

Chapter 25: Speech, Invention, and Reflection: The Composing Process of Soundwriting

By Tanya K. Rodrigue, Salem State University, Salem, MA

1. Audio Process Note #1 (out of 9) by Carolynn

Carolynn, a graduate student from my summer 2017 “Composing with Sound” class, composed the below audio process note.

Transcript

Carolynn: Okay, so this is my first process note. I feel pretty awkward [*laughs*] because I never—no, that’s not true—I recorded my own voice alone in a room for the first time during lunch for class a couple of days ago. But I read right out of a script. So this is my first time recording myself unscripted. But it seems like it makes sense. I feel like my brain has just totally, totally been worrying for the past three days.

It's wild to me— I realized I was walking to my car that I think the majority of the stories and information that I've listened to and learned in the past five years has come from podcasts and the radio. But I didn't even realize that until today walking to my car, and just realizing that I was aware of all the noises around me in a way that I wasn't three days ago. Even just now when I was thinking about making my process note I was like, oh I should get all set up, I should get my notebook out of my backpack so that I can sort of read off what my ideas are for my project. Then I was like, oh no, it would be so much cooler to just you know hear the rustles of me taking it out of my backpack and zippers in the background. I don't know, I'm just more conscious of taking off my shoes and hearing them hit the floor [*inaudible*] than three days ago.

This is gonna be really terrible; I don't think I'll listen to this played back.

So, anyway, I did start to brainstorm for what my project would be even before the class started. I knew for a month or so that I was gonna take the class and the idea that I originally had came from reading in a pedagogy book for elementary teachers of English about this idea of lifting a line from a poem and having students read a poem or a piece and then lift a line—take a line straight out of it and then sort of do a riff off of that on their own. And I thought how cool would it be to get either a bunch of students, or a student versus their teacher, or people who would just have very different perspectives on the same poem to do an exercise like lifting a line and then record it.

And I think that kind of fits in with the same idea I've had for my other writing class around trying to break down this idea of one correct interpretation of a poem and make poetry fun again because that's how I feel about it; I feel like it's just an entry point to conversation.

And I still think that that could be a possible idea, but the more that we've analyzed different pieces as examples this week, the less that I feel that that really takes advantages of all the affordances of radio. So I started to think on my drive to Salem on Tuesday about how do I make best use of sound as a medium, and it's sort of similar to the thought process that I went through my first week of my other class thinking about what makes a blog different and when it came to a blog I was so excited, I was like, I'm such a visual person, this is great. I'll do something that combines poetry and drawing. But when it came to sound, all I could think of was the constraints of sound.

I thought about my friend John who builds organs for a living. Not like body organs, like music organs, and I thought, wow, what if I could follow him around his shop for the day. And not just listen to the sounds of an organ being played, but also listen to the

sounds of an organ being built. And that that would just be such a fascinating contrast and really make use of the fact that, you know, the project is an aural project.

I also think John just has a great voice and like a very wry, dry sense of humor, so I just think he would interview really well. So I was playing with that, and then sort of midway through the day I had this flurry of different ideas all at once, and it wasn't until like ten minutes ago, grabbing a drink out of my refrigerator that I thought, oh maybe they're more connected than I thought. At first I thought they were totally disconnected so . . . Hold on, I'm finding . . .

[the sound ofCarolynn flipping through pages in a notebook]

Where did I put them?

[still flipping through pages in the notebook]

See, I'm so conscious of turning the pages now, it's so funny. But I'm not doing that for show, I really can't find where I put these.

[The sound of flipping through pages in a notebook stops.]

Oh, okay—here we go. Yeah, so, I was thinking about the fact that I am moving in just a couple of days, and I'm moving in with my partner, and it's the first time that I've lived with a partner and all the reflecting that I've been doing on the phone and by GChat with friends. And I was thinking about the piece that we listened to that was an audio journal and I thought wow, wouldn't it be really interesting to audio journal my reflections before I started packing and now that I've brought five measly boxes up from the basement and leaned against the wall and then once I get settled in. So I had that idea, just mostly because that's what's relevant and going on for me right now.

And then something triggered me to have this other idea, something about the idea of asking an overarching question that you come back to over and over again, about this question of like, do I want to have kids? And I was thinking about what it would look like to interview people in my life about the decision to either have kids or not have kids or where they are in that discussion with themselves and with their partners because I feel like, at 32, that's a conversation that is, like now . . . My friends have such different responses to from one another and then sometimes from me. So thinking through and listing out all the different people that I could interview and what their different perspectives are, including that like my two best friends in the world experienced miscarriages last year, which I sort of knew nothing about until watching them go through that. I have a friend who is gay and IVF is not paid for for same-gender partners in Massachusetts. I have a friend who doesn't want to have her own biological kids—there are some things she doesn't want to pass down to them but wants to adopt, and just how I have some friends who have such different perspectives on this.

So I started to think, what if I did a podcast that was basically—do you want to have kids? So the idea that I had for how these actually link together is some genre that is basically about the early thirties. And of course, you know, the early thirties are not a uniform experience for people. I think my socioeconomic status and my job and the region that I'm in and my race and my gender all play into me having and everybody having their own really unique experience of what it is to be in your early thirties. But then I think there's also a bunch of things that accompany 25 to 35 that are big moments that I just think it would be cool to hear somebody else reflect on. And so yeah, that might be cool to put that out there, things like moving, things like do you want to have kids, things like being with a partner in the same apartment for the first time.

So that's where I'm at. I guess this note got really long so I'm going to end it now.