

## **Listening in/to the Liminal (audio essay)**

compiled by Catherine Lamb and Bryan Eubanks

*with contributions from (in order of appearance):*

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Mark So/ Eileen Myles  
Jason Kahn  
Manfred Werder  
Jakob Ullman  
Eric Laska  
Maryanne Amacher  
Michael Pisaro  
Johnny Chang (with Dina Khouri )  
Madison Brookshire  
Jordan Topiel Paul  
Bill Dietz (read by Sebastian Biskup)  
Andrew Lafkas  
Walter Branchi (read by Bryan Eubanks)  
Éliane Radigue  
Mani Kaul (read by Catherine Lamb)  
Peter Ablinger

Since the Autumn of 2012 we have been attempting to connect a variety of musical and conceptual work in which we feel strongly exists in, points towards, or employs an area that could be described as the *liminal*. We both feel that this is not something so easily defined, does not have to do with a particular *kind* of work, nor is a particular *thing* or perceptual understanding. Yet at the same time we feel that in some music or ideas this area becomes quite important- actually vital to the total experience- even if it is not to be directly discussed. For our contribution to *Lateral Addition* we decided to compile an audio essay of responses from a selection of composers we knew and think are working directly, or indirectly, in this area of the liminal. (In two cases, we included previously written/recoded comments from recently deceased artists who spoke eloquently on the subject). Those who chose to respond, and how they did so, greatly determined the outcome of the piece, which in many ways is very different than what we would have done on our own. We are grateful to the participants who took the time to contribute and their varied responses have opened new tangents of inquiry.

Catherine Lamb and Bryan Eubanks, January 2014

*I think that everything is very strange and when I say this I don't mean that it is mysterious, or mystical, or interesting. Just very strange. I think that we cannot be all the time perceiving things that are strange because that would be impossible to stand. But, I really enjoy when I get in touch with this strangeness and I think it is a very elusive thing. When something tries to be strange it's not, never. When we think that we are getting in touch with this something strange, I think it goes somewhere else. I think also that it's not so important to find out this strange thing, but what is very fascinating is when something happens that makes us move towards it. Like when you feel that something is happening that is taking you to perceive that strange thing. This is something that I really like to happen - when it happens and I wish I could provoke myself. I think that this strange thing is always not in the center of anything, it's around. It's never about what we are talking about, it's never about what we are looking at, it's never about what we are listening to. It's somewhere around those things, not wanting to be observed, or to take any attention. And then, when something happens that makes us aware of that, I think it's incredible.*

- Lucio Capece

*Listening in the liminal is one thing. The other thing is writing in the liminal. A sound, played by a musician has always the tendency to come to the center, whether it is loud or soft, or long or short. I go in writing to the liminal. Sometimes, I keep it outside, just one little step outside of the field of composing, almost nothing, in the fallow land.*

- Jürg Frey

*I've been learning about echolocation recently and there are four animals that I have learned about that can echolocate. Dolphins can echolocate, bats, oilbirds, and some humans. Oilbirds fly in caves where it's pitch black. Bats hunt at dusk. Dolphins live in the ocean where the light penetration doesn't go very far, so in most places it's quite dark. The people who can echolocate are blind. So they all have in common living in light impoverished environments and this seems to be the condition that gives rise to the ability to echolocate. The way bats use echolocation to catch prey seems really amazing to me because they send out a sound and then it gets bounced off a little insect like a mosquito, and then it comes back to the bat—the echo comes back to the bat off of the mosquito, but in that time between sending out the sound and receiving it, the bat has been flying through the air, (it's in a slightly different location and so is the mosquito), and somehow the bat can triangulate this information with the sound of the echo that it's receiving.*

- Laura Steenberge

ample her head on her lap. / It wasn't really the parrot's joke but it felt like that. / the d/ the degree of one's loss is also the degree of one's vitality, one's ability to sustain small constant amounts of loss. //cretary the queen of language tried very hard to get us to speak correctly // It was speech too. Women were walking away from the parrot who kept saying loudly goodbye, goodbye. / Language is like that, it is this incredible code for immediacy and my mother, that wonderful secretary, the queen of language tried very hard to get us to speak correctly so that we would fit into America and advance / knew who we were by that pie. Watching that movie. I got the sign. But I'm thinking about today. Yes on Cape Cod, here, / "nakin" / I miss her, I miss my family, it was another way to say us. Nakin. / How we/ the center of any linguistic use is use, and closing the distance / really important train that there will be huge consequences if you miss, and I only know this situation too well because I did miss that train / Thoreau said at the end of his book Cape Cod, and he was talking about Provincetown, that famous line: here a man can stand and put all of America behind him. /of the fire, or some image of the bombing in the Persian Gulf/ I would like to fuck you, not everyone but some. I still think of my freedom, part of it as being allowed to say that word in public. /overs in bed, I pull you close. You use some fragment of my name. / They say a liar always tells his story the same way /rs. One of the lovers grows thirsty and lifts a bottle off the floor or night table. /nt sad and beautiful and even fatal American immigrancy where people drown in the Rio Grande, / A lot of my thoughts about speech come out of the experience of being entirely outside of my language. / you know, like this, grasping occasionally, using your sense of touch, the feel of the wall, the texture, the temperature, absences, the absence of sight, familiarity, the presence of danger - writing a poem is exactly like that /here, and I drop as I go, I move close. I would like to fuck you, not everyone but some. / Samuel Delany says that all sexual relations are class relations, and I'm saying that all classes borrow from the working class and the lower class, / to god and breathing. Is it true. They say a liar always tells his story the same way. / the English language grew that way, you let the Vikings and the Saxons and the Celts, you let the vandals in and we will come anyway, and of course we are tourists also - art always plunders the other - art brut, mentally ill patients, the poems of kids, so-called primitives, females and queers, the other culture even as you are educated into misunderstanding your own home as that, /nd of Silence of the Lambs, well very close to the end, the scariest part when Jod/ there was a movie called Joe with Peter Boyle in which the working class family ate a discount pie for/ I'd say put some pussy, too, but I'm saying the erotic component in American poetry today is the gasping immediacy of absence, to do what John Ashbery describes as acting in the writing of the poem as if the reader or the listener were in the same room with you. /actly like that, but perhaps the poet is/ The End of New England /n. I always think of what happens in the writing of a poem as similar to running to catch a train. A really important train that there will be huge consequences if you miss, and I only know this situation too well because I did miss that train on that same trip to Russia and I was ru/ Do you know her? She's a theory person, she was very stylish at the time and I particularly remember her talk at the Drawing Center in SoHo /Saxons and the Celts, you let the vandals in and we will come anyway, and of course, we are also tourists - / she rubbed her hands lovingly and I know in some way I was thinking that's what I want, /ives, females and queers, th/It's poetry. A lot gets dropped. And assuming you succeed, what succeeds with you and how will you know yourself? / being the body that is wanted rather than the body that is important, the body that bears another rather than being he who is borne - /oday, which things, less of them, but I'm looking out of my window in New York at this gorgeous building which is Port Authority it's so perfect and all around my neighborhood where I've lived for a couple of years I've watched people wheeling their stuff and lugging it / I don't mean artists, but people who lift things, people who, say, move the huge sculpture from there to there, /book was very good at using a ton of detail to conjure up silence, the vast silence of emotion, of awe, there was a huge wad of it at the head of his book /more waves in - then I went to Maine this week, a couple of days ago and there I'm looking out on a frozen pond or ri/ Which supports this thing I've heard kicking around, that the body is stupid. / If not it certainly means gay power. It means discomfort. Ouch, it's a little tear. It even means birth again, separation, the moment is real. /loss is also the degree of one's vitality, / ever the working class speaker is condemned to the animal realm. /it as an obscene kind of truth, but I'm not having it Mr. Bush, you are at home everywhere esse/You hear the voice in Disneyland, in Barnes and Noble, in s/ The phone rings. Someone has zing. / a little further than that / But it's used for poetic emphasis. /able to say what I need. /but Avital Ronell was referring to this notion that the body is stupid, she wasn't saying that she thought it, but was musing on the way that we, our culture, thinks that, / the people who go to Harvard, they don't work at all. Hardly working. / but so what, I am one of the lucky ones and I have another home and I will go there soon with less stuff. I will be forced once again to say what matters and surround myself with what I imagine I am today, which things, less of them, but I'm looking out of my window in New York at this gorgeous building which is Port Authority and it's so perfect / several elections ago when we faced another man named Bush that/ He sticks his head in the window and breaks into his native dialect. He makes a joke with the man inside, a white-collar worker, and the envelope is slid his way. /was at at home because it was a their planet. / actually it's been a perfect place in mid-life to think about things like speech and poetry and the sea, I'll throw some more waves in - / / Those people are dumb. They speak in shorthand these people, they say: hey behind you. They say, on your left. / but one moves through life continually leaving things behind and that's one definition of class, the degree of one's loss is also the degree of one's vitality, one's ability to sustain small constant amounts of loss. / /

- Mark So (reading *The End of New England* by Eileen Myles)

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from *though we haven't read it, we know there is a script*

RIGHT CHANNEL

*A boom occurs in the street. / /they said every single word. Right? / in language on the rare occasion that I was on the inside of the conversation and someone else was flailing in the realm of panic and gestures, / around / One of the lovers grows thirsty and lifts a bottle off the floor or ni/ Her pounding and demanding was humorous and intense. / /language people look different when they speak which probably underlines class differences. / She was calling for help. Let me in. / see teeth. "Hard." More body, ever the working class speaker is condemned to the animal realm. / Do you know what I mean by class? Frankly I don't know what class I am today. I can tell endlessly about my family and how much money we had and education and what were the things inside our house. But class I think is utterly not about content. // / / Then a little brown bird, a brown bird with some red on its feathers came sailing into the day, / I knew who we were by that pie. Watching that movie. I got the sign. /by means of all that acting and the emphatic use of one tiny word. D/ I always think of what happens in the writing of a poem as similar to running to catch a train. A really important train that there will be huge consequences if you miss/ I think is utterly not about content. What's inside the house or the poem. I mean yes there was a movie called Joe with Peter B/ I lost a jacket and I think I even lost my ticket / dessert and I remember eating an awful lot of pineapple pie from A&P because it was always on sale. I knew who we were by that pie, watching that movie. I got the sign. /He's a good egg. / [inaudible]/ our constant sad and beautiful and even fatal American immigrancy where people drown in the Rio Grande, / the accent of the middle class, never to the blurred cadences of the workers - unless you want to act. In Sons and Lovers Paul Morel, D.H. Lawrence's narrator goes to pick up his father's paycheck at the Mining Company. He sticks his head in the window and breaks into his native dialect. / [inaudible]/ Do you know what I mean. Are you with me? I'm thinking in a disaster depicted on teepee the newscaster is standing in front of the fire, or some image of the bombing in the Persian Gulf. / He handed that silence to John Cage / and in some ways I'm thinking about all writers who are essentially always engaged in this act of translation / the beach at Cohasset is covered with Irish corpses, /nd another, for instance - shuttling between the literary language which is written and more affiliated with the middle class and up, / It even means birth again, separation, the moment is real. Silence is not allowed on teevee or radio. / awe, / // /and the "d" becomes something that is so quick, just try it, if you/the ordering master voice of the culture must not let up. /been sliding towards that "d" around a little corner of "rrrr"s and you al/Some people say Cage's silence means gay. / In poetry is it the ordering or the disordering voice that you like, which speech. /th so quick and birdlike, and the whole facial expression is entirely different when you say that word. Within the same language people look different when they// Sto. /lass differences/say "ha/ Sto. It meant what, like what are you talking about. / this gorgeous building which is Port Authority, it's so perfect /end of my talk, late middle maybe / animal realm. / and I watch people go up and down the stairs actually it's been a perfect place in mid-life to think about things like speech and poetry and the sea //how much money we had and education and what were the things inside our house but class I think is utterly not about content, what's inside the house or the poem. I m/ and I will go there soon with a little less stuff, I will be forced once again to say what matters and/ one's ability to sustain small constant amounts of loss. //because it was always on sale. I knew who we were by that pie. Watching that movie. I got the sign. / Language is like that, it is this incredible code for immediacy / way out, she's high, it's like the Friday of the expression. I'm out of here. It's the king. / I loved the way they spoke "bare naked" taping words together, really making the point, heiney, a million ways to be dirty and there ere eight of them so you heard it again and again, /mbedded in the sound structure of the language - it has been worked on for so long by so many anonymous speakers for d/ Everyone in America is moving and dropping things, /it's a poetry that passes the keys of the kingdom to those who use it, just like th/ I think of that race as class, or moving through time. / they had no air. /lot gets dropped. And assuming you succeed, what succeeds with you and how will you know yourself? In our beautiful country of immigrants and pilgrims - of hundreds and millions of pilgrims of all kinds - our con/se at a certain sad moment in history the lower classes begin to believe in their own stupidity, / taping words together, /na, " why?) to get here, and whole boats full of people are sent back to die in the camps during World War II, tha/My sister said "nakin," / boat full of Irish immigrants in the 19th century like in Thoreau's Cape Cod, / To say in words that I live here, and I drop as I go, I move close, /ish corpses, a mother holding her little drowned child, and she's dead too and h / e stand as one people going slow and moving fast, talking to god and breathing. Is it true. They say a liar always tells his story the same way. /ther of God Jesus Mary something like that or nothing at all because Thoreau in his book was very good at using a ton of detail to conjure up silence, /ause at a certain sad moment in history the lower classes begin to believe in their own stupidity, / you know like this, grasping occasionally, using your sense of touch, the feel of the wall, the texture, the temperature, absences, the absence of sight, familiarity, the presence of danger - writing a poem is exactly like that, /all of America behind him. / If not, it certainly means gay power. It means discomfort. Ouch, it's a little/Samuel Delany says that all sexual relations are class relations and I'm saying that all classes borrow from the working class and the lower class, always have, the change occurs at that level, the language we know is a pulsing fabric of immigrancy, /*

- **Mark So (reading *The End of New England* by Eileen Myles)**

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*Liminality in listening exists for me in that space where we approach a level of suffusion in our perception. I'm interested in how we deal with these junctures of density – where perhaps we would still like to perceive more but are unable to because the sheer permeation of our perception makes it impossible to listen any further. By having too much to focus on we withdraw, shut down. The implications of this are fascinating for me and finding that liminal space between varying levels of concentration has been a model for much of my work. For me, the concept of liminality also extends beyond the notions of sound – I use this in thinking about space in all its forms and in the ways these different spaces interact. Where does the liminality of movement place these different spaces when they collide or coincide? Perhaps it is the very points of friction between different spaces which define the range of liminality and whether we are able to go further in our perception or retreat into a position of safety where our senses no longer yield to a space of total saturation.*

- Jason Kahn

*Today, I'm not particularly interested in a perception of what is going on in the world. Perception in its strategic forms still seems to happen from an outside perspective: The perception of the dominating human versus the domesticated world that has become a zoo. I think I'm looking for a kind of operating that wouldn't differ from the operating of all reality that is. Hence, rather a stance of operating than of differential thinking that can't but inform perception. It is not really "attention to the world" either, rather something that is both the most subjective and least subjective, both utterly closed and open.*

- Manfred Werder

*Für mich ist ein liminal ein raum, der entscheidend ist, um musik heute wahrnehmen zu können. Auch komposition ist eine form der wahrnehmung von musik, die, wie eine flaschenpost, an andere gegeben wird. Sie öffnen die flasche und finden eine botschaft, die sie gut verstehen oder nicht so gut verstehen und geben diese botschaft weiter an leute, die nicht lesen und nicht spielen, sondern hören. Dieses hören ist heute nicht selbstverständlich, weil wir häufiger gezwungen sind zu hören als dass wir hören möchten. Die schwelle also zwischen dem hören, das (welches) wir möchten und dem hören, das (welches) wir müssen, muss erst nach aussen geschoben werden. Das heisst, man muss einen raum aufbauen können, in dem hören möglich ist. Dann wird dieses hören seinerseits die schwelle überschreiten und die umwelt – das draussen – anders wahrnehmen können; also (wird) der raum, der zunächst das hören bergend ermöglicht hat, nun transparent für eine umwelt, die durch ihre akustische anwesenheit zeigt, dass die musik nicht ausserhalb der welt, sondern in der welt ist.*

*Diese verschiebung der grenzen nach innen und aussen ist ein vorgang, den ich als komponist gern produzieren, aber nicht steuern möchte. Die musik verschiebt die grenzen, nicht der wille des autors. Was der autor von musik tun kann, indem er etwas aufschreibt, ist zu versuchen, eine situation zu schaffen, in der musik entstehen kann auf solche weise, dass diejenigen, die an dem prozess beteiligt sind, ihre situation gegenüber dem stück und gegenüber der musik verbessern können. Dass auch sie etwas lernen können in einer weise, dass am ende der komponist auch etwas gelernt hat über sein stück, das im moment der aufführung ihm schon nicht mehr gehört.*

*Für mich ist entscheidend, dass die musik, die ich mache, mir selbst als etwas eigenständiges begegnen kann im prozess der (historischen) abfolge der musik und im prozess des hörens. Die präsenz der musik ist dabei ein ganz entscheidender punkt. Ich habe immer wieder festgestellt, dass selbst wenn musiker durch (feste) wände vom zuhörer getrennt sind, die lebendige musik eine brücke der kommunikation bildet, die das liminal offen macht für energie, die nach aussen und nach innen fliessen kann. So wie wir die geräusche der umwelt hören – und so lange es so angenehme umweltgeräusche sind, wie wir sie jetzt (d.h. zum zeitpunkt des interviews, als regen zu hören war) hören- sind sie ein vorzügliches und willkommenes zeugnis, dass die musik in der welt und nicht auf einem imaginierten platz ist oder unter einer glocke, die sie von der welt abtrennt. Aber gleichzeitig ist das liminal als ort freier begegnung eine kritik an einer welt, die uns zwingt zu hören, dinge zu hören, die wir nicht hören möchten oder so (beschaffen) sind, dass das hören sogar durch krach oder durch die struktur dessen, was klingt, unmöglich wird. Insofern brauchen wir diesen lebendigen raum des liminals, um die offenheit einer musik gegenüber spüren und erzeugen zu können, die nicht mehr zurückschaut, sondern in eine zukunft blickt, die alle beteiligten gleichermaßen überraschen und erfreuen kann dadurch, dass sie etwas zu erleben in der lage sind, was sie vorher nicht einmal ahnten.*

- Jakob Ullman

(transcribed by Michael Pestel)

*For me the liminal is an area that is critical to the perception of music today. Composition is also a form that shapes the perception of music, given to others like a message in a bottle. They open the bottle and find a message they can either understand or not understand, and then pass this message to other people who do not read or play the music, but only listen. Today this listening cannot be taken for granted since we frequently only listen to that which we are forced to hear. The threshold, you see, is between listening to what we want to hear and what we must hear, and we have to first push what we must hear to the outside of our perception. So, one must build a space so that this type of listening is possible. Then this listening will in turn extend itself past the threshold through to the environment, so the space that initially sheltered it is now transparent to an environment that shows through its' acoustic presence that the music does not belong to the world but in the world.*

*This inward and outward shift of the borders is a process that, as a composer, I like to produce but do not want to control. The music shifts the borders, not the will of the author. What the author can do is write something down that creates a situation in which music can occur in such a way that those involved in the process can improve the situation by relating to the piece and relating to the music. They can also learn something in this way, and the composer also learns something in the end about his piece, which in the moment of performance doesn't belong to him.*

*For me it is essential that the music I make myself can meet me as something independent in the process of following the music and in the process of listening. The presence of the music is quite an essential point. I have repeatedly found that even if the performers of live music are separated by walls from the listener, the liminal forms a bridge of communication that makes an opening for energy to flow outward and inward. As long as the environmental sounds we are listening to are pleasant, like the ones we are now listening to, they are a welcome and favorable testimony that music occurs not in some imaginary place or under a glass bell separating from the world, but in the world. But at the same time the liminal, as an open zone of clashing noises, is a critique of a world where we force ourselves to hear sounds how we want to hear them instead of listening to the impossible sound structures that are present. In this respect we need to have an open mind towards the experience of music in this living area that is the liminal without looking back, but instead to the future, which can equally delight and surprise by being an experience one had not expected to be possible before.*

- Jakob Ullman

(translated by Catherine Lamb and Bryan Eubanks)

*I think of music as the total perspective in which the act of listening is the subject. Within this frame, the liminal is the space of unfocused attention; within this space lies the possibility of discrete experience.*

- Eric Laska

*The second factor of our sense as human responders is what acousticians call pattern modulation...or auditory beats in the brain, and as far as I know it's not exactly clear what the researchers' knowledge of what actually is sounding—if it's some resonance in the neurons or not, but how this specific example of this is—if you take a tuning, close to the fifth, octave, or fourth, and you arrange the beats so that they become very slow... and they're slowing down, there are many patterns, and I had brought an article from scientific American that I was going to project of a study that was made binaurally, where people experience different shapes...now I had always done this when I began composing and I had many strange names for these effects, so when I had finally found some articles they were very helpful to me because I knew that I was not listening too long, that actually there was fundamental research done, that people hear spirals, they hear curves, they hear various shapes, and this is very simple. In the book of Rodier, he studies the monaural case, and monaurally, if you take the beat at the octave, or the fifth, or the fourth, you will hear the same shapes and the same patterns, which then tells the acousticians that this is not in the cochlea at all like the other tones, which are mechanical and are called first order effects. These are tones that we simply add to the music, from the vibration of our tympanic membrane, and the spots on our ear. But the second order of effects are how we are able to extract information and actually make these patterns and these shapes, and without doing it consciously I, in my own work, often begin this way because I'm able to make very, very nice melodies, where they surprise me, and I do it through tuning, and through this matter of taking simple intervals and hearing certain shapes. In terms of our experiences, it really is very very different because I have made recordings of complete tape, of really fundamentally the same timbres, the same music really, except for a slight shift in, what is phase, or, these shapes that I'm talking about, from, actually whether the wave is very steady, or whether it just moves a little bit, and these variations are all very different, how you experience them, they're very different, and this is something, I suppose that will be, eventually analyzed, how this happens.*

- Maryanne Amacher  
(from a lecture at Ars Electronica, 1989)

*The liminal is everywhere. I don't think there is any region of hearing that escapes or that fails to erect some border between what we can directly perceive and those things that lie beyond our perception. So whether you look in harmony, or rhythm, or in loudness, density, silence. In any of those regions and more you're going to find a huge number of possible borderline, so I really don't think it's escapable and for that reason I don't really operate with a concept of it. It's not necessary; it's really below the threshold.*

- Michael Pisaro

A response to **listening in/to the liminal**  
by **Johnny Chang**, with assistance from **Dina Khouri** (reading)

*The creation of my response to listening in/to the liminal involved capturing urban locations through audio recording, text fragments and the use language as tonality/harmonic fields. The reader (Dina Khouri) was instructed to reading and translated simultaneously a given text to her native language, Arabic. Now and then, Dina adds her own thoughts or comments on the text which she just read - the additions are not translated.*

*The spoken text fragments were created for a compositional framework which attempts to address my interest in audio observations and reflect clearly the materials which presented themselves whilst I was working, hence the full title of the piece: Solitary luncheon(s). Early evening church bells plus toy guitar. Concert/ Manfred Werder. Violin-Noise-Action..*

*An important part of Solitary luncheon(s). Early evening church bells plus toy guitar. Concert/ \_\_\_\_\_. Violin-Noise-Action. is the exploration of discrete audio observations from daily routines/rituals ranging from various noise elements from the primitive violin-box, overheard unintelligible kitchen conversations to distant urban sounds gently expanding in all directions.*

The sound is both present and not present. It is an object of attention, but only for as long as you actively listen to it. In a short amount of time, it recedes from the forefront of attention and enters the realm of background noise. It reenters attention when it exits the present: often the click that accompanies the end of the side reminds one of what one was just listening to since it is no longer there.

The sound is both present and not. It is an object of attention, but only when one notices it. In a short amount of time, it recedes from the forefront of attention and enters the realm of background noise. It reenters attention by exiting altogether: it is often only when the tape clicks off that one realizes what is missing and therefore what one just listening to.

It occurs to me after listening to the last recording that, of course, this is a performance and what I am performing is thinking. I can hear the sound and speed of my thought as it relates itself through the percussion of the typewriter. Certain thoughts accelerate onto the page. Others linger. It is therefore not a liminal listening situation at all, but rather a very direct and object oriented one: the object is thought.

There are perhaps three layers of sound. There is the real noise, which I may not have left enough of in this recording to register. Shit. There is also the taped noise of the same space playing in the same space, but clearly distinguishable from it. Then there is the sound of the typing itself, the percussive sound of thought mediated by ~~xamash~~ machine. This is perhaps an interesting audio-essay on liminal/physical sound after all.

Layers of sound: There is night itself and soft rain-like crackle of the air conditioners in the summer heat; then there is the taped noise of this place, displaced from another season, quieter on the one hand, but noisier because of the tape hiss, which is here accumulated into a roar. Then there is the sound of the typewriter itself. Its percussive thudding, thudding, thinking music. It has the troubled pace of organic thought wring through a machine. , Much like the unnatural task of repeating this audio essay over and over.

One of the funniest things about me is that I have no intention of publishing this writing, and yet I also want it to be real writing, for lack of a better term, but largely because I understand the acoustical effect this will have. In some ways then, this is a liminal recording, but it is the writing that is both writing and not-writing. The sound of thinking on paper, of performing thinking on paper--through a machine-- is becoming intolerable. I increase production values... or perhaps I am just doing multiple takes, waiting for the one where what I want to be audible is audible.

- Madison Brookshire

*At first, silence and noise seem to occupy the poles of a linear continuum, like a line from zero to infinity. Listening reveals that this continuum is really a circle without any poles, but with momentary extremes that we can more accurately call "liminal."*

- **Jordan Topiel Paul**

Irrespective of quantitative thresholds' qualities (tendencies toward too much or too little), perceptual liminality is first and foremost a relation between one and an other; a space in which a boundary is unresolved. Perceptual liminality is a particular and typically temporary state of tenuous equilibrium – a balance specifically *of* uncertainty.

In artistic practice, evocation of perceptual liminality is often synonymous with a heightening of concentration such that attention may be experienced as a form of attachment with that which one attends. Such evocations hinge upon transforming a transitory state into a static or drawn out condition – a contradiction fully in keeping with a logic of the art work as *explosante-fixe*. Productively, this extension allows the relational potential of that which might be lost or passed over as a fleeting confusion to be at least mimetically maintained. Performing persistent instability reveals the identity of each momentarily blurred term as the product of constant maintenance and rehearsal. Problematically, the consequent petrification of relational flux in its *production* subsumes the liminal, that which promises complex entanglement, in the conciliatory transactional space of classical aesthetic experience. The listener remains seated, the work takes on a threshold relation to her, and after the brief oscillatory boundarylessness or indistinction which the framework allows, affected bodies return without moving to their non-vibratory discretion. As such, in its static instrumentalization, even liminality contributes to a normative coordination of bounded space.

In my own 'production' of the liminal, my attempt has been to insert a *dynamic* of homeostasis (not unlike organisms' lived experience or pursuit of equilibrium) into the work itself. Inverting the scene of the static liminal insists that perceived liminal stasis occur only as the result of listeners' perpetual adjustment to changing conditions. Instead of receiving a fait accompli from the stage (the stage being the institution of art, not any physical structure), the listener herself becomes the very condition of liminality. She must consciously modulate (in every sense) her own relation to an other to produce or maintain a desired relation. The other (the work) facilitates that modulation, leaving the listener in an elsewhere both independent of and yet driven by it.

Dynamizing the liminal is a means toward articulating a reflexive erotics of equilibrium. Dynamized, the liminal is insistently transactional but without exchange – a ruse (still), but from which an *occasion without preposition* (without precedent, and yet with a specificity of space) might emerge.

- Bill Dietz

(read by Sebastian Biskup)

*With the integration of limits, we may discover the limitless.*

- Andrew Lafkas

### ***Parallel Music***

*This is the challenge: exit from the before and after in the music and enter into its here and now. In integrated or parallel music everything coexists: this and that and not this or that. It is we the listeners, fully aware that we are an active part of the context, who freely choose what to listen to and when. That's the point, we must develop an awareness that we are part of what we are listening to.*

**- Walter Branchi**

*(read by Bryan Eubanks)*

*When the sounds are liminal, you have to bring more intention, more attention to it, to really listen to it. If something just pump! into your ear, it takes time after, just to listen. The best example is when (les cloches) bells, are, say, in the mountains- after they stop, you can hear all the shimmering aspects of all the partials, overtones, harmonics, and all that...but as long as you have the bong! in the ear, you can't hear all of that. To have this beginning very liminal, necessarily, unless you go down, you go out, because you don't like it, attracts the attention. There's a quote- a very good friend of mine, Thibaut de Ruyter- who once in Berlin made an interview about this thème somehow and he tells if you are in the black, after a while, the subtle details of light start to appear. I think that for that reason, it's very important. On the other hand, if you play very softly, here you can hear all of these famous sub-aspects, partials, and all that whatsoever-harmonics or subharmonics, some small beatings, all of this which are so charming, and "charming" is maybe not the right word but which produce a real kind of a....so! I like it and obviously the people like it also, but if the fundamental is too loud, you cannot hear all that. It's also the problem for recording this kind of music, because of course, the microphones are not that subtle. I mean, in the range of their way of recording, the fundamental is always too strong... and so many things are happening. I would say that the common ear would say "but it's nothing", these sustained tones, but it's not true at all, through these sustained tones, so many things are so rich, the vocabulary is so rich. For me, for what I am looking for with music, is the fundamental- to have that, to really dig into the sounds, into its real essence, the way it is constituted, because anyway what makes the special color of an instrument is the special range and shape of all these partials. What makes the difference between a wonderful instrument and a poor instrument is the large range of the partials for a good instrument. I think that somehow the essence of music is in these small aspects. But maybe, you know, I'm a bit crazy about that!*

-Éliane Radigue

*I speak of subtle augmentation of tones and even of their equally diminished condition. All these come together into one beautiful intangible whole. Intangible because (there is) no effort at any convergence of meanings. On the contrary the tones make fine divergences and reflect upon a new state of our human existence where the traditional requirement of coherence stands meaningless. In repetition there is not repeating and the emergence of changed nuances make nature's own consonant/dissonant movement possible. There is so much pain present and at the same time much affirmation. As if in every dying of things upon earth there is new fertility.*

- Mani Kaul

(read by Catherine Lamb)

*Die grosse und die kleinste Differenz sind mit einander verbunden. Anfang der neunziger Jahre wurde der eine Strang meiner Arbeiten immer reduzierter und leerer, der andere immer komplexer und dichter. Als ich weiterarbeitete standen sich irgendwann (Fast-)Stille und Weisses Rauschen gegenüber, bildeten aber keinen Gegensatz mehr.*

*Vielelleicht am interessantesten jedoch sind Differenzen wenn sie gewissermaßen asymmetrisch sind. ZB. die Differenz von Etwas und seiner Wiederholung: Die Asymmetrie hier ist die zwischen der objektiven Identität und der erfahrenen Differenz. Es gibt im Grunde keine zeitlichen Symmetrien die nicht als asymmetrisch erlebt werden. Die Verallgemeinerung davon ist dann auch die Differenz zwischen Etwas und seiner Wahrnehmung, zwischen einem Klang und dem Hören desselben Klanges.*

*Das sind zentrale Aspekte meiner Arbeit. Aber sicher ist auch, dass, was uns heute als Grenze oder Peripherie erscheint, schon morgen das Zentrum bilden kann. In anderen Kognitionsbereichen ist das ohnehin schon langst der Fall.*

**- Peter Ablinger**

*The largest and the smallest difference is interconnected. At the beginning of the nineties one strand of my work became more and more reduced and empty, the other more and more dense and complex. As I continued working at some point (almost) silence and white noise were standing face to face, but no longer formed an opposition.*

*Perhaps most interesting, however, are differences when they are, so to speak, asymmetric. For example, the difference between something and its repetition: the asymmetry here is the one between the objective identity and the experienced difference. There are basically no temporal symmetries that are not experienced as asymmetric. The generalization of this is then the difference between something and its perception, between a sound and hearing the same sound.*

*These are central aspects of my work. But it is also certain that what now appears to us as a border or periphery, tomorrow may form the center. Which in other areas of cognition has anyway already long been the case.*

**- Peter Ablinger**

*(translated by Catherine Lamb, Bryan Eubanks, and Peter Ablinger)*