

Sugar's Waste

by

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Abstract

Sugar's Waste is an experimental, theatrical music performance, one hour in duration. The work features songs, experimental choral work, and atmospheric instrumental pieces. The scores are created by hand, using a combination of traditional, durational, graphic and indeterminate notation. The core ensemble is a string quintet that doubles as a vocal chorus; some pieces feature further additions, such as live digital processing, electric guitar, piano and hand-held tape recorders. Short poetry readings are scattered throughout. *Sugar's Waste* is related to 20th and 21st Century non-narrative, post-operatic practices, as well as popular music formats such as conceptually-integrated recorded albums. The songs and scores were written concurrently with a series of poetic texts that address themes of partition, enclosure and resistance in the historical and imaginary 'range' of early post-contact North America. These themes inspired the staging, set and sound design of the work.

Dedication

To Peter, for 26 months of triage, and paprika cure.

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Stephen Collis / Owen Underhill / Cole Lewis / Judy Radul / a rawlings / Ben Rogalsky / Ben Wylie / Alexandra Spence / Jan Kucic-Riker / Robert Leveroos / Gordon Havelaar / Elliot Vaughan / Kyla Gardiner / Paul Paroczai / Peter Driftmier / Jordan Scott / Matthew Ariaratnam / Classmates in English 372 / The Fruits of the Orchard / Laureen Burlat / Taryn Hancock / Don & Patty Bruton / Tegan Wahlgren / Clara Shandler / Dave Chokroun

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Defence Statement



Image 1. *The Heard Surrounds*. Photo by Andi Icaza

Introduction

Sugar's Waste is an experimental, theatrical music performance, one hour in duration. It was performed on October 6th and 7th 2016 in Studio T, Simon Fraser University, Goldcorp Centre for the Arts. The work features songs, experimental choral works, and atmospheric instrumental pieces. I created the scores by hand, using a combination of traditional, durational, graphic and indeterminate notation. The core ensemble is a string quintet that doubles as a vocal chorus; some pieces feature further additions, such as live digital processing, electric guitar, piano and hand-held tape recorders. Short poetry readings are scattered throughout.

I worked collaboratively with a choreographer, Gordon Havelaar, and a production designer, Robert Leveroos, to stage the piece according to mutually dependent acoustic and aesthetic concerns. The audience of forty was seated in the round on cushions and chairs in the centre of the studio, surrounded by fifteen-hundred

standing brown paper grocery bags. The set design gestured toward a grassy expanse; the space also featured a mound of flowers and weeds brought in from the outdoors. Gordon staged the performance so that musicians performed on the inside or outside of the audience circle, depending on the piece. Speakers placed at four points just outside of the audience circle created a sense of multi-dimensional sonic immersion.

I wrote the songs and scores for *Sugar's Waste* concurrently with a series of poetic texts that address themes of partition, enclosure and resistance in the historical and imaginary 'range' of early post-contact North America (see Appendix C). These themes inspired the staging, set and sound design of the piece. Formal connections between these elements can be likened to 20th and 21st Century non-narrative, post-operatic works such as Philip Glass' *Einstein on the Beach*, wherein 'the search for unity between music and drama has been abandoned; dramatic principle is deconstructed, operatic texts (libretto, music, stage set) are not in a strict hierarchical relationship, nor is there any intention for them to be so' (Novak 136). *Sugar's Waste* can similarly be related to popular music videos, where action on the screen may not be narratively related to the music, but a variety of visual gestures serve to emphasize key musical elements (semantic or otherwise).

Aesthetically, I situate my vocally-focussed music more definitively within popular music than within opera. This is chiefly apparent in my preference for naturalistic vocal styles rooted in folk and pop traditions, with some inclusion of extended techniques drawn from pioneering post-operatic singers such as Meredith Monk and Diamanda Galás. I align myself amongst *songmakers*, 'artists who are taking unusual and challenging approaches to the song form, expanding it beyond the typical singer-songwriter/rock/pop/country/folk paradigm. While they may occasionally draw on those familiar elements, they are using them in unconventional ways' (Mitchell 2016). Los Angeles based singer/songwriter/composer Julia Holter, for example, produces experimental pop albums that are frequently based on mythic or filmic source material. Her 2010 album *Loud City Song* is a collection of songs and musique concrète soundscapes inspired by Colette's 1944 novella *Gigi* and director Vincente Minelli's 1958 comedic film of the same name. *Sugar's Waste* was realized as a live performance, but overall compositional design is comparable to a conceptually integrated, recorded pop album. 'Songmakers' typically sing their own material.



Image 2. *The Heard Surrounds B.* Photo by Andi Icaza.

Poetry and Theory

In Michael Parenti's classic anti-imperial analysis of Hollywood movies, he points to the 'upside down' way that the 'make-believe media' portrays colonial settlement...the settler is portrayed as surrounded by 'natives,' inverting, in Parenti's view, the role of aggressor so that colonialism is made to look like self-defense. Indeed, aggression and self-defense are reversed in these movies, but the image of a surrounded fort is not false. Instead, the false image is what emerges when a critique of militarised life is predicated on the forgetting of the life that surrounds it. The fort really was surrounded, is besieged by what still surrounds it, the common beyond and beneath – before and before – enclosure (Moten and Harney 24).

In the poetic texts that laid the groundwork for *Sugar's Waste*, I was interested in Moten and Harney's notion of the 'Surrounds' as literal imagery, and also as a metaphorical state of collective being – fugitive psychological zones operating underground or outside of what has been captured and enclosed. I was particularly interested in how the 'aggressor' and the 'surrounds' have been portrayed in Western genre films and literature featuring complexly Romantic descriptions of the pre-modern West. I used imagery from these genres, which I regard as belonging to my own aesthetic tradition as a person of White

Settler descent, but I attempted to organize my texts in such a way as to encompass power relationships with and within the 'life that surrounds', so often imperceptible in the popular [white/heterosexual/able-bodied/middle-class etc.] imagination. I also attempted to highlight intersectionality within these power dynamics.

My interest in North American colonial texts and artworks ran parallel to my interest in the contemporary cattle industry, particularly the ways in which popular ideas about ranching life come up against the violent realities of factory farming and meatpacking. Significant to this research was my coming across the 1894 publication, *The Banditti of the Plains*, by A.S. Mercer, a historically-banned book which details the 1892 invasion and subsequent massacre of a group of small-time Wyoming ranch owners by large-scale corporate ranchers or 'cattlemen', under the willful deception that independent rustlers had been stealing corporate cattle. This conflict struck me as exemplary of the complexities of territorial demarcation within settler colonies. *The Banditti of the Plains* invites righteous empathy for the settlers, and yet these settlers were complicit in the mass removal of Indigenous groups from the area. I also saw a thread of relationship to the modern cattle industry, where in Alberta and Texas recent immigrants, often refugees or temporary foreign workers, make up much of the meatpacking labour force and are notoriously exploited by corporations such as Tyson Foods (Broadway 564).

The resulting poetic text is a stitching-together of phrases and imagery from multiple source texts, including *The Banditti of the Plains*, *The Undercommons*, Upton Sinclair's *The Jungle*, research papers on meatpacking towns, and fictional poems based on mood, characters and action in 20th century Western films and novels. *Sugar's Waste* also features texts that I wrote during field research in Southern Alberta – prose descriptions of my surroundings, and aestheticized listings of objects and landmarks of the above-and-below-ground territories. I treated each page as a terrain map, loosely framing the landscape using a Traditionally-European navigational practice. I've treated this 'text-mapping' in a variety of ways, however – sometimes growing landmarks vertically as though in landscape portraiture (Bruton 21-23), sometimes scattering named-landmarks across multiple pages (Bruton 10-13), other times manifesting character action within the space (Bruton 31). I have actively engaged words as both signifiers and material – paying careful attention to the shape and positioning of the words on the page so as to evoke a kind of material text-action (Bruton 32-37).

Formal Interdependence

I wanted to create a musical performance that existed in autonomous counterpoint to a poetic text. Though the actual poetry was featured only minimally in the performance, I was interested in how the reader or audience might creatively participate in the realization of dynamic imaginative spaces ‘between-two’ (Toye 187). It is important to emphasize that I wrote the performance and the poetry *concurrently* – the works developed in continuous informative relationship to each other, creating a subjectivity that is not ‘about being but about becoming, and which is always becoming *in relation*’ (Toye 187). Though I had originally intended to distribute chapbooks at the performance, I eventually decided that a chapbook would distract audience members. Instead, I included a few spoken and pre-recorded texts within the performance. I also distributed seventeen different poems on individual cards as a part of the program note; audience members had some contact with the poetry prior to the start of the show. I believe these inclusions provided a necessary amount of context for the music, while still allowing multiple interpretations and experiences to occur.

The song *Ponies Under Darkness* (see Appendix A) can be regarded as an example of the autonomous but interdependent relationship between music and text in *Sugar’s Waste*. My formal intention was to write a ‘sentimental’ and ‘romantic’ song that deliberately engaged aesthetic tropes of the country music genre, with specific reference to 1950s and 60s songs that combined country lyrical ballads with a pop-oriented crooner sound. This ‘country’ sound emerged from the same era as the films I referenced in my poetry – I didn’t feel a need to convert the song into a poem, as its purpose was rooted in an auditory gesture. The chorus line,

I would steal you on a pony
under cover of darkness
and you know that
you could steal me
oh don’t, please

nonetheless originated in a sentence from *The Banditti of the Plains*. ‘The cattlemen who have gone into the state at the head of the fighters whom they can trust, are men

who were driven off the ranges by the rustlers. Many of these men saved their lives only by escaping on fast ponies under cover of darkness' (Mercer 20). One audience member relayed to me after the show that he felt 'The cowboy entered the room' when I sang this song. This relationship wasn't intentional, but I think it can be traced to the appearance of 'Sugar' (the cowboy) in a poetic line spoken earlier.

A man trampled in on his horse

A man is trampled to death by his horse

A man named Sugar tramples in on his horse

Earlier in the desert, a man on his horse

On his horse a man is wounded, earlier

In the desert, Sugar passes crackers to a wounded man without his horse
not understanding why it happened

And he is required to shoot (Bruton 31).

Relationships between music and semantic concepts also appear in more abstract ways throughout *Sugar's Waste*. In the opening piece, for example, I used my vocal microphone to create speaker feedback from within the circle. As a performer, I felt I was probing intangible borders, or pulling forth vibrant energy from the 'interval between' (Toye 187). If I gestured too close to a speaker, the result was painful for audience ears; delicate movements, on the other hand, created tiny crackles and pure tones. It was an intimately collaborative piece; I wouldn't be able to perform it safely without a sensitive sound engineer (Matthew Ariaratnam) continuously adjusting levels. This piece grew not from concepts but from accidental feedback occurrences during my private vocal practice sessions. It nonetheless belonged in the performance, introducing the audience to a sense of unseen-but-sometimes-audible sound hanging in the physical and imagined atmosphere of the stage.



Image 3. *Feedback Seeking*. Photo by Andi Icaza.

Experimental Vocal Practice and *Unsongs*

I've categorized the vocal pieces in *Sugar's Waste* as belonging to two groups, 'songs', and 'unsongs'. 'Unsongs' are pieces which attempt to break down or disperse the unitary subjective voice. I've made this distinction based on the relationship between words and form in each vocal piece – some pieces, such as *No Place in the Sun* and *Ponies Under Darkness*, follow a standard verse/chorus format. Other pieces, such as *The Heard Surrounds* (see Appendixes A & B) and *Ring Oscillator* (see Appendixes A & B), feature fractured lyrical lines and non-verbal vocal sounds, as well as unusual formal patterning. Rosi Braidotti asserts that in order to resist the 'rhizomic or weblike structure' (Braidotti 25) of power relations in the post-industrial world, it is necessary to 'start from micro-instances of embodied and embedded self and the complex web of social relations that compose subject positions' (Braidotti 4). She also suggests that there is power in a pluralistic 'nomadic subjectivity', which privileges change and motion over stability, best exemplified by the processual figurement 'becoming- (woman, minority, insect etc.)' (Braidotti 29). I wondered how I might apply the notion of a nomadic or non-unified subjectivity to formal musical structures, especially that of the song, which is perhaps a quintessential expression of the unified, individual subject.

In the piece, *The Heard Surrounds*, I inverted the traditional melody/harmony art song relationship by multiplying, fragmenting and bifurcating text within a field of noisy, improvised bass music. *The Heard Surrounds* originated in my poem, *Sounding the Run*, wherein I play with similarities between the words, 'Surrounds,' 'Sounds', 'Heard' and 'Herd'. Two versions of this poem have been featured as part of my documentation, one as a separate document (see Appendix C) and one on pgs. 36-39 of the *Sugar's Waste* text. Densely arranged, half-formed sentences gesture towards an expanse of fragmented and unstable voices. It seemed fitting to use this poem as an experiment in non-unitary songwriting - by embedding what is normally a stable and foregrounded object (the song) into a drone-based sonic environment, I hoped to direct the listener's attention towards multiple, scattered sites of 'becoming' within the surround. Gordon Havelaar and I staged *The Heard Surrounds* so that singers walk in a circle around the audience. This dynamic sound design emphasizes the decentralized instability of the voices.

THE HEARD SURROUNDS

EACH SYSTEM APPROXIMATELY 30s 1

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The Heard Surrounds, Page 1.

I was interested to use the fragmentary form of *The Heard Surrounds* as an overarching structural container for *Sugar's Waste*. In the tradition of early minimalism, drones and other forms of repetition or sustained sound are used to suspend temporal expectation and increase a listener's sense of the physicality of sound (Potter, Keith and Kyle Gann and Pwyll Ap Siôn 5-6). Similarly, I hoped that continuous return to a recognizable set of drone-based structures could support my intended evocation of physical place. I also wanted to integrate my experimental, improvisational vocal practice, using non-verbal vocal sound as a means of highlighting the centrality of the voice in human communication or lack thereof, while stimulating some form of non-linguistic visceral response. This resulted in the creation of a series of vocal pieces that function less as procedural minimalism and more as tonal and textural anchor-points for the listener.

I created the pieces *Crickets*, *Ring Oscillator*, and *Tape Cassette Ooh* (see Appendix A) by borrowing micro-structures from *The Heard Surrounds*, vocally improvising within these micro-structures, and editing the improvisations into new formal structures. Each of these derivative pieces features some form of improvisation during live performance. In *Crickets*, for example, I improvise a new vocal line on repetition of the through-composed form. *Crickets* is followed immediately by *Tape Cassette Ooh*, where I record improvised pitches onto four fixed-duration tape loops, re-creating the piece each time it is performed. In the Friday night performance, this process resulted in my discovery of shrill, accidentally birdlike sounds in the upper ranges of my voice. After *Crickets*, I recorded these sounds into the tape-recorders. Once the looping environment had been established, I continued to improvise within it using these previously-unrealized vocal textures.

Score style

In the second year of my MFA research at SFU, I made a significant transition from standard, digital notation to hand-produced durational and indeterminate score formats. I initiated research into non-traditional score formats after completing my first-year project; in *Cattletongue* I realized that although I was working with extended string techniques, my music conveyed a classicism that I felt was non-indicative of my aesthetic interests and intentions. I wanted to create pieces that unfold in a temporal manner reminiscent of experimental electronic genres, which meant a shift away from conventional metrical notation. I also wanted to engage my ensemble's listening skills and improvisational capacity.

In the durational score for *Thickets* (see Appendixes A & B), each performer reads from the entire score, where starts, stops and temporary pairings between players are indicated. My ensemble and I felt it was conducive to group cohesion to work using approximate durations; one player kept approximate time, nodding every ten seconds. Stops and starts were directed via physical gestures; throughout the course of performance, leadership was shared between pairs of players, or passed between single players. This piece was completed with the addition of live digital processing by Paul Paroczai. We used condenser microphones to transfer a live signal from each instrument to Paul's computer, where he manipulated the sound and created digital

'echoes' of the acoustic fragments. Paul had full creative control over this aspect of the performance, and it is not indicated in the original score.

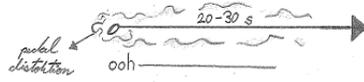
The image shows two systems of handwritten musical notation for a piece titled "Thickets" by R. Bruton. The first system is labeled "A1" and the second "A2". Each system contains four staves: Violin I (vl. I), Violin II (vl. II), Viola (Va.), and Cello (Vc.). The notation is characterized by extensive use of glissandos, indicated by "gliss." and "g/liss." markings, and dynamic markings such as *mp*, *mf*, *p*, and *pp*. Vertical lines with arrows pointing down to the staves are labeled with durations: "0''", "5''", "10''", "15''", and "20''". The score is written in a fluid, expressive style, with many notes and lines connected by slurs and glissando lines.

Thickets, Page One.

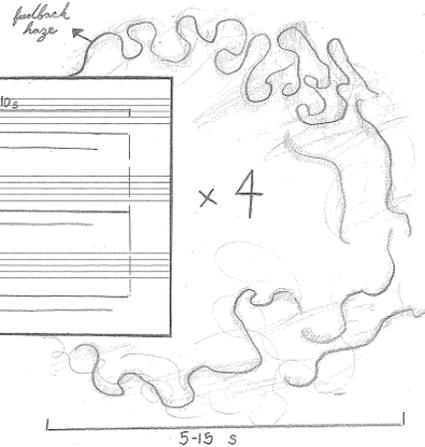
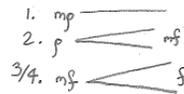
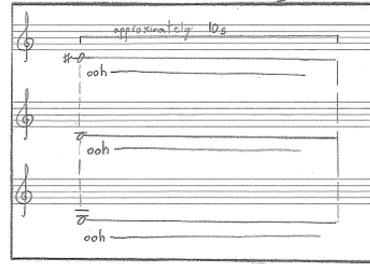
In addition to durational notation, I worked with graphic and instructional score formats that allowed performers to quickly leave the score behind. In *Ring Oscillator*, for example, one vocalist sings an improvised pitch for an indeterminate amount of time. There are instructions for the ensemble to start either after or during the initiatory gesture, but duration is indicated as being approximately four to six seconds. Consequently, there is some flexibility written into the piece for how a given performance might collectively feel.

'RING OSCILLATOR'
R. BRUTON

VOICE A + DELAY



CHORUS



VOICE A + DELAY

IMPROVISE A PITCH ANYWHERE BETWEEN G3 & D5
SUSTAIN FOR 8-10 s ON 'OOH', DISTORTING WITH
PEDAL AS DESIRED.

CHORUS WILL ENTER AFTER OR DURING YOUR
SUSTAINED PITCH.

HOLD MICROPHONE CLOSE TO SPEAKER TO PLAY CHORUS
FEEDBACK. PROLONG AS YOU LIKE WITH DELAY.

WAIT 5-20 s BEFORE INTRODUCING NEXT PITCH.

CHORUS

ON SYLLABLE 'OOH' & INDICATED PITCH, OSCILLATE
MICROPHONE EVENLY FROM LEFT TO RIGHT, WITHIN A WIDTH
OF 6" TO EITHER SIDE OF MOUTH. ALLOW 1 s PER
SWEEP ACROSS FACE.

1. START 2-3 s AFTER VOICE A HAS FINISHED.

2. START AS SOON AS VOICE A FINISHES.

3/4. START AMIDST VOICE A'S SUSTAIN.

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Ring Oscillator.

I also worked on combining traditional song notation with these indeterminate and durational approaches. In *Transport Truck* (See Appendix A), I've notated the lyrics using common time. At the end of each lyrical line, the ensemble is expected to enter with a harmonic swell. This section is unmetered, but initiated by the final word in each lyrical line. It is up to the ensemble to listen and communicate with each other as to when this chord will stop and start.

'TRANSPORT TRUCK' r. bruton

Transport Truck.

Staging, Set Design, Lighting

Gordon Havelaar developed the staging based on a combination of aesthetic, semantic and acoustic impulses. We wished to transform the poetic and political notion of 'surrounds' into a series of visual gestures that could manifest autonomous formal meanings, while enhancing ideas already present in the music and text. We also had to accommodate music stands, microphones and wires. The choreography revolved around the seating circle as boundary, with action and sound occurring inside, outside, or in-between. The final result was relatively simple; the conventional 'song' pieces featured a group of performers performing at one edge of the circle, as though to emulate a concert stage (ie. *Nora, listening* – see Appendix A). Other choral and instrumental pieces had the performers surrounding the audience, while still others featured the performers clustered in the centre. Some pieces were amplified; others were entirely acoustic. Four speakers were positioned at the four corners of the studio, pointed inwards.



Image 4 *Nora, listening.* Photo by Andi Icaza.

My decision to seat the audience in a circle, with a clearly defined ‘inside’ and ‘outside’, emerged from a conversation with Theatre Faculty member Cole Lewis, before I brought Gordon on to the project. She had heard my piece, ‘No Place in the Sun (see Appendix A),’ which is based on a passage in Moten and Harney’s *The Undercommons*.

We say, rightly, if our critical eyes are sharp enough, that it’s evil and uncool to have a place in the sun in the dirty thinness of this atmosphere; that house the sheriff was building is in the heart of a fallout zone. And if our eyes carry sharpness farther out we trail the police so we can put them on trial...We move through it and it moves with us, out beyond the settlements, out beyond the redevelopment, where black night is falling, where we hate to be alone, back inside to sleep till morning, drink till morning, plan till morning, as the common embrace, right inside, and around, in the surround (Moten and Harney 19).

Cole noted that the repetition of the phrase ‘out here’, in my own piece, created a simultaneous sense of isolation and inclusion. Though the ‘we’ has been excluded, there is a sense of togetherness in the banished group.

Sheriff tried
To build a house out here
Out beyond the settlements
Out here.

And he built a narrow fence
Right inside
And around
And he kept us on the criminal side
Out here.

Mmmm sleep 'til morning
Mmmm drink 'til morning
There is no place
In the sun.

But if our eyes would carry sharpness
Even farther out
Beyond the redevelopments
Out here

In the dirty thinness
Of our atmosphere
Who would be on trial?
Out here.

Mmmm sleep 'til morning

Mmmm drink 'til morning

There is no place

In the sun.

Cole suggested that circular seating could be an effective way to create intimacy between performers and audience, and amongst audience members themselves. She also suggested that the area outside of the circle could be at times threatening and at times peaceful or inviting, depending on how it is lit. The 'we' could refer alternately to those attempting to protect themselves from the surrounds, and those who have been banished to the surrounds.

Though the gesture of seating the audience in the round was initiated as a form of theatrical representation, it became significant to the formal acoustic realization of certain compositions. The piece *Thickets*, for example, involves interplay between unamplified and digitally processed sound. The performers were clustered in the centre of the circle, while the digital sounds echoed up from around the edges of the landscape. Spatialization of this piece, in this way, supported listeners' immersion in the foregrounded string textures and less identifiable digital sound.



Image 5. *Thickets*. Photo by Andi Icaza.

Rob Leveroos designed and constructed the scenery based on my unfinished poetic text, some images of bright-purple grass that I had given him, and recorded pieces to be featured in the show. His impulse was to set the work in a grassland, but to skew the grassland in order to avoid direct representation. He chose grocery bags as a building material, which evoked grass but also garbage and human-made landscapes. In one corner we created a mound of living plant material; the aim was to juxtapose lush, storybook imagery with subtle references to the post-apocalyptic or sinister. I've referred to the aesthetic as 'techno-pastoral'. The lighting designers emphasized this juxtaposition by switching between warm oranges and yellows, and colder hues such as green and blue.



Image 6. *Lavender Mound.* Photo by Andi Icaza.

Conclusion

As a composer and performer I have sought to emphasize the emotionally expressive, viscerally impactful and linguistically communicative dimensions of the human voice, using my own vocal practice as a primary imaginative tool. While my chosen aesthetics are rooted simultaneously in singer-songwriter and post-operative traditions, I have worked to de-construct and fragment the unitary subjective voice, scattering half-formed sensuous meanings across the edifices of the work as a whole. *Sugar's Waste* is co-creatively intertwined with a series of poetic texts of the same name; these texts create ethical commentary on histories of the cattle and meatpacking industries in the North American West. The texts also offer semantic imagery and micro-narratives to the musical compositions, set design and bodily staging. In my compositional, directorial and collaborative capacities, these images and narratives have repeatedly been abstracted into their own formal microcosms across disciplinary borders.

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Sounding *Áfall/Trauma*

Introduction

This research pertains to a specific collaborative project: the creation of a musical work that responds to *Áfall/Trauma*, a new poetic manuscript by Icelandic-Canadian poet a rawlings. My role in the project will be to develop musical sketches, or scores, that will be further elaborated through an improvisational performance process between rawlings and myself. We will work in collaboration with a producer and recordist named Allan Farmelo, who will record, edit, and take a collaborative role in developing the concepts and overall structure of the work. My compositions will not be fixed, authoritative forms in the tradition of Western Art Music. The process will be closer to that of a ‘band’ making a record in collaboration with a producer – everyone has a role in generating material, and the recording and editing processes are an integral part of the work itself, as opposed to a final act of documentation. The development of a functioning performance ensemble will run parallel to the development of material for performance.

My research as outlined in this paper primarily concerns methodologies and aesthetics of 20th century Art music, and is devoted to the task of transforming an ethically-oriented poetic work into an album that simultaneously invokes pop, folk and experimental music sensibilities. I will demonstrate ways that representative musical practices have been problematized since the late 19th century, and investigate methodological practices that allow abstract music and text to co-exist in non-referential, but nonetheless aesthetically-pleasing, relationship. In the final section I will detail ways that formal structures in *Áfall/Trauma* offer foundation for an interdisciplinary encounter that itself constitutes an ethical gesture.

Part 1: Áfall/Trauma

Áfall/Trauma is a book of poetry that takes the form of a non-narrative play. The text poetically documents a series of rites between human and non-human environment that rawlings created and undertook during the course of her treatment for breast cancer. In her summary of the work, rawlings states, “Breast cancer becomes a vessel to experience a ‘theatre of the rural’— isolating, intimate, discomfiting, and where the private commons are a stage for semi-public conversation between and about a person and a person and a land” (rawlings, *Áfall/Trauma* 1). The ethical purpose for these rites was to enact experimental sensual engagements with specific locales, with the aim of manifesting non-anthropomorphic empathy for biotic and a-biotic entities within a given ecosystem. rawlings justifies this approach according to Arne Naess’ *eco-centrism*, a “branch of ethics that supports human interconnected interaction with environments where species are placed in egalitarian relationships” (rawlings, *Að Jökla* 44). She aims to re-frame landscapes from “a use-value position...to an immersive position of ecocentric egalitarianism where humans, non-human entities and eco-systems and their components are capable of communicating through multiple senses” (rawlings, *Að Jökla* 44). While it may be possible to experience *Áfall/Trauma* for aesthetic value alone, it is important to consider the piece as an ethico-aesthetic experiment. The ethical content of the piece is embedded in rawlings’ experimental generative practice, and in the material form of the text. I will investigate the ethical dimensions of the work further in the third part of this paper.

An important overall structural aspect in *Áfall/Trauma* is its non-fixity or “expansive interpretive flexibility” (rawlings, *Áfall/Trauma* 1). The performer or reader can choose to read, create from, or co-create the text in a multiplicity of permutations and combinations. The work is organized around four generalized themes, *The Beginning*,

The Room, The Play, and The Relationship. These sections can be read linearly, with the reader's eye and understanding progressing through the play as the pages turn from start to finish. Each section can also be read as a quasi-autonomous entity, without narrative dependence on the other parts. Alternately, a performer might interpret each section as a place or time wherein action occurs (etc.). The non-fixity of parts extends into the microscopic levels of the script, as well as its macroscopic layout. An example occurs in the section titled, *The Beginning*, which appears at the start of the script and formally contains only one page of text.

ÁFALL / TRAUMA by a rawlings

THE BEGINNING

in^{1 2 3 4}

The superscripts lead to footnotes at the bottom of the page:

¹ In English, *in-* may prefix negation onto a word; this translates to Icelandic as *ó-*.

² In Icelandic, *-in* may be a definitive feminine article ending.

³ *in*: a lighthouse, a cave, almost a temporary shelter

⁴ *-vade, -vert, -vite, -voke, -volve*

(rawlings, *Áfall/Trauma* 3)

The reader or performer may travel through this page several different ways. They may speak the word, 'in,' followed by 'one, two, three, four.' Then, they might quickly scan through the list of superscripts at the bottom of the page. Or, they could create short poems based on the titles of the four major sections, 'in the beginning, *in* The Room, *in* The Play, *in* The Relationship.' Each enunciation of 'in [section title]' could be followed by a performance pertaining to that section of the play. For musical performers, the slight spaces between each superscript, 1 (space) 2 (space) 3 (space) 4 (space) create opportunities for pausing on the silences between sounds, particularly when counting a set of digits that are commonly heard aloud at the start of a piece of music.

As an example for how I might treat the text as a songwriter and composer, I have chosen to create lyrics to a song by re-arranging words according to permutations based around the third and fourth superscript, as well as the title of this section. I have paired 'in' with each of *-vade, -voke, and -volve*, so that I have the words 'invade,' 'invert,' 'invoke,' and 'involve'. I have fixed these verbs to the place-types identified in superscript 3.

Invade a lighthouse

Invert a cave

Invoke a light

Invade, The Beginning, which was

almost

a temporary shelter.

This exercise demonstrates how text in *Áfall/Trauma* is always in motion, and will be created in different ways depending on who encounters it.

Part 2: Against Musical Representation

As I have outlined in my introduction, the aim of this project is to create a recorded musical work that exists somewhere in the territory between popular music and the avant-garde. As such, the creation and distribution of the work will feature diverse practical methodologies, and no single technique or aesthetic will dominate. My role in the project is to compose music, but my compositions will not serve as finalities. The process will involve processual feedback between live improvisation, composition, audio-editing, and electronic production. The purpose of this section is to situate my role in the project as a composer with training in the Western Art Music tradition. However, my approach is heavily influenced by (and integrated with) my diverse performance and pedagogical background. My aim here is to investigate the aesthetic challenges associated with creating music based in a poetic text that carries a strong ethical prerogative. I will look mainly to histories of Western Art Music, because writings on

these histories provide the most solvent explications for why my own aesthetic preferences are oriented within a Formalist ideology. I acknowledge, however, that musical aesthetics can't be pinned to a single historical trajectory, and that the current musical realm is one that involves multiple simultaneous influence amongst different musical genres and cultures.

I don't wish to create a work that musically represents *Áfall/Trauma*, nor one that attempts to capture its precise ethical imperatives. I also don't wish to create music that works in subordinate relationship to the text, as a means of emotionally or narratively driving the text. This approach is supported by the Formalist bent in post-Modern Western musical aesthetics: there is general agreement that extra-musical associations in a musical piece are generated by the listener, rather than the composer (Pymm 281). Representational sounds or gestures in certain kinds of music are regarded as historically specific constructions, not as qualities inherent in the acoustic construction of the music (Pymm 281). For example, the switch to a major key in Gustav Mahler's Late-Romantic song cycle *Kindertotenlieder (Songs on the Death of Children)* is generally associated with feelings of transcendence or acceptance, but it is recognized that associations between Major keys and happiness emerged during the Romantic period and are not necessarily true to music of other traditions or time periods. It is more common to speak about music as having its own meaning and structure, a kind of musical thinking that "includes the view of composition as the proposition of musical realities" (Rosenboom 205). Some evolutionary theories support the idea of music as a purely superfluous offshoot of language, a pleasurable vibratory detritus stemming from our need to communicate with one another but not directly beneficial to our survival (Grosz 31). Others have argued that music plays a direct role in sexual selection,

intensifying affect and subsequent attraction between two creatures (Grosz 29). In both these scenarios, music creates its own sensuous meaning.

I generally agree that music should not be tasked with making meanings in the dialectical sense, nor with re-creating text. While there might be scientific and aesthetic support for the idea of a 'pure' music, I'd like to point out that this approach to musical aesthetics is socially and historically situated, and thus also politically situated. Prior to the 19th Century, European art music had a *functional* purpose, as the vehicle for transmitting words, supporting narrative drama, or providing sonic decoration at court or religious functions. Where music was employed within multidisciplinary projects such as opera, it acted in subservient relationship to image and text. In the early 19th century, the Industrial Revolution, the rise of the Bourgeoisie, and the crumbling of the traditional Aristocracy all led to a change in the ways that people experienced music (Hamilton 68). Whereas previously composers were employed and commissioned by the church and aristocratic courts, there was now a public demand for music and performance that had previously been available only to the aristocracy. The subsequent rise of concert halls "meant that musical performance no longer had a direct social function that subserved other practices, but became a practice in its own right" (Hamilton 68).

The increased autonomy of musical practice and performance from courtly social function combined with an increased valuing of *instrumental* music based in Romantic aesthetic ideals. This may also have been influenced by the mass availability of factory-built instruments such as the piano (Partch 82). During the Romantic period, a distinct form of narrative, referential instrumental music called *program* music became popular. Program music told stories through sound, with concerts frequently accompanied by detailed program notes that helped to guide listeners through the piece. Many composers simultaneously began to create works that had no intended extra-musical

referentiality, resulting in a notion of 'absolute' music. Non-referential music existed before the Romantic era, but it was generally used to support another purpose, such as dance, or a church service. Instrumental music with no purpose other than for listening was therefore a novel emergence of the 19th century (Hamilton 70). The use of musical themes and figures to depict extra-musical ideas or emotions eventually resulted in two conflicting lines of musical thought: aesthetics of expression and aesthetics of form (Hamilton 83).

The aesthetics of form suggest that "form, as opposed to content, meaning, representation or extrinsic purpose, is the primary element of aesthetic value" (Hamilton 71). Though historically situated alongside social ruptures of the Industrial Revolution, it can also be traced to the Kantian ideal of autonomous aesthetic judgment. This refers to Kant's claim that "a pure judgement of taste attends exclusively to the form of the object or of its representation, while impure judgements of taste are affected by such factors as charm or emotion" (Hamilton 71-72). Kant did not esteem music highly for lacking the "meaning and intellectual appeal of other arts" (Hamilton 71), but he did include it as an example of 'free beauty,' which is a crucially influential aspect of his work that preceded Formalism. Free Beauty rests on the absence of representative expression within an artform (Hamilton 71). Some historians suggest that the rise of Absolute music is paradigmatic of free beauty, because of its supposed non-referentiality and abstraction (Hamilton 86).

It is important to further note that the notion of any artwork expressing or demonstrating objective politics is a narrative concept based in what Rancière calls the "field of possibility for writing" (Rancière 56). The inscription of political ideals that are comprehensible via semantic, or writerly, understanding is a "principle of the representative tradition that the aesthetic regime of art has called into question. That

means that there is no criterion for for establishing a correspondence between aesthetic virtue and political virtue” (Rancière 57). While the notion of politically-committed artwork may be outdated due to its narrative implications, there is nonetheless a “politics of aesthetics: forms of community laid out by the very regime of identification in which we perceive art (hence pure art as well as committed art)” (Rancière 56). As I have shown already, aesthetics of music are predominated by Formalist ideals that presuppose no inherent political value or otherwise referential meaning in a musical work. This does not mean that music is devoid of politics, however, as the very emphasis on a Formal or ‘pure’ musical aesthetics is bound in socio-political history. Music is abstract, but it is not truly *autonomous*.

Áfall/Trauma itself is a multi-dimensional semantic and sensuous document, and does not express its politics in a straightforward dialectical format. In the next section I will show ways that some of the non-dialectical forms and processes, specifically those pertaining to sound, can be shared between music and text.

Part 3: Music and Text in Modern and Postmodern Aesthetic Practice

My compositional framework for developing *Áfall/Trauma* will include elements of 20th Century formalist music practices, as well as aspects of emotional expressivity that can more commonly be found in popular or vernacular music forms. I won’t go into detail on the popular music forms in this paper due to space limitations. I will instead elaborate on a few key methodologies from 20th Century Art music.

As I have outlined in section two of this paper, developments during the Romantic era saw the emergence of musical forms increasingly autonomous from either social function or the service of narrative text and drama. This resulted in a concept of music

as an independent art form, as well as the notion of Absolute music. The development of Absolute aesthetics into sound for sound's sake became a key concept for composers of the 20th Century Avant-Garde (Kane 29). During the late 20th Century, theatre *also* saw increased autonomy from representational function, resulting in post-dramatic theatre that operates according to a different set of formal principles than those of dramatic text. Hans Thies Lehmann has conceptualized such works as theatre "after drama: theatre whose object is a stand-alone work of art and not theatre as the illustration of a dramatic text" (Novak 134), which means there is "a different aesthetic logic underlying the constellation of elements that together make up the theatrical event" (Novak 135). Such an exposition of post-dramatic elements can be found in the structural make-up of *Áfall/Trauma*, which is arranged into four sections or acts, each with shorter component parts or scenes, but the meaning of each scene or act is independent from its chronological ordering. The work contains no singular narrative arc, but there is recurring imagery and symbolism throughout the entire work.

It is useful to look at ways that ever-increasing Abstraction in music has corresponded with (or run parallel to) post-dramatic theatrical developments. A commonly used example is that of the Happening, a theatrical concept that allows multiple performative disciplines to work in tandem, but not direct relationship, with each other. The first Happening occurred in 1952 and was scored by composer John Cage.

Cage provided a rhythmic structure, a series of time-brackets...Once a performer's compartment had been signalled to start, he was free to act in it for as long as and in any way he liked. The separate compartment were arranged to overlap one another so that a complex of differently timed, completely independent activities, each in its own timespace, was produced...The activities which the 'happening' contained were as follows: Cage was up a ladder delivering a lecture which included programmed

silences; poets M. C. Richards and Charles Olson went up another ladder at different times and read; at one end of the hall was a movie and at the other end slides were projected; Robert Rauschenberg played an old hand-wound gramophone, David Tudor was at the piano and Merce Cunningham and other dancers moved around the audience, while some of Rauschenberg's white paintings were suspended above the proceedings...movement took place in the large centre space and in the aisles, although the larger part of the action happened outside the square (Nyman 1974 60).

I emphasize the significance of what constitutes development or change in this event. The piece features a combination of performative disciplines, but there is no narrative arc to the piece as a whole. Instead, the work highlights *action through space and time*, as well as the aesthetic tension between sustained actions that occur in deliberate autonomy from one another within an enclosed space.

A related area of investigation is in the realm of post-opera, which exists at the juncture between Modernism and Postmodernism (Novak 136) and has historically been influenced heavily by Minimalist music. In the paradigmatic post-operatic work composed by Philip Glass, *Einstein on the Beach* (1976), “the search for unity between music and drama has been abandoned; dramatic principle is deconstructed, operatic texts (libretto, music, stage set) are not in a strict hierarchical relationship, nor is there any intention for them to be so” (Novak 136). *Einstein on the Beach* can be described as an “archive of scenes that make associations to the life and work of the scientist Albert Einstein” (Novak 136). There is no plot in the five-hour opera, and no linear narration. The libretto is constructed predominantly from numbers and *sofège* syllables that correspond to metrical layout and sung pitches, simple constructions that allow basic musical architecture to reveal itself in performance. Even the title character appears only as a signifier: Einstein is staged as a mute figure playing the violin. The

piece works in the liminal territory between *process* music, where “repetitive music depicts merely its structure and the order of its constituent parts” (Novak 136), and extra-musical signification that grounds audience members in the life and work of Albert Einstein.

I think there are some useful links between process-minimalism, specifically in the ways it is employed in projects such as *Einstein on the Beach*, and the task of creating a musical work in response to *Áfall/Trauma*. One of the defining features of process music (a term often equated with minimalism) is the use of repetition, drones, and auditory illusions to reveal the spatial and temporal physicality of music as sound (Potter, Keith and Kyle Gann and Pwyll Ap Siôn 5-6). In her eco-linguistic research, rawlings has employed similar techniques to investigate the physical and sonic architecture of Icelandic words, demonstrating ways that semantic meaning dissolves when a speaker explores a word’s sensuous construction.

The phonological breakdown of *jökull* commences with a voiced palatal fricative (j), followed by front rounded low monophthong (ö). An unvoiced velar plosive (k) precedes the closed 10 back high monophthong (u), and the word finishes with the pre-stopped, unvoiced lateral fricative (ll). This combination produces a powerful explosion of minimal vowels connecting fricatives and unvoiced utterance. The word starts with a push, a force of voice through the mouth, and ends in the near-whisper of the dark ‘ll’ ...Repetition strengthened my familiarity but also estranged me from the word as an indication of meaning, as I inhabited the collection of sounds to explore their choreography within my body (rawlings, *Að Jökla* 44).

This breakdown draws attention to words as collections of different kinds of sound-material. It is important to underscore that the sonic materials of language and music move through time, and are dependent on anticipation and change to make meaning.

Composer and music theorist David Rosenboom has suggested that our use of the term 'chord' to designate a harmonic layering of sounds is somewhat misleading, as 'chord' refers to a singular sound object. Chords instead should be understood as actions, and thought of as musical verbs rather than nouns (Rosenboom 216).

In *Áfall/Trauma*, there are several examples where a formal process is applied to a group of words as a means of generating poetic material. In *The Room*⁷, English words and phrases featuring the word 'land' are arranged alphabetically in a large-font block of text that takes up the entire page.

THE ROOM⁷

Iceland island backland badlands bland borderland
brushland bushland clandestine coastland colander
cropland dockland downland dreamland dryland
duneland eland fairyland fantasyland farmland
fatherland flatland forestland garland gelandesprung
gland glandular grassland Greenland headland
heartland heathland highland hinterland Holland
homeland inland landed landfall landfill landform
landgrab landholder landing landlady landless
landlord landlubber landmark landmass landmine
landowner lands landscape landslide landslip
landsman landward lotusland lowland mainland
marshland meadowland midland moorland
motherland New Zealand Netherlands norland
northland outlander outlandish never-never land
land of nod land of the living blight on the land land
of milk and honey the lay of the land land a blow
land a job land on both feet no man's land land sakes
live off the land on land the promised land this land
is your land home and native land

This poem/script works in a few different ways. It draws attention to all the ways we speak about and conceptualize land in the English language, and it causes listeners to think about the word, 'land' as a sound. As the word is repeated, it loses some of its referential meaning. Rather than try to comprehend the conceptual meaning of the words, the listener anticipates temporal change, taking pleasure in the shift between alphabetical sounds throughout the duration of the piece. rawlings treatment of the text in *The Room*⁷ is distinctly musical, as she has worked with sound as the basis for temporal development. She has also drawn the listener's attention to a gradual sonic-poetic process, much as a minimalist composer would draw attention to a gradual musical process through accretive repetition or the use of drones.

rawlings and I have performed this text on pre-determined pitches, bringing an element of song into the performance. We start on a very high pitch, and each new word brings a semi-tone drop in pitch. On a second iteration, one person starts very low and the other person start high, and the directional lines of pitch cross over in the centre of the text. By bringing a musical notion of pitch into the enunciation of already-pitch-inflected words, we emphasize the gradually-changing process inherent in the structural layout of the text.

I'd like to consider *Áfall/Trauma*'s non-fixed form as a potential entry point into musical creation. A musical equivalent to non-fixity in text is the compositional technique known as Indeterminacy. In indeterminate scores, certain sounds, structures or materials are indicated, while others are left to chance or to the performer's/group of performers' creative choices. The above mentioned Happening is considered a form of Indeterminacy (Nyman 60), but it can be executed in other ways. Toronto

composer/guitarist Ken Aldcroft's provides musicians in his *Convergence* ensemble with a page of chords and phrases. They are also given indicators such as 'when you hear the main melody, bring the piece to a close.' How the musicians perform the musical material is up to their own aesthetic preferences, and will change depending on the conditions of a given musical performance.

While there are some resemblances between the textual indeterminacy of rawlings' text and indeterminacy in Art Music, there are fundamental differences between musical scores and poetry. *Áfall/Trauma*, as writing, can be experienced silently and internally by a reader, due to the semiotic nature of words. Simultaneously, the words function as indicators for performance. If the reader is a native speaker of either English or Icelandic, their inherent linguistic knowledge will guide them through correct pitch and rhythm of speech (Pinsky 3-4). The musical score, however, is a collectively-private experience involving the composer, the musical director and the performers, but generally not the audience members. The act of reading occurs physically in the act of performance, and the pleasure of music lies predominantly in hearing rather than imagined internal sounding. McNeilly eloquently details the score's function in his description of jazz composer Steve Lacy's settings of poems by Tom Raworth:

The score...is neither music nor text, after all, but a muted hybrid. It formally promises an absolute semiosis...a cohesion of sound and sense, but reading that score, either as typography or as a blueprint for performance, only confirms an inability to arrive at any such fusion on the page. The song will not exist as lines or notes on paper, where it lies tacit and unperformed...both poem and music resist the context of their meeting, putting collaborative performativity at issue in a stillness, a transcription that in itself performs nothing (McNeilly 159).

Scores can have an inherent visual aesthetic value and like texts, they serve as artefacts that physically carry knowledge through time. However, the primary function of scores is to indicate musical events; there is a fundamental inequivalency between a score and a poetic-hybrid such as *Áfall/Trauma*. While some aspects of the text might be translated into music, the resulting score cannot be regarded purely as a translation, but rather as an originating, disciplinary hybrid that includes elements of script, words, pitches and musical instructions.

Part 4: Ethical Explorations in *Áfall/Trauma*

As outlined in the first section of this paper, I have chosen not to treat rawling's text as a libretto, which I might for a more traditionally narrative or expressive text. I hope to enliven the text in a way that is predominantly musical, but where the source text is still recognizable. Here I will focus on the ethical project embedded in *Áfall/Trauma*, and on ways that meanings are formed and knowledges are produced beyond the overtly semantic or cognitive. I will suggest that because the piece takes an indeterminate or non-fixed form, it supports the development of collectively heterogeneous conversations surrounding meaning and identity, on multiple planes or territories of a given eco-sociological system. The script makes space for and invites vital and productive difference while acknowledging ethical work as a shared undertaking, which I will frame as an important component in anti-oppressive, emancipatory practice.

I will continuously draw these conversations around to the project at hand, which is to create a musical artwork that converses with/responds to the text in its simultaneous formal and ethical dimensions. My interest in developing language wherein form can be discussed as codeterminous with content (in this case, ethics) will act as a gateway for

treating music as sensuous meaning-making. I will refer back to the problematized issue of representation in musical practice, and show ways that music can work as ethics beyond semantic referentiality. As this work is developing in conversation and collaboration with a rawlings, I will draw attention to the ways that multidisciplinary arts practice is itself a form of pluralistic knowledge production, and hence an imaginative ground for encountering difference.

I will start by discussing the notion of difference or other within Margaret E. Toye's framework of *poethics*, or 'embodied ethical writing,' which she offers as a means of "creating and understanding texts that think through ethics, bodies, aesthetics and politics together as a part of a vital and relevant contemporary feminist ethics of embodiment that foregrounds the materiality of the language we use to mediate our relations" (Toye 185-186). Toye constructs her *poethics* from what she refers to as a discursive "close encounter" between Haraway's Cyborg Feminism and Irigaray's Ethics of Sexual Difference (Toye 185). Within this framework, the cyborg as a discomfiting site of hybridity is used to discuss various troubled border crossings such as man/woman, subject/object, human/machine. Haraway's notion of hybridity is brought into proximity with Irigaray's ethical concept of the "interval between," as a site for renegotiating simultaneous material and imaginative borders surrounding identities, politics, economy etc. My intention is not to equate rawlings' work with the figure of the cyborg. However, when placed alongside certain poetic occurrences in *Áfall/Trauma*, the cyborg can offer a useful axis for comprehending notions of hybridity, border-crossing, and relations between one or multiple other(s) (Toye 183).

In her introductory summary of *Áfall/Trauma*, rawlings situates the work as confrontation between "the body in crisis," and "narrative, diagnostics and identification." These confrontations are subsequently located in relation to "the self, society, cultural

habit, non-human entities, and land". Already, rawlings has situated the body-in-crisis (breast cancer) as a site of suspended or disrupted meaning. The cyborg itself, as a hybrid between a person and a machine or other form of technology, is not directly transferable to rawlings' assemblage of encounters. However, Toye describes the ethical cyborg as "a locus for various border crossings and a site of hybridity where the relations between selves and others are renegotiated, including in relation to subjectivity, identity, concepts of the body, sex, reproduction, the family, labor, language, oppression and resistance" (Toye 183). rawlings deals with blendings and confusions that run parallel to the Cyborg's function as disruptor to *what is known*, a process which subsequently makes way for radical re-orientation of meanings.

It is useful to examine the concept of the Cyborgian Other in relation to the blurring of boundaries between subject and object that occurs throughout *Áfall/Trauma*. In the sections entitled, 'The Play,' and, 'The Relationship,' we witness ongoing counterpoint between the subjective 'I,' and objective references to 'A woman'. 'A woman' and 'I' run parallel to each other as a simultaneous, but not-quite-conjoined, subject/object:

A woman and I enter the room. We sit down. We close our eyes and breathe. For some time, I

watch my mind wander from topic to topic and note its fixations. At some point, I think that I am

in a room sitting near a woman.

For some time, a woman and I have been many places together. I close my eyes and see a woman in

the place where I most picture a woman when I think of a woman and a woman and I are not in

the same place together. In my mind, I see a woman on Mount Hekla. Her mouth is open and I can

see the spaces between her teeth. A woman's face looks distracted and her body language suggests

she may leave at any moment.

I sit down. I close my eyes as I breathe. In my mind, I see a woman in the place where I most picture

a woman. She looks ready to leave at any moment. In my mind, a woman leaves. I follow her

through many places we have been together (p. 23).

Rawlings has related¹ the 'A Woman and I' thread to the troubled dysphorias that arose as her body became separate from her internal 'I' during medicalized discussions surrounding diagnosis and treatment.

A related thread to the experience of self as other is the appearance and re-appearance of the excised and missing breast. The subject/object questions, "What becomes of excised breast meat? Is it buried, burned, trashed?" (rawlings, *Áfall/Trauma* 31). She searches for her missing breast, which we see in the three-page exposition of statements, "Photograph trash in the room" (rawlings, *Áfall/Trauma* 40), "A woman photographs trash while searching for breast meat" (rawlings, *Áfall/Trauma* 41), and "I photograph trash while searching for breast meat" (rawlings, *Áfall/Trauma* 42). The action of photographing distances the subject/object from the missing body part, while the pairing of 'breast' with 'trash' signifies the breast's relationship to something firmly separate from the subject/object's body. Meanwhile, she grounds her search in the emotions of a body that has undergone major physical and identity loss. "Where the

¹ In conversation, August 2015

breast was aches when breasts are *lost*— as in *hérna* she entered a *state of shock* when she could not find her nipple” (rawlings, *Áfall/Trauma* 67).

By demonstrating the confusion between self/other, woman/not-woman, and subject/object that occurs as the body undergoes trauma, rawlings outlines a version of reality where fixed-state dualities are thrown into non-fixed relationality. This can be brought alongside of the ethical cyborg as a site where empathy and responsibility manifest.

It is this emphasis on renegotiating the lines between “self” and “other” where Haraway reveals the ethical commitment at the root of her figure. Haraway places ‘the Other’ within us, and underlines our responsibility for this other...The cyborg includes the Other without incorporating it, without subsuming it; the other remains in-itself and for-itself, existing side by side with others, meeting, but not blending, with them’ (Toeye 184).

Toye relates the cyborg to Irigaray’s Interval Between, a site where differences are brought into intimate relationships where neither the self nor the other is subordinated.

Irigaray’s ethics is based on what she has termed “between two,” which is a subjectivity that is not about being but about becoming, and which is always becoming in relation. It is the “interval between” that mediates and determines the possibilities for an ethical relationship between these two subjects. As such, it gives us not just a relational ethics but also an ethics of mediation.

Áfall/Trauma presents numerous ethical mediations in its narrative/referential fragments. Furthermore (and significant to the creation of music based in the text), *Áfall/Trauma* creates opportunity for an ethical, non-authoritarian encounter with the reader or performer.

As I have already shown, *Áfall/Trauma* constitutes an upheaval of subjectivity that moves the self and multiple others into a complex process of unstable, or non-unitary relations. This ethics of relationality, or series of *becomings*, can be witnessed not only in the semantic content of the text, but also in its indeterminate form. As I have already outlined in section one, the work can be navigated in myriad ways, depending on the experiences, knowledges, physicality, artistic discipline etc. of each person that chooses to engage it. The work can never be completed, because it is made only in the act of encounter, and the author cannot be present to govern or assess how each of these creations proceed. In other words, the work always inhabits the interval-between as a necessity of its form.

Braidotti aims for a proliferation of minorities or affirmative differences, in critical theory, philosophical discourse and active citizenship. She calls for a “robust praxis of collective engagement with the specific conditions of our times – for instance, the proliferation of *quantitative* differences and the erasure of *qualitative* shifts in ethical and political accountability” (Braidotti 18, italics mine). She describes the political force behind Nomadic thought as “the expression of a nonunitary vision of the subject, defined by motion in a complex manner that is densely material” (Braidotti 3). Braidotti’s focus on re-orienting, or re-creating the subject, is predicated on her understanding that “subjectivity is a socially mediated process of relations and negotiations with multiple others and with multilayered social structures” (Braidotti 4). It is therefore bound to questions surrounding power, in the Foucault-ian sense that “power is the process that flows incessantly in between the most ‘internal’ and the most ‘external’ forces...power is a situation or a process, not an object or an essence” (Braidotti 4). Braidotti thus produces material implications for a critical re-orientation of subjectivity and the relations that form it.

Braidotti's cautionary discourse against totalizing or majoritarian theory is based in the schizophrenic nature of post-industrial capitalism. Late capitalism operates around "dogmatic and exclusionary power structures" (Braidotti 19) that have many different centres scattered throughout the global economy. Nomadic praxes must therefore aim at transforming these centres at a local level. Furthermore, the authoritarian nature of these power structures cannot be radically transformed by replacement with a similarly totalizing project. Irigaray might support this with a theory of 'metonymy,' based around difference, association and contiguity, rather than the substitution, similarity and sameness more commonly associated with metaphor (Toye 187-188).

Braidotti recommends multiple processes of *Becoming* as a way of setting these plural knowledges into motion and mediational relationship with each other. Like the Cyborg, which "offers a way out of the maze of dualisms in which we have explained our bodies and our tools to ourselves" (Toye 183), the process of Becoming "aims at decolonizing the thinking subject from the dualistic grip" (Braidotti 30). I'd like to argue for *Áfall/Trauma* as a nomadic project that initiates and supports pluralistic subjectivity and knowledge production through its non-unitary work in the 'interval between'.

"Becoming" works on a time sequence that is neither linear nor sequential because processes of becoming are not predicated on a stable, centralized Self who supervises their unfolding. These processes rather rest on a nonunitary, multilayered, dynamic subject attached to multiple communities. Becoming woman/animal/insect is an affect that flows, like writing; it is a composition, a location that needs to be constructed together with, that is to say, the encounter with others. They push the subject to his/her limits, in a constant encounter with external, different others. The nomadic subject as a nonunitary entity is simultaneously self-propelling and heterodefined, i.e., outward bound (Braidotti 35).

Meaning in *Áfall/Trauma* arises from co-creative encounter with the reader or performer. The text does not demand reproduction, but rather initiates a multiplicity of different versions, or different knowledges, amongst each of its readers or performers. Like the Becoming that Braidotti describes, this process is not supervised by the author, but rawlings' work nonetheless facilitates a diverse proliferation of subjectivities.

Conclusion

My investigative purpose has been to seek ways that music can share an ethical project with a text, without attempting to represent or replicate those ethics in a dialectical format. This is because music operates according to its own formal sensibility, and musical meaning cannot be equated to linguistic understanding. *Áfall/Trauma* does not make meaning solely via dialectical referentiality; the ethical or political action occurs as much by encounter with indeterminate form as it does by semantic content, and poetic experimentation with sound provides an entry-point for confluence with music. A musical project that works through and with *Áfall/Trauma* does not need to reproduce the politics of the text. Rather, it can situate itself within a shared ethical project, but operate according to musical sense.

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Appendix A.

Audio Documentation

Full Show

Creator/Director/Credits: All compositions and lyrics by Rebecca Bruton. Digital electronics created and performed by Paul Paroczai. Performed by Rebecca Bruton (voice, violin, microphone feedback), Tegan Wahlgren (Voice, Violin), Elliot Vaughan (Voice, Viola), Clara Shandler (Voice, Cello), Dave Chokroun (Bass), Matthew Ariaratnam (Speaker Feedback and Guitar on *Ponies Under Darkness*), Ben Wylie (Piano on *The Heard Surrounds*).

Set design by Robert Leveroos.

Choreography by Gordon Havelaar.

Lighting Design by Josie Lee and Jake Lindsey.

Stage Management by Ivy Cui and David Cowling.

Technical Support and Direction by Ben Rogalsky.

Sound Engineering by Matthew Ariaratnam and David Cowling.

Description: Audio recording of *Sugar's Waste (Night Two, October 6th and 7th 2016)*.

Filename: sugar's waste night two.mp3

Select Excerpted Audio

1. **Creator/Director/Credits:** Rebecca Bruton, Composer & Voice. Tegan Wahlgren, Violin. Elliot Vaughan, Viola. Clara Shandler, Cello. Dave Chokroun, Bass.

Description: Audio recording of *Tape Cassette Ooh & Transport Truck*

Filename: cassette loop ooh+ transport truck.mp3

- 2. Creator/Director/Credits:** Rebecca Bruton, composer, lyricist and lead vocalist. Paul Paroczai, digital composition and performance. Elliot Vaughan, Clara Shandler & Tegan Wahlgren, back-up vocalists. Matthew Ariaratnam, sound engineer.

Description: Audio recording of *Nora, listening.*

Filename: nora live night two.mp3

- 3. Creator/Director/Credits:** Rebecca Bruton, composer, orchestration, lyricist and lead vocalist. Tegan Wahlgren, Violin & Voice. Elliot Vaughan, Viola & Voice. Clara Shandler, Cello & Voice. Dave Chokroun, Bass. Matthew Ariaratnam, sound engineer. Justin Haynes, Mixing and Mastering.

Description: Audio recording of *No Place in the Sun.*

Filename: NO PLACE IN THE SUN MASTERED.mp3

- 4. Creator/Director/Credits:** Rebecca Bruton, Composer, Voice. Tegan Wahlgren, Voice. Elliot Vaughan, Voice. Clara Shandler, Voice. Matthew Ariaratnam, sound engineer.

Description: Audio recording of *Ring Oscillator.*

Filename: Ring oscillator.mp3

- 5. Creator/Director/Credits:** Rebecca Bruton, Composer, Voice. Tegan Wahlgren, Voice. Elliot Vaughan, Voice. Clara Shandler, Voice. Dave Chokroun, Bass. Matthew Ariaratnam, sound engineer. Justin Haynes, Mixing and Mastering.

Description: Audio recording of *The Heard Surrounds.*

Filename: THE HEARD SURROUNDS MASTERED.mp3

6. Creator/Director/Credits: Rebecca Bruton, Composer, Violin. Tegan Wahlgren, Violin. Elliot Vaughan, Viola. Clara Shandler, Cello. Paul Paroczai, digital composition and operating. Matthew Ariaratnam, sound engineer.

Description: Audio recording of *Thickets*.

Filename: Thickets, Sugar's Waste Night One.mp3

7. Creator/Director/Credits: Rebecca Bruton, Composer, Songwriter, Voice. Matthew Ariaratnam, Acoustic Guitar.

Description: Audio recording of *Ponies under Darkness*

Filename: PONIES UNDER DARKNESS MASTERED.mp3

Appendix B Score Documentation

1. **Creator/Director/Credits:** Rebecca Bruton, Composer

Description: *The Heard Surrounds*, Full Score and Parts.

Filename: Rebecca Bruton, Heard Surrounds Score and Parts.pdf

2. **Creator/Director/Credits:** Rebecca Bruton, Composer.

Description: *No Place in the Sun*, Full Score.

Filename: No place in the sun.pdf

3. **Creator/Director/Credits:** Rebecca Bruton, Composer.

Description: *Ring Oscillator*, Full Score.

Filename: Ring oscillator score.pdf

4. **Creator/Director/Credits:** Rebecca Bruton, Composer.

Description: *Thickets*, Full Score.

Filename: Rebecca bruton, thickets score.pdf

Appendix C Poetry

1. **Creator/Director/Credits:** Rebecca Bruton, Writer.

Description:

Sugar's Waste, Complete Poetic Text.

Filename:

Rebecca Bruton, Sugar's Waste.pdf

2. **Creator/Director/Credits:** Rebecca Bruton, Writer.

Description: *Sounding the Run*, text.

Filename: Rebecca Bruton, Sounding the Run.pdf