ELECTROACOUSTIC VOICES: SOUNDS QUEER, AND WHY IT MATTERS

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Abstract: Queer processes abound in fixed media electroacoustic music with voice, in both the composition and listening processes. 'Queer' means transgressive, unstable, and disruptive, and queer processes break down restrictive traditional binaries. In this article, I name the queer where some may have thought it does not or could not exist, in well-known works by Berio, Stockhausen and Lucier, as well as lesser-known works by Truax, Normandeau and Westerkamp. Any claim to the queer in these electroacoustic works is inherently political because the core of the term's meaning is to disrupt and perturb the status quo, which is maintained by existing power structures. I outline how composers unsettle the gendered voice and exploit its mediating role between the body and language. Studio manipulation is further enhanced by the acousmatic listening context, which is intimate and unsettling ('queer'), and can depict the 'third space' between the bodies of the voice and listener.

The opening of Canadian soundscape composer Barry Truax's *Song of Songs* (1992) will be familiar to anyone with a Christian upbringing, but is also surprising with its evocative soundscape.[1] The original biblical text includes three narrators, Shulamite (female), the Beloved (male) and Shulamite's female friends. What I hear in *Song of Songs* are two voices, initially gendered male and female, but who very early in the work suggest that heterosexual (and monogamous) love is not the subject of Truax's work. Soon enough, the male voice speaks of *his* lover, and the female voice speaks erotically of her lover's breasts. Harmonisations fill with space with a chorus of lovers, engaged in a sonic orgy in my listening imagination.

In *Queer Voices: Technologies, Vocalities, and the Musical Flaw*, Freya Jarman-Ivens points to the voice as 'potentially a very rich site for the emergence of queer, of queer spaces',[2] due to its materiality and immateriality. Her analysis considers the internal and external technologies of voice and power heard in recordings of Karen

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[1] The work was commissioned by Lawrence Cherney for oboe d'amore and cor anglais combined with two digital soundtracks (male voice, female voice, soundscape elements). The initial live performance included Cherney and visuals, but, like much of the electroacoustic canon, I listened to this work at home, primarily through headphones.

[2] Freya Jarman-Ivens, *Queer Voices: Technologies, Vocalities, and the Musical Flaw* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), p. vii.

Carpenter, Maria Callas and Diamonda Galás. Her introductory reflection on technology and the queer voice recalls my own doctoral research on the voice in contemporary electroacoustic music. My aim here is to examine a parallel but distinct musical path to that of Jarman-Ivens – to expose queer processes in fixed media electroacoustic works with the recorded human voice.

I want to argue that queer processes abound in electroacoustic music, in both the composition and listening processes, and that identifying emergent queer spaces and queer pleasures is politically significant. Composers and listeners are encouraged similarly to embrace the queer in electroacoustic music with the human voice. My analysis builds on the work of queer theory in musicology, work that examines voice within socio-culturally reinforced notions of gender and sex. The pieces I will discuss demonstrate the gendered performativity of the voice and the studio possibilities to exploit it. A number of works enhance and disturb the binary between body and language, with voice as mediator. The studio manipulation is further enhanced by the acousmatic listening context. Acousmatic listening intensifies the arousal and intimacy we experience when listening to music, and it unsettles our ability to maintain a clear subject–object position in relation to coherent bodies. Spatialisation situates us in a specific relationship to the voices heard, which can amplify the flip-flopping process of identification/anti-identification.

'Voice' in this article refers specifically to the audible voice articulated by a human body – the material voice – as it is this voice that is recorded and manipulated in these works. However, the immaterial significance of 'voice' discussed in voice studies also contributes how we perceive and interpret the voice.[3] As I will argue below, 'voice' is inherently gendered due to its relation to the body.

Throughout the twentieth century, 'queer' has denoted 'homosexual'. Michel Foucault argues that this association arose because of the relationship between sexuality and power structures, specifically those that constructed 'homosexuality' as an identity.[4] The term 'queer' became synonymous because its original meaning reflected what society believed about homosexuality: that it was strange, unsettling, disruptive, odd, peculiar and suspicious. Queer theory relies on Foucault's work on sexuality and power and Derrida's on deconstructionism to destabilise the binary oppositions that underpin our concept of sexuality and gender.[5] I use 'queer' here primarily as a verb (to queer) and an adjective (e.g. queer arousal). The queer process is transgressive, unstable and disruptive, but frees one from restrictive traditional binaries.

While electroacoustic music may broadly mean any music for which loudspeakers are the principal mode of transmission,[6] the music I discuss in this article intentionally uses the capabilities of electronic technology to mediate acoustic sound sources and produce new sounds. All the works discussed here are examples of fixed media:

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[3] See the *Oxford Handbook of Voice Studies*, ed. Nina Sun Eidsheim and Katherine Meizel (Oxford: Oxford University Press, forthcoming); Michel Chion, *The Voice in Cinema*, trans. by Claudio Gorbman (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999); Karen Sunabacka, 'She is the Voice, She is the Sound: Women's Voices in Electroacoustic Music' (PhD diss., University of California Davis, 2008).

[4] Michel Foucault, *Histoire de la sexualité I: La volonté de savoir* (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1976).

[5] Jacques Derrida, *De la grammatologie* (Paris: Les Éditions de Minuit, 1967).

[6] Simon Emmerson and Denis Smalley, 'Electro-acoustic music', in *Grove Music Online, Oxford Music Online* (accessed 8 September 2016).

these are works that exist in their final and complete form on some fixed medium, such as tape, compact disc or mp3. The studio is a site not only for simple transduction, but also for sound modification and manipulation.

Any claim to the queer in these electroacoustic works is inherently political because the core of the term's meaning is to disrupt, unsettle and perturb the status quo, which is maintained by existing power structures. While I have already explained that 'queer' does not by necessity denote non-heteronormative identities, 'queer' cannot divorce itself completely from these associations. And I want the reader to have both the broader concept of 'queer' and the specific association with 'transgressive' sexualities in mind. When stories abound of queerphobia, the presence of queer spaces, queer processes and queer pleasures can incite violent reactions from the heteronormative patriarchy. In this article, I name the queer where some may have thought that it doesn't exist and where some may refuse to acknowledge it could exist. But I celebrate electroacoustic music for abounding in queer possibilities that can result in expansive, creative, strangely beautiful, and lithe musical works, compositional practices, and listening contexts.

Queer Processes in Electroacoustic Composition

The voice is a marker of the body. When the physical body is unseen, the voice may be the only marker to portray certain aspects that are essential to one's identity. Frith suggests that because 'the voice *is* the sound of the body',[7] 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.[8]

Joke Dame insists that when we assign a voice a body, we engage in a gendered process because we believe that every body has a gender, either male or female.[9]

Judith Butler's pioneering work on gender and performativity argues that gender and sex are social constructs that we perform, not immutable and biologically determined categories.[10] While it can be easy to accept that our outer appearance – clothing, hair style, mannerisms, and so on – are gendered performances, Suzanne Cusick explains, 'we are perplexed . . . by the idea that sex might not be a biological fact with certain inevitable consequences, both the fact and its consequences being self-evidently based on the unchangeable structures of our bodies'.[11] Cusick identifies the voice as the stumbling block for those who are willing to accept Butler's argument. She explains: 'because we imagine our voices to be the way they are because of our bodies' structures, we assume our voices to be among the inevitable consequences of biological sex'.[12] The

7 Simon Frith, *Performing Rites: On the Value of Popular Music* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996), p. 192.
8 *Performing Rites*, p. 196.
9 Joke Dame, *Het zingend lichaam: Betekenissen van de stem in westerse vocale muziek* (Kampen: Kok Agora, 1994).
10 Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1990).
11 Suzanne Cusick, 'On Musical Performances of Gender and Sex', in *Audible Traces: Gender, Identity, and Music*, ed. Elaine Barkin and Lydia Hamessley (Zurich: Carciofoli, 1999), p. 28.
12 Cusick, 'On Musical Performances', p. 29.

voice emerges from the body, and so it must be defined by the limits and design of that body. And every day we seem to easily identify the gender of individuals by their voices in person or disembodied on the radio, over the phone, and so on. However, we know that voices are a social construct within a specific cultural context that combines an intersectional performance of sex, gender, race and class, among others.[13] For example, Judith Peraino identifies the intentional performance of an ambiguous voice by MTF transsexuals, albeit with greater difficulty than FTM transsexuals.[14] And Cusick notes that her voice changes depending on the language spoken.[15]

While the electroacoustic voice manipulated in the studio could be an opportunity to disrupt (i.e., 'queer') traditional gendered labels and roles of voices, electroacoustic works typically affirm traditional associations between gender/sex and voice[16] in ways similar to the authoritative position of the narrative voice in cinematic voice-overs.[17] This often-male voice is the 'voice of authority' noted by Michel Chion as the 'acousmêtre'.[18] The male narrator of film, who is all voice (i.e., cerebral and intelligent) 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 civilised and primal/savage.[19] In Hannah Bosma's survey of the electrovocal repertoire, she noted that most composers were male, and they most typically used female voices for live vocals and electroacoustics. The balance of male–female voices was greater in fixed media works, but the female vocalist maintained a more traditional role as singer (often textless) rather than speaker. The male voices tended to be those of the composers themselves, or sampled voices from other media, similar to the male voice of authority in film.[20]

We can hear two notable exceptions to this trend in Hildegard Westerkamp's role as narrator for her own works and the gender reversal in Christian Calon's *Minuit*. Westerkamp frequently narrates and reflects upon her recording and studio processes, such as pointing out filtering affects and close miking techniques in *Kits Beach Soundwalk* (1989). She is the authoritative voice, but she also intentionally shares agency with the soundscape, often resisting the temptation to over-process sounds. For example, in *Cricket Voice* (1987) she explains: 'I remember a moment at which I said "Stop". The journey was beginning to turn into electronic experimentation and the cricket was being obliterated'.[21]

Montreal acousmatique composer Christian Calon's *Minuit* (1989) presents an erotic narrative with male voice, female voice and soundscape elements. At first, *Minuit* reinforces these trends of gendered

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[13] See the forthcoming *Oxford Handbook of Voice Studies*.

[14] Judith Ann Peraino, 'Listening to Gender: A Response to Judith Halberstam', *Women and Music: A Journal of Gender and Culture* 11 (2007), p. 62.

[15] Cusick, 'On Musical Performances', p. 28.

[16] Hannah Bosma, 'Bodies of Evidence, Singing Cyborgs and Other Gender Issues in Electrovocal Music', *Organised Sound* 8, no. 1 (2003), pp. 5–17.

[17] Kaja Silverman, *The Acoustic Mirror: The Female Voice in Psychoanalysis and Cinema* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988).

[18] Chion, *The Voice in Cinema*.

[19] Chion, *The Voice in Cinema*; Sunabacka, 'She is the Voice, She is the Sound'.

[20] Bosma, 'Bodies of Evidence', p. 12.

[21] Andra McCartney, 'Cyborg Experiences: Contradictions and Tensions of Technology, Nature, and the Body in Hildegard Westerkamp's "Breathing Room"', in *Music and Gender*, edited by Pirkko Moisala and Beverley Diamond (Urbana: University of Illinois Press: 2000), p. 322.

voices in electroacoustic music with a male storyteller. The man's voice remains central until 14:25 (over a third of the piece), thus reinforcing that eroticism is from the male perspective. But in the remainder of *Minuit*, Calon challenges and then sonically deconstructs this gendering in two key ways: first, through the use of a female narrator who takes over the authoritative role, and second, through the treatment of the male voice's disjointed texts and a splintering of the text through stretching, reverberation, and panning.

Electroacoustic works can highlight the performativity of the gendered voice by disrupting its perceived naturalised stability. Montreal acousmatic composer Robert Normandeau composed a cycle of works entitled *Onomatopoeias* made only from recorded voices at different ages: *Éclats de voix* (1991) – childhood, *Spleen* (1993) – adolescence, *Le renard et la rose* (1995) – adulthood, and *Palimpseste* (2005, 2006, 2009)[22] – old age. In his cycle, we can still recognise the vocal sound object at times, but the bodily source is obscured through expansion to impossible tessitura. The voice can no longer be perceived through the simple binary of male vs. female. *Spleen* uses only the recorded voices of male teenagers, but the transformed sounds reach much higher than even any typical female voice could. *Le renard et la rose* includes both male and female adult voices as sound sources, but Normandeau exploits what the internal vocal apparatus has produced through external technology until it is impossible to know the gendered origins of most of the sounds.

The composer can also transform the voice from speech to song. The speaking voice in particular is strongly tied to gendered identity, but many scholars identify song as having disruptive potential. Annette Schlichter points out that the speaking and singing voices can perform gender differently.[23] Certainly the castrato and countertenor vocal range and timbre defy assumptions about the male gendered voice. And numerous examples abound in popular music of singers whose singing voices complicate an assigning of gender (e.g. Prince, Tracy Chapman and Shamir). Using the example of a countertenor and a drag queen, Judith Ann Peraino argues that speaking and singing voices do not always coincide,[24] which, according to Annette Schlichter, means 'one vocal body might provide the site of a multiplicity of genders'.[25] While Peraino suggests that the female speaking voice is difficult to cover (hence why MTF transsexuals aim for an ambiguous voice), 'the singing voice … seems to open the door of gender with the opening of the throat'.[26] The singing voice, thus, can disrupt heteronormative performances of the gendered voice.

In electroacoustic music, transformation from speech to song can take several sonic forms. But in each case, the composer shifts away from the speaking voice and its linguistic content to focus on contour and timbre. In the electroacoustic context, this timbre often resists easy gendered labelling. Alvin Lucier's famous *I am sitting in a room* (1969) demonstrates 'the natural resonant frequencies of the room articulated by speech' achieved through repeated playback; the work also reveals Lucier's idiosyncratic stuttering, which is 'smoothed

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[22] Normandeau completed five versions of *Palimpseste* before finding satisfaction with the sixth and final version in 2009.
[23] Annette Schlichter, 'Do Voices Matter? Vocality, Materiality, Gender Performativity', *Body & Society* 17, no. 1 (2011), pp. 31–52.
[24] Judith Ann Peraino. 'Listening to Gender', p. 60.
[25] Schlichter, 'Do Voices Matter?', p. 48.
[26] 'Listening to Gender', p. 63.

out' until only its rhythmic quality remains. The resulting contour of resonant frequencies resists gendering as either male or female. Paul Lansky similarly hides the linguistic details of the voices of himself and his wife in *Smalltalk* (1988) and *Late August* (1989) through software that eliminates the specific words while maintaining the contour, rhythm and pitch of their talking.

Through granular time-stretching and harmonisations, Truax transforms – often slowly and, therefore, more noticeably – the spoken words into song, as individual phonemes are stretched and sustained, a process that enhances disruptive queer processes already at work. The process of granulation begins by dividing a sound into 'short enveloped grains of 50 ms duration or less'.[27] The composer can independently manipulate duration, pitch, volume, speed or phase in these grains. Once this granulation has occurred the composer can 'stretch' the sound without altering the pitch, creating 'slow motion sound'. Truax asserts that granular time stretching reveals 'the inner timbral character of the sound' and enhances 'the volume or perceived magnitude of the sound'.[28] When applied to the voice, Truax argues that there is 'a sensuousness, if not an erotic quality to the sound'.[29]

In addition, Truax's technique unsettles (i.e., queers) binaries between human and nature. The vocal utterances 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'.[30] Like 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 in a queer sonic orgy inhabited by the voices, soundscape and listener.

Despite these many options for transforming the voice in the electroacoustic studio, the material voice remains utterly of the body, as it emerges only through an enactment of the physiological vocal apparatus. But this material voice also articulates language – the semiotics and syntax of verbal communication. Thus, the voice mediates between two gendered concepts: the body, which is feminine, natural and primal, and language, which is cerebral, masculine and civilised. The voice sits at the fringes of two seemingly stable concepts, flipping between being of the body (i.e. feminine) and of language (i.e. masculine), thus participating in a queer process: the voice negotiates and resists the tension of this gendered binary.

Thus, language has strong ties to the body, as articulated by the voice. Using the voice to emphasise the tension between language and body is a queer process. Spoken language often betrays the lived experiences of the body, including cultural and familial bonds. In *Für Dich – For You* (2005), Hildegard Westerkamp highlights her immigrant identity as family and friends recite Rainer Maria Rilke's poem 'Liebes-Lied' in both the original German and English translation with soundscape material from northern Germany and Vancouver in the background. Westerkamp emigrated to Canada as

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[27] Barry Truax, personal website, *Simon Fraser University*, www.sfu.ca/~truax/wsp (accessed 30 August 2016).
[28] Truax, personal website.
[29] Barry Truax, 'Homoeroticism and Electroacoustic Music: Absence and Personal Voice', *Organised Sound* 8 no. 1 (2003), p. 119.
[30] Barry Truax, 'Discovering Inner Complexity: Time-Shifting and Transposition with a Real-Time Granulation Technique', *Computer Music Journal* 18, no. 2 (1994), p. 46.

an adult, and has since incorporated her immigrant identity – with two languages, two cultures and two homes – into her works. In *MotherVoiceTalk* (2008), Westerkamp assembles excerpts of Japanese-Canadian artist and poet Roy Kiyooka (1926–1994) speaking and inter-viewing his mother Mary Kiyoshi, in addition to the recorded voices of Westerkamp and her own mother, Agnes Westerkamp. Japanese exposes Kiyooka's feelings of attachment and belonging to his mother and cultural heritage while German allows Westerkamp to reflect on her own immigrant experiences.[31]

The voice articulating language can betray the body as 'other', in this case, the immigrant body. One key sonic element that highlights the immigrant experience in *MotherVoiceTalk* is the phrase 'umeiboshi throat', which Westerkamp suggests refers to 'Kiyooka's own voice, born and steeped in a strong Japanese tradition'.[32] 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 internalised. Westerkamp also states 'with [her] German accent' the same phrase: 'umeiboshi throat'. In *MotherVoiceTalk*, the voice mediates a troubling relationship between body and language, one that unites to betray Roy, Mary, Agnes and Westerkamp as enemies of the West during World War II. The queer listening process is heightened as the listener is disturbed by any self-identification with the speaker (which equates a self-identification with 'the enemy'); thus she flips to identification *against*, but will constantly be brought back to identification *with* the voice.

Electroacoustic composers can also destabilise the body and language through manipulation of the voice, dismantling language and enhancing the body. The voice's relationship to language has a long legacy in electroacoustic music. The Studio di fonologia Musicale at the Radio Audizioni Italiane (RAI) in Milan was established by Luciano Berio and Bruno Maderna to complement activities in Cologne and Paris. The name betrays the studio's interest in voice and speech (an influence of Umberto Eco), and the possibility that electronic technology could aid in the study of the sounds of language. Phonology and electronic music were both viewed as scientific realms that could be best served through systematic organisation. But those at the studio also used the voice and its linguistic utterances for musical ends. Berio's famous *Thema – Omaggio a Joyce* (1958–59) breaks down the recording of his then-wife Cathy Berberian performing 'Sirens' from James Joyce's *Ulysses* (1922). Individual words and phonemes are isolated, stretched, and recontextualised to destabilise the role of language as communication and to highlight intrinsic musical features of rhythm, contour and timbre.

Similarly, *Songs of Songs* uses granular time stretching to expose the inner timbral quality of sound, which, in the case of recorded text, means the semiotic meaning is inconsequential. These works exploit the voice's queer mediation between the body and language by enhancing the body's presence. The materiality of the body is central to queering the voice for it performs the gendered body within social structures of power. Roland Barthes names this materiality the 'grain',

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[31] Alexa Woloshyn, 'Playing with the Voice and Blurring Boundaries in Hildegard Westerkamp's "MotherVoiceTalk"', *eContact!* 14.4 (March 2013).

[32] Hildegard Westerkamp, 'An Imaginary Meeting: The Making of *MotherVoiceTalk* (2008)', in *The Art of Immersive Soundscapes*, ed. Pauline Minevich and Ellen Waterman (Regina, SK: University of Regina Press, 2013), p. 149.

which is the geno-song of vocal utterances; the geno-song, which is the 'body in the voice as it sings',[33] makes audible 'the physiology of vocal production'.[34]

The external technology of the electroacoustic composer's studio draws attention to the materiality of the voice. For example, in *Song of Songs*, Truax stretches words at the end of phrases so that their meaning is indiscernible, or at least inconsequential, and the 'body in the voice as it sings'[35] – or in this case, is made to sing through time stretching – becomes the focus.[36] Barthes's 'grain' and Truax's 'grain' are not synonymous: the former is an aesthetic concept, while the latter is a technical term. However, through Truax's granular time stretching, the listener can encounter Barthes's grain; this grain of the voice is emphasised – even magnified – so that whatever 'grain' may have been indiscernible before is now apparent and perceivable.

Queer Processes in Listening to Electroacoustic Music

Music is the 'nexus of erotic activity and sexual pleasure';[37] music's eroticism is due not only to plot and text, but also the intimacy of social music-making, mappings of sexual climax on large-scale form, and the arousal of the listener. Electroacoustic works with recorded texts abound, and many include erotic texts that continue music's overt connection to this 'erotic activity and sexual pleasure'. For example, the texts of *Song of Songs* and *Minuit* both describe erotic acts. Other electroacoustic works use sonic signifiers of sexual climax in ways that traditional music works cannot. John Corbett and Terri Kapsalis note the examples of 'the female voice simulating sexual bliss ... [that] have become a staple of dance music from hip hop to Belgian new beat'.[38] They briefly note the existence of examples in art music contexts, such as 'Erotica' from Pierre Schaeffer's and Pierre Henri's *Symphonie pour un homme seul* (1949–50). These sounds are also heard in Calon's *Minuit*, allowing its eroticism to be audible through accelerated breaths, moans and groans of a female voice.

Moving beyond these plain examples of eroticism in music, Suzanne Cusick and Jodie Taylor both ask whether music *is* sex due to the physical pleasure gained by creating and listening to music, and to its primary status in one's identity. Taylor expands Cusick's reflection in her examination of what she calls musico-sexual fetishism, or auralism, and concludes that there is a 'circulation of intimate erotic pleasures in and through music' – that we use music 'to engender, experience, and intensify the erotic'.[39] Sarah Hankins identifies this arousal as fundamental to a queer relationship with

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[33] Roland Barthes, 'Grain of the Voice', in *Image-Music-Text* (London: Fontata, 1977), p. 188. Geno-song and pheno-song are modelled on Julia Kristeva's concepts of geno-text and pheno-text, first explicated in *Séméiôtiké: recherches pour une sémanalyse* (Paris: Édition du Seuil, 1969).

[34] Jarman-Ivens *Queer Voices*, p. 5

[35] Barthes, 'The Grain of the Voice', p. 188.

[36] This is the opposite of attempts to 'clean up' digital recordings of the voice to remove 'imperfections' from the external technology or evidence of the vocal apparatus (e.g., breathing).

[37] Jodie Taylor, 'Taking It in the Ear: On Musico-Sexual Synergies and the (Queer) Possibility that Music is Sex', *Continuum: Journal of Media & Cultural Studies* 26/4 (August 2012), p. 604.

[38] John Corbett and Terri Kapsalis, 'Aural Sex: The Female Orgasm in Popular Sound', *The Drama Review* 40, no. 3 (Fall 1996), p. 103.

[39] Taylor, 'Taking It in the Ear', p. 612.

music: 'Arousal opens, extends, and receives; it dissolves boundaries not only between our bodies and objects in the outside world but also between different and even contradictory parts of our selves'.[40] This arousal may call to mind the modern definition of 'queer' if one imagines the arousal of a listener for a voice of the same gender. But gender and sexuality is not what makes listening and arousal through listening queer: it's the destabilised delineation between self/other and subject/object – the unsettling of tidy, socially-situated boundaries.

The voice creates an intensified aural experience for the listener who is drawn into the voice's intimacy. The power of the voice is heightened through the absence of visuals in an acousmatic listening experience. Nicola Dibben 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.[41] While many of the musical works discussed in this article were originally designed for live diffusion, most, if not all, repeated listenings will be experienced through an individual's playback device. The sounds heard are just for the listener; voices heard, even of crowds, seem inside one's head when heard through headphones, and extraneous noises are shut out to allow a more intensified, detailed listening experience.[42] For example, the sensuality of the female voice's utterances in *Song of Songs*, with slow and deliberate articulations of 's' in particular, is enhanced for me through this intimate listening context, as it feels like I am privy to personal and private details.

More than simply intimate, acousmatic listening is unsettling, argues Linda Dusman, as the listening context forces the unsettled listener to focus attention back onto his/her body:

> Without a performer there to instruct my listening via facial expressions, body movements, and the shaping of the sound itself – and then to smile at me at the end of the process – I have no idea whether I have successfully negotiated this sonic terrain.[43]

Schlichter points to additional unsettling possibilities of the voice, ones that electroacoustic music can exploit. She points to the voice as key to the performance of gender and to the undermining of 'a coherently gendered, intelligible body'.[44] She states that 'while the voice might work in conjunction with heteronormativity, it also indicates the gendered subject's potential to disrupt the illusion of coherences'.[45] For instance, because 'a subject's speaking and singing voice do not necessarily function within the same register, one vocal body might provide the site of a multiplicity of genders'.[46] Thus, in *Song of Songs*, the listener is unsure about how many voices (and thus bodies) are present and which genders they might be; this incoherence is unsettling.

[40] Sarah Hankins, 'Queer Relationships with Music and an Experiential Hermeneutics for Musical Meaning', *Women and Music: A Journal of Gender and Culture* 18 (2014), p. 101.
[41] Nicola Dibben, 'Vocal Performance and the Projection of Emotional Authenticity', in *The Ashgate Research Companion to Popular Musicology*, ed. Derek B. Scott (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009), pp. 317–32.
[42] Jonathan Sterne, *The Audible Past: Cultural Origins of Sound Reproduction* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003).
[43] Linda Dusman, 'No Bodies There: Absence and Presence in Acousmatic Performance', in *Music and Gender*, ed. Pirkko Moisala and Beverley Diamond (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2000), p. 339.
[44] Dusman, 'Do Voices Matter?', p. 47.
[45] Dusman, 'Do Voices Matter', p. 47.
[46] Dusman, 'Do Voices Matter', p. 48.

Karlheinz Stockhausen's groundbreaking *Gesang der Jünglinge* (1955–56) sonically depicts the songs of praise to God from Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego through a layering of voice and machine. Stockhausen recognised the expressive nuance of the voice – its grain – and so to minimise timbral dissonance, he used the voice of only one adolescent boy. However, *Gesang* presents a sonified voice that '[works] against a coherently gendered, intelligible body'.[47] This is achieved not only because Stockhausen electronically 'disrupts the illusion of coherences',[48] but also because a single voice seems to occupy any number of uttering bodies that sonically surround the listener. The shift between a single voice and a multitude of voices disrupts identification with the voice, a queer process for the listener. This queer process of identification is furthered unsettled through the arousal in the listener who takes great pleasure in Stockhausen's creation, a transgressive, and thus queer,[49] pleasure that comes through the vocalisations of a pre-pubescent boy reciting a religious text.

One key to the listener perceiving bodily presence in an electroacoustic work is spatialisation. All listening situates one's own body in relation to the sound source, in our case, the body producing the voice. Electroacoustic composers' focus on spatialisation (i.e., placement and movement of sound objects in the auditory space) can be as – and sometimes more – important than timbre, texture and structure. The resultant works can perceptibly enact Jarman-Ivens's queer third space.

Both Wayne Koestenbaum and Serena Guarracino point to the voice's penetration of the body.[50] Because of the sexualized gender identities invoked by the metaphors of perception, Jarman-Ivens argues 'the detachment of voice from body renders unstable the signifiers at play here in such a way as to make the voice itself a space highly productive of the queer'.[51] For Jarman-Ivens, the moment the voice's sound-waves leave the body and are hanging in the air, there is 'the possibility for multiple gender identities'[52] and only upon perception does that identity take shape, in the listener's perception.

This, then, is the 'third space' between the voicing body and listener's body: the listener negotiates a relationship to the perceived voice, one that alternates between 'identification with and identification against the voice by the listener, and in that identification/anti-identification is contained a site for the emergence of queer'.[53] Spatialisation in electroacoustic works aurally situates the listener in relation to the vocal sound object. The third space can be amplified by shifting the listener's subject–object position through placement and movement in the mix.

In *MotherVoiceTalk*, the first person narrative and dry vocal staging facilitates an easy identification *with* the voice. But when Westerkamp asks 'Will you join me?' the shift to second person jolts the listener into identification *against* the voice. In *Minuit*, the listener engages

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[47] Dusman, 'Do Voices Matter?', p. 47.
[48] Dusman, 'Do Voices Matter?', p. 47.
[49] Hankins, 'Queer Relationships with Music', p. 83.
[50] Wayne Koestenbaum, *The Queen's Throat: Opera, Homosexuality, and the Mystery of Desire* (New York: Poseidon Press, 1993) and Serena Guarracino, '"It's Not Over Till the Fat Lady Sings": The Weight of the Opera Diva' in *Historicizing Fat in Anglo-American Culture*, ed. Elena Levy-Navarro (Columbus, OH: Ohio State University Press, 2010).
[51] Jarman-Ivens *Queer Voices*, p. 3.
[52] Jarman-Ivens *Queer Voices*, p. 3.
[53] Jarman-Ivens *Queer Voices*, p. 2.

in a flip-flop of identification that is intensified by the obvious gendered subject position of the voice: female orgasmic sounds are situated predominantly in the mix, and this reinforces a male perspective, which objectifies the female body and the sounds of its pleasure.[54] The listener will flip between identification with the male perspective and the female voice inside the listener's head. Depending on the gender and sexual identity of the listener, this flip-flopping could be all the more unsettling and disturbing (i.e. queer).

Changes to the mix can create a perception of movement that amplifies the alternation between the identification/anti-identification Jarman-Ivens describes. In the third section of Normandeau's *Spleen* and *Le renard et la rose*, the listener is startled out of a previously stable listening position.[55] The abrupt movement, through panning and increased dynamics to raise the vertical span, reminds the listener that she does not have agency – that she is not the subject. However, moments of stability switch the perspective back to identification. The movement in *I am sitting in a room* is much more gradual. At first, the dry vocal staging and first person narrative facilitates identification with the voice. However, each subsequent playback creates distance between the voice and the listener. Nonetheless, this distance achieves the unsettling (i.e. queer) acousmatic listening experience that Dusman notes, as one is forced back into awareness of one's own body.

Queer Matters

Electroacoustic works that are named, embraced and intentionally created as 'queer' are political and vital acts for our modern age. In a 2003 article, Barry Truax noted the lack of electroacoustic works dealing directly with texts and stories that counter heteronormativity.[56] More than an increase of homosexual stories is at work in Truax's music and the other works discussed here: I argue that queer processes abound in electroacoustic music. To queer electroacoustic music is to undermine its status quo as a masculine heteronormative space. We can see similar shifts with the push to name and celebrate female electroacoustic composers and musicians.[57]

My desired results are twofold. First, I encourage composers to harness the enhanced 'third space' of the medium, to actively disrupt heteronormative renderings of the voice, and to exploit the voice's mediating position between the body and language. Second, to listeners who may avoid acousmatic electroacoustic music in favour of more traditional or mixed genres, I ask you to start listening to this music. 'Queer' does not mean gay or homosexual: it means to disrupt or unsettle; it means that which is unusual or strange. But I actually want us to also maintain that connection, especially if the concept makes a composer or listener uncomfortable. We should all aim to queer our disciplines and our activities. Because the status quo can

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[54] Corbett and Kapsalis 'Aural Sex', p. 103.
[55] Alexa Woloshyn, 'Wallace Berry's Structural Processes and Electroacoustic Music: A Case Study Analysis of Robert Normandeau's Onomatopoeias Cycle', *eContact!* 13.3 (June 2011).
[56] Truax, 'Homoeroticism and Electroacoustic Music', p. 117.
[57] Tara Rodgers, *Pink Noises: Women on Electronic Music and Sound* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010); Andra McCartney, 'Creating Worlds for my Music to Exist: Women Composers of Electroacoustic Music in Canada', *International Alliance for Women in Music Journal* 2, no. 2 (1996), pp. 16–19; Andra McCartney, 'Gender, Genre and Electroacoustic Soundmaking Practices', *Intersections: Canadian journal of music/Revue canadienne de musique* 26, no. 2 (2006), pp. 20–48.

lead, at best, to boredom and a lack of creativity, and at worst to the kind of destructive and oppressive systems and structures based on sexism, xenophobia and homophobia. Vocal electroacoustic music sounds queer. And this matters.