

# 10

## Encouragements, Self-Portraits, and Shadow Walks

## Gender, Intimacy, and Voices in Sound Art

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## Introduction

The voice is produced and shaped by a body. When heard, it also suggests a body. This tension between the relationship of the voice and the body has been a productive force in the creation of a variety of works within sound arts. In previous publications I have investigated how women sound artists have used voice, both literally and metaphorically, in their work to challenge contemporary historical and contemporary cultural assumptions about women's voices and the male normative within sound arts practice (Lane 2016). This was ignited by research into gender differences in the work produced by students of Sound Arts and Design at London College of Communication, a significant finding of which was that many female students used spoken voice in their work. Through an investigation of

some of the ways that women's voices have been demonized and ridiculed within the public sphere and the analysis of how voice was being used in works by sound artists Hildegard Westerkamp, Janet Cardiff, and Jasmeen Patheja the paper went on to conclude that

“The act of using one's own voice and language in one's own way is a radical move within electroacoustic music and sound art and women sound artists use voices, their own and others, in ways that subvert commonly held historic, socio-cultural prejudices against the existence of women's voices in public spaces. (Lane 2016, 109)

In subsequent presentations (Lane 2017) this research has been extended and developed to consider some of the mechanisms by which some voices have been excluded from the sound arts canon through an uncritical acceptance of what Jennifer Stoever-Ackermann has termed our “raced, gendered, and historicized ‘listening ears’” (Stoever-Ackerman 2010) accompanied by an obedience to normative notions of attentive and “expert” listening. In recent work this has been further developed by investigating the ways that the separation of the voice from the body has offered ways of silencing women in the public sphere through likening them to animals, and also allowed artists such as Laurie Anderson to play with creating new persona through manipulation of the voice (Lane 2018).

Examining works by a variety of contemporary artists who work primarily with sound, this chapter aims to look at how the voice and voiced sounds, such as audible breathing and other nonlinguistic utterances, are used to both express and investigate notions of intimacy and their relation to gender. I have chosen to group the works together according to the category of sound used in the work, namely the sounds of female sexual pleasure, breath, and voice. In each case, these sounds are used by the artists to explore or express significantly different aspects of intimate experience and their relationship to notions of public, private, and political. Of course the works share aspects in common that transcend the choice of sounding material and where possible these will be discussed in relation to each other.

## Notions of Intimacy

Intimacy between people always involves some form of closeness; this can variously be interpreted as affinity, rapport, warmth, or understanding, all of which can be understood in terms of the space or proximity between two or more beings. While a variety of forms of intimacy have been identified—including emotional, experiential, cognitive, intellectual (Kakabadse and Kakabadse 2004); recreational, financial (Tran 2017); spiritual (Tartakovsky); and aesthetic and unconditional (Kamal 2015)—the form of intimacy that most commonly comes to mind for most people is probably physical or sexual. At the root of sexual and physical intimacy are strict codes of space, proximity, appropriateness, and consent. These codes also apply to the sonic expression of sexual or physical **intimacy**

## The Sounds of Sex: Raimondo, Shetty, Lockwood

Brussels-based, Italian artist Anna Raimondo works across sound, performance, and radio. Much of her work questions and often transgresses notions of public and private space. *Féminisme quotidien #1—voyage au Maroc, 2017*, a work in the series *Daily Feminism*, consists of five screen-printed T-shirts, a series of photos, sound recordings, and wall texts. Each T-shirt broadcasts statements that sounds like a private thought: “If you find me provocative then look away”; “Your daughter’s body does not belong to you”; and “I am not a piece of meat.” The gallery exhibition featured a series of “tourist” photographs of Raimondo posing at well-known sites in Rabat wearing these garments. Wall texts chosen by the artist extended the textual commentary, and the T-shirts were available for sale so that gallery visitors could “contaminate more and more the urban space with these sentences” (Raimondo, e-mail to author, August 25, 2018). The sentences were all from Moroccan women who had been invited by Raimondo to send her a sentence that they would like to share in a public space. This transgressive insertion of the women’s private thoughts into the public space through the imprint of their words on the body of another woman publicly ventriloquizes and broadcasts them into the public arena. Whilst it echoes the long history of political and campaign-based marketing and publicity from many causes through slogan T-shirts (notable examples in the United Kingdom being Vivienne Westwood and Malcom McLaren’s “God save the Queen” punk T-shirts from the 1970s; and Katharine Hamnett’s political slogan “Choose Life” T-shirts from the 1980s) and the plethora of printed T-shirts sold by social and political groups, it differs from them in that these are not calls to action but expressions of inner private thoughts. The anonymizing of the original authors of the words and their journey from internal to external, from the body of a Moroccan woman to that of a European woman, potentially provides a safety net for the women concerned and allows the unfettered circulation of their intimate thoughts in the public realm.

In her 2014 video work *Encouragements*, Raimondo is seen travelling around the city of Brussels constantly talking into her mobile phone, loudly broadcasting “encouragements” gathered from women of different ages, origins, and sexual and religious backgrounds. The phrases sound as if they might have been said by women to other women in private.

“You don’t owe prettiness to anyone. Not to your partner, not to random men on the street. You don’t owe it to your mother, you don’t owe it to your children, you don’t owe it to civilization in general. Prettiness is not a rent you pay for occupying a space marked ‘female’”; or “Women need to think of themselves as predators rather than prey. I want you to be a solid strong free women, one who trusts herself”; as well as some more clichéd or generalized sayings: “Every choice is a surrender”; or “A life lived in fear is a life half lived.” Around five minutes into the video the transgression ramps up as the intimate and still generally taboo, even among women, subject of female masturbation is mentioned loudly by Raimondo whilst sitting at a café table near two young men, “I also think women are

denied masturbation even more severely than men, and that's another way of control," who obviously both find the whole conversation slightly uncomfortable. A little later in the video we see Raimondo pacing in the park close to a man and woman sitting on the grass with their three dogs. Just after she pronounces that "women have something really special to offer in terms of helping our society grow sexually" they ask her to go away—she has got too close, overlapped intimate spaces, and has intruded in their invisible private space physically, sonically, and emotionally. These public broadcastings of words, once offered in more intimate circumstances through the travelling physical body of Raimondo, offer incursions into other intimate exchanges taking place between people around the city, as her physical proximity interrupts their own expressions of intimacy, forcing them to listen to her telephone conversation or to engage with the words on the T-shirt by being asked to photograph Raimondo. At times they also transgress what is acceptable in public by their subject matter.

This is taken a step further with the 2012 video work *How to make your day exciting*, in which we see Raimondo traveling through London on public transport. Despite wearing headphones, what she seems to be listening to can be heard by all around her and as she moves through these spaces she broadcasts a sonic composition made primarily from the soundtracks of pornographic films of women having sex. As these sounds infiltrate various forms of public transport we see most passengers studiously ignoring them, looking vaguely embarrassed but acting as if they cannot hear them at all. The sounds are ignored, denied, no one challenges her; it is as if they do not exist, but we the viewer are aware that they can hear them and act as witness to Raimondo's nonchalance and their discomfort with these sounds.

The sounds of sexual intimacy feature in a number of other works. Bangalore-based artist Yashas Shetty's *The Nine Billion Names of God* is a program that downloads pornography and looks for points where the participants shout out "god"—in the hope of collecting nine billion, and while it's doing that it uses all the tropes of artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning to learn how to better identify the sound of the word across different voices and accents. The work takes its name from a 1953 short story by British science fiction writer Arthur C. Clarke. The story is set in Tibet where monks aiming to list all of the names of God rent a computer and Western computer programmers to help them with the task. They believe that once the task is completed the world will end. Shetty's program started collecting these invocations in January 2017 and he calculates that around 7,000 sound clips were gathered in the first 18 months. This work in progress is funny, which is relatively unusual in a work of sound art, but it also shows how often the same words are uttered in acts of sexual intimacy, or maybe how the pornography industry thinks people should verbalize and sound in moments of sexual intimacy. On listening to the sound files, which are collected and made available online every week, it is striking that around one in ten or less of the sound clips are from male-sounding voices, the vast majority being orgasmic expressions from female-sounding voices. This probably tells us less about gendered cultures of sexual intimacy than it tells us about who the main consumers of pornography are and how in these cases the female voice stands in for the

image of a passive female who is being sexually pleased and “driven mad” by a largely silent man in terms of the on-screen action, the sound file, and the consumer. These expressions of sexual intimacy are being performed largely by noisy women for consumption by silent men.

In their 1996 paper “Aural Sex: The Female Orgasm in Popular Sound” John Corbett and Terri Kapsalis ask

what do recorded female sex vocalizations become *evidence* of? Whose pleasure is being represented? On one hand, these vocalizations are conventionally designed to provide sexual arousal for a male listener. . . . As evidence of the truth of her orgasm and the truth of his/her ability to bring her to orgasm, the listener is offered the sound of uncontrollable female passion. Sound is used to verify her pleasure and his/her prowess. (Corbett and Kapsalis 1996, 104)

It is also one of the few occasions when it is desirable that women make loud sounds: “evidence of female sexual pleasure is usually deferred to the aural sphere, hence, within mainstream pornography and mass culture alike, where male sexual pleasure is accompanied by what Williams calls the ‘frenzy of the visible,’ female sexual pleasure is better thought of in terms of a ‘frenzy of the audible’” (Corbett and Kapsalis 1996, 103), where the greater the volume the greater the imagined force of orgasm. Corbett and Kapsalis point out that “the vocal ejaculations of climaxing women are a prominent, perhaps *the* prominent, feature of representations of female sexual pleasure in main-stream porn and popular culture at large” (Corbett and Kapsalis 1996). They postulate that the lack of policing of audio does, in the authors’ opinion, mean that female sex sounds constitute a “more viable, less prohibited, and therefore more publicly available form of representation than, for instance, the less ambiguous, more easily recognized money shot” (Corbett and Kapsalis 1996, 104).

Before moving on to expand this discussion of intimacy, voice, and gender within sound art I would like to consider a third sound work that uses sounds of a female orgasm. New Zealand-born, US-based composer Annea Lockwood’s 1970 tape work, *Tiger Balm*, was created while Lockwood was still living in the UK. The work starts with the close-up sound of a cat purring, which is soon joined by a repeating gong or gamelan-like percussive riff; when the cat drops out something that sounds like a slowed down jaw harp or maybe a cat-like roar joins—then moves to take center stage, joined by breathing and moaning, which it is difficult to distinguish immediately as sexual. There are abrupt changes in proximity and perspective, the jaw harp/roaring moves into a background and is joined by something that sounds like rain. The breathing and moaning becomes more central at around 5’30” and sounds more obviously sexual, sonically reflected by the cat sounds, so that it becomes slightly difficult to tell them all apart. At around 7’ the female voice sounds close to orgasm and then post-orgasmic. It gives way to the sound of an airplane before returning to the percussive riff on which it ends. While very pleasing to listen to it is difficult to make sense of these sounds and their relationships to each other. The overall impression that the work leaves with me is one of sensuality, possibly sustained by the fact that the two most dominant sounds, that of the cat purring and the female sex sounds relate in ways that are not merely sonic—but also as expressions of sensuality and pleasure.

This is not the orgasmic utterance of the porn film—a “frenzy of the audible,” presented to titillate the male listener, indeed the male commentators on the work have not even recognized or named them as the sounds of sex. The advertisement for the album, which was rereleased in 2017, mentions

a select palette of mainly unprocessed sonic elements chosen for their mysterious and erotic characteristics (a purring cat, a heartbeat, gongs, slowed down jaw harp, a tiger, a woman’s breath, a plane passing overhead), presenting at most two sounds at once. As one sound flows organically into the next, their shared characteristics are highlighted, opening a space of dream logic and mysterious associations between nature and culture, the ancient and the modern. (Forced Exposure n.d.).

Writing about it in *Source: Music of the Avant Garde, 1966-1973* Bill Smith is a little more observant

*Tiger Balm* (1970) begins with a recording of a purring tiger (a sound that should be familiar to any cat owner) over which other sounds—some produced by musical instruments, others not—are gradually layered on top of each other. About seven minutes in, the sound of a woman having an orgasm emerges seamlessly from the sounds of animals breathing and then recedes, just as seamlessly, into the sound of an airplane. It’s pretty provocative stuff. (Smith 2014)

*Tiger Balm* came out of Lockwood’s interest in the effects of sound on the body, specifically “the characteristics across cultures of music used in rituals in which trance is induced” (Cole and Lockwood 2018). Lockwood herself says that

At the core of *Tiger Balm* is the merging of woman with tiger. Starting with the sensuous purring of an old cat, Carolee Schneemann’s *Kitsch* whom I was cat-sitting at the time. . . . I began to assemble other sounds, which I found erotic. A form of vocabulary: a heart beating, the slow arc of a plane passing by overhead at just the right height—I still love that sound, a mouth harp slowed down, recording of tigers mating—a recording I had made at a workshop of people playing Carl Orff instruments in a gamelan like pattern, also slowed down. (Cole and Lockwood 2018)

At the time Lockwood was moving away from the kind of single material investigations that she had been undertaking in *The Glass Concert* (1967–1970) and decided to limit the piece to no more than two sound sources at a time “often just one in order to preserve the individuality of each sound source, and to structure its flow by a form of osmosis, that is, sounds flowing into each other via shared characteristics, such as the disappearing tiger’s breath and the slightly rough and breathed arc of the plane flying overhead” (Cole and Lockwood 2018). Lockwood worked out the succession of sounds by dreaming the order “I completely trusted my dreaming mind to come up with a structure which would function the way I wanted it to” (Cole and Lockwood 2018). Whilst Lockwood does not explicitly remember *Tiger Balm* being composed as a feminist statement she does acknowledge that the “oncoming wave of revived feminism at the time was affecting me deeply, it was indeed empowering, becoming more so once I moved to the States” (Lockwood, e-mail correspondence, August 29, 2018) and that in the atmosphere of the time “Carolee’s work,

for me as for so many others, opened up the possibilities of being directly and openly sexual in one's work" (Cole and Lockwood 2018). In retrospect, however, *Tiger Balm* can be read as both a concretely feminist provocation inserted into the male-dominated world of 1970s *musique concrète* and avant-garde music and an antidote, a quiet alternative moment of female-centered sexual intimacy, in sharp contrast to the loud and overblown female sexual vocalizations featured in the previous two works discussed. As such it is both transgressive and a statement of female power and sexuality.

In their own ways each of these works highlights, on the one hand, the transgressive nature of the sound of the female orgasm in public space as well as, on the other, the sort of spaces, such as Internet pornography sites, where these sounds are welcomed and why. Of course it is not only the sounds of female orgasm that are not welcome in public spaces. I have already mentioned previous work in which I have discussed some of the mechanisms through which female (and other nonnormative) voices are demonized and silenced in the public domain (Lane 2018, 2017, 2016) and how sound artists (including Janet Cardiff, Hildegard Westerkamp, Jasmeen Patheja, Mark Peter Wright, Lawrence Abu Hamden, Laura Malacart, and Imogen Stidworthy) have worked to subvert some of these dominant cultural ideologies, but with the exceptions of the "intimate" voices chosen by Janet Cardiff and Westerkamp I have not focused on wider notions of intimacy within sound work.

According to psychologist A.C. Gaia (2002), descriptions of intimacy across all categories include: self-disclosure, emotional expression, support, trust, physical expression, feelings of closeness, and a mutual experience of intimacy. While the above discussion has concerned work that focuses on vocalized expressions of female intimacy, specifically sexual, I would like to turn to look at works that focus on different soundings of the physical body, specifically the breath.

## Breath: Kaddal, Biswas, Bailey, Westerkamp

Ever since Henri Chopin's sound poetry experiments with the microphone and the internal workings of his body in the 1950s, sound artists, driven by a wide array of research and sonic imperatives, have used audio technology to explore the intimate workings and processes of the body and through this opened themselves up, directly disclosing their bodily responses and the physical expression of their emotional responses, through sound and vision.

Egyptian-born multimedia artist Khaled Kaddal's live audiovisual performances draw on his experience of the political revolutionary unrest in Egypt between 2009 and 2014, part of which is now termed the Arab Spring. Three performance works, *Trapped Sounds* (2015), *CODE3* (2016a) and *CODE20* (2016b), are informed by and expressive of bodily responses to the volatile nature of the sustained violent political protest that Kaddal experienced. In each of the three performances Kaddal wears a gas mask, fitted with a microphone, which allows him to both amplify and signal process his breathing. The three

performances share other sonic elements including a “hammering” sound, not quite a heartbeat, not quite footsteps, but reminiscent of both, as well as the sound of police beating riot shields; media extracts commenting on the action; field recordings from protests; high, sine wave-like, synthesized sounds that remind us of both the operation of the nervous system and hearing loss associated with tinnitus; and other electronic sounds that call on sonic metaphors and cinematic soundtracks to both communicate and create feelings of tension. In each of these works Kaddal examines the effect of sound on the body in times of intense sociopolitical unrest and personal trauma and expresses and explores the relationship of the individual to society, the state, and the urban environment. The individual responses are communicated by the breathing and synthesized sounds and have the effect of putting us inside the mask, gaining an intimate and symbiotic relationship with his body in all its fight and flight experiences. The works also share musical and structural elements. These include repetitive and insistent sounds or patterns that have slight variations in pitch and tempo, gradually speeding up or slowing down or changing pitch or timbre until they are almost imperceptibly transformed into something else; as well as extended periods of chaos when it is difficult to differentiate one sound from another, as a result of which the overall effect is often disconcerting and stressful. At times over the three performances we hear pulses throbbing and blood pounding and as if it is in our heads: sirens, helicopters, robot armies, and the bleeps of machines mainly encountered in hospital wards. In *Trapped Sounds* (2015) and *CODE3* (2016a) we, the audience, are taken on a journey as if we are inside Kaddal’s body, we don’t really know what or where that journey was, nothing is made explicit, but we feel that we have intimate experience of his physical and emotional reactions and states. In *CODE20* (2016b) the journey is made more explicit. The visual element of *CODE20* is less abstracted than the previous two performances and the conceptual underpinnings of the work are made more apparent.

From the American police radio scanner codes, number “20” identifies an acute trauma case. The performance is a live multimedia representation that explicitly demonstrates different types of listening during political conflicts. On how violent sounds affects the body with physiological injuries and psychological traumas. The performance follows “Mapping Zones of Wartime (In)audition” from the book *Listening to War* by J.M. Daughtry, taking his concentric listening zones as a score to form the piece. (Kaddal 2018)

AQ: Sentence beginning ‘On how violent sounds affects the body’. Is this error in the original?

During the performance words are projected, they are a score for Kaddal but also a guide to the audience informing them about the journey that they are on, carried along by the intense, immersive sound experience. The piece starts with Kaddal’s breath through and amplified by a gas mask. As we are enclosed by it projected words start to appear on the wall

First, it starts with running!  
 [In hale]  
 [Ex hale]  
 Heart beat  
 “What are we running from?”  
 “I don’t know”  
 “Hahaha.” (Kaddal 2016b)<sup>1</sup>

We don't know whether these are instructions from him to him, from him to us, or from someone else to him, but we are implicated through the intimate enclosure in his breath as it responds to the sonic memory of the events to which the words allude. The breathing continues, the words continue describing states and, once again, possible instructions "Listening to: Conflicts, Seduction, Alert, Distress, Anxiety, Traumas, Violence Memories, Attack, Terror, Fear, Clashes, Authority, Warfare, Militant, Riots" (Kaddal 2016b) but the threat and the anxiety that creates them remain unspecific. As the sound builds we are given more of an idea about what we might be listening to. Text projecting the zone analysis identified by Daughtry (2015) takes us through four zones: Zone 1: The audible inaudible; Zone 2: The Narrational; Zone 3: The Tactical; Zone 4: The Trauma: "The skin listens, The chest listens, The hair listens, The viscera listens, The ear listens, The body listens" (Kaddal 2016b) and these are accompanied by two moving image projections. Sounds come and go but we are always left with the sound of the breath and the electronic sounds. The performance ends with the high sounds, the breathing and images and sounds of a burning microphone popping, booming, and cracking like the sounds of gunfire and explosions.

Kaddal invites us to share these experiences with him, not through a vocal invitation but by immersively enveloping us in the sounds and responses of his body. We look at the same screen that he looks at—we see the same words that he sees, the words both trigger his emotional responses, and in turn ours, and guide us as to why we are feeling them. Kaddal offers us a degree of emotional intimacy—we are invited both to earwitness and to share in his trauma. In contrast with the seductive invitation that Janet Cardiff offers in works such as *Louisiana Walk 14* (1996) where she "begins by placing us in an internal environment and her voice immediately establishes intimacy through her tone, her words and her proximity. She whispers in your ear, a close friend or lover inviting you to follow and stay with her wherever she leads" (Lane 2016). Kaddal's amplified breath is not so much an invitation to, but an offering of, intimacy through the mediated sharing of his emotional experience. Investigating men's experiences and perceptions of intimacy, Patrick and Beckenback (2009) "posed the possibility that men use means other than stating feelings in order to express and receive intimacy in their relationships" and that "women are encouraged to focus more on relationship. Men socialized to focus more on task may, for example, complete a chore to demonstrate intimacy for their partner" (2009, 49). While we, the listening audience, are not intimate partners we recognize that Kaddal has completed a chore or rather a performative action that demonstrates intimacy for us.

The intimate experience of mediated breath and entrainment also occurs in a work by UK-based artist Ansuman Biswas. Biswas practice encompasses music, film, live art, installation, writing, and theater, much of which is influenced by his vipassana meditation practice and various methods of mind and body control. In common with Kaddal much of Biswas' work is "performative" in that his physical body is present and at the center of the work. Sometimes Biswas cannot be seen, he is hidden, but the event still centers around his presence. In *CAT* (1997) Biswas remained sealed in a light- and soundproof chamber for ten days. Nothing entered or exited the box and all the time that he was in there Biswas attempted to maintain continuous, detailed observation of all sensory phenomena. For *Manchester Hermit* (2009) Biswas spent forty days and forty nights alone in the Gothic

Tower of Manchester Museum. He was physically isolated but visible 24 hours a day via a webcam.

Biswas' 1999 work *self/portrait* was also a durational performance in which he shared with us the minute fluctuations of the emotional and physical states of his body. In a week-long performance at the Now99 Festival in Nottingham the artist sat opposite a video screen onto which his image was projected, modified by the signal from an ECG, which measured his heart rate in real time.

As my thoughts and emotions flow and change, along with myriad biochemical reactions, so my heart rate slows and speeds. The heart pulses like a bass drum around which all the other rhythms of the body organize. Small electrodes on my skin pick up this electrical weather and feed it into the computer. The view from outside is also fed into the computer via video. The internal and external views are mixed together and projected onto the wall. (Biswas, e-mail to author, August 30, 2018)

Biswas transmitted and communicated three main emotional states (agitation, appreciation, and concentration), which correlated with particular physiological data and were mapped to processes within the video software. The system responded so that agitation created very abstract and chaotic patterns, and periods of calmness and concentration caused the image to become very clear and focused. Biswas was literally sharing every emotional and physical fluctuation with us, second by second, as we witnessed his attempts to entrain all his bodily rhythms through meditation and the breath. The work challenged the very idea of intimacy. On the one hand it fulfilled at least three of Gaia's (2002) features of intimacy, namely self-disclosure, emotional expression, and physical expression, but it also removed the subject from himself—making him an object of perusal or study, both by himself and by the audience. Biswas had made himself the subject of his own experiment and, while at once controlling and also disconnected from his own reactions, he opened himself up and placed those physical and emotional responses for him and us to study. Kaddal shared this approach when talking about *Trapped Sounds*, saying “At that time, I wanted to bring myself as a biological example, and start to reflect on our psychological experiences resulted from the political transformation in Egypt. Just like laboratory mice” (Kaddal, e-mail to author, September 13, 2018). In both cases Kaddal and Biswas chose to put themselves under scrutiny and bare themselves, physically and emotionally, to the audience. Patrick and Beckenbach (2009) have noted that, when examining gender-role socialization, women are more likely to negotiate situations from a relational context, while men adopt an autonomous stance with others. Kaddal and Biswas are both focused on themselves and their experiences, which they enact in front of us largely signaled by the sound (or the power) of breath. We are invited to witness and to some extent partake in an intimate sharing of these experiences through multisensory and multimedia means that by and large transcend the use of verbal communication.

London-based composer Ain Bailey's 2014 work *Breath* exists as both a fixed media and a performance piece. In common with Hildegard Westerkamp's 1990 work *Breathing Room*, one of three electroacoustic pieces with that title, it primarily uses the sounds of recorded breathing. However the similarity ends there. Westerkamp's three-minute *Breathing Room*

is a series of musical deep breaths that nourish the listener and celebrate the ability to breathe within the natural world. Bailey's *Breath* was written in response to listening to the last breaths of her mother as she passed away "one of the most chilling sounds I shall probably ever hear" (Bailey, e-mail to author, 9 September 2018). These breath sounds are heavily processed and the work is open to many metaphorical interpretations—often full of an energy that it is difficult to decipher—sometimes angry, sometimes sympathetic. We are never quite sure whose experience is being expressed, that of the mother or the daughter, although we feel they are entwined and symbiotic. The piece starts with a long oscillating sound that moves transcendently upward and away. Soon it settles into the breath sound that is central to it throughout—a mixture of a death rattle and a cry for help, which starts, occurring regularly, only to stop suddenly, falter, and then start again, losing and gaining rhythm all the time. *Breath* is constructed from only one or two recorded breath sounds that frequently fracture into smaller grains and harsh ancillary rhythms, as if we are witnessing the transformation of the breath, and life itself, into smaller molecules. At times the sound is terrifying as if there are encounters along the journey; it is not smooth, but it keeps moving at an inevitable and unforgiving pace, full of tensions, its stops and starts marked by abrupt changes. "This sound performance transforms the entirety of the space into a breathing organism . . . an immersive experience of visceral wake work" (Akademie der Künste 2018). Bailey does not put herself at the center of this work. In performance her role is limited to the electronic manipulation of sound. The sounds are the central protagonist in the work. It is an intimate expression of grief, raw and pained, and at the center we can sense the relationship between the two women, mother and daughter, with all its inevitable tensions and contradictions. We are never sure whose experience is being expressed, it feels like an amalgamation of the experience of the dying mother and the witnessing daughter, and we earwitness both these experiences at the same time, in relation, and totally intertwined.

These works, which each focus on the breath in different ways, have invited the audience to share as powerful an experience of emotional and physical intimacy as might be expected from sound. In each case we have been enveloped in the experience—on the one hand, with Kaddal and Biswas, the enactment and reenactment of intimate physical and emotional reactions and experiences, and, on the other, with Bailey, a powerful emotional trauma and tribute that has both invited us to witness the multifaceted nature of grief, life, and death and the mother/daughter relationship.

## Voice: Hojo, Corringham, Karikis

Of course sound can be used as a tool to reflect on the intimate relationships of others as well as representing the artist's own intimate relationships and experiences. This can be particularly pertinent for the investigation of gendered communication.

Tomoko Hojo's 2018 work *I am listening to you*, is both a live performance piece with a **score** and an installation. The work,<sup>2</sup> is based on an interview conducted by Andy Peebles

with John Lennon and Yoko Ono on December 6, 1980, for the UK's BBC Radio One. We now know that the interview was in fact conducted two days before Lennon was shot and killed in New York. The performance starts with Hojo sitting behind a microphone and a music stand facing the audience. She is still and quiet. After about 17 seconds she looks directly at the audience and makes a small vocal sound "nn," after another ten seconds or so she repeats it, slightly differently. The performance progresses like this with Hojo interjecting small quiet vocal sounds into the room on average around every ten seconds. Once in a while she says a few words, "I was in the basement," "No No," "I was preparing before the opening," "Indica gallery" (the London gallery where she first met Lennon in November 1966), "No no," "He didn't explain it really," "He just sort of kind of" (Hojo 2018a) but mostly they are small interjections and a few small laughs

Ono was often muted and mostly accompanied his speech by laughing with high soft small voice. In Japanese society, people insert "aizuchi"—a sort of backchannel such as "huh" or "yeah"—quite often during the conversation, to let the other speaker know that they are actively listening. Although Ono seems to inhabit this specific behavior, there is equally an absence, a meandering in a different time and place. Listening becomes the act of imagining unspoken words, and gradually shifts into a fluidity between listening and speaking, and voiceless voices hidden under discourses would become audible. (Hojo 2018b)

This continues for around eight minutes, at which point Hojo gets up and leaves the stage and starts to manipulate four small lo-fi playback devices scattered around the performance space among the audience. Each device plays back different sounds including breathing, laughter, and little bits of the speech that are also featured in the original performance. These sounds are free to pervade and inhabit the space until they are turned off after about six minutes. This subtle work can be read on many levels. On the one hand it is notable that in the space of the eight-minute first section of the interview that Hojo has used, Ono sounds only thirty-eight times—each sounding being very small and many of them no more than a faint breath, which, if listened to carefully, merely denotes that she is there. She says less than seventy words—none of them in full sentences. This is not necessarily noticeable within the original interview, which is very much dominated and moved along by the force of Lennon's personality but it becomes much more apparent when Ono's sounds are isolated and inserted into the silent performance venue where each interjection seemingly "echoes" or resonates through the silent space and time surrounding it. In the second half of the work the recorded segments sound and resonate through the space and occupy it much more fully, on the one hand reinhabiting the space, on the other emphasizing how very little, both in terms of amount and the content, that Yoko has been able to say. Ono's interjections into that conversation, now so long ago, ventriloquized through Hojo's contemporary presence, somehow add a poignancy to the work. We, as contemporary listeners, know that two days after these utterances Ono would never again be able to talk to Lennon, her husband and close collaborator. Removing them from Ono's recorded voice and transferring them into Hojo's performing voice allows us to consider them as objects, which add some sort of commentary on the relationship, or at least the public manifestation of it. The visible presence of Hojo as a young woman artist from Japan

operating within Western Europe also invites thought and comparison about the nature of both race and gender historically and contemporarily.

US-based sound artist and vocalist Viv Corringham also revoices other people's words. In her longstanding series *Shadow walks* she invites local people to take her on a walk that is special or meaningful for them in some way. Apart from being a good way of engaging with the geography, history, and culture of an unknown place, this methodology is a shortcut to intimate exchanges with relative strangers as, in the course of the walk, they divulge aspects of their lives, thoughts, and feelings to Corringham. "Walking with someone is an act of intimacy. You walk close together, your steps start to match, you move forward together. Yet you both look ahead, not making much eye contact, so embarrassment is minimal" (Corringham, e-mail to author, 6 September 2018). The process usually starts with Corringham asking the person where they are going and why the walk is special to them "that brings forth loads of personal information" (Hojo 2018b). This is not a sharing of intimate information, "I try not to talk much but to just listen to them and encourage. But I'm always willing to answer anything they ask or to share things. In fact people rarely ask me about myself, and when they do they are almost always women. Maybe women feel less comfortable with or used to the attention and being listened to" (Hojo 2018b). So far *Shadow walks* has been conducted with around 120 people in almost 30 different places including Greece, Hong Kong, the UK, the US, Portugal, Italy, Canada, and Australia. After walking with the subject and recording the walk—the conversations with the walker as well as the sounds of place carrying on around—Corringham retraces the walk on her own, guided by the memory of the previous walk. As she does this she revoices her sonic memory of the walk, channeling parts of the conversations with people as well as other sound events heard during her previous journeys along that route. The initial walk usually produced an almost immediate intimacy between Corringham and the walker, "Sometimes I feel things people say are so personal that it is as if they are talking to a close friend" (Hojo 2018b). In the examples of intimate things that people that she barely knows have discussed with her, Corringham gives examples that are much more confessional, "A special walk triggers a lot of personal memories and reflections" (Hojo 2018b). These might range from disclosures of guilt, mental health problems, frustration, or shame, things that would not normally be shared in an hour's conversation with a stranger. She does not necessarily use all that material in her repeated iterations of the walks, but as she retraces the steps that she took with her walker on her own she relives that exchange through an embodied memory:

Everything on the walk triggers my memories. Just walking the route again reminds me where things were said, and often the exact words used. I often remember a shape to the walk in terms of mood or events and try to use that. I find I don't have to try to trigger memories—just taking the walk again at a similar pace to the original does that. Walking pace is quite important. Once I slow down (usually that's what brings me to the pace of the original walk, especially with an older person) I stop being just me out for a walk. (Hojo 2018b)

She repackages the exchange and even makes it safe through using her own voice and sound making for a public audience, "I'm often careful how much I use of these as I wonder

how they would feel if they heard their words in a public performance or on radio” (Hojo 2018b).

Both Hojo and Corringham are revoicing the voice of another, someone they have shared some kind of private intimacy with. In Hojo’s case it is an older Japanese experimental artist and musician who is also a very well-known, iconic woman, and, in Corringham’s, a series of intense but short and finite relationships that have involved intimate exchange. Both artists go through a process that involves listening and internalizing what they hear, then passing the words and sounds through their bodies in order to revocalize them. In this way they both act as mediums, or transducers, with their voices as the medium through which the original sounds are broadcast in the formality of a performance. This process involves a number of degrees of a kind of physical intimacy ranging from what we imagine or hear, and the temporary closeness of intimacy that each artist has with their subject, to the taking sounds into the body—absorbing, retriggering and revocalizing them. These revocalizations are imbued with the vestiges of that intimacy, they have left one body and been absorbed by another, then reframed, and re-sounded. They gather, in Hojo’s case, a poignant gendered reflection on the relationship between John and Yoko, which somehow holds empathy and criticism at the same time; and, in Corringham’s case, they mark and to some extent validate and formalize intimate experiences and relationships to place that are normally private and enacted in the body or maybe shared with friends or close family members.

A related intimate revoicing can also be witnessed in Mikhail Karikis’s video work *Sounds From Beneath* (2012) made with members of the Snowdown Colliery Male Voice Choir, a group of former coal miners from the county of Kent in England. The colliery was closed in 1987 in the aftermath of a long and bitter battle between workers and the government to save the UK coal industry. The soundtrack of the video work is entirely based on the sounds that these former miners have carried in their bodies over the last fifteen years or so, the varied industrial sounds of the working coal mine now recalled and vocalized for this work. In the video we see the choir perform the composition at the site of the ex-mine in ways that remind us of both the traditional formality of a performing choir and the formations of picket lines during the long running Miner’s Strike of 1984–1985, which preceded the final decline of the UK coal mining industry mentioned above. The revocalized sounds speak of an intimate relation with place and labor, and the visual setting of the work in the former colliery, combined with intimate camerawork, often focusing on the faces of these now elderly men, extends this expression of intimacy, once again into a poignant and gendered relationship between the viewer and the lost sounds of people and of a history of past industries. Much of Mikhail Karikis’s recent work shows different aspects of intimacy, again not the intimacy between long-term friends, colleagues, or lovers, but an intimacy that reveals itself in work that can only have been produced through an intense relationship of trust and sharing. Karikis has long been engaged with exploring the voice as a sculptural material alongside notions and performances of masculinity, society, and politics, particularly in relation to place and labor. His projects, often video-based, have, over the last seven years or so, become less theatrical and “composed” and focused more on the groups of people that he has been working with. In

*Ain't Got No Fear* (2016) Karikis worked with a group of teenage boys living the Isle of Grain in Kent. The Isle of Grain is not an island but a peninsular at the southern mouth of the Thames estuary as it reaches the North Sea in the southeast of England. It is a site that has been historically and industrially significant but is now a militarized postindustrial marshland, and a site of both economic and cultural deprivation. In the film a group of 11- to 13-year-old boys from Grain travel around their area using their voices as if to embed their own experience on the now ruined but historically charged landscape that they inhabit. They perform a rap song with sounds made from the long-term demolition of the local power station—the 244 meter-high chimney of which is the largest structure to ever be demolished in the United Kingdom, a deconstruction of the past that still saturates the landscape and their lives—field recordings, and words that they wrote working with Karikis. Their words reflect on lives lived so far in this shadow:

Now I am at the age of thirteen  
 Sitting around playing FIFA 16  
 Sometimes talking about Black Ops  
 Hanging around the local shops  
 The street's no life but it is ours  
 We go and play for hours and hours. (Karikis 2016)  
 and the place that the landscape might play in their future lives  
 Hope to be sixty years old  
 Thinking of days long ago  
 Dreaming about the fun and pain  
 Enjoying the times on the Isle of Grain. (Karikis 2016)

“The project reveals a way in which industrial sites are often re-imagined by youths with a form of spatial justice defined by friendship and play, the thrill of subverting authority and evading adult surveillance” (Karikis n.d.). But more than that, the film offers a different view of intimacy in the form of an invitation for the listening viewer to have an intimate experience with the six protagonists. It is difficult to say how this happens. On the one hand it is produced by their gender—we have a rare glimpse into the some of the things that matter to a small group of male adolescents, they have bared their experience and performed it to us, and it is presented in such a way that the sharp contrast between the physical “proto-masculine” adolescent swagger and bravado that they exhibit as they move through the landscape and the expressions on their faces as they look directly at us, the listening viewers, emphasizes their vulnerability. On the other hand, as they look as if speaking directly to us we both witness and partake in the obvious trust that they have built up with Karikis who is behind the camera. The result is that we feel that we have had an intimate exchange—they, working with Karikis, have managed to combine self-disclosure, emotional expression, physical expression, and their obvious closeness with Karikis, and this is transmitted through the work to us, giving us the impression and experience of having had a brief intimate experience with these boys.

Each of the works discussed in this chapter has dealt with some form of intimacy through the primary use of the voice or other body sounds. Although I have grouped the works discussed through the primary sound that they feature, the works share many things

in common with each other. Through these works this selection of artists has at once critiqued and transgressed what can be said or sounded, particularly by women, in public space; revealed the commodified ubiquity and gendered nature of the oral expressions of sex in mediated pornography; invited us to make sense of and share the traumatic and sensual experiences of others who bare themselves and their feelings to us; and offered us new intimate perspectives on people. We, as listeners, have been invited into a variety of personal and public spaces, and offered or witnessed situations that have involved self-disclosure, mutual trust and validation, emotional expression, physical expression, closeness, and mutual experiences of intimacy, empathy, and acceptance.