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THE MELANCHOLIA OF RADIGUEAN AESTHETICS

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Abstract: This article undertakes a Kleinian analysis of the early feedback works of Éliane Radigue. By reading the melancholic nature of these works – their fixation on the 'lost objects' of recorded sound, and the self-recursivity of their feedback techniques – as sonically generative rather than merely mournful, I argue that Radigue's feedback works transcend the signifying order of much elegiac music, offering a distinct intervention and epistemology within the history of musique concrète, electronic music and the sonic arts.

Éliane Radigue's sound pulls me into an expansive, melancholic encounter, into an entranced state that both mourns and embraces an experience of profound, overwhelming transition. The subtle nature of this melancholia is the subject of this article; I feel spurred to analyse it because the 'sadness and mournful pensiveness' so often associated with the term do not strike me as adequate descriptors of the affective fields her work engenders.[1] To read melancholia as a conversation with gently morphing sonic objects, as a state that demands and facilitates graceful endurance and transformation, is what guides my project. To this end, I will attempt to give an overview of Radigue's early feedback works and describe how they instantiate a vision of melancholy that is more Kleinian than Freudian, less tragic than generative, flowing and rich with possibility.

I first encountered Radigue's work in the early 2010s after reading an interview with her in Tara Rodger's *Pink Noises*.[2] I then began exploring her oeuvre, first her long-form *Trilogie de la Mort*, or *Trilogy of Death*, and then her *L'Île re-sonante, Biogenesis*, the *Adnos* works and *Chryptus*. Though these works carry an air of elegy, of terminal lament, I felt, equally, that they were birthing worlds; at the heart of Radiguean aesthetics, I propose, this paradox reigns. Gaps occasion resonance; lost sonic objects ripple with an exuberance that brings the sensorium overwhelmingly to life; what sounds, prima facie, like a lament is more profoundly legible as a sublime modality of meditation and celebration.

Throughout her career – from her earliest feedback works, her 'propositions sonores', her works in synthesis and acoustic

[1] Mary Ann Lund, *A User's Guide to Melancholy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021), p. 2.
[2] Tara Rodgers, *Pink Noises: Women on Electronic Music and Sound* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010).

compositions – Radigue's work has figured forth discontinuities and tensions, coaxing two or more seemingly similar materials (multiple de-synchronised tape loops running in parallel, for example) into a relation productive of infinite variability. As I have pursued this line of inquiry, I have come to think of feedback as a primary conceit across Radigue's oeuvre – feedback as a melancholic loop which cuts away upon its return to unity, transfigured to an opening of elsewheres and differences. Her deployment of feedback echoes throughout her oeuvre, whether by mobilising listening itself as a form of composition, arranging alchemic inquiry into liquid states as a guiding principle of improvisation, through her attention to partials, overtones and transfiguring 'environments of sounds' or, quite explicitly, through her use of feedback: Larsen effects and tape reinjection feedback, electronified erosion, the resonant frequencies of recording technologies, instruments and acoustic spaces. Radigue's work points the listener to a fundamental engagement with the role of feedback, with the difference, voice and emergence found in the noisy, displaced cracks of repetition's reproductive return.

My analysis will begin with a brief history of melancholy, of stages in its invocation as a mood uniquely generative of artistic practice. I will then proceed to recount a history of Radigue's early feedback works and explain how their technical conception and aesthetic execution might profitably be understood in light of theories of melancholia elaborated by Melanie Klein.

A History of Melancholia

Women, artists and characters '[seeking] out solitude' and '[sitting] lost in their own thoughts and fantasies' have long been associated with melancholia within the Western canon.[3] Melancholia has likewise maintained a privileged relationship in fantasies of genius. Aristotle made an early link between melancholy and genius, locating an 'anxiety in Being' with the ethos of the philosopher.[4] Marsilio Ficino's 1489 *De Vita* foregrounded the link between 'melancholy, creativity and intellectual prowess',[5] and several centuries later Schelling would write of the indestructible melancholy of nature,[6] stating that melancholy was the 'essence of human freedom'.[7] Robert Burton's 1621 *The Anatomy of Melancholy* provides a more exhaustive examination of what he describes as a universal affliction, a therapeutic guide for the 'grieving minds' for whom sorrow is met with exuberance.[8]

Across contemporary cultural studies, art history, literary theory and psychoanalysis, theorists have further elaborated the relationship between melancholia, creative practice, artistic formations and the modern.[9] Western modernity involves a series of fractures and lost objects. It involves the loss and mourning of metaphysical certainties:

[3] Lund, *A User's Guide to Melancholy*, p. 2.
[4] Julia Kristeva and Leon S. Roudiez, *Black Sun: Depression and Melancholia* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1989), p. 7.
[5] Lund, *A User's Guide to Melancholy*, p. 3.
[6] *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, 'Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph von Schelling', 22 October 2001, substantive revision 9 February 2023, https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/schelling/ (accessed 14 November 2024).
[7] Kristeva and Roudiez, *Black Sun*, p. 7.
[8] Lund, *A User's Guide to Melancholy*, p. 7.
[9] See, for example, Esther Sanchez-Pardo, Allen S. Weiss, Julia Kristeva, Jonathan Flatley, Mathew Bell, David L. Eng and David Kazanjian.

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the death of steadfast belief in reason, progress, god and the unified self, as well as the radical restructuring of the nature of labour, time and space in the face of industrialisation, colonisation, urbanisation and technological advancement.[10,11] The project of modernism mourns and confronts these losses or, as Jonathan Flatly writes, operates as 'the symbolic space in which what counts as modernity, what modernity is or should be, and for whom, is contested, debated, reevaluated, or otherwise articulated'.[12] With the emergence of recorded media and sound we find a particular series of responses to the lost object of the sound source.

In his discussion of recorded sound's radical restructuring of relationships to death, disembodiment, mourning and melancholia, Allen S. Weiss has drawn a compelling link between the advent of recorded sound and broadcasting in the nineteenth century and emerging Western modernist aesthetic formations.[13] With recorded sound's ability to record, reassemble and project the voices of the distant and dead, he writes, a new poetics, music and sound art emerge. As with the ego's split from consciousness in Freudian melancholia, whereby the ego and self become lost, decentred and fragmented, emergent artistic strategies stress multiple, fragmented subject positions and points of view.[14] Shock, estrangement, montage, collage and the cut-up come to characterise emerging devices and forms. Within the psychoanalytic lineage established by Freud, Weiss highlights, melancholic mourning is an obsessive variety of nostalgia, a reaction to loss which assumes pathological dimensions. Following a great loss, the ego of the melancholic begins to identify with the object of mourning; not wanting to accept the loss, the newly fragmented ego separates from consciousness such that death, or the lost object, becomes psychically internalised.[15] This produces an impossible, incessant mourning and search for the lost object, as well as their associations, resulting in extreme dejection and self-reproach.[16]

That said, the Freudian theorisation of melancholia, dominant as it may seem, is not the only game in town. In her description of modernist literary responses to the horrors of the world wars and the loss of various metaphysical assurances, theorist Esther Sanchez-Pardo relates these various modernisms to two lineages of melancholy that arise in the twentieth century.[17] Alongside Freudian melancholic epistemology, with its narcissistic movement turning 'back upon the ego', she locates a lineage of melancholia in the work of Melanie Klein, which presents instead 'a specific mode of object relations'.[18] Whereas Freudian melancholy is characterised by the split, fracture, disembodiment and estrangement, Kleinian melancholy opens another space 'within modernist culture, a troubled interior space

[10] David L. Eng and David Kazanjian, *Loss: The Politics of Mourning* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2003).
[11] Jonathan Flatley, *Affective Mapping: Melancholia and the Politics of Modernism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008).
[12] Ibid., p. 32.
[13] Allen S. Weiss, *Breathless: Sound Recording, Disembodiment, and the Transformation of Lyrical Nostalgia* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2011).
[14] Ibid.
[15] Sigmund Freud, *On Murder, Mourning and Melancholia* (London: Penguin, 2005).
[16] Dana Amir, 'Naming the Nonexistent: Melancholia as Mourning over a Possible Object', *The Psychoanalytic Review (1963)*, 95, no. 1 (2008), pp. 1–15.
[17] Esther Sanchez-Pardo, *Cultures of the Death Drive: Melanie Klein and Modernist Melancholia* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003).
[18] Ibid., p. 9.

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that poses a traumatic relationship with exteriority… Space in Kleinian theory is not something that has to be conquered but something that must be experienced in all its complexity. It is also a space that is empty enough to allow the (lost) object to emerge.'[19] For Klein, melancholy and loss are always already inscribed, from the outset. Before the object is lost, there is a fundamental mourning that allows for separation and loss with psychic integrity. The actual loss of the object is simply a reactivation of the trace of an originary loss.

Sanchez-Pardo details the ways in which the loss of these metaphysical assurances between the wars resulted in aesthetic attempts to shatter consciousness and the world, to employ techniques of juxtaposition in order to foreground sensations of discontinuous, fragmented time.[20] Simultaneously, however, we find the rise of a counteracting belief in the power of 'movement, change, mutability, transformation',[21] a drive towards Kleinian melancholia's particular 'mode of object relations' and phantasmic resistance to binary divisions, 'essentialism, reification and closure'.[22] It is my contention that Radigue's feedback works highlight the transitional, the blur, the always already lost, unwanted noise on the plane of audition, with all of the transformation, openness and integration of Kleinian melancholia. Tape recording itself, the precondition for sound separated from source, is not employed as a silent, empty space of reproduction, but instead becomes a noisy, productive voice that emerges from listening across a gap – listening to listening itself. In what follows I will offer brief descriptions of Radigue's early feedback explorations as well as provide further elaboration of the link between her technical and material processes and the work of melancholic memorialisation.

Early Feedback Works

Many of Radigue's works – *Transamorem Transmortem* and *Trilogy of Death* – explicitly reference states of transition or passing, and rightly take note of the melancholic and even sombre tone that runs through her work. The gradual, almost imperceptible textural evolution in her pieces draws attention to the fatality inherent to time itself and signals the weirdly buoyant yet relentless decay of the present. In the 1950s and 1960s, however, we find the genesis of a singular melancholic formulation in the technique and raw material of Radigue's earliest feedback works, particularly when explored from within the context and aesthetic purview of musique concrète and acousmatic music. Radigue's early feedback works, I suggest, offer a unique response to the lost, dead object of recorded sound and its silent keepers.

As a woman working largely from the margins of the post-war European musical avant-garde, Radigue's aesthetics of melancholia, I suggest, distinctly internalise the world. We might posit that those operating from the margins have a particular relationship to mourning and loss as a precondition for the very perception of the object. Where early musique concrète employs the forms of montage, cinematographic collage and the reassembly of fragmented objects in response to the separated sound source, Radigue's aesthetics involve the voicing of the recording device's listening and environment, as well as foreground relations, tape superimpositions, and gradually unfolding,

[19] Ibid., p. 12.
[20] Ibid., pp. 12 and 20.
[21] Ibid., p. 10.
[22] Ibid., pp. 9 and 11.

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complex sonic textures. Her distinct use of feedback – both Larsen effects and tape reinjection feedback – lays aside the question of the ghostly, lost sound sources of the recorded sound object, and instead foregrounds the sonorous materiality of recording itself. The resonant frequencies of the recording device listening to a resonant environment are voiced, and the listening of mechanical reproduction is rendered audible in a new home of endlessly re-combinatory tape loops, in what Radigue called at the time – some time before the development of the term 'sound art' – 'propositions sonores' (sonic propositions, or endless music).[23]

In the late 1960s, Radigue joined Pierre Henry at his Studio Apsome 2, on the Boulevard Saint-Germain in Paris.[24,25] It had been over a decade since Radigue had first worked with Henry at the Studio d'Essai.[26] In 1954 she had met the studio's co-founder, Pierre Schaeffer, whose work she had first encountered on the radio.[27] In her words, Schaeffer's work resonated with her sense that 'it is in our way of listening that sounds have their own meaning and their own sense', that you can hear 'some pipe with water running and it is music. And so everything can become music depending on the way you listen to it.'[28] The disregarded sounds of the everyday could be heard in all of their complexity, in their inherent, composite significance. The following year, the 23-year-old mother of three would join the studio as an assistant and, in the process, learn cutting, splicing and musique concrète techniques.[29]

Raising her three young children, however, was her priority in the ensuing years; following an extended musical hiatus, Radigue returned to Paris in 1967 as Henry's assistant at Studio Apsome, working unpaid, as she did during her time at the Studio d'Essai.[30,31] For the following year, she archived his sound recordings, aided with editing and worked closely with him on *L'apocalypse de Jean*, which was performed at the Sigma Festival in Bordeaux.[32,33] Whenever able, however, she continued her sonic exploration. As she described it, Henry was supportive of her pursuits, but the space constraints of the studio hindered her use of it.[34] However, as Henry became engaged with courting his soon-to-be second wife, the studio was freed up for her experimentations.[35] Radigue was not unused to sonic exploration from the edges, even in hiding. As a child growing up in a working-class family for whom music was 'not a way to make a life' – an 'unthinkable' occupation of the saltimbanque, or street performer – Radigue, against the wishes of her mother, was given secret piano lessons for years by a woman living in her building who had noticed her deep

[23] Emmanuel Holterbach, liner notes, Éliane Radigue, *Feedback Works 1969–70*. 2022, Alga Marghen, plana-R alga040.
[24] Ibid. (Holterbach dates Radigue's assistantship to 1967.)
[25] Pierre Henry, '*STUDIO APSOME 2: october 1964 – march 1971*', n.d., https://pierre-henry.org/studios/studio-apsome-2 (accessed February 2023).
[26] Éliane Radigue, *Intermediary Spaces*, ed. Julia Eckhardt (Brussels: Q-02 Umland, 2019), pp. 32–33, 65 and 74.
[27] Louise Catherine Antonia Marshall, 'Deep Listening: The Strategic Practice of Female Experimental Composers Post 1945' (Ph.D. dissertation, University of the Arts London, 2018), p. 103.
[28] Ibid., p. 103.
[29] Radigue, *Intermediary Spaces*, pp. 65–67.
[30] Marshall, 'Deep Listening', p. 116.
[31] Radigue, *Intermediary Spaces*, p. 76.
[32] Marshall, 'Deep Listening', p. 119.
[33] Radigue, *Intermediary Spaces*, p. 75.
[34] Marshall, 'Deep Listening', p. 119.
[35] Radigue, *Intermediary Spaces*, p. 74.

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interest in the instrument's sonorous fascinations.[36] In her time working at the Studio d'Essai, in the late 1950s, she once again was sure to camouflage her musical pursuits. As she has described, had she made it evident that she was making '[her] own music [she] surely would never have stayed there'; 'as long as [she] was just a *stagiare* [trainee or intern], cutting, splicing tape, making… that was quite alright'.[37] Following this year of assistance and personal study at Henry's Studio Apsome, it was, in fact, her creative deviations from his tape-loop technique, which he sharply criticised, that ended in her resignation.[38]

All the while, however, in this period preceding her move to synthesis in the 1970s, Radigue was developing a keen interest in feedback. Though these pieces were produced in the 1960s, Radigue has dated her feedback experimentations to her time at the Studio d'Essai;[39] Emmanuel Holterbach has noted that 'it seems evident the entire creative process in Éliane Radigue's work had begun in the Studio d'Essai in 1955'.[40] Radigue found herself drawn to the electronic sounds of feedback, sounds which would have been considered unwanted noise, or 'garbage' sound to the studio technicians.[41] She began experimenting with two feedback forms, Larsen effects and tape reinjection feedback, both of which occur in a 'positive feedback configuration', a causal relation wherein an increase in input produces an increase in output, 'typically unstable behaviour [leading] to exponential variations'.[42] Larsens occur in a double loop, in which a microphone is connected to a speaker, which is then reproduced and again captured; what is recorded and played back occurs in a loop with a delay between the input and output, producing variable feedback which can be controlled by moving the microphone closer and further away from the speaker. Tape reinjection feedback involves inputting the reel-to-reel output back into the record input at various speeds and amplitude levels.[43] The technique, when used as sonic material, involves a study of control, anticipation and movement.

Unlike the recordings, precise tape cuts, raw material reversals, extensions and effective shifts of musique concrète's tape experiments, this technique involves improvisatory, embodied, gestural response. By moving the microphone too close to the loudspeaker, or at an excessive amplitude into the reel-to-reel's record input, you lose control of the feedback; it overwhelms the circuit and becomes painfully ear-piercing. Too far away, or amplified too quietly, and you lose the sound altogether; it disappears into silence. The technique involves a delicate balancing act, a practice of movement that is neither excessively nor inadequately controlled, that anticipates the mercurial directions of the recording device's voice. It involves deep, focused listening and moving to just the right spot. Radigue was drawn both to this practice and to the sounds that would emerge therefrom. 'By just moving slightly the mic on this right distance [one finds] sustained tones, but slightly changing' at 'various speed beats'; by moving just so, a landscape of shimmering, variably pulsing tones manifests.[44]

[36] Marshall, 'Deep Listening', p. 95.
[37] Ibid., p. 85.
[38] Ibid., pp. 120–21.
[39] Ibid., p. 113.
[40] Holterbach, liner notes.
[41] Marshall, 'Deep Listening', pp. 118–119.
[42] Dario Sanfilippo and Andrea Valle, 'Feedback Systems: An Analytical Framework', *Computer Music Journal*, 37, no. 2 (2013), p. 14.
[43] Ibid.
[44] Marshall, 'Deep Listening', p. 114.

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While at Studio Apsome, Radigue began a series of feedback experiments, resulting in her 1967 *Jouet électronique*.[45] After she left the studio, Henry, as she says, had the 'elegance' to leave her two Tolana reel-to-reel tape recorders that he had lent her.[46] In her home studio, she used the two Tolana recorders, a Telefunken tape recorder, a Sennheiser microphone, a small mixer and two speakers. The Tolanas were particularly useful in the production of feedback: with the lightest touch, Radigue was able to produce varied tones and sonorities.[47] She would go on to use them in her 1969–70s works, $\Sigma = a = b = a + b$ (1969), *In Memoriam-Ostinato* (1969), *Usral* (1969), *Omnht* (1970), *Stress Osaka* (1970) and *Vice-versa, etc.* (1970).

Within the broader historical context, the substantial attention paid by Radigue to feedback stands out within musique concrète, whose origins in broadcasting, radiophonics and cinematographic montage and whose emphasis on the manipulation of pre-recorded sound, on typomorphology – on sonic type, behaviour in time and spectral distribution – produce a split between real and imagined source recognition.[48] Musique concrète, particularly in its early years, yielded various montage assemblages of disparate, collaged sonic events. 'The concrete music film is nothing other than a cinema of sounds,' writes Pierre Schaeffer in *In Search of a Concrete Music*; it is 'made up of pre-existing elements, taken from any sound material, noise, or musical sound, then composed experimentally by direct montage'; here, the artist uses 'concrete means to fragment musical matter into new volumes'.[49] Allen S. Weiss' 'melancholic epistemology' explicitly links such aesthetic formations – the split, shattered and fragmentary, similarly described by Sanchez-Pardo – with the advent of recorded sound and the process of melancholic internalisation of the lost object. With the advent of recorded and broadcast sound, Weiss suggests, we find new relationships to death, disembodiment and mourning: in what Whitehead described as the 'ghostland boneyard' of radio, death and life become blurred; the invisible voices of the departed become 'free-floating entities'.[50]

Addressing the haunted nature of the arts of mechanical reproduction, and the question of how to confront the echoing, transformed, lost objects of recorded media, posed a central problematic for the Studio d'Essai and acousmatic sound, which turned to the object's ghost, or phantasm, and the listening experience itself, rather than fixating on its origin. 'For the "concrete" musician, there is no difference between the cut bell and the piece of train: they are "sound fragments".'[51] The lost, internalised object, as Julia Kristeva puts it, is 'better fragmented, torn, cut up, swallowed, digested' than lost entirely.[52] Musique concrète, in its centring of acousmatic sound – sound separated from source – and in its emphasis on and plastic recombination of these sonic memories, or disembodied, lost, fragmentary sound-objects, might be said to exact this sonic loss, a loss

[45] Holterbach, liner notes.
[46] Marshall, 'Deep Listening', p. 121.
[47] Radigue, *Intermediary Spaces*, p. 76.
[48] Marc Battier, 'What the GRM Brought to Music: From Musique Concrète to Acousmatic Music', *Organised Sound: An International Journal of Music Technology*, 12, no. 3 (2007), pp. 189–202.
[49] Pierre Schaeffer, Christine North and John Dack, *In Search of a Concrete Music* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2012), pp. 176, 25 and 181.
[50] Weiss, *Breathless*, p. 20.
[51] Schaeffer, North and Dack, *In Search of a Concrete Music*, p. 14.
[52] Kristeva and Roudiez, *Black Sun*, p. 12.

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that is invoked in Schaeffer's title choice for his 1952 *In Search of a Concrete Music* text, a reference to Marcel Proust's great modernist tome, *In Search of Lost Time*.

In Radigue's feedback works, we find a distinct engagement with this search for the lost sonic object. Some of the works, such as *Elemental* (1967) and *Opus* 17 (1970), feature recorded sound with feedback acting as either a slow, decaying force of electronified erosion or as a timbral counterpoint to the source material. The majority of these works, however – everything Radigue produced from the time she began working alone in her studio – feature no pre-recorded sounds of the world. Much like early video art experimentation, the technology of capture becomes the medium. The act of recording sounds itself voices an already haunted listening on the plane of audition. The mourning conveyed in Radigue's work does not so much express the 'phantasmic projection of an impossible presence seeking psychic disintegration' that Weiss relates to the 'amplification, reversal, dubbing, projections, broadcast, and disembodiment' of recorded sound;[53] instead, Radigue's use of feedback engenders a concept of listening which includes the resonances of unknown internal and external co-existent murmuring voices, silently inscribing, guiding and distributing the act of listening itself. In this listening, the notion of a singular listener capturing, confronting and reconstructing a static world is upended; instead, a Kleinian, melancholic listener emerges, for whom inside and outside – both known and unknown – are noisily blurred, and a gap allows for a new mutability and transformation in a distributed, vibrant listening.

Beyond Radigue's feedback technique and choice of raw materials, we can locate an emphasis on mournful reintegration of loss in the works' remarkable wielding of gesture (the hand's touch is often lost in electronic and concrete music) in their slow, timbrally rich crossfades and durations and in the contexts in which they were presented. The feedback works do not include sonic splits and shocks, nor do they adhere to the structure of cinematographic montage integral to musique concrète. Her sonic propositions, or endless music, are much more akin to contemporary definitions of sound art, or immersive sound installation, and produce what would, in her 1970 *Omnht*, be called an 'environmental space'.[54] *Omnht*, a piece using three long loops of different durations that slowly de-synchronise, was diffused through three transducers placed behind the walls of artist Tania Mouraud's installation *One More Night*, at the Galerie Rive Droite. Mouraud described the work as a 'fausse-cercueil', a speculative, imaginary 'fake coffin' in which 'l'oeuvre c'est le vid', 'the work is the void', whereby Radigue's sound encouraged 's'accoutumer à la mort', a 'getting used to death'.[55] The walls became topographical, a vibratory transducer, creating an architectural installation of vibrating membranes and resonant, variable relations as the listeners moved through and rested in the space.

Radigue's early works were often presented as an environment of related objects, creating interactions between sound, visual elements, sculpture, architecture and the listener-participants themselves. Her 1970 *Vice-versa, etc.*, created for a Lara Vincy group exhibit, plays with sonic layering and durational malleability while incorporating

[53] Weiss, *Breathless*, pp. 21 and 82.
[54] Holterbach, liner notes.
[55] Aline Dallier-Popper, 'Les Voyages de Tania Mouraud', *Opus International*, 1975, 56, June, pp. 46–47.

the compositional collaboration of the listener.[56] The installation invites listeners to play the left and right channels in either direction at different speeds, creating shifting soundscapes depending on the listener's choice: each variation opens into different textures, different sonic worlds. This endless music could, in theory, provide an infinite, emergent soundscape in which the listener can explore embodied, improvisatory gestures, wherein each movement generates a new sonic environment. The final works resist fixture, inviting listeners to mould the sonic environment through the manipulation of tape lengths, encouraging modulation of the record's rpm speed (as with $\Sigma = a = b = a + b.$), or through the body's very movement through the sonic space (*Labyrinth sonore*). Each mediation, format or listening provides a kaleidoscopic angle or sonic fragment of an unrepresentable whole, rather than offering a total or final composition.

Radigue's works are less concerned with shock or the 'cut' of splicing than with mutating sonic mixtures and interactions, tape superimpositions, gradually shifting soundscapes and the endless possibilities of layered, durationally malleable combinations of sound. Origin and ground, inside and outside, are blurred. The lost object is not fractured and then reassembled. Instead, the voiced object is located in the act of listening, within a transmuting environment. The material sounds only via this tenuous capture. An empty but vibrant space is laid open in which lost, typically silent objects manifest in variable, navigable complexities.

The works, at least in my listening, offer submergence in a deep, trance-like state, between wakefulness and sleep. There are no harsh breaks or caesuras; the shock of modernity and the juxtapositions of montage are met with a calm, dreamlike opening, a horizon of sonorous pulsations which seem to summon mournful processing and psychic reintegration. Delicate feedback voices slowly surface and dissipate in haunting animate breaths, cries and murmurs, and we, the listeners, are left, in the words of Radigue, freely 'immersed in the ambivalence of continuous modulation with the uncertainty of being and/or not being'.[57] Closure is never achieved, but this 'failure' is imbued with the endless possibilities of voicing lost objects that were misplaced, yet co-existent from the outset, in listening itself.

Conclusion

The slowly unfolding beatings, pulsations and sustained tones that are voiced in Radigue's feedback works occasion a distinct epistemology within the history of early electronic music and musique concrète, wherein experience is understood as an elaboration of endurance. At the risk of ascribing a quality of nostalgia to her work, I have called it melancholic, and I have argued that this represents, after Klein, a lucid openness to the demands of onwardness, rather than a fixation on lost objects or fantasies of lapsed origins. Gesture is deployed with delicacy, nuance and feeling; technologies of sonic capture feature equally as instrument and medium; and sound is spatialised, site-specifically, to a haptic degree. Where Radigue's work takes place, place is restored to its intrinsic and volatile openness to a regime in which the mutable and transitional hold highest sway.

[56] Holterbach, liner notes.
[57] Éliane Radigue, 'The Mysterious Power of the Infinitesimal', *Leonardo Music Journal*, 19 (2009), p. 49.

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