the mother-child relationship as essential inspiration, specifically as she searches for a connection similar to “the wholeness”
of the womb (118). I suggest that the consideration of “this first loss”—i.e., the separation of the mother and child after birth—extends from earlier works to MotherVoiceTalk; this work focuses on the grown-up child in search of a connection to the mother, the body that formed, nourished, birthed, and then continued to nourish and protect with her body until the child becomes independent and self-sufficient. McCartney traces this theme through Westerkamp’s Moments of Laughter, in which a live adult female interacts, both vocally and physically, with the recorded, and only minimally processed, sounds of a young child who, starting from infancy and ending at age seven, imitates sounds and language, gradually acquiring a more fully articulated mode of linguistic expression.

Mothertalk reflects on this often-complicated second-person relationship that can exist between mother and child. The book suggests that it was not uncommon in the early twentieth century to send children to live with other either wealthier or childless relatives in order to relieve the financial strain of an ever-growing family. Mary Kiyooka’s two eldest children (Roy’s older siblings) spent many years in Japan with her and her husband’s families: George didn’t return to Canada until he was a teenager, Mariko until she was in her 40s. Particularly for Mariko, much bitterness persisted because she felt abandoned; she did not have the opportunity to learn personhood from the figure from whom she most desired it. Mary confesses an emotional estrangement from George and a difficult re-acquaintance with Mariko, with whom she lived until she died. The physical presence of the mother’s body is essential to intimacy with the mother. In Mothertalk, Mary explains that, despite deep love

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82 Westerkamp has written many works that focus on children and the parent-child relationship. Selected examples: The Deep Blue Sea (1989) - story of a man losing custody of his child; Breaking News (2002) – the sound of her grandchild crying, breathing, breastfeeding, laughing, and vocalizing.

83 In Breathing Room 3 – A Self Portrait (1991), Westerkamp’s own live performance with tape continues to reflect on the mother-child relationship, in this piece from a biographical perspective as both mother and child.
felt and expressed through letters, the physical separation from George and Mariko when they were young (and in Mariko’s case, until adulthood) contributed to a lifelong emotional alienation that proved hard to overcome. Roy himself continued to visit his mother in order to feel connected to her and his Japanese heritage.\textsuperscript{84} Despite access to telephone technology, it was the physical, in-person, interactions that best connected him with her:

I’ve been talking of how my mother gave me my first language, a language I began to acquire even as I suckled on her breast, and what a motley mode of speaking it’s all become in time. Need I say, that she couldn’t save me from that fate. But I have seen a look on her face that told me she understood (wordlessly...) the ardour of all such displacement. Thus it is that I always speak Japanese when I go home to visit her. More than that I can, for the time being, become almost Japanese. I realize that it’s one of the deepest “ties” I have in my whole life. (Kiyooka 1997, 183; from “We Asian North Americanos”\textsuperscript{85})

Westerkamp’s own inspiration to include her mother was the physical proximity to her. She was working on the piece while visiting her mother, Agnes, in Germany. While certainly physical proximity remains a practical advantage for recording, recording voices over the telephone would have been possible. But it was the physical proximity to her mother that drew Westerkamp to consider her own mother-child relationship.

\textit{Moments of Laughter} highlights the birth and growth in the early life cycle. From the opening breath and cries of labour, a child is brought forth through the mother’s body. As an appropriate counterpart to this work, \textit{MotherVoiceTalk} exposes the frailty of this maternal source of life. Roy began interviewing his mother in the 1980s, while she was in her 90s, in order to preserve her stories before her physical body failed. Similarly, Westerkamp felt an

\textsuperscript{84} Mary explains in the book that Roy visits her the most out of all her children besides Mariko, who lived with her during the period of the interviews.

\textsuperscript{85} It is unclear why Kiyooka used the term “americanos,” a term associated with Latin Americans and their independence struggles. Perhaps he wished to reference the effects that colonization and social hierarchy had on his experiences as an Asian immigrant.
urgency to preserve her 100-year-old mother’s stories. While Westerkamp was composing
*MotherVoiceTalk*, a process that saw her examining the relationship between Roy and his
mother, particularly in her later years, Westerkamp visited her own mother, Agnes
Westerkamp, in Germany. Similarly to Westerkamp’s identification with Roy’s immigrant
identity, Westerkamp found an affinity to Roy’s relationship to his mother, and between the
two mothers themselves:

> Hearing her [Mary Kiyooka], and the way Roy spoke about her, I sensed that she
> must have been as powerful a woman as my own mother. Both had gone through the
> hardships of war and political changes, but had not been crushed by them. ... Both
> Roy and I chose to stay in close touch with our mothers: we got to know them better
> in their old age and conducted interviews with them. It seems that both our mothers
> loved to reminisce and tell stories. (Westerkamp forthcoming, 9-10)

Because of these connections and the timing of being with her mother as she was working on
*MotherVoiceTalk*, Westerkamp included her mother’s voice in the composition as well. These
conversations with their mothers helped them connect “with their powerful female presence
in us...” (6). She includes the voices of both mothers, often layering them over each other,
panning them back and forth. The specific meaning of their words is lost, and, thus, rendered
insignificant—many native English speakers might not understand these languages anyway.
By layering and panning their voices, their words and sounds become symbols for
motherhood. Westerkamp further emphasizes the equivalence of their symbolic significance,
rather than the differences of their linguistic meaning, by panning the two mothers’ voices
back and forth; they continually move and cross each other. The panning of their voices,
particularly when they cross over each other, creates a kind of sonic equivalence as the
distinct sounds of their voices and the linguistic content are sometimes lost. Rather than
keeping them as discrete characters in separate positions in the mix (for example, one in the
far left and one in the far right) to construct their physical presence, here Westerkamp treats their voices metaphorically. Their voices also signify the “otherness” that was part of Roy Kiyooka and Westerkamp’s immigrant experiences.

4.2.4.4 The Immigrant Body: Language and Soundscapes

According to Nicola King (2000), memory is our only access to events. And it is these events that are articulated through language. King’s book focuses primarily on the relationship between memory, the body, and language in processing and articulating abuse. While the intensely traumatic stories in King’s book may seem far removed from the stories captured in *MotherVoiceTalk*, in fact, it is precisely the latter’s documentation of immigrant experiences that parallels some of these traumatic connections among memory, body, and language. For example, not only did Mary experience years of struggle as a young bride in Canada, trying to feed and support her family, but the Kiyooka family also had to retreat to a small Albertan town to escape persecution during World War II when their bodies and language displayed their disdained “otherness.” King highlights Edward Casey’s (1987) notion of embodied memory, that is, memory that “is constitutive of our experience of living in time” (King 2000, 27). Thus, King states, “the body itself is imagined as an archaeological site which preserves the experience of the past” (15). And the experiences of the past “are inevitably reconstructed in language...” (15). In *MotherVoiceTalk*, we hear Mary reconstruct through her first language—Japanese— the past, a past based on physical hardships and vilification. As I will discuss below, Roy reflects on his dual identity through a corporeal metaphor: umeiboshi throat; his “otherness,” which can also be seen in his physical appearances, manifests in the language of the stories that emerge from his umeiboshi throat.
Language is central to both identity and relationships (i.e., bonding) in the story. This is a testament to Roy’s own preoccupation with language, a preoccupation Westerkamp continues in *MotherVoiceTalk*. As a Japanese-Canadian immigrant, Roy found that language acted at once as a means of both attachment and alienation. Mary felt a connection to home (Tosa, Japan)—both a specific place and a feeling—through the letters written in Japanese that her father sent to her in Canada. Because Mary never became fluent in English and most of her children didn’t become fluent in Japanese, language became a barrier to the mother-child connection. Mary in fact explains that she didn’t teach her children her native language because “the desire to rid ourselves of our immigrant status was very strong” (Kiyooka 1997, 151). Even Roy, though he had sufficient Japanese fluency, arranged for a translator to interview his own mother. It was only through this external mediator that Mary could share with her son and he could hear her story.

For Roy, though, it was this Japanese language, at once foreign and familiar, that connected him to the other half of his dual identity, Japanese-Canadian: “She and she alone reminds me of my Japanese self by talking to me in the very language she taught me before I ever had the thought of learning anything” (Kiyooka 1997, 182). As an English language learner, Westerkamp related to Roy’s experience of reconciling two ethnic identities:

... for those of us who carry a first language and culture inside us, different from the second language and culture in which we now live and function, our ears are alert in a specific way, always trying to decipher the meanings of the culture and environment we joined later in our lives, trying to negotiate our way through it. (Westerkamp forthcoming, 5)

86 George and Mariko spent many years in Japan, so they were fluent in Japanese; however, the alienation persisted because of the physical rather than linguistic divide.
Westerkamp’s commission for the Kiyooka project was to derive inspiration from his output, which includes numerous paintings, sculptures, photographs, and books of poetry. Much of Kiyooka’s poetry also ponders his experience as a Nisei (second-generation, Canadian-born, child of Japanese immigrants) and its impact on his family, both siblings and parents. Some of these poems are interspersed in Mothertalk, a decision made by the editor, Daphne Marlatt, in consultation with Kiyooka’s daughter, Fumiko. The decision to focus on Mothertalk and its source material (i.e., interview tapes) speaks to Westerkamp’s own preoccupation about polyphonous identities: at once Canadian and German, with these elements always foregrounded in the relationship with her German mother.

Westerkamp’s use of the mothers’ voices, both in foreign languages, must then focus on their symbolic signification as “other.” Westerkamp had access to many of Roy Kiyooka’s recordings and documentations as well as the recordings of Masutani interviewing Mary Kiyooka. Though she did not understand the Japanese language spoken on the tapes, she was inspired by this “rich sonic world” (Westerkamp forthcoming, 9):

I found her voice extremely interesting in its power and expressiveness, its varied intonations. When it came to selecting excerpts for possible use in the composition, I was guided by listening for interesting intonations, strong expressions of emotions such as crying or laughing, hearing place names and names of her children, or other words I might recognize, such as “samurai.” (9)

One key sonic element that highlights the immigrant experience in MotherVoiceTalk is the phrase “umeiboshi throat.” This phrase appears often in Roy’s works, and Westerkamp includes an excerpt of one such poem in MotherVoiceTalk:

87 I do not believe that Fumiko is also Marlatt’s daughter. In her introduction to Mothertalk, Marlatt refers to Fumiko, Mariko, and Kiyo as his daughters.

88 Mary Kiyooka’s father was a samurai, and this was a source of pride for her family and a central aspect of her Japanese identity.
Why I am prone to ask myself why does this midnight litany with all your voices enthral the yet to be born throngings in my umeiboshi throat?89

Though the word umeiboshi refers to a traditional Japanese food, Westerkamp suggests that Kiyooka’s use of the word means a Japanese voice: “Kiyooka’s own voice, born and steeped in a strong Japanese tradition” (Westerkamp forthcoming, 6). His use of the phrase fits with Westerkamp’s interpretation. The phrase combines a Japanese and an English word, much in the same way that he must combine the two cultural and linguistic worlds. His poetry often includes Japanese words; Kiyooka explains: “Given who I am that is inevitable” (6). Westerkamp allows Kiyooka to meditate on his “umeiboshi throat” in MotherVoiceTalk by including several repetitions of the phrase, each of which moves further away into the auditory horizon, and becomes increasingly processed, the effect of which is the impression that the phrase and its significance are being internalized. Just as Roy’s words have prompted Westerkamp’s reflections throughout the piece,90 Westerkamp now states “with [her] German accent” the same phrase: umeiboshi throat. Given the stories of Roy, Mary, and Agnes in particular (who all lived during World War II), “umeiboshi throat” signifies not only the curious experience of bilingualism and immigrants, but also the betrayal they experienced during World War II when their umeiboshi throats declared them as enemies to the Allies. Roy’s family was forced to move to a small town in Alberta in order to escape persecution (though internment was unlikely) during World War II. Roy quit high school in order to work, and he never received his high school diploma. In her biographical discussion of

89 Unknown source. When I asked Westerkamp about the source of this quotation, she explained that it was from one of his poems, but she didn’t know which one; she was using a recording in which this passage was stated (Westerkamp 2011b).

90 Recall that Kiyooka opens the work with “my mother” and his intention to record his mother; Westerkamp then states “my mother” and also speaks of her creative intention. Kiyooka talks first about his mother; then Westerkamp talks about hers. Mary’s voice is heard before Agnes’s.
Westerkamp, McCartney discusses the impact of Westerkamp’s German experience in her childhood and youth: “As part of the generation of Germans who were born just after the Second World War, Westerkamp lived with the grief and shame that younger Germans have inherited from events that happened before their birth[s], during the Nazi time” (1999, 148). These stories that they tell are Casey’s embodied memories, the “archaeological site” (King 2000, 15) of the “memories of joy or pain which can be relived involuntarily” (27).

Westerkamp positions her body relative to her environment in soundwalks and field recording in a manner that stems from her immigrant experience, a manner which then affects her compositional approach to recording and soundscape composition. When Westerkamp began working at the WSP studio at Simon Fraser University, she benefited from a well-equipped studio with liberal access and colleagues working with a shared concern for listening and experimenting. In her master’s thesis, Westerkamp articulates this context as ideal for helping her gain confidence as a composer and as an immigrant:

The studio environment has provided me with a “niche” where I could find my own creative voice without interference from the surrounding social, cultural context ... Since it has always been hard for me not to give external voices more power than my own inner voice, this was an important stage for me. (Westerkamp 1988, 133-4)

By using a “passive style of recording” (McCartney 1999, 155), Westerkamp was able to avoid newcomer blunders, both as a recordist and as an immigrant Canadian. She would stand and record, and wait for people to approach her. McCartney suggests that the microphone became a “tool of access,” allowing her to enter situations where, as a newcomer to Canada, she may not have been welcome or comfortable. Then “with an immigrant’s displaced ears, Westerkamp is at once inside this new soundscape and outside it, able to hear with a fresh perspective” (156). McCartney suggests that Westerkamp’s self-proclaimed
dialogic approach stems from this newcomer identity. With this dialogic approach, Westerkamp creates a soundscape that highlights the affinity she finds with Kiyooka.

Westerkamp is restrained in her selection of soundscape elements for *MotherVoiceTalk*. The focus is on the voices and their stories rather than on an overpowering soundscape. A “sense of place” that McCartney suggests is essential to Westerkamp’s aesthetic approach and output is still created. But this “place” is imaginary. The sounds of the river and Westerkamp’s announcement of her presence on Salt Spring Island anchor the scene in reality, but very quickly the piece moves into this imagined place that defies time, space, reality, and even death. The pitched sonic material comes principally from a low drone, and excerpts of recordings of Roy playing a zither and a whistle (or recorder). The drone’s harmonic stasis creates a sense of timelessness, or at least of time frozen for a few brief moments to allow the meeting of these four voices. Westerkamp inserts the delicate notes of the zither and whistle during episodes when the voices are silent. Their exotic timbres remind the listener of Roy’s dual identity as same and different—Canadian, but with vestiges of another home.

The most important soundscape element in *MotherVoiceTalk* is the raven call. The use of the raven, which is a significant symbol to Native Americans, as testified by their frequent inclusion on totem poles throughout British Columbia, is also a sonic reminder of the Canadian part of Roy’s, Mary’s, and Hildegard’s identities. Though she grew up in Germany, Westerkamp now calls Vancouver home. Mary’s first home as a new immigrant was in

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91 Both Roy and Mary died in the 1990s. I assume that Agnes died sometime after 2008; in her email to me (Westerkamp 2011b), Westerkamp wrote of her mother in the past tense.
Vancouver, and Roy spent time there as well. The raven and the West Coast wilderness signify their shared Canadian identities.

4.2.4.5 Reflection

When Westerkamp began to immerse herself in Kiyooka’s artistic output, she was overwhelmed by its enormity. But she found herself drawn to the similarities she perceived between their lives, a link she found with a man she had never met. As a Canadian immigrant herself, who had to negotiate two cultures, two languages, and two homes, she identified with this similar struggle in Roy’s (and his mother’s) life. They both had mothers whose stories helped Roy and Westerkamp define their own life stories and construct identities. By melding the multiple narratives of Roy, Mary, Agnes, and Hildegard, Westerkamp attempts to express many of these struggles. And the result is a work that tries to also comment more broadly, beyond their specific stories.

In McCartney’s discussion (1999) of Westerkamp’s Moments of Laughter, she describes Westerkamp’s desire to achieve a greater universality and move beyond only personal experience. In a similar way, Westerkamp moves beyond the experiences of Roy and his mother Mary to create a story about mothers and sons, mothers and daughters, and the (universal) quest for identity, from perspectives that cross borders (Europe, Asia, and North America) and generations. Near the end of the work, Westerkamp includes two passages of Roy paraphrasing his mother’s reflections about elderly parents and their children:

Young people these days have nothing but money on their minds. They want to make enough money to be able put their parents in an old age home and visit them once a month. What they don’t realize is that most people end up dying of loneliness. By the
time you know what your parents have given you and you want to say thanks for the gift of life, it’s usually too late. That’s what the old proverb used to say. (paraphrase of 1997, 123)

It isn’t a simple matter of children because they’ve got a mind of their own from the start. You won’t understand this feeling until you’ve had your own children. Ah but it’s odd, but when they grow up, they think that they did it all by themselves. (paraphrase of 1997, 123)

These passages reiterate Westerkamp’s focus on mothers as a source of memories, whose stories help to construct our own stories. In these final moments, Westerkamp encourages her listeners to connect with their mothers, find out the important stories before their mothers are only “like a memory.”

MotherVoiceTalk, like Für Dich - For You, suffers from a tendency towards broad, universalizing statements. However, Westerkamp does frame the specificity of MotherVoiceTalk in both the piece’s text and her discussion: the interaction between her and Kiyooka. However, the work again generalizes the experiences of immigrants, offering little space for criticism or contradiction.

4.3 Conclusion

Aesthetically, Calon’s acousmatic Minuit and Westerkamp’s soundscape-infused compositions Für Dich – For You and MotherVoiceTalk differ tremendously, considering the former’s more abstract approach to sound material, an approach inherited from the Schaefferian legacy, and the latter’s ethical origins in Schafer’s soundscape studies and acoustic ecology, origins that prioritize context and grant “place” a central role in meaning. However, through the blend of private and public, these works manifest interesting similarities and convergences.
Minuit, Für Dich – For You and MotherVoiceTalk all incorporate the words and ideas of others. In Minuit, Calon not only incorporates direct quotations in both the work’s poetic texts and the program notes, but also infuses the writings of poets and authors (Georges Bataille in particular) into both his poetic style and content. Calon’s process relies greatly on interpretation of these original words; even the placement of the direct quotations first interprets their original meaning and then confers new meaning in the new context.

Westerkamp distances herself in some ways from the interpretation of semantic intent by directly inserting the voices of Roy and Mary Kiyooka, and Agnes Westerkamp. In some ways, these voices speak for themselves. But in her selection of recordings, and layering and distribution of the voices (in time, or pacing, and space), Westerkamp shapes these deliberate references to her own discursive ends.

In their use of someone else’s words through someone else’s voice, both Calon and Westerkamp engage with traditional gender roles in electroacoustic music. Traditionally, and with only slow transformation today, electroacoustic composition is twice-gendered male, with both composition and technology historically entrenched as male. In electroacoustic works with the human voice, the male composer maintains control over the voice, which is often female. Even when the voice is male, the binaries of male, mind, culture, and technology versus female, body, and nature persist; the female voice often uses extended vocal techniques and primitive or pseudo-linguistic utterances, while the male voice acts more frequently as a narrator, using words and text. Calon affirms this gender norm in three key ways: first, he is a male composer controlling the human voice in the studio;

92 For research that examines artists who challenge the gendered discourses of technology, see Bosma 2006; Pegley 2006; Rodgers 2010.
second, the male voice retains a role as narrator, opening the work with « vieille histoire »; finally, the groans, moans, and orgasmic breaths of females are heard before any speaking female voice is heard. But in two other ways, Calon challenges these norms: first, he includes a female narrator; while her entrance is delayed until the middle third of the work, she is the voice that ends the work and speaks the final “message” of Minuit; second, rather than manipulate the female voice, Calon extensively manipulates the man’s voice, using such extreme alterations that his words become incoherent.

As a female electroacoustic composer, Hildegard Westerkamp is already an exception in her twice-gendered context. Indeed, when she began working with the World Soundscape Project, she was surrounded by men who already understood studio technology. But like many female electroacoustic composers, Westerkamp took advantage of field recording and studio work to document her own stories, to find a voice as a woman, a composer, and, in Westerkamp’s particular circumstance, as a new Canadian immigrant. In both Für Dich – For You and MotherVoiceTalk, she allows other voices to speak for themselves: friends and family recite Rilke’s poem at their own paces, with varying inflections; recordings of Roy, Mary, and Agnes convey elements of their personalities through the tone and pace of speech, and through laughter. But inevitably, the composer’s authority must shape the work. Within the semblance of autonomy that a documentary-style work suggests (especially in MotherVoiceTalk), Westerkamp manipulates the timbral, textural, and spatial elements of the voices. In Für Dich – For You, she slowly increases the textural density by layering more and more voices within each subsection. As the multiple voices, male and female, and the bilingual recitations overlap, the listener loses a sense of individual speakers, and hears
instead a cacophony of text. In *MotherVoiceTalk*, Westerkamp has chosen what will be said, a choice of not only specific recordings, but also of how to juxtapose and manipulate those recordings. In certain sections, Westerkamp dissects Roy’s words, repeating certain phrases (e.g., “my mother”) or isolating certain sounds, such as his idiosyncratic inhalation and dry laugh. Westerkamp takes further narrative power away from Mary and Agnes; the semantic content of their Japanese and German stories becomes inconsequential for an English audience, a practical aspect that Westerkamp exploits. While she selected portions of recordings that contain recognizable words (e.g., *samurai*), Westerkamp largely treats their voices as symbolic. Their specific words are not important; their voices become a metonym for motherhood and “otherness.”

These stories of Calon and Westerkamp exhibit the importance that referential sounds, such as environmental sounds, have in creating works that connect with listeners. This “sense of place” helps delineate fantasy and reality, and blend the private and public in all three works. Calon incorporates few soundscape elements, but the sounds of nature in particular play a significant role in the initial shift from reality to a storytelling fantasy. As described above, the birds, water, and creaking chair fade off the auditory horizon as the story begins. The sounds of nature never return, but Calon includes several “human sounds” beyond the voices of the two storytellers: footsteps and whispering voices remind the listener that humanity is central to Calon’s narrative; the erotic breaths and moans help Calon highlight *erotisme* as a central human act.

In contrast, Westerkamp’s soundscape elements pervade *Für Dich – For You* and *MotherVoiceTalk*. The sounds of rain, running water, birds, thunder, and seaplanes serve to
establish not only a general setting like Calon’s forest, but for some listeners, a definite “sense of place” in Vancouver and northern Germany. In Für Dich – For You, the soundscape elements provide a formal reference, delineating sections of the poetic text. These interludes allow the listener to reflect on the poem’s theme of love and consider how nature, place, and love create the “home” and “connectedness” that Westerkamp craves. The text is not the only meditation on “home”; the soundscape is a powerful mode by which Westerkamp and many listeners reference home through memory.

Both Calon and Westerkamp highlight the blurred boundaries between private and public that are intrinsic to and exploited in electroacoustic music. Both composers incorporate various types of vocal staging; the use of a dry voice, especially when contrasted with a voice with heavy reverberation or equalization, creates an intimacy and directness with the listener. Though at times they are placed further in the auditory horizon, whispered voices in both Minuit and Für Dich – For You reference the intimacy of the mouth close to the listener’s ear. Calon further challenges the public-private boundaries by including erotic sounds; similar to the labour sounds of Moments of Laughter, the groans, moans, and accelerated breathing reference an intimate act, an act not permitted in public spaces.

More so than Calon, Westerkamp moves in the other direction, from public to private. The soundscape elements are taken from public spaces, places anyone can access. She incorporates the sounds of birds, water, thunder, and seaplanes into two works that are personal to her; she invites her listeners to also meditate on the private themes of love, home, mothers, and identity. She creates new sound worlds out of the voices and sounds that the listener, if he is at home, hears as a direct message to himself, with his experiences
constructing meaning. One important example of Westerkamp’s shift from public to private occurs in the use of the raven call. The raven call is used to reference a specific place: the West Coast. Also, the calls between two ravens represent the conversation between Westerkamp and Kiyooka; this common sound in nature becomes intimate through its signification in *MotherVoiceTalk*. Finally, Westerkamp parallels the raven call with Kiyooka’s laugh. The raven call becomes the reincarnated Roy; the raven is no longer a general element of the soundscape, but an embodiment of a real person, a person whose life story—his memories, his family—shifts from private to public in his own book *MotherTalk* and in Westerkamp’s *MotherVoiceTalk*.

The electroacoustic medium offers composers potentially compelling and dramatic means through which to become storytellers. The resulting narratives can combine text, soundscape elements, and synthesized sounds to create stories that are situated on constructed continuums between reality and fantasy, and private and public realms. The voice is a vehicle for the word, and its varied treatment helps the stories progress. Through poetry or conversations, with professional actors or friends, these three works exemplify the potential of using electroacoustics as a storytelling medium. The words are central, but the incorporation and treatment of other elements create dramatic and often personal stories.
Chapter 5
Conclusion

5.1 Summary

The aim of this dissertation was twofold: first, to highlight the previously under-recognized (at least in the scholarship) repertoire of Canadian electroacoustic music; second, to examine the aesthetic and compositional approaches behind the use of the recorded voice in order to articulate the expressive and communicative possibilities in the electroacoustic medium. I contextualized this research in Chapter 1, suggesting that the voice-body connection has often been explicitly constructed in electroacoustic works. The capabilities of an electroacoustic studio, in which acoustic sounds are transduced and manipulated or combined with synthetic sounds, allow a composer ultimate control: the final work is fixed. Beyond the subtleties of live diffusion or discrepancies in home stereo or personal listening devices, the work in some senses will never change; Camilleri suggests that “[e]xposure to repeated listening to a piece in recorded format forms a sonic image which is more fixed and rooted than one of a live performance” (2010, 210). Thus, fixed-medium works may give the analyst a more direct glimpse into the aesthetic goals of the composer—there is no performer to act as intermediary in the listening experience.¹ In addition to this seemingly direct line from composer to listener, the private listening context places my listening experiences at the centre of the perception and construction of meaning. In many ways, the analyses in Chapters 2, 3, and 4 are my critical listening logs, offered as a model for future reflections on the role of listener agency in the experience of electroacoustic music.

¹ Song of Songs was originally written for live oboe d’amore and English horn, but the CD version includes recorded instrumental parts.
Rather than providing superficial summaries of numerous works and composers for this project, I was committed to providing a thorough consideration of a handful of works and composers. I hope that in reading this dissertation, one will have experienced an immersion in these works, that one will come away with a deep grasp of the aesthetics and possible meanings of each work. With the amount of thought, time, and precision put into these works, I felt that they deserved more than a passing glance or footnote citation. I also hope that in my dissertation, certain connections have emerged between these works and the broader Canadian and international electroacoustic repertoire.

In Chapter 2, I discussed Quebec composer Robert Normandeau’s four-work *Onomatopoeias* cycle. With its heavily modified, highly abstracted treatment of the human voice, the cycle pushes the limits of the voice’s expressive and communicative possibilities. The ageing voice and the ageing body are subtly constructed through intermittent conspicuous human sounds, especially those that include traces of the vocal apparatus (e.g., breath – lungs; kissing – lips; wet sounds – tongue), energy profiles that express emotions such as anger, and rhythmic gestures that construct motion and vitality. Normandeau combines the timbral, textural, and spatial elements of both abstract and referential sounds with evocative titles and subtitles that reflect certain emotional, physical, and mental developments associated with various age groups. But as ironic nostalgia permeates the cycle, and particularly *Palimpseste*, the listener is left to contemplate not the innocence of childhood, the vibrancy of youth, the rationality of adulthood, or the wisdom of old age, but rather the inevitability of decay and death, a dark sentiment that emerges initially in the fears and anxieties of childhood.
Chapter 3 set up a counterpoint between the output of two seemingly disparate creative individuals: the self-designated homoerotic electroacoustic works of Vancouver composer Barry Truax and the innovative use of Inuit throat singing in new social and erotic contexts by Tanya Tagaq Gillis. They both seek out alternative modes of engaging with their musical heritages.

While Truax is a male composer with a strong computer background in the male-dominated field of computer music, he is also an outsider. This outsider identity stems not only from his homosexuality, but also from his soundscape compositional approach whose referentiality he understands as an alternative to abstract computer music (Truax 2000). These differences led him to explore homoerotic potential in the electroacoustic medium, which he achieved in *Song of Songs* through a non-heteronormative treatment of the text and the use of soundscape elements, the latter of which is an alternative approach in the male heterosexual computer music world. The time stretching of both the voice and the soundscape elements blurs the boundaries between nature and humanity, and speech and song, while the English horn and oboe d’amore also blend references to religious traditions and blur the distinction between speech and song. The result is a work whose obscured boundaries between numerous sound sources represent the blurred distinctions Truax would like to see between hetero- and homosexual love.

Tagaq’s modifications of recorded sound in the studio are in some ways subtler than Truax’s, with her wide-ranging vocal timbres emerging from her impressive vocal skills rather than from studio transformation. However, Tagaq, too, uses the studio to both expand and deconstruct the origins of her vocal style in traditional Inuit vocal games. Particularly on
her first album, *Sinaa*, Tagaq mimics the sounds of Inuit vocal games (e.g., voiced, unvoiced, pitched, nonpitched, high and low, inhalation and exhalation), includes traditional songs from that repertoire, and reconstructs the ideal vocal partnership that is central to it. By the time of her second album, *Auk/Blood*, Tagaq’s vocal style had deviated far from its vocal game source. As both this album and her live shows demonstrate, Tagaq uses her voice as a widely expressive element (e.g., screams, sobs, sighs) within the overall sound created by new partnerships with other musicians. This second album demonstrates a new element of Tagaq’s approach: the inclusion of erotic sounds. The social, ludic body of the Inuit vocal tradition has transformed into an erotic body, as expressed with gestures in live shows, orgasmic sounds on *Auk/Blood*, and the autoerotic text setting of “Hunger.”

Chapter 4 shifted focus from the expressive to the communicative use of the voice. Calon’s *Minuit* combines text, soundscape elements, synthesized sound, and electroacoustic processing to blur reality and fantasy, and private and public in a story that enacts Calon’s interpretation of humanity’s attempts to transcend what George Bataille describes as discontinuity through the erotic act; this “leap” is repeatedly performed in an effort to experience the continuity of eternity. Manipulation of the male voice and its fragmented text in “Immémorial” becomes the climax of Calon’s depiction of the erotic “leap.”

In contrast to the storytelling of the male and female voices in *Minuit*, Hildegard Westerkamp uses friends’ and families’ voices, texts with personal significance, and sounds of her two homes to create two works whose autobiographical storytelling reflects her preoccupations with connectedness and home in particular. In *Für Dich – For You*, Westerkamp surrounds the listener with voices, in German and English, reflecting on love. In
MotherVoiceTalk, Westerkamp shifts the focus to one especially important relationship: mother-child. Thus, important second-person relations and her immigrant status help define Westerkamp as a woman, mother, daughter, and composer. It is through the words of Rilke and Kiyooka, the voices of friends, and family, and the sounds of Germany and the West Coast that Westerkamp can tell her own story.

5.2 All Things Re-Considered

5.2.1 Aesthetic, Compositional, and Technological Intersections

As I sought to find connections between these works, grouping them according to particular aesthetic and theoretical issues, I realized that connections persist across the chapter divides I constructed. In some ways, a more obvious connection would have centred on compositional aesthetics: acousmatic composers Normandeau and Calon with their cinéma pour l’oreille aesthetic; and Truax and Westerkamp with their soundscape composition. I would now like to reflect on the alternative relationships between the composers and works from the previous chapters.

Cinéma pour l’oreille diverges from acousmatic music’s predecessor musique concrète in its inclusion of referential sounds. This inclusion, which Normandeau articulated as a distinguishing feature of Quebec electroacoustic music (Woloshyn 2011b), combines internal sound quality and external references to create works that evoke both imagination and memory in a meaningful listening experience. Dhomont was one of the early proponents of cinéma pour l’oreille, and he has been named by both Normandeau and Calon as a mentor. As Normandeau outlined (1992, 1993), the language and techniques of cinéma pour l’oreille
are derived from cinematography. He provides specific examples of the application of cinematographic grammar (such as shots, colour, and frame), including examples in Éclats de voix. According to Normandeau, Éclats de voix “est entièrement impregnée de l’idée de cinéma” (66). The two most important shared criteria between Éclats de voix and cinematography are shots (including foreground/background) and space. He explains that the beginning of the second subsection of Jeu et rythme (from 0:50 to 1:30) is an example of the use of zooming out (zoom arrière). The regular rhythm created through the various mouth/saliva sounds first introduced at 0:47 remains close to the listener until around 1:19. At this point, Normandeau uses reverb, delay, and low-pass filters (all controlled by MIDI), to gradually fade the sounds into the background, allowing the new sounds (introduced at 1:22) to establish a new sonic landscape (Normandeau 1992). In addition, Normandeau suggests that he used reverse tracking (travelling arrière). In cinema, this effect is achieved by moving the camera back while zooming in on the subject, creating a vertigo effect. Certainly one can hear an active and sharp sound at 1:35 (somewhat reminding me of lip sounds) that is in close proximity to the listener; at 1:52, this sound has increased reverb and decreased amplitude, creating the effect of it moving back in the shot, away from the listener, while the other background sounds remain fixed. However, many of these details, even through close listening, do not lead me to the cinematic interpretation that Normandeau outlines; in the example mentioned above, I don’t experience an aural equivalent to vertigo. Other effects, though, are central to my experience. For example, the use of montage in Colère is essential to the section’s expression of anger: its unpredictable, aggressive gestures parallel constantly

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2 “Éclats de voix is saturated with the idea of ‘cinema’.”
changing camera shots and visual enactments of anger (e.g., facial expressions, physical violence).

Calon is similarly subtle in his application of cinéma pour l’oreille. The opening scene of Minuit relies particularly on the contrast between foreground and background shots: at first the forest and porch swing are foregrounded, but their gradual decrescendo fades them to the background and ultimately out of the scene as the story begins.

Both Normandeau and Calon use selective “human” sounds to reinforce the connection to human agency. In Normandeau’s Onomatopoeias cycle in particular, these sounds contrast powerfully with the rest of the relatively abstract sonic environment; clearly articulated words, breath, kissing, and laughter are used not only for their sonic value (internal), but also in association with the meaning of the source or cause. As I articulated in Chapter 2, many of these sounds are essential to the listener’s construction of the body—the sensual, social, and ailing body. Yet despite Normandeau’s claim to the contrary, I suggest that the Onomatopoeias cycle is largely abstract.

Similarly, in Calon’s Minuit, referential sounds prevent the work from shifting entirely into abstraction. Although the human voice is mostly minimally processed to facilitate semantic communication, the experience can still feel distant from everyday life, particularly with the pervasive synthesized sounds and the fragmented and symbolist poetry. And so while Bataille’s notion of discontinuous beings remains an ontological rumination, Calon affirms the connection to a real human experience (i.e., orgasm) by using clearly referential human sounds: walking, running, and breathing.
An abstract (i.e., a focus on intrinsic qualities) approach to sound, though, remains a central feature of acousmatic music. To varying degrees, language is treated as an abstract sound in the works by Calon, Normandeau, Truax, and Tagaq. Normandeau’s *Onomatopoeias* cycle is the most obvious in this approach. He begins with language material that is purely sound.¹ Normandeau further abstracts the *sounds* of onomatopoeias by isolating phonemes, turning articulations (i.e., consonants) into sharp gestures, vowels into sustained sounds, and tongue rolls into internally active timbres. Language as sound is the foundation of the entire cycle. Calon treats the voice largely as a communicative medium in *Minuit*, processing the voice mostly without disguising its semantic meaning. However, in “Immémorial,” Calon distances language from its communicative role by first fragmenting the poetic text and then dramatically abstracting the voice through heavy processing. Stretching, fragmenting, and applying heavy reverberation are some ways that Calon explores language as sound.

Though neither Truax nor Tagaq are acousmatic composers in an aesthetic sense,² at times they also approach language as sound rather than as semantic communication. In much of *Song of Songs*, the communicative role of the voice as deliverer of text is essential to the work’s meaning, especially its homoerotic meaning. Truax’s most overt homoerotic interpretation of *Song of Songs* occurs when the male and female voices declaim certain pronouns, and anatomical and gendered nouns. Truax’s granular time stretching, though,

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¹ I must clarify my use of the word abstract in this discussion of language. Semantically, onomatopoeias are not abstract because they signify only themselves: the sound is the meaning. I use the word “abstract” in the Schaefferian sense of intrinsic sound qualities. It is the sound of the phonemes rather than the semantic meaning that is important.

² As discussed in Chapter 1, any sound that one hears without seeing the cause is technically an extension of Pythagorus’s concept of *akusmatikoi*. 
prioritizes the voice and its words as sound rather than semantic communication. While some granular time stretching emphasizes the text without disguising it, at other times, the vocal sounds are stretched to such extremes as to turn them into sound, into song, that blends with the sounds of cicadas or a crackling fire; or the vocal drones create a harmonic stasis below the English horn and oboe d’amore. Thus, together (voices, instruments, soundscape), the sounds transform into a cacophony whose meaning is expressive rather than communicative. In these moments, the words no longer matter, but rather their sonic qualities transcend boundaries of speech and song, and intrinsic and extrinsic complexities.

Traditional Inuit vocal games have some similarities with onomatopoeias when the vocal games use sounds that imitate the sounds of nature, such as a young pup trying to run with a dogsled team (“Qimiruluapik”), a mosquito, or a river (Nattiez 1999). But Tagaq’s vocal style is largely divorced from these references. She mimics the sound of the vocal games, creating an expressive language without semantic meaning. Even her traditional Inuit songs remain abstract vocalizations to a non-Inuit audience (which is the majority of her audience). Her style has progressed even more into abstract sound as she uses her vocal skills to blend with the sounds of the violin, cello, and programming on Auk/Blood or the violin and drums in her latest shows. Timbre and texture, elements that Schaeffer’s musique concrète and today’s acousmatique emphasize, become the central expressive features of her sound.

Despite a parallel focus on timbre and texture, soundscape compositions aim to retain the referential meaning of sounds, and, for Truax, the goal is to unite the abstract and referential (or internal and external) complexities of sound material. Song of Songs by Truax
and *Für Dich – For You* and *MotherVoiceTalk* by Westerkamp exemplify the soundscape aesthetic through not only the inclusion of soundscape elements, but also the unification of sound and structure to create meaning (Truax 2000).

The referential significance of the soundscape material in *Song of Songs* maintains structural importance: the sounds are associated with certain times of the day and, thus, help delineate and differentiate the four sections. Similarly, Westerkamp uses the soundscape material to structure *Für Dich – For You*, using soundscape interludes to punctuate her divisions of Rilke’s text and create time for reflection. In both *Song of Songs* and *Für Dich – For You*, the soundscape elements are used to create meaning beyond their superficial referentiality. For instance, the cicadas, birds, and church bells of *Song of Songs* are transformed to traverse the continuum between sound or noise and song, which is a transformation that acts as a metaphor for the blurred boundaries along the sexuality continuum that Truax celebrates in this work. Similarly, the sounds used in *Für Dich – For You* especially (e.g., rain, ravens, wind) do more than reference northern Germany and the West Coast; they represent “home” for Westerkamp. The principles of soundscape composition celebrate this associated meaning. The sound of a stream (like that in *MotherVoiceTalk*) should connect with a listener’s memory and experiences to create meaning. And in fact, regarding this importance of listener memory, soundscape composition, and *cinéma pour l’oreille* meet. Normandeau explained the following example when discussing *cinéma pour l’oreille*: “If I use a sound of a train, it will be every listener’s train according to their own experience. It will remind them of different things. And then they will be put in a situation where they have to deal with themselves” (Woloshyn 2011b).
However, despite their placement under the same banner of “soundscape composition,” Truax’s and Westerkamp’s outputs highlight some of the tensions present within the genre. Truax often uses recordings of soundscapes to create soundscapes—imaginary sonic environments—such as the imaginary island in Island (2000), which contains soundcape recordings, or Riverrun (1986), which creates the impression of a river at various intensities, using high densities of small grains (from sine wave tones). Especially with granular synthesis and time stretching, Truax achieves a level of abstraction that Westerkamp would eschew on both aesthetic and ethical grounds. While Truax would never claim that Riverrun is a true soundscape composition, he generally uses soundcape material with greater liberty. In contrast, Westerkamp aims to create a “sense of place,” not an abstracted or imaginary place, as in many of Truax’s works, but an impression of a specific place—the West Coast or Germany, for example. The soundscape is imbued with a level of authenticity that is central to Westerkamp’s identity as a composer, woman, immigrant, and acoustic ecologist. Moreover, Westerkamp asserts an authenticity in her sound sources that she feels compelled to respect. In Chapter 4, I quoted Westerkamp’s reflection on the cricket recording used for Cricket Voice:

I do feel that sounds have their own integrity and feel that they need to be treated with a great deal of care. ... I could not just “manipulate” it. It had to be a new sonic discovery journey to retain the level of magic for me. And I remember a moment at which I said “Stop.” The journey was beginning to turn into electronic experimentation and the cricket was being obliterated. (Westerkamp 2006, 33)

Westerkamp feels an ethical obligation to maintain the integrity of her sound sources; to do otherwise would be to upset the balance to which she aspires in her soundwalking practice, a practice whose beliefs permeate her soundscape compositions, sound documents, and
articulated soundwalks. As I discussed in Chapter 4, though, her works do not really allow the places to “speak for themselves,” but rather Westerkamp speaks for them, and often over them, resulting in her “sense of place.” But couched in the ethical, and thus political, terms of acoustic ecology, her approach creates an illusion of authenticity; it is only an illusion, though, due to the constructed nature of studio work. Westerkamp constructs an emotional authenticity by constructing an intimacy with the soundscape, the voices, and the themes in *Für Dich – For You* and *MotherVoiceTalk*.

Intimacy with sound, achieved with close microphone placement, granular time stretching, and careful mixing, is one way that the listener’s experience of the works discussed in this dissertation become private. Several of the works extend further into the private realm by incorporating specifically “intimate” or erotic sounds. Erotic sounds are used in many of these works to reference the body and, thus, gain expressive significance. Despite Truax’s homoerotic purpose and Westerkamp’s frequent inclusion of “private” sounds, *Song of Songs*, *Für Dich – For You*, and *MotherVoiceTalk* contain none of the erotic breaths or groans heard in Tagaq’s music, *Minuit* or in one instance in *Palimpseste*. As evidenced by her direct statements and his poetic text and reliance on Bataille, both Tagaq and Calon feel that sexuality and eroticism are important aspects of humanity’s experience (and in Tagaq’s life specifically). These composers incorporate sensuality into their art and, through the voice, they reference the sensual body. But their inclusion of such sounds raises the question of legitimacy, or the appropriateness, of the blurred boundaries between private and public arenas in the fixed electroacoustic medium.
As I mentioned in both Chapters 1 and 4, sounds shift initially into the private realm due to the individualized listening experience enabled by the home stereo or, especially, by headphones and a personal listening device. Soundscape elements originally found in public natural spaces find their way into these personal listening circumstances via the composer’s personal interpretation of the sounds’ significance. But several works maintain an oscillating position on the public–private continuum. For example, the source text of *Song of Songs* is a biblical (public) text that may have originated as a (private) love letter from a king to a young girl. Truax sets the text similarly as a (private) declaration of love, but in the electroacoustic medium (public). Normandeau’s treatment of space in the fourth movements of each work in his cycle (especially in *Éclats de voix* and *Spleen*) also highlights the tension between private and public space, here represented by four spaces (*salle*, *intime*, *pièce*, and *extérieur*), two of which are public and two private.

A discomfort arises for many listeners (recall: McCartney’s anecdote regarding *Moments of Laughter*) with the shift from private to public. The orgasmic sounds on Tagaq’s *Auk/Blood* and in Calon’s *Minuit* reference what is an intensely private act. Tagaq has received criticism for her public display of sexuality through the sounds and lyrics on *Auk/Blood* and sounds and gestures in her live shows. These sounds are an element of authenticity in her mind, as she attempts to create music that is relevant to her life. She seeks to challenge the private-public divide that imposes rules on the appropriateness of sexuality. For her, sex should not remain only in the home, an unspoken topic and unseen act in public spaces.

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5 I refer to sex as a private act not only because of social convention and government policy, but also because even communities that attempt to disrupt the deep-seated belief that sex can and should only be private maintain the public-private divide: “...public sexual activity constantly crosses the public-private distinction in practice as one goes out to get sex (private to public) conveying covert (private) signals to sexual availability (public) to retreat into invisibility for the actual sexual activity (public to private)” (Edwards 1994, 94).
The issue of private versus public will persist in electroacoustic music because the technology makes (virtually) all sounds available to the composer. The only limits are those imposed by the composer’s aesthetic and expressive purposes. But if these composers wish to connect with listeners, they will need to negotiate this boundary without forfeiting all sonic connections (or referentiality) to memory and personal experience. The electroacoustic composer will need to balance the solitary and potentially autocratic studio environment to create works with potential for broader meaning.

In terms of both sound material and processing, the electroacoustic composer has amassed significant control over the final work, far more than all genres that rely on performances, including live electroacoustic works. Scholars such as Bosma, Hinkle-Turner, Marsh, McCartney, Pegley, Truax, and Weber-Lucks have highlighted the gendered binaries both reinforced and challenged in the electroacoustic medium, particularly around the issue of “control” in the electroacoustic medium throughout its history. The composers and output examined in this dissertation are no exception. In some ways the male/female, mind/body, master/slave binaries persist; however, gender reversals and subversions also emerge.

Robert Normandeau’s treatment of sound sources resonantes with the traditional image of the male electroacoustic composer exerting his power over the sound material. Just as Berio stripped Berberian’s identity and power from her through intense modifications of her voice and her absence from credits in some documentation, so too does Normandeau make irrelevant the original identities of the voices he uses. He credits their names in the program notes, but they have forfeited all control to the creative hands of the acousmatic composer. Truax and Calon draw particular attention to their control as electroacoustic
composers through the contrast of minimally and dramatically modified vocal sounds. The lovers’ voices in *Song of Songs* retain much of their original timbre and cadence; however, at the ends of phrases especially, Truax highlights his ultimate control by stretching out the final syllables beyond human capability. Similarly, Calon contrasts the more “natural” treatment of the voice (though still varying the vocal staging with different levels of reverberation) with the heavy modification of the man’s voice in “Immémorial.”

As women, Tagaq’s and Westerkamp’s uses of technology challenges the male-dominated world of sound technology. Few electroacoustic composers are women; few technicians, engineers, or producers are women. But both Tagaq and Westerkamp use the recorded medium to tell their stories. Tagaq even includes a personal email in “Hunger” (on *Auk/Blood*); Westerkamp includes autobiography in *MotherVoiceTalk* and expresses important elements of her identity in both *Für Dich – For You* and *MotherVoiceTalk*. These women also maintain power over the sounds they create and modify. Their control in the studio is hardly unlike that of Normandeau, Truax, or Calon. However, by taking their personal lives (private) and bringing them into the public sphere, Tagaq and Westerkamp challenge the traditional demarcation of a woman’s domain to the home—private space.

Furthermore, Westerkamp and Tagaq demonstrate the important point Rodgers emphasizes in her introduction to *Pink Noises* (2010): women use and frame their use of technology in multiple, and often contradictory, ways. To reject the gendered constructs of technology

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6 Here I refer specifically to the fragment entitled “Immémorial” that is part of the section entitled *Immémorial*.

7 This number is growing, and thanks to the work of scholars such as Diamond (2006), Marsh (2006, 2009a), McCartney (1996, 2006), and Rodgers (2010) these women are also receiving increased recognition for their work.
requires us to also reject the gendered constructs that still restrictively categorize the music and musical practices of female electroacoustic composers.

For all of these composers, the studio moves beyond mere transduction to become a site of creativity, a vehicle for pushing the boundaries of the voice’s expressive and communicative possibilities. The studio transforms the voice into humanly impossible ranges and textures (e.g., *Onomatopoeias* cycle); it creates relationships that did not or could not exist in reality (e.g., *Song of Songs*, Tagaq’s “Qimiruluapik” and “Hunger”); the studio allows the composer to defy time, space, and even death (e.g., *MotherVoiceTalk*).

**5.2.2 Is There a Canadian Sound?**

In the first issue of *Organised Sound*, Dhomont (1996) asked, “Is there a Quebec Sound?” His criteria of this “Quebec sound” seemed less to define such a sound as to demonstrate how Quebec composers are defined by Quebec’s dual identity as both French and North American. Similarly, I suggest that the works I selected for this dissertation do not define a “Canadian sound,” but they are defined by aspects of the Canadian experience. These works exist as they are because they were made in Canada by Canadians.

As Dhomont explains, the connection to France persisted (and persists) in Quebec due to a common language, and yet, as Normandeau articulated, Quebec composers were largely unencumbered by the aesthetic debates in Europe between *musique concrète* and *elektronische Musik*. Quebec composers freely incorporate both referential and abstract sounds. This acousmatic genre, and in particular the *cinéma pour l’oreille* aesthetic, finds its broadest base in the group of Quebec composers that today consists of people like Normandeau, Calon, and Gilles Gobeil.
Similarly, soundscape composition has some conceptual foundations outside of Canada with Cage’s reflections (1961) on sound, noise, and silence and Pauline Oliveros’ “Deep Listening” (2005). Certainly, the World Soundscape Project proceeds with an ethical mission of “balancing and improving the quality of the sonic environment” (Kallmann 2010) as opposed to a purely ontological one. And the work of the WSP “has secured Canada a place in the forefront of the study of soundscape ecology” (Kallman 2010). Out of this research grew soundscape composition, a creative engagement with the sounds celebrated in the WSP’s archiving endeavours. While soundscape material is certainly used by composers outside of Vancouver (and Canada), it remains firmly connected with the teaching, research and output of current composers in Vancouver and at Simon Fraser University, including Truax and Westerkamp. The West Coast also fostered both the WSP and soundscape composition through the juxtaposition of a booming urban centre, with traffic, construction and sea planes, and the mountains and forests in the Lower Mainland, including the Fraser Valley.

Any claim of Tagaq’s “Canadianness” is problematic given that the Inuit have sought autonomy from both Canadian identity and the Canadian government. However, she represents one of many groups who call the geographical land mass that is Canada home. Some, like the Inuit, have been here for centuries; others, like Roy Kiyooka’s mother and Hildegard Westerkamp, arrived during the twentieth century to find opportunity and to make

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8 Westerkamp taught at SFU until 1990.
a new life. They all maintain aspects of their dual identities: Inuk-Canadian, Japanese-Canadian, German-Canadian, and French-Canadian.

Regardless of the politics surrounding issues of Aboriginal autonomy, immigration laws, or Quebec sovereignty, Canada is a country of many cultures: multicultural. And it is this culture of diverse perspectives that we can hear in the varied expressive and communicative aspects of these contemporary works. However, this is only an easy answer to a deep and troubled problem.

The idea of multiculturalism emerged in government policy as early as 1971 and became the subject of national legislation through the 1988 Multiculturalism Act (Dhamoon 2009). However, “multiculturalism” has recently come under scrutiny for its focus on culture rather than other important modes of difference, such as gender, race, class, all of which are essential aspects of identity and difference. For political theorist Rita Dhamoon, who teaches at Simon Fraser University, the liberal theory behind Canada’s multiculturalism policies “obscures issues of power” (2009, 6). By reinventing Canada as a multicultural nation, we mask our troubled history of “white supremacy, colonialism, and racism” through “the language of diversity” (6). While multiculturalism celebrates tolerance, its own limits end with cultures that do not employ the same values of autonomy and choice. Dhamoon explains: “Not only is there an underlying demand for conformity, but the dominant culture is represented as if it were not fraught with social inequalities” (7). Through its “narrow conception and overdetermined” (8) view of culture, liberal multiculturalism reinforces state regulation of difference, namely, difference in culture.

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9 Tagaq’s father was a British air traffic controller who settled in Resolute Bay and met her mother (National Post 2006). Her parents are still together.
This chapter is not the place for an extensive critique of multiculturalism. But I find a parallel into the recent attempts to locate other modalities of difference in my own attempts to reconcile, or juxtapose, the various works discussed here. For instance, soundscape composition has often been associated not only with particular principles of sound preservation and manipulation, but also with a specific geographic region: the Canadian West Coast. The World Soundscape Project involved a close-knit group of mostly men, well educated and white. I chose to discuss works by two composers associated with the WSP who present other modalities of difference, namely sexual orientation (Truax), gender, and culture\(^{10}\) (Westerkamp). The seeming homogeneity of the WSP and soundscape composition is challenged when Truax and Westerkamp are examined and then interrogated against each other.

Similarly, the acousmatic approach has been associated with Quebec composers, and \textit{cinéma pour l’oreille} with Dhomont and his protégés Calon and Normandeau. But to group them together conveniently because of geographic location and language only serves to mask the differences between their aesthetics and output. In my juxtaposition of Calon and Westerkamp, I tried to examine some of the modalities of sameness and difference in works often assumed to be entirely incompatible aesthetically, and thus, perhaps incompatible for the listener’s understanding of expression and meaning.

5.2.3 The Bigger Picture

As I stated above, one of my goals was to discuss a small number of Canadian electroacoustic works in great detail. I believe the works discussed here demonstrate a wide

\(^{10}\) Culture, here, refers to her German heritage, which combines language, nationhood, and ethnicity.
range of aesthetic approaches and expressive meanings. However, the scope of my study has remained limited. The output of each composer discussed here is vast and diverse; the electroacoustic scene in Canada is plentifully populated with composers and their significant oeuvres. And Canadian electroacoustic composers have extensive international relationships with studios, universities, festivals, and concert programmers.

One task now is to expand the themes explored in this dissertation regarding the use of the voice and the construction of the body (such as intimacy; authority, agency, and control; and the private-public boundary in fixed-medium works) to other Canadian works and non-Canadian works. In particular, I am interested in the points of (perceived) friction between aesthetic approaches and specific works. For example, often soundscape composers are grouped together into one lump of bird calls and rain. The differences I highlight between the music and musical practices of Truax and Westerkamp suggest that such homogeneity is an illusion. Future research should address how the aesthetics and compositional approaches of soundscape composers are constructed by their own discourses. In what ways do they seek to unify themselves under a banner of ethical acoustic ecological practices? How does their actual engagement with and construction of space and place suggest not only difference, but tension within the soundscape composition genre? I believe that similar questions can be asked of acousmatic composers and composers who incorporate the cinéma pour l’oreille.

I continue to be drawn to the grey areas, the blurred boundaries between genres, aesthetic goals, and compositional practice. How do composers and artists use “sound technologies to engineer meanings, functions, and social strategies in musical cultures and in the world at large for strategic cultural, aesthetic, political, and economic ends” (Green 2005,
4)? Where do their music and musical practices converge or diverge? As in popular music studies (Frith 1996; Middleton 1990; Penley and Ross 1992; Théberge 1997), I believe the electroacoustic world needs to reflect on its engagement with technology, on the “ongoing tensions between cynical exploitation and utopian cooperation” (Lysloff and Gay, Jr. 2003, 18) and consider how the engagement of particular composers or a particular aesthetic approach creates these tensions.
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