PROFOUND LISTENING:
POETICS, LIVING INQUIRY, ARTS-BASED PRACTICE
AND BEING-PRESENCE IN SOUNDWALK - SOUNDSCAPE COMPOSITION

by

Andrea Anath Dancer

B.F.A. The University of British Columbia, 2003
M.F.A. The University of British Columbia, 2005

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in

THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE AND POSTDOCTORAL STUDIES

(Cross-Faculty Inquiry in Education)

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA
(Vancouver)

October 2014

© Andrea Anath Dancer
Abstract

As an artistic practice and a knowledge base, acoustic arts-based research is nascent.

An interest in sound is emerging across trans-disciplinary fields ranging from urban geography to bioacoustics to architecture to experimental music. In Education, attention to sound produces barely a whisper. This thesis explores how relationships between listeners and the sound environment (soundscape) evolve and are articulated through arts-based means: a hybrid form of sound art, electroacoustic music and acoustic ecology called soundscape composition.

As a soundscape composer, my artistic and professional trajectory is steeped in hybridity: poetry, radio documentary-feature, sound art, visual arts, and arts education spanning twenty plus years. For these reasons, this thesis consists of:

- writing (scholarship, narrative, and poetics),
- listening (soundwalking, field recording, and soundscape compositions),
- processing (artistic, literary, and curatorial practice across genres),
- documenting (living and poetic inquiry, research, reflection on works), and as a
- pedagogic and hybrid means of knowledge acquisition.

The manuscript explicates, theorizes, tells stories, offers poetry and prose, and opens into a series of listening salons available online at http://circle.ubc.ca/handle/2429/50784 – all toward the aim of enhancing listener experience in the contemporary world, a place overwhelmed by sound and noise. It also engages the listener-reader in a process of coming-to-know acoustically, intellectually, and experientially through an open-ended process that questions rigorously and answers keenly. This is in keeping with the nature of sound, listener engagement, and how listener-to-sound relationships intersect with Heidegger’s notion of Being in the world – with awareness, rather than certitude.
The methodology situates in arts-based research as living and poetic inquiry in education. Themes include writing and speaking the experience of sound, listening as Being, soundwalking and soundscape composition as research, listener-to-soundscape relationships, mentors and practitioners, the state and practice of soundscape composition, and a positioning of myself and this work within the field.

As I interrogate sound, I ask about who I am in a sensate-mediated world so that a robust future of acoustic awareness, sound environments, sound art practice and scholarship avails itself to yet-to-Be initiated artists, educators, writers, composers – as well as the everyday listeners we comprise.

All audio is available online at http://circle.ubc.ca/handle/2429/50784
Preface

This dissertation is an original intellectual and artistic product of the author, Andrea Anath Dancer.

The soundscape composition, *Sounds Like Home*, is an original work that was commissioned by New Adventures in Sound Art in conjunction with the Canadian Broadcast Corporation (CBC) as part of the residency program for the Radio without Boundaries Festival. The composition premiered on the CBC radio program, *Living Out Loud* and I received appropriate copyright permissions for the final composition and retain copyright over all original audio recordings.

The *Cloist(au)ral* and *Walking Sound* soundscape compositions are original works that were broadcast by Radio Vltava, Czech Republic for the Radio(a)justica program. In both cases, the copyright agreement is non-exclusive.

The *Walking Sound* soundscape composition was produced in collaboration with Michal Kindernay and I was the lead producer. I maintain copyright over my own audio recordings that comprise the final composition. I have obtained permission from Michal Kindernay to use the composition as part of this research.

The soundscape composition, *For the Love of Dead Meat* (aka *Cowcaphony*), is an original work that was part of *V černém oblaku. Edukativní program k výstavě decadence now* (The Black Cloud Ritual: The Educational Program for the *Decadence Now!* Exhibition), a collaboration between Uměleckoprůmyslové Museum U(P)M (The Decorative Arts Museum), Galerie Rudolfinum and Univerzita Karlova v Praze (Charles University in Prague, Pedagogic faculty) under the leadership of Dr. Marie Fulková. Subsequent research was designed and conducted under the leadership of Dr. Fulková and several publications, duly referenced, indicate I am a co-author. No texts from those publications are reproduced in this manuscript without due reference.

All photographs are original works of art © Andrea Dancer, 2014.
# Table of Contents

**Abstract** .......................................................................................................................... ii

**Preface** ............................................................................................................................... iv

**Table of Contents** .............................................................................................................. v

**Acknowledgements** .......................................................................................................... xi

**Dedication** .......................................................................................................................... xii

**Pre Amble: The Sound Map** .......................................................................................... 1

**Oeuvre One**  *Dis/ Integrated Listening* ......................................................................... 7

*And without even* ................................................................................................................. 8

*Listening salon A: Spokes in long grass* .......................................................................... 10

*List: A tilt of the ear* ............................................................................................................. 11

*Repre *sound* ation: In/congruence* ................................................................................ 14

*Intra poetica* ......................................................................................................................... 18

*Centaur* ................................................................................................................................. 19

*Repre *sound* ation: Intergration* ...................................................................................... 21

*Intra poetica* ......................................................................................................................... 23

*Swimming in treetops* ......................................................................................................... 24

*Notional potentiate* ............................................................................................................. 25

*Phenomenal sound* ............................................................................................................. 26

*Listening salon B: Cisterna* ............................................................................................... 31

*Sound un kind* ..................................................................................................................... 32

*Ur bane* ................................................................................................................................. 32

*Nefarious uses of sound* ...................................................................................................... 34
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page</th>
<th>Section</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>36</td>
<td>St. Elmo’s fire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38</td>
<td>Silence: The particularity of sound</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40</td>
<td>Intra poetica</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41</td>
<td>I am touched</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>42</td>
<td>Oeuvre Two Insitu Tropes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>43</td>
<td>Listening salon C: Sounds Like Home – part one</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>44</td>
<td>Intra poetica</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45</td>
<td>Transience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46</td>
<td>Notional: Speaking listening appropriation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>53</td>
<td>Reconstitutions of sound-Being</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>54</td>
<td>Pro found listeners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55</td>
<td>The rebound howl</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60</td>
<td>Soleful magnanimity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>62</td>
<td>Soundscape: tropes of sound and listener</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65</td>
<td>Composing as sonance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>68</td>
<td>The listener’s turn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70</td>
<td>Riffs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>74</td>
<td>Intra poetica</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>75</td>
<td>Standing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>75</td>
<td>To stand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>75</td>
<td>Standing too</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>76</td>
<td>Composing sound with words</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>83</td>
<td>Speaking tribulations</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Oeuvre Three *Insitu Selves* .............................................................................................................. 86
  Intra poetica ................................................................................................................................. 87
  Ceramist league ........................................................................................................................... 88
Cultivating the poet’s ear .................................................................................................................. 89
  Intra poetica ................................................................................................................................. 93
  Sitting in a hollow, ........................................................................................................................ 94
  Listening salon D: Sounds Like Home –part two ......................................................................... 95
  Intra poetica ................................................................................................................................. 96
  Fish bones in the midden ............................................................................................................... 97
The room that roars: Radio.............................................................................................................. 98
  Against convention: Radio art ....................................................................................................... 101
Sound walking .................................................................................................................................. 105
  Ahistorical: Appropriations of sound ............................................................................................ 106
  Another acoustic appropriation ..................................................................................................... 107
  Design in flux .................................................................................................................................. 109
Composing with sound ................................................................................................................... 111
  Disphonia ....................................................................................................................................... 111
  Euphonia ......................................................................................................................................... 113
  Contingency I: Becoming-deterritorialized sound ....................................................................... 117
  Contingency II: Soundwalk-soundscape composition ................................................................. 118
  Contingency III: Cagey conversation ............................................................................................ 119
Oeuvre Four Death in the Palace ...................................................................................................... 126
  Intra poetica .................................................................................................................................. 127
  Even song ....................................................................................................................................... 128
Oeuvre Five  The Acoustic Labyrinth .................................................................................. 170

Notional: Time-space in sound ......................................................................................... 171

Prague: Listening intercession .......................................................................................... 176

Prague: Cloist(au)ral and Walking Sound ......................................................................... 177

Listening salon G: Cloist(au)ral ...................................................................................... 180

Cloistaural: Sequestered listening ..................................................................................... 181

Being becoming-sound ...................................................................................................... 185

A-historical phonia ............................................................................................................ 186

Intra poetica ...................................................................................................................... 188

Bog people ......................................................................................................................... 189

Walking Sound: Gardens to trains to swans ................................................................... 190

Refrain: That which be-comes home ............................................................................... 194

Listening salon H: Walking Sound .................................................................................. 195

Com position crossing ....................................................................................................... 196

Intra poetica ...................................................................................................................... 198

Walking in sound ............................................................................................................... 199

Inter route and day ............................................................................................................ 201

Out of chaotic listening .................................................................................................... 203

Oeuvre Six  Toward Other Operandi .................................................................................. 204

Pedagogic intimations ....................................................................................................... 205

Design by process .............................................................................................................. 209

Acoustic arts as living and poetic inquiry ......................................................................... 215

Toward a poetics of sound ................................................................................................. 217

Acoustalogy ........................................................................................................................ 218
Acknowledgements

An audacious journey compels many turns and necessitates many a generous hand, sagacious word, guiding arm, step-in-kind, leg-up, song on the breeze, opening of heart and mind, light held out in darkness, and the assurance of another sunrise when dusk approaches. Gratitude, much gratitude to all named and unnamed who shared some part of this trek with me.

To Dr. Karen Meyer, committee supervisor, who listens for the tree whispering in the seed and then sings the tree into being, without whom there would be no sustainability. To Dr. Carl Leggo, rare bard within scholarship, whose turns inspire. To Dr. Marie Fulková, who knows so well the necessity of abiding and the necessity of articulating one’s place with a courageous heart and fierce intellect. To Dr. Ellexis Boyle whose constancy is dauntless. To Lois Yip for extraordinary generosity. To Diane Sutherland, consistent writer-in-kind.

To all those in the Acoustic Ecology, Sound and Radio Art communities, to the wielders of sound-words, who have inspired, mentored, and listened with me. To Hildegard Westerkamp, Michal Kindernay, and to Sarah Atkinson for her soulful cello and Kate Romain, for her joyous accordion, all listeners-in-kind.

To my father, Anthony, whose spirit sustains me always. To my mom, Pat, and step-father, John, for their persistent belief. To my children, Aviva and Eliya, the future already present. To Jiri, for being in the journey with me, every step.

Finally, I wish to acknowledge the generous financial support of the University of British Columbia and the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council that provided the funding for this project.
Dedication

To the world of listening,
to listeners who take time to be presence.

To the richness of the sound environment,
the soundscape, may it enrich rather than overwhelm all life.

To all those for whom listening is as urgent as breathing.

To the sounds of silence.

For the silent and whispering beings,
for our call to listen.
Pre Amble: The Sound Map

Sound is amorphous, fluid and invisible. It does not behave like a visual-based medium and therefore does not adhere well to linear ways of working or thinking. It is a unique way of Being, coming to know, and of understanding being-in-time as profoundly relational.

This manuscript is similarly organized as profoundly relational so that the reader-listener increases awareness of sound through different written and acoustic mediums. Readers leave the page and take the listening into everyday life with them. Thereby, through the manuscript, they become a deeper listener, more aware of the potency of being in sound, of the soundscape, of themselves in it. That knowledge carries into different fields reinforced by the scholarship that attends the work.

The manuscript is as much an artistic and literary work – an experience of coming to listen through sound-based artistic and literary production and practices – as it is a scholarly treatise about listening and sound.

Each instance of writing and listening nests into another, each strengthens a presence of understanding that is cumulative. In this way, the manuscript is structured as a deepening listening practice, tracing my own coming to awareness through multiple practices. It constitutes a walk through sound, a soundwalk, that I have designed and am inviting you to attend. We journey together. Here is the map of the route.

There are six openings, Oeuvres, which are sections. Within each section, there are chapters that explicate about the theme of the Oeuvre and then sub-chapters that deal with different aspects of each chapter’s theme.

Entwined into each sub-chapter are artistic works: poetic inquiry indicated by the reoccurring title, Intra poetica, with inter-text that situates the poem following – but can be read before or after the poem; Listening salons that prompt the reader to listen to audio from soundscape compositions; creative prose and stories; and theoretical quotation that intervenes as prose.
The rationale for this last category is that the text-quotation is intended to span both prose and theory, as is Deleuze and Guattari’s sway, but not intended to be a theoretical treatise as such – it is prose with a theoretical bent among prose.

The manuscript’s primary theoretical tethering, Heidegger’s notion of *Appropriation* (1969, 1972), is also entwined through the piece in proximity to what it is explicated and indicated by the banner *Notional* in the sub-chapter heading. As the experience of Being acoustically diverges from traditional phenomenological theorizing (usually associated with visuality), what is being proposed is tentative and not definitive. As such, it also creatively reaches for acoustic ways-of-understanding worldliness. This does not devalue the rigor of textual analysis, but focuses tightly on Heidegger’s last lectures and, in order to traverse the visual to acoustic chasm, proceeds with caution as well as daring.

Each Oeuvre section deals with a different phase of coming to know acoustically:

Oeuvre One, *Dis/integration*, begins the journey and introduces the initiate to different types of sound (including silence, noise, and discrete sounds) discussing its effects on human and creature kind.

Oeuvre Two, *Insitu Tropes*, speaks to the lineage that conceived of soundscape composition, its key practitioners and concepts.


Oeuvre Four, *Death in the Palace*, the first case study is about the extensive travels of audio recordings made about an industrial cattle barn and the ensuing soundscape composition, *Cowcaphony*.

Oeuvre Five, *The Acoustic Labyrinth*, is the second case study tracing a form of soundscape composition based in soundwalking and includes two evolving compositions, *Cloist(au)ral* and *Walking Sound*.

In Oeuvre Six, the last section, *Toward other operandi*, pedagogical implications are sketched out from within arts-based research. A treatise about the research design, *Design by process*, is initiated.

The piece ends with...no, not to give too much away. Arrive as you arrive.
The chapters in each section do not always start at the beginning of each section. At times, creative works, prose, poetry and listening salons¹ (audio recordings and parts of soundscape compositions) intervene. They do so to preference experiential ways of coming to know about listening, themes, and aspects of theory or explication before the explication itself. This is to enrich the treatise, but more than enrich, to also provide different ways of engaging with the work and coming to know – acoustically-based and experientially-privileged.

Chapters are minimally numbered to indicate that there is no hierarchy of headings, although one is implied by the Table of Contents. This is simply an organizing strategy – each chapter and sub chapter works relationally with what precedes and processes through the different writing and listening genres.

*Listening salons A-H*² are essential parts of the manuscript. They are its heartbeat. Listening to sounds brings the experience to the fore so that the writing, creative and explication, are more than abstraction.

Without listening (and on great earphones), the manuscript and its acoustic promise are profoundly muted. The listening salons also proceed relationally with the themes in each chapter and are interventions along our sound walk – intended to deepen listening awareness as well as reinforce understanding about compositional strategies as my own work evolved.

In this way, the soundscape compositions shift and progress in technical and compositional refinement as you, the listener, deepens your appreciation and understanding of sound.

¹ Please consider listening to the audio (Listening Salons) as you encounter them.

² At this time, embedding digital audio or video sources into the manuscript is problematic as the research library system, which harvests doctoral theses, excludes ones with digital material embedded. For this reason alone, I’ve not embedded the audio – which runs the risk that reader-listeners will read without accessing the linked audio or listening to the accompanying CD with the audio – really, quite an impediment for an acoustically-based piece of research. **Major compositions are also available on my website at [www.andreadancer.wordpress.com](http://www.andreadancer.wordpress.com)** or all recordings can be accessed at [http://circle.ubc.ca/handle/2429/50784](http://circle.ubc.ca/handle/2429/50784)
The overall research questions guiding all the work are:

- How do listener-to-soundscape relations shift and deepen through listening while soundwalking?
- How is this deepening awareness evoked in aspects of soundscape composition?

While in the process of artistic production, iterations and variations of questions arose that were concretized during the post-production phase as part of framing the research around these case studies. The overall research questions ratified particular questions posed around different acoustically investigated genres as they are stated throughout the manuscript, such as in poetry, radio documentary-feature, sound art and other writing investigations, toward asking how the soundscape compositions, as a conjunction of these interconnected genres, instantiate deepening listening experiences. These query experiential learning as a coming-to-know in acoustically diverse ways through the multiplicity inherent in this form of soundscape composition.

The manuscript is comprises of two major case studies. The first is a soundscape composition entitled, Cowcaphony, which became a soundscape study, educational research project, and theoretical treatise. This section, more than the others, is cohesive and shows extensively the application and range of possibilities for soundscape compositions to inform research.

The other major case study is a recapitulation of two soundscape compositions, entitled Cloist(au)ral and Walking Sound, created from soundwalks undertaken in Prague in the Czech Republic. Each has the compositional aim of taking the notion of a soundwalk into the realm of soundscape composition, experimenting with taking a listener into a deeper appreciation of listening mimetic of an actual soundwalk – although the compositions accomplish this through mediated means such as recording and editing techniques, listening circumstances (radio, headphones, concert), and compositional elements.

Further, these soundscape compositions represent two differently nuanced approaches to process and outcome, the first is based in adherence to a route and the second forms across a day. They both attend to, and trouble, conventional notions of time-space and, as such, their treatment in the manuscript is in story, theory, and poetry with minimal exposition. By this point in the manuscript, the intention is to further open the manuscript's aims, so that meanings and nuances speak for themselves and to the now
acoustically acculturated and knowledgeable reader-listener in comprehensively acoustic ways. As *Walking Sound* is a pinnacle piece of audio recording and composition, it represents a culminating of the research and manuscript’s work.

The manuscript concludes in consideration of pedagogic implications within arts-based research, living and poetic inquiry. Here, too, the work sets out to offer possibilities rather than define or prescribe method. Soundscape composition, as a new genre and unexplored arts-based research practice, depends on open-ended considerations at this phase in its inclusion into pedagogy. In this spirit, after such considerations, the manuscript returns to storytelling about different ways of listening.

Now the sound map is sketched out. We can begin. How will we begin? It begins with a theme that runs through the work passionately, that of finding location and place in dislocation and displacement – in the story of an expat Canadian artist working and living in the Czech Republic.

I have a great sense of gratitude toward the Czech Republic – the lands, soundscapes, history, stories and people – where I’ve sojourned over the past twelve years. I spent my childhood between Canada and Europe: Germany and Britain, touring France, the Netherlands, Switzerland, Bavaria, Austria, but unable to cross into then Communist Czechoslovakia. My father, like many free thinkers of that era, looked to Communism as the alternative to a free market that had failed its people in the West during the pre-war Depression era. He aligned himself with the working class, the laborers as had his father in the 1930’s and in post-war England. A history buff and intellectual, he made us aware of how Czechs were betrayed repeatedly by the West during WWII and in the aftermath of the Prague Spring of 1968. I was only ten years old, but I remember watching grainy newscasts on our new television in Zweibrucken of tanks and people gathered in the streets of Prague in disbelief, of listening to a besieged Czech Radio’s urgent broadcasts telling the world what was happening, of Russian guns pointed at old and young – and my father railing against what had happened, being distraught and overcome with disillusionment that Russia could brandish its iron fist on a satellite country with which it was allied – and all taking place just across the border only a few hours’ drive and a few hundred miles from our doorstep.

It was our doorstep, as we did many such trips throughout Europe in our Volkswagen sedan with my father stopping to set up the camp stove for tea. After all, my father sometimes, over whisky with his
closest chum, made covert references to their having traveled on a Canadian Intelligence Corps mission from Germany where we were based with the Royal Canadian Air Force. My father, who worked in psychiatry, told an animated account of having travelled through former Yugoslavia into Romania by train to escort a mentally ill member of royalty out to the West for treatment. These were important stories for me growing up.

When the Soviet door closed, my father told us a great literate and cultured people of courage and spirit were suffering unjustly, that every day while we went about easy lives in Germany and Canada, great writers, artists, poets, composers, intellectuals and ordinary people were living under terrible circumstances. Silenced, but not forgotten, as the works of artists such as Alfons Mucha and Egon Schiele adorned my bedroom walls, and often our living room shook with the music of Antonín Dvořák and Bedřich Smetana. When I first came to the Czech Republic, it was a return to the Europe of my childhood, a return to the earlier gentler time of my father. The Czech colleagues and artists and friends consistently bore my father’s vision of them out and I’ve been deeply inspired by what I’ve encountered there.

The soundscape works created in the times I’ve lived in the Czech Republic are about coming to know through listening and of that listening amplified through being embraced by people and places where, as the interloper, I feel a passion for life unsurpassed. Is this not the expatriates’ call – to love that which they have chosen as a home place as much or more than the home they’ve left, to return the gift of being other through a differently experienced sense of self between those who belong and those who sojourn, and to do so with all ones heart and being? Is this not the essence of the call to listen?
In this beginning: a first audio instance invites listening to musical minutia, an argument sets forth, three stories speak of sound, a theoretical frame approaches and flees, a second audio instance invites listening divergence, three other acoustic considerations, silence.

Proceed, in the spirit of misadventure, misapprehension, mistakes, misreading, misunderstandings, misinterpretations, misalignments that open the acoustic field to radical resonance, as is its want.
And without even

The child-fingers reach for a hand and although they start the journey, they forget where they were going and the fingers stay in that reaching. A cloud rolls in, rolling slow and slowing it all down. Everything turns to wool.

I’m not sure what comes first, the heightened sensitivity of myself the child or the cultivated sensitivity of myself the artist. I know crowds, too much stimuli, have always been challenging for me. This life-long hypersensitivity is part of a chaotic way of being and something that both feeds and detracts from my artistic practice. What I do know is that it is defined by certain consistent aspects: a pervasive noise or static, an overabundant empathy, an ambivalence with process, a self peripheral to what I am experiencing – and an excess in sensate experience. There are always too many possibilities and ways of inhabiting what I’m experiencing.

A minute before, hundreds and hundreds and everywhere calling and scuffling around on the concrete floor. Her bowels loosen. A moment before, she was riding a merry-go-round and that was ok, no, it’s a tilt-a-whirl and she has to close her eyes, no, no, she’s trapped in the barrel of a kaleidoscope, colored glass, wool, and pebbles pelt her body against walls of herself, chaos, ghosts and reflections and she can’t make it stop. Her stomach chokes up.

Being centered is a moment by moment practice when inundated by too much sensate presence of being. In an era when being present is the ideal, I wonder if there is something about the strain of always being present that invites hypersensitivity. It seems to me that the locating of myself, my body and thoughts and environment, relationally is a fundamental aspect of coming to terms with my life experience. It seems to me that when I am at the center of my sense of who I am, where I am, and how my body is situated resonantly in relationship to the bodies and matter around me, then I am centered.
Spark white inside her head, sparklers starting out of white strands of hair whispering and anddddeeeeee eeessbees swarm around through her. She bees her name, aannddeeeeee, winding grinding down.

I cannot pretend to have mastered this awareness, but I am beginning to glean moments where I have achieved this in a deep listening state when soundwalking or when composing with sound — usually after a prolonged listening period as my listening practice evolves. In this doctoral thesis, I focus on how sound, the soundscape, locates and dislocates the self through listening.

The white sun into a white wall, white cliffs dissolving into white chalk, she is salt white spilling on the road, specks in a wind, she is is and not not here.

This experience of centered awareness is particularly relevant to the world of sound. Everything that makes a sound locates itself in terms of other animate and inanimate bodies continually in the process of attuning to the spectrum of pitches and frequencies emanating from themselves and others within their hearing and energetic range. In this way, the embodied self moving through acoustic space is the locus for the acoustic phenomenon (sound events) encountered, how that encounter is negotiated, and the encounter’s potential to either disconnect or integrate the listener into the experience of the acoustic field.

Then, her fingers reach the hand that lifts her and she can hear the rustle of his sleeve, the sandpaper of his cheek against hers, as he carries her out of that place and back into the fairgrounds, outside, under a blue sky and warm wind. She is back in children’s laughter. She sees that her teapot dress is up over her crinoline. It crinkles as she smooths it back down.

I remember the child I was and listen for the artist I am.
**Listening salon A: Spokes in long grass**

Listen to Spokes (01:36)
For an optimal listening experience, listen in a quiet room with high quality headphones or speakers
Condensed to 16 bit wav, originally 9800 Hz, M-audio Microtrack T microphone.
Audio link: [http://circle.ubc.ca/handle/2429/50784](http://circle.ubc.ca/handle/2429/50784)

3 My artistic practice has evolved, over the past twenty plus years, into one centered in sound and listening.

Attentive listening begins with the simplest of moments, the taking delight in the everyday, the subtle, the most overlooked parts of daily existence. Start with bicycle spokes circling around through long grass at the edge of a forest clearing. How high is the grass and how thick its stalks? How dense is the growth? Notice the sound of a bag on the handlebars and the bottle of water plonking around in it. How fast is the dismounted rider walking – do you hear her body, her breath, the rhythm of her steps?

Teasing out these nuances with a microphone and being able to listen for nuance and small pleasures– these abilities are not to be taken for granted. Everyday movement is not easy to render, and so, spokes in grass become a symphony of the highest order.

Listening, as you will come to eventually, such as in soundwalking and soundscape composition, is a way of addressing a schism between human and world and consequent habits of sensory imbalance.

The call to listen intently through a Listening Salon, an intentional break with the visuality of the text, is as much an invitation to be *other* as it is to reconceive Being, to be in a process continually working against itself, to cultivate listening as a kind-of passive activism.

Listen. Listen as intently as possible. Then, listen to yourself listening.
List: A tilt of the ear

We listen every day to the world around us. Why do we need to listen differently?

There is listening and then there is listening.

Listening habits change over time as the sound environment changes. No one can embody the listening habits of the past or of indigenous cultures or of other species — although there are resonant crossovers. I can listen to artifacts from diverse sound cultures or glean something about sounds in the past from literature or partake in a different listening culture through music or film — but a lifetime of being inside the soundscape I inhabit shapes my listening experience, especially in terms of the meaning associations.

Sound, however, is never a closed system. The complexity at play in sounds’ capriciousness is an expression of relationships and convergences between diverse sounds, environments and listeners. Listening relationships reconstitute as reciprocally location and dislocation. These flickerings constitute experiences of known and unknown, immersing and distracting, adhering and disconcerting — moments of coming-to-knowing experientially in a dynamism substantiated through increasing awareness and learning potencies.

Being profoundly embodied, listening starts with a location in the body: breath, heartbeat, nervous system, mind chatter, and body tempo. Then, the embodied experience moves out into the world and encounters itself in the world and as a part of it.

In a contemporary milieu, listening is a lost art as the sound environment, like many ecosystems, collapses with a profound loss of acoustic diversity. How does this mute-ification affect the experience and meaning of being in the world? What modalities are available to investigate and deal with this collapse?

Listening implies self-directed attention distinct from hearing, which is how sound interacts with the ears’ mechanisms. In listening, there is attention to being-in-the-world acoustically. This implies that being-as-listening holds the possibility of coming to understand changes in sound environments and human/creature experiences of those changes. Without those possibilities, awareness also collapses.
Meanings and experiences of sound are as diverse as the listeners who are imbedded in cultures and habituations of listening. Generally, listeners favor sound experiences that calm the nervous system and bring pleasure – however, this is not a given but rather a bias often based in the sound traditions and values of different cultures. What soothes in one tradition may excite in another. In Western European cultures, sound modalities are tethered to philosophical movements, such as the Enlightenment’s glorification of the pastoral and structures of music, for example.

Listening favors habituation – and breaks from habituation bring attention to a sound. If you grew up next to a railway track, the roar of trains may be pleasurable. Similarly, if you grew up next to highway, the monotony of tires punctuated by large transport trucks may act as a lullaby. If you grew up in a machine shop, the sounds of machines may make you feel at home, whereas if you grew up in a monastery, quietude puts you at ease.

If however, you grew up in a monastery and now live next to a highway, you are probably in trouble.

This argument also has its limitations, as there are types and levels of sounds that are psychologically numbing or physically damaging regardless, but the point is that understanding ones habituation and working within and without such states brings awareness into states of being. This awareness gains listening potency firstly though different listening experiences (especially in everyday sound milieus) and secondly through reflecting and writing about the experience of listening, about what sound is as lived experience in all aspects that impact worldly existence — self and other, ecologies of sound, mediated sound, listener to sound relationships, location and dislocation, experiential learning modalities, ways of inquiring and knowing, written and spoken tropes, being and time-space.

Within this plethora, this thesis’s work is by no means exhaustive but rather a richness from which other inquiries into listening and sound will emerge.

There is trepidation as well. After the sound occurrence, descriptions of sounds are particularly troublesome. In the gap between the experience of sound as sound and the meaning ascribed to it, much is transfigured (as into visual metaphors). Written and spoken language, although based in sound and natural sound environments, has evolved far from its origins and lost much of the complexity found in, for example, indigenous phonemes and even ways of using sound to describe sound-based phenomenon. Onomatopoeia simply don’t replicate but rather reference sound through culturally-
based language cues that attaches values, such as dog or cat or cow vocalizations being given a different word in different cultures.

So, how write about sound? Through the experience of sound because it is specific to listener-sound environment acculturation, through descriptions of sound occurrences expressive of listener awareness, through memories and associations that are particularly potent when listening to sounds deeply, through stories and through language that tethers to its oral traditions, such as poetry.

And, in attempts to theorize and explain the invisible, fluid, and ephemeral nature of sound.

In all instances, a poetics of sound is grappled with as sound-based language, as conventions and conceptions of sound, and as attempts to translate the image and coloration of a listener experience into acoustic terms equitably. The task remains necessarily daunting.

Although there are many examples in literature, especially during times when sound environments were changing, such as during the onset of the industrial revolution (Schafer, 1977b, 1993), sounds are not easily transfixed on the page.

To begin, I offer three vignettes: one, a piece of prose about an experience I had with one of the most finely attuned prey creatures who bridge human and animal sensibilities – horses. The second is a well-documented observation about another attuned creature wonders – the spring frog chorus. The third is an instance of listening existentially. Through these different genres, the foray into the impact of sound and listening begins – but a mere incursion into a vast complexity impossible to hold definitively even through multiple word-based genres – whether personal, narrative, poetic, spoken word or explication. This multiplicity of ways of speaking and knowing is sound’s unique gift to the experience of being.

Throughout this thesis, the written and spoken word rises to the challenge in different forms.
Repr soundation: In/congruence

I fully claim bias.

I also covet those sounds that have meaning for me and lead me into congruence between my habituated inner soundscape and the world of sound around me. I came to understand this profoundly through horses, their prey sensibility and embodied sensate congruence - especially in listening.

My daughter has trained horses in non-invasive ways professionally since she was fifteen – more than ten years now. In this way, my observations are from that time when I was part of the naturalistic approach to horse training termed non-invasive horsemanship. The term non-invasive is commonly used in contradistinction to more traditional ways of training horses by a community of horse trainers that seek to use alternative methods – as an internet search of the term will attest in countless naturalistic horse training websites, as well as by equine researchers and veterinarians (Hockenhull & Whey, 2014; Mello, 2003; Millhouse-Flourie, 2004). As I understand it, it means that communication between the trainer and horse happens in consideration of the horse’s prey sensibility. Their nervous systems are highly tuned to their environment and changes in that environment, which takes the notion of embodiment into a highly sensitive realm hard for humans to grasp as we are predators wired for the chase. Perhaps, some humans are more aligned to a prey sensibility due to their physiology (autism) or conditioning (family dynamics) or life events (trauma). In the prey sensibility, there is a prevailing flight response as survival necessitates the ability to sense change in situations and respond quickly.

The horse community (herd) depends on the dominant members’ ability to determine the extent to which everything that comes into their sensory field presents danger or not and to what degree. Horses have eyes on either side of their head, with 285 degrees monocular vision, 65 degree binocular, and blind spots immediately in front, around and behind their bodies, as is consistent in prey animals. This means their other senses, haptic (touch, including sound vibration, as a form of communication), and

---

4 When a rider uses a bit, then the horse’s binocular vision and ability to respond appropriately is severely limited. A bit is piece of metal held in the horse’s mouth by reins that direct the horse’s movement. The mouth is specifically expressive of emotion for the horse as they chew to relax and they cannot chew with a bit inserted. The problematic use of bits and discussion of non-invasive ways of riding bit-less (such as using a snaffle) are discussed comprehensively by W.R. Cook in an article entitled Pathophysiology of Bit Control in the Horse in the Journal of Veterinarian Medicine (1999).
hearing\(^5\) are particularly acute (Timney & Macuda, 2001). More accurately, horses attend with their whole bodies to fluctuations in energy fields, such as sound waves (Heffner & Heffner, 1983a). This is a more expansive sense of the word *listening* than conventionally understood as it is not tied exclusively to the ear.

Sound travels through the air and can be heard through the ear in addition to vibrations touching their body. However, horses also use their hooves\(^6\) to pick up vibrations from the earth over long distances, such as when an earthquake or tsunami or the footsteps of their favorite trainer approaches – long before these are detected by ears or eyes (Heffner & Heffner, 1983b).

When a horse is sensorially congruent, according to herd dynamics, when a high degree of attunement between the body\(^7\) and the immediate environment is achieved, the horse’s relevancy and standing in the community increases as their trustworthiness to communicate reliably about whether something represents a threat or not increases their value to the herd as a whole.

It is concerning from an holistic point of view to consider how humans, consistent with our own reductive sensate tendencies, insensitively harness the natural proclivity of horses toward sensate richness: mouth apparatus that direct vision and cut emotions, metal shoes that amplify the haptic of the foot hitting the surface to the point of damaging the leg bone (aptly termed concussive).

Noninvasive horse training, as I have experienced it, works with horse herd mentality and energy fields to heal horses, but also to help humans observe and understand the fullness of their insensitivity, such

\(^5\) Horse ears (pinnae) are conical and rotate 180 degrees and are therefore able to detect low (infrasonic) to very high frequencies (ultrasonic) giving the horse significantly more hearing power than humans. Also, horse hear binaurally with each ear capable of focusing directionally, meaning that the ability to know where the sound comes from is particularly incisive. They also *hear* with their bodies. Their haptic sensibility provides the ability to feel a fly on the end of a body hair as well as vibrations through their hoofs and up their legs. Henry Heffner and Rickye Heffner discuss this acoustical physiology in depth in their article, *Hearing in Large Mammals: Horses (Equus caballus) and cattle (Bos taurus)* (1983a) and *Hearing Abilities in Horses* (1983b).

\(^6\) When horses are shoed, a metal base is placed around the edge of their hoof wall. Typically, hoofs are described as having no sensations, in other words, not being able to feel pain. But it is common knowledge that metal shoes significantly increase “concussive” effects, increasing the vibrational effects of the hoof hitting a surface. This leads to many lameness issues (Cowles, 2008). The effects of vibrations as a type of amplification of sound is overlooked.
as when what humans are embodying (feeling as embodied sensate communication) is not congruent with their body language (feeling as a mental construct conveyed back to the body as language).

I’ve experience this relationship to congruence with horses several times in ways that fundamentally changed my experience of my body as resonant and connected.

_The mare stands on one leg, then the other._

_I know that sensation, being pregnant and needing to shift the weight from one leg to the other to ease pressure, share the footload. Especially in the paddock. I think it must sooth the foal, that rocking, like having to stand at the stove or sink shifting from one foot to the other. A few fields over runs a freight highway. Trucks roar past ceaselessly andblurry up whorls of dust._

_This mare is little and feisty. She’s never had a bit in her mouth or shoes on her hoofs. She never waits for me or anyone unless its mealtime. I like her attitude: straight at you and no nonsense. But she’s over full with foal as she raises her lashes, turns her ears; she has no appetite. We are mothers. Her first birth and she lacks interest until the unavoidable now. She’s tired and wants it over. I want it back. But I know how she feels. I still want it back._

_The day blisters. Another truck pummels the ground. Does it concuss her legbones? Does the foal tremble?_

_I am shattered today. The mare lumbers over. Her breath siroccos into my chest: ventricle intone timber I am falling into her into her cavity is mine where my foal withered whereas her child is mine that was not._

_When my child birthed, it didn’t breathe, poisoned the air, the water stank. She births her healthy foal that week and a year later, in a too-soon-again birthing, the mare dies. Time past and future collude in the present._

_So it goes between us that one day as the deafening semi finds us, blasts us into stone, and then passes us by – a flurry of woman-pregnant-mare in an overgrazed patch of sand._
It amazed me that day to feel the mare feeling my loss and giving it back to me. I don’t know how else to describe it, but in the intersection between her nuzzling my heart and what came with it in feelings as the sound waves of the freight truck shook us both, scored the moment. I was immersed in that sound like no other. The grief I carried that day that would eventually become as monotonous as tires on pavement, something I took for granted. But that day, there was information being conveyed to me that defied time and yet, it was just a semi passing, just as semis passed frequently. And there was my body connected with the mare’s in that day’s storm of sound, fury, and inevitability. It was the mare as trucks quaked through her repeatedly every day, the fragility it brought with it, and how she brought this sense of unavoidable grief, the shattering of the ground and air one inhabited – the blast of what I was feeling as I brought it to what she was feeling. It was a completely different way of embrace and exchange brought about through a shared embodiment of sound.

I’ve experienced other such embraces with horses and sound becomes accentuated in them. I cannot explain it – some might explain it as a projection – but it made me listen to my body and the sounds around me very differently. It evoked an alternate state of listening awareness.
In a different instance, many years early, I experienced a fusing with a different kind of equine encounter. This one is told in the form of a poem entitled: Centaur. Poems are aural-based (as spoken and listened to) forms and, as such, retain the possibility to both articulate through sound. Significantly, poems can also impart sounds as part of an instance or encounter, particularly in the coloration of scenes or images used to re-imagine a moment in time translated onto the page. In the poem, Centaur, that follows, the use of sound is filmic as the poem presents a series of scenes and underscores them with sound.

These acts of conversion communicate how sound inhabits our sense of what sound is and how it resides. Poetic forms of writing proffer ways of coming to know about sound through words, a familiar hybrid (visual, written, acoustic) form.

This awareness is one of many incursions toward a radicalized sense and awareness of sound centered in listening.
Arrival

the woman climbs
broken bundles, inhales the pong
rising from burlap spilling cotton, printed
rice-dyed sienna, umber, ocher, textile
of dirt floors, cooking fires, underfoot
unfettered babies, livestock pressing
flooding the passage up to rosewood doors

inside a violin sails in
and out of range

the woman lifts her hand, knuckles
the moment, then knocks once, once
again, strings stop mid-strain

a boy, like turned earth, jet eyes
fixed, brow furrowed
opens the doors inward, lamplight
shifts shapes into a sepia sea, a
flickering hermitage,

white-eyed dogs dance,
rumble of paw nails
click, clicking
circling on wood

through a filigree partition a shadow
has stirred, she is called, the name
slip-slides along her spine, she hears
nostrils suck the air, the horse-man
risen, dust sparking in the wake
Visitation

he serves her chai with goats’ milk in a bowl
they finger tangerines, watch startled fruit flies settle,
tentatively press for the details of aging flesh
ruminate through strands of graying hair,
try to ignore the clatter of old bones rattling
to be possessed on or under the kilim
where they sit

away from his land, he does not
sleep, cannot dream, so he tells her a story
about a newborn foal, birthed in his absence

she can see the foal venture sky struck, night, master away, slow-eyed, sleepy stable boy lets go dogs
meant to keep coyotes away. One roaring second, the foal falls, torn limb from limb, ripped

here, between half beast
half human

she takes hold of his face,
wraps around his thick neck
feels his solidity nuzzle her
with lips folded back, with
teeth primed to nip, to
impress, mount

Taking leave

straddled,

she rides like rain on the stallion’s back, until
out of the corner of her eye she sees borderlands, sees
the draughtsmen waiting, waiting to drive human passion
to myth,

she feels herself falling like lines onto paper
Have you ever listened to a frog chorus in the springtime? Crickets on a summer’s eve? Since I was a child playing in fields behind the house, I’ve always found these a fascinating listening experience. Certainly, when I’m sitting listening to these seasonal rituals, I feel enthralled by the harmonics. I listen to how the vocalizations synchronize and undulate. I enter a meditative state where my body seems to hum in response. But what is happening and why is it important to me, the listener?

The Great Basin Spadefoot Toad is a important example of how bio-acoustics, habitat, and species sustainability are interconnected. Its chorus is directly related to, and expressive of, its well-being and will to survive. The way its vocalizations attune can be observed in many frog, reptile, amphibian, bird, insect, and mammal behavior with each species in the genus. Each species occupies a distinct bandwidth frequency, range and time signature in its habitat (Turina, 2003). This particular toad lives in dry grasslands and open forests along the northwestern inland regions of North America, including British Columbia (where I live), Canada, in the dry region between the Cascade and Rocky Mountains. The Spadefoot Toad digs underground to live in and hibernate in burrows. It emerges from hibernation in April to migrate en mass to a water source such as a pond or slow river – when it is most vulnerable to predators. More than its natural predators, this toad is impacted by climate change and human competition for habitat (humans tend to like hot dry places next to water), giving it the designation of an endangered species.

Once the males arrive, they strikes up a harmonious chorus that declares the opening of the spring mating season. The chorus is audible over about one hundred meters and attracts the females who mate repeatedly with different suitors. This way, each toad can identify the location and voice of each other male toad around the periphery of the pond as well as attract potential females. This chorus is built on individual specifically-pitched toad gwaas timed and repeated in such a way as to both locate each toad in terms of each other as procreator, but also to hide these locations to predators (Krause, 2002).

Bernie Krause, a bio-acoustician who has recorded and collected over 4,500 hours of wildlife habitat, gives this example and terms this acoustic interaction among and within species and their environment as “biophony” (1992; 2002). He observed that if an airplane flies over the mating site, the chorus dies.
away in response. Then, when the plane has passed, the toads start up again, one, then two, then five, and so on until the chorus has been reestablished and the individual merges with the collective (p. 27-36).

This period of reestablishing the harmonics of the group is a precarious time for the Great Basin Spadefoot Toad as each toad is finding its tone and rhythm relationally in the group. Its voice is perceptible as an individual sound and entity and its location is revealed to birds, snakes and other predators. This is the time when the most toads are caught and eaten, the community’s cache diminishes, and its gene pool is altered. Once the chorus is re-established, each toad is once again immersed in a total sound environment and community, and because of this immersion and omni-directionality, each individual becomes the center of its existence in many ways: harmonically and resonantly as integral to the well-being of its community; biologically and evolutionarily as it sings to attract a mate and procreate; as a physical body resonating in relationship to other bodies; locatory as declaring its location so a mate can find its exact place in the marsh among all the other potential mates; and so on.

Perhaps this is part of the allure of the chorus and the role it plays in Western sacred music. When listening to the merging of tone and pitch, when one voice aligns with many, something greater than the parts emerges and no one is in isolation from their fellow creatures. There is safety in numbers!

When I am listening to the frog chorus or any moment of harmonics, I am in the ur-sound. This term is used in the same spirit as the ur-myth or ur-poem8. I mean the mother-sound, the universal hum, the moment where all sound is one sound and that sound contains all the sounds that have or will existed.

---

8 The ur poem is one "whose existence is the Idea that can be abstracted out of all concrete and written texts which have ever existed or whichever will exist" (McGann, 1987).
In the poem that follows, entitled *Swimming in treetops*, a quintessential moment of disharmony, of being displaced in one’s life, instantiates out of profound quietude where different scales of existence (the speaker in her fishbowl life, the toads far below in the underbrush, the sound of heart and breath) signify that although things are beyond her hearing range, they still constitute her acoustic moment – one that leaves her as breathless as a fish swimming in treetops. Between the awareness brought about by silence, by space on the page, by the sense of connection and increasing awareness through sound of the onomatopoeia that attempt to fill in that space, plays the vast complexity of what sound is and how it informs all life. In order to be in this stream of awareness acoustically, the body is situated through organs and breath, and one appropriates things coming into and out of range in a state of continual discontinuity that brings the awareness into place.

As sound waves continue on, sounds and their occurrences reencounter themselves in infinitesimal possible and impossible contexts.
Swimming in treetops

Through the pane of this fishbowl life,
lying looking
from this entropic bed,
too high in the canopy,
too low to fly,
pine needles scatter in another round of wind

pitter patter.

Far

far

below,
under a fallen root,
toads colored crimson bind themselves
doing the double-backed dance
for tadpoles in spring

suck-skin-suck-toed.

My heart takes in this rapt breath as its own,
ap ro pos

a fish
swimming in treetops
Notional potentiate

The theoretical tetherings of this work are tenuous and come to intervene with the text, to add another turn for consideration at various points in the text under this banner, Notional, and in various hidden aspects, interventions where text simply arrives.

The rationale for this approach is that the theorizing of sound resists becoming a centralized study; sound is too amorphous, immediate and uber-experiential. Thus, the experience of being in sound, of the soundscape, and of being as listening remain peripheral to most attempts to fix them into a classical philosophical system.

For these reasons, this theorizing about sound remains an incursion rather than an adherence to philosophical lineages.

In making this and other distinctions toward a theoretical base for the experience of sound, Heidegger’s last lectures, *On Time and Being* (1972) and *Identity and Difference* (1969) serve as a turn away from the metaphysics of Being, of linear conceptions of time-space toward a fourth dimension grounded in relationality, the unity of past, present and future in the approach, the Appropriation (a key term) of time by Being and Being by time. This is a profoundly useful turn to begin thinking of how sound works to position the listener in an acoustically re-appropriated way of knowing and Being.

As Heidegger is trying to bring about an *end of philosophy* so that the experience of Being is foregrounded rather than further abstracted, this theorizing about listener-to-sound relationships begins with etymologies, a rigorous consideration of how terms arrive at their meanings – such being a Heideggerian tactic itself.

In grappling with the experience of Being acoustically, every instance of abstraction must be interrogated in order to come to awareness of acoustic states of being. The thesis addresses this further through various means noting how the seduction occurs – in words, in forms of writing, in composing, in audio recording, in habits of listening, in soundwalking and in soundscape composition, and in ways yet to be identified.
As this grappling extends into theorizing, like any excursion, it opens pathways – but does not pretend to know the way nor to be surveying the field in order to construct a new superhighway into phenomenology.

No, this is a raucous bushwhacking, at best.

**Phenomenal sound**

In classic Phenomenological terms, time-space is constituted through perception as the body moves through it, as a means of determining Being both in linear (Husserl, Sheehan, & Palmer, 1997; Husserl, 1999; Merleau-Ponty & O’Neill, 1974) and contested conceptions (Barbaras, 2004; 2006; Casey, 1996; S. Elden, 2001; Heidegger, 1969; 1971; 2009). It follows that if the structure of the listening environment is changed, so one's perception shifts and the time-space is constituted differently: Is the structure of the listening environment destined to remain something constant, linear, a given, a field already constituted in a philosophically embedded notion of time-space for the listener to pass through and then left to itself to continue on its destined trajectory? Certainly, it can be measured, notated, mapped and understood in those terms – but is it that straightforward?

If the listening experience shifts away from its habituation, can the listening environment also be shifted – in terms of time, space and Being?

Yes, it can, through a radicalized awareness of sound where the relationship between the listener and sound initiates, sustains and renews a listening environment continually redefined. In these ways, the classical ideas of time-space (predicated by visuality), as preconceived experience, fracture and open to new perceptual and embodied possibilities. The acoustic environment is especially constituted in terms of the listening body and the awareness the listener brings to it. These are the premises on which an ecology of acoustics emerge – toward a listener encounter with the intriguing flux of sound and toward an acute awareness of sound as sound.

In this way, soundwalking and soundscape composition can be called an act of *com-position*, a continual re-positioning that comes with attentive listening – although to use that term is to bind acoustic phenomenon again to a presupposition, to the history of music.
Speaking of (articulating) sound also requires a hyper-vigilance around tropes.

The soundscape compositions in this thesis, like the thesis itself, are meant to take the listener on a journey into a different awareness of sound and appreciation of their participation as a listener. The listening in soundwalking defies definitions of sound or music – as with all lived experience, it is both and neither all at once. Soundwalkers hear music in sound and sound in music, but these are associations, tropes about what is. The experience is simply what it is as one is in it. In this way, the experience of listening queries assumptions about states of being and the nature of space-time.

As a phenomenon, sound is part of the world, something that shapes human sensate existence. Sound can be understood as moving through time and giving shape to space in classical linear terms. Certainly, sound enters every sleeping and waking moment of being. The acoustic experience is perceived as another aspect of the sensate, inhabited world, but for the most part, lived acoustic experience is taken for granted, as organization around speech and as the accoutrement of things in motion, as direction and location. Sound is ideated primarily from within ocular-centrism. For this reason, theorizing sound from within the philosophy of phenomenology is awkward because of the primacy of vision as the classical filter through which the experience of Being-in-the-world is made meaningful. A phenomenology of sound resists method, litanies of occurrences, artifacts, or descriptions that compromise the complexities of the listener experience or their acoustic being-ness, resulting in insurmountable phenomenological reduction. Don Ihde’s 1976 groundbreaking survey of auditory phenomena, contextualized as a method for listening in music and human experience, *Listening and Voice: Phenomenologies of Sound* (2007) admits:

> I can focus on my listening and thus make the auditory dimension stand out, but it does so only relatively. I cannot isolate it from its situation, its embedment, its ‘background’ of global experience. In this sense a ‘pure’ auditory experience of phenomenology is impossible, but, as a focal dimension of global experience, a concentrated concern with listening is possible. (p.44)

Visual apprehension skews the basic premise of how one experiences the world as sound, however, investigations of a reflective listener to sound experiences offer possibility of coming to know oneself in sound, sound in oneself.
It can be argued that this is how it is: that vision trumps hearing in one’s experience of the world – and this is, in fact, the case. But it is not the only possible way of being or knowing. Listening habits, expressive of listening environment, are constructions situated within socio-economic, acculturated, gendered and meaning-making systems. As colleagues and fellow Vancouver soundwalkers, Milena Droumeva and Vincent Andrisani point out: “the embodied aural response between the individual and the environment represents a site of convergence between the identity of the listening subject and the broader socio-cultural milieu” (2013).

Sound is profoundly a social phenomenon, and within this are multitudes of ways of re-mastering listening so that other ways of knowing and being emerge. In different societies and throughout history, there are many examples of sensate alternatives to visual-centrism.

Situating sound within phenomenology is to tie it to a Eurocentric world view and trajectories from an era in which phenomenology was coming into being and visual-based intellect, like the sciences, music and arts, were in a specific configuration in terms of philosophizing about Being, beings and the world. It was a certain kind of world in which the conviction of mathematical formula, the fact of the measure, the fact of the fact, was the ground on which all other vantage points stood. Classical phenomenology is a child of the Enlightenment and, as Heidegger repeatedly points out in his canon, the explained world still tethers to that trajectory. Today, although influenced by streams of meta-philosophical thinking, there is more openness and curiosity about other possible knowledges and ways of being less-abstracted. Infinity remains out of reach as does a grand theory of either physics or mathematics. The more that is known, the less understood about how the periphery of existence fits into the infinite picture. This is especially the case in matters closer to home as awareness and consideration grows around the rapid demise of species, ways of life, indigenous and past knowledges – and the way of being of the past has a finite future on what is now understood as a dying planet. This finitude is shifting ideation around what it is to exist and what it is to exist in this current world in embodied ways, increasingly and undeniably besieged.

In some sense, Heidegger anticipated this necessary untethering of Being from its philosophical tradition, its historicity, of which he was a crucial contributor. In his last lecture, entitled On Time and Being (1972), Heidegger is clearly catechizing and reworking the concepts he put forth in his formative work, Being and Time (1962). In so doing, he reexamines the history of the idea of Being from its
beginning with Aristotle through to his own work in phenomenological-hermeneutics tied to its lineage through Husserl’s concept of consciousness as intentionality, where “a spatial being can ‘appear’ only in a certain orientation, which necessarily predelineates a system of possible new orientations” (p. 73). Within a visually-based system of directionality different from acoustic-based interactive knowledge, the listener attaches linear orientations, but is actually energetically co-creating time-space and assigning visual markers to it.

In terms of time, Heidegger rattles his Kantian framework in which the condition of care that makes awareness, the core value of being human, possible is a linear conception of past, present, future. A distinction is made in these frameworks that these are states of consciousness that other beings, such as animals, do not possess. Still adhering to this basic premise, Heidegger’s rethinking of presence begins to pry open the possibility of different non-philosophical experientially-based states of being, such as sound potentiates.

These breaks, initiated in his later works such as *Identity and Difference* and *On Time and Being* mark Heidegger’s acknowledgment that times have changed, so to speak. Conceptions of time as linear are changing. Conceptions of space radicalize as well, particularly in the field of human geography and urban studies where the work of Henri Lefebvre redefined space as produced through human activity attached to the forces of production (Dancer, 2007; Elden, 2004; Lefebvre, 1961, 1991a, 1991b, 1992, 2005; Shields, 1999; Simonsen, 2005) and in the notion of the *flâneur* meandering through a bricolage of space as described by Michel De Certeau (1964, 1986, 1988, 1996). This signals a shift toward tangible ways of apprehending space as non-linear, just as Heidegger seeks to re-define time-space in the experience of Being. The epochal ratification responds to understandings of other-ness accelerated as quantum theory challenges conceptions such as how matter manifests in space-time and cross-species communication indicates that animals have awareness, consciousness, and conceptions of space-time that may not be the same as our own. Even our own conception of time is changing, as Heidegger anticipates in his later work, through these epochal turns and through the technologisation of man – important considerations for artistic work that takes lived experience into the borderlands of the electro-acoustic realm.

Scientific investigations indicate that even plant life communicates through the release of chemical compounds and, in some sense, is aware of changes in its environment because it adapts behavior in response. These shifts in the perception of what it means to be aware are radicalizing notions of
consciousness and the idea of consciousness of time traditionally lodged in the Phenomenological idea of Being as presence. These shifts demand that the past thinking about presence is troubled and a reframing, however precarious, of key terms and concepts is necessary. The acoustic realm – lived and mediated – offers a way of reframing Being.

As Heidegger begins to take apart the meaning ascribed to these influential concepts defined in his work in Being and Time, he begins thinking through to an end to philosophy. This, he claims, is a call to thinking, to an activated awareness different in approach from concepts of Being tied to lineages of thought such as in hermeneutics and phenomenology. With a departure from the history of philosophy, Heidegger takes on the task of decontextualizing these terms as epochal changes in meaning. Joan Staumbaugh, in the introduction to Heidegger’s last lecture’s English translation, explains this pivot in Heidegger’s thinking that led to On Time and Being (1972):

According to Heidegger, Being has been thought in traditional philosophy exclusively as a kind of Presence. The manner of presence changes throughout the history of philosophy, not in the dialectical, calculable fashion of Hegel, but in sudden epochal transformation which cannot be plotted out in advance. (ix)

In this spirit, the phenomenological consideration of sound must untether from classical phenomenology and ocular-centrism and this, Heidegger’s last lecture, offers and opens to such a frontier-istic undertaking of misadventure, misreading, mistaking, and misleading – to name a few – attempts to claim an acoustic field aligned with, while distancing from, visual-meta-philosophical centric descriptions traditionally found in phenomenology.
Listening salon B: Cisterna

Listen to an excerpt from *Cisterna* (01:53)
For an optimal listening experience, listen in a quiet room with high quality headphones or speakers. Recorded with M Audio Mictrack 48 bit / 96 Hz, Sound Studio custom binaural microphone. Audio link: [http://circle.ubc.ca/handle/2429/50784](http://circle.ubc.ca/handle/2429/50784)

9 Underground waterways convey many things, including sewage and sound. The old Prague sewage filtration system in Bubenec, at the bottom of a hill gleaming with diplomatic villas, is itself an ecological and architectural wonder. It filtered the effluence of the powerful into the great Vltava River that winds through Prague. Built in 1894-1911, it remained in use until 1984 primarily because the new sewage plant was not as reliable, but more recently the site serves as a playground where artists and musicians delve into the acoustic algorithm of its over 100 meters of brick water tunnels.

In 2009, I composed an installation with 6 wide-range speakers projected through the 10 - 19 meter long and 5 meter wide water tunnels of the abandoned sewerage to create an experiential listening space that spoke to the uses and reuses of this socio-culturally rich terrain.

As an adjunct, I created a composition about a group of artists who venture into the tunnels at the other end of the installation’s listening proscenium, it’s non-orientation behind the speakers far into the labyrinth and among eons old sludge, to listen to the installation traversing the tunnel air and waterways. I wanted to track and experience the underside of sound, the unexpected, and disorienting aspects as we moved through near darkness. This is the sound installation heard echoing through the tunnels from deep in the labyrinth.
Sound un kind

Ur bane

Industrial sounds can have a beauty all their own, just as industrial sites carry a certain mystique with contemporary artists and urban dwellers – especially abandoned sites that evoke a redolent decay. Cityscapes are another place where sound marks decisions in urban planning, histories, times of day, and articulations of values. The sheer density of a city’s population often means that sounds also reach an overwhelming density, and a culture of mono-listening takes over. Traffic is the most obvious example in North American cities where cars dominate a soundscape further hardened by non-absorptive surfaces such as glass and concrete. In older cities, stone creates a buffer to urban sounds. The problem is not noise, per se, but acoustic overload.

For the most part, I inhabit an acoustic environment that I am only peripherally aware of and where I rarely differentiate between more than what is noise (loud or quiet), human voices, and music – unless I am attending to listening. When I discuss the notion of attendant listening, in general, people admit they don’t pay much attention to how the everyday sounds we encounter affect us, other than what is categorized as noise. When someone is introduced to soundwalking or to listening to high fidelity recorded sounds, they often speak of how they have never experienced sound in this way, and whole new worlds of listening open to them. In the acoustic ecology and sound art communities, one concern is how humans are losing vital auditory skills, such as listening to sounds in the distance or listening for discrete sounds or listening to sounds traveling across distances – even in noisy urban setting. Also challenging is listening for the wealth of information sound provides about the space we are passing through as distinct from visually-based information.

Many urban spaces are also designed around moving people through space, not inviting them to dwell and thereby congest popular venues. Market values also come to bear – and the design of environments utilize acoustics intentionally. Consider the experience of a favorite restaurant, one whose decor of bright colors, wood interior and comfy booths invites patrons to savor their North American fare. However, if I am sitting enjoying conversation with a friend over the meal, I may wonder why we have to raise our voices to each other, unaware that the acoustics of the room – the material of the walls or density of wood paneling over concrete; the size and position of glass windows; the material, shape and
position of the tables and seats, even the material of floor, in concert with the audio engineering of the
particular music playing, the placement of the speakers, and the vibrations emanating from the bass
settings – are all conspiring to create a certain kind of eating experience. This experience is underscored
by the restaurant’s profit margins including that, once our meal is over, my companion and I will be
compelled by this sound experience to move out of the restaurant relatively quickly as, in the restaurant
industry, each table is its realestate. We will critique the decor, service, and food, but if we want to talk
intimately or in depth, we will be compelled to find somewhere quiet to talk. How many pithy
conversations take place after the meal?

Urban soundscapes are rife with such examples built into the acoustic design of malls, traffic and
vehicles, living quarters, urban planning, the materials used in building buildings and sidewalks and
roadways, mobile devices and headphones, and so on (Blesser & Salter, 2007; Bull, 2001; Burgos, 2004;
Thompson, 2002).

Non-urban soundscapes are also expressions of the values of those people, creatures and entities that
inhabit them and can be understood as a vast resonant locatory matrix where the state of biodiversity is
reflected in acoustic diversity. Non-urban spaces also have loud, noisy, or deafening quiet soundscapes,
but one major difference is that there is space for listening – in other words, the soundscape is less
congested and therefore more discrete.

Urban spaces, for the most part, limit the movement of sound over land, truncate the distance over
which sounds travel, and tend to habituate ones hearing towards a condensed hierarchy of pitches,
loudness, tones, and rhythms – all competing with one another for our attention. Soon, it becomes an
amorphous din of mono-sound, indiscreet, not nuanced, and banal in the type and amount of
information it transmits to us about the location and relationality of our bodies and sense of selves. In
this mix, bodies habituate to reduced and unhealthy ways of being, eyes and voices become the focal
point of meaning-making, and listening capacity is significantly reduced.
Nefarious uses of sound

For the most part, the cacophonic effects on the body go undetected alongside the pleasing sounds (euphony). I may feel nauseous as I pass an industrial site or a building's air exchange mechanism; I may experience headaches at work; I may avoid loud noises or the monotony of traffic, but it's just part of my everyday life – effects I take for granted. While urban noise pollution remains problematic, low frequency acoustic effects, such as generated by wind farm turbines, are strangely pervasive in that they are not heard, per se, but felt, and remain contested as the cause of documented malaise and illness (Bolin, Bluhm, Eriksson, & Nilsson, 2011; Leventhall, 2006; Moller & Pedersen, 2011; Salt & Hullar, 2010). The World Health Organization's Guidelines for Community Noise online report notes that “health effects due to low-frequency components in noise are estimated to be more severe than for community noises in general" (Berglund, Lindvall, & Schwela, 1999).

Nefarious are the military applications. The lesser evil, tinged with surrealism, is the use of psycho-acoustic correction (high decibel sound and music) such as those used to dislodge Manuel Noriega from the Vatican embassy in Panama (apparently loud rock music did the trick) and at the Waco siege (where a surprising mix of Tibetan chanting and heavy metal music was deployed). The subjectivity of sound works against these techniques’ effectiveness, as what one listener finds disturbing another may find pleasing or of no consequence to their listening sensibilities.

Truly nefarious are high ultra-sonic frequencies (more than 700 kHz) used in warfare and crowd control. These range from the US military’s research into sound bombs (sonic beams directed at targets) to the use of sonic booms strategically deployed in the Gaza strip to the Mosquito Teen Repellent device that projects a high frequency buzz audible primarily to the under-twenty crowd. Steve Goodman identifies and terms these effects as a politics of frequency in his book, Sonic Warfare: Sound, Effects and an Ecology of Fear (2010), and points out the alarming potential they represent in what is presumed non-lethal weaponry. These weapons exploit the vibrational qualities of ultra-sound frequencies, with haptic crossover, impacting the nervous system with symptoms from trembling, nausea, headaches to disorientation, severe nausea, vomiting and diarrhea, to seizures and death as cells increasingly vibrate and then fragment. Deafness, a potential side effect, presents an outcome that debilitates and severely impacts quality of life, as journalist Daria Vaisman discovered in conversation with Harvey Sapolsky,
head of Security Studies at MIT (2001). This is especially the case in majority countries with high illiteracy rates and few resources for a deaf population. Sound touches bodies and lives in very real ways everywhere.
In the poem following, *St. Elmo’s Fire*, the effects of an over-sensitized nervous system are likened to being hit by a plasma bolt, a natural phenomenon noted by sailors where objects are seemingly on fire, but don’t actually burn. Attributed to St. Elmo (also known as St. Erasmus), the patron saint of sailors, this phenomenon can be either a good or bad omen, a common perception with things that seem to exceed natural laws.

While mostly experienced and described as visual, it is also accompanied by a loud hissing noise, which puts it in the category of acoustic phenomenon as well.

The speaker of the poem experiences it as part of a night terror, a panic attack, or the effects of post trauma – all bodily manifestations in which the nervous system is hyper-activated. In such states, the body itself is a soundscape that heralds a different attunement, one borne of states of imbalance, disharmony and cacophony.

These states are also evoked as the physical experience of exposure to the effects of ultrasonic frequencies described above, to which people can be exposed without their knowledge or as the by-products of industrial noise.

The poem acknowledges that these are states of being as well, as part of the human experience of physical degradation, the many illnesses that accompany it, and that this suffering is part of an inevitability essential to life – as inevitable and essential as sound, itself. Sound is expressive of these states as well.

The body is a locus of sound in profound ways that are both natural phenomenon and dark mystery, often in tandem.
St. Elmo's fire

I am awake.
I am alarmed awake. Every night
a body full of noise and every morning,
the same body
surfacing
to orchestrate
dread.

My left heart leaps over to the right
and back again,
hissing like steam, leaving
in its wake
a band of static, noise
on fire.

My spine lights up,
a ships mast hit by lightning,
and this feels good.

It feels amazing, this rod of white light.

I slide down it into my stomach,
the lightning curls into a ball, visceral plasma.

I grunt despite myself.

Now I've arrived at it, the mass
on the left side of my gut,
the place with the words
not spoken.

I imagined this as a place of dead silence,
devoid of sound,
but it isn't.

Even in death, my body will continue to bubble and crunch and slurp and puff long after
I — the eye-I that is staring, thinking, speaking this to you, the this-you I imagine —
is gone and forgotten.

The last thing that remains is the first:
the sounds of matter in encounter,
encounters that matter.
Silence: The particularity of sound

Another way to appreciate how comprehensively sound touches every part of human (and created) existence is to consider silence. Silence is what we experience as subdued hearing, but the body is still affected in two major ways: in the nervous system's adjustment to sensory depletion and vibrationally, through frequencies outside of our hearing range. In this way, silence is not the absence of sound but a relational aspect of sound. It, too, is diverse and complex. All silences are not the same and the effects of silence, like sound, can be desirable, contemplative, relaxing or oppressive, or disorienting and even induce madness. Some people thrive and seek out silence while others find prolonged silence distressing. Some people thrive on noisy urban settings while others find the constant din overwhelming. It depends on the circumstance and the listener.

In Sara Maitland’s distinctive work, *A Book of Silence* (2009), she draws from accounts of hermits, abbesses, explorers, and adventurers, as well as her own experience living for long periods in isolation on the Scottish moors. The research covers types of silence, such as imposed, prolonged, reposed, seasonal (a cultural history of silence) to its many positive and negative effects, including heightened senses, auditory hallucinations, disinhibition and accidie (sloth), ineffability and bliss. Starting with accounts in 16th century hermitages, she proceeds to present-day extreme adventurers, such as those who climb Mt. Everest, solo sailors, and pole scientists, and shows how some have come to terms with the isolation and effects of silence while others have succumbed to its psychological demands. Maitland experienced firsthand that silences can be as nuanced as sound and that sound, itself, becomes subtle in silence, especially when the noisy body and mind chatter are subdued. She also discovered that "silence apparently happens in a different part of the brain from speaking or hearing or even thinking in a rational and orderly manner; a part of the brain separate from where language happens" (p. 279). Although silence is housed in the subcortical region of the brain, the pre-language site we share with animals, it comprises intersections between the body and its environment, between inner and outer space, between cultures and eras, time and space in a manner concordant with sound.

A certain aspect of oneself attends to sound, as well, listening as an individual in a specific sound culture and environment. As environments change, contexts change, habits and meanings change. Listening as
an individual, as the center of ones existence, was not always valued as it is today. The contemporary idea of an individual didn’t exist before the Enlightenment.

In the times of ascetics, there was no concept of self as distinct from community, environment or body – although worldly existence was being denied. Sequester was not about merging with an inner self, but with the community of god in heaven, an otherworldly community. Sara Maitland makes this connection to the idea of silence – that the hermit sought silence to commune with a listening culture based in sacred music, chanting (plain song), and a distinct sound environment reflective of oneness with god. In that acoustic environment, sounds were discreet and distinguished from one another unlike today’s dominant mono-acoustics. These distinctions could be heard in the sound of bells pealing across the villages, forests and farmlands of Central Europe in which listeners knew which church, congregation, service (time of day) and ringer’s ringing called them in for either service or a meal. All sound marked diverse information necessary to the listener in order to locate themselves in their community. The recluse removed themselves from worldly concerns, but the sound world became more nuanced and distinct as a result. That richness belonged to utterance ascribed to god and creation.

Listening is a culturally distinct act implicit in a contemporary sense of an individual experience, although listening is also collaborative in what arrives for the listener to apprehend. Never-the-less, tracing the movements of acoustic culture in something as nuanced as listening to silence remains, well, silent and nuanced.
Intra poetica

The poem following, entitled I am touched, brings an instance of listening for silence and the nuanced sound that attends it. It is a still moment defined by delicacy of sounds. An airplane passes overhead, but in this moment, it hums faintly and takes its place as nothing more than a distant hum (I listen for it), in contradistinction to the evoked (but not heard) sound I infer of moss and pebble from the deer’s perspective.

Ironically, the more sensitized I am as an artist and writer, the greater the need, in order to survive the whirlwind of contemporary living, that I listen intently for myself in the smallest component of the soundscape.

In order to listen with sensitivity, I recognize my position as a listening from behind glass, from behind the contemporary sensibilities I bring to the moment. But in this, too, there is a palpable stillness that I am co-creating, through the actual listening and the posture of the listening, real and evoked.

I live quietly. That way, I can hear myself in the things inside and around me.
I am touched

by the way
stillness
stills me.

A deer nibbles
behind the knoll
ears twitching
at the slide of moss
at the pebble underfoot
at an airplane overhead
(always an airplane overhead).

No wind this dawn, no leaves falling,
no one walking on the road,
no rooster crowing, no bird stirring,
nothing but the deer

and me and my cat
cought listening
behind glass.
In this interstice, those who come before claim the field as practitioners, listeners, orators and wordsmiths, masters and initiates, all come with utterances, monikers, contexts, stories and formations from, within, about sound.

Here, proceed with skepticism through the kaleidoscope of words that turn and return sound as other than what it is in the moment of listening. Here, each turn presents another coloration of sound, which is itself profoundly transparent.
Listening salon C: Sounds Like Home – part one

Listen to an excerpt from the beginning of Sounds Like Home (02:45)
For an optimal listening experience, listen in a quiet room with high quality headphones or speakers.
Recorded with M-audio Microtrack, 24 bit, 96 Hz
Excerpt compressed to 32 bit PMC Wav file
Audio link: http://circle.ubc.ca/handle/2429/50784

In this early work, a comparison is made between the Vltava River in Prague and Active Pass, Gulf Island, British Columbia, both places close to where I lived over the course of several years. I found acoustic mirrors in both places of each other. This excerpt from the beginning of the composition takes place on a man-made beach, forgotten except for swans feeding along the edge of the Vltava River in Prague and just to the side of a trestle bridge where trains passed overhead and caused vibrations in the water below, a surf for the swans to ride with regularity, a wonderfully varied acoustic feature.

This fascinated me and I produced a piece about it as artist in residence for the 2009 Radio without Boundaries Festival in Toronto (Dancer, 2009). The piece took many forms over the years, including radio broadcast and a multi-channel performance with poetry in which narration was spoken live.

Enjoy the play with sound, narration and poetry – forms in coherence and collision. This represents an early transition from poetry to radio toward soundscape composition.
Intra poetica

The poem that follows, entitled Transience, is actual narration taken from the Sounds Like Home soundscape composition. The narration for the piece was written as poetry rather than as narration, as such. It gives a visual aspect to the sound, contextualizes it, and thus locks its meaning. Timing of word to sound was important.

As poetry, the sounds are backgrounded with myself, the speaker of the poem, foregrounded in what I am seeing and the meaning I’m ascribing to it.

The meaning is the theme of the piece: that of being an expatriate, being displaced in location and relationships, in one’s sense of self and habituation, and yet finding location in the grafting of different landscapes one onto the other and associating different sounds one onto the other. In this way, auditory associations become meaningful in ways that visual or image based ones cannot.

This is the basis for the meaning ascribed to transience – to be in two places at once and, in the in-between, in neither as home ground.
Transience

At the Vltava’s river’s edge, I feel land-locked in man-made time.

I feed like swans on white bread, *houska* and slices of *chleba* — a bakery run discarded.

I stretch the air with my wings and tiptoe around the bodies of a mallard, bottle blue and black and a silver carp, bloated and eyeless.

On this counterfeit beach, with plastic, broken-up concrete, pyres, and swans, I too am midden, an arti-fact, out lived and washing back out again.

I hear time inside of time, places inside of places —

I used to think I could make anywhere into home but it’s not that simple.

I am, am I not, a listening transient?

I am, am I not, just space and silence.

I am, am I not, not ... home?
Notional: Speaking listening *appropriation*

Heidegger’s last essay *On Time and Being* turns away from *Being and Time* (1996), from metaphysics toward what is fitting the end of philosophy. This emphasis shifts to a dynamic of Being in time-space other than in its Aristotelian or Kantian guise. Here, Heidegger opens the field for a consideration of Being as a reciprocal relationship with time that he proposes be described as Ereigni, translated by Joan Stambauch in consultation with Heidegger as *Appropriation* (1972) – a key term to re-think sound as phenomena.

Notions of linear time and its sidekick, space, appropriately begin to quiver.

Heidegger queries the hermeneutics hovering about the term *Ereigni - Appropriation*. This querying opens possibility for concern about acoustic phenomena and Being-in-listening. It presents an opportunity to unpack a phenomenology related to sound beginning with a likewise vigilant examination of the terms around *Ereigni - Appropriation*.

*Ereigni*, in everyday German, is most commonly translated as *event*. This has been applied to a phenomenologically inspired use of the idea of a sound event, primarily in quantitative acoustic research. The term *event* resounds in both the German etymology of *Ereigni* and its translation as * Appropriation* in its origins, alterations, and translations including as a spoken word, as will become evident.

As Heidegger agreed with Stambauch on the translation of *Ereigni as Appropriation* (1972), there remains the issue of translation that renders the two terms’ etymology porous making alternate readings possible of the words through their origins, usage, and translations. This is the necessary order of the work, the beginning of plying *Ereigni-Appropriation* from its visual apprehension and reorient it toward an auditory orientation. This is not a task to be entered quickly or lightly, as the changing of habits of thinking, imbedded ways of being, require a masterful attention to minutiae of meaning, especially when dealing with the seductive and deceptive potential of words.

Etymologically, *Ereigni* comes from the German prefix, *er-*, comparable to *re* in English, and *auge*, eye, and accordingly connotes something coming into view again, in a second instance that initiates
perceptional awareness. This classical phenomenological definition is based in perception as seeing with eyes.

Heidegger first mentions the term Ereigni and links it to Appropriation in Identity and Difference (1969), in which he explains that “the word Ereignis (concern) has been lifted from organically developing language. Er-eignen (to concern) means, originally, to distinguish or discern [that] which one's eyes see, and in seeing, calling to oneself, ap-propriate” (p. 36).

In translation, Heidegger acknowledges that the etymology of Ereigni begins in a developing language, Latin to German. At this time, there is an epochal turn around the notion of perception from that of multi-sensory to visually predominant. Tracing both of the translated terms back to the same Latinate origins creates possible parallel readings in a convergence of Latin meanings consistent with Heidegger's intent.

Further, the order of seeing with one's eyes, and in seeing, calling to oneself, is the first in a series of turns Heidegger makes in Identity and Difference referencing his own use of language around explaining that “the event of appropriation is that realm, vibrating within itself, through which man and Being reach each other in their nature, achieve their active nature by losing those qualities with which metaphysics has endowed them” (p. 37).

This passage is particularly striking in the way it explains the vibrational aspect of the acoustic realm, where vibration – waves of energy – encounter man as part of the acoustic environment, and in each encounter with things and beings, an exchange of energy changes the sound, its trajectory, as well as placing things and beings in a network of relationships and interactions. Here, Heidegger is specifically using referents directly applicable to a soundscape, the listener-to-soundscape reciprocity that shapes Being-in-the-world.

The clue to this epochal shift is in the Latinate origins of con-cern, the translation of Ereigni, which Heidegger ascribes in the above quote. In the early 15th century Medieval Latin, concernere meant concern, touch, and belong to. Its figurative use signifies to sift, mix, as in a sieve. By the era of late Latin, con-cern had evolved to mean perceive, comprehend, away from touch toward a visually-based intellectual abstraction.
Herein lies the beginnings of a turn from the intimacy of a touch that expresses care as necessary to understanding into the abstraction and conceptualization of assumed and privileged visuality on which phenomenology is predicated. This turn from haptic action-based understanding to visual conceptualization is one Heidegger tries to distance from in classical phenomenological lineages and assumptions in his reworking of the term Ereignis (concern, event) into Appropriation, the relationships in which time appropriates Being in order to have meaning to the concerns and events of beings. This is particularly cogent in his later works, Identity and Difference and On Time and Being.

If, calling on the figurative use of con-cern, one thinks of taking aspects of something as commonplace as flour, something so taken-for-granted in its substance, necessity and mundaneness, and sifts it through the medium of touch – fingertips that direct the ground wheat through the sieve and the sieve that touches and separates the flour into a more refined substance – an allusion can be made with the haptic of vibration carried by the wind against a cheek or an eardrum that directs the awareness of phenomenon into their refined parts. In this expansive figurative reading, perception retains some of its original intimations.

To limit con-cern, like the terms Ereignis and Appropriation, to a trajectory of visual and linear meanings, rather than creative and associative ways of coming to know, is also to condense words from their oral-aural associations into a written language base, a process of ap-propriation to propriety, to meaning made exclusive rather than expansive.

In the last line of the first quote, “to distinguish or discern which one's eyes see, and in seeing, calling to oneself, ap-propriate,” Heidegger associates perception with a calling to oneself, an ap-propriation, after the fact of seeing, which is the moment of perceiving as an intention of bringing self to heightened awareness. It is a moment of sifting through seeing toward a reciprocal Being in which utterance expressed by the self and received from the self locates the self relationally. This is an instance of acoustic perception.

The prefix ap that Heidegger distinguishes from propriate is the Latin version of ad, which signifies directional movement, a moving to, toward as well as with regard to, and in relation to in time-space. What is significant here is that Heidegger identifies Er-eignis as Ap-propriate as first seeing and then a calling to oneself. In the second instance, the instance of awareness, this happens as a call to belong.
that is specifically directional, in movement, and relational in terms of other things and beings in the world.

Sound takes on distinction when a listener situates the sound in relation to themselves, to their instance of Being as sound moves dynamically around them with themselves as the epicenter. After perceiving phenomenon as something image-based and therefore static, the call brings awareness of an intrinsically fluid and relational self.

This self emerges from the intimacy of an aural or haptic sense of self out of that which is as taken for granted, something as immersive as sound or vibration. This process can be understood as a sifting of visuality from sound, then utterance as a situating self in sound, placing the speaker as a listener listening to and for themselves in the soundscape.

These nested refinements, once sifted through sagaciously, bring about an instance of heightened awareness of Being-in-the-world, Dasein, that can only be achieved when the most mundane, the most taken for granted, the nullified and isolated, aspects of Being come to awareness in consideration of what they are, what sound is, what touch is, in rapport with the surroundings and other things and beings of which the world consists. This is especially the case with sound, which flows invisibly between things and yet seems immersive. In this way, the perceiver does more than perceive, but experiences themselves as part of a relational milieu greater than themselves, with increased awareness of its encompassing parts. This is a listener-to-soundscape trope.

First one sees, that is the epochal necessity; then one hears sounds around them, which is the call to listens, and in this listening, beings situate themselves in their Being-ness in the world in relationship to a sound matrix. Being visually is also ratified.

In its first recorded instances, circa 450 AD, the word appropriate was adpropriare meaning to make one’s own from Latin ad- to and propriare as to take as one’s own (which begs the question of what one’s own might mean in relation to a self at a time when there was not the same sense of ownership and individualism as even in the Late Latin circa 14th and 15th centuries Europe). To take something as one’s own means that one had a sense of separation, of something as other than oneself, and then one locates the thing while the thing locates oneself, reciprocally. Then, the sense of separation is incorporated into a renewed sense of self that predicates a forgetting and re-habituation.
In this dynamic, there is mutuality and exchange where what was not known or known peripherally becomes that part of that individual’s sense of themselves as part of themselves, then again without question. The movement of thing to self and self to thing in time or space is associative, but never-the-less inevitably toward that which is *propriate*, *pro-priate*, the *proper*. The proper is that this thing that was other is now part of the identity of the individual, taken back into that which is separate. Once appropriated, the thing becomes integrated into the person and is part of their mundane existence. However, traces of that alternate knowing remain and this opens a pathway to recurrent and cumulative states of awareness.

The pivot occurs before the individual affirms their individualism, before the world as a series of dots of Being re-asserts itself and relationality is hindered. That moment is an intention, a will-ing-ness, such as in the attentive listener challenging their abilities to listen from inside the soundscape they are immersed in. This intentionality or con-cern determines what is ap-pro-priated through multiple instances in coming to perceptive awareness.

This is how listening is a gift, in the Heideggerian sense of the “it gives” that instantiates the presence of Being. Thus, Heidegger explains, in *On Time and Being*, how appropriation takes time through the Greek understanding of *Epoch* as a holding back rather than a span of time occurrence, which is “the fundamental characteristic of sending, the actual holding-back of itself in favor of discernibility of the gift, that is, of Being with regard to the grounding of beings” (1972, p. 9). So too, sound holds back that which it is, where it came from, what other matter or forces it encountered, until the encounter. The listening to a sound may take the shape for the listener as coming toward or moving away from them, but until the approach becomes the encounter, the listener listens tentatively to discern all the sound entails. This is a great gift, the interactive mutability of sound that gives it its presence and it is also the necessity of grounding being in the certainty of where and what is once the sound arrives at the listener.

Listener intentionality is further reinforced in the additional prefix, *pro* (*pro-priate*), which is a word-forming element with a plethora of meanings such as: *on behalf of, in place of, before, for, in exchange for, and just as*. In this way, that which is being appropriated, such as a sound that locates a listener in their sense of themselves in the soundscape, lingers in the possibility of being understood and appreciated in the myriad information and capacities that sound brings to Being.
The process of the phenomenon becoming exclusivity identified with the individual’s sense of self is twice removed in an act of ap-pro-priation and emphasis lies in the approach, the intent before the act of making one’s own that which one perceives through many means. It is the nuanced moment before Being is substantiated, when relationality is fluid. This is the heightened awareness of Being.

Once that moment has passed, the listener becomes again an integral part of the soundscape and habituation reasserts itself. The sound is just another sound surrounding them. The body immerses itself into the phenomena in order to perceive itself in the surroundings with certainty.

The more attention the listener brings to sifting through the richness of sounds surrounding them, the more the sounds are enriched as information and as experience, which the listener then takes on in a process of ap-pro-priation, of coming to know themselves in nested instances of Being as presence.

Time also shifts to multiplexes of times, of sounds moving toward and away, of the different rhythms of, for example, tires on the road beside a house where someone is raking, the time experienced by the one raking, the rhythm of footsteps as someone strolls or rushes by, inside of their own time frame which is resonating with the relational time frame of each attendant ear. The moment, in sound, is fluid, relational and in flux and so Being becomes nesting beings and the world nesting worlds, time nesting time and space nesting space.

Nested as in place in one thing in another as well as a place to call home.

Perhaps I’ve strayed far from Heidegger’s intent.

In the introduction to On Time and Being, translator Stambaugh explains Heidegger’s intent further into two categories useful to repurposing the term Ereignis - Appropriation toward acoustics ways of knowing and Being:

The event of appropriation (Ereignis) is a word belonging to common language and means “event.” But Heidegger’s use of it is more (1) abstract in the sense of being infinitely removed from everyday events and yet being that which is so close to us that we cannot see it, and (2) “concrete” in its use of the very roots of that word: er-eignen (eigen = own, thus to come into
one’s own, to come where one belongs) and er-augen (Auge = eye, This is the real etymological root of er-eignen), thus to catch sight of, to see with the mind’s eye, to see face-to-face. (p. 14)

Now it is possible to concern ourselves again with Heidegger’s intent as it relates to acoustic phenomena. Not at all an event as a singular happening along a linear time frame, the more abstract sense of gaining a sense of Being through that in which one is immersed, to be able to remove oneself from the everydayness of the sound, to situate oneself as a listener at the center while appreciating that the soundscape touches the body and flows through and around it, affects it, and continues in all directions at once – “so close to us that we cannot see it,” directly expresses Heidegger’s intent of the word Appropriation.

Not only in the abstract, however, but in the lived experience of Being in and part of a soundscape in concrete terms, to come into one’s own through this situating of body and self as part of the surrounding environment, as center and periphery, so that one experiences a sense of belonging where one takes ones place in the intrinsic fabric of sound, ephemeral and concrete, everywhere and all around all at the same time, while moving away and on, all at the same time, profoundly relational – and in the apex, presence as listener.

And yet, the fact remains that we are increasingly predominantly visual beings, with an increasingly pressing call to being something other as well – the listener.

A phenomenology of sound has been tentatively undertaken, but remains tentative because of visual referents and the attempt to methodologize hearing as listening, the instance of presence as an event, which overlooks the fecundity of the role of the listener’s coming to awareness acoustically, and in this awareness, a listener experiences self and time in profoundly intimate ways.
Reconsitutions of sound-Being

How does sound work, experientially?

This we surmise. It is immediate and in constant flux; it is the score of all motion, all activity; it is not an it, but a relationship. Sound locates material, bodies, movement and is always in motion. Sound is not an end to, but a means of, being in the world.

Doors open and close in myriad ways, each with a signature in sound that is unique to the wood, the environment in which the tree grew over hundreds of years, the chemicals released when it was hewn, the pounding of the axe or the tenor of the plane saw's pining touch echoing across the landscape, the carpenter’s experience of his day as he gouges, taps, carves, sands, hammers, and so on. It is all there in the density and resonance of the thud or creak of the door. If one knew how to listen for it. A woodsmith knows.

Similarly, the hiss of a swan expresses a situation and is specific to the body of the swan, the temperature and humidity in the air, whether it is on water or land, and it’s expressive power; the blast of the voice of a man from a speeding train on a trestle turns language into wind and velocity and situates the listener directionally in relationship to the event. If one knows how to listen for it. The sound artist recording this event knows.

Each pulse of blood through veins echoes in the ear canal and vibrates the skin of the eardrum as a singular burst-hum that heralds a concert of organs and bodily functions that are mostly embedded, un-listened-to, if one plugs ones ears or meditates, this too can be known.

Beings cannot see inside their bodies, but they can hear teeth, lips, tongue, swallowing, gut sounds, joints pop and creak, etc. as part of their everyday sense of self. When we sleep, we close our eyes but not our ears.

Each encounter speaks in and over time to a moment of being that locates bodies and things in relationship to a listener inside of immense complexity – and yet it is so simple, so obvious, so just what is to the one at the center of the experience.
Pro found listeners

In sound, the before is always present in the after. There are no separations in the present, and although contemporary linearity and individualism desires to detach and distance from things that came before, this is to forget the fullness of longer-term ongoing convergences.

These junctions coalesce around the master-listeners – those on whose ears other ears opened, who opened the field and continue to work vigorously with and against different modes of listening through many fruitions since their beginnings up to the present day. The majority of what they first brought remains fresh and relevant; some of what they brought subsequently and inevitably raises vital challenges and questions for others to consider, now, from today’s different position – in relation to those formative beginnings. They did, and continue to do, this work through conferences, performances, lectures, writings and mentoring. They represent a small enclave whose reach grew far beyond what they anticipated exponentially, now, as the field of soundscape studies burgeons.

Like many, I owe my interest and professional career in sound to these master listeners and the community they foster. They are the ones who dared to question what they perceived as a degradation of the acoustic environment, a concept totally radical in its time, and who then and now, rise up to question and articulate a difficult field – difficult because it is always changing, invisible and not easily rendered.

Their lineage is well known and documented – from beginnings in the World Soundscape Project and the continued work of R. Murray Schafer, Hildegard Westerkamp and Barry Truax and organizations such as the World Forum for Acoustic Ecology (WFAE) and its affiliates. Today, a debate exists about why one needs an umbrella organization such as the WFAE and its affiliates when individuals are doing such important work on their own and through their own institutions. Is the WFAE truly representative of the field of Acoustic Ecology worldwide and its companion practices, such as sound art, electro acoustic composition, soundscape composition, soundwalking? Certainly, there is a proliferation of related fields, but these ones listed are the most closely associated with this lineage. And that is the point. The WFAE is the organization that represents that lineage and the professionals and artists who identify with that lineage. The work is ongoing.
As one of this community, I am interested in speaking of Murray and Hildi in the ways I know them, as people in my personal as well as professional life. Therefore, I tell stories about our encounters and share the encounters of others who are also part of this community, rather than survey their works from a distance, as academic subjects, as this has already been done in previous thesis work and writing. I also add to the debate about critical question of what it means to privilege a static definition of coherence in soundscape composition, of acoustic environments and artistic works. This brings a unique primary research component to their legacy as I’ve encountered it, as a still emergent field where the originators remain a vital part of the lives of those who are taking up this work. This is a unique and privileged location.

As an emergent field, acoustic ecology and these companion practices, especially nascent genres such as soundscape composition, continually grapple with finding ways to describe what they are and what they consist of – sometimes stammering along the way. In academia, the pressure to insert concepts relevant to soundscape studies into existent scientific and theoretical frameworks risks reducing the experience of listening into exercises of abstraction and conflation – just as imposing orthodoxies of listening can be exclusionary.

Still, this is fertile, if unstable, ground. Few speak the language of sound and silence masterfully without being inconsistent, as sound and silence resists any but complex and mutable definitions. So, too, with listening – sound happens in a moment, it effects the listener, and then it moves on. How does one start to talk about this now robust field?

Before long, the term soundscape makes itself heard and the first to speak that word in a forceful way was R. Murray Schafer.

**The rebound howl**

Sound environments are termed soundscapes in acoustic ecology. The term was coined in its current usage by R. Murray Schafer in his groundbreaking book, *The Tuning of the World* (1977b). This book, the first of its kind, re-conceptualized everyday sound as culture, literature, and history, and initiated the
idea of an inherent balance in the soundscape, termed acoustic ecology. Murray unleashed the forceful rethink of sound that is still making itself heard worldwide.

I met Murray in 2005 at the Canadian Association of Sound Ecology’s annual retreat where we were both keynote presenters. I was a radio producer new to soundscape studies and I was awestruck to be in such illustrious company.

Murray walked in late to his workshop, a willow of a man, grey beard, one milky blue eye that gazed into an altogether other direction, and a black fisherman's cap directing his whole demeanor. Although his workshop was named something vague like Soundsapes, it quickly became clear he had neither cared what it was called nor did he intend to follow some preconceived idea about what he would be sharing with us. It was all just happening. In no time, he was showing us all how to do the wolf dance from his Wolf Project, the last avant-garde performance piece from his ring-cycle opera, *Patria*, that took place annually in the wilderness that surrounded us. We were at the Haliburton Forest and Wild Life Reserve, a private wolf sanctuary on the edge of the Algonquin Provincial Park in Ontario. After stamping out a rhythm in a circle of fifteen or so ambivalent (we weren’t sure where this was going...but this was the great man, himself, after all) participants, we lifted our heads and howled and howled and howled. It felt amazing to release sound collectively in this way! Later that night, I walked with the group and listened to the wolves singing in the distance. Vast distances expanded as those languorous cries eased out from bushy tails to elongated mouths and across trees, lakes, outcrops riding time primordial and space unbound to bring us closer to the silence in ourselves, our standing in proximity together alone in moonlight listening. This was my introduction to the potential of the word *soundscape*.

It took thirty years for *soundscapes* to take hold as a concept after many interrogations, such as: why use the term *scape*, which links the sound environment to the *scape* of land, such as in the collapse of experience into forms such as landscape painting or landscape as an abstraction worthy of colonization? These were important questions to pose, but the term took hold expansively and is now in academic and popular use in Europe, South and North America. Somewhat dubiously, walking tours with cellphone audio are called soundscapes, businesses selling audio gear use the word, musicians slap it onto ambient compositions, writers refer to it in their novels and poems, visual artists wrap their ears around their eyes with it, and sound and radio art forms embrace the concept prolifically. In academic disciplines from urban geography to cultural anthropology to music, it stands, basically, for any sound
environment, but when used appropriately, it gives that notion a poetic appeal permeated with due complexity.

Schafer, although his reach is far more comprehensive, advocates for a model of an ecologically balanced soundscape within specific terms and it is important to have such concepts for addressing noise pollution issues and legislation, and to cohere activism around instating humane acoustic environments. However, current trends in acoustic ecology are countering the idealization of sound environments of the early movement and seeking a different way of determining what constitutes a complexity of sound as the contemporary world experiences it. A fundamental curiosity about what sound is and how it works outside of its most basic mechanics seems inexhaustible. At the heart of this explosion of interest is the question of how sound impacts human and creature experiences. How does sound shape time, space and a sense of being in the world? As a traditionalist in the acoustic ecology movement, I embrace this larger context and critical stance while remaining true to the notion that an ecology of sound infers the ultimate aim of human, creature and planetary well-being. Acoustic ecology serves as a barometer of these chiasmi of existence.

In a Festschrift for Murray’s 80th birthday celebration, *Ways of Listening, Figures of Thought* (2013), Sabine Breitsameter traces the movement of acoustic ecology through its founder, R. Murray Schafer. With specifically Canadian roots, influences such as Glen Gould and Marshal McLuhan cross-pollinated Schafer’s thinking about the technologizing possibilities and limitations of then new audio media, specifically advances in recording and radio as an artistic medium. The Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, before the fiscal restraints and restructuring of the 1980’s, was the premier showcase for innovation and Gould and Schafer created radio works that pushed the listening envelope between spoken word, music and sound (Dancer, 2005). Certainly, these and other early forays into the use of field recordings profoundly influenced my own artistic arc.

Although Murray is a technophobe, he aligns with McLuhan around the necessity of a media ecology regarding the technologizing of man (Schafer, 1977b, p. 20-24). Since that time, no one can deny the profound impact field recording equipment and techniques have, and continue to have, on bringing a deeper appreciation of sound to a larger public as both a consumer and producer of sound-based works – and that this technologization of the ear has its banal side as well. Without attending to what expands an acoustic repertoire, what brings nuance and complexity to listener experiences, one reinforces non-
attentive, sensory collapse and risks further listening degradation. However, when used to expand listening consciousness, these tools are powerful allies.

Schafer provides a conceptual, lexical and methodological framework for addressing sound that serves well to introduce acoustically-based concepts and has relevance as the substantive lineage, but given the scope of the task now at hand, these frameworks’ specificities are limited in meeting the field’s growing demands. The plethora of uses of the term soundscape far outreached what Schafer instantiated, which is a measure of his success. For this reason, a revolution is afoot struggling to find new words, conceptions, poetics, methodologies, and pedagogical approaches that can convey the practice of listening from within the soundscape, and all it implies, into the rich new terrain that has already declared the term as its own.

As well as telling characteristically Murray stories, contributors to the Festschrift speak of how Murray and his coinage of the term soundscape determined important understandings and led to important work in their own lives and careers. In addition to the centerpiece article by Sabine Breitsameter, entitled Ways of Listening, Figures of Thought: on the History and Perspective in R. Murray Schafer’s Tuning of the World (2012) (the English translation of the forward to the German translation of R. Murray Schafer’s s pivotal text), of the twenty five contributors solicited (the publication was limited by funding to 70 pages and not widely distributed), the majority refer in some way to the pivotal contribution of Murray’s conceptualizing and terming the notion of a soundscape. This speaks also to the wide scope with which the term has found meaning. I mention a few:

Volker Bernius, an editorial journalist for educational culture and cofounder of the Stiftung Zuhoren (Listening Trust), describes the influence of Murray’s audio perception education publications in shaping his acoustic pedagogic practice and that today, soundscape studies remain foundational to training programs at the Listening Trust. (p. 39)

Barry Blesser, with a forty year career in the perception of sound and space as one of the founders of digital audio and author of MIT Press’s Aural Architecture, claims that Murray’s concept of a soundscape was foundational to his next MIT book, Spaces Speak, Are You Listening? Experiencing Aural Architecture (2007) (p. 40).
Lidia Camacho, founder of the Mexican National Phonotheque, director of Radio Educacion and author of six books, states that in the creation of the Fonoteca Nacional of Mexico, the concept of a soundscape led to Mexico establishing “a public institution that has the mission of preserving its sound heritage and fostering a true culture of listening among the population” (p. 41).

Heidi Grundmannm, founder of Kundstradio-Radiokundst and Elisabeth Zimmermann, producer, describe that through Hildegard Westerkamp, they learnt about acoustic ecology and the genre of soundscapes, which led to Schafer’s idea of radical radio and the streaming of radio art projects, including nonstop broadcast of soundscapes and Sound Drift, a nine day continuous sound installation at sixteen international locations (p. 44).

Helmi Jarviluoma is the Professor of Cultural Studies at the University of Eastern Finland specializing in the study of changing European soundscapes and author of 150 publications, including Acoustic Environments in Change (2009), an updated research project based on the World Soundscape Project’s European Villages research project and publication (1977a). She states that “in the late 1980’s, the term ‘soundscape’ was not known in Finland by researchers or society at large…a few decades later, the close collaboration between Murray and [ourselves] means that the term appears regularly in the media here” (p. 46).

David Toop, musician, composer, writer and curator since 1970, author of five books on music, sound, and listening, and Professor of Audio Culture and Improvisation at the University of the Arts London, points out that Murray inspired Toop’s “conviction that sound and listening were not only central to human culture but also deeply enmeshed within a connective web of disparate phenomena.” Further, Murray’s identification of the degradation of the sound “provided a conceptual framework and vocabulary for action…[that has] been accepted, absorbed, and contested within music and all branching fields of scholarship in which audio culture has relevance. Even more impressive is the fact that his term ‘soundscape’…is now in common usage” (p. 55).
Keiko Torigoe musicologist, soundscape researcher/designer and Professor at Aoyama Gakuin University, founder of the Soundscape Association of Japan, and co-translator of Schafer’s *The Tuning of the World* (1987) as well as other publications, was so struck by the concept of a soundscape, which she encountered in a Japanese contemporary music magazine, that she centered her Master and Doctoral graduate theses around Murray Schafer and the World Soundscape Project (1982). Since that time, she has remained involved in Japan in projects and realizes that “although the concept of a soundscape was developed by a Canadian, it has helped me to reclaim various buried sensitivities and cultures that we have forgotten in the process of Westernization” (p. 56).

Barry Truax, Professor at Simon Fraser University (SFU) and an original member of the World Soundscape Project (WSP), edited its *Handbook for Acoustic Ecology* (1999a) and authored a pivotal textbook, *Acoustic Communications* (1984). He explains that this work “would become the basis for an entire career at SFU, leading to my work in acoustic communication and multi-channel soundscape composition...The Sonic Research Studio, which Murray founded, continues to be the teaching and learning center for countless students, researchers, and composers, and the WSP database provides access to others worldwide” (p. 58).

Tim Wilson, veteran Canadian Broadcasting Corporation radio producer, host and documentary filmmaker and founding member of the Canadian Association of Sound Ecology, acknowledges Murray as his first real mentor in acoustic arts and that, in true Murray fashion, in a letter to Wilson, Murray chastised the Canadian Broadcast Corporation style radio for its tendency to “interrupt soundscapes with an unctuous weasand ... ([I] had to look it up: it means gullet, windpipe) of commentary” (p. 61).

*Soleful magnanimity*

As for myself, the person who has intimately influenced my current artistic practice and opened the lived experience of the term soundscape is Hildi.

Hildegard Westerkamp, an accomplished acoustic educator, soundscape composer, writer and lecturer, is the sole female member of the original 1970’s World Soundscape Project at Simon Fraser University
under the research leadership of Murray Schafer. In the forward to the Festschrift publication, she expresses the dynamism and energetic force of that time as replete with “serious engagement, playfulness, rigorous research, creative activism, lots of laughter, inspiration and a large expanse of ideas for changing the world soundscape” (p. 9), and these values are very much alive in Hildi’s engagement with those who seek her mentorship.

A mentor to many beginning and established acoustic ecologists, graduate students, artists and initiates to soundwalking practice, Hildi’s strength of spirit, quick laughter, and pragmatism far exceed her diminutive frame. To walk with Hildi on a soundwalk is to feel each footstep plant itself with certainty, as though the ground is rising up to meet one’s sole magnanimously – yet without making a sound. This is a remarkable feat. Hildegard Westercamp has, more than anyone else, fostered the art of soundwalking into a worldwide practice.

Hildi and I have soundwalked, presented at conferences, discussed stages and cycles in the acoustic ecology movement and in our own personal lives in Canada and Europe. All this and yet, to listen to one of Hildi’s soundscapes compositions (listed on her website (2014), notably Into the Labyrinth (2000), Talking Rain (1997), Für Dich (For You) (2005) and most recently, Once Upon A Time (2012)) is to recognize mastery of the genre, of listening, of understanding sound and the soundscape, of experimentation, and a lifetime dedication to this practice.

Hildegard Westerkamp’s life and work is a study in itself and the basis of Andra McCartney’s Ph.D thesis, entitled Sounding Places: Situated Conversations Through the Soundscape Compositions of Hildegard Westerkamp (1999). A survey of electroacoustic composition as it relates to the fledgling genre of soundscape composition, the study significantly places Westerkamp within considerations of feminist epistemology and investigates the role of place in her compositions – and it does so in an intimate dialogic way through the relationship that developed between McCartney and Westerkamp. McCartney discusses each of Westerkamp’s compositions in detail, including elements such as the inclusion of speaking voices in Fur Dich, electroacoustic sounds in Into India (2002), as well as Westerkamp’s attention to the lived experiences of listening such as breath in the Breathing Room series (1990).
Of breath, McCartney explains that “for Westerkamp, the metaphor of breathing is an important one, and the act of breathing is a focus, meditatively, compositionally, politically and in moments of anxiety as a centering force” (p. 335). This resonates with my own sense of breath as concomitant with listening. McCartney’s thesis is a fascinating peak into the process and reception of Hildi’s works, their position in the genre, and of the genre itself in terms of the meaning listener’s make of them – particularly from within and juxtaposed with music, which is McCartney’s background.

This positioning of Westerkamp’s work and soundscape composition within musical genres (electroacoustic) and educational fields (communication) diverges from my own work and practice: I am interested in the artistic practice itself, in listener experiences in a specific form of soundscape composition that intends to deepening listening in ways resonant with soundwalking; in the experience of dislocation that is inevitable and invigorating in the mediated elements in soundscape composition, and in the arts-based educative and research potential of this form of soundscape composition.

These aspects also exist in Westerkamp’s works and inspire in my own work as an acoustic arts-based educator and soundscape composer. Also significant to this thesis, there remains a language of listener-to-sound tropes to be articulated. As Sabine Breitsameter points out, citing Hildegard Westerkamp and other writings on the subject: “a poetics of the genre Soundscape Composition is in its very beginnings and awaits further development” (Breitsameter & Leonardson, 2013, p. 25).

**Soundscape: tropes of sound and listener**

Sabine Breitsameter, in her 80th Festshrift essay noted above, describes that

> The term “soundscape” represents a sound-and-listening trope that is grounded in a specific listener positioning: in the willed acoustic reception of the entire array of sound events in a place, space or landscape, in full surround, down to the faintest perceivable sound. (p. 24)

This description of the term is particularly expansive and resonates with my experience of, and work with, sound. It acknowledges that a soundscape is a term that represents something that it is not the
thing itself, that thing being the ineffable quality of sound that is always already in flux. What does it represent? A sound-and-listening trope where the hyphenated words establish the inextricably of sound from the listener, pointing to sound’s immersive quality and the listener’s immersion in – and potential for awareness of – sound. Both are inevitably symbiotic. To link this relationship to a trope is to evoke further complexity evident in my own trajectories:

soundscape as an ontology encompassing the sound-listener encounter; soundscape as an ontological concept, part of a philosophical construct around Being and world; and

the sound and listening trope etymologically, as in to turn, to direct, to alter, to change the continual turn in listening as the listener directs their listening attention and thereby alters the soundscape in ways referential to themselves in the act or intention of listening; the changeability, fluidity, mutability of sound as it interacts with whatever it encounters; and

to evoke a musical trope, the soundscape as supplemental to musical composition, as making up for an unacknowledged aspect of music, as strengthening the whole; and

to evoke soundscape as a literary trope: a poetic turn, a popularized or cliché figure of speech, a literature and language of sound and soundscape; acknowledging soundscape as integral to listening as sound.

Then, Breitsameter’s definition specifically grounds the idea of a soundscape, not as in the abstraction of the landscape, but in a specific listener position. The positionality of the listener is central to my argument: the premise that sound locates and dislocates. As such, listening is an act of positioning the listener in sound and the self as the center of the listening experience with potential to influence the soundscape and oneself relationally in it. Following the colon, equitably, Breitsameter’s attention turns to sound itself as a willed acoustic reception, lodged with the listener, but also willing space for a radical misfire, the capacity for sound to dislocate the listener, effecting their attention in ways unanticipated and with an unanticipated attendant embodied response. When the anticipation of the meaning of a
sound is fractured, it creates a fertile opening to alternate experiences of listening, to experiencing sound for its own sake. It opens to a sentient participation in the flux of an acoustic environment.

In this scenario, the soundscape is dynamic and the listener is engrossed to the point of integration rather than enacting meaning-making. The listening body inhabits its own vibrational niche within the soundscape. In this case, the tree falling in the forest does make sound even if a human is not listening in that all sounds carry a receptive potential as sounds encounter other sounds or things or creatures or even if the sound travels in space over eons until it has an encounter. The vibrational force of a sound stays in circulation relative to what it encounters and its rate of decay, which hypothesizes that the first big bang sound of existence is still in circulation and potentially affecting us. This idea inheres with a vivification of the soundscape as larger than what I, the listener, experience or consciously encounter.

As an artist and composer, this is an essential aspect of the work: placing a listener into a directed listening experience that raises that experience above the sum parts into a whole. Toward an ecology of listening, I situate myself in writing sound, soundscape composition, soundwalk and listening practices aligned with the above reification of the term soundscape:

as an ontology of listening;
as the turn of an anticipated listening outcome becoming other and else, elsewhere;
as the euphonic-cacophonic of a schizophrenic composition;
and, as the poetics of dislocatory-locatory sound.

These aspects of the listener-soundscape encounter can be disorienting and decentering and locatory and centering. Awareness and familiarity of all these possibilities opens a vital experiential learning space crucial to mitigating plethoric worlds of sound.
Composing as sonance

Here we are concerned with the coexistence of dissimilars, and the central points where fusion occurs are many: the ears of the listeners wherever they are. This disharmony... is simply a harmony to which many are unaccustomed.

John Cage (1961a, p. 12)

Composition anticipates an integration of positions. Whether in form, structure or method, the composer seeks a unified whole aligned with classical expectations. Even when working against classical structures, they are being referenced – there is no ahistoricity. The overarching acoustic model for composition is music with a set structure based in pitch, rhythm and harmony. Even in the soundscape, a listener often finds delightful and surprising musicality or design in the confluence of sounds that are perceived as inherent. The artist brings compositional intent to all parts of the creative process whether in choices around framework and structure, in decisions made during process, or in how the work is interpreted at any point in its conception or realization.

Soundscape composition situates within the electroacoustic music tradition, where the use of environmental or found sound complements experimental music and voice or choral elements. This use carries with it a compositional bias that is musical, while from an acoustic environmental standpoint, there is no such force coming to bear on the soundscape or how a soundscape composer composes with found material. Sounds in the environment are open to myriad structural interpretations as evident in different cultures of listening, traditions, and musical systems. If the musical expectation is removed from the act of composition, then a new emphasis emerges – one that has the potential to delineate and restructure listener-to-sound relationships based on the soundscape.

The iconic avant-garde composer, John Cage, redefined silence as what happens when the music stops playing. He noted that a composer using sound and recording-editing media can choose to either incorporate sound into his musical composition and thereby maintain control over his medium or “one may give up the desire to control sound, clear his mind, and set about discovering the means to let sounds be themselves” (1979, p. 10).
In this spirit, soundscape composition comprises many avenues. In my arc as an acoustic artist, I begin with musicality and spoken word as compositional means toward creating acoustic coherence. The earlier pieces use musical elements and vocalization (cows, humans) to provide context. The later works are based on the experience of soundwalking as a means of actively dislodging habitual listening toward deeper appreciation and attention to sounds, themselves. The soundscape compositions based on soundwalking are not documentations of a soundwalk, but a reconstitution and reworking of a soundwalk route through various recording and editing techniques.

Working compositionally between the public performative occasion of a soundwalk and an end production for broadcast presents the challenge of reconstituting a lived experience using a mediated form, recording – somewhat static in the sense that the recordist fixes the acoustic moment in time and space to be revisited at will. This fixes the listener directionality, in space, but creates the possibility to revisit the composition many times, although the listener’s own sense of time and space remains embodied. This is not possible in the lived experience of acoustic phenomenon. What emphasis do I, the composer, bring to this reconstitution? A musicality, meaning based in words, an ecological activism, or some bridge between these and other listening appetites?

In the series of soundscape compositions presented as case studies, this compositional arc is apparent. The first case study, *Cacowphony*, is an instance of listening standing still so to attend to the utterance of the other. A single occurrence, it is recorded as it occurs and later edited to convey the immediacy and impact of the cattle vocalizations. The work moves from documentation to composition with an aim to convey the urgency of what I encountered in that one place, its emotional impact, and explore the erotic of these sounds implicated in suffering and death. As an early work, I find myself compelled as well as challenged by its emotional force and, like the subject matter, I too am articulating something highly personal and universal.

A major influence in my artistic journey is that, as an acoustic ecologist, I increasingly believe that change in acoustic environments begins with the listener-to-sound relationship centered in the listener. If listening experiences deepen, awareness expands, and the potential for environments to shift radicalizes. The potential for listeners to determine what constitutes acoustically balanced spaces and experiences comes into range. To advocate for acoustically balanced spaces and changes in legislation in areas such as urban planning remains an important strategy, as there is undeniable degradation.
However, without activating listener awareness of their immediate acoustic environments disregards the force of the highly personal and subjective to inspire change. Individual ratification of what constitutes a healthy soundscape centers on individual listening habits and shifts in understanding of those listening experiences. From this position public consensus is possible. These shifts in listening awareness are key in building a reconceptualized culture of listening, a listening for the other, the unanticipated and unknown, the alien as a way to coming to awareness of self in the presence of beingness.

Composing toward this end, recent soundscape compositions, Cloist(au)ral and Walking Sound, aim to take the listener on a journey into deeper listening states as experienced in a soundwalk and to do so through a creative medium, soundscape composition. Movement through these states is mediated by recording and post-production editing techniques according to the acoustic events and features along a predetermined route. The route designed for a soundwalk intends to increase awareness of the lived experience of the soundscape. The route remains a constant in the composition, while the time and occurrences along the route change – as I record after or before the enactment of the public soundwalk. The other constant is the situation of walking through sound that the soundscape composition plays with and that continually locates and dislocates the listener in relationship to this constantly reconstituting virtual soundscape. The composer situates the listener in the piece and the listener goes through a specific experience of sound where sounds, in their de-contextualization, are simply what they are – sounds.

The alternation between the anticipated known and unanticipated unknown opens the fertile space of coming to know, space especially relevant in attending to sound. It isn’t a comfortable place of knowing. Sound just is, it does not attend to the abstractions that preoccupy human conceptualization or desires about lived experience or of what sound, itself, is. Cage refers to this when he declares: “A sound accomplishes nothing; without it life would not last out the instant” (p. 14). Why would life not last out the instant? Because life is not about accomplishing, it is about being, and being compels a turn.
The listener’s turn

Turns are inevitable in listening. A turn implies linearity – that something goes along and then changes direction in relationship to itself – while the instant of turning is its opening. In contemporary listening culture, linearity is inevitable as part of the visual predominance of perception, which must be accommodated in order to move beyond it toward listening. The turn acknowledges this progression, however, the turn turns on itself and is therefore not new knowledge, per se, but a coming to know what is already known or taken for granted – this time with a different potentiality. This is a listener’s opportunity.

A fold might also be a useful concept, as sound happens within Heidegger’s conception of a fourth dimension of time-space that, in *On Time and Being*, he describes as the unity that approaches after past, present and future recess into relationality, as a “nearing nearness [that] keeps open the approach…It unifies in advance the ways in which what has been, what is about to be and the present reach out toward one another“ (p. 16-17). Sounds are in a constant state of approach, in a state of fluidity, their unity centering on the listener’s state of being. Rather than a directionality, which is relational to the listener as center point, they emanate in all directions at once. For this reason, sound is often conceptualized as immersive. When sound is spoken about in this way, as immersive, the abstraction of space creates this affect. Immersion collapses the embodied experience of relational time-space and the fold implies that this everything everywhere pulls away from itself to double over in an instant *other* from all-encompassment. What is that *other*? Is it the moment of the turn adapted to conceptions of space?

Sounds emanate outward from their source, but are not immersive in the same sense as constructed in space. Sound is profoundly reciprocal and active. As a sound emanates outward concentrically, it alters and is altered by untold encounters and exchanges too complex for us to understand, witness, or conceive except in their totality. Sound, as the human experiences it, receives these encounters not as immersive, but as encompassing in the sense that they attend to a direction. Directionality implies linearity – which is why sound circulates primarily through means (the human ear, recording equipment, musical notation) grounded in time, duration and rhythm – whereas sounds’ complexity and rigorous flux means that it isn’t at all easy to explain, describe, write about, notate or do anything but experience. Even recording is a linear medium in that the recordist points her microphone toward a
subject and shapes a narrative in this way with a linear thrust. In a sense, we are immersed in space and encompassed by sound. How to derail this thrust?

This attends to the question of the use of the turn to explain sound: to communicate across languages between visual and acoustic ways of being and knowing.

The soundscape is not an isolated thing but inextricably bound to each individual listener. Each listener is the receptive center of interrelated emanations positioning them in sound. The listener, according to their state of being, listens and interprets. What is understood about what is heard is highly subjective and aligned to habits of listening and histories concerning the interpretation of these sounds. These habits and histories are inextricably caught up with visual and language centric ways of being, understanding and interpreting. These enact an unavoidable linearity in their articulation. We can evoke sound through creating or reviving a circumstance associated with a sound, but we cannot hear the sound outside the context of its making.

Even when listening to a recording of a sound, the listener context is changed, as well as that of the sound. The recorded sound of the tractor rumbling across the hillside may give the impression of positioning me and my ears at the center of the movement, but there is no tractor rumbling across the hillside in my headphones. I’m sitting in a chair in my living room and my body and I both know this as irrefutable, even with our eyes closed. Listening to the recording, I cannot see the red tile rooftop of a house just below the hill that skims part of the rumble of the sound, absorbing part and sending other parts of the sound off on a different trajectory, but I can still tell approximately how far away the tractor was from the microphone and whether it was moving toward, away, from left to right or vice versa in relationship to the body holding the microphone. This directionality grounds the listener in the acoustic experience and is a familiar starting point in coming to appreciate the soundscape.

The notion of the turn aligns with potential openings that incorporate directionality. The turn encompasses a re-turn to the experience of the known or taken for granted, such as epitomizes sound, through attention to an accessible dimension of sound – its directionality.

This initiates the process of coming to understand and describe the experience of the listener listening to sound in a way that makes sense to the listener, who interprets that experience within their concept of what sound is and how it works, an explication of the lived experience of sound. In other words, in
In order to understand sound, we cannot help but use words and visual metaphors to arrive at interpretations. Speaking in turn opens space for a deeper lived experience of the acoustic realm. Then, the turn is complicit in opening something as ordinary as everyday listening.

It is interesting that, in general, the most open listeners are those not involved with commercial music or sound production. Sound technicians’ feedback often relays that all they are hearing is ambience and they rarely stay the listening. The significance of these responses lies in awareness of the degree to which listening habits are engrained and that every listener brings their listening biases and identifications to the situation. The willingness to mitigate such habits is the meeting place between the composer’s skill working with sound and the listener’s ability to open to new, challenging, sound terrain. Still, every ear comes with biases.

Everyday listeners often respond to my soundscape compositions commenting that they do not know exactly where or what they are listening to, but that they have never experienced sound in this way before – that their appreciation for the sounds around them is radicalized. I consider this the measure in meeting my own artistic and activist aims.

**Riffs**

I was, at one time, married to a North American who lived and studied in Varanasi, India, for ten years. His area of study was Vedanta philosophy and classical Indian music. He played the tabla, the percussion instrument that sets the structure in classical raga traditions. Bob often described how the untrained Western ear becomes bored or irritated when listening to ragas as there is no point of reference for the seemingly endless hours of droning instrumentation and repetition of riffs. That uninitiated ear lacks the appreciation of thousands of years of highly mathematical rhythmic structure evolved to mirror a level of compositional and listening nuance not operating in Western classical or modern music. In traditional Indian classical music concerts, the first few hours consist of the musicians courting their particular muse (as in mus/ic) and tuning their ears symbiotically to each other, so that they can fully improvise together from within complex musical structures. The musicians also actively cultivate a particular listening ethos with their live audience. These intentions collude to create a listening experience and instruction in listening toward an experience of attunement. Only in the early hours of the morning does
the real performance begin. That is entirely different from Western expectations of music that soon becomes disinterested without constant rise and fall in a dramatic structure. Perhaps the Indian soundscape is full of enough chaos and drama that the raga seeks to ameliorate it.

The tradition of classical Indian music fosters the sustained attention of the listener within a carefully cultivated musician-sound-listener relationship often over an 8 to 10 hour cycling through different listening states. By contrast, soundwalking aims for the listener to approach an altered listening state over maximally 90 minutes and a soundscape composition rarely exceeds one hour! Of course, we are immersed in the soundscape continually, every moment of every day, so the ear must have the capacity for such listening marathons. In the raga form, there is the expectation of the listener to be taken through sequences of complex structures (known by the audience) and be entertained – as in keep the ear interested by the minute differences in what the structure demands and the musician improvises upon. Then, there is the listener’s own mind-body state nurtured through the music in various ways; as a sound-based embodied entrainment and engagement with a muse (deity). The last fulfills a desire to be transported farther into a universal soundscape or vibration – the primary utterance of existence. In Western musical traditions, the aim to approach a god-head is built into the classical 12 note harmonic and the sound-space of cathedrals, but the difference remains in how the listener, as a embodied other and disembodied intellect, is called to that approach. The clear divide of Western epistemologies between earthly sounds and heavenly sounds doesn’t exist in other knowledge bases and musical traditions.

I suspect mind and body constitute according to the focus and content of what our ear attends to over time. Imagine what is possible if these parameters are actively and consciously expanded.

In all Western traditions, the word is the universal utterance and meaning resides primarily in the logic of language – in speaking reality – whereas in indigenous and other belief systems the utterance is the energetic vibrational sound that continually manifests all creation. The morphology of this sound is life itself.

I experienced this working with Mayan, Lakota and Amazonian shamans in sacred ceremonies where it took time and training to deal with the ongoing commentary in words dominating my mind. It was like watching a hockey game with a commentator like Don Cherry ranting about what was happening at
every move. I kept asking myself to turn down the annoying commentary, but it took time and effort until I could allow alternate states of knowing to emerge based in embodied experiential knowledge and the spoken commentary receded. When the annoying announcer was banished, what a relief! This is not uncommon among Westerners who pursue alternate indigenous ways of knowing and being. In these states, spoken or visual (insidious cartoons, for example) commentary is an initial state one passes through in order to engage with embodied knowledge in the form of vivid living visions, heightened surround audition, and physical knowledge based in the nervous system, such as increased heartbeat, tremors, sensations of disembodiment or movement and so on – which all instruct in attending to a living embodied experience of connection and communication with all other life and ways of being, as well as coming to know one’s own state of disconnection and limited communication. This is my personal experience, but there are many ways to approach this ontology such as yogic, meditative, fasting, dancing, chanting, etc. One aspect remains consistent among them: from these perspectives, existence is vibrationally and energetically-based and, therefore, closely associated, if not integral, to sound and the haptic.

The soundscape, as a listener-to-sound relationship in a life-world environment, offers an alternate source of knowing and being that eludes the visual and spoken-word paradigms that predominate in Western culture. In order to access this different knowledge base and understand different forms of information and meaning, the listener requires a means of instruction that connects with, but is not exclusive to, visual or word lucidity. Soundwalking and soundscape compositions offer this type of learning opportunity.

The tyranny and ecstasy of visual culture dominates media and research with the written word as a significant point of departure from auditory ways of knowing and being – however sound itself is mostly overlooked (pun). Distinctions exist between the spoken word and written word, but always within a visual culture of listening. Most listening habits reinforce visual rather than auditory culture as sound is interpreted through a visual lens. If I hear a sound, I generally look for its source – what is it and where is it in space: is it a car coming towards me or a jet in the sky passing overhead?

I look rather than listen for a sound’s location and movement. If I want to convey a sound to someone, I describe its circumstances in words or create an image of it where sound is contextualized and
transcribed. If language, written and spoken, signifies visual culture, how does the word mediate acoustic culture?

For a writer grappling with conveying sound, this is an important question – just as it is for a composer aiming to shift listening habits away from visual and word-based culture, just as it is for the acoustic-based educator.
Poets have an advantage in conveying acoustic experience. This references the orality inherent in poetry as a form, even now as a written form, but one that relies on breath, rhythm, pause and space, imagistic association, mimetic experiences, and meaning that is both in the word, turns of phrase, and resonant etymologies as well as in a polemic of words, fractures of meaning, discordant etymologies, and schismatic turns of phrase, syncopation, dissociative images, missed breaths, arrhythmia.

Few can achieve this as masterfully as the poet, Paul Celan.

The poem, *Standing*, reveals the poet’s stance as intensely other, in the demands of being completely naked and stripped of meaning, of language, of identity, of community and being able to remain (to stand) in the extreme experience of this – to be alien to all that is known and valued and still be able to stand – this is the poet’s calling.

In my retort, the poet wrestling with acoustic ways of knowing and being stands also naked and is at a loss to meet the demands of listening when lodged in language. The ear is confounded by the task of writing, a silencing in itself. The easy reach is to point to onomatopoeia, to the sounds in the words themselves, in repetition and divergence. The resolution is to play with words in a banal way and point to how the intention fails the outcome: thinking ink-ing. And thereby succeeds: without even. This makes the room.
Standing

To stand, in the shadow
of the stigma in the air.
Standing-for-no-one-and-nothing.
Unrecognized,
for you
alone.

With all that has room in it,
even without
language.

Paul Celan, Breathturn, pg. 79.

Standing too

To stand, air still,
confounding ears.

Still sounding silencing
din-ing ging-ing ens-ing

conceded
to listening
alone.

With all that room,
without even
thinking,

ink-ing.

Andrea Dancer
Composing sound with words

How came words to make a claim on soundscape composition? Perhaps in the way that we equate words with sound and pursue language to make sense of experience. As I’ve gravitated away from using words and music in compositions, there is a tension between making sense of sounds and listening to the sounds themselves. Why is there this tension?

Soundscape composition’s lineage involves incorporating the spoken word to support what is considered to be decontextualized sound with a uniquely Canadian twist.

As mentioned earlier, a major influence in Canada rests with Glen Gould’s inroads into sound recording and editing using interviews to create spoken word collages that he called *contrapuntal radio documentary*, contrapuntal referring to four voice harmonies. The first, entitled *Solitude Trilogy* (1967), was commissioned by the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC), back in the days when it was the platform for experimental audio and documentary forms. The most compelling part of that trilogy is the one entitled, *The Idea of the North* (1967), the first notable experimental radio documentary in Canada. A voice-based composition, it comprises conversation, words, minimal music and field recordings from the inside a moving train.

As Gould highlights in his narration, the train is one of the cast of characters. The primacy of the sound of the train from the inside of the carriage (including the conductor and other passengers) places the interviewees and audience into the same virtual listening space. The iconic sound of the train whistle and rhythm of wheels on the tracks – as heard from the inside of the carriage but moving through space – uses sound to create the impression of connecting Canada’s vast territories, the south with the north, as well as bridging the intellectual space between different voices.

Most interesting are the moments of contrapuntal voices – in that when the overlapping voices challenge intelligibility, words emerge as primarily sound. In this reconversion, the sound of the train moves into the foreground and onto an equitable acoustic plane with the spoken word. Also interesting, Gould matches the pitch of the voices with different pitches of the train sounds. This points to Gould’s musical sensibilities, which he is also breaching. When the voices merge with each other, I experience an irritation at their unintelligibility and welcome the sound of the train as the context. Sometimes, the train overwhelms the voice and visa versa. Significantly, the shifting ground constantly brings the human voice and sound into an equitable and reciprocal relationship.
Gould keeps the train sounds present as a way of creating the illusion that all the interviewees converse in the same space, that of the train, but what is significant to me as a soundscape composer is the way the sound of the train acts as an balanced contextualization rather than a background – as though sounds, whether human or of the Northern land and its inhabitants, don an intensified relevance in this reciprocity. The vast geography speaks to the vast silences that define this iconic soundscape, which seems to attribute to this intensity. It initiates a differently conceived listener-to-soundscape relationship where the word-based intellectual dominance, the logos, begins to question itself faced with such immensity of silence and space as the Canadian North. That seems a worthy compositional aim.

This idea is reinforced at another point in the composition by a retired northern surveyor, who spent considerable time in the northern wilderness, W. V. McLean. He talks about himself as a Northern listener and describes how the Northern soundscape shapes his listening sensibilities and heightens listening discontent:

I am indeed a northern listener, then. And the pity of it all is that I’m not always able to select what I hear. I hear what other people inflict upon me. You know, the noise, the noise of civilization and its discontents. No matter what we do to try and escape them, unless we select and understand and use what we hear, we are lost indeed. Not just lost listeners but indeed lost people. I do believe that being able to select, I do believe that being able to reflect on that selection, makes you more than a mere analyst that most of us claim we are. ... In detaching and in reflecting and in listening, I suppose I’m able to synthesize to have these different rails meet in the infinity that is our conscious hope. (Watts, 2012)

This Northern listener’s avowal strikes eloquently at the heart of the listener to urban or word-centric soundscape issues and makes linkages between equitable and enforced listening.

Would that we could all chose what we hear. Listening implies a right to this choice.

Gould’s choice to include this segment and place it towards the end of the composition sheathed in train sounds gestures mimetically to the composer, Gould’s, strategy – selecting what is to be heard and instructing on how to listen to his composition. Both men reference the impact of alternate listening experiences, such as the one Gould composes and the surveyor articulates, both advocating toward different acoustic sensibilities and relationships to knowing and being in the world. This invites a future point of synthesis, the place where the railroad tracks meet as an acoustic horizon. In this way, the train
carries these expression purely as sound and appropriates a listening-to-sound potential different from usual expectations. I find this a particularly poignant moment in the Canadian sense of nationhood, the idea of the North as more than resources to be plundered, and the beginnings of the Canadian radio documentary (specifically in the form of the program Ideas) as an experimental form that lasted until the 1980’s, when the CBC turned to a market-based North American (rather than European) model of programming (Dancer, 2005).

Closely following McLean’s plea, which comes toward the end of the piece, orchestral music replaces the train. Also an interesting compositional choice— as though the train cannot hold the same monumental and emotive impact necessary to create a dramatic score to the words that are elevated in order to create a dramatic ending. It feels like a compromise in the integrity of the acoustic experiment as the music composer reasserts himself. But Gould was correct in pointing to sound as a co-actor in the world of words in a way overlooked – certainly in radio – until that time. The work received mixed reviews, but remains an inspiring piece in Canadiana and radio experimentation. After all, this is Glen Gould – eccentric but brilliant.

At about the same time as Gould, Murray Schafer was writing about the soundscape and beginning to compose for the environment. He was also creating sound-based documentaries for the CBC, however his emphasis was more on sound itself with little reliance on words, for example Six Themes of the Soundscape (1974). There is one audio clip from that time that he played at a Megalopolis conference in Mexico City, 2009. It is unforgettable.

A subzero day on the Canadian prairies, the air crackles and the silence is crisp. Something far away comes into hearing range, a contraption.

Everything in the landscape stands stiller than still at its approach.

The approach is long, languid, tinged on either side by silence and punctuated in increasing particularity.

An old Ford engine and underinflated tires churn over the frozen half, quarter, eighth of time in miles as metal, rubber, rubble, combustion rankles frozen dirt,

now flying low and leisurely speeding up.
now right here, right in front and passing, now inch by inch, right across where we’re standing still blasted by icy dirty dusty air.

Then, it measures away

into the distance.

The whole occurrence takes several minutes, minutes in interplay between movement and trans-fixity. There are many written descriptions of the wide open land and sky of the prairie, but few as eloquent as listening to the actual audio-recording experience. Not a word is spoken.

Wide open spaces are wondrous listening opportunities. As Schafer explains in *The Tuning of the World*, prairie farmers can tell the weather, air temperature, wind movement and distances just by listening to a train whistle travelling across the long stretches of flat land (p. 81). The opportunity to listen across vast distances is an increasingly rare aspect of listening, impossible in urban settings.

Murray, himself, writes of this different car incident – approach obscured – in his sound journal after his arrival in Monteagle Valley, a rural community with a far different geography (hills and forest) than the prairie:

Then a car came along the road behind the swamp. I heard it come from the south and move slowly up the road to the north for about two miles before the hills obscured the sound. The aural illusion that resulted was striking because I couldn’t confirm that the car sound originated behind the frog chorus. Of course, I know the road was behind the swamp, but I couldn’t say the car was further away based on sensory evidence alone. (1993, p. 92)

By contrast are the instances where words alone are treated as sound. Somewhere in the curve from Gould to Schafer lies the work of British Columbia’s poet ensemble, the Four Horsemen. The troupe consisted of Rafael Barreto-Rivera, Paul Dutton, Steve McCaffery and bp Nichol. In their work, words are raw vocalizations, basic utterance relying on rhythm, repetition, and emotional force for meaning. This was a radical departure from poetry as based in word formation. Sometimes they used words, repetitive, overlap and chant, but the words are pushed into pure vocal expression. Listening to a recording of a performance, the Four Horsemen’s style of intelligibility devolves into rants, to my sensibilities, lacking the variation of pause, silence and gradation that gives fluency to sounds. The rant is fully frontal and in-your-face. This is one limitation.
Another lies in expectations of meaning in context. A lack of context in words differs from a lack of context in sound in that the expectation of intelligibility in language frustrates the intellect’s thirst for immediate and direct meaning apprehension. In sound, the expectation involves the body as a totality and communicates in a more effuse but diverse manner. For this reason, word intelligibility has a harshness entangled with a desire for immediate meaning gratification that sound does not. Sound with limited context, such as listening to sounds without knowing where they are taking place, searches among myriad possibilities in order to find meaning, including distance, movement, and location in relationship to the body. In this way, sound contextualization is less intellectual and more embodied. This changes the way in which knowledge arrives and is incorporated in meaning.

Take, for example, the ensemble’s piece entitled *Monotony* (Steve McCaffery, The Four Horsemen, 2012), where a collection of voices flitter around one dominant voice speaking in a quasi-drone. The drone has a hint of the artificiality of the computer-generated voices used by telephone answering services. Granted, the piece is dated, as monotony is perhaps today not still equated with a technological takeover and the devolution of humanity as anticipated when the piece was conceived. Today, such voices have more inflection and the proliferation of technology offers more than overriding monotony.

However, the monotony of the piece acoustically is in the force with which the words are spoken in contradistinction to the other softer and inarticulate mumbling voices. The argument about what monotony is, what repetition is, is repeatedly addressed, while the listener follows that dominant voice’s monotonous speaking ideologically. It evokes little other than an orthodoxy of ideas through rhetorical question and answer that is repeated. From the perspective of a circular and age long repetition of the same philosophical ideas, it is philosophically monotonous, and so too is the speaking voice.

From another perspective, there is no repetition – every instance of repeating is new, and so there is no state of monotony. While the listener follows the argument, intellectual meaning pivots around this point. For the listener attending the mumbling background voices that question and muse in various tones, shades and articulations, albeit muffled, a different acoustic-based contextual meaning opens. As sound, these alternate voices act as release from monotony and skirt intellectual meaning-making as contrapuntal and recessed – as sound often is when confronted with words. It references, in a way similar to the Glenn Gould example, alternate modes of listening toward meaning-making that test notions of intelligibility as dominantly word-based where words elide sound.
Murray Schafer admired these experimentations by the Four Horsemen sufficiently to invite them to perform in several of his productions beginning in the late 1960’s. These included enduring sequester in a canoe on a windy mountain lake at dawn to herald the arrival of Schafer’s mythic pantheon with vocalizations and words. According to Murray, this was a long cold wait (personal conversation, March 24, 2009). It took place in his wilderness ring cycle opera entitled *Patria*, in the *Princess of the Stars* (1986) segment on Lake Louise in Banff. Schafer composed his wilderness operas so that environmental sound, such as wind or water or the echoes as sounds interacted with the lake and mountainous terrain. These early forays brought attention to using words experimentally as sound-based in proximity with environmental sound.

As Schafer glossed in the liner notes to the Four Horsemen’s album, *Live in the West*: “The Four Horsemen dig their electromagnetic spurs into the flesh of our complacency, inspiring the tribe. Poetry is reborn through the Horsemen” (Dutton, 2014). However, sound poetry in the style of the Horsemen remains another quirky moment in Canadian literary arts history and, although it gained attention and renewed appreciation in a recent theatrical revisiting of their work, it remains part of a nostalgia for the British Columbia hippy heydays. However, the ties between sound, word and soundscape (as sound environments) continued to be explored by artists and composers aligned and situated in soundscape composition.

Hildegard Westerkamp explores words and poetry in tandem with sound extensively in her compositions. The intervention of words into soundscapes replete with electroacoustic modulations and musical elements is highly considered and placed – and there is a spaciousness that takes the listener on a journey into a deeper appreciation of sound itself.

Hildi’s word craft is reminiscent of Glen Gould’s countrapunctual voices in her compositions that use lines of poetry such as *Für Dich – For You* (2005) that is based on the poem *Liebes-Lied* by Rainer Maria Rilke, translation into English as *Love Song* by Canadian poet Norbert Ruebsaat (Woloshyn, 2013); or excerpts from recorded voices, such as the recording Roy Kiyooka (1926–1994), Canadian artist and poet, made of himself and his interviews with his Japanese mother in *MotherVoiceTalk* (2008); or of

---

11 I refer Hildi, personally, as I would in conversation with her and in keeping with the intimacy she brings to all her work, in which she refers to herself primarily in the first person. The sound of Hildi’s breathing and heartbeat are never far from whatever is being expressed and explored in her compositions. This openness and intimacy sets Hildi’s work apart from her contemporaries, as she brings her listener audience in close to her experience of sound and how it is implicit in her life.
Hildi’s grandchildren in *Once Upon a Time* (2012). More effective than Gould’s early foray into composing with the human voice, Hildi’s use of repetition is within a highly sensitized rhythmic structure, which adheres elements that might otherwise fall out of integration with the sounds and musical aspects. In this way, Hildi’s mastery over a lifetime of experimenting with words and sound, and attending to sound as an everyday occurrence, places her as a central influence in this genre.

Barry Truax’s definition of soundscape composition in his important text, *Acoustic Communication* (1984), continues in this vein. He traces these innovative uses of the spoken word in music, music concrete and soundscape composition. However, his writing reveals a romantic attachment to the word as acoustic communication. The text makes an association between spoken words as compositional elements that direct meaning in soundscape compositions. As an electroacoustic composer who uses the highly modulated voice as well as sounds, this makes his insistence on meaning-making understandable. This also aligns with principles of radio production.

However, as an acoustic ecologist with the aim of shifting the listener to sound relationship towards the soundscape and away from music or spoken word forms of aurality, I interrogate and depart from these lineages ultimately aiming for a different kind of exclusively sound based experience that is not always contextualized. From this standpoint, I problematize the notion of sense-making compositionally when working with *found* sound – sound orientated to the soundscape whether recorded or lived.

John Cage, in *Silence* (1961), his credo for a new music based in environmental sound-silence, touches on this vital distinction:

> New Music: new listening. Not an attempt to understand something that is being said, for, if something is being said, the sounds would be given the shapes of words. Just an attention to the activities of sounds. (p. 10)

Working with and against these conventions, I question: how do words, narration and poetry usurp or enhance meaning in soundscape composition. Why is speaking considered necessary to sense-making of an acoustic-centered compositional form? What do words attend to in the composer’s aims, the genre’s unconventionality, the listener’s ability and focus?
Speaking tribulations

In the earlier work, *Sounds Like Home* (2010b), I used both narration and words to convey the experience of displacement when living in two places: Prague, Czech Republic and Mayne Island, British Columbia, Canada. When I listen to it now, I feel the confusion and clutter of interplay between two places that have no real relationship except the one I was making mimetically through sound. Moreover, I felt pressed to bridge high recording fidelity to broadcast market sensibilities: the 98hz high fidelity recordings of highly nuanced sound would be diminished to 48hz at least and then broadcast in daytime into mono car stereo systems, the sole Canadian market being Canadian Broadcast Corporation’s *Living Out Loud*\textsuperscript{12} daytime program, produced by Steve Wadham, which told stories from people across Canada.

As a poet with great respect for the power of words to evoke ideas, images, memories, emotions and sound experiences, I also mistrust words profoundly to seduce and manipulate the receiver out of their own sense of self and lived experience, their capacity as simulacra. Words can connect as well as disrupt connection. They flaunt themselves as experience itself – the more skillfully, the more convincingly applied – but they carry a force based on experience that is not the experience. Of course, words are articulation based in sound, but the sound of a word is never – even when onomatopoeic – the sound of the thing it is describing, although it can, with its force, evoke the thing or moment as though it were happening.

From the writer’s perspective, sounds continually defy wordification (the written form of the sound) as all sounds written into text evoke the sound but cannot repeat the experience of the sound itself (ruff ruff, cluck cluck, rumble, crack, click, grrr). This is not to overlook the role of onomatopoeia. You hear an impression of the sound that is word-based in your head.

In this way, words are intellectual things with a will of their own – the will of abstraction – to move the world in certain directions. A poet or writer knows this all too well. If, at midnight, you open the door of the library too suddenly, you may catch the blurr of a conclave of books in conversation rematerializing back on the shelf with a self-satisfied mien of innocence as if to say, *look, I’m only a book on a shelf. I don’t talk.* But, there is no doubt that the ideas in books are in conversation at the time of reading or writing. The writer draws from their own litany of favorite writers and thinkers as well as their recent

\textsuperscript{12} This work was commissioned as part of the Deep Wireless Festival, May, 2011. All artist – composers retained copyright of their works, including those broadcast by the CBC.
and past experiences and the now-moment of writing or the morning they find themselves in – the experience of their body and mind and the sounds that they are surrounded by as they write in the midst of. It all comes to bear on the word, the sentence, the written thought. When read, the words coalesce conspiring to convince the reader that these words in this sentence remain the most original word-inspired moment, the words that are creating your experience at this moment, the first word. Well, at least until the next sentence comes along. (Have I convinced you?) Where are you at this moment? How does your body feel right now? What do you hear?

When I listen to the compositions where I interjected poetry and narration as opposed to those that are composed entirely of sound, I feel the words intrude and upstage the sounds. The words encourage specific meanings or apprehensions of experience to predominate that are actually based on forces outside of the immediate experience of the sound. For example, if we are listening to rain – which is not rain but a collection of pitches, tones and rhythms as each water drop hits a surface, a windowsill or the ground or the roof within the same time-frame – and I speak a line of poetry: **Rain rain go away, come another rainy day**, then you will think back to a childhood moment, perhaps splashing about in a puddle in your wellington boots, yes, yellow, with a yellow raincoat and hat but no umbrella or perhaps you remember, as I do, the page from a first poetry book with a picture of just such a child next to lines of the poem – and for that time of remembering the water droplets become amorphous rain, a collective mass that is pleasing but more an abstraction than the thing itself, being discrete acoustic moments as each drop of water hits a different or the same surface at a different or the same time. One way to stay with each drop is to attend to the rhythm of each one next to the other as rhythm is an important compositional element, more so than pitch, tone, harmonics, etc., when listening to the soundscape Rhythm marks each sound as discrete as well as relational, a listening experience diminished in urban settings and so important as a listening tool and practice.

So it is with words, the spoken voice or animal utterances that the ear foregrounds are primary forms of communication. This is the listener’s challenge: to focus beyond words or other familiar forms of communication in order to hear the less familiar, more nuanced, communicative aspects of sound.

As my soundscape compositions evolve, they explore different aspects of communication through sound, sometimes incorporating text, spoken word, animal vocalizations, impressionism, even footsteps – until finally comprising primarily of found sound in later works. In these works, words become passing conversations in different languages as I encounter them – fragments of meaning that bring the soundscape into relationship with the words equitably. I’m pleased by this reconfiguration.
Sometimes, music or instrumentation enters the composition, either serendipitously at the time of recording or as a staged intervention in the original soundwalk restage for recording – but with the aim of bringing attention to sound, to the act of listening attentively, and not as music, per se. Listening within a listening habituation, such as with music, provides relief from the demands of listening deeply for a sustained period of time to sounds as sounds themselves and references listening according to musical conventions, but in an equitable relationship with the other sounds attending. A cellist improvises to the rhythm and tones of water slapping against the underlying fountain pool – there is tonality and atonality. An accordionist plays a melody while travelling on a boat through water, the waves lapping up against the sides of the boat, and the metal against metal of tie rings scrape and clang as the boat crests another wave. There is nostalgia and presence.

How, then, does the soundscape composition explain itself both in relationship to conventions of listening, such as words and music, as a composition that opens listeners to listening that is neither words nor musically based?
In this fissure, the artist emerges through time through many processes of seeing, writing, listening, inquiring until one is walking listening and then composing as walking listening.

Here, be wary as there is no objectivity. The artist begs compassion for flawed processes, naivety, assumptions, inanity, stories told to fit the purposes – for all delimitation in order to pass.
Intra poetica

Poetry sounds place. The sounding of words, their syntax, tonal and rhythmic registers work to reconstitute the poem’s original circumstance, its physical environment, and the lived process of its crafting (Dancer, 2009). I am fascinated by the way sound situates each thing according to its acoustic niche in a vast and complex communicatory stream.

Poetic aspiration (pun intended) can be understood as the ventriloquism of the universal hum. The Ur poem sounds through neural pathways, genetic code, the musculature of dying, and the toenails of mundane living, as well as in time as a dreaming. If I am listening, the substance of nature sounds out the story of our mutual encounter. If I am listening, life’s dissonance calls upon the sounding poem to fire utterance and silence into acoustic counter space.

I compose poems with an ear toward the musicality and mutability of words; with an inner ear as well as eye that recreates a sense of place for the recipient to enter imaginatively; and with sound, silence and breath as acoustic material expressive of lived experience and necessary for sharing that experience. Silence, which exceeds the definitions of sound, is a rare commodity in contemporary society. It evades the written page and is the component which gives sound its meaning, acting as the pivot, the space for musing and imagining, an esoteric and spiritual turn.

A cultivated hypersensitivity to sound profoundly influences my being-in-the-world. The people who inhabit my work are at points of disjuncture in the give-and-take interrelatedness of bodies making sounds and listening within a matrix of lived experiences, natural and man-made. Alien to each other and their life worlds, their embodied states are expressive of embodied nature courting disembodiment, fracture and dissonance – such as in the poem, Ceramist League, an early poem where these elements are making themselves known.

Still, every day presents possibilities for activism: the reintegrating of natural and human environments; for weltering in the muck of star-stuff; for a tuning of life-worlds that are, in my experience, mediated meditation in sound.
Ceramist league

I
Walking, talking alone in silence, wrapped
in wetlands and tall grass and October,

thinking about that landlocked land where one man
formed another out of clay, breathed life into him
with sound, a song of necessity, this man
who was no man, this form of a thing.\footnote{The Golem is a Jewish story, a legend, about Judah Loew ben Bezalel, the late 16\textsuperscript{th} century rabbi of Prague, who used Kabbalahistic incantations to animate a clay figure to protect Jews from attack (pogroms). The poem, Ceramist League, was written on Deas Island, a wildlife refuge just outside of Vancouver, B.C.}

The innocence and the arrogance –
to think that a man could be anything less
than a salacious North wind, whipping up
waves in Alert Bay and flinging them back
toward this rock bound shore, this atoll in a salt marsh,
this perch above the shifting silt of the Deas Island Slough,
where freighters off-load and ferries refit
and the Massey tunnel chokes traffic up.

All around, the earth moves to soundless pounding,
while water-logged loam gathers to
signify nothing.

II
On this shore, we sculpt ourselves into figurines,
satyr and nymph, caught in the crucible. The
earth we fire burns breath, the dance, our bones
ceramic, then ash, then dust.

Remember nothing, recreate no moments,
rekindle no fires, want nothing save this:
oars slap, oarlocks grind,
cut across a toothless
river mouth, old voice cries out,

Is that you?
Cultivating the poet’s ear

My attention to sound began formally as a poet. In the Master of Fine Arts program in Creative Writing at the University of British Columbia, Canada, under the tutelage of George McWhirter (first Poet Laureate of British Columbia), everyone was compelled to listen attentively and appreciate the misunderstood: George had a strong Irish brogue and a way of twisting language that surpassed us all. In response (and in order to approach George on his own terms), I came to craft poems to be listened to visually for the image, then intellectually for the meaning of the poem, and then as a listening experience playing with the language’s sound qualities. When I say sound qualities, I don’t solely mean onomatopoeic, assonance or dissonance, or other poetic gestures, although I play with those elements, I also seek to evoke sound through different means that hover between the sound of the word, breath, and resonant meanings. Those that take one’s breathe away.

At readings, it became, and remains, important to cultivate the space between myself, the words of the poem and the audience based on breath and sound – and push meaning-making or images to the background so that space opens to an experience of sound. This periodically confounds the listener in the way a Zen koan might, achieving an intellectual pause so that the experience of sound and silence, nuanced and complex, might arise – which is intentional. This is quite a fascinating space, as it pushes for an altered type of listening that recesses intellectualization toward an experience of bodies, breath and sound mediated by the word.

Or, perhaps, what is at play is the space before and after the word, the pause between sounds. This is a space of radical unknowing where what is anticipated fizzles and new knowledge is possible. It is a place of traumatic revisioning and resounding.

How can we understand this ephemeral moment? Let me call on a poet who influences my work and who grapples profoundly with this ephemera. The Romanian poet, Paul Celan (1920-1970), survived the trauma of the holocaust and is a major European poet of the 20th century. The word-deconstructionist, Jacques Derrida, found Celan’s use of language significant and wrote a book length essay, entitled Shibboleth14 for Paul Celan. Discussing repetition, he notes that “in the here, now of the poem – and the

---

14 A shibboleth has Biblical (Hebrew) origins meaning the part of a plant that is considered grain (significant during Passover, when grains are considered leaven and rigorously removed from households). It also references the tribe of Ephramites, who were betrayed by their dialect and murdered by the invading Gileadites. It indicates a dialect phoneme, word or custom whose variations in pronunciation or style can be used to differentiate members of in-groups from the out-group. What is significant is the orality implied in the speaking of words to make such
poem has only this one, unique moment present—even in this immediacy and nearness, that which is addressed gives voice to what is most its own: its time, the time of the other” (1994, p. 14). In this way, Derrida points an immediacy and be-coming (an approach) that is also present in the soundscape compositions, in that the listening intensifies in its place of dislocation, of other. Celan’s poems reflect this.

In his later life, Celan’s poetry concentrates on the turn before and after words; his poems become difficult in their complexity and sparseness. He begins to break with the musicality of poetry to foreground what he experiences as the euphony that accompanies cacophony (beautiful sound attending horrific sound), such as birds singing in the midst of atrocities. He wants to create a space of listening dislocation through the sound of words as experienced in the turn of the breath in order to disrupt its intellectual and anticipated location. In his collection entitled Breathturn, he crafts a space where the word “does not transfigure or render ‘poetical’; it names, it posits, it tries to measure the area of the given and the possible” (2006, p. 17).

I am intrigued by this possibility, of what it holds for a poetics of sound, where there is no expectation of poetical or of the sound – that the listener stand on the precipice of engagement in order to engage fully and be in the process of becoming with the poem or with the sound, in its own terms.

For this reason, I initiated a poetic conversation with Celan, answering his poem “Standing” with a response – not to evoke sound but to evoke the sense of anticipation extended into periphery, as resides in listening attentively. Consider the differences that rise out of the following Celan poem and my prose rejoinder to the second stanza that follows.

differentiations. It also pertains to an era when listening was an activity within a complexity of soundscape and speaking where such minutia of information was necessary for survival – as is also the case in circumstances, such as the Holocaust, from which Celan is drawing his poetics. States of trauma cultivate hypersensitivity to such differences and to states of otherness.
HAMMERHEADEDNESS, at
palfrey pace,
alongside us, of the double
slowly streaming redtrack.

Silvery:
Hoofsayings, lullaby-
neighing–dream-
hurdle and -weir–: no one
shall go further, nothing.

You under me, centaurishly
rearing,
I empty into our across-
roaring shadow

(Celan et al., 2006, p. 145)

“Silvery:” opens to a celluloid dream projected onto a silver lenticular screen,
silent screening.

Hoofsayings, the truncated words pressed up to repress thought and impress
impressioning. What is a Hoofsaying, soothsaying, or the hoof saying or what is
the hoof speaking: I hear the pounding of a paltry horse, an evening’s gentle
lope in toward home.

It stands in contradistinction to the first stanza, a rush to get going on the
redtrack, the initial rush of the encounter. In the dashes and m-dashes,
measures, hesitation, a grasping for more than a word, the rhythm of grasping, groping.

Lull song, neigh song. The steam in breath and body. The dream that hangs by a comma to the approach of the hurdle, and and and the watery space - before, and after, once orgasm is achieved.

Now, another colon and the final turn: the denouement, post, the after before the ego rises.

Celan takes us through an experience that is sound, movement and reticence – the metaphor recesses then comes back into view. No easy image, no happy metaphor to hold onto, although, in the last stanza, we know the woman, centaur-like, has mounted the man who is speaking in the poem.

In this way, Celan foregrounds the sounds of words and starts by eliciting a rhythmically mimetic hammerheadedness, heads hammering, which turns on a listening trauma, a schziophonia (a term I return to later), so that when meaning is once again brought forward in the last stanza, the reader is thirsty for it, surprised, it is not the meaning anticipated.

This poetics of schizo-listening is important to working with different genres as I move away from listening conventions and become fascinated by the locatory-dislocatory space inherent in everyday listening as well as compositional works. I seek a nuanced experience for the listener where what is and is not flickers in the listener’s consciousness.

Seeking this space begins, for me, in poetry.
Intra poetica

The poem, *Sitting in a hollow*, originates in the narration for the soundscape composition entitled *Sounds Like Home*. You can listen to that narration in the second part, in *Listening salon D* that follows. While the first part of the composition, *Listening salon C*, centers on the swan beach in Prague, this second part D takes place on the First Nations (Tsawwassen Band) land at Helen’s Point.

On Helen’s Point, there were originally two traditional Coast Salish welcome figures carved into the house posts of the main communal and ceremonial building. More recently, a contemporary version was carved and erected on Mayne Island by the grandson of the last woman who was living in the abandoned house building on the beach at Helen’s Point. At a gathering, the carver, John Aiken, did indeed ask me — where are you from?

My answer was a list of places, a long rambling list. The poem’s answer is painful.

There is an inversion at hand – who is the speaker in the poem? It is the displaced one, condemned to displacement, and it is also the absence and presence of the welcome figure the carver is carving, the meeting place that the carver queries and that the speaker desires.

Once the question is asked: where do you come from, who are your people – of the transient, the sojourner – a relationship is established that cannot be sustained. The one who sojourns, but promises not to leave a mark, has already broken the promise. Their yearning for home anticipates home.

Together, the carver and the sojourner comprise the wood tree trunk, the hollow and the figure, the one who has asked an impossible question and the one who has answered it impossibly. One cannot cancel the other, one is the transposition of the other. This constitutes the welcome.

So, too, with the listener and sound. Once encountered, both are changed – located and dislocated as the sound leaves the listener with a sense of location and then dislocation – location in dislocation – the sound moves on, the listener’s attention moves to the next sound – both are already altered by the encounter.

This is also the theme and structure of the *Sounds Like Home* soundscape composition in its both parts, originally one but in an untenable relationship compositionally. Still, it is an opening and a welcome.
Sitting in a hollow,

the carver of welcomes asks,

where are you from?

Oh, here and there I am and live
in diasporas, my gut, skin, muscle and sinew,
the channel in my ear like the one in my heart
another expandable expendable border, my terrain
the pathways in my brain; home, grey matter.

The carver of welcomes strikes his mallet. The knife grooves, I twitch.

Who are your people? Where is your land?

Oh, pleads I,

let me trespass...let me sojourn.

I will pick
no berries, rifle
no creatures, flout
no noise, breach
no secrets, invade
no ancestors, take
no fish nor pry
no shells, steal
no artefacts, snap
no branches, trample
no grass, betray
no stories –

just this –

lend me your oceanland
so that I might learn to live
on the communal air
that sings as it passes

or be blown apart by the wind.

Chip chip chip between us.

Then, he puts down his knife.

Then, he takes out his veiner and gouges.
Listening salon D: Sounds Like Home – part two

Listen to an excerpt from Sounds Like Home – the ending (3:18)
For an optimal listening experience, listen in a quiet room with high quality headphones or speakers.
Recorded with M-audio Microtrack, 24 bit, 9600 Hz
Excerpt compressed to 16 bit PMC Wav file
Audio link: http://circle.ubc.ca/handle/2429/50784
In exploring Helen`s Point, the location where I recorded the audio for the soundscape composition, *Sounds Like Home*, I spent time in the original last standing house, occupied by a Tswwassen First Nation family until late 1970. The site was continuously inhabited by First Nations for five thousand years, a summer fishing camp.

The foreshore is a midden (place where refuse was buried in ancient sites) that attested to this, but the recently upgraded British Columbia ferries (B.C. super ferries) are eroding the midden and its artifacts. Everything that speaks to this history is washing back out to sea according to the B.C. Ferries schedule.

The one-room house and surrounding land is a place of light and dark where the roof is caving in, floorboards uprooted, outside a stroller and bed frame, inside some broken cups. Through the one glassless window, surreal super ferries roar past sometimes hourly, engines like thunder, announcements piercing the stillness, voices from the decks rattling the air. At the narrowest part of the channel is a light, once a lighthouse, once lit by the father and son who lived in the house.

The poem, *Fish Bones in the Midden*, is a reflection on that place as I encountered it, as I documented it, in the process of compiling audio recordings for a composition. I didn`t know what the end would be, the meaning and structure I`d ascribe in the final composition, but the place itself felt resonantly inhabited in its stillness (between ferries), and it was a listener respite (between ferries).

It had an incredibly rich and evocative silence to it that I wanted to enter into the poem.
Fish bones in the midden

Empty is to space as silence is to sound.
not empty, not silent.

In silence, the body listens to itself extensively. In emptiness, spaces fill with oneself emptied.

In the house falling derelict
to long lost native land,

I make a clay cup clatter,
while assonance lingers
under broken floor boards,
vacant window sills,
ruinations of a dark frame,
sink holes of conversation.

Whorling loosestrife blow
like the locks of long dead longing.

Winds bare
breath-taking.
to make the silences speak.

Along the shoreline,
the midden keens
fish bones with every wake
to wash time out of existence.

Listen as wide-eyed,
night fishers
fish among themselves.

I cycle through last winter’s long grass.
I cycle through dusk into night to beat back the dark,
I cycle through the shadows,

the old native man and his son,
long time gone
come to light
the light house lamp.
The room that roars: Radio

Don Mowatt told me that poets make the best radio feature producers because they know how to work a complexity of ideas into an economy of words and leave enough white space for breathing. As a radio documentary-feature producer, the challenge is always to refine complexity. This complexity begins in that the space between what I produce through voice and sound and the audience’s listening experience is already physically abstracted. Unlike the poet reading their work, the radio listener and the producer are not in the same room nor do they have the same experience of the sounds and material compiled to tell the story through words, music and soundscape.

I accept this dislocation as the starting point: the voice of the poet becomes one of the narrator – a reliance on voice as different genres come into play. I am in the enviable position of having been mentored by Don Mowatt, his sole student to master in the European model of radio-documentary feature – considered an art form because it draws from drama, poetry, literature, and music as well as field recordings. Don won nearly every North American and several European awards for broadcasting, including multiple ACTRA awards and two Peabody awards. I remember Don counselling me to not over-narrate documentaries, as well as keep footsteps out of recordings – two peeves he would not tolerate.

The voice as a focal point guides the listener through a matrix of complexity that can only maintain integrity if the radio producer carefully distills all these genres and elements into a form similar to that of an Ionesco or Beckett absurdist play or a Kafka novel. Integration rises in white space, in absence, in silence, in what is not being said.

Absurdism also strives to disrupt meaning-making with the premise that human experience lays outside the human capacity for intellectualization. The radio-documentary feature, as an absurdist genre, aims to create a listening space similar to the one sought by the poet, Celan, as a turn as simple and complex as the breath one takes before taking in or speaking out the word. It skates a knife’s edge of meaning-making by placing dramatically disparate things, words, and ideas into proximity and takes pleasure in a resultant explosion of creative mis/understanding that heighten the dramatic effect.

Don brought the radio feature to the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation in the 1970’s when the genre was already gaining momentum in Germany through the work of Don’s mentor, Peter Leonhard Braun. Braun produced his unique form of documentary feature at Sender Freies Berlin (Radio Free Berlin) from
1974-1994. Braun brought everyday sound into radio in a profound way, stereophonically, creating documentaries by going out into the field with his microphone at a time when radio was primarily recorded in studio. Field recording of sounds also carry, in their capacity to both locate and dislocate the listener, the potential to open and adhere radio culture’s specific type of listening space. Braun’s use of field recordings shook up the logics of radio phonic types of storytelling away from the page into the soundscape. He expanded genres from exclusively radio drama into other forms, such as poetry, fiction, interview, found dialogue, etc., to tell a story. The Canadian Broadcasting Corporation’s program *Ideas* became its signature program for creating compelling documentary-features, ones that used sounds in unusual ways, renown world-wide primarily through the work of Don as a features producer until the cuts of the late 1980’s when it was deemed fiscally untenable to produce in this kaleidoscopic way and a reductive North American model was adopted (Dancer, 2005). The richness of that form continues in European radio programming and is a source of inspiration to new genres of radio documentary and radio art world-wide (Madsen, 2005).

I remember Don’s workshops in the radio documentary-feature format in the Creative Writing Department at the University of British Columbia. At exactly midpoint in the evening, he would glance at his watch (timing is crucial to radio production) and he would take out his thermos and pore himself some tea. That was our signal to break. He’d bring radio features from the International Features Conference (the main gathering for documentary-features internationally and presided over by Braun) proceedings for us to critique. He’d tell us stories of how absurd life was, such as an interview or encounter or recording that turned the story into a totally new direction. His style of composition was to let a story tell itself – not create a story line first and then fit things in to make it work. It made for stirring unanticipated stories deeply invested in human experience. We students knew there was no better life than roaming the world, recording, interviewing and then bringing these unknown worlds into the people’s living rooms. Don made radio a theatre of extraordinary possibility:

*A man slumps over on the bench. He is marked by black, black suit and black hat and black suitcase and long white beard cascading over his black chest against a whitewashed wall in white light and air, subzero that morning as he tilts over and back.*

*A spindly man, a string of fly dirt in the corner of a village train station.*
The train station a frozen white block with a black roof and a turret piercing absence like a wrought-iron cross in a snow-bound graveyard.

A bony finger of a branch scratches the station window.

The man sleeps there overnight in as precise a silence as is needed to escape the harangue of a wife whose voice breaks him.

He is a silent man, a man of choice words. This predawn waiting hangs in his icy breath, in rasps slowing.

I hang there with him, with his breath close to my ear as I inhale the moment of his dying.

The next rasp rushes something onto the horizon. Before we take another breath, it bears down towards us then upon us, the thunderous surge rends bones from flesh, and then it’s already passing and I breathe out the shocked air as the train chews up the tracks, pounds out the news, wails and screeches tearing apart my living room ...

Tolstoy is dying. Tolstoy is dying. Tolstoy is dying.

The refrain grinds into the tracks, fades into the distance, and flies on to St. Petersburg.

I remember listening to Don’s radio feature about Tolstoy (1990) and Don saying that the great thing about radio is that you can be sitting in your living room and a train can thunder through and shake your bones and it makes sense that it was there, it blew right through you, and then it was gone. There aren’t any other mediums that can do this. Imagine what is conveyed when the train that passed by a dying Tolstoy thunders through your living room. You feel the frozen silence of the place that leads up to it,
the roar of the train rattles your bones, and the dramatic moment sings in your mind while being reinforced in your body. A shiver travels up your spine and raises the hair on your head. It feels deliciously wicked.

Through the radio feature-documentary form, I came to field recording and entered into the idea of a soundscape. Increasingly, I resisted the narrator’s voice as contextualizer. It sought to fill gaps and secure meaning, while I had the oral poet’s experience of the voice as breath in sound. I wanted more sound, less talk. I sought a return.

I turned to radio art.

**Against convention: Radio art**

Radio art offers a chance to work with and against radio conventions. I produced pieces that comprised field recordings and spoken word. In this genre, I worked with the recorded soundscape as the primary means to create story – spoken word came later as it fit into the rhythm and musicality of the soundscapes. I could experiment using skills acquired through poetry and radio feature production. I moved into radio art out of a sense of frustration with having to fill meaning-making gaps with voice where I craved sound. I just wanted to push listening into listening for sound’s own sake as I had with poetry and the non-narrative aspects of radio feature production.

Composed while I was artist-in-residence by the New Adventures in Sound Art’s radio arts festival and the Canadian Broadcast Corporation’s *Living Out Loud* program, the soundscape composition *Sounds Like Home* is an ode to being an expatriate, as I was for several years in Prague, of missing home, and of listening for one home in the other. The year before I left for Prague, I lived on Mayne Island in the Gulf Islands of British Columbia and found a favorite place in old First Nation’s Reserve land. The land was clearly sacred to me in its silence and the remnants of the last house near the beach and the beach’s pre-history midden. At the narrowest point of the channel known as ‘Active Pass, I watched B.C. ferries forge through the water on schedule disrupting wildlife and ocean creatures and creating a wake that was eroding the foreshore midden, artifacts washing out to sea, a people’s past in the process of being forgotten. I often recorded audio there and took a photographic record.
When in Prague, I found a small man-made beach – the only sand beach along the Vltava River – whose heyday had long passed when people still swam in the river. Now it was an abandoned faux resort area where people dumped garbage and fed the swans. A little farther upstream from the tourist areas, a small unknown transit ferry and the rowing club mostly used that part of the river that runs under a train trestle. To me, the place was a fascinating acoustic enclave where the trains thundering overhead caused vibrations and waves up onto the beach – the swans shaken but habituated.

Two places entirely different and yet I could associate the sounds of the trains with the sounds of the super ferries and their pounding acoustic effects. In this early composition, I played with spoken word, poetry, choral elements, and soundscape.

Already breeching places and genres, the piece was also designed to work as an eight speaker surround with the poetry performed live at the festival and, at the same time, to be broadcast for stereo or even mono speakers, such as with someone listening to the radio in a car being driven home from work.

At first, there was the daytime monophonic broadcast. I designed the radio piece so that certain key sound marks were boosted, amplified but also edited so that the higher frequencies became foregrounded in order to balance the mono reception of sound with the spoken word in hopes that this would cue the ear to listen for both. It was ironic to me, this forced reduction, as it migrated meaning right back into a voice that framed the experience for the listener with words while the listening experience I was cultivating intended to break this radio convention. In fact, the radio feature form accessed a better fidelity as the recording equipment and bandwidth of European broadcasters such as the British Broadcast Corporation and Czech Radio Vltava aimed toward an F.M. sensibility that sat in the evening in an armchair in stereo. The Canadian Broadcast Corporation relegation of radio art to A.M. listening spoke to a desire to share the form with the larger public but at significant costs to fidelity, while also reinforcing a lack of commitment to radio art as acoustically important and viable.

Murray Schafer notes this trend toward the dismissal of radio listening contexts in the early 1970’s in American broadcasting, before the Canadian Broadcast Corporation had taken up the American model. He notes: “listening to radio in the presence of noise (the car radio is a good example) has had a very interesting effect on programming: it eliminate[s] it,” (1993, p. 137) substituting culturally impactful programs for voice reliant and repetitive programming, denuded of the demands of listening sophistication such as required by sound field recording. Most radio art programs are, unfortunately, relegated to after midnight, although the exceptions in this are Germany and England, where there is a
tradition of using sound field recordings in radio programs. Nevertheless, I appreciated the opportunity to have an alternate piece of radio travel through the Canadian airwaves.

I sat with my elderly mother and brother in his broken-down Ford work truck outside a restaurant in downtown Toronto at rush hour and listened to the broadcast knowing that it could not possibly do the job of being coherent without at least quality stereophonic sound. I thought about how painstakingly I had recorded sounds on a remote First Nations reserve – wind, ocean, the groaning of sea lions, the coming and passing of boats and ferries between a narrow passage, recorded with high quality binaural and underwater microphones over the period of most of a year. However, this was all reduced to low-fidelity in the broadcast and the emphasis shifted to the words and tenor of the speaking voice (mine). This meant that the timing of the sounds in concert with the poetry being spoken was lost. The spoken word became the thing itself. The soundscape receded. The piece became some poetry with ambient static in the background.

In performance, the mix was radically different. This event was a radio listening salon, another radical listening opportunity, where a usually solitary listening context (a radio at home) became a public one (an audience seated theatre style engaged in a collective listening). The audience sat surrounded by eight speakers anticipating a listening experience where sounds moved around the speakers including a recorded voice speaking words. I wanted to upset this expectation as well. I had edited the sounds into an eight channels so that the timing choices were about the movement of sound to create a sense of space and an emphasis that supported the storyline. Instead of playing it with the recorded narration, I performed the poetry live and on cue to the sounds moving through the multi-speaker set-up, while I physically moved through the center and periphery of the room in response to the sounds’ movement and in relationship to the spoken word.

This shook things up radically again. The eight channel high-fidelity sounds, luscious and rich to the ear, were listened to intermittently when I was not speaking. The spoken voice predominated again and when I was reciting the poetry, an aspect of performance took over and became the focus. Once again, the nuanced and carefully cued soundscape was relegated to ambience.

This taught me a great deal about the fickle nature of the ear that entrains the listener toward what makes sense and is comfortable and reasserts habits of listening. Even radio and sound art enthusiasts and professionals find this hard to resist as the speaking voice is a primary locus of situating self.

But it doesn’t have to be this way.
In my work, I aim to dislodge this mono-sonicism (sonic cynicism) and explore the potential of the soundscape to disrupt and cohere everyday listening habits alternately (as in other and as in alternating between different listening states). The speaking voice and visual logic (intellectualization of sound) require upsetting in order for sound to make itself known. The force of this realization led me to explore soundwalking and soundscape composition.
Sound walking

Soundwalking is a living-performative collective listening act. The actors are the listeners as well as the acoustic events both arranged and serendipitous that comprise acoustic space as performative, being thus cohered because of the listening attention each participant brings to the public sphere. As a soundwalk designer, I choose a route that has a theme or tells a story, that has acoustically distinct features, and that has several on-site interventions staged along the way. Visual artists are asked to bend their eyes to think through an aural version of their intervention. Intermedia artists create mediations with different devices that focus and reinforce the auditory aspects of their intervention. Musicians are challenged to fracture the musicality of their instrument in order to respond to acoustic events or features in the space where they are improvising. Interventions such as these are not conventional to soundwalking, where the tradition is on encountering acoustic space as it is, as found along the designated route, however this is also changing as more interventions become common fare. I invite collaboration with other artists as this brings different foci to listening that bridge visual and musical conventions of the ear and helps create a pathway through the listening known toward the unknown. As artists reach to step outside of the comfort of their medium, participants are likewise cued. As an acoustic artist with my own distinct background in various forms, I find this fertile ground for exchange. The specific aim when designing a soundwalk is to expand the listening range of the soundwalk participants, cue them to acoustic features they might otherwise take for granted, and guide them toward an increasingly orchestrated deep listening state.

My style of soundwalking came out of leading soundwalks in Vancouver and then in Prague, Czech Republic. In Vancouver, as part of the Vancouver Soundwalk Collective for many years, I found myself wanting to increase the performativity of soundwalks to cue the ear to alternate listening possibilities. This creative urge emerged from soundwalks that grappled with cultural and historical ideals, with ideas about what layers of meaning were submerged in acoustic space and how to bring them to the surface.

In Vancouver, encounters with the past inevitably bump up against First Nation land use and issues as this area has an ancient continuous history and is the place of the most recent acknowledgement of land use claims in Canada and the United States. It is present throughout the city, however, in an abstracted way as the architecture of First Nation settlements, buildings or signs of past land use are absent except where referenced as artifacts, such as in museum or tourist settings. In Prague, the buildings and
stonework, the planning of the old town dating back to at least the 8th century is overlaid with different reigns and eras in the city streets that are intact as lived space since that time. The past is evident everywhere in concrete terms so the layers of submerged historical space are still in play. It is easier to perceive these ancient acoustic aspects and understand historical listening habits in Prague than in Vancouver.

**Ahistorical: Appropriations of sound**

I remember a soundwalk I designed at the University of British Columbia that went behind the Museum of Anthropology where there is a Musquem (First Nations) long-house with greeting figures as well as clan and funereal totems carved on the site in the recent past or totems brought from other indigenous sites. Visually, this is quite compelling and brought to mind the indigenous culture, songs, ceremonies and dress of these peoples, which is how we are fascinated with them, how we know them, as an imaginary past. Of course, First Nation culture has undergone a renaissance and is very much alive and well, playing an important role in sustainable resource extraction issues in Canada. However, the indigenous imaginary past (the one non-native peoples generally experience) was referenced everywhere but was not the sole feature of the acoustic landscape we were moving through. Soundwalkers often encounter visually based ideas about the past and this visual logic presents a challenge. The question arose as to how to reference both this culture and the acoustic features of the place as it presented itself to us in our current time and space. As we walked listening to sounds of the wind atop this cliff and in front of the museum, the imagistic (visual) past was competing with the acoustic present.

This is not uncommon in soundwalking, as layers of space present themselves visually and intellectually, while acoustic space are fiercely in the here-now. The small contingent of designers working with me and I decided to prompt participants to pick up the white stones that were part of the landscaping around the totems and hit them together to make sound that explored this artificial aspect of the place and test its acoustics. I naively brought an Inuit drum to bang a few times and invoke spirits of the listening past. That I am not First Nations mattered, but did not seem prohibitive, which I now recognize as a serious misappropriation of both Inuit and Musqueam (First Nations) culture. The effect was that we related to the rhythms and tenor of each of our rock-hitting forays, but these tentative gestures were not large enough to have an impact on and carry across the physical geography or to meet the
splendor of the traditions of the land that loomed over us in carved figures, creatures, buildings and the sense of the place itself. While the acoustics of the drum met with the grandeur of the landscape, it felt dishonest and intrusive. It was. Consequently, there was no force behind it.

Our acoustic explorations barely referenced the beautiful piece of land, a cliff plateau high above the ocean where the wind whips up and over onto the grassy plane. We barely played with the wind against the tall glass wall of the Museum of Anthropology as a reflective surface, a contemporary repository of ancient history, although we did stand next to it with one ear to the glass to feel the vibrations and listen for air against the surface. This soundwalk haunts me still. I was preoccupied with heeding the First Nations traditions and land as it is documented that First Nations peoples taught their youth in a kind of skills university at this place. And this remains important – but how can a listener listen to a place when displaced in time and space, when what is being listened for is performance out of place?

What if we asked Musquem (First Nations) people to participate and enact the games they played to teach their life skills at this place? What if someone read a historical account of the place while we were there? What if there was traditional music and singing? Would this take us deeper into the listening space we encountered or merely become an extension of the museum, a staged act? How does one tease out the acoustic past and bring it into the present in a meaningful way?

Another acoustic appropriation

I encountered this again as a participant in another Vancouver soundwalk more recently. In this circumstance, the soundwalk designers designed a route through First Nations ancestral land that followed rich delta fishing and gathering grounds. Now, it is called False Creek and is a busy park walking, biking, and jogging path past a yacht club, fishing docks and condominiums in downtown Vancouver. Again, the intent was honorable: to reference the past in order to listen to the present and perceive the changes in land use. The traditional clan peoples, the Musquem (First Nations), of the area agreed to sit on an area of this land where they fished and gathered seafood and play a traditional betting game while singing and drumming intermittently. As the soundwalkers encountered this enactment of traditional indigenous activity, they entered a performative space where their listening was coopted by sounds and activities interjected to reference ideas based in a culture of the visual, as observers. Even more problematic, soundwalkers were invited to break with their code of silent listener
and participate in the game. Others sat theatre style around this enactment, which was interesting, but
seemed completely out of place other than as a curiosity among the Sunday park-going population. The
emphasis was on watching a piece of theatre, not on listening to it.

Also, a problematic reification of a First Nations imaginary came to the fore and it was as though we
were sitting watching a museum moment rather than participating in an acoustic real. I found it deeply
unsettling and decided to move around the periphery of the players and drummers to listen to how
voices carried or were submerged in the mix of geography and other sounds, with my eyes closed at
times, to try to understand the event acoustically. What I did notice was the way the drumming carried
up to the underside of the concrete bridge we were sitting underneath and bounced around there as a
counterpoint rhythmically to the sound of car tires going over the steel girders. For me, this created a
contemporary acoustic moment that was fascinating and rich. Poetically, one might use this moment in
a recorded soundscape composition to underscore the convergence of indigenous culture (traditional
drumming) with contemporary urban culture (tires on pavement). Taken out of context, but applied
thematically, this acoustic juxtaposition of drumming and car tires on a bridge might effectively highlight
the issue of indigenous land coopted for highways. This remains important and relevant in Greater
Vancouver and throughout Western Canada as it is legislated that an archeological survey for First
Nation sites must first be conducted before building can commence. The same is true for logging or any
other invasive land use. But I have digressed. The point is that acoustic ways-of-knowing do not
necessarily adhere to visual logics and ways-of-knowing.

The problem is often that what we envision or imagine an acoustic space to be is often not what it is.
Acoustic space is received in the present, but complex underneath this apparently simple and
comprehensive real. Partly geophysical with acoustic implications that one comes to know over time as
an inhabitant listens for its variables, such as wind, weather, temperature, time of day or season,
migrations of creatures and changes in geography, the soundscape also engages a poetics of space. This
poetic has some aspects that enhance memory, imagination, and multi-sensory as well as real-time ways
of knowing and being – once the arrogance of visual logic recesses. The expectation of the space to tell
stories about itself or its past is limited when a listener spends minimal attention to the sounds
attending familiar acoustic space – the nuanced aspects of the space are overwhelmed by the urban
rush and routine of listening to mono-sound. We inhabit a different time sensibility as observers than as
listeners.
Design in flux

This is particularly problematic for the soundwalk designer. What a designer brings of their listening habituation to the course are those aspects that they privilege and are not necessarily what a listener privileges. Further, what the designer encountered in one instance is often different at the moment in time when the soundwalking entourage encounters it. The designer’s infusion of meaning into one space does not translate to every ear. Acoustic space is in constant flux and, although there will be consistent acoustic elements, every encounter is unique acoustically (as in acoustic-phenomenological). For these reasons, I question soundwalking design as based primarily in a route but rather as encounters designed to shift listening habits and open space to alternate listening events and possibilities through alternate experiences of listening location and dislocation, consciously apprehended with the designer as a guide.

As a soundwalker and designer, I create improvisational spaces in collaboration with other artists and musicians in order to accentuate acoustic features, such as an archway or hill or cliff or glass wall or tunnel or any one of myriad acoustic sweet spots and arrange the route so that these encounters, carefully placed to surprise the listener as they approached and, in that surprise, encourage them to listen more attentively. I create a soundwalk as a listening experience composed and orchestrated to increasingly open the listener to different states of listening that gradually relieve their visual and intellectual expectations of the space they are passing through. This is an approach I’ve developed in response to soundwalks designed acoustically but conceived visually or intellectually. I’ve participated in many soundwalks internationally and seen them coopted by musicians playing national music, mediations with cell phones, with performances that referenced imaginaries but not the acoustic present of the space.

I’ve also been delighted by a lone saxophone player improvising in a warehouse as soundwalkers passed through a port area (we never did see whoever was playing, but the tones referenced the no-mans-land of such spaces cinematically) and a soundwalk that ended with breakfast in an old stone farmhouse kitchen where we were blindfolded and listened to the making of a fire, the careful laying of cutlery and crockery, slicing of bread and an old toaster where the anticipated POP never occurred as it had two sides that each held a slice of bread – so that the pungency of the smell of the toast was accentuated under our noises before we could understand how it had arrived. The scape of toast being buttered!
Coffee hand-ground. The steady tock of the clock. The dawn rooster outside. The silence in between each sound. The soft ambiance of sounds on stone walls and the movement of our host’s feet across the stone floor. I know as I write this that you are also at that breakfast with me. The smells were unforgettable and the sounds of the past were delicately brought into our present as meaningful and necessary – we were also cold and hungry after over an hour of soundwalking in the drizzle of that old Hungarian village so that every sound that brought us closer to that breakfast was fully anticipated and embraced.

Soundwalking holds this capacity for sensory richness and engagement, but it isn’t easily achieved. Soundwalking nevertheless brings participants into listening spaces that they wouldn’t have encountered without extended listening and attention to the soundscape. Andra McCartney, who has written extensively about the work of Hildegard Westerkamp and soundwalking, describes soundwalking as an improvisation, dividing it into the following listener stances:

- Group soundwalks are often led by a listening guide who will suggest ways of listening to the participants including musical listening to pitches, rhythms, textures, harmonies; subjective listening while thinking about relationships between bodily sounds and their surroundings; historical listening in which people think of other times they and others have walked in that place or in similar places and how the present sounds are similar or different; political listening when paying attention to which sounds are more ubiquitous, which masked, which inaudible and who controls these sounds; and evocative listening where the listener pays attention to related sensual associations that are brought to the surface. (2013, p. 1)

Certainly, these are ways listeners can be guided to listen, however, the listener experience is complex and these categories of listening quickly recess into the organic act of being attentive to sound in a sound environment. Categorization of the experience happens afterwards. Soundwalking is a simple activity with profound possible outcomes in bringing awareness to acoustic ways-of-being. Soundwalking as an art form and radical learning space is just beginning.

In order to develop these possibilities, I moved towards elevating the soundwalk into a radio medium and challenge the current definition of both a route based soundwalk and a recorded found-sound (or electroacoustic) soundscape composition into a quest for the process of listening as a coming into being acoustically.
Composing with sound

When soundwalking, the urge to preserve the experience means either that the event is recorded in audio, video, mapped or sounds are listed. I came to soundscape composition with a desire to avail this journey towards alternate listening through recording the acoustic features of a soundwalk based on movement through space, site specific acoustic-based interventions, and recording techniques. I am interested in the composition of time-space through sound as directed by microphone techniques as a reconstitution of place. These compositions are based on the lived experience, reference that experience, and then diverge into displacement as the listener may or may not relate to the sounds contextually. Technologization of lived experience demands these types of streams.

This emphasis on composing toward a listener-soundscape relationship implies a coherence that is often fractured. It cannot help but be. I am recording a route in a place that may not be familiar to the listener. It may evoke some imaginaries of place, such as McCartney discusses in her thesis about Hildegar Westerkamp’s works, especially the formative (to the genre) *Into India* (2002) soundscape composition, but ultimately, the listener is not walking through the space. I am not on a soundwalk as such when I do the field recording. I’m not participating and recording the soundwalk at the same time, which is how most soundwalk are recorded, as I find recording intrusive to the listening experience. In a traditional soundwalk, the composition is in the route, the intention of the soundwalk designer, and the listener’s habits and will to contextualize.

In a soundscape composition as I approach it, the composition covers the spaces of a route but attends to the significant acoustic features of the places along the route and the serendipitous acoustic events that happen while I am recording them. The aim in recording and editing is to create a listening experience that instantiates deeper listening in a way mimetic of the type of soundwalk I design.

Disphonia

To a certain extent, these events are anticipated as, for example, if I am in a park on a Sunday, there are bound to be the voices of families or, if it is twenty-five below and snowing, there is bound to be crunching footfall and the eerie sense of space that silence in cold weather brings, or if I am in a tourist attraction, I’m certain to encounter different languages or if I am recording at dawn, there will be bird
song and distant sounds as a lone car or bus moves across the listening vista. And there are all the other sounds that are not usually encountered, such as:

- the nuanced aspects of sound not normally heard except when mediated through microphones or editing of the sound wave in post-production;

- the positioning of voices or sounds that do not reflect a known landscapes such as the sound of voices in a 15th century arcade made of stone that ride the curve of the ceiling and echo through passages and onto cobbles or voices whose volume increases at just one spot in the arcade where acoustic element are reinforced;

- sound that is moving in unconventional ways such as reflecting off of a stone wall of a narrow passageway or bouncing around underground tunnels or skimming over water under a trestle bridge onto one of the river banks;

and many other examples that you, attending to this thesis, are encountering.

In this circumstance, the listener is confounded, dislocated and reaches for acoustic memories or associations in order to make sense of what they are hearing, situating themselves in relationship to the information they are receiving. This makes a great deal of sense – to be congruent in one’s soundscape – but we do not generally live in this ideal state. More often than not, humans and creatures are confronted with a great deal of acoustic cacophony and malaise that provides neither necessary information nor a sense of ease and confidence nor a coherence or ecology of sound. Perhaps, from within this contemporary listening dis-ease that is taken for granted and not attended to, there is also an opportunity to listen toward an ecology of listening and listen for an experience of the richness of sounds themselves.

Listening in this way is uncomfortable as it creates confusion in the listener, who seeks situatedness: where is the sound coming from, what is it, what is its meaning, what is its relationship to me spatially and what does it mean to my well-being? The degree to which the listener departs from their habituation creates disorientation, which is stressful and demands the listener find a different way of contextualizing the sound.
Euphonia

Traditionally, soundscape composers (like radio producers) tend to seek acoustic coherence. They compose to keep the listener inside a cohesive listening experience which is understandable as to do otherwise is to alienate the listener. I wonder why there is such thrust toward euphonic experience.

Some of it may come from the influence of radio production, where the listener is courted in a specific way that satisfies the market. As national broadcasters experience fiscal cuts, avant-garde work – that which doesn’t make sense in normative ways – is often the first to disappear from programming. In Europe, where there is more of a cultivated and historical adherence to the avant-garde, the cuts are less devastating to the arts in general although this too is becoming the norm in these times of deficit.

Prior to the fiscal cuts of the 1980s, the lineage of soundscape composition is inextricable bound to the lineage of the Canadian Broadcast Corporation most notably through works such as Murray Schafer’s soundscape documentaries and Glen Gould’s contra-punctual radio. In Canada, after repeated funding cuts, the state of avant-garde radio remains with community radio, festivals, and sole producers.

In Barry Truax’s foundational text, *Acoustic Communication* (1984), there is a brief discussion of the term schizophrenia, coined by R. Murray Schafer (1969) and disseminated by the World Soundscape Project, as being the inevitable decontextualisation that takes place between the original sound and its electroacoustic reproduction. The problem, as Truax explains it, is that the “challenge of the schizophrenic situation is for the listener to make sense out of the juxtaposition of two different contexts” qualifying this further by stating “breaking with traditional acoustic restraints is not to condemn its existence altogether” (p. 134). However, there is an implicit bias toward an unmediated soundscape, a face-to-face encounter, as the preferred listening circumstance. Jonathan Sterne, in his wonderful study entitled *The Audible Past, Cultural Origins of Sound* (2003), takes Schafer and Truax to task for these presumptions asserting that “acousmatic or schizophrenic definitions of sound reproduction carry with them a questionable set of prior assumptions about the fundamental nature of sound, communication, and experience. Most importantly, they hold human experience and the human body to be categories outside of history” (p. 20). Further, Truax ties soundscape composition as a musical genre to a dependence on sound as either electroacoustic mediation or text-sound, the spoken word as sound, whereas field recording that are not modulated remain suspect as a potential cite for a breaking with a sense-making that still falls within an acousmatic – schizophrenic bias.
I posit this problematic occurs because soundscape composition continues to be categorized within a musical genre. As he explains in contradistinction from purely abstracted field recordings as part of the spectrum of compositional choices in soundscape composition:

At another extreme, one might wonder whether a seemingly random collage of environmental sounds might work as a soundscape composition, particularly if most or all of the sounds are individually recognizable. The problem here is that the arbitrary juxtaposition of the sounds prevents any coherent sense of a real or imagined environment from occurring. In addition, the lack of apparent semantic relationship between the sounds prevents a syntax from being developed in the listener’s mind, hence it is impossible to construct a narrative for the piece. (p. 139)

To relegate a soundscape composition using primarily unmodulated environmental field recordings as potentially an arbitrary juxtaposition of sounds reveals a hierarchy of compositional choices based in music – perhaps an Achilles heel of electroacoustic composition. This limits the potential for soundscape composition as other than housed in a musically privileged compositional genre. Ironically, the same critique can be said of electroacoustic and all experimental music, that it can seem, to a classically biased sensibility, simply an arbitrary juxtaposition of compositional elements – which is exactly its avant-garde and experimental strength.

Truax reveals further biases based in context meaning-making tied to the logic of the language when he refers to the semantic relationship between the sounds that he envisions as preventing a syntax from informing the listener of the narrative of the composition. Must all composition adhere to a narrative logic, one that works according to linear, teleological, language-based ways of meaning-making simply because of a perception of what constitutes an acoustic ecology? Is the compositional task not also to radicalize habits of listening?

Vital debates and discussion continue to argue about what constitutes an ecology of sound. However, the idealization of a natural soundscape over the contemporary one, the one listeners’ encounter everyday whether in urban or natural settings, imposes an ecological stipulation onto an artistic expression and reduces the potency of both. Within an experimental genre, the stating what constitutes the norm is particularly problematic. For this reason, soundscape composition must challenge and distance from such limitations precisely by evoking them, as is my aim in resituating soundscape composition within artistic production and not musical production. Referencing points of intersection is
both necessary and vital to bring awareness to an emergent form. Further, if soundscape studies is to move out of the music classroom and into the classroom as a place of learning about listener-to-soundscape attentiveness and for creating artwork and research using sound, then these distinctions become imperatives. Also significant, one major aim is to reorient and re-sensitize the ear to listening, to sound as sound and within a soundscape, as it occurs around us in today’s noisy, chaotic, decontextualized and technologized world.

What influenced my thinking about this need for context in soundscape composition was when Hildegard Westerkamp, as someone who adheres as well as breaks with this lineage, listened to *Walking Sound* (the last of the compositions discussed in this thesis) and commented that one often didn’t know what was happening or where one was, but the audio recordings were just so wonderful and rich that the listening was pleasurable.

While adhering to this traditional Schaferian viewpoint that in a soundscape composition the listener must be kept aware of context, she also admits the innovative potential decontextualized listening has in the genre, declaring:

> The soundscape composition then is a new place of listening, meaningful precisely because of its schizophrenic nature and its use of environmental sound sources. Its location is the electroacoustic realm. Speaking from that place with the sounds of our living environments inevitably highlights the world around us and our relationship to it. By riding the edge between real and recorded sounds, original and processed sounds, daily and composed soundscapes it creates a place of balance between inner and outer worlds, reality and imagination. (Westerkamp, 1999)

Riding the edge between what creates balance, what presupposes the necessity of balance, and the role of imbalance strikes at a possible divide between acoustic environmentalism and the artistic imperative—where imbalance, dislocation, and sensory disorientation demand a reordering of the norms implied in the notion of balance. Are there not ways of knowing acoustically that disrupt the communicatory field, shared contexts, cultural and locatory assumptions? Where the act of listening is enough to open sound to radicalized ways of knowing what sound is and of being in sound, in time-space?

Is not acoustic engagement a continual de-re-contextualization?
What if the listening experience doesn’t make sense in narrative or contextual ways? What happens then if the sounds themselves are foregrounded in rich and unusual ways? Does this negate the artistic thrust and imperative of the works as based in sound? Clearly, not.

Perhaps the struggle to determine what constitutes critically notable works lies (in addition to other factors such as creativity) more in techniques and mastery of skills (recording, editing, compositional elements) that open new and unanticipated listening experiences, awareness, and possibilities.
Contingency I: Becoming-deterritorialized sound

...music is not the privilege of human beings: the universe, the cosmos, is made of refrains; the question in music is that of a power of deterritorialization, permeating nature animals, the elements and deserts as much as human beings. The question is more what is not musical in human beings, and what is musical in nature...human beings are hardly at an advantage, except in the means of overcoding, of making punctual becomings-woman, -child, -animal, or – molecular, nature opposes its power, and the power of music, to the machines of human beings, the roar of factories and bombers. And it is necessary to reach that point, it is necessary becoming music of sound, for them to confront and embrace each other, like to wrestlers who can no longer break free from each other’s grasp, and slide down a sloping line.
(Deleuze/Guattari, 1992, p. 309)
**Contingency II: Soundwalk-soundscape composition**

Whatever the soundscape one encounters and however the body's habituation, sound is amorphous, fluid, and the ear is highly adaptable. This means that, in addition to building a healthier acoustic environment, there is the possibility to develop healthier, more integrated, alternate everyday listening practices with minimal effort.

If listening habits and awareness of the acoustic environment are going to shift toward something deeper and more attentive so that we have choices about integration of self and world, so that we can attend to dislocated listening responses as learning opportunities, then practices such as soundwalking are potent toward an integrated soundscape experience as a way of being sensorily empowered in an overloaded sensory world.

If listening habits and awareness of the acoustic environment can be shifted through electroacoustic means, such as artistic practice and listening genre such as soundscape composition modeled on the experience of soundwalking, then an active cultivation of hypersensitivity to sound possible through recording techniques and mimetic composition can bring a similar empowerment to the listener who become intimate with sound through such decontextualized listening sites and experiences as I am proposing.

I open the listening field in ways that listening has opened me: through an investigation of soundwalking as lived experience, as composition and as an activity and area of study overlooked by education. I do so through my own work in soundwalk-based soundscape composition as a listening practice, an event and performance of sound, as field recordings and a composition, and as a fertile learning space.

In doing so, I perch on some uncanny cagey shoulders.
Contingency III: Cagey conversation

Question: Mr. Cage, may I call you John?

Answer: How about we don’t call me anything. I’d rather stay unnamed at this point, – which isn’t at all the same as anonymous, by the way. Let’s just have a conversation in the spirit of experimentation.

Question: Ok.

Answer:

Question: [rustling]

Answer:

Question: [a sigh]

Question: I’m struggling with how to work my soundscape compositions into some kind of notation.

Answer: [sigh]

Yes, that’s exactly the predicament I foresaw. Time to digress:

THE PRESENT METHODS OF WRITING MUSIC, PRINCIPALLY THOSE WHICH IMPLY HARMONY AND ITS REFERENCE TO PARTICULAR STEPS IN THE FIELD OF MUSIC WILL BE INADEQUATE FOR THE COMPOSER, WHO WILL BE FACED WITH THE ENTIRE FIELD OF SOUND.

The composer (organizer of sound) will be faced not only with the entire field of sound but also with the entire field of time. The ‘frame’ or fraction of a second, following established film techniques, will probably be the basic unit of measurement of time. No rhythm will be beyond the composer’s reach. (5)

[ pause breath breath breathe ].

119
I had to dig deep for that.

Question: Appreciated.

It’s interesting to consider the frame as a notation device in time, especially because it emphasizes rhythm as a baseline for interpreting sounds in the soundscape. But transcribing sound in its environment and transcribing silence – where does one begin?

Answer: Begin.

Question. Now, I’m out of breath.

Question: If, in musical notation, silence is indicated by the pause and in that pause the soundscape (environmental sound) emerges, is there any way to score that silence-sound?

Answer: Everything hangs in translation.

Question: In translation as in taking sound out of its context and submitting it to some system of notation, whether based in music, word or visuals? How do I honor the intention of the soundscape composition to remain found sound in its own right?

Answer: I agree that sound has rights. Right on, ride-on soundscape.

Well, I think it depends entirely on what you want to emphasize.

If you situate sound in relation to music, you might concern yourself with the white spaces or numbers that mark time to indicate the duration of the pause.

[Insert frame]

If silence, you might leave white space on the page, but this doesn’t address the different timbers of silence, different qualities and how what comes before and after the silence that determines that silence.

[ insert
You might decide to punctuate the silence with impressions – marks – but how you intend to create impressions in a non-notation score is beyond me, unless you defer again to either image or text.

[don’t insert; undecided]

Question: R. Murray Schafer, who is a contemporary of yours and mine, (today’s his 80th birthday), creates hybrid notations for his compositions that consist of music, voice, and environmental sounds. He adds drawings, flourishes, musical notation, and detailed instructions for the cast about their positioning in the wilderness, where he stages his operas and compositions. His music scores are beautiful works of art themselves. Is there something that can be borrowed from his work?

Answer: I never attended a performance of Mr. Schafer’s works – although –

I was once on a small beach on a very small island near Pender Island for an afternoon. Xena, my wife for 10 years – we thought it a perfect place – waves on the shore, seagulls wheeling around, kelp burping and crabs scavenging. No boats or airplanes. Then some people came along and said, well, there’s nothing here, and left. Let’s invite Schafer there. We can have a non-conversation in that nothing-place, just fine –

Schafer. Great Canadian composer –. Wrote some great things about sound... don’t know his scores, his techniques...I think what works for him works for him because it’s important to him.
What’s important to you in your work?

Question: Hum mm. I think space and place – where the composition comes from – it’s actual location. I think this because it is the least problematic contextualizer; if I can describe the place and space of an acoustic event, it immediately creates an acoustic impression. I can do this through text and images. Or even a map. But this tactic will undermine my intention of creating a listener experience where sound is heard as sound because of just this kind of displacement.

Answer: Yes, it will influence the way a listener listens to the sounds – especially if the listener has a mental image of where the sounds are taking place.

Question: Well, I color sounds in the editing process – isn’t that similar manipulation? And in how the sound occurs – its morphology – by moving the microphone. It’s inescapable – everything in process and production is in translation. Even the experience itself is in translation depending on what the listener chooses to focus on and what meaning they give it. This happens in both a lived experience of sound, like a soundwalk, and in a recorded composition of sound, such as a soundscape composition.

Answer: Now you’ve gone too far in the other direction. Everything has to be considered and every consideration involves interpretation. What exactly do you do?

Question: What do I do?

I take people on listening walks along routes designed so their listening expectations are met and then disrupted and then, hopefully, in the process, deepened. Sometimes I ask other artists to collaborate – musicians who improvise to acoustic events and poets who recite lines or speak as they feel and dancers who move as the sounds inspire them and new media artists who set up interventions, like owls in the daytime, along the route. Sometimes those interventions, which are meant to cue a listener’s ear to shifting their habits through known genres (music, spoken word, etc.) toward different, challenging and unknown listening experiences (a sound you don’t know what the heck it is, where it’s coming from, or why it’s occurring).

I then record sounds after or before the soundwalk but based on the route and its acoustic features sometimes with the artist interventions. Those are broadcast on radio or performed in a concert, sometimes surround sound, setting.

In a nutshell... I try to get people to listen differently...
Answer: So it’s a kind of acoustic theatre lived and then recorded after the performance to be re-experienced after the experience?

Question: I guess you could think of it like that.

Answer: What are you asking me about it?

Question: How do I notate it?

Answer: Don’t. Don’t bother. Why bother?

If you are taking a lived experience of sound – the soundwalk – and recording it as a composition in a recontextualized - decontextualized situation of time and space –

What is the significance of the route?

Question: A baseline. That’s just how it’s evolved – from a living performance of sound to a composition in sound intended to create a listening experience in sound and about sound. About the soundscape, the listener and listening environment.

Answer: What about rhythm?

I’ve always thought rhythm was the key to composing with sound – duration, time, repetition and crossovers.

Question: Frames, durations, time, repetitions and crossovers. I understand why you, Mr. cagy Cage, work this way – with recording devices, orchestras, voices in live performance – avoiding traditional notation, the illusion of control. Working against musical expectations highlights the problems of notation.

In situ sound, though, isn’t exactly linear. As everyone knows, sound starts at one point and radiates outward in all directions although its morphology (how it is changed by what it encounters) is unpredictable...

Wait. I have an idea.

Circles of sound. Frames is the wrong shape.

Concentrism of sound. Radiations of sound events encountering
other sound events.

In circular time. Space abstracts.

Space is in the sounds themselves.

In sounds in encounter.

The route is the string one follows, the continuity.

Movement is important to this as it places the listener at the center, as the one standing still.

It’s relative, like if you’re sitting on a train that is standing still in the station and the train beside you starts to move, to leave, then you feel physically as though you are moving and the train other train, the one that is actually moving, is standing still.

Is it the methodology?

In that case, you have sit on the train in order to understand relativity. Acoustic phenomenon act relatively.

A: Look, you’re really grappling with writing sound and experiencing sound. Aren’t you like the phantom bluesman approaching the crossroads of phenomenon and hermeneutics?

Q: The route. The phantom. Right. Walking listening along a line in space, notation. The path that approaches ... philosophy, theory, the way to understanding the experience and the interpretation of the understanding of the experience, cypher in space.

The route historicizes as it moves the listener, as the listener historicizes the route, as the listener interprets what they are hearing along a continuum, their continuum.

Oh, apologies for the visually based metaphor – the train. But maybe it isn’t just visual.

A: When it’s happened to me, it’s a very physical sensation, this movement that is actually a sitting still. And the sound of the train as it moves – unless it’s a Swiss train, which makes no sound at all. Maybe
the movement in the silence in the sound of sitting not moving moving at the center of this relativity –
relative silences...

Q: I’ve always wondered about the silence in the train where one is sitting when one thinks it’s moving
and then what about the silence of the other that is moving – shouldn’t there be more sound, like that
of the engine. Instead, there’s just the sound of my breath and quiet rustling of my sleeve.

Of course, I’m inside the train. If I were outside, it would be completely different.

You see how I’m already moving from the relativity of visual phenomenon to explain the relativity of
sound to the relativity of words to explain the relativity of sound? It’s endless! I’m just going round in
circles! What am I trying to accomplish by this. Why write sound or why notate sound compositions?

Answer: “Purposeful purposelessness or purposeless play. Affirmations of life” (Cage, 1961a, p. 12).

Question: If I play with the impossible, will I silence death?
In this first of two case studies, a Sunday saunter turns into a documentation turns into a soundscape composition turns into an online sound art exhibition turns into a museum educational program turns into a cinema listening salon – and all because of the utterances of cattle with a will to life.

Here, there is no steady state, no certainty in what is being said, no definitive meaning, no will to life or death, no opus nor magnus nor verdict.

There is only a provocation to an opening of the ear to the other.
Intra poetica

In the following poem, *Even Song*, a pastoral in listening is established and broken.

This poem emerges from sitting on a hill overlooking an industrial cattle barn after recording audio there, specifically the sounds of cows. An acoustic moment, it references an ecology of sound and a sensitivity to other.

On that day in that place, I celebrated the pastoral while, contradictorily, grieving the human condition, the insensitivity to environment and creature. It was simply a moment with no long-term intentions.

Over time, the poem has remained the same but its potency has increased with artistic production and meaning uncovered in those initial audio recordings. The case study that follows, *Death in the Palace*, investigates the journey of those initial audio recordings.

In this way, the poem prefigures itself and, as is the richness of poetic forms of inquiry, it stands in time as well as circles around itself kaleidoscopically, changing and remaining the same with each turn.

Enter, now, into the palace.
Even song

On the ridge over the fields up and behind “Behind the Village”
we breathe in the evening, the day melting, the sun slipping, listening
to chirping skies, clicking fields, rustling forests
that intone nocturne as they fold toward sleep.

A hare, large and listening, bounds through the tree line into grass,
where we become marked, overridden by the ultra-light,
a bluebottle engine drone overhead passing over and out
and away. The hare comes, close, mislead

as we are, human and animal, by the furore that mutes and
the confusion that follows. Ears erect and straining,
we hear only the screech, wail, and rumble of these, our places,
until our eyes and nose twitch, sending us into terror.

The sun’s now half buried by the horizons we create with our eyes,
while in their palace, ungodly cows moan out their lives tethered to meat –

like wind rustling wheat fields or the far off traffic rattling our bones –
their horrified hoofs undulate and rattle at our approach.
Inherent elsewhere

Over the past eight years now, I’ve spent summers in a farmhouse in a small village in the Czech countryside.

The soundscape is well articulated there, the buzz and hum of insects, a yellow flying thing that doesn’t, thankfully, bite and crickets and flies caught between the inner and outer windows underscore constant birdsong – too many bird’s songs to try to name lace the day – and at dawn in the spring, they are like nothing else I’ve heard – so lush and varied.

A family of the birds, a type of swallow with a split black tail\textsuperscript{15}, lives in the barn in the part remaining from the original 17th century cottage where log beams are set in straw above long empty animal stalls (an early central heating system). The swallows live there, many generations of them by now. I enter into the barn to be confronted with head-on anxious wing-flapping in my face. Intruder alert!

This year’s young chick is learning to fly when I arrive. I sit in the garden and watch early flying lessons and tryouts. The adults can catch an insect for dinner mid-air. They fly fast and acrobatically. I’ve come to know swallow birdsong the best, complex and varied like several birdsongs in conversation at once – when it’s really one him with himself – and ending each time with a whirring tongue-clacking flourish. That’s when he actually opens his beak. I know it’s a male as he sits on the electricity wire over the apple tree under which I’m sitting, strikingly black with a burnt orange tail, while the female flits back and forth between there and the red tile roof of the cottage in attempts to distract me from her youngster. Not many creatures make it to maturity in this disciplined landscape, so no wonder at their concerted song and dance tactics.

Consistently, the utterances of chickens, roosters, cats, sheep and one sheep bell on the hillside crisscross the quiet and, of course, as in all villages, dogs bark in the distance. Always somewhere a barking dog.

\textsuperscript{15} “This bird might be a jiňička, a smaller bird than a swallow. Jiňička (femininum) is onomatopoetically, and probably also ethymologically, connected to the male name Jiňí (masculinum). The female name derived from Jiňí is Jiňina (Georgina). Jiňina is also a flower. Jiňička is the bird. The suffix ička indicates that something is small.” (M. Fulkova, personal communication, July 21, 2014,)
With 130 full-time residents here, most related to the original family (Bartos), everyone else exists somewhere along a continuum of foreigner starting with those who married in from surrounding villages to extreme cases, such as I am as the only non-Czechs, and Canadian, at that. I speak hockey, know Indians, and make peace wherever I go (not). How I arrived here is another story.

During the summer, the activities of the villagers involve farming or building houses. On weekdays, some days, the dawn chorus of birds is broken by trucks with trailers lining up at the stone quarry. On weekdays most days, tractors grumble past, the gravestone cutter next door makes hammering or stone cutting interjections, the sawmill sends a high pitched zing into the air, and in the evenings, lawnmowers and weed whackers keep grasses from the chaos that is the norm in our yard – as we are transients who arrive every one or two years now for a few weeks. By dusk, things quieten down.

On weekends, table saws whine, the traffic on the road increases with cottagers, a solo Harley motorcycle roars through overtaking groups of cyclists, there is usually a wedding at the Cultural House in the center of the village, sometimes there is music at the pub along the road or at the summer camp on the edge of the forest or sometimes just the voices of children playing in the sports field drift my way. I sit on the rise of the hill behind the cottage and watch the sun set in one direction and the moon float over the forests and fields in the other direction. A black cat stealths through the field of wild flowers at my feet as I listen to the day ending, as the village sinks into dark and a dankness creeps into the valley.

Between this village and the next, in hillside folds, a large red roof crushes down on a warehouse-like building. A few smaller buildings cluster round the enormous one and the whole compound recesses in the crux of three hillsides with fields in all directions and a ridge of forest at the top of each hill. From between these slopes, muted shuffles and groaning haunts the breezes that gust past my ear, catch, then pass. Snatches of covert things and conversations.

One morning, I trudge towards that place where I’ve been told unwanted kittens are deposited to meet nature’s fate. Nature, in such countryside, lurks far far inside a long-historied will to subvert any wilds, although wilderness (especially Canadian wilderness) catches many an imagination here. There is a tradition of the Wild West enacted throughout this area, farming communities on the one hand and people with log houses with totem poles, tribal affiliations, and camps with names like names Buffalo Creek, Camp Tatanka, and the Canadian Camp, on the other hand. This imaginary spans Central Europe with links to Ernest Thompson Seton and the boy scouts (Chalmers & Dancer, 2008; Dancer, 2005,
2008). If there is a dance in the village, the music is country and western. While the Indiáni construct pristine wilderness, the farmers harness nature as is their long-time way of life. Wilderness left Europe a long time ago, but there remains degrees of adherence to concepts of nature.

A woman told me that, before the end of the 1960’s in a more liberal era of Communism, the village cow herd pastured in the forest behind her house. She thinks they were milk, not meat, cows. She still longs to hear their bells over the countryside as it was somehow comforting to her – it kept her company in the solitude of being the last house before the forest and in her life with an often absent husband. She said she marked the end of daytime and the approach of evening when she heard the cowbells clustering at the back of her house. Their proximity and lighthearted clanking signaled a kind of all’s well that she’s missed ever since. With the 1970’s crackdown of Communism in Czechoslovakia, farms were treated as industrial collectives and each village was its worker base. In fact, the old cow barn is one of the buildings in the barn complex, now derelict but small and quaint. Someone has put up a plaque declaring that the last animals were housed there in 1967, ironically the last year of moderate Communism just before the Prague Spring of 1968. The era of normalization marks the brutal Communist crackdown on Czech citizenry and plunder of Czech resources bound for Mother Russia when the current industrialized cattle facility was built and put into action in the village. When Communism ended in 1989, these collectives reverted back to the villages, which is how it is today – but the pastured cow herd was never reinstated.

Sometimes, when I’m walking in the interstices between field and forest, I stretch my ear to imagine the cow bells, random and unseen, conjuring a call home to a warm mug of milk. This stands in contradistinction to the silence of the cattle facility.

Most villages have a kravín, a large scale cow barn. I’m a city girl, so don’t have the pragmatism of country folk. I’ve lived in proximity with horses, cats, dogs, chickens, ducklings, rabbits, budgies, and an iguana, as companions – but never as food. I luxuriate in the premise that all life carries consciousness and a right to equitable treatment. I adhere to the premise that animals are fed before I sit to eat as, for animals, eating is a social activity and why should they do without while I satisfy my needs. I sit firmly in the camp of sensitive animalist.

I take my bike and ride through the village up the hill road out of one village towards the next and toward the cow barn. I’ve never been there before but I’m curious about the muted quality it exudes. Everything seems to bypass it. There are never cars or trucks in its driveway, I’ve never seen anyone
there. It resides in an elsewhere, on a road from somewhere to somewhere— and in my life, that somewhere-in-between is something I feel a kinship with.

I take my camera and audio recording equipment. I take the road and then approach through a field rather than take the stark white oversized driveway up to the barn compound in order to approach the warehouse’s colossal double doors, which are locked shut.

I hear muffled shuffling and puffing, like a dormitory full of bodies turning in restless sleep.
*Listening salon E: In the field*

Audio Recordings, unedited
For an optimal listening experience, listen in a quiet room with high quality headphones or speakers.
96000 hz, 32 bit float, wav files
M-audio Microtrack II, Stereo T Microphone and Sonic Studios custom binaural microphone
Audio link: [http://circle.ubc.ca/handle/2429/50784](http://circle.ubc.ca/handle/2429/50784)

Initially, there are fifteen recordings totalling almost two hours. These are unedited in real time. I talk in my narrator’s voice about what I’m doing at the beginning of the first recording and there are many ambient footsteps, as these weren’t originally intended as part of a soundscape composition. Included below are four of the unedited material that became part of an eventual soundscape composition

Concentrism dance in the vertical.
**Approach**

Listen to 8:00 minutes.

I begin by biking to down through the village and then dismount when I reach the field and cross it with my bike. I leave my bike in an outer building and walk up to where the cows are housed.

The first door gives way to a feeding area, my first place of encounter.

You can hear the silence – I am facing over 100 cows in this area alone, a feeding trough, but they are so tightly packed they can hardly move.

All you hear first is bodies jostling against the enclosure railings (1:09).

Then the cow closest to where I’m standing with my hand outstretched with the recorder in it starts snorting and breathing into my hand and the microphone. You can feel the size of their nostrils and force of their breath. The closest cow’s breath is hot and moist. They also chew and chomp and you can hear their big teeth and lips. I don’t know what this means to cows, but in horses it’s a sign of deference, of trust.

I think this first articulation, the way it builds from bodies to breath to vocalizations, is the most powerful.
*Pssss*

Listen to 1:20 minutes.

In the old barn, which housed its last occupant in 1967, the year before the emancipatory thrust of the Prague Spring.

To me, the small scale and individual stalls speak of a different sensibility.

Even that someone put a plaque stating that the last herd was there at that date indicates that someone cared for the place and its animals.

The back of the industrial barn monopolizes the view out of the old barn windows. I stand looking into the wall of fans and hear the faint demonstrations of cattle.

Why do I make a psssss sound? I’m not sure now, but perhaps to emulate the passage of time and loss or humanize the hum of the fans? The fans aren’t loud and the cows in the big barn are silent. To give sound to the silence?

Perhaps I whisper along with the haunting of things of a gentler time; my conjecture about gentler times.
**Cow utterance**

Listen to 0:42 minutes.

Again, the my hand with the microphone is close to the cow through the gate at the feeding area;
the closest cow among the hundreds in this area;
a door at the far end that accesses another big room
with another hundred or so cows.
All standing still. All looking.
And this one, repeating some urgent thing,
some listing thing,
some song for
some listener
at hand.
*Fandungo*

Listen to 3:00 minutes.

The back of the large barn stretches for the total of this recording with large fans fit into the wall at equal intervals, slowing turning like eyes rolling at the absurdity of what lies mired in shit and moving the stench away from tables set with cutlery, endlessly set, inevitably set, set in the stone of human appetite.

The fans take it all away with the wind, into oblivion.

I walk alongside oblivion.
The lost bird

Listen to 0 minutes (recording lost)

There is a bird.
She sings.
I don’t know where or when,
but she is there,
singing on a tree,
always singing,
as the others fall
to their knees
and silently sink
into their end.
**Kravin: The cow palace**

This project begins as a documentation of a part of the village, the cow barn, remnant of a communist way of life and cooperative farming. Initially, my companion and I refer to it satirically as the cow palace, the village villa for cows. In this way, it starts quite innocently with a curiosity about this eerily silent place where hundreds of heads of cattle are kept – a big red and silver roofed mystery. Perhaps there is a cat lingering who will catch mice for the farmhouse, I think to myself. In my time recording there, I don’t see a trace of a cat.

The cattle barn, once inside through the feed opening, knocks me back, appalls me, and slices through me with the indifference of the butcher knife. Miles of bodies pressed against one another, unbelievable stench, blasts of hot breath, a sea of single black eyes with singular expressions, mires of shit on hoofs and knees and up to foreheads. Crowding and humping. Lowing and low moaning. All incredible quiet.

From what I read and understand, in fascist and repressive regimes, humans are treated like cattle. Human life improves under capitalism and free markets, but there is little trickle down to animal welfare here. Some treatment is better than others, but whether pet or domestic animal, both are intended to serve humankind’s end. Dogs are guard dogs. Cats are semi-feral, not spayed and meant to catch barn vermin. Many kittens are left “to nature’s way” as one resident put it, although many are drown or crushed by the farmer and few survive. An adult cat’s life lasts only a few years. At the end of the street where I stay, two different sheep each year live for the summer months without food or water and under uncut horrendously hot coats without any discernable care. They nibble at sparse tufts of grass that diminish if it doesn’t rain. Today topped 40 degrees. I think about the sheep as I drink water to stave off a headache and exhaustion. I dare not venture to the end of the street to see how their doing. Last week, I put a bucket of water in their yard, but someone removed it. Better not to meddle.

I recognize that in this, I am foreign, as I cannot tolerate any type of creature or human suffering. Of course, this reveals things about my personal background. As someone familiar with the outcomes of trauma, I also know its avoidance isn’t always possible. I remember watching a student video of a Romanian villager taking his most beloved pig – all the while singing loving songs and calling her “Darling” and petting her quite sincerely, teary eyed – up to place where he would, in one gesture, cut her throat at slaughter. There is no judgment intended, just recognition that my sensibilities are bound up with something quite different. I still hypocritically eat meat from animals whose lives and deaths entail unspeakable suffering and don’t generally think about it when it comes neatly packaged. On some
level, making the audio recordings of the cows whose lives are spent locked up in the cattle barn becomes a means to break a profound silence around the suffering of animals, and perhaps my own, and a way of facing this acknowledged obliviousness.

I can only begin to acknowledge the suffering inflicted with impunity on children and people in situations of abuse on a daily basis in my own city and in the communities I encounter, let alone worldwide, if I acknowledge the suffering inflicted in similar ways on animals.

I only go to the cattle barn once, make these recording over several hours, and know I will never return.

I never return in person but the recordings mark countless returns.

**Contingency IV: Rattling Cage**

Q: When the feed door opened, surprisingly to my hand that was fiddling with its handle, the pastoral music score of my romantic village ended. You’ve said that what is not notated in music, the human unsaid and unsung, is silence, a pause and a turn, where environmental sounds rise to the fore (8).

A: Powerful, that articulated silence that speaks to what is in the moment.

Q: Like an openness, the negative space of sound, nuance sound –what signifies as silence, and in that silence, the sounds of the nervous system and blood in circulation interns the body in space?

A: The body in space but in sound space, vibration. The dance that continues when the music ends to human ears and in human articulation. So much still being articulated.

Q: Is that the eerie silence I imagine emanated from the cow barn before I even arrive there – just seeing it from the vantage point of the hill I sometimes sit on in the evenings or as I walk across the fields behind the cottage where I’m staying? Is it in the faint sounds that ride up the hill and catch in my ear – sounds of the disquiet of the silenced?

A: The turn– a disquiet – is inherently a place of unrest. It holds the space of hauntings of what has been and what is yet to come. Like the tent in the woods at night with the unseen threat, anticipated through listening and auditory hallucinations, as something that roams about just outside. The things that are not what we are and what we cannot appreciate in their thingingness because of our arrogance.
Q: Is that the turn that activates the unanticipated listening that you refer to?

A: I think so. “This turning is psychological and seems at first to be a giving up of everything that belongs to humanity – for a musician, the giving up of music” (Cage, 1961bp. 8). To the everyday person, giving up the comfort and safety of habitual listening. For the soundscape composer, it’s giving up what makes sense and letting sounds speak for themselves.

Q: Such as a romanticization of the human in the world as master? The villagers seem to accept human brutality towards animals as part of a general nature brutality. Both stances situate the human as master over world whereas, when it gets too much to bear, mastery is abdicated to something termed nature. Either way, no one has to question the tenor of the brutality.

Is this the knife’s edge I’m skating on and against?

A: Of course. Personally and as a composer.

It isn’t a question of good and evil but of the need to stay in control challenged by the ability attentive listening and the soundscape presents to embrace a “turning [that] leads to the world of nature, where, gradually or suddenly, one sees that humanity and nature, not separate, are in this world together; that nothing was lost [by opening silence to sound] and everything was given away [illusions about the human as master in the world]. In fact, everything is gained [greater awareness of what is]” (8).

Q: Such as encountering the raw articulation of suffering and feeling it as one’s own that is only possible through listening to the sound of it, to it as sound, as an exchange body to body vibrationally and without separation, to an adjournment of self to other as self? Isn’t it taking ones place with humility in the interconnectedness of being in the soundscape?

A: Are the mushrooms singing?

Q: What?

A: It’s all getting rather cerebral and wordy. Let’s listen again now.
**Listening salon F: Cowcaphony**

Listen to *Cowcaphony* (02:54)

For an optimal listening experience, listen in a quiet room with high quality headphones or speakers.

96000 hz, 32 bit float, wav files on M-audio Microtrack II,
Stereo T Microphone and Sonic Studios custom binaural microphone

Audio link: [http://circle.ubc.ca/handle/2429/50784](http://circle.ubc.ca/handle/2429/50784)

---

I am the bird sitting in the tree, the one who sings and observers and is free to flit away at will.

I am the woman standing at the door, the one with her hand open and stretched forward through the bars of the gate.

I am the master, the one recording, the one who touts self-awareness, that supremely human privilege, and who wants to walk away but can’t.

I am the one at the trough, microphone in hand, the one who cries for a hand in the night, assurance that I will not be led to the slaughter like so many all around and before and to come.

I live for that assurance. I mount that assurance.

Then, it mounts me. I am the one who cannot get away.
Compound explications

The *kravín* project is relatively compact with myself as participant and producer. It is an early foray into soundscape composition and therefore a reasonable starting point for experimentation on how to unpack and explicate soundscape composition. Although the process in later works evolves to align closely with soundwalking, this project uses audio recording as documentation as well as story, as an educative and creative tool with an activist edge in the process of creating a soundscape composition.

The intent was to document a soundwalk through the cattle barn compound as it was occurring. I knew it would have specific expressive sounds: metal against metal (doors, gates, fences), the sounds of cows (utterances, bodies in a confined place, breath) set against the open sound-space of the village. Also, I wanted to express the quality of the silence I associated with the place. It was also intended as my contribution to the World Listening Project (World Listening Project, 2013), an annual online festival and sound map to mark R. Murray Schafer’s birthday, so I know the date it took place – July 18, 2010. It never did meet that aim.

What begins as a soundwalk quickly becomes a focused recording session as I am transfixed by the encountered. It becomes something I can’t walk through, but have to stand inside of and listen. In this way, this work differs from later compositional strategies where I create a public soundwalk, enact it without any documentation, and then record it after the fact using various recording methods and microphones. In that approach, emphasis is on movement through acoustic space, walking and listening to a sequence of sound events along a route designed to enhance awareness of the soundscape. The *kravín* recordings happen all at once while I experience it. The experience overwhelms.

There is one microphone employed, the one that comes with the recording equipment, a good microphone with two stereo mics, one each at the end of a T bar. It picks up stereo on the right and left sides. At the kravin, I position the mic close to the sounds I want to record, sometimes with the subject between the T to emulate surround and other times with one of the mics directionally centered on the subject and the other on the background sounds. But when faced with the cattle, literally, I am caught between the experience and the one who records the experience. This tension is heightened by the intensity of the encounter and, as a result, the recording is rather catch-can. The interesting compositional aspect is just this immediacy, which is also expressed in the urgency with which the cows respond to me, with increases in shuffling and utterances.
In later soundscape composition field recordings, technique and preparation become refined and, in this sense, the experience mediates the real time moment of recording in anticipation of the end product. I have no end project in mind when I recorded at the kravín. As Cage points out, this is the optimal compositional sound-to-listener situation: where the artist is fearless in attending to the sound as sound with the full force of impact in an embodied listening experience pushing it forward. This force resonates forward over time in the recordings. For subsequent listeners, the meanings change but the initial emotional force carries that meaning as potentially profound, such as was the case for me in what I initially experience. My intention for that day is thwarted by a much different and challenging acoustically-based experience.

This is communicated in both the raw recordings of what was happening as I approached these creatures who were obviously reacting to my presence and, if I have accomplished my aim, in final composition as an expression of what I experience.

Why did the cows react with such utterances? Perhaps I represented an unanticipated feeding in a regime of feeding that is the only contact the cows have with the outside world. Perhaps, they simply craved stimulation other than each other. Perhaps, as I felt, the cows experienced a receptive and sympathetic presence – as I listened, made eye contact, and recorded attentively and with stillness to what they were articulating. I will never know for certain, and while most were silent and wary, a few pushed their noses through the bars toward my hand, breathed short hot breathes onto it, and then bellowed and moaned for some time afterward with me still in their gaze. In this exchange, I felt a tragic song, an attempt at communication, a reaching out for solace in an impossible situation.

In such an intense soundscape, what I want the world to be is blown apart and I face an unanticipated sense of something essential in the experience.
Intra poetica

Who is speaking? Who does not know moments of oblivion, of profound contradiction, schism to the point where we enter the void of the other?

Poetic ways of inquiring speak the unspeakable, the untenable, the insufferable, provoke the already dead, is always in the process of be-coming undone.

In these ways, it must be an intensely personal exchange that undoes the reader in order for the words to penetrate alien flesh.

So, too, with the listening for the radical other.
I know oblivion

well. Although
to know oblivion
is antithetical.

There is the silent scream, the muffled fit, the non-
desire,

the waking to dread and lurching through the day.
I know that as well as my next heart
beat
gutted,

the gut
the poison
and the anti-
dote.
Other listening: Erotics

Are there aspects of sounds that are erotic? What constitutes an eroticism of sound? What is it that raises the heartbeat, sends pleasure seeking signals to the brain, and is arousing without sexually being explicit? Certainly, the senses are brought into play: taste, touch, sight, smell – but what types of sounds are erotic?

There are the standard erotic sounds implicit in the sexual act: breath, moaning, groaning, rapid panting, etc., but these have been overplayed by the porn industry. Erotic sounds are those implicated in lovemaking, but also outstrip that narrow tag into moments of sensual excess as eclectic and diverse as experience itself.

They defy categorization such as in the moment of an almond-tinged whisper whose breath assonates against an ear and sweeps warmth into the canal so that words become sounds become touch in a swoon at the graze.

The silence of desire is also particularly erotically charged as it opens space for other senses to anticipate comingling, and in that charged pause, a heightened awareness in which every twinge, pang and swoosh of an encounter with self in other and other in self becomes existence itself.

In excess of lovers, there are other possibilities.

For a mother, the sounds of satisfaction as her baby suckles may be arousing. For many people, it is whisper of fur against fingertips or ankles, the tremolo sighs of sleeping puppies, and the sandpaper scratch of a cat’s tongue. Someone once related that when, as a child, she lay her head on her grannies lap, she was lulled by the knitting needles that clacked above her head, and this euphoria is somehow erotic to her as an adult. Someone else found the burst (bubláni, in Czech) of blancmanche pudding erotic, the slow thick vanilla-scented build to rupture, the pouphe of air. Another found the scratch of a pen on a wooden desk alluring, which is different again from the sound of graphite on paper.

In each, anticipation of release, arousal, intensified sensation.
Erotic ap peal

In September, 2010, Dr. Marie Fulková, Director of Research in the Department of Art Education, Pedagogical Faculty at Charles University in Prague asked me to collaborate on an educational program for an upcoming international exhibition at the Galerie Rudolfinum entitled Decadence Now!: Visions of Excess (2010). In response, I curated an online sound art exhibition entitled The Erotics of Sound (2010a) with the intent to include the audio pieces in the educational program.

I put out a call to the international audio art community.

Several thematic clusters of emerged in the responses from audio artists to the call for sound art pieces involving sounds they perceived as erotic. Some were associations with place, others memories, the most involved language, and two involved death, the ultimate erotic act. Each audio artist submitted a spoken commentary (transcribed and translated into Czech) on their piece that further elucidated their inspiration, intent and/or process. (I’ve quoted some transcriptions, but the audio is available to listen to at the web address http://eroticsofsound.wordpress.com under each artist’s name. I encourage you to listen.)

Annea Lockwood, a musician, electro acoustic and soundscape composer, for example, submitted a piece about a cat’s purring that grew in strength and morphed into a tiger’s roaring. As her statement that accompanied the piece explains:

This is an excerpt from Tiger Balm, a piece I made in 1971 and named after the Chinese ointment. It was assembled from sounds I found erotic and was made at a time when I was particularly interested in ritual and trance music. It was made for live performance and involved actions such as bare feet running on a wooden floor, sweeping with bamboo leaves, blowing on grass blades. The excerpt starts with a cat purring ... It goes on to expand into a tiger and a woman making love but that’s another story. (2010)

Anthony Magen, a landscape architect and acoustic ecologist based in Melbourne, associates a land reclamation project – the attempt to save a body of sand from inexorable dissolve back to its watery origin – with the acoustic eroticism imagined in human muscle and tissue forming or decaying, with the sounds of sluice, slurp and roll of inevitable return:
The sound of internal peristalsis combined with the memory. A sluice of physical actions and emotions rolls into and out of consciousness with this sound of sucking on an oceanic scale. No amount of hard wall can hold back the ocean’s ebb and flow. You can suck as much as you want but it will be wet in here. (2010)

A majority of contributors associate words or articulation with eroticism: Daniel Blinkhorn (2010), an Australian (Sydney) composer and digital media artist, integrates whispers into a luscious stream of sound, while both Majena Mafe, a trans media artist and theorist in Brisbane, Australia, and Sarah Boothroyd (2010), a Canadian radio and sound artist, both deal with words, in repetition, as erotically charged phoneme composed to different effect and association in Mafe’s *Again and Again* (2010) and Boothroyd’s *You* (2010) b). Jesse Seay, Professor and sound artist interested in kinetic sculpture in Chicago, USA, identifies the erotic aspect of catharsis, the dissonant release in the many pitches, tempos and tones in *Wailing* (2010) – crying, the power of longing in the keen.

Alice Calm, a French composer of classical and electroacoustic music who works with multiple genres, exploits the mouth as reciprocal sensual sound circulating breath, whisper, sound, words – as her luxurious voice wraps around each syllable, she waxes until the words can longer bear. Her composition, *Ce que dit la bouche / What the Mouth Says*,

... is also the mouth of kisses, symbol of desire.

It is the place where the sensory and motor functions are closely associated with early forms of emotional resonance and emotional relationship to the other and oneself.

And then there are the words.

Words that name parts of the body.

in absentia.

Fragments.

Discontinuous flux.

Perceptions floating. Uncertainty.

Pictures emerging.
Sarah Boothroyd’s second piece plays with decadent notions around sex and death, “the precariousness of being, the shear physicality of giving birth and dying, and the way these themes pepper the mundane routines of daily life” (2010a)

Eric Leonardson, acoustic ecologist and sound artist, chair of the World Forum for Acoustic Ecology, and Professor at The Art Institute at Chicago, explains how the act of drawing, graphite or other materials on a surface, is both sound and touch (haptic). The vibrations of the materials encountering each other and amplified brings sound into association with touch and drawing is extended to the auditory experience, and the added sensory input intensifies your awareness. You are making sound as you draw ... your sense of touch is intensified through sound ... This may enrich our experience in pleasure of drawing as a process that connects the whole body and mind. (2010)

Also within the erotic of pencil and paper, one composition from an anonymous (2010) contributor who took the moniker of Aviva, makes direct sexual connotations with eroticism through a memory of an early experience of sexual arousal and its acoustic ambience, with the pressure of exams, the sounds of writing, and the place of writing, a high school gymnasium, eroticism leads to orgasm.

Each expression of an acoustic instance of eroticism, regardless of what sound or circumstance, intensifies associations between acts and the senses. In order to do this, some connection must be made between what is happening, what it means to the listener, and how other aspects of embodiment are engaged. In some way, the haptic creates that intimacy – sound as vibration as a form of non-verbal communication where bodily sensation is heightened, associations are made in the mind, imagination is engaged, and states of arousal rise to the fore. In this way, sound has the potential to open the physical to ways of knowing and being often in disconnect or dissociation. In this state of dissociation, an erotic urgency drives reconciliation.
Alien reception

In retrospect, I realize the profound sense of alienation at the heart of human angst was driving me, as part of a human and creature swarm grappling with the singular aspects of mortality, to explore how sound as a medium, as non-verbal and vibrational commune-ication, potentiates the experience of an alienated self/other.

Three months had passed while the cattle recordings sat, unattended. Revisiting them, listening again from a distance, I was sucked back into their sensual force, a deep empathy and desire to receive their articulations, to be open to them, whatever they meant. As the idea of an erotic of sound emerged, I grasped that the vocalizations of the incarcerated cattle, the intimacy of the encounter, the tenor of the sounds and their sensuality, and the exchange – the desire for connection and escape from insufferable circumstance and looming death – all spoke erotically.

I also identified associations between the cattle sounds to the sounds of human sexual encounter. But that wasn’t where I wanted to go with the piece – rather to speak to sensual expression bound with intimacy and the release that is death. Orgasm is sometimes called the little death in the way that love and intimacy initiate a form of escape from self into other and otherworldliness is experienced. This is the aspect of the exchange between the cattle and myself that I pursue in a soundscape composition that I gave the title, at that time, The Love of Dead Meat (2010b).

I don’t really like the title, although I recognize activist overtones. I’m not sure why it still makes me uncomfortable, but it has to do with the directness of “dead meat” and the way it denies the sentience of each individual cow that risked an utterance. The cattle were destined for a package in the supermarket, without a doubt, but this title collapses the distinct voice to the lowest possible expression of the value of their lives, which I do not accept. Even the categorization of animal is problematic. I played with names such as Trough Dirge or Cowabungle or Love at Steak – to add a satiric bite. I’ve settled on Cowcaphony. I decide this rather than Cacowphony to foreground the Cow and disrupt the phoneme sequence from ca-co to cow-ca. This brings a freshness and twister aspect to its speaking intent on slowing what is said to how it is said, to demand a kind of minutia of attention to sound, speaking, and language that also works against the broad designation of animal as cow.

I now declare this soundscape composition Cowcaphony to emphasize that the cow articulations, as originally recorded and documented, skate the edge of cacophonous, discordant, and inharmonious
sounds whereas in the composition their erotic force recontextualizes these same sounds as skating the edge of euphony. The new title, compositional elements, and accompanying sounds of this project in its parts and totality now speak to a desire for connection, other-worldliness – and a gentle state of reception evoked by the composer with a potential listener in mind, a listener that the composer desires, a listener who opens to the voice of radicalized other radicalized through sound and the listener-to-sound relationship.

With this project, the experience, documentation, recordings and then the final composition constitute a study in how one early acoustic composition came into being in the trajectory of my work as a soundscape composer. Its potency lies in the force of the experience of those powerful articulations, sounds that bridge between human language and its attendant meaning-making and the voice of the other, utterance as language where meaning lies in the emotive force of the sounds themselves. It represents an important point of departure in coming to compose with sound as sound and inviting dislocation, conceptually and materially. In order to attend to sound as other, as self in other, the listener is called to loosen and unhinge their urge to codify meaning in the habitual way of humans – through human-centric language.

This is the call toward an ontology of listening through excess – can a listener listen to the alien being of the other and, in doing so, realize and recess the associations and codifications of habituated listening that stories human ways of knowing and being?

Can humanity not, in this way, begin to shift environmental complacency – evident in human inhospitality toward one another and all planetary existence – through such a turn around utterance as voice?

This is the incitation that attends Paul Celan’s poetry, the dissonant turn that allows words to congeal around the unspeak-ability of the WWII Holocaust and other human to human genocides. It is also Jacques Derrida’s reiteration of the Shibboleth in Celan, not unlike Derrida’s questioning of the concept of animality, the word and the other of it (2008). Is this not the potency of cacophonous- euphonic listening, the value of the schizophoncic composition?

Does this not problematize the spoken word as an interpreting mechanism toward sound that limits its potentials and is evident in mediums such as radio art? Does this evocation of finding the alien other in the location of a dislocated self not strike at the heart of a poetics of the listener-to-soundscape trope?
These questions emerge out of this early happenstance of audio recording meant as documentation of an unknown part of somewhere I was sojourning, somewhere where I was living and seeking belonging to place and land knowing I would never belong. In a village in the Czech countryside, even a bride from a neighboring village is a foreigner. Without even language, I was profoundly displaced. And this was the opening. The foray into a silent foreboding place led to an experience of myself as alienated finding connection through the alien communications of a radical other – incarcerated cattle.

The audio recordings of that encounter become the composition, which then finds new meaning as part of an online audio exhibition and then part of educational program for a major arts exhibition dealing with decadence. Eventually, the composition is shown in a darkened cinema where the audience anticipates light on a screen, but instead is compelled to listen in an unanticipated moment in between the decadent films of an adjunct film festival.

This trajectory shows the mutability of sound, acoustic-based meaning-making mechanisms, and an artistic trajectory in excess of anticipated aims. Working with sound invites flux and fluidity continually in excess of the origins of its making as it travels toward unknown encounters. Sound, in this sense, aligns with an erotic exceeding sensate singularity – overriding the propensity of visual-based ways of knowing and being. In this way, acoustic ways of knowing and being have the potential to be an invitation, rather than a confrontation, to that which is seen as alien. In terms of decadence, it defies the image.
De cadance

When Dr. Marie Fulková explained the premise of the educational program entitled *The Black Cloud Ritual* for a major international visual arts exhibition at the state contemporary arts gallery and museum, Galerie Rudolfinum, the opportunity arose to bring audio art into a visual arts educational context. The subject matter was intriguing and had not been dealt with, to my knowledge, in sound – the theme of decadence. The idea was to include an audio art component to the exhibition educational programming – and I had just such an experience of decadence with the industrial cow barn recordings.

The exhibition, entitled *Decadence Now! Visions of Excess* (2010), was curated by Otto M. Urban, who had previously curated an exhibition (Prague and Brussels) and published a book, *In Morbid Colours: Art and The Idea of Decadence in the Czech Lands, 1880 to 1914* (2007), on Czech decadence. The new exhibition was important in its thematic approach and international scope including works by art world celebrities such as Joel-Peter Witkin, Cindy Sherman, Robert Mapplethorpe, and Damien Hirst – to drop a few names. The main star was Zbigniew Libera, whose controversial work *Lego Concentration Camp* (1996) reinforces the artist’s mandate to reveal the social forces that dictate the unspeakable, the commodification of the traumatic.

Marie Fulková, a brilliant spitfire of a woman, is championing uncharted territory in gallery and museum art education in the Czech state curriculum and internationally. With an already established working relationship with Galerie Rudolfinum and the Uměleckoprůmyslové museum v Praze (U(P)M, The Decorative Arts Museum in Prague) and the courage to tackle controversial subjects such as decadence, she was well situated to provide the educational program component for this difficult material. To say that it was difficult is not to do justice to the full force of morbidity, pornography, and taboo images wielded by artists who are masters of creating excessive visceral effects and responses in the viewer of the material. These particular viewers were children and adolescents in the Czech state school system. The alliance between the Galerie Rudolfinum and Charles University was to create an educational program for middle to upper grade school children and undergraduate university students.

The terms of the project, its stakes, were nothing less than contextualizing intensely disturbing material – even for adults – to make it palatable enough for school age children and young adults to understand as decadence – as a social response that had been in circulation since the time of their great grandparents, approximately one hundred years ago – a history still apparent in music, literature and art.
However, what exacerbated the problem was that this exhibition’s form of decadence did not reflect Czech socio-cultural lineages, but was tracing primarily North American and Western European ones. The exhibition represented a profoundly culturally imbedded form of decadence – to which Czech society and history was, and remains, only peripherally sensitized.

The decadent hitch

The decadent movement’s influence on the art and literature of Western Europe and North America post modernism is well known. A late 15th century fin de siècle phenomenon, it began in France as a social revolt against romanticism’s idealization of nature. It aligns with artifice, symbolism, and the persona of the “dandy,” who flaunts excessive dress, expression, and appetites in the face of social norms. In France, it associates with the writings of Charles Beaudelaire and Emile Zola, in Britain it’s typified by Oscar Wilde, in Germany it thrives in pre-war Berlin, and in North America, Edgar Allen Poe is its poster-boy. Painters include Edvard Munch, Gustav Moreau, Gustav Klimt, Alphonse Mucha, and even James McNeil Whistler – artists who expressed aspects of morbidity as part of the human experience. The list of decadent bad-boy/girls spans the next two centuries with artists and writers expressive of the under-bellied excesses of society – and the force behind a fascination with a political and social ethos of doom collapses incrementally into the contemporary obsession with a gratuitous violence inherent in self and other (planetary) annihilation. Doom is not the same sense of end as annihilation.

The Czech era that runs parallel to the fin de siècle decadence movement elsewhere was actually a time of relative optimism economically and politically (the First Czechoslovakian Republic of 1918 – 1938) as Czech literature and art was finally able to move beyond cultural nationalism to situate itself within the larger European and North American milieu, including Russia. This infused considerable new energy that found its way into a Czech sense of decadence responding to the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian Empire and the inter-war ethos of the decadence in cultural centers, specifically Berlin, where the mood was Bacchanalian and Prague was a nexus for the artists and writers and dandies travelling between these citadels.

The Decadence era in Prague spans approximately 1880 – 1914, but from this socio-political perspective it continues in the Czech lands up to the occupation of Czechoslovakia by Germany in 1939, when the
Prague Circle members were forced into exile as chronicled by Max Brod in this book entitled, Der Prager Kreis - The Prague Circle (1966).

Franz Kafka (1883-1924), Franz Werfel (1890-1945) and Max Brod (1884-1968) were the most famous authors of the Prague Circle, a group of Jewish writers of 1910-1938 that defined Czech decadence. Brod is perhaps best known as Franz Kafka’s long-time companion and the man who defied Kafka’s orders to burn all his writings, thereby saving Kafka’s legacy. The circle also includes the literary critic Willy Haas (1891-1973), the doctor Ernst Weiss (1882-1940) and John Urzidil (1896-1970). This was Prague’s decadent literary core.

Max Brod is an example of one variety of Czech decadent existentialism and literature. Angela Habermann (1984), reinforces that the decadence movement took many forms and, in an article about the early works of Brod, explains that Brod expressed decadence as "indifferentism", a specific existential philosophy whereby causality, regardless of whether good or bad, rendered life meaningless – human beings had no choice. Brod’s collection of novellas from this early writings, Die Einsamen (1919), deal with this notion of decadence. In the novella, Indifferentismus (1907), however, the main protagonist triumphs over his life circumstances despite – and perhaps because of – this pessimism. His indifference saves him.

Indifference is an appropriate survivalist response to recurrent invasion, cultural appropriation, and oppression by foreign regimes. In its most good-humored satirical form in the Czech Republic, it is elevated to a national trait beginning with the story of the The Good Soldier Švejk (1963) by Jaroslav Hašek, a hapless WWI soldier enlisted by the Austro-Hungarian army who triumphs in every situation despite the odds because of his passive resistance. Švejk’s passive resistance16 is only a stone’s throw from Brod’s indifferentism when considered as different aspects of classical origins of satire as tragedy expressed though comedy. While the Švejk satire is not within the decadent genre of writing per se, it is a response to the social forces that prompted the decadent movement. In this way, these well known pieces of Czech literature are just two examples among many of the rich and varied definitions of decadence and output of its proponents in Czech culture.

---

16 “Under his passivity operates an active process of developing and practicing a rich arsenal of absurd subversive strategies that do not allow any counter-action from representatives of the state or military power. Švejk is a tool, a concept, an idiot –genius of subversion.” (personal correspondence, July 21, 2014, M. Fulkova)
The precursor exhibition and publication to the *Decadence Now!* exhibition was exactly about the Czech Decadent movement. Entitled *In Morbid Colours: Art and the Idea of Decadence in the Bohemian Lands 1880-1914* (2009), it was celebrated nationally and held in the Municipal House in Prague, the Art Nouveau turn-of-century (construction started in 1905 and completed in 1912) architectural jewel with artwork and design elements incorporated by Prague’s premier decadent artists: Alfons Mucha, Jan Preisler and Max Švabinský. The whole building and its interior is breath-takingly exotic and opulent in design. As a national seat, it was the place where the Czechoslovak declaration of independence was read to its people after four hundred years of Austro-Hungarian rule – a pivotal moment in which equality, rights and freedoms seemed a hard won certainty. It was also Švejk ’s dream realized.

This exhibition and its location speaks to the strength of linkages between national, cultural and socio-political contexts and the Czech Decadent literary arts movements as culturally specific. This precursor exhibition concentrates on Czech decadent contexts and lists the extent of influence and number of Czech artists (many of whom were also writers) working within that ethos. Otto M. Urban, who curated both the Czech-specific and current contemporary Western exhibitions on decadence, points this out listing the specific part of the art scene at the turn of the century influenced by the idea of decadence to include: Max Pirner, Hanuš Schwaiger, Beneš Knüpfer, Jakub Schikaneder, František Bílek, Karel Hlaváček, Max Švabinský, Alfons Mucha, Jan Preisler, František Kaván, František Kobliha, Jan Zrzavý, Josef Váchal and many more.” (2007)

However, it can be argued that for Czechs, their experience of decadence as moral, ethical and social degradation intensified in daily life before and after the inter-war era and through the successive regimes from Nazism through to Communism. Decadence, for Czechs, is not an abstraction.

The Czech peoples encounter the abstracted contemporary style of decadence represented in the *Decadence Now!* exhibition only after the fall of the Berlin Wall and Velvet Revolution in 1989. This makes the Czech sensibility toward contemporary versions, especially Western European and North American, unique and at odds.

**Edutropism: The educational turn**

I remember conversations with Czech colleagues about the kind of decadence – overt, violent, sensationalist, in your face – predominant in this international art exhibit, *Decadence Now! Visions of
Excess. Marie Fulková, as the Director of Research in Charles University’s Department of Art Education, Pedagogical Faculty, and the Educational Program Director for the exhibition, in conversation with the Director of the Decorative Arts Museum, Dr. Helena Koenigsmarková, and myself expressed a problem with this new decadence as portrayed in the exhibition as lacking the poetics of the decadent literature and art familiar to the Czechs. Decadent turn of the century French, German, and Czech authors are still widely read and artists’ studied in the Czech population and education system.

There was something consistently hard core and uncompromising in the way this contemporary decadence slammed the viewer through the image that we speculated had to do with the role media played in defining and promoting social taboo as specifically lodged in North American movies, pornography, video games and television. The North American model is now widely in circulation globally and this, we suspected, was evident in the cumulative art works, which despite being touted as international, was largely North American and Western European (British), as an expression of decadence – or influenced by it.

As arts educators knowing this exhibition was to be viewed by a large range of school aged children up to high school – this presented a problem. How to make accessible to Czech children and youth a version of decadence that exceeded the range of their experience? Czech society does not have the same steady diet of North American TV shows and violent images that North American children are exposed to and, further, while sex doesn’t have the same puritanism or sense of taboo as in North America, Czech children and youth do not have the same concentration in media of sex with acts of violence. Significantly, an educational program with this content or subject matter for school aged youth and children would be censored in North America because of the violence and pornography – but the Czech response was not to censor the content or restrict access, but to create a bridge between the material, the decadent movement contemporized, and the younger Czech generation whose associations with the decadent movement are culturally specific. There is no doubt that, through travel and an increase in TV programming from North America, the upcoming generation’s exposure to such content will increase – and this educational program provided a testing ground for how to deal with, and prepare for, such confrontations.

Czech culture just doesn’t have the same fascination with violence, the same imaginary real of looming threats and annihilation as in North American culture. Czechs have lived through oppression and its adherent violence, physical and other. They hold primarily secular values, rather than those shaped by a religious sense of morality and ethics which a North American style of decadence is in defiance against.
Czech values are still relevant as the lived experiences of parents and grandparents resonate through time. The family unit remains intact by large in Czech Republic – grandparents living with or having frequent contact with grandchildren. Although most cultures relate to characteristically decadent themes: alienation, deviation, depression, perversion, horror, ugliness, beauty, hallucinations, death, suicide, decay, narcissism, pornography, violence, narcotics, illness, madness (Urban, 2010), its heightened and pervasive portrayal in media, television and film – and an overriding obsession with violence and gore – as a potent imaginary is not a global cultural given.

The educational aim of The Black Cloud Ritual (Fulková, Dancer, & Sehnalíková, 2010-11; Fulková, Dancer, & Hník, 2010-11) museum educational program was to create rhizomic associations between themes and practices, activate discourse between multiple tiers of stakeholders (students, teachers, art education students, researchers, gallery curators and administrators and educators, and artists); to co-create curriculum, educative experiences and research; to work multi-modally across disciplines and genres; and to do so with focus and intent. As Marie Fulková summarizes in the recent textbook, Muzejní a galerijní edukace. Vlastní cestou k umění / Gallery and Museum Education (2012) dealing with this and other similar art research projects under her stewardship:

The transmission of the culture on one hand and the subversive function of the art on the other hand create a useful space of meanings between a word, a sound and an image: we have in mind, e.g. multimodal integration (multisensory perception), synesthesia, metaphor and the impact of these processes in public space, e.g. their influence on the construction of subjectivities, identities, the creation of values, ethics. (Summary page)

The project successfully met these aims. Marie Fulková and her team, of which I was a part, responded with the primary aim of putting control back into the hands (and sensate bodies) of the student viewers by designing an educational program based in ritual and play that engaged senses other than predominately visual: touch (haptic), taste, smell, and sound. The idea was to provide materials that students could use to create personalized rituals while in the Decorative Arts Museum in response to what they would be seeing in the exhibition. These rituals would then be enacted in the gallery while viewing the exhibition. Teachers across the state educational system received instructions, examples, and materials with which to craft arts-based (studio arts, dance, spoken and written word, performance and sound) rituals and the students came to enact them in the Galerie Rudolfinum exhibition space among the Decadence Now! exhibition artifacts.
This, in itself, was radical: to open museum and gallery space to these types of student and teacher disruptions. In the politics of these spaces, the viewing space is real estate just as the experience of viewing the art works is managed by the placement of works and the accompanying text. The text in this exhibition described the thematic of each section of the exhibition and coached the viewer into a single perspective of the theme’s significance – it was curated thematically. As the exhibition’s website declares, “the exhibition is not divided chronologically, but thematically into sequential sections which fluently and logically relate to each other, and which also create a sort-of imaginary closing circle” (2010). The themes were: Excess of Self: Pain; Excess of Body: Sex; Excess of Beauty: Pop; Excess of Mind: Madness; Excess of Life: Death. In such a self-defining and closed system of ways of investigating decadence – and one that tries to be ahistorical – the demands of re-contextualizing decadence betrays its lineages and cultural specificities. Perhaps it was a way of managing the controversy and affront with which the Czech general populous greeted the media portrayal and perception of the exhibition’s content. The media sensationalization of these themes bears out in its promotional video (Studio Madragore, 2010), where ominous music backs appalling images, with no narration (ironically) to stay their impact.

In this way, the placement of works followed a route through these themes and managed each viewers physical proximity to each work and amount of time spent in each thematically arranged room. There was the usual mismatch with the acoustics of the spaces, rooms with few buffers to absorb sound so that the clatter of viewer’s footsteps and voices bounced around in the cavernous empty space up to the high ceiling adding to the harsh quality of the experience. The interruption of students and teachers performing rituals in the midst of this highly produced space created tension between educational and curatorial intent. Then there were the sounds of songs, recitations, dances and movements uncharacteristic of the space and centered in the midst of the works but with the focus turned toward the group and way from the artworks, making the art referential and therefore peripheral to the experience. Students literally turned their backs on the artworks in order to speak back to them. From the educators’ perspective, this was a triumph. It radicalized the learning space.

Further, this tension strikes at the heart of the visual dominance pervasive in contemporary society and means by which other sensate space can be won, particularly through alternative education programming such as this and based in the arts and in ritual. The role of ritual, as a movement and sound based enactment, cannot be understated.
Sound and the practice of listening is another such contested state of embodiment and potential alternate learning space. As an acoustic arts educator, I designed the online exhibition, *Erotics of Sound* as an acoustic adjunct to the main exhibition. It too was international and consisted of notable sound artists in response to an aspect of decadence that seemed less overtly sexual or violent – that of the erotic. Each artist also provided a short commentary about their audio piece. The commentaries were translated from English into Czech. It is significant that, although I distributed the call widely among the artists I knew in Prague working with audio in their art practices, not a single Czech artist contributed to the *Erotics of Sound* exhibition, which was part of the educational program rather than the exhibition. I’m not sure why, although audio art of this kind was fairly new in the Czech Republic at this time and, perhaps, this was also part of the ambivalence associated with the *Decadence Now!* exhibition. Czech educators, the museum staff, and the students were all responsive to the audio pieces.

I also felt that it was fitting that an international enclave of audio artists were creating a bridge between contexts through the notion of eroticisms within the decadent international milieu and one with which most artists were immersed in – that of North American portrayals of decadence. In this way, the artists could create a bridging space. They were not apprised of the disconnect that I observed working with the project in Prague and theorized after the fact.

Students, in the exhibition space and beforehand, could download the sound art compositions to their mp3 players or cell phones and respond through poetry, story, spoken word, dance or ritual prior to and while viewing these highly disturbing visual works of art. I observed their ritual incorporation of the audio pieces in the exhibition space and was consistently struck by how their embodied responses, their movements, conformed to the chosen artistic form (dance, performance, spoken word, etc) while antithetical to the visual viewing space. The sheer spectacle of bodies moving and filling a usually still space, the shift in emphasis toward the center of the room and away from the artworks, the sense of connection and reciprocity among the group as bodies cominged – even though each student was listening to their own choice of sound art pieces on their own mp3 player – was stunning. They were, indeed, taking back space and context and speaking back to the unspeakable individually and as a community.

In a video made of the ritual being enacted in the Rudolfinum gallery space (Flynn, 2010), toward the end students move and dance to the downloaded audio of soundscape compositions now on their mp3 players from the *Erotics of Sound* exhibition.
In this way, the project reinforces the potential for sound art to bring a different modality from the overwhelming visual one. It engages another of the senses to enact embodied responses intent on reclaiming space as sensorily equitable. The student comments were not documented about the audio pieces specifically, but students did use the sound pieces to produce their own artifacts, such as songs, poems, dances and visual artworks and these artifacts speak to the power of the audio element in their rituals. The inclusion of sound into an educational program about a visual arts exhibition was novel and provided an opportunity to include sound arts as part of multiple ways of experiencing and speaking back within the arts, in general. It opened a previously unknown area of art to teachers, students and educators as well as the gallery and museum administration. It also contributed in leveling the viewing space and intellectual field for program adherents and participants. In these ways, sound offers relatively uncharted possibilities to educational programming in visual arts contexts.

**Acustropism: Sound art as erotic excess**

Why not put a call out to artists for decadent sound and entitle the project *Decadence in Sound*? Why emphasize the erotic component of decadence as excessive and why in sound?

The aim was to provide a bridge between the hard core, pornographic, expression of decadence that was part of a North American / Western European apocalyptic inevitability and a specifically Czech context of decadence, one more aligned with a sense of doom and a human redact toward indifference, as a best strategy when doomed – but not without possibility. It was to break with a reification of an annihilatory force as decadence, with something without possibility, as a complete alienation and dissolution. It was to take back nuanced space, which is the space of silence and of listening; to diversify visual singularities of expression into a nuanced realm specific to the flux of sound and reciprocity of listener-to-soundscape complexities.

Eroticism is a plea: it calls for connection toward something or someone other when bereft of the self, other in self, which is the nature of its desire. The erotic invitation to decadence is a nexus between the self-indulgence of decadence and the self-dispossession necessary for the erotic to surface.

Eroticism is excessive of desire, love, sex and death. It is far more subtle than the pornographic image, although it intersects with the explicit. In its inexplic[it]ability, it holds and defies and exceeds the act at its center. It is arousal that engages the senses and rouses the imagination. The relationship between
embodied experience and fantasy is where emancipatory activities such as self-expression come into play, where self-dispossession is sought in exchange something shared, and where the self exerts itself in the face of oppression or self-annulation, such as in the dynamics of decadence as a social response. Sound is uniquely associative, non-explicit with a potential to be what it is and invite embodiment through nuance. Sound is profoundly erotically potent.

Sound’s erotic potential has not been explored other than as pornographic scoring in film. How would one think through decadent sound, sound in excess? This is an interesting question that I did not explore fully in this project’s context, although I refer to it in the earlier chapters, where extreme sound, loud or of a pitch (low or high frequencies) that cause human adverse reactions could be considered as decadent: acoustic warfare, psycho-acoustics, the politics of frequency where sound becomes excessively haptic and can damage tissue. In sidestepping decadence in sound, I anticipated it would entail too an intense acoustic or haptic angst – sound has the capacity to exceed in seriously physically debilitating ways not appropriate for these educational aims. The aim was to trouble and engage a poetics of decadence. This seemed an appropriate adjunct for sound’s inauguration into eroticism as decadence.

**Eroticism cowcaphonious**

What might be the juncture of sound, eroticism and death?

George Bataille is one of the few theorists to deal explicitly with eroticism as a subject in his theory and fiction in ways implied in the audio exhibition and audio component of the educational program – and he is proximal to the decadent literary movement. Although he first associated with the 1920’s Paris surrealist writers, eventually he distanced himself from this movement. His novels’ explicitly pornographic and erotic content situate him within a literature of transgression that fits with the realm of decadence. The novels deal with violent sexual acts, often involving body parts such as the eye or testicles, which culminate in death (Bataille, 1985). Bataille further theorizes that this eroticism is essentially violent as it reinforces not the finality of death through the sexual act – but death as the finality of self and hence the beginning of emancipation. The main themes in his text, *Eroticism: Death and Sensuality* (1986) directly apply to the Cowcaphony project and soundscape composition, framing
eroticism as the discontinuous and continuous states of being seeking and denying death; eroticism as
death ritual and sacrifice.

According to Bataille, humans and all other than single celled creatures suffer an existential angst at
conception through the reproductive act that defines sex. As he explains: “sperm and ovum are to begin
with discontinuous entities, but they unite, and consequently a continuity comes into existence between
them to form a new entity from the death and disappearance of the separate beings” (p. 14). In this
discontinuous state of self as individual, the erotic act seeks that original continuity and is thus caught in
a dance between both states seeking the other through the violence of coming in and out of material
states of being. Death is the end point of this moment of conception, and the only tangible expression of
these life transitions, hence its necessary violence – the violence of coming into and out of physicality. In
this violence we are utterly alone, we are singular entities, in transition to and from states of profound
connection with that with in which we are profoundly other. Only in an urge to love is union sought and
only in death is discontinuous being resolved through the continuity of an end that joins every living
beings to the same fate – as with birth – and thus life defines itself between those erotic-centered
pivotal moments. All creatures, including humans, participate in this dance. This conundrum is the erotic
force.

Bataille also identifies the problem in similar terms to those implicit in listening and speaking when he
claims:

“Between one being and another, there is a gulf, a discontinuity. This gulf exists, for instance,
between you, listening to me, and me, speaking to you. We are attempting to communicate but
no communication between us can abolish our fundamental difference. If you die, it is not my
death. You and I are discontinuous beings”. (p. 12)

However, in this discontinuity, there is always the will to connect, to find continuity, which is its
eroticism. This difference is entrenched in communication models where language anticipates meaning
and when that meaning is not achieved, the gulf widens. Sound need not anticipate this human-centric
meaning making. Utterance is suspended between sound and meaning with the possibility of exceeding
language as words toward a universal language in sound.

This is the acoustic implication of the Cowcaphony project – through listening profoundly to the
suffering cattle; to their utterances as the speech of the other; to that which I am not – in these ways, I
listen to / for myself in the perspicacity of being. This dislocation in sound is lodged with the listener
who is called to explore the utterance as sound in its potential to de-codified speech and to avail oneself with the physical and emotional force of utterance as sound with an alien emotive force of its own.

The challenge is to listen for the greatest capacity I possess to hear the other, their dissonance, the sheer force of sound as range and pitch and embodied intent. To listen to the discontinuous until the continuous possibility of self as other emerges.

In this way, I receive and carry the inevitability of these creatures’ death in an act of identification with their utterances that is essentially erotic: bumping up against discontinuous / continuous states of being through another species and language (that of the animal), the tenor of their utterance (as reaching out to another – i.e. love), and through the violence of their looming death. Death is intrinsic to the cow utterances, their physical life circumstances, and the feelings of compassion they elicit in me.

Thus, I enter into the emotive force of their acoustic space as a radicalized listener, receptive to and listening for the unspeakable and unspoken, the alien other. This exchange is heightened through the medium of sound and, as an inveterate listener, I begin to attend to the articulations of the other in their intention and force through which the occurrence and situation of the utterances constitute a soundscape. This is how I arrived at realizing that the exchange with the cows was, in fact, an acoustically erotically charged instant of listener-to-soundscape engagement intrinsically bound to death.

Another aspect of Bataille’s theory of eroticism deals with the role of sacrifice and ritual. Bataille explains that early humans viewed animals as caught in birth and death cycles bound to violence and killing:

> Man wished to transcend these cycles by deeming certain practices involving human to human death as taboo. Sacrifice was a means of sanctifying the taboo through the death of the animal wherein humans both distanced from their animalism, ironically reinforcing it through the ritualized death of animals (p. 83).

In many ways, the commodification and consumption of animals as an industry enacts a taboo ironically mimetic of the industrialization of the human as consumer and thus a commodification of human activity and life itself for which ancient humans were atoning. This industrialization debased ritual and further distances humans from identification with animals as sentient beings. All planetary life is reduced to industrial resource, ritual denuded of identification with the gift of the sacrifice, and
annihilation replaces any need for further considerations. This is a truly North American model of decadence.

As *The Black Cloud Ritual* students create ritual, they enact a series of nested potential rites. Listening to the *Cowcaphony / Love of Dead Meat* composition as they participate and potentiate sacrificial rites that incorporate the sacrifice of animals (cows) to human consumption – which may not be their overt understanding of the composition or its circumstance, but it is the force behind it.

Many of the images in the *Decadence Now!* exhibition have elements of human to human violence, victimization, and dehumanized situations where the viewer becomes one of the partakers of that most sacred taboo against the taking of human life through the act of viewing. This is its decadence force. The students are viewers as well and they themselves become both victim and partaker of the taboo represented in the pornographic images surrounding them. The need to take back the viewing space through ritual is an enactment of an urge to reinstate the taboo, to bring poetics back and acknowledge this aspect of human kind. The sound composition’s force reinstates a dynamic in which animals, their utterances, sublimate for those of the silent victims in the artwork. Thus, an ancient aspect of ritual comes to bear – that of animal sacrifice for human inhumanity. In this macabre dance of veils, Bataille’s discontinuity of being is disrupted and, like the cattle, all beings partake in the dance as continuity and sacrosanctity of life seekers. As Bataille notes: “A violent death disrupts the creature’s discontinuity; what remains, what the tense onlookers experience in the succeeding silence, is the continuity of all existence with which the victim is now one” (p. 27). The student ritual makers and participators are thus reconciled with an untenable exchange between the urge to defy and embrace death that defines eroticism bound to violence.

There is one aspect in which *Cowcaphony* departs from Bataille, however: Bataille feels that this ability to anticipate death is the distinction that defines human-kind, that human beings know of death whereas animals, although they have inner lives, do not and cannot imagine their end (p. 8). The foreshadowing of death is one of the meanings with which I imbue their utterances during our encounter and in the process of recording and composition – that the cattle, in their state of suffering, are living a state of death of which they are in some sense aware. As sentient beings, animals are capable of suffering (as Bataille concurs) and inherent in that suffering is an acute knowledge of death. This intensity of knowing incorporates the inevitability of death. This is my departure from Bataille: as a soundscape composer with the intent of foregrounding this intensity, utterances are crafted into the sound composition in such a way as to augment an expression of death in concordance with Bataille’s
version of eroticism in which the articulations (such as moans and cries) of organism acknowledge and deny the continuance - discontinuance of individuality that rises up when confronting - denying this erotically charged aspect of death.

Bataille’s theory of eroticism explains another facet of the bond between sexual desire, violence and death. It further coheres the act of documentation (recording the cattle) with the final composition (Cowcaphony) specifically in how the cow utterances reinforced the Erotics of Sound project’s educational aim of creating acoustic space through which the unspeakable can be spoken back to. This occurs in the act of composing and in the dance between discontinuous continuous being being enacted by the students through ritual when faced with violent pornographic images. According to Bataille, the Marquis de Sade claimed that, “There is no better way to know death than to link it with some licentious image” (p. 11). In the Decadence Now! Exhibition, the visual impact of portraying aspects of violence and death is at the center of its desire to be excessive.

**Alien recon**

It is also possible to listen for death, suffering, injustice, atrocity. It does not necessarily attend in the cacophonic, in the chaotic of noise, in that which ruptures eardrums or assumptions that all is well.

The point is that listening demands openness to that which is either mundane or excessive. In order to know and experience beyond what is known, the known must embrace the untenable, the thing that is most objectionable, the profoundly dissonant.

In order to do this, a radical reciprocity, a reconfigured listener wherein figuration no longer applies as ground and sky are in flux, in constant play with everything in and between them.

Instead, a listener integral and rapt to the acoustic environment, an inquirer into sound as sound, one for whom a bird sings over the battlefield, for whom euphony delimits cacophony and vice versa – for whom the soundscape is filled with alienation reconciled.

Perhaps this state of being is a becoming that is realized in the becoming and never quite realized substantially. Perhaps the be-coming, an approach, an appropriation, is being realized.
Intra poetica

How we come to know acoustically hangs on a becoming, an approach, an appropriation.

The poem that follows, Winter Solace, also hangs on an a be-coming, the approach of winter, the time when carols are brought to mind, old stories of saints and wanderers around the hearth, a closing in to home. So, too, I winter in the old farmhouse in the village.

But in turning inward, the poem also points to the anticipation of another turn – spring. In such wintering, where the village closes in on itself and inhabitants burrow underneath heavy snow, one lives in anticipation of spring, in the promise of its approach as winter thickens.

This is old knowledge, old silence and old ways in which listening occupies time discretely, in every gust of wind, drift of snowbank, crack of ice, crunch of footstep, rasp of breath, chop of wood, crackle of fire as well as the first signs of ice melting onto a windowsill.

In this time, the act of appropriating time to distinguish states of being. Being in this tenor of time stretches enough to make small everyday acts palpable in the sounds and silence that also appropriate one another.

The poem catches this time of year and also the anticipation of spring – where everything returns to the hurly burly of everyday activities of life and the be-coming, approach, and appropriation of being is subsumed again. Being is likewise subsumed.

So, too, with sounds in the soundscape that become less discrete and distinguishable as contemporary states of being elide other states.
Winter solace

The land beckons with fingers
crusted with winter coming,

snow deep and crisp and even,
brightly shines the moon at night
though the frost is cruel, when
a poor man comes in sight,
gathering winter fuel,

Home home – close the shutters,
seal the cracks, burn twigs and cones,
coax coal cinders to smoulder
in the bellies of old communist stoves.

In the cottage behind the village
it’s toasty. Outside, rain turns to ice,
pelts the clay roof, prattle before
the crypt of mid winter –

when you will dismantle the farm house,
burn the centuries’ girders and beams,
save nothing but the fire’s warmth,
the memory of it.

When the thaw arrives, ask not what will be when
frost no longer nips your joints and
dampens your solitude and your bed
alone fills with mould.

By then, you’ll have your ticket to fly,
petty migrant, song less bird.
The second major study, Prague, where sights dazzle and sounds intrigue, where history is palpable, and a day walking and listening is a day never forgotten. Where the turn is everything and words cannot do justice, whereas listening and the passion of being-here! impels the artist to two significant soundscape compositions.

Here, keep your eyes in your ears and let knowing / not knowing the environs pull you through time into a profound sense of being-there with me.

Place is where you are listening.
Notional: Time-space in sound

*I hear time inside time, places inside places.*

Appropriation as presence arrived as a gift, a sending forward and holding back that, according to Heidegger, differs from past notions of the present, from linear time and Being as an occurrence (event) of a now time. Instead, Heidegger summarizes that in thinking “Being itself and follow[ing] what is its own, Being proves to be destiny’s gift of presence, the gift granted by the giving of time” (1972, p. 22).

Heidegger is pointing to the question of the horizon of time and how Being manifests in time. He is not, in this last lecture, explaining the role of the human, as such, but rather the relationality of Being and time in being-ness. This relation he calls an *Appropriation*, tossing aside the language of an *event of Appropriation*, which is problematic in that it brings notions of sequential time back into the picture (20). For this reason, calling sound an *event* or an *occurrence* is not appropriate for this reframing of a phenomenology of sound. Heidegger further explains this dynamic thus:

A giving which gives only its gift, but in the giving holds itself back and withdraws, such a giving we call sending. According to the meaning of giving which is to be thought this way, Being – that which it gives – is what is sent. Each of its transformations remains destined in this manner. What is historical in the history of Being is determined by what is sent forth in destining, not by an indeterminably thought up occurrence (p. 8-9).

The listener may think of sound as an event or occurrence as part of their conceptualization of sound based in quantitative ways of knowing, visual-based ways of perceiving, the age-old predominance of the measure, but sound exceeds these limitations, as sound is constantly in flux and dynamic. It has a trajectory, but is non-sequential, remaining consistently mutable as it reaches and extends through myriad encounters with other matter and forces. These encounters can be understood as nested, each retaining and sending forth of themselves one within another.

When sound reaches the listener, the listener as a center point perceives themselves as the apex of the sound. They then concern (following the etymology of con-cern as to sift and to perceive) themselves within the sounds’ directionality, quality (tone, pitch, loudness), possible locator meanings and other such requisite information. The listener does not generally consider that they are one of myriad acoustic encounters that determine the listening field, the soundscape. For the listener, the sound approaches, arrives and moves on in relationship to themselves and along a pathway imbedded in a past, present,
and future. There is the direction of approach that is of interest, the moment perceived as an occurrence of arrival and as the fulcrum, and when it moves on, its passing is soon relegated to the past and elsewhere. However, the listener as a being – habituated to concepts or not – is defined in time-space by the encounter.

In this way, sound can be thought aptly within Heidegger’s experimental rethink of Being as time, time as Being, appropriated reciprocally. To consider this, in concert with Heidegger, the question arises as to “what is peculiar to Appropriation” (p. 22) and, in concert with this thinking of sound, what is peculiar to sound as the listener experiences it as a being in time. Heidegger, in one turn, says that “the sending in the destiny of Being has been characterized as giving in which the sending source keeps itself back and, thus, withdraws from concealment” (p. 25). This withdrawing from concealment, the opening of sound in its way of being sound, is an important consideration in understanding the potential for sound-to-listener encounters as time appropriated by Being.

As sound emanates from its source, it gives of itself to each thing it encounters in that it changes with each encounter and the encounter changes the thing, itself. The changes may be in force fields or cause changes in chemistry or may change perceptions and movements, but the sound gifts itself to what it encounters as it loses part of its duration in the encounter and also is changed, amplified, augmented or denuded in some way. This is how the sending source both retains what is quintessential to sound, what it is in how it interacts with its environment, and how it also withdraws from concealment as it emanates outward. Sound opens itself to what it is in each exchange it encounters as it travels. The exchange extends sound in time as it reaches out throughout its trajectory and diversions and sub-trajectories.

This constitutes a possible rethinking of how sound exists in time, as interrelations between things and forces toward a complexity of time-space as perceived by beings. Each encounter gifts presence in the way sound lets itself be known as sound – through openings that hold the potential to reveal the nature of what sound is and what it encounters within the acoustic field, the soundscape – locations, substance, movements, for example – profoundly interrelated.

This is how sound withdraws from concealment, by making itself and what it encounters known through reciprocity. These presences are what Being appropriates of time and time appropriates of Being – a relationship of extending and revealing that the listener can, if sensitized, apprehend in listening to sounds in concert with themselves as part of the soundscape.
How is time nested in time, place in place? Heidegger points to this contradistinction from habituated ways of experiencing time as linear or sequential. As he explains:

In true time and its time-space, the giving of what has been, that is, of what is no longer present, the denial of the present manifested itself. In the giving of the future, that is, of what is not yet present, the withholding of the present manifested itself. Denial and withholding exhibit the same trait as self-withholding in sending: namely, self-withdrawal. (p. 22)

The listener attends to a sound approaching, perhaps a car far off on the Canadian prairie or a train as it approaches and crosses a trestle bridge in Prague or a motorcycle that drives up, revs its engine and roars away from the ancient stone portal, the cobbled royal road, into an ancestral site (Branik gate), Vyšehrad. Each is moving within time-space. The where of where it is coming from or going is important for the time in which it shapes the soundscape and brings associations to the listener (although this need to locate in space is more acute when the listener is listening through headphones and not watching the scene unfold). Listeners, habituated to thinking movement as linear in time-space, delight in this phenomenon.

Heidegger further explains that

True time is the nearness of presencing out of present, past and future – the nearness that unifies time’s threefold opening extending. It has already reached man as such and so that he can be man only by standing within the threefold extending, perduring the denying, and withholding nearness which determines that extending. (p. 16)

What takes presence is how the listener is caught in the continual exchange of what is approaching and what is passing as it approaches repeatedly and passes repeatedly throughout the movement. In this way, sound constantly denies the present manifest in the future of continual approach and the past of continual passing. This, too, is a constant sound-withholding-opening that most listeners finds intriguing, that brings presence to the fore as the being-self must withdraw in order to embrace the fluidity and vivification of the present as presence. In this embrace, Being-as-listening becomes acute.

The approach and withdrawal are what gives the impression of the where-ness of time and time-space. In Heidegger’s approach, “the realm of its threefold extending determined by the nearing nearness is the prespatial region which first gives any possible ‘where,’” (p. 16) and it does so only in relation to man, without whom there would be no time.
This, too, explains the experience of sound as shaping the soundscape from the perspective of the listener, that the listener experiences themselves as manifest in Heidegger’s fourfold time that is and yet exceeds the past, present, future into the opening of presence, wherein there manifests an absence that is also a mode of presence. Consider Heidegger’s description of absence as

what has-been which, by refusing the present, lets that become present which is no longer present; and the coming toward us of what is to come which, by withholding the coming toward us of what is to come which, by withholding the present, lets that be present which is not yet present. (p. 17)

This withholding the present, [which] lets that be present which is not present also opens the space for vivid memories and associations that often accompany listening to a soundscape composition or high-fidelity recordings of sounds through media.

In relation to the quote, first, it is apt to consider the manner of listening, whether live or mediated, where sound is traveling and in that movement defines itself, but until that moment, it is in a different defining moment in space that has a trajectory, but from the perspective of the listener, remains momentarily undefined, ambiguous, radical and on the edge of becoming. Unlike linear conceptions of sound as movement through time, acoustic time and time-space are continually hovering before falling into convergence. That is why one is called to listen deeply, acutely, with all the body and perceptive abilities – and most of all without anticipation – to catch this refined aspect of how sound shapes the soundscape and how being is shaped inside of it. So much presence depends on one’s listening acumen.

This is also how silence, a mode of absence in relationship to sound, opens and extends sounds as receptacles of time, time-space and Being. Not at all a true absence, silence is nevertheless a self-withdrawal of sound that brings whatever sounds present more acutely into the presence of beings. In silence, the listener becomes aware of themselves in their sound-making bodies, in the space they are inhabiting, in the nearing nearness of things close and far, distance approaching, in the minutia of the approach and withdrawal, and in the presence of time, which is better articulated and, in that sense, proffers a unity, a sense of duration, that speaks of lasting, of certainty, of timelessness. As Heidegger states, “Presence means: the constant abiding that approaches man, reaches him, is extended to him” (p. 12), which is man, the listener’s, primary concern. So too, the listener abides in silence, in the refined sense of absence of what is in the nearness approaching.
As Heidegger muses, however, even this abiding must not be taken for granted for “not every presencing is necessarily the present. A curious matter” (p. 13). The curiousness of this holds the listener transfixed in a presence unique to sound.
Prague: Listening intercession

Prague’s old world acoustic terrain billows as spectral mystics and madmen, spies and lovers mingle with women bustling into the baker in the morning and, again, to the butcher mid-morning replete with doors cracking open and falling shut, with greetings Dobrý den or leaving Na shledanou of a thousand years spoken. At the noonday peal, workmen lumber toward a lunch counter to slurp midday soup with their meat, potatoes and beer. Mothers tussle their children to or from school, new mother’s air out their babies in prams, old men sun on a bench – time past and ongoing with every day’s goings on. As the present hurries on its way, shadows steal through the cobbled streets and down narrow lanes between convents, palaces, arcades and houses. Things fold into each other and machinate in one’s bones.

Like all grand old cities, sounds nest the past in the present. These acoustic byways are discrete and distinct. One of the world’s great cities, Prague covets discretion and distinction – the two being inextricable in places built up over periods of alternating benevolent and tyrannical power brokering. This dynamic defines Prague. The city grasps at encounters broken into undertones.

Even the five hundred bells that ring out and crisscross the hand-hewn stones of its parapets and facades – and rebound between the cobbles underfoot and red-clay roof-tiles overhead – continue to shape themselves around intrigue. Intrigue in its many forms – mystery, fascination, espionage, and tryst – reverberate like endless rounds of change-ringing, peals struck hourly conceding only to stone and time.

Along the river banks, whispers of people and things align with the cries of gulls to skim the watery surface. Over a hundred or so summer days, steam paddle boats churn voices and music into festive bursts. In the night, lovers curl wordlessly into each other, while the crackle of youth cuts the tender air. Along the hewn promenade, pedestrians pause underneath one of the seven bridges to catch the ambience of enclosure where stone, concrete or steel looms overhead and, in an acoustic enclave, you can always snag some conversation’s drift.

It’s as though the stunning visual surround, eliciting the gasps and silence of awe, demands an acoustic reserve. The hills and river and inhabitants raise a collective finger to their lips and declare sssshhhhhush to today’s boisterous penchant for novelty, traffic and tourists.
This reticence conjures the oppressive silence of communism, the sounds of a covert exchange of goods, the rustle of samizdat, dissident writing, crumpling from one inconspicuous bag to another. The midnight knock. Scuffles across cobbles. Lips pressed tight into each other and someone else’s ear. Hands brush and then flick away. Something always unspoken.

Everything comes and goes, comes and goes, the articulations of regimes, lovers, drunkards, housewives, artists, students, tourists, boats and trains that score Prague in its tacit thoroughfares. Its bridges speak intercession.

**Prague: Cloist(a)ral and Walking Sound.**

My infatuation with Prague and its ambiance is unabashed. Over the decade plus years that I’ve visited and lived there, I’ve walked the city listening daily – what else is an exile to do but commit to silence in the midst of goings-on peripherally mine. I know enough of the language to get by. I listen intensely for inklings of myself in other, other in myself. Prague offers, as a place and culture of listening, moments of singular grace.

Soundwalking, in Prague, is tricky. The architecture and visas are stunning and eyes reel at every turn. The lifestyle is intensely social, café and pub culture, so everyone likes talking. Exactly for these reasons, Prague is a perfect place to cultivate a practice of listening beyond and inside of this dazzle. Once the ear is given precedence, an equally impressive aural experience opens a rich soundscape – ornate, historical, and diverse for what it is now in its contemporary international urban guise – precisely because it courts differentiation and nuance in its spaces and how they are inhabited.

During 2009 to 2011, I designed and led soundwalk projects in Prague. Some were impromptu with colleagues and students, some were public events, and some became sound compositions for radio. Two are notable in how they evolved from one to the next and how the second evolved compositionally:

*Cloist(a)ral* is an early solo soundwalking composition. At first, I did not call it a soundscape composition, although it became one as well, but in this work I wanted to investigate how to document a soundwalk and then record it – not in real time, but as a journey into listening where the route and physical tracing of that route acoustically are recessed to a process of recording along the route before and after the soundwalk in order to gather documentation – and ultimately material for a composition.
This is a radical in-between: designing and implementing a lived (not recorded) soundwalk, documenting the process of investigating acoustic features along a route (writing, recording), and recording along the soundwalk route with the intention of a later soundscape composition based on the soundwalk. Perhaps a different moniker is warranted: soundwalk-soundscape composition. This practice emerged with Cloist(au)ral, a project based on soundwalking with several aims: the initiating of Prague students and colleagues into the activity of soundwalking and the crafting of a soundwalk – soundscape composition, and to investigate how, if at all, listening for the past intersects with the present. All aims were artistic, as a means of undertaking and sharing an acoustic-based artistic practice.

Toward this third aim of listening through to the past, I became fascinated by the area, Malá Strana (Lesser Town or Little Quarter), under the Charles Bridge, which I traversed several times a week on the way to one of the universities where I taught. A touristic area, it has a rich history as an early Templar enclave and the oldest continuous brotherhood, in Central Europe, the Order of St. John of Jerusalem who, since founding a monastery there in 1158, retains an original Renaissance chapel wall. What is fascinating to me is that the bridge, tower, monasteries and palaces that date back to the 12th century have been in continuous use. In this way, the area retains traces of an ancient past through to present day in an intact street and buildings layout.

I was seeking those traces acoustically, asking how contemporary use of space converges and diverges with the past in places where street design remains intact with architecture ranging from Medieval through Renaissance eras yet incorporates aspects of the present day. I was curious about time nesting in time – space, in the constant abiding of citizenry, and whether this was apparent in the soundscape. I wanted to know how the mix of places of solitude known mostly to Praguers – those of quiet sequester such as convent gardens and monastery courtyards – retain the ethos of the past and provided sanctuary for locals when juxtaposed with the jostling of tourists in ways reminiscent of ancient streets filled with pilgrims, merchants, finances and power-broking. Malá Strana (Little Town) lies under Hradčany, (the Prague Castle complex and continuous seat of the President) where the merchant and everyday proximity to power and wealth remains as it did over the long period of Templar bustle, which centered on business, money-lending and power. In this spirit, I later recorded events along the route attending to acoustic features where this layering of acoustic space, contemporary and ancient, remains activated through the configuration of buildings and streets, as well as in ongoing activities, such as commerce or cloister.
The second soundwalk and composition, *Walking Sound*, began as a public soundwalk with interventions by artists and musicians arranged for a European Broadcasting Union (EBU) avant-garde producers gathering. The subsequent soundscape composition was recorded before, in investigation of the route and possible acoustic features, and after, as a revisit to certain places along the route. It is not a real-time recording or an attempt to reconstruct, as such, the route of the soundwalk. Rather, it is a composition that emerged from the experience of engaging profoundly with a soundscape several months and is an expression of that deep listening practice as an investigation of place over time.

*Walking Sound* is a pinnacle piece in that it seamlessly incorporates soundwalking with performance with diverse and innovative recording techniques and is a departure in terms of thinking of soundwalking as soundscape composition. The composition, unlike the soundwalk, follows an approximation of the route according to a day and thus begins with silence and distance sounds of predawn, the beginning of the day, the bustle of day proper, into the approach of dusk as a ferryboat on the Vltava river docks and a slow accordion refrain and waves against the side of the boat, like a lullaby, signal the end of the day. Recordings were made through the day of acoustic events encountered along the soundwalking route. It is a more spacious and evolved piece in the confidence evident in its use of nuanced sound.

For this reason, while there follows a discussion of the Cloist(au)ral project as a starting point in soundwalk-soundscape composition, it serves as a counterpoint to the aims and implications of the *Walking Sound* project.
Listening salon G: Cloist(au)ral\textsuperscript{17}

Listen to Cloistaural (20:00)  
For an optimal listening experience, listen in a quiet room with high quality headphones or speakers. Condensed to 4800 mp3, originally 9800 Hz, M-audio Microtrack II, Stereo T Microphone and Sonic Studios custom binaural microphone  
Audio link: http://circle.ubc.ca/handle/2429/50784

\textsuperscript{17} In this excerpt from Cloist(au)ral, so called "ambient sound" is given equal weight as the musical instrumentation or spoken word, although those elements work to bridge expectations of listening with the sounds themselves and open the listening field to shift one's listening biases.

This reconstituted soundwalk, Cloist(au)ral, takes the notion of attentive listening back to the cloister, a place of sequester listening attached to silence and not speaking, such as is the protocol in soundwalking – to not talk and sequester listening.

Movement through linear time-space is grafted on to the cello's bow moving across its strings onto an anticipated musical structure although the musician is improvising in response to the sounds encounter while the energetic flow is underscored in the body through resonation and the equal weight given to the sounds, themselves. Sarah Atkinson's cello improvisations serve to cue the ear to this reconfiguration.

Over several months, the same areas in Malá Strana 's Templar environs were recorded on different days at different times of day. A route as determined was followed, however, sound events determined places of intense layering with the audio clips.

In this way, the piece works vertically in so-called time-space, rather in a nesting of time and place in Heidegger’s Appropriation of Time as Being. What emerges are moments of sequestered listening, a contemporary cloistral experience, a concentration and meditation that retunes the body and conflates inner and outer realms, an ear-ly retreat.
**Cloistaural: Sequestered listening**

What can listening tell us about the histories, daily activities, imaginaries and proprieties, proximities and registers (loudness, frequency, dominance, distant, soft, habitual) of an area such as Malá Strana’s *under the Chain*, with its distinct history manifest in configurations of neighbourhoods and daily activities. Is an acoustic social history possible to apprehend in contemporary acoustic configurations? If so, how does it manifest?

The composition entitled *Cloist(au)ral* (Dancer, 2011a) was broadcast on Czech state radio, Radio Vltava’s avant garde R(a)dio(custica) program, affiliated with the European Broadcasting Union’s experimental music group, Ars Acoustica.\(^\text{18}\) R(a)dio(custica) is the brainchild of Michal Rataj, an experimental composer and Professor at HAMU (Hudební a taneční fakulta, the state music and dance faculty). I approached him in 2010 as one of a few people I’d encountered in Czech Republic who actually produces a radio art program and knows about and includes soundscape studies in curriculum. Despite Czech proximity to England, Germany and Vienna where considerable awareness and practice exists, soundscape studies and soundscape composition is an emergent area of knowledge and arts.

It is relatively unknown as a radio genre. The significance that the Czech Republic’s canon of classical and modern musical traditions maintains makes sense in a country and culture that fought multiple bouts of oppression to reclaim its arts. Classics in music, art, and literature hold fast and remain well-known in the radio listening populous. State radio is deeply invested in forms of program production and content that showcase its national heritage and identity— even the radio documentary-feature with its multiple forms including field recordings remains peripheral to Czech radio sensibilities. This is not to say Czech radio isn’t compelling and excellent — it is. Czech pragmatism demands that when something is done so incredibly well (and is listened to by a majority of the population), why change it?

The commission for this work came from an interest by Michal Rataj in soundwalking. Soundwalking, as an extraordinary activity, seems redundant in a country where everyone walks in a countryside pastoral emblemised by the Czech composer Bedřich Smetana’s iconic symphony *Má vlast* (*My Country*) – which so powerfully underscores the actual soundscape and is accompanied by a potent romantic notion of the lone poet (such as Karel Hynek Mácha (1810-1836), the author of the poem Máj), writer, composer,

\(^{18}\) In the case of both Cloist(au)ral and Walking Sound, artists retained copyright.
everyday person or hunter traversing the forests and knolls of Bohemia. Czech countryside is deeply storied, as are its towns and old cities, such as Prague.

However, the contemporary situation as I experienced it is that most Czechs are with friends and family when walking in a leisurely manner, and when Czech’s are together they are usually engaging in conversation. This is an acoustic cultural distinction I’ve observed. On the west coast of Canada, we do speak to one another but don’t generally engage in conversation while walking – we are jogging or we hike. Just as Czech forests are full of songbirds chittering away, this stands in contrast to the silence of Canada’s west coast forests known for their dense silence punctured only by periodic caustic raven calls. In advocating among Czechs for soundwalking, it became clear to me that the idea of walking together as a group for an extended period of time and not talking seems antithetical to social walking culture. One of the aims of Cloist(a)ural as a project was to introduce Czech artists and composers to the idea of soundwalking as a lived artistic practice. Despite several different occasions of organising soundwalks, what occurred among Czechs defied convention – in true Czech spirit.

And so Cloist(a)ural began in a misadventure in casual soundwalking among friends. This winter’s day was bitter, well below zero temperatures (around minus fifteen), with a nasty snowstorm winding up. No one else would have ventured out, but steadfast friends and those fascinated by the idea of soundwalking. I laid out protocols and instructions for soundwalking: I’m the guide so follow me. Listen for places of silence. Don’t lose sight of the person in front of you. No talking. Then we set out on the route I’d been exploring in advance for several weeks, myself setting the pace and listening intensively, keeping my eyes on the ground ahead rather than the stunning Prague vistas — as is my particular strategy for focusing on sound.

The first place of quietude we encountered was the inner courtyard of an old monastery complex, Vojanovy sady. There, the peacocks huddled against blasts of icy wind and everything was crystal quiet. From where we’d emerged, the trams and traffic behind the thick stone wall enclosure and the voices of passersby, fell away like time. The water in the fountain was slowing and slurring as it turned into ice. The snow wafting down bundled the quietude even more tightly. No one was in the garden in such weather. No windows from the back of the monastery building were open, no voices floating in a breeze as was usual in this space during the day. The only sound was ours, as our footsteps squeaked and cracked in new snow over old. Bent against increasing torrents, I ventured on determined to show my companions the wonders of soundwalking.
When I stopped mid-way into the monastery grounds, I realized I couldn’t hear the crunching squeaking footsteps behind me anymore. Then I caught sight of Michal in my peripheral vision wandering off in another direction, losing himself to the white cascades engulfing him. Jan and Helena were standing in different spots transfixed like ice sculptures by their earnest listening while softened and swept into gusts of swirling snow. I gestured to them and continued on my quest. Now, at the far edge of the garden, I looked back. The two were heading in opposite directions with the other calling after them. All three of my protégé were disappearing, waning into whiteness. I started back toward them to repeat the dictum – *I set the pace, stay with the group, no talking.* By the time I reached them, they were huddled in animated conversation, one statue of three bodies obscured by now heavy snowfall yet beacons of laughter and exclamation. They had so much to tell each other about this listening in sub-zero temperatures and falling snow.

As we progressed, it was like trying to herd cats — everyone wanted to go off on their own listening adventures and then talk about them when they returned to the group. At one point, I went into an alcove to make some interesting sounds with found objects and called out for them to join me, breaking with my own no talking soundwalking protocol, but Helena and Jan thought I wanted to be alone, so they stood off in the distance listening for silence. They were dedicated, if somewhat miffed, by this unknown practice – and Michal, who had the flu, went home to drink grog (vanilla rum, lemon, hot water) after the first freezing thirty minutes. Who could blame him?

Eventually, in public soundwalks, adherence improved, but there was always one or two participants who went their own way with it. Such is the Czech spirit of independence.

In these early days of trying to create a soundwalking community, I continued to explore Malá Strana alone with an ear toward creating a composition that would bring the practice to a wider, although specialized, audience as well as those I was trying to entice.

And that’s how the idea of this artistic compositional practice came about – a hybrid soundwalk-soundscape composition with the aim of bringing the listening experience of soundwalking. Not just the route or documentation or real-time recording as means focused on the real-time soundwalk, but a means of bringing the *experience* of listening without attendant visual cues and across time and space to an uninitiated audience through a listener-based medium (such as radio). In this way, the resultant composition would privileged sound itself and embraced decontextualized sound as a listening-learning experience.
In this early instance, a distinction is made between a soundscape composition and soundwalk composition — one I continued to formulate in my time in Prague and as the work progressed.

Could I create a sound composition in which linear time and space with its expectation of sense-making dropped into the background and became less a consideration? In which Being as Appropriation, as a be-coming-in-listening, is experienced as predominantly acoustically?

Sound and silence are not linear mediums, but happen in tandem and are everywhere all at once. They are occasions of convergence. What if the structure of the composition has the specific intent of deepening listening in a way mimetic of extended walking–listening-not-talking that is soundwalking and invites the acoustic perceptional shifts that happen in a fully engaged state of listening?

Could I share this acoustic epiphany with my Czech companions and others yet to be initiated?
Becoming is never imitating. When Hitchcock does birds, he does not reproduce bird calls, he produces an electronic sound like a field of intensities or a wave of vibrations, a continuous variation, like a terrible threat welling up inside us...the tarantella is a strange dance that magically cures or exorcises the supposed victims of a tarantula bite. But when the victim does this dance, can he or she be said to be imitating the spider, to be identifying with it, even in an identification through an ‘archetypal’ or ‘agonistic’ struggle? No, because the victim, the patient, the person who is sick, becomes a dancing spider only to the extent that the spider itself is supposed to become a pure silhouette, pure color and pure sound to which the person dances. One does not imitate; one constitutes a block of becoming. Imitation enters in only as an adjustment of the block, like a finishing touch, a wink, a signature. But everything of importance happens elsewhere in the becoming-si Spider of the dance, which occurs on the condition that the spider itself become the sound and color, orchestrate and painting.

(Deleuze/Guattari, 1992, p. 305)

Listening, the dancer moves and through the sounds of the spider moving, becomes pure sound. Becoming pure sound becomes the spider in the dancer. Thus, one becomes the other through the sound.

If you listen to birds and cicada in a soundscape recording, you do not hear an imitation of a face to face (ear to ear) encounter, you become the bird or cicada approach, one appropriating the other as taking it as one’s own. In this way, decontextualization becomes deterritorialization, that which gifts the becoming-bird, becoming-cicada, that music reaches for and soundscape composition realises.
A-historical phonia

Is it possible to re-experience ancient soundscapes? A sound is heard and then it passes away. There are histories of sound, descriptions of sounds in texts, recordings of streets in old films, but these are even more remote to the contemporary ear. As Murray Schafer illustrated, one can imagine and categorise the soundscape in literature or in a Pieter Bruegel the Elder (1525 –1569) painting (1993, p. 45-52) but how do we experience the soundscape when thus mediated? That remains elusive.

If the original design and buildings of an area are intact, parts of its history residing in topography, architecture and inhabitation, is it possible that aspects of the soundscape itself, as acoustic occurrences are kept in circulation? What about for local Praguers, whose generations inhabit these places, for those listening without knowledge of Prague?

In a more distant past, at the end of the 11th century onward, Malá Strana was an important hub of Prague. It was the place where the Grand Priory of Bohemia was formed as part of the Order of St. John of Jerusalem (1099), known later as the Maltese Knights and also, generically, the Templars. In the 12th century, King Vladislav II presented the Church of Our Lady Beneath the Chain to the Knights as axial to their fortified monastery. The building is the oldest church in Malá Strana and its two towers are the remaining parts of the original priory — the nave now a courtyard. The Knights, along with acting as pilgrim hostellers, also monitored traffic across the old Judith Bridge, precursor of the Charles Bridge, specifically on the left (north) riverbank, the approach to the castle complex. Being under the chain refers to either the chain across the fortified entrance to the area or to the chain that supposedly surrounded the priory neighbourhood or to a chain that stretched from one river bank to the other. This had strategic military reasons, but it also marked class and economic divisions between the ordinary citizen, pilgrims and the ruling elite. The power and wealth of the Knights came about through acquisition of lands, but more interestingly through their practice of taking pilgrim’s valuables, giving letters of credit, and then returning the same or in kind to travellers when they reached their destination or returned from the open roads. This set up a widespread banking system across Europe into Jerusalem — a rather hefty chain, indeed. Just as the chain across the river secured passage, it also secured a toll, just as passage on the road was secured, so was usury. In the shops, restaurants and tourist venues that now predominate the area, credit card signs adorn every entryway.

So it is that I can envision Malá Strana and Kampa Island, the route of the soundwalk composition, in the same general configuration of buildings and geography as bustling with foreigners, commerce and
multiple service industries eight hundred years ago. In the midst of this hullabaloo, the church ruled over monarchs and the penultimate expression of the ideals were the inner sanctums, the utmost privileged spaces — the cloisters. In contemporary listening culture, there are few physical cloistral spaces. In listening terms, there are wilderness places, quiet places, secluded places and inner spaces, but the intent of cloistral space is perhaps not available to contemporary sensibilities. The idea of religious cloister as a withdrawal from everyday abasement and toward union with the sacred is not in circulation today as it was then. Or is the idea of cloister still in circulation detectable not as a division between banal and sacred spaces but as the acoustic experience of passage from noisy urban space, filled with travelers, foreign tongues, bustling markets catering to wayfarers into those places set aside as localities, places for city residents to encounter familiarity, away from the transience of money interests, tourism, foreign interests?

Places where custom, speech, culture can cloister for the purposes of those who live intimately in tourist destinations, who call these citadels home and move between stone walls and cobbles they know as their own. This eating establishment, that relic, those gathering places, those privilege places, that quiet forgotten space under the bridge at night. The cloister garden that had limited access in the past — gender specific, class specific, religiously rigorous — now holds the past in the knowledge of local inhabitants, the garden whose gate is concealed to the foreigner. The cloister garden which arrives early in this composition is simply a wooden door in a high stone wall that, without knowledge, one would bypass. Inside, peacocks, parents with children, old women gathering and a different sense of rhythm and time passing.

Inhabitant can envision these historied places walking through them just as the soundwalker contextualises sounds as one encounters them. But what of sounds recorded and decontextualized. What then of the listener’s experience?

Can the acoustic space carry some of those intents forward into the present in the acoustic dynamics of the space itself, such as the muffled sounds outside of the cloister walls versus the street sounds?
Intra poetica

I am fascinated by the idea of how the long-time past arrives in the present.

One circumstance of this is in the ancient remains found in peat bogs across Northern Europe (dating from Celtic and earlier times), in the way matter that would usually disintegrate remains intact on the bodies so that details of their personhood are preserved: nails that are groomed or chipped, skin showing vast networks of wrinkles or smoothed, hair braided, gelled, wound up in a bun, the death expressions on their faces as agonistic or at peace, clothing wrapped around them and intact, wooden implements and ornamentation as they had worn them in their moment of death, a testament to that death, the circumstances, the stance upon meeting death – that, in the case of bog people, were most often violent, either murder or sacrifice.

When staring into the visage of a bog person, eons of time slip away and connections are made with the expressivity of these remains and myself, a contemporary onlooker. However, it does not feel as though the mirror is one sided.

What pervades, however, is an immense sense of silence, of the silence of being underground for eons. In the poem, Bog People, the speaker of the poem stands on both sides of this mirror.

I am not sure how the past is enacted in sound, even when artifacts from the past enter and enact the present. Contrarily, I do feel the past to be present in silence and I’m not sure why.
Bog people

Some days how I long for my plot,  
where the peat downs the bog, left  
to this day become ancient,  
to relic silence.

Peat land taxa, relict fauna, relict insects  
hum through this mute dereliction;  
I am sludge re-sounding  
the human din.

This body craves soil like water:  
water-sucking hummus, skinning tan  
to hide, organs stretch dry, bones petrify,  
and like that, my desire nought and tough.

What was it that disbanded  
to deposit me here where fuel is cut  
from the earth with knives? What remains  
of my betrayal, the sacrifice?

I exhale my lives into the ground,  
the masters’ song sung in a round –  
circumstance calliopes past.

Child or woman or man or not, I am  
the unknown interned, carrion of  
the origin of the origin of a time  
of speculation – whatever my matter.
Walking Sound: Gardens to trains to swans

Time has passed, two almost three years, but I return to the same route. I am a different person. I’m discovering that return is sweet. I savor the way of the retrace. I’m in it more than once, I’m in multiple presences: each one the many times I walked this route in the fall of 2011 knowing I was leaving Prague and uncertain when I would return. Actually, I was certain I’d return soon, the next year or so, but I didn’t know how life would test me back in my homeland, how I’d morphed into something more of that other place than the one I called home. I’d lost the sense of where my feet were planted, if feet can ever root. If my feet can ever root.

Now, I am in Prague again realizing, in walking that soundwalk route, that I felt vividly alive here, alive in my mind and heart and senses and community, so I must still possess the possibility to live intensely that I thought I’d lost – if I can remember it and feel it again in this moment. The life I returned to in Vancouver, the one I had left for good reason, the life I thought I was returning to as a different person – and I am a different person – that ghost life had been living, too. As a child, I grew up in Europe and, really, I am more acculturated to European society, although I’m a hybrid as well. I realized, standing there on the edge of the ravine, that I’d missed the listening environment of Prague, that in modern cities in North America, I’d found the soundscape I was habituated to simply dull, un-histroided, architecturally and acoustically flat – so it seemed to me now. As a result, I’d done little artistic work there. This is the conundrum of the ex-pat – always longing for a homeland other.

I’m standing at the edge feeling the wind blow through me again. I am in the teaching hospital zone on the ridge above a ravine that plunges down to a road that goes nowhere. The slopes of the raven have staircases and orchards and a terraced garden that I will move toward and eventually descend.

I remember us all, about twenty or so, standing with our arms outspread to catch the wind, the constant wind, that blew us open, that whipped coats and wailed past ears and caused eyes to tear. It blew what we’d been carrying, life dross, away in gusts. We were ready to start listening differently.

I’m walking past the wrought iron fence that fronts one of the 18th century brick buildings. The wind, diminished now by a few buildings at the top of the ravine, but channeled between them and through buildings that line one side of the road, strums the iron as though it was catgut and, with an ear held close, I can hear vibration, non-music, dissonance from that other world that forms and encompasses us. Aeolian harp. The harmonious discordant chorus of the universal hum.
I approach remembering the group approach the concrete air outflow from the metro below. It is an anomaly that marks the super highway to the communist era monstrosity of modernism, the Congressova conference center, which dominates a hilltop in the distance. But, myself in the now and myself as part of that group of soundwalkers in the past, we are standing in front of a sunken wheel with concrete spokes where forced wind from below surfaces. Each of segment of that strange aperture had contact microphones on the inside and speakers strategically placed to emphasize the rumbling below and bring it into concert with the pounding of traffic on the overpass. Some of us climbed down into the recess to stand in between two of these Faustian wings, where I again feel pressed at a crossroads of hissing and straining monsters on one side and the thunderous approach of Satan's highway barrage on the other. It is only then, a statue among statues, that I noticed a policeman, outside of the police museum in the old monastery grounds adjacent, watching this strangely loitering group. There is reprieve to move.

I follow the wall that rims the ravine onto a small path behind the buildings, a path for locals, past orchards and vineyards that cling to the edge between the wall and the lip of the cliff. The path is descending rapidly. I walk again into the little terraced park and between the terraces, remember a man on a bench playing a mouth harp as we, the group, passed through on our soundwalk. I pause at the bottom stair of the path remembering the group transfixed by a woman’s voice in beautiful song drifting impromptu from the window of a house that fronted the path onto the street. You simply cannot repeat such moments, such gifts sent to bring presence to being ardently. I expect to hear it again, I almost do hear it again – in my memory and in the nearness of the now, the refrain remains imminent.

Now, I am in the tunnel underpass where people walk and bike from one side of the railway tracks to the other. Above our heads, the tracks are bare steel and wood and I stand waiting for a train. This was a tricky part of the soundwalk as we had to stand as a group silently, the group guessing why, waiting while pedestrians and bicycles swerved around us. Some wandered away, but then suddenly the thunder exploded overhead scored by the familiar rhythm of a train passing over tracks, the hiss and screech of steel on steel. Just as suddenly, it was over and gone, rumbling around a curve in the line and away. My heart bounding, I am filled again with child-like glee.

Now, I start the climb up the cobbled hill with another train roar ricocheting off of the stone of the rise, walking up the steep inclines and along huge stone ramparts where a trifling hum of traffic from the streets below bounce back into the winding streets toward the Cihelná brána (Brick gate), voices and feet and the memory of voices and feet riding intermittently the same different breeze along the walled
street. I hear, in my mind’s ear, the little girl singing a nonsense rhyme about a duck (kachna) – I hear it as it is in the soundscape composition, as I listened to it hundreds of times after that first instance of recording it, as I edited and played with where it ended up in the composition. Today, memories inside memories, time inside of time, hovering between then and now. I enter the gate, with its vaulted ceilings, an Empire-style portal built in 1841, remembering how the group lingered as a cellist improvised to the sound of the wind funneling through, the clatter of shoes on cobbles, the chatter of conversations, whatever was in the acoustic realm. I had worked with Sarah Atkinson, a musician friend from Toronto now living in Budapest, on previous occasions so she was able to play with sound rather than lapse into musical riffs. I remember how I’ve missed those type of collaborations.

Now, I am in the ancient stronghold, Vyšehrad, original castle complex and seat of the founding kings of Bohemia, the Přemyslid dynasty (9th century to 1306), and place where the mythical matriarch of the Přemyslids, Libuše, prophesized the establishment of Prague. As I walk up the cobbled lane to the bastion that overlooks the ravine and streets I’ve just trekked far over the red clay roofs to distant bridges, spires and towers. The Vltava River wends along the other side of the bastion wall, where the train trestle bridge crosses and runs past far below where I am standing. From this place and moving along the bastion wall, while my eyes are feasting, I listen to the dull hum of traffic, always present, and wait to hear a train as it crosses the Vltava and moves toward me. This time, the sound of the train is softened and the approach the thing. Boat horns on the Vltava and the voices of revelers intercede weirdly carried by the water’s surface and the wind up the stone walls into this platform lookout.

I remember one man in the soundwalking group taking out his camera and taking photos, overcome by the scenery and, for that time, dumb to the whirl and click of his camera as punctuating the otherwise gentle distant soundscape. Closer, people in conversation and children’s voices, the crunch of footsteps on sand paths.

As I turn to walk past the open air theatre, this day thespians practice, whereas on that day, it was empty and silent, the absence of players still in the round. Now, it is two in the afternoon; then, it was early evening, and the bells of the Basilica of St. Peter and St. Paul, wrought in the Perner Passau foundry, chime Má vlast, the famous Vltava passage, by the Czech composer Bedřich Smetana. I remember one gentleman in the group of radio avante-garde music producers, commenting that one of the bells was out of tune, although I didn’t notice, charmed by the music-box quality of the chimes and the nostalgic appeal of the melody, which forms part of the Czech National Anthem. Today, I’m held rapt by the robust ringing that always follows the tune, listening for overtones, which are present, rich and
enigmatic. I've recorded those bells many times and, in times of longing for my Czech past, in my Canadian home, I've listened to them overcome with pleasure and longing. As I walk the wall, again, I listen through the opening in the stone, obsolete gun mounts, to the intermittent sounds of the street below, the trams, the traffic, voices on the staircase down, clicking signaling when to walk across cross walks, river sounds and birds, always song birds.

Soon I am down the staircase leaving the fortress behind and heading for the embankment and the trestle bridge. This time, I sit under the bridge and listen to the river and trains, as I have done so many times both going about my business and making recordings from either bank of the Vltava river. On the other side, the beach with swans that came to mean as much as the trains that first winter, when I was yearning for home and made the early composition, Sounds Like Home. As I sit, the public ferry that passes under the trestle passes again, this time without the accordionist, Kate Romain, another Toronto musician and performer who was in town and delighted the soundwalkers who were standing on the trestle waiting for a train while Kate was ferried underneath playing random melodies responding to the sound of the ferry engine chugging along. On the soundwalk, I remember the radio’s lined up on the swan beach that changed stations as a result of vibrations in the water beneath after a train passed – a brilliant installation created by Michal Kindernay. I remember him relating trying to explain to passersby, two Roma who had parked at the beach to drink beer, what exactly he was doing and why. Today, across the river, the beach has a few people feeding swans, small swatches of color in the distance. I hear a train approaching fast this time, and then it is over me, and then it is past – as always, the train shaking my bones as reliably as time.

(The beauty of the soundwalk is that it was not recorded as it happened. It remains as it occurred, until this writing brought it into time again, resonant time.)
Refrain: That which be-comes home

Now we are at home. But home does not preexist; it was necessary to draw a circle around that uncertain and fragile center, to organise a limited space. Many, very diverse components have a part in this, landmarks and marks of all kinds. This was already true of the previous case. But now the components are used for organizing a space, not for the momentary determination of a center. The forces of chaos are kept outside as much as possible, and the interior space protects the germinal forces of a task to fulfill or a deed to do. This involves an activity of selection, elimination, and extraction, in order to prevent the interior forces of the earth from being submerged, to enable them to resist, or even to take something from chaos across the filter or sieve of the space that has been drawn. Sonorous or vocal components are very important: a wall of sound, or at least a wall with some sonic bricks in it. A child hums to summon the strength for the schoolwork she has to hand in. A housewife sings to herself, or listens to the radio, as she marshals the antichaos forces of her work. Radios and television sets are like sound walls around every household and mark territories (the neighbor complains when it gets too loud). For sublime deeds like the foundation of a city or the fabrication of a golem, one draws a circle, or better yet walks in a circle in a children’s dance, combining rhythmic vowels and consonants that correspond to the interior forces of creation as to the differentiated parts of an organism. A mistake in speed, rhythm, or harmony would be catastrophic because it would bring back the forces of chaos, destroying both creator and creation.

(Deleuze/Guattari, 1992, p. 310)
Listening salon H: Walking Sound

Listen to Walking Sound (20:00)
Recorded in 48 bit / 96 Hz with M Audio Micotrack,
Sound Studio custom binaural microphone, a Zoom recorder, a Sony PCMD 100
and a variety of other microphones.
Audio link: http://circle.ubc.ca/handle/2429/50784
Com position crossing

What does it mean? Where are we? Why does the motorcycle engine follow the little girl singing? Why are there trains and radios? Why is the rhythm of the first part so different from the second? Why does the composition end with accordion music and water? What are the important questions to pose about the listening?

While listening, the mind always wants to impose meaning and order. It wanders from being present in the sound and being elsewhere with it: questions, locating, understanding, making order, associations, and memories. The mind goes in and out of listening and this wealth of experience tells the listener about their habituation, values, needs and desires. The listener is called into multiple states of awareness and called out of them. The crossing of intersections, the intersections are what speaks to what one perceives, but more importantly, to how one perceives states of being, becoming – this and that, mind-body junctures, time-space, and presence.

The becoming the other, in its approach, is everything.

In this composition, things happen. Sometimes they happen to create a vignette. Sometimes the linkages are lost. The compositional aim was to loosen the route, the sense of moving from place to place, and play with sound loosely across a day from dawn to evening. Loosely, because what defines the work is sounds recorded intensively out of an experience over months that included soundwalking, early morning recording forays, revisits to locals many different times of day and days of the week, a few of the musician and artist interventions along the soundwalking route to explore acoustic features, such as trams and trains and playing marbles on cobbles under an archway, radios set vibrationally to change channels when trains passed on the trestle nearby – things the composers lived and explored that gave meaning as a long-term project with many parts.

As a composer, I wanted to maintain the integrity of the sounds, primarily, and so the recording fidelity as well as techniques, in a sense, carry the piece. This was also a primary aim with a listener in mind who was invited to listen intensively, as a beginning practice, without seeking context other than what the sounds brought to the listener in a highly personal and individual way.

Working collaboratively, many of the recordings were made by Michal Kindernay (Dancer & Kindernay, 2011b) and decisions about ordering the recordings were made in tandem. Michal Kindernay worked, at that time, primarily with images and transmedia installations. This project was a fruitful cross-pollination.
where sound was given precedence over visual medium. Many of our discussions about composition negotiated these different ways of working, and this also influences the eventual shape of the piece. There is a sense of spaciousness and quietude to the first half of the piece, like a camera pulling far back that was Michal’s influence. In the second half, as within a progressing day, the rhythm of the composition speeds up and space is filled with activity, as is more my style. In compositions up to this point, I was in a hurry to fill the acoustic space, but Michal gifted me a different sensibility. Toward the end, time reposes on an accordion’s refrain and on water, both a rhythmic lulling toward day’s end. In some way, this is a place where both the spaciousness and the bustle find resolution. While the piece contains evidence of transitions between these different working styles, ultimately these are opening where different ways of perceiving acoustic time and space create unexpected turns, a schizophrenia that adds to a sense of the euphonic-cacophonic edge, the flicker of known-unknown that sharpens the listener’s attention. In this genre of emergent sound art, the soundwalk-soundscape composition, these are vital places of unknowing, unravelling, seeking differently configured meanings.

However, the piece is many other things as well. It does speak of the experience of disruption across space across time apprehend-able through listening dissonantly and sonantly, in turn, to sound and the way the soundscape unravels, converges and reforms in the listener-to-soundscape trope. This opens the possibility of radical learning and coming to presence anew. This is especially the domain of art and artistic process – to offer the everyday, the obvious as the radical, to open eyes and senses, to sensitize the partaker to the state of their inhabitation, to open to the other, and to reach for a poetics of sound.
In exploring a poetics of soundscape composition, a poetics of sound, I improvised with writing what I encountered in intensive listening, as transcribing sounds to words, as I listened to the composition, *Walking Sound*. What follows is the result.

After reaching through various familiar forms to conjure sound in the written form throughout this thesis, this way of working is tremendously satisfying and, more than any other, relies on the sense of dissociation that breaks anticipated meanings that is essential to the poetic form.

I did not give myself time to rankle and ruminate over meanings – I gave myself the challenge of writing as I was listening without revisiting parts of the audio or revising the words and lines in the writing. This demand allows words to rise from a bridge between stream of consciousness, experiential language, and an immediacy that mimics listening.

There are several ways to proceed, each problematic in its own way. In one sense, I hope you’ve listened to *Listening Salon H: Walking Sound* before reading what follows. Once you’ve read the poem, you will listen for that context in the soundscape composition and the sounds, themselves, lose potential to be sounds and to reveal to you your own sensibility and associations with the sounds. That would be a shame.

In another sense, if you read the poem first and then listen to the composition, you will be enacting a contextualization informed by what follows, and you’ll listen for what is described and say to yourself, *There it is!* The *there* will be between us, as will the *it* and *is* in one configuration. *It* is there, regardless.

If you listen first and then read the poem and then listen again – the opportunity avails itself for you to attend to a shifting awareness of how listener relationships to sound change. A poetic-acoustic inquiry will rise up that inform each other. This is my intention.
Walking in sound

In the molten night
cicadas rub as cats wail,
far a lone tram skims tracks
before dawn, the density of
the exhaust
fans that never sleep,
birds that offset morning
train’s thunder
overhead, beneath
whispers and sleeves rub a side,
let them pass,
the early ones.

On the way into the day
sing kachne-bush, kachne-bush
kachne-bush, ride
fine-tuned and robust
like a Harley
through the old gate
where wind tosses poplars
and birds ride high and wild

The day is on,
tossing time like marbles
against stone
cobbles
each glass orb
reflecting the world,
rolling this way and that,
erratic-intent
crisscrossing
the path of the squat heart
while sirens scorch the air.

There is time this day for
what sounds in the air, for

tracing the citadel to the strand
through whitewash rush-hours,
let the insistent
trains shake the trestle,
let the river quiver
and swans hiss.
Misa (nthropy) answers to know one
not even the static and random
airwaves, stations changing
through all the broad
casts of lives, random order,
endless banter barrage.

Ferry me into a lullaby, under
across all around, sooth me,
with a tune, improvised yet ever-green,
through the worldly grind into the
wake full ness.

(o to listen and be)
**Inter route and day**

_Cloist(au)ral_ is a piece that bridges the sense making of music, rhythm, and place as the cello improvisations serve to ease transitions from one place to the next, from the bustle of the street corner, cross walk signals and the interior of the cloister, where the fountain, children and parents, and old women in conversation passing define the space. This is a piece about places, where bells sound in the distance, the wheels of a plastic bike against an airplane against the distant Charles Bridge trumpeter. Again the cello intervenes and transitions us back through birds taken flight, big birds wings, and a child that chases and names, past an exhaust fan, into the inner sanctum of hands rubbing against each other and the cello again reframes rocks rolled against stone walls of St. Elmos chapel, ancient dance and rite like hail thrown and tossed down on wayfarers, the cellos sadness cuts through and then picks up the pace as footsteps crunch in snow and everything slows, the castellan rings his bell, garbage bins are moved into place and the sanctuary is forsaken for the street, cello discordant against tourist utterances, _ulice prági_, Russian, the language of oppression marks the place and camera’s click, there is banter that doesn’t make sense again speaking English is broken, the smallest ever passageway as hands slap the walls and at the bottom, a restaurant where the chef pounds veal for schnitzel as swans laugh and a car idles, we make our way back up in a tour group and in French, _nous parton a la scripture_, as we head for the bookstore a reveler chants _cremation is the cheap smoke_ and the noon bells fade. In the bookstore, directions to get to somewhere with jazz in the background, weary tourists shut the door to the street, we are glad to descend down stone steps to the cellar, a lower sanctum, where a New Yorker couple whispers about price and _the Crowley_ book and looking for books on Kabbalah (Jewish Mysticism), as a book is taken from its place among its compatriots sighs, we ascend again leaving them we go back out into the street, back into the cello that mimics a wailing child under the bridge overtaken with walking and a duck laughs while the ferry boat with a Czech woman captain tries to understand the crewman who doesn’t speak Czech, _what_? she asks to no answer and the duck laughs again at the farce, the ferry leaves as a car arrives and we are near _Mariansku_, a young man mumbles and as a child singing, often the child singing, a bicycle changes gears, two women speaking of _choices_ and here, at the music school, doors are opening and closing, Mara is late and then suddenly, brisk walking and keys and again the trumpeter and bells from another vantage point, the garbage man is hauling garbage cans and the cello sings of long endings and endless songs sung among gulls and, as always, the embankment of the river that gives it all its meaning.

Now there is ample context, but will you listen the same way?
It is easier to prose-ify (explain and trace as in the prose above) the places of Cloist(au)ral as they make a narrative sense whereas Walking Sound does not try to tell a story, but traces time over a day and experience over several months as the project evolved: its turns are poetic. Between these two modes, there are significant differences. Cloist(au)ral adheres to linear time through space, through the one day of recording and through the movement through a route during that one day, it tries to make sense through the tracing of the original soundwalking route. It also represents a solo work, from recording through to composition. In this way, as well as because of the role of the cello as narrator, it is easier to contextualize the sounds and occurrences.

Walking Sound is amorphous and more difficult to listen to although it too has vignettes that shape meaning. The role of silence is more pronounced in Walking Sound, sounds take time to build and articulate, the composition is less hurried and the listening space more open– and the sense of not knowing where one is or what one is listening to is more pronounced. But the recordings, the sounds, the nuance, the distance and closeness...are made achingly palpable. In the uncomfortableness of this schism, the call to the listener to listen for their own sense of time, space and being-ness is more acute. For these reasons, I consider Walking Sound to be a place of departure from expectations of listening and, as such, a pinnacle piece, an invitation and a call to listen differently.

Between the route (space), and the day (time), in-between as coming to Being, lies the approach, the appropriation, which is everything.
Out of chaotic listening

From Chaos, Milieus and Rhythms are born. This is the very concern of very ancient cosmogonies. Chaos is not without its own directional components, which are its own ecstasies. We have seen elsewhere how all kinds of milieus, each defined by a component, slide in relation to another, over one another. Every milieus is vibratory, in other words, a block of space-time constituted by the periodic repetition of the component. Thus, the living thing has an exterior milieu of materials, an interior milieu of composing elements and composed substances, an intermediary milieu of membranes and limits, and an annexed milieu of energy sources and actions-perceptions. Every milieus is coded, a code being defined by periodic repetition: but each code is in a perpetual state of transcoding or transduction. Transcoding or transduction is the manner in which one milieu serves another milieu, dissipates in it or is constituted in it. The notion of the milieu is not unitary: not only does the living thing continually pass from one milieu to another, but the milieus pass into one another; they are essentially communicating. The milieus are open to chaos, which threatens them with exhaustion or intrusion. Rhythm is the milieus’ answer to chaos. What chaos and rhythm have in common is the in-between – between two milieus, rhythm-chaos or the chaosmos: ‘Between night and day, between that which is constructed and that which grows naturally, between mutations from the inorganic to the organic, from plant to animal, from animal to humankind, yet without this series constituting a progression…’ In this in between, chaos becomes rhythm, not inexorably, but it has a chance to. Chaos is not the opposite of rhythm, but the milieu of milieus. There is rhythm whenever there is a transcoded passage from one milieu to another, a communication of milieus, coordination between heterogeneous space-times. Drying up, death, intrusions have rhythm.

(Deleuze/Guattari, 1992, p. 312)
The pragmatics and art of living and writing inquiries into sound and of designing acoustic arts-based education and research are tentatively explored. Tentatively, as the task of creating with and out of sound comes towards us, like the inevitability of sound waves. This is the offering toward that embrace.

Here, take note, you who are now initiated into the cornucopia of possibilities open to you in active listening, in its dissemination, and in the production of acoustic arts as sounds now rumble toward your cochlea, hearing receptacle, through the thalamus, gatekeeper of consciousness, to the cortex, perceiver of world-being.

Take these riches forward in all your everyday and professional living to share with the coming generations of listeners.
Pedagogic intimations

The field of acoustic ecology, soundscape studies and, particularly acoustic arts-based research in education is virgin soil, on the verge of being overturned and seeded. As such, there are only peripheral and emergent modes of inquiry being articulated. Sound art itself is a new genre and sound artists are, and have been over the past thirty years, the vanguard bringing acoustic ecology and related fields into public purview through fostering awareness of sound in listeners.

Schafer’s foray into finding an educational base for his work houses itself in music education (Schafer, 2005, 1965, 1969a, 1969b, 1976, 1992) and was most effective in European systems, as the 80th Festschrift greetings attest (see chapter The rebound howl). Schafer’s curriculum contains listening exercises that heighten awareness, but are prescriptive and biased towards an idealized soundscape, the one that brought about the idea of a schizophonia between an unmediated and mediated listening situation. An alternate model has not been formalized, although soundscape studies and acoustic arts are increasingly taught in universities globally as a discipline unto itself rather than an adjunct to visual art, music or film studies – especially in Europe. However, often the basics of developing a listening practice, of attending to the craft of field recording, of using acoustic art as arts-based research toward investigating issues in the humanities and social sciences – and especially in education – are in a nascent and formative state.

Never-the-less, this work addresses two general and guiding research questions, further explained in the chapter that follows, Design by process:

How do listener-to-soundscape relations shift and deepen through listening while soundwalking?

How is this deepening awareness evoked in aspects of soundscape composition?

What remains is to model possible practices and leave the necessity of trying to bind possibilities to protocol, method, and prescription to a later stage. For these reasons, I am not addressing methodologies definitively, although there are some considerations to craft and concern with tertiary lineages so that one can know begin to identify parameters – perhaps to be discarded at some point. The starting point is in arts-based research, most closely aligned with living inquiry as an experientially-based practice of research appropriate to soundscape composition and poetic inquiry as a written means of reflecting on the experience of listening and listener-to-soundscape tropes.
The main hope is for there to be a place for acoustic arts-based research in education born out of a desire to investigate how soundscapes reveal the human condition and how the human condition attends to the soundscapes shaped by human and other activity – this is as much as an ecology of sound as can, at this point, be stated.

In my own experience as an educator, I offer this instance where field recording as craft – as exposure to sound art and soundscape composition within a practice of living inquiry within arts-based research – emerges to enriched teaching and learning experiences.

While living in Prague, organizing soundwalks and creating soundscape compositions within the robust artistic and scholarly acoustic communities of the European Union, I also taught in the international Socrates program, part of the European Union’s excellent exchange program, Erasmus, in the Department of Art Education, Pedagogical Faculty at Charles University in Prague under the direction of Dr. Marie Fulková. Such teaching opportunities were not available in my own university, so I sought them elsewhere. To my great fortune, I was taken in as one of Marie’s own, both as a colleague and a doctoral candidate, although I had no formal affiliations with the university or faculty.

In the two years (2009-2011) that I taught there, I supervised third and fourth year and Master of Arts students in the Faculty of Education at Charles University in a six month to year-long stay in the program. Students came primarily from Finland, Germany, Greece, the United States, and Britain to study studio arts in art education. My role was to supervise them in a final thesis project that incorporated these different artistic mediums (drawing, painting, sculpture, photography, collage, book-making, video), frame it as arts-based research, prepare a thesis essay and defend it, and exhibit their final works (including documentation of their process) at the university. Introducing them to key thinkers in arts-based research, we surveyed the writings of John Dewey, Elliot Eisner, Maxine Greene, Rachel Mason, on a weekly basis.

Students also worked thematically to explore the historical and contemporary milieu of Prague as a city, a cultural and political entity, as a place inhabited by citizens and foreigners – to identify places of engagement and tensions and position themselves within this rich tapestry.

In order to do so, I incorporated aspects of Dr. Karen Meyer’s graduate courses in living inquiry and alternate forms of scholarly writing that I’d attended through my doctoral program in the Center of Cross Faculty Inquiry (now Cross Faculty Inquiry) at the University of British Columbia in the Department of Education. Karen Meyer’s emerald eyes startle while taking one into a sea of curious probing, a gentle
wash that reveals a spirit dedicated to championing alterity, the hybrid space of the other, a particularly besieged court in scholarship – and in this she is legendary. Karen’s approach is inspiring and important in that one’s own lived experience, subjectivities, situatedness, process and practices are framed and validated as qualitative forms of research, part of a growing interest in hybrid research models in the humanities and social sciences supported by arts-based research protocols.

The notion and practice of living inquiry as developed by Dr. Meyer (2006; 2008; 2010; 2012) remains consistently apt to this doctoral thesis work and to soundscape composition as a potential research modality. Living inquiry, as an alternate research methodology course for Education graduate students (although the course appealed to students from different disciplines), always fills beyond capacity. Students are enriched by an approach to research that is rigorous, yet invites them to discover themselves perspicuously in their research. As Dr. Meyer explains, “with respect to the community of beginning researchers, shared inquiries call critical attention to who we are as researchers in the academy, exposing our own biases and positions as researchers “ (2010, p. 87). As a beginning research practice, both living inquiry and soundscape studies is in the process of situating and declaring themselves within a politicized and enclosed intellectual system that does not easily adapt to seemingly unorthodox and without-lineage propositions.

We begin from where we are – secure that what we propose, the unknown and unfamiliar, is exactly what the academy cries out for and is, in fact, its essence. Just as listening can be habituated and the task is to bring awareness to this state of forgetting, living inquiry problematizes the “normative expectations and ways we imagine our existence [that] are always already carried in our narratives and images and limit possibilities, arguably to the lowest common denominator” (Meyer, K., 2010, p. 85).

The Living inquiry model uses four themes: place, time, language and self/other – themes that inform throughout my own work and thesis. The basis is field notes that are then used to reflect but also to enrich the research, allowing for a depth of intellectual knowledge to emerge – and this is applicable to sound field recordings. Drawing on Dr. Meyer’s model, Socrates students kept field notes reflecting on their process and engagement with both artistic medium and themes. This extended their visual arts practice into written forms, such as narrative and poetic inquiry. In this way, they compiled a portfolio of art works, field notes (written creative and scholarly genres, artistic mediums including performance and dance, sound recordings) along with their more formal visual art works.
I also introduced students to acoustic art and inquiry. We went soundwalking in order to investigate areas historically potent, sites where the history of communist oppression was submerged under resonant layers of political and economic change. Several of these places became central elements in student art and thesis work, such as the huge metronome that replaced the statue of Stalin in Letná, a park with a promontory that is visible from most parts of the city core. The tock of the metronome mechanism marks time, signifying historical and contemporary passage. Another student was inspired by the paternoster tucked away and still in use in several older buildings, those old style elevators where the distinctive rhythmic rattle of the mechanism belies the visual nether space one encounters at either end of the descent or ascent, a place there an inexplicable turn takes place as the elevator cabinet disappears, a continuum that appears to reappears as an inversion heading in the opposite direction. Where does one go between the top of the last floor and the bottom of the first floor, and vice versa, while the apparatus chugs on?

Encountering, investigating, making audio recordings, writing about, and incorporating these sounds into every aspect of inquiry became the fasciae, connective tissue, that coalesced artifacts, material production with thinking about states of being, the actualities of historical and lived experience in Prague. As lived acoustic experience, recordings are more than facsimile or artifact – they are a resituating of lived experience over again in each instance of listening – they remain dynamic throughout this fluidity. This is sounds’ gift to investigating and framing more static means.

These were the learning outcomes I articulated at that time:

- to engage deeply in sound art process, sound as lived experience, and its artistic parameters in relation to a major art project and to identify strategies for documenting that engagement;
- to experiment with different art practices in tandem with sound and come to / articulate multi-modal ways of knowing;
- to situate the self as a profound listener: acoustic investigator, artist, citizen, subject, insider / outsider, culturally and historically acoustically delineated, and as from within the academy as an acoustic arts-based researcher;
- identify, incorporate, and apply critical spatial and cultural theory to acoustic art-making and project aims;
• to frame, re-frame, articulate, present and discuss one’s art work from as a multiplicitous body of work;

• become familiar with qualitative techniques and methodologies, formulate questions / arguments / manifestos, and evaluate how those formulations are denied, met or exceeded within aspects of major acoustic art projects;

• to design research that is individual and contends with indeterminacy, uncertainty, misfires, and flux that is vital to the artistic process and inherent in acoustic ways of knowing and being.

As a learning and research tool, as arts-based educational research, acoustic fluidity keeps the living inquiry process open and in play for an indefinite period during and past the event of listening, through production and into practice, tethering thinking to the experience with continually renewed relevance.

A profoundly different way of conducting inquiry, this strikes at its central aim of keeping states of being in the flux of proximal and distanced awareness, remaining curious about such awareness, about potentiating different ways of coming to Being and knowing in the world, of articulating that process through researched, documented, artifactual, known and yet to be discovered epiphanic turns.

Sound art, acoustic ecology, soundwalking, soundscape composition – all possess enormous untapped potential within pedagogy as hybrid forms of research in the classroom, in research settings, in artistic endeavors, in thinking and speaking about being, in consideration of other planetary states of being, in the simple and complex acts of existing in order to enhance and enrich knowledge, concrete and abstract, about the worlds we encounter and inhabit.

Design by process

As an artist who is choosing to apply artistic process to research protocols, I engage design as an open-ended continual experience of revelation. A life-long artistic practice means I trust that patterns of design will emerge from the process. Although I often hover over a precipice of neurotic outcomes, I have accepted complexity and entanglement as an inquiry expectation.

Never-the-less, an important aim of this thesis is to model the experience of coming-to-know acoustically for other artist-scholar-educator-researchers and situate my process in relationship to
practices within soundscape studies. This aim drives the structure of the thesis and its experiential thrust. First, listening is an experience of coming to know sound and then different forms of writing come to give different dimension to the work, broadly categorised as creative, analytic and theoretical writing. An insistent inquisitiveness arises that asks how the experience of listening can be deepened and shared.

For this reason, my own artistic journey models a coming-to-know acoustically – no mere self-aggrandisement or vanity research. This journey also involves my interactions with communities of practice and mentors that serve as an educational model as well as a survey of the field of acoustic ecology and sound art within soundscape studies. Identifying key moments of solidarity and divergence among these practitioners sets out the current field and this thesis within it. I am privileged that the field has emerged during my lifetime, so that I am drawing on lineages that are part of my own artistic and scholarly life – face-to-face encounters with luminaries, such as was the way the arts, scholarship, theory, and disciplines evolved in the past.

From this robust base comes the act of researching that is, indeed, a framing and reframing of artistic process through different lenses. A visual metaphor is apt here, as movement from artistic process to method likens to applying linear ways of knowing to relational ones. Initially and throughout, however, the process begins and re-turns organically.

Essential to this act of researching is an obstinate curiosity about my own soundscape composition process, a requisite need to share that process through stories, rather than a list of techniques, and to provide a place in the dissertation manuscript for listening to sounds and the compositions, the *listening salons* that are pivotal to the written investigations. This keeps the research relevant and alive for myself as well as my anticipated reader through a return to the experience of listening to inform more cerebral pursuits.

Out of this passion for listening comes attention to the means of becoming acoustically aware, avenues of self-reflection, and a dogged listening for the source of this passion through a sense of inquisitiveness that keeps imposing itself. This is an essential part of my own way of identifying creative interests. I listen for certain ideas, encounters, phrases or questions reoccurring in my everyday mundane existence to signal a creative opening that demands attention.

Querying the means of becoming acoustically aware finds research relevance in the protocols of *living inquiry*, as an arts-based research modality. After searching for appropriate methodologies, I returned
repeatedly to Dr. Karen Meyer’s class on *living inquiry* and alternative thesis writing strategies. After taking these classes initially, I sat in on them several times over the course of compiling the manuscript and both approaches inform this work throughout. *Living inquiry* provided the tools for framing the soundscape compositions as research through field notes, situating the work as experientially relevant within education, and positioning my reflections as part of the research process. All of these activities converge in an analytic framing and re-framing. This is the core of maintaining academic integrity in work that is profoundly experientially and self-reflectively – to know how to situate oneself as a researcher in relationship to the work through the creative and self-reflective elements within an academic and research-based analytic and theoretical paradigm. Alternative thesis writing supports this positioning, as poetry, narrative, and prose-based forms of analysis require the researcher point to how the writing furthers and supports the work of more traditional forms of scholarship. In my case, it is because of the pursuit of experiential ways of knowing and learning integral to understanding and analysing a profoundly experiential discipline – listener-to-soundscape relationships and a coming to knowledge and to scholarship acoustically.

From the outset and throughout all artistic and scholarly activities, these same two general research questions reasserted themselves: How do listener-to-soundscape relations shift and deepen through listening while soundwalking? How is this deepening awareness evoked in aspects of soundscape composition?

Within these research processes, the first of curiosities (research questions) arose while soundwalking in regard to how soundwalking deepens listening practice:

- How does one becomes aware as a listener through the simple act of walking with a group along a route for an extended period of time?
- Is it the group dynamic, the focus on acoustic space, the privileging one sense over another, the element of not talking but listening over an extended period of time?

Initially, the questions hovered around exploring soundwalking as a research tool for exploring place and space as defined by humanist geographers such as Henri Lefebvre and theorists such as Michel De Certeau. For considerable time, I explored this avenue, however, the problem arose of how to actually base research on an activity that was exclusively a living experience without collapsing the acoustic-coming-to-know into abstractions of describing a soundwalk, providing maps and instructions, theorising
– but without any way of replicating its effect in increasing acoustic awareness for those not present.

Soundwalks are often documented through video, audio recording, and photographs – but these fall short of the experience itself. As an experiential learner myself working within profoundly experiential material, this was not a viable strategy.

During this time, my own artist practice leaned increasing toward soundscape composition. With a background in radio documentary-feature, I am technically proficient with audio recording equipment and the experience of listening through powerful microphones to foreground sound (field recordings), as well as using editing software compositionally (rather than narratively), made the transition exciting and natural.

With this evolution in artistic practice, so too came an evolution in curiosities:

Could soundscape composition act as a mechanism to enhance listening mimetic of soundwalking?

If so, what tensions in the genre would come to bear and how would they be identified and discussed?

This new line of inquiry meant coming to understand what necessitated the transition in the first place and it lodged in several places of fracture: the visualisation and wordification of sound and how it affects listening, the positioning of soundscape composition within its own field, the thrust toward finding and maintaining coherence and location in listening verses courting schizophrenia, and my own life circumstances of displacement that thematically inform this time and these artistic works.

These areas of inquiry arrived after endlessly observing and questioning the expressive elements in the artistic works, the soundscape compositions, primarily through repeatedly listening to the compositions and field recordings, revisiting the sites of recording, and writing about them and their circumstances of coming into a final compositional form through different kaleidoscopic turns.

(Perhaps, these can be likened to using a microscope, viewing turns in magnification, applying different lenses, and meticulously creating different specimens to gain a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon under examination.)
While initially I planned to use a series of soundscape compositions arranged chronologically around my own artistic trajectory, eventually, a select few became representative of the emerging themes and points of critical analysis important to the developing structure.

The different forms of writing took up the task of investigation and reframing and, although I had an evolving structure (in the form of a rough table of contents, maps and diagrams taped to my walls, bits of writing also strewn around my work area), I was careful not to finalise or tie myself to outcomes until themes and questions began to emerge organically.

This approach draws from an artistic strategy I practice in radio documentary-feature production, where different genres (interviews, drama, poetry, sound recording, and narration) are utilised to create a comprehensive yet cohesive investigation of a subject for the immediacy of radio. In order to find a design within a mass of material, first one must generate the material and then arrange and rearrange the elements until patterns, themes, and a potential overall design emerges. This is a writer`s strategy as well, to tell oneself the story of the project (or in this case, the research) completely, deeply, widely, comprehensively, and intuitively before deciding on an overall structure.

With a critical mass of material achieved, I began the unrelenting task of identifying patterns and themes and, in the final stages, possible theorists. The structure remained mutable until about two-thirds of the way through, when I began to see clusters of themes, writing approaches, and places of discontent that signaled potential sites of critical analysis. Then, I narrowed the structure by foregrounding emerging patterns of these themes and analytics throughout the writing, structuring and restructuring, focusing and refocusing until an overall architecture for the piece began to declare itself.

Titling, using heading and subheadings, also helped pragmatically to keep the arms of the octopus from overwhelming the source of its nourishment, me.

I positioned myself in the research through telling stories about my own trajectory and the people who influenced it, and this also worked as an organising principle. I experimented with writing sound into narrative and poetry to understand how and to what degree writing can provide an experience of listening through different genres and how that constitutes experiential learning. I wrote poems and prose in the places where the soundscape composition field recordings originated at the time of recording and also later at the time of writing the thesis.

The Intra poetica poetic inquiry framing and Pedagogic intimations section came at a much later date when the manuscript was in its final stages as a way of explicating the process as inquiry. Once the
manuscript was in a final draft form, at the suggestion of the doctoral committee supervisors, I produced a map for the reader to orient them to how the thesis was organised and this helped ground the structure. I further formulated this synopsis of the arts-inquiry informed process as a way of sharing potential research design with other scholars.

I trust I have, in some way, inspired arts-based researchers to take on the challenges and immense rewards of a way of working, knowing, being, and sharing that is both true to their uniqueness and craft as well as their chosen body of study – so that all humankind may be enriched through our collective and individual work.
Acoustic arts as living and poetic inquiry

In the process of coming to soundscape composition, many positions are taken and integrated into the work: visual, written, spoken, performed, documented, theorized, mediated, and practiced. The thrust in all these endeavors has been both creative and analytic – a desire to know and be differently. A desire to know and be expansively and transversely.

This demands of dislodging of self from the known, from histories and places and ideas, means constantly questioning one’s sense of what is in order to be present. I have a healthy trepidation about the consequences of living with feet peddling the air seeking ground; and a healthy respect for what such efforts yield – ground-breaking-flight.

As a living inquiry, the process of using soundwalk-soundscape composition to research acoustic features of a route can equated with going into the field to survey what is important to the research, the design of the route akin to decisions around research design and identifying what is significant, what bears questioning. Making field recordings along the route can be understood as making field notes about what one encounters, decisions about how to use and position the microphone similar to the situation of one’s own position in relation to the research. The capturing of audio happenings acts as the substance of the research, the voice that is given to it and the significance assigned. Editing of the recordings into a composition reports, frames and makes conclusions about the inciting incidents that motivated posing the research question in the first place, although the research question has often changed by this time. Other forms can be used to document the route, to explore research questions and outcomes through multiple means, to come to different insights into the inquiry.

The act of writing about sound best translates, in my experience, into a poetics – a way of writing with ties to orality, breath, connotation, and evocative of lived experience, such as poetry and creative prose offers. Sound is profoundly connected with poetic propagation bringing experience again, resonantly, as a newly experienced experience based on an already experienced experience, in both the poet writing about an experience and the reader reading or listener listening to a poem (Dancer, 2009). The degree of craft enhances this ability to re-evoke experience, which is the poet’s artistic aim, often through emotive power, image and – in this thesis’s case – evocation of an experience of sound.

Within my own trajectory as an artist-writer-researcher, poetry remains central to radio and sound art practices and coexists with soundscape composition as a means of making compositional choices at
every stage and level. Poetic ways of experiencing the world cannot be separated from this work as they articulate the complexities, rhizomes, and connections between forms grounded in the equally complex, interrelation, and ephemeral nature of listener-to-sound relationships.

Poetic inquiry, like soundscape composition and studies, is a newly emerging, potent, site of definition and redefinition as both articulate what they are and how they work. This is appropriate. Dr. Carl Leggo points out that poems, themselves, are sites of struggle that enhance discourse and meets the criteria of intertextuality central to contemporary understanding of language (2006). Poetic inquiry, as a research paradigm, flies in the face of what the literary canon and poets ask of poems – to simply be expressive – and what research asks of explication of the human condition. For these reasons, the poems included in this thesis, dis-inhabit the two aims they propose to inhabit. This is exactly their tenacity in this case, as they try to articulate the ineffability of listening and, just as impossibly, use poetics to give appropriate imperatives about how listening constitutes experientially-based research. For these reasons, I qualify each poem with a preamble entitled Intra Poetica, the word intra meaning from within and during, in contradistinction to the word inter based in an in-between state. The inquiry explication antecedent signifies that these poems, in this case, are part of a way of re-searching articulations of being-in-sound from within how the poem came to be, from the vantage point of the poet as craft-person and as researcher. This conscious positioning of the poem emphasizes the aforementioned tensions, and although the poem as poem stands on its own, my intention is also for it to stay within that aim while providing useful research potential.

Within the robust community of poetic inquiry practitioners, Dr. Carl Leggo moves elegantly and eloquently (his writing has a penchant for alliteration) at the head of the vanguard, generating a lofty surge in poetic research possibilities (1998, 2004, 2005, 2007). Although many important treatises exist about what Poetic inquiry is and how it works (Butler-Kisber, 2010, 2005; Cahnmann-Taylor & Siegesmund, 2007; Cahnmann-Taylor, 2009; Prendergast & Leggo, 2007; Prendergast, 2007, 2009; Prendergast, Leggo, & Sameshima, 2009; Richardson, 1998), this passage from one of Dr. Leggo’s articles about poetic inquiry, aptly entitled Astonishing Silence, best explains the intentions of my specific poetically informed inquiries:

The evaluation of the knowledge will include a critical examination of the way that poetry evokes responses and connections, a careful inquiry into the methods that poetry uses to unsettle ossified thinking and provoke imagination [sonification], and a conscientious consideration of the resonances that sing from word to world. (2007)
In this way, the inquiry precursors and following poems in this thesis provide context and support these aims, especially to dis-inter-n ways of thinking about sound, listening-to-soundscape tropes, and the intrastate resonances of being within being, experience within experience, time within time, knowing within knowing, listening within listening that will open a floodgate of potential for ways of coming to awareness in and with sound through resonant forms.

Toward a poetics of sound

I inhabit words as words inhabit me. With sounds, it is an embrace, a holding tentative, a flutter up against on the way to something else, the touching the leaving. Between the words and the sounds, I fashion a fish net into a butterfly net, so that what comes in between lingers just so long, just long enough, to wonder. The wonder is in the difference, the misuse, the exchange between others. And so I wonder at that which I catch in the periphery, as I listen and record and write. I claim no authorship – I just happen to be there waving my hapless net around in the air. I just happen. just happen. hap pen.

Writing listening means I am no longer listening. I am listening through not listening. What I am listening to is not what I am listening for, anticipating, as I write – even if I am listening and writing the listening as I’m listening – they are not the same kinds of things. I am walking looking backward for certain passing passages, glimpses of how I am before and after, so I can know how I am now. I can’t know it now. I can only know the approach, the promise of convergence. I can only be now trying to fit one into the other. So I hold up my gill net fashioned to slow winged things with an imagined viscosity. They kindly hover to amuse themselves and hold my attention, to indulge my vanity.

So it is with writing sound. The experience of listening risks entanglement in its writing – only through an articulation of liminality can a poetics of sound graze the chiasmi of the net, escape meshment in the rhetorical inversion, one to the other.

To seek a poetics of listening, one must listen, intensively, with abandonment of self to sound, to find self in sound, self in other, to be becoming continuously and not to quaver. I have quavered, stuttered, fawned and fayned my way toward writing about my experience of listening, to give inkling to sounds, to catch them like fish in the sea when they are butterflies with wings that influence weather. Better yet, to glimpse the pollen of butterfly wings that swirls through the air with every beat and dream of a
cloudburst elsewhere. Some of that rare dust, an infinitesimal amount, arrives on my fingertips. If I am fortunate, I can sense it there.

Inquiring through words about sound means that I must catch myself listening and thereby catch the listening. There are few worthier ways of catching the listening for those who see. It so resists and defies description. I weave images into the net hoping the winged things will settle there; sometimes they do and I’m pleased they have graced me. Through a vision conjured, the dust of a sound settles on these grasping fingertips. So it is that com-promises are made.

On the page, surrounded by other word intentions, these timid poetics are easily overwhelmed. They are the sound of wings over a highway at rush hour. Their only chance lies on either side, on the generous ear of an unanticipated listener whose car breaks down, who leaves the highway and the ways of the highway to seek the field in spring to catch butterflies without the appropriate net, another grace.

When I speak the words to you, breath to breath, you can stand in for the other side of the net with me as the inside. Breath-sound forms words – hummingbirds, small and agile, winged but with more substance than butterflies and winged things, not so ephemeral, not such easy prey – flitter-filter through, their wings baffling to the waves of sound that now catches on the mesh. But I cannot be with you to lull you, embrace you, catch us in my speaking of myself as sound. (Invite me, I will accept.)

For these reasons, I have not recorded myself speaking these writings, this poetry. I leave them laying on the page as page things, admirable in their making, waiting for that wayfarer – you – who will raise them into themselves and speak them to themselves, in their chest and with their breath, breathe sound into them anew. Take them, they are yours for the speaking. They are your listening.

**Acoustalogy**

**Storied listening**

This piece [Cisterna] is very spatial again and the metal, industrial or iron sounds brought me into big and empty hall with light beans shining scarcely through holes in dark walls or windows. I love empty, abandoned industrial buildings. My parents used to send me to experience “real” work in a factory when I was a teenager. I used to work in a textile factory, an old building that
was established and owned by a Jewish family in 19th century and the spatial disposition of the building remained the same. Technology of “combing” the surface of a woollen piece was still the same since the “parent founders’” time and I loved to do pick tiny pieces of prickles of African thistles of the cloth...Deafening noise of working machines – beating looms were all around me.

(M. Fulková, personal communication, March 16, 2014)

Listeners tell stories about what they are hearing, often making associations with other listening experiences. Often these are stories about memories, but also as information about their environs, culture, sense of being, about movement through space, rhythms and cycles in their sense of time passing. Telling stories about sound is a valid methodology, such as was used in the original European Sound Diary (Schafer, 1977a), and the contemporised version, Acoustic Environments in Change & Five Village Soundscapes (Järviluoma, H., M. Kytö, B. Truax, H. Uimonen & N. Vikman, 2009) – both as ethnographic and narrative research using field recordings and interviews that document the changing sound environment and the listener experience of these changes over thirty plus years. As such, it is the most comprehensive research project undertaken in soundscape studies since the 1970’s World Soundscape Project.

Listening locally-vocally

The function of using found conversation is firstly because human voices inhabit the space I am recording as I am recording: the element of happenstance. I have confidence that what is occurring in the acoustic moment as I’m recording it speaks to listener-in-soundscape relationships in such a way as to be useful and revealing to my own compositional aims of bridging association with dissociation. Not all conversations speak with the same veracity toward my compositional aims, which is how the compositional process shapes the piece. I then edit to accentuate these moments and movements through acoustic time-space with the aim of fracturing and enriching listener experiences.

Conversational fragments give context to the scene, where the listener can understand the words or listens to inflections, and the words provide information about a space that grounds the listener. The grounding is important in consideration of listener expectations of, and habituation to, the soundscape. In order for a listener to be able to fracture expectations and habits of listening, I lead them through
bridging the familiar with the unfamiliar, location with dislocation, the particularity of sound with the human voice and language to invite different listening experiences.

(The cello improvisations in Cloist(au)ral work in a similar way as they are musical but not music in that the cellist, Sarah Atkinson, is responding to the sounds around her and not to a score. Of course, she is working within a musical system of her own habituation, but she is also attempting to break with it. Sarah is aware of these aims and provides instruction in them to the listener as well with her playing.)

Compositionally, the snatches of conversation, musicality of sounds, and increasing awareness of the soundscape mimics the experience of a live soundwalk, the basis for this style of soundscape composition, as mimetic of a process of deepening listening.

However, in a soundscape composition, because the listener is not in the space of the soundscape, but rather listening in a different space to another through listening media – field recording, editing and mixing, then through a computer or stereo into speakers, headphones or a concert or radio setting, etc.), the possibility for being disoriented, dislocated, un-worded is accentuated. This is an instance of radical possibility in coming to awareness of what sound is and how it works in other than habituated ways. It is also one of the main artistic and pedagogical aims – to create acoustic states of unknowing so that new sound-based ways of knowing can emerge.

Here I transcribed for you what I could understand / since I find the fact I WAS ABLE to understand what was said a very important moment in my listening experience. They talk about a book that is an icon of child literature classic (first stories emerged in Lidové noviny in 1933), where the main character is Ferda the Ant. (More online, Ondřej Sekora: Ferda Mravenec, book 1936. Hermína Týrllová: Ferda Mravenec (animated movie, 1943)

1. a part with cello, water, sea gull.

Bright voice of a child, in the middle of the excerpt:

Mami, povídej mi vo jedný knížce, která Ferdovi utekla, a menovala se (...) Ferda Mravenec učí mraveniště. (My literal translation: Mum, tell me about one book that escaped from Ferda and that was called Ferda teaches an ant-hill.)

Young woman’s voice: Ferda cvičí mraveniště? Ferda trains an ant-hill?

Child: Jó... Yoooo... – long sound, open possibility..

Young woman’s voice: A že utekla Petrovi? And that the book escaped from Petr?
Inviting different listening experiences is about coming to know sound with awareness of how the listener is situated in terms of language, visuality, sensory information, social situatedness, and, in that sense, it is also the tenor of Deleuze and Guattari’s becoming – the role of the voice and music as antichaos (2009, p. 303-309) – being brought to bear. Listener-to-soundscape relationships, including alienation, are key concepts in the thesis.

In these ways, fragments of conversations become evok-atures (beings of evocation) intended to open alternate conceptual space for things like association, but also to reference the in-between space of coming to know through more than words, through sound as utterance, through sound as a locatory system that humans have conceptualized and lingua-fied, when knowing and being acoustically aware offers different ways of coming to know and being through uncertainty, flux, liminality, dissociation, etc.

Spoken words open up an associative field ingrained in being that sound has the potential to, for a brief moment of flickering, undermine with a continual be-coming of another through sound. This is the flickering I am seeking.
Listening multi-sensorily

Synesthesia, as I understand it, is an individual listener response dependent on whether a listener has the capacity for it. Actively increasing sound awareness does lend itself to some aspect of synesthesia, the neurological stimulation of one sensory or cognitive pathway with another, in that as awareness increases, other sensory awareness is heightened. For example, when I am working with sound intensely such as daily editing a soundscape piece, my sense of smell becomes acute and colors in the landscape intensify. But I do not identify myself as a synesthetic.

Chromesthesia is a common form of sound synesthesia where people hearing specific sounds, either every day or musical, see-hear colors. As I am not a synesthetic, I cannot compose to this capacity – although I certainly wish I could. Perhaps if I was painting while listening to sounds...

Perhaps cross modal perception and multisensory integration research, which is the broader application of synesthesia, is closer to the aims of my soundscape compositions, although I must stress that this thesis does not go into it from this scientific research direction. I am approaching it from the perspective of the artist-composer and my aims of bringing awareness to listener-soundscape relationships through artistic process and grappling with an emerging poetics of soundscape composition.

What the process of creating a composition toward deepening listener-sound awareness utilizes is the means of capturing sounds in ways evocative of coloration and spatialisation toward a multi-sensory given in which listening is trumped by seeing in contemporary society. This is achieved through techniques such as recording articulated sounds with powerful microphones up close to bring out their richness, minutia, nuance, and also to give a specific sense of movement in space, such as using binaural microphone to record for the listener a sense of things moving around them as a focal point or positioning a microphone to exemplify things accelerated in time and space such as a man shouting from a passing train.

These are tricks of the trade in that the recordist makes decisions about what and how to record instances of nuance, exactitude, movement, coloration, associations that are then enhanced in the editing and compositional process. It is an artistic process more than an exact science, although attention to building craft makes a significant difference to the final piece.

One of the results of this is that many listeners do have profound listening experiences in that they haven`t considered the richness of sound, the embodied implications of sound as cross-sensuality and
that listening often provides strong memories and associations to things in the past. These memories and associations are most often related to scenes, images triggered by the sounds. Ricardo Huisman, a sound artist in the Netherlands, created *super sonic sound scape shoes*, woolen shoes that people put on and can hear sounds from a speaker in each shoe as well as other such haptic listening apparatus (2012). What they hear are also vibrations moving up their legs such as a horse might hear (see chapter: *Repre sound ation: In/Congruence*). This seems to accentuate the vividness of the scene they are remembering, a re-embodiment, especially in older folks. Possibly, this experience mimics auditory-tactile synesthesia, a rare form, in which sounds create sensations in certain parts of the body, but I am not following the research in this area.

**Listening: Time inside time, space inside space**

Ah, time. When listening to a soundscape composition, time manifests inside of time in tangible ways.

First, there is simply the time of the room the listener is inhabiting, where they are actually sitting listening to the piece. That is one time instance. Then there is the time of the piece. That is another time frame in which multiple time instances can be apprehended at the same time. There is the time of the listener associations, memories. Then, there are the many time perspectives of what the inner world of the composition is bringing forward and recessing. These are also in play.

These multiple time frames happen as the story the listener is co-constructing about what is happening through sound takes place along an anticipated narrative arc. The arc exists because that`s one way the listener is grounded, as an anticipation of the listener. It is a co-construction with an active listener because the recordist and composer are also making decisions about the composition that enhance a storied soundscape, an inevitable part of the interpretation the artist and listener bring due to the storied nature of how humans experience existence.

The other is time as it occurs through movement of things in space (a body moving from right to left passing the vantage point of the listener—which is actually the recordist location), the associated time of sounds of the present and past, such as bells that have rung out over hundreds of years in the same sound trajectory, trains or trams with mechanisms from a previous era that haven`t been updated and are still in use across a turn of the century trestle bridge, and the sound of cell phones or modern car engines that reference contemporary time frames – and often, in the compositions from Prague, these
are occurring in close proximity. There is the issue of trying to listen historically, which is a contradiction in terms as sound is immediate whereas material (stone, wood, glass, concrete) and the way cities are planned as well as their architectures shape soundscapes in historical ways.
Novella in silence

Days go by and there is only the sound of her breath.

This is not entirely true. Up on the sixth floor of this turn of the century building, the gas radiator creaks, the wind rushes, when she turns on the hot water in the morning, the gas pilot light in the bath closet explodes into action. A door in the hall outside opens or closes, it's hard to tell if these are comings or goings. Sometimes, when the wind is strong, it's as though it's causing the radiator to click and creak its strange code. On her chest, there's the new kitten silent and deep asleep. Sometimes, there's a baby crying in the room next to her bedroom. Always, there's her breath and inside there's always dialogue, a miasmas of recriminations.

We withdraw because the world becomes too much to bear. This is not entirely true. We act out our inner disconnect. She thinks of the graveyard and of walking in it and listening. She thinks she must get onto that project soon, make it happen. But first, a cup of tea whose making will wake the silent kitten tucked into her t-shirt against her breast.

Oh, and there is the sound of the keyboard as she makes thoughts appear on a screen: could one decipher it into actual spoken words – that click click, – if one knew the exact spatial configuration, the tenor of each click. Then she could hear herself think instead of watching. If she could hear herself think in this way, what would that voice sound like? The voices in her head do not sound like the ones she uses to speak, surely. They are not the same at all. What she speaks in her head is not rehearsed in actual out loud words beforehand. It's a kind of sing song for one thing and who knows if the words are actually sounding the same as the ones she hears inside as they are not articulated, but only thought, only an ephemeral other. They are not words at all. They do not sound out loud.

She's feeling herself heavy in the world. She's often this but today more so. She's going to get up now and walk across the bedroom into the kitchen to make that cup of tea. The kitten will wake and mew. Her slippers will slap the wood floor and then the rug and then more wood. She'll turn on the water to fill the kettle – hot water because the cold is too slow – and the pilot will blast into action in another room. The kettle will boil quickly and then click when it's finished. She'll take a teabag from the box, put it into a cup and pour the water. The fridge door will open for the carton of milk, which will pour into her cup. She won't mix it with a spoon. She'll squeeze the teabag with hot fingertips and silently set it in the top of a jam jar for another later cup of tea – although she rarely re-uses these teabags. When there
are many of them, she'll open the cupboard under the sink and toss them – although she has no bag in
the garbage container so it'll have to wait. She'll get up now...so listen. But it isn't entirely like that. The
chair groaned as it swung around. The cat dropped on the floor and mewed for food. She opened a
package and went to sit by the window with her tea.

It wasn't how she imagined it, it was so much more. It was the meticulous sound of the real.
References


Barbaras, R. (2004). *The being of the phenomenon: Merleau-Ponty's ontology* [De l'être du phénomène.].

Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.


Albuquerque, N.M.: University of New Mexico Press.


Vancouver, B.C.: Vancouver New Music.


Vancouver, B.C.: Western Front.

