Someday

The eight-channel sound installation ***For Romantic Fantasy*** is both precursor to, and an extension of, a project called *Performance Prescriptions* (2009), which was "an apothecary of actions prescribed for audience-identified ailments". With *Prescriptions*, Loveless invited her community to share their perceived ailments—whether "psychic, physical, or psychological"—and then prescribed curative actions for them. Most of these cures involved the voice: she proposed learning non-human languages, speaking to trees, to a body part, and to the dead.

For Romantic Fantasy was a self-prescription, and offers Loveless' own voice repeating the heteronormative song of optimistic longing "Some Day My Prince Will Come" with increasing loss of linguistic intelligibility. Produced through digital time shift of the original sound file, and documenting her analog attempts to master these new sounds, *For Romantic Fantasy* is played out in multiple speakers and in increasingly slowed tempos until the voice moves well beyond language. Its process is evocative of Alvin Lucier's germinal project, *I am Sitting in a Room*, wherein he recorded, played back, and re-recorded a simple text until the text itself was lost and his stuttering voice smoothed over. His didactic language is replaced with that of the resonant and formant frequencies caused by the interrelation of the subject voice, the recording device's capabilities, and the architectural volume and material—or acoustics—of the room in question. His sound is formed by structure. Loveless has fully engaged the spatial here in the form of physical installation, but she herself has replaced the recording device as the interlocutor, and the work does not directly activate the acoustic phenomena of the architecture to perform itself. Instead, *her* voice, as it replicates the slowed original recording, shifts in pitch and takes up ever more time and space. These sounds moving through the handmade speaker structures and their orientation within the room hint at both the complexity of location and the difficulty of making a legible sound; together they assert the complicated nature of exhibition as a constructed and deeply coded site. It is with this distinct series of actions that Loveless places the act of *listening* at the forefront of the work and, importantly, the first listener is herself. This unique subject position offers up the feminine individual as literally polyphonic as she dismantles a seemingly antiquated and prescriptive text into the sonorous.

This mimicry of recorded materials conjures the work of the American artist, Sharon Hayes, whose work focuses almost entirely on women's voices in the intersections between history, politics, and speech. She uses a similar methodology that she calls "respeaking" wherein she selects and repeats women's speech acts from historical recordings that she is listening to live in performance. The effect is powerful and disconcerting as you know something is missing from the story, but also deeply moving as the weight of the silences and Hayes own voice as she stumbles to speak and listen simultaneously to other women creates an uncommon composition. We are hearing her think, her process, as she runs the others' utterances through her own unified body. We do not witness the performative acts that make up For Romantic Fantasy—only listen to the recorded artifacts of the process. Loveless *has* performed such efforts publicly in the series "For Lack of Voice", in which she attempts to mimic recordings of iconic 20th century voices (such as Bob Dylan, Diamanda Galás, Marlene Dietrich, and Paul Robeson) that have been slowed, reversed, and otherwise transformed into various states of abstraction. The performative gesture is assumed here by both the sound delivery system and the reception of sound in space.

"…what secret is at stake when one truly listens, that is, when one tries to capture or surprise the sonority rather than the message?" … jean-luc nancy, listening, p5

By freeing the voice from the civilizing bounds of the lyric, Loveless unlocks a history of women's voices as emblematic of the other, the animal, the uncontrolled, and most importantly, the uncontrollable. I will *respeak* here some of the mythology and narratives assembled by Anne Carson in "The Gender of Sound",[1] wherein she describes the historic perceptions associated with the higher pitch of the female voice, drawn from written documents spanning centuries of western history from Aristotle to Hemmingway. Within these stories, the female voice is foremost indicative of danger to the masculine person and his ideals of silence and self-control. The sound of a woman is deviant. In a world where the sound a creature makes indicates their mental and physical fortitude, the high-pitched sounds made most often by women and other not-men, indicate their strengths lie in other arenas. The Furies, the Sirens, the Gorgon use their vocal talents to attract, mislead, and doom: they are sisters, a chorus, and multiple. Their sounds suggest their powers are otherworldy and come from a mutiheaded source that counters overtly the heroic individualist typology prescribed for those coded masculine of our species, as well as those species we are most familar with.

Loveless evokes these historical associations in her witchy gesture to heal herself with a self-prescription that multiplies her own voice. The eight free-standing speaker devices are anthropomorphic but illformed for humans: camera tripods hold upright drivers to deliver sound, not devices to record images. They are dressed with handmade paper cones like Victorian funeral bonnets that, like all garments, amplify the affect of the wearer, both that which is desired and that which is deeply felt. They are connected via wires that run overhead to a power source that distributes the sound that she makes and that these stand-ins broadcast for her. Her chorus of one with multiple apertures attempts to repeat the lyric told to her, "some day my prince will come…", but the song's linguistic failure over time leaves only her own sounds in repetition and seeking reception. The connecting wires are threaded through eyes at the end of long rods that are evocative of the heddles of mechanised looms of the last century, and the sounds they deliver twin the highest cries with breath-like releases somehow equally animal and mechanistic.

Aristotle suggested that the testicles were responsible for creating the lower sounds of the masculine voice. While not entirely misguided, as there is a proven relationship between hormones and voice[2], Aristotle suggested the testes acted as loom weights, pulling down on the tubes that connected them to the heart where he believed lay the origin of the voice.

"All animals when castrated change over to the female state, and as their sinewy strength is slackened at its source they emit a voice similar to that of females…. If the testes are removed, the tautness of the passages is slackened, just as when the weight is removed from the cord or from the warp; and as this slackens, the source (or principle) which sets the voice in movement is correspondingly loosened. This then is the cause on account of which castrated animals change over to

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[1] Carson, Anne. "The Gender of Sound", in Glass, Irony and God, 1992, New Directions, NYC,NY. pp 115-142

[2] this is substantiated by scientific investigation to hormonal effect on vocal quality and potential size and fitness Valentina Cartei, Rod Bond, David Reby, *"What makes a voice masculine: Physiological and acoustical correlates of women's ratings of men's vocal masculinity."* Hormones and Behavior 08/2014; DOI:10.1016/j.yhbeh.2014.08.006

the female condition both as regards the voice and the rest of their form: it is because the principle from which the tautness of the body is derived is slackened." [3]

While not insinuating loom weights, Loveless seemingly shares with Aristotle the idea that the body is the locus of the voice, but in her exploded view, she also implicates the physical environs, the social spaces, and the tools of both construction and delivery—thus shifting the focus from individual performance to the range of reception. By transforming the textual message of the original lyrics into abstract vocalization, she asserts more fully the spatial nature of song and the body as its source. To sing, the body must physically shift the boundaries of acoustical space within the throat and expand its potential for breath—it must change its own parameters. It must claim its own space. This inside/outside sonic occupation is precisely the disorder imagined historically, but it is not intended here as a divisive threat, instead it asserts the necessary conflation of the two.

"Every sound we make is a bit of autobiography. It has a totally private interior yet it's trajectory is public. A piece of inside projected to the outside. The censorship of such projections is a task of patriarchal culture that (as we have seen) divides humanity into two species: those who can censor themselves and those who cannot." [4]

Loveless has had the abstracted sounds of the installation transcribed and scored by composer, Keiko Devaux. With this gesture, she puts into volley the potential replication of her own utterances—that range between the guttural and the seemingly ecstatic over the rote repetition of the sexist Disney ideal. It is within this complex series of registers: the physical, sonic, spatial, and the social, that Loveless engages the tireless refrain of prescriptive heteronormative coupling and masculine saviours. But she performs the dismantling of the ideas with a display of coded feminine powers, just one of which is the double bind of embodiment. Her occupation of space begins an undoing and invites us into experience and away from repression. She has not only chosen *not* to self-censor, but within community to make public, to make sharable, to make reproducible—to publish.

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[3] Aristotle, Generation of Animals, V.vii, tr. Peck, A. L., Loeb, 1942

[4] Anne Carson op cit pp130