

**Representing Birth in Outi Tarkiainen's *Midnight Sun Variations* (2019): Stasis, Expansion,
and Decay as Temporal Processes**

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Abstract

Outi Tarkiainen's *Midnight Sun Variations* (2019) for orchestra is a work about the sun being up at night and its associated blurred temporal boundaries, as well as about pregnancy and birth. I argue that musical representations of the growing daylight towards the summer solstice parallel musical representations of a mother's labour contractions until she gives birth, as well as the mother's body shrinking to its former self as the days get shorter. The goal of this thesis is to examine how Tarkiainen musically represents the stasis, growing, and shrinking that constitute the narrative of the piece. To do so, I first relate Tarkiainen's work to representation of pregnancy in Mina Loy's poem "Parturition." Drawing on the work of scholars who write on temporal manipulation, such as Victoria Malawey, Edward Pearsall, Olivier Messiaen, and September Russell, I observe how Tarkiainen inhibits harmonic and rhythmical hierarchy to evoke blurred temporal boundaries. I analyze moments of tension and growth towards the climax, by drawing on Malawey's concepts of emergence and processive growth. I also borrow Malawey's notion of decay (shrinking) to discuss how the music that follows the work's climax fades. Overall, I illustrate how Tarkiainen creates a narrative of stasis and expanded temporality under the midnight sun, as her way of linking the body with the growing and shrinking of the days.

Midnight Sun Variations (2019) pour orchestre d'Outi Tarkiainen est une œuvre traitant du solstice d'été en Finlande et des limites temporelles floues qui y sont associées, ainsi que de la grossesse et de la naissance. Je soutiens que les représentations musicales de la lumière du jour grandissant vers le solstice d'été sont parallèles aux représentations musicales des contractions du travail d'une mère jusqu'à ce qu'elle accouche, ainsi que du corps de la mère se rétrécissant suite à la naissance à mesure que les jours raccourcissent. Le but de cette thèse est d'examiner comment Tarkiainen représente musicalement la stase, la croissance et le rétrécissement qui constituent le récit de la pièce. Pour ce faire, je relie d'abord l'œuvre de Tarkiainen à la représentation de la grossesse dans le poème « Parturition » de Mina Loy. En m'appuyant sur les travaux de chercheurs qui écrivent sur la manipulation temporelle, tels que Victoria Malawey, Edward Pearsall, Olivier Messiaen et September Russell, j'observe comment Tarkiainen inhibe la hiérarchie harmonique et rythmique pour évoquer les limites temporelles floues. J'analyse les moments de tension et de croissance vers le point culminant en m'appuyant sur les concepts d'émergence (*emergence*) et de croissance progressive (*processive growth*) de Malawey. J'emprunte également la notion de désintégration (*decay*) de Malawey pour expliquer comment la musique qui suit le point culminant de l'œuvre s'estompe. Dans cette thèse, j'illustre comment Tarkiainen crée un récit de stase et de temporalité élargie sous le soleil de minuit, comme sa manière de relier le corps à la croissance et au rétrécissement des jours.

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Table of Contents

List of Examples	vii
List of Tables	viii
Chapter 1	1
Literature Review and Theoretical Framework	5
Temporality and Pregnancy in Mina Loy’s “Parturition”	5
Approaches to Thick Textures	7
Octatonic Collections	8
Temporal Boundaries: Metric Suspension, Oscillation, and Fragments	9
Processive Growth, Emergence, and Decay	12
Methodology and Chapter Description	14
Thick Texture	14
Metric Suspension	15
Octatonic Collections	15
Harmonic Oscillations and Fragments	16
Processive Growth: Emergence/Decay	17
Outi Tarkiainen: A Brief Biography	18
Chapter 2	20
Stasis and Temporal Blurring in Mina Loy “Parturition”	21
Overview of the Opening	25
Suspended Time	30
Texture	32
Metric Suspension	34
Ambiguous Octatonic Collections	37
Oscillation and Improvisatory-Like Lines	39
Extended Instrumental and Harmonic Techniques	49
Conclusion	53
Chapter 3	54
Labour in Mina Loy’s “Parturition”	56
Overview of R7 to the End	58

Emergence and Processive Growth	62
Emergence as an Intra-Sectional Process	63
Emergence as an Inter-Sectional Process	66
Change Between R7 and R8	67
Change within R8	68
Changes Between R8 and R9.....	72
Climax and Decay: R10 to the End	73
Climax.....	74
Decay and Liquidation.....	75
Conclusion	83
Conclusion	84
Bibliography	90
Appendix	92

List of Examples

Example 2.1 <i>Midnight Sun Variations</i> , mm. 2, tumbling octatonic motive	26
Example 2.2 <i>Midnight Sun Variations</i> , mm. 6-7, oscillating motive	26
Example 2.3 <i>Midnight Sun Variations</i> , mm. 11-12, wind effects.....	27
Example 2.4 <i>Midnight Sun Variations</i> , m. 29, pulsating chords	28
Example 2.5 <i>Midnight Sun Variations</i> , mm. 32-35, improvisatory-like melodies	28
Example 2.6 <i>Midnight Sun Variations</i> , mm. 1–2, thick texture	33
Example 2.7 <i>Midnight Sun Variations</i> , m. 3.....	36
Example 2.8 Octatonic 01 and 02.....	40
Example 2.9 <i>Midnight Sun Variations</i> , m. 2, piccolo and clarinet	41
Example 2.10 Shifting Octatonic 01 and 02	41
Example 2.11 <i>Midnight Sun Variations</i> , mm. 1-3, clarinet I.....	42
Example 2.12 <i>Midnight Sun Variations</i> , mm. 6-9, flute and clarinet	44
Example 2.13 <i>Midnight Sun Variations</i> , mm. 32-35, oboe and clarinet.....	48
Example 2.14 <i>Midnight Sun Variations</i> , mm. 32-40, woodwinds.....	49
Example 2.15 <i>Midnight Sun Variations</i> , mm. 29, string reduction	50
Example 2.16 <i>Midnight Sun Variations</i> , mm. 10-11	52
Example 3.1 <i>Midnight Sun Variations</i> , mm. 75-78, strings.....	65
Example 3.2 <i>Midnight Sun Variations</i> , mm. 75-78, reduction	66
Example 3.3 <i>Midnight Sun Variations</i> , R7-R8 reduction	68
Example 3.4 <i>Midnight Sun Variations</i> , mm. 92-93, flute and clarinet	69
Example 3.5 <i>Midnight Sun Variations</i> , mm. 96-104, flute, clarinet, and oboe	70
Example 3.6 <i>Midnight Sun Variations</i> , mm. 95-97, flute, clarinet, and oboe	71
Example 3.7 <i>Midnight Sun Variations</i> , mm. 104-106	73
Example 3.8 <i>Midnight Sun Variations</i> , mm. 114-116, strings.....	75
Example 3.9 <i>Midnight Sun Variations</i> , mm 117-120, strings.....	78
Example 3.10 <i>Midnight Sun Variations</i> , mm. 126-131, strings.....	79
Example 3.11 <i>Midnight Sun Variations</i> , mm. 135-142	80
Example 3.12 <i>Midnight Sun Variations</i> , mm. 146-152, strings, celeste, and harp.....	81

List of Tables

Table 1.1 <i>Midnight Sun Variations</i> , narrative overview	3
Table 1.2 <i>Midnight Sun Variations</i> , tonal and textural overview	4
Table 2.1 <i>Midnight Sun Variations</i> , motivic overview of R0-R6.....	29
Table 2.1 <i>Midnight Sun Variations</i> , textural and tonal elements of R0-R6.....	30
Table 2.2 <i>Midnight Sun Variations</i> , mm. 1-5, texture	34
Table 3.1 <i>Midnight Sun Variations</i> , overview of motives and texture in R7-R12	59
Table 3.2 <i>Midnight Sun Variations</i> , textural and tonal overview of R7-R9.....	61
Table 3.3 <i>Midnight Sun Variations</i> , tonal and variation elements in R10-the end.....	77

Chapter 1

Finnish composer Outi Tarkiainen (born 1985) has gained prominence on the contemporary music scene in her native country as well as internationally. Leading orchestras in Europe and North America have commissioned and performed her pieces, including a full opera commissioned by the Theater Hagen in Germany.¹ Her *Midnight Sun Variations* for orchestra (2019) was inspired by the birth of her first son, which occurred under the midnight sun in Finland. The score for *Midnight Sun Variations* includes a quote from writer Robert Crottet that refers to the Sámi people and their traditional territory, the Laplands. He states, “*Ce n'est pas notre faute, si dans ton pays, le rêve et la réalité sont si étroitement liés qu'on ne les différencie pas bien l'un de l'autre*” (It is not our fault if, in your country, dream and reality are so closely bound together that one cannot well distinguish one from the other).² In her *Midnight Sun Variations*, I argue that Tarkiainen draws on this quote about dreams and reality to connect the mother's body experiencing pregnancy and childbirth with the changing of the seasons.³ In this thesis, I discuss the various musical processes that Tarkiainen employs to portray these themes.⁴

¹ Andrew Mellor, “Outi Tarkiainen | Biographies,” National Art Centre, published June 29, 2022, <https://nac-cna.ca/en/bio/outi-tarkiainen>.

² Outi Tarkiainen, liner notes for Outi Tarkiainen, *Midnight Sun Variations*, trans. Susan Sinisalo (Copenhagen: Wilhelm Hansen, 2019), accessed June 4, 2024, <https://www.wisemusicclassical.com/work/60055/Midnight-Sun-Variations--Outi-Tarkiainen/>.

³ Katja Gauriloff, dir., *Kaisa's Enchanted Forest*, Oktober Production, 2017, 1:18:00, accessed June 4, 2024, <https://areena.yle.fi/1-2731009>.

⁴ Although the title of the piece features the word “variations”, the scope of my research does not allow me to explore these moments.

My thesis explores two main questions: 1) How does Tarkiainen represent moments of blurred temporal boundaries as the sun is up at night? I discuss this question in Chapter 2, where I analyze Tarkiainen's methods for creating a sense of musical "stasis" in the first part of the work. I explore stasis as an expression of the mother experiencing blended "dream and reality" before and during childbirth.

2) How does the music reflect processes of growth and receding as they relate to the mother's body, as well as the days growing longer and shorter? I evaluate question 2 in Chapter 3, as I search for how Tarkiainen creates musical "emergence" and its opposite process, "decay," in the second part of the piece onwards. With the former (emergence), Tarkiainen aims to evoke variations of shimmering light as well as labour contractions; with the latter (decay), she aims to represent the days getting shorter and the mother's body returning to itself after giving birth.⁵

I borrow the terms stasis, emergence, and decay from Victoria Malawey's work on Bjork's music. I first explore musical stasis by examining various textural, metric, harmonic, and formal means Tarkiainen employs; I also analyze links between birth in the poem "Parturition" (1914) by Mina Loy (1882-1996) to birth in *Midnight Sun Variations*. I then analyze Tarkiainen's processes for creating musical growth and decay in the second section of the piece as I draw on Malawey's studies on expanding textures, harmonies, and dynamics.

Although the title of the piece includes the word "variations", I do not consider the piece as to be a classical "theme and variations." However, many of the musical

⁵ Although gendered language is changing around how scholars discuss pregnancy and parenthood, for simplicities sake, I will be using "mother" for the term "birth-giver", and using "she/her" pronouns.

gestures Tarkiainen introduces repeat and change over their repetitions, and I will discuss these changes in their respective sections.

This piece features three sections that are marked by different tonal attributes and texture. I use R to represent rehearsal numbers. My analysis uses rehearsal numbers as formal makers because Tarkiainen relies on them to mark important moments where new textures and musical motives are introduced. The first section of the piece expresses stasis as it represents a stagnant summer evening (music until R7), succeeded by growth in the second section (R7-R10), and then music that fades away in the third section (R10 to the end) as Tarkiainen evokes the growing and then shrinking of the mother’s body after giving birth. Table 1.1 offers a summary of the work’s main formal divisions, musical processes, and narrative themes.⁶ One notable part of the piece features pulsating chords that, as Tarkiainen has noted, represent the contractions she experienced during childbirth through various processes expressing tension and release.⁷ Eventually, the music fades away, representing the shrinking of the mother’s body after giving birth.

Rehearsal Numbers	R0-R6 (mm. 0-74)	R7-R10 (75-113)	R10 (114)	R10-end (114-151)
Musical Process	Stasis	Emergence	Climax	Decay
Narrative Contents	Stagnant summer evening	Growing days, sunbeams and contractions		Body shrinks to former self as days fade to Autumn

Table 1.1: *Narrative overview of Midnight Sun Variations*

In table 1.2, I outline the tonal and textural elements of the whole piece. Changes in texture and tonal areas mark the piece’s three different sections. The first part of the

⁶ Tarkiainen, liner notes for *Midnight Sun Variations*.

⁷ Tarkiainen, email message to author, February 23, 2024.

piece, from R0-R6, features sparse textures, low drones, and oscillating fragments. This section represents stasis, and the tonal contents prominently feature octatonic collections (OCT) 01 and 02. The melodic fragments and the bass lines follow these two collections. In section two, the music’s texture thickens to represent daylight’s growth from spring to summer. Tarkiainen creates this growth through expanding texture, and the bass line begins with a B flat and rises chromatically until it reaches E near the end. At the climax and in the final section of the piece, OCT 01 serves as the main collection. The new texture features thick homophonic chords that decrease over multiple repetitions.

R0-R6 (mm. 0-74)	R7-R10 (75-113)	R10 (114)	R10-end (114-151)
Textural Elements Sparse texture Low drones and high timbre Oscillating fragments	Textural Elements Growing texture and dynamics Pulsating chords that overlap	Textural Elements Strings play thick homophonic chords	Textural Elements Strings play thick homophonic chords Texture gradually thins
Tonal elements Mixture of OCT 01 and 02 Begins with C center Bass drones feature notes from OCT 01 collection	Tonal Elements Begins with a B flat center and bass moves down by semitone to end on E flat	Tonal Elements G sharp minor chord; melodic line is OCT 01	Tonal Elements Melodies are OCT 01 collections; G sharp minor shifts to F sharp major (tritone away from C at the beginning)

Table 1.2: *Tonal and textural overview of Midnight Sun Variations*

As this piece is about pregnancy, the poem “Parturition” by Loy serves as a starting point to discuss how a person giving birth might experience undistinguishable “dream and reality” in a musical work. I therefore begin my discussion on artistic representations of pregnancy and birth by considering how Loy blurs the temporal

boundaries. This is something I argue Tarkiainen expresses musically by evoking themes that revolve around birth and the cycles of the seasons. I also relate Loy's poem to the processes through which the composer depicts musical contractions, the act of giving birth, and then the body shrinking to its former self after giving birth.

The remainder of this introduction offers a review of the relevant literature that supports my analysis, followed by a discussion of my analytical methodology, and a brief biography of Tarkiainen.

Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

Temporality and Pregnancy in Mina Loy's "Parturition"

Literature discussing representations of pregnancy in poetry will serve as a starting point for my analysis on how Tarkiainen depicts pregnancy as a state that merges dreams and reality. I therefore turn to Loy, who writes of her own experience with childbirth; in Chapter 2 I look at Loy's exploration of the mother's body and how she breaks temporal boundaries in the act of giving birth, and in Chapter 3 I compare her and Tarkiainen's respective portrayals of contractions.⁸

Although Tarkiainen does not mention Loy's poem as an inspiration, I still link "Parturition" to *Midnight Sun Variations*. During my preliminary research, I noticed many similarities between "Parturition" and *Midnight Sun Variations* in terms of thematic material (growth in contractions, eternity through life cycles, temporality

⁸ For full poem, see Appendix.

blurring), and in how both music and poetry use aural effects to create tension through various rhythmic elements.

Loy wrote “Parturition” in 1914. She was a radical poet and often explored topics considered inappropriate for women authors at the time, such as childbirth and sex.⁹ “Parturition” follows the point of view of a mother giving birth and portrays the blending of time and senses, such as sight and sound that mothers experience while giving birth. The narrator of the poem muses about life cycles and how she participates in the process of becoming (being birthed) and the process of giving birth to her own child. She also compares herself to the infinite through her participation to the continuation of life cycles through the miracle of giving birth.

In her article “Impossible Births: Childbirth Beyond the (M)other in Jacques Lacan and Mina Loy” (2021), Genevieve Smart discusses themes of temporality between life and death in “Parturition.”¹⁰ She explores how Loy’s narrator experiences a blurring of temporal boundaries through labour, and she discusses rhythms in the poetry that represent labour contractions. Smart also demonstrates how Loy’s narrator extends boundaries of time through symbolic imagery of life.

Similarly, Tara Prescott also explores temporality and blurred boundaries in Loy’s poem in her article “Mother and Mother’s: Mina Loy and ‘Parturition’” (2010).¹¹ She examines themes of eternity and the infinite within Loy’s poem as Loy links the continuation of life and the miraculous nature of childbirth with infinity due to continuing

⁹ Tara Prescott, “Moths and Mothers: Mina Loy’s ‘Parturition,’” *Women’s Studies* 39, no. 3 (March 22, 2010): 197.

¹⁰ Genevieve Smart, “Impossible Births: Childbirth Beyond the (M)other in Jacques Lacan and Mina Loy,” *PsyArt* (2021): 25-70.

¹¹ Prescott, “Moths and Mothers,” 194-214.

life on earth through procreation. Prescott also focuses her analysis on Loy's concepts of infinity and the cycles of life that Loy's narrator contemplates. Together, Smart and Prescott interpret the poetic imagery of labour in ways that I transfer to my discussion of musical themes in *Midnight Sun Variations*. Like Loy, as we will see, Tarkiainen blurs temporal boundaries as a way to represent the cycles of life as well as distortion of time (Loy with pain and Tarkiainen with the sun up at night). And just as Loy uses breaks in the poetic lines to evoke contractions, Tarkiainen also uses pauses in the music, and she devises various musical processes of "growth" to represent the contractions and birth.

Approaches to Thick Textures

In "Anti-Teleological Art: Articulating Meaning through Silence," (2006) Edward Pearsall aims to explain how thick textures lead to stasis in music. He explains how note clusters create a lack of distinct melodies: "notes cluster together, thereby losing their identity as individual tones. The redundancy of the musical events in these compositions is the result of a purposeful effort to produce a static, spatial quality in which the texture itself becomes the focus of attention."¹² He continues to argue that:

it is easy to characterize music that downplays traditional formal relations as an affront to coherence and musicality. Such music, because it does not contain familiar melodic and harmonic constructions, seems to go nowhere, present itself, instead, as a static, nonfunctional mass of sound whose trajectory in time and space cannot be predicted.¹³

¹² Edward Pearsall, "Anti-Teleological Art: Articulating Meaning through Silence," in *Approaches to Meaning in Music*, ed. Byron Almén and Edward Pearsall (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006), 53-54.

¹³ Edward Pearsall, "Anti-Teleological Art," 57.

In the first six measures of *Midnight Sun Variations*, the music features thick textures that blur the hierarchy of notes and beats. The listener, as a result, feels “in the moment” as they cannot distinguish a melody.

Octatonic Collections

Some composers have used the octatonic collection to represent stasis, and Messiaen writes about this in his own music in his *Technique of my Musical Language* (1956).¹⁴ He explains that the octatonic collection has many opportunities to create different sound “worlds” due to its symmetry. Messiaen uses the octatonic collection to represent eternity in his music as it has limited modes of transposition; that is, the various octatonic collections only have so many transpositions before they map again on to themselves.¹⁵ Messiaen links the cyclicity of limited transposition with spirituality and eternity. Like in Tarkiainen’s *Midnight Sun Variations*, as I will argue, symmetrical scales represent cyclicity of life, and come from the Sámi people’s philosophy on spirituality and cyclicity.

While Richard Taruskin does not discuss the spiritual aspect of the structural possibilities of the octatonic collection, he mentions in his important article, “*Chez Petrouchka: Harmony and Tonality chez Stravinsky*” (1987), that the octatonic collection can cause a lack of tonal pull. He states:

to be sure, an octatonic tonality will never be precisely analogous to a diatonic key, since the structure of the collection precludes the exclusive a priori hierarchal dominance of a single pitch class. Although the octatonic collection can create

¹⁴ Olivier Messiaen, “Modes of Limited Transposition,” in *The Technique of My Musical Language*, trans. by John Satterfield, (Paris: A. Leduc, 1956), 64-67.

¹⁵ Messiaen, “Modes of Limited Transposition,” 67.

harmonies that mimic the diatonic collection, composers may choose to use it in such a way that the scale lacks a tonal hierarchy.¹⁶

In Chapter 2, I examine the lack of tonal hierarchy and cyclicity in the way Tarkiainen uses the octatonic scale in the opening of *Midnight Sun Variations*.

While Taruskin and Messiaen discuss octatonic collections and their possibilities, Jonathan Bernard analyzes the use of octatonic collections in the orchestral work *Silver Ladders* by Joan Tower (1986). In his book chapter “Joan Tower, *Silver Ladders* (1986) ‘Octatonicism,’ the Octatonic Scale, and Large- Scale Structure in Joan Tower's *Silver Ladders*” (2016), he summarizes important literature on octatonic collections and looks at the ways in which Tower employs various collections at once.¹⁷ Tarkiainen also uses a mixture of octatonic collections in similar ways to Tower, and Bernard’s analysis provides a terminology to discuss how the octatonic collections interact in the opening section of *Midnight Sun Variations*.

Temporal Boundaries: Metric suspension, Oscillation and Fragments

Victoria Malawey explores methods of analyzing music that feels like it is not moving forward by identifying and examining music with metric suspension. She writes: “Metric suspension occurs when the music is freed from the constraint of meter. Often it results from incongruence of metric implications of multiple parts... or deliberately unmeasured

¹⁶ Richard Taruskin, “Chez Petrouchka: Harmony & Tonality chez Stravinsky,” *Nineteenth-Century Music* 10 (1987), 267.

¹⁷ Jonathan W. Bernard, “Joan Tower, *Silver Ladders* (1986) ‘Octatonicism,’ the Octatonic Scale, and Large- Scale Structure in Joan Tower's *Silver Ladders*,” in *Analytical Essays on Music by Women Composers: Concert Music, 2960-2000*, ed. Laurel Parsons and Brendan Ravenscroft (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), 67-84.

style. Sometimes metric suspension, as freedom from measured pulse, enables listeners to lose themselves in the sound *in the moment*.”¹⁸

To explore moments of metric manipulation in Tarkiainen’s work, I draw on Malawey’s definitions, which extend work from Jonathan Kramer, and I identify moments that feature the following processes: the music consists of moments, instead of phrases; the music starts and stops, but does not feature beginnings and ending; and the music lacks closure, climax, and hierarchy.¹⁹ As Malawey argues, music that feels unmeasured creates a sense of stasis. In Chapter 2, I explore moments that lack closure and harmonic hierarchy using Malawey’s definitions, and I analyze methods Tarkiainen uses such as repeating melodies and using fragments (as I discuss in my methodology).

Malawey’s contributions to understanding temporality in pop music, specifically themes related to birth in Björk’s album *Medúlla* (2004), is crucial to creating a framework for this thesis. Malawey proposes an original framework to analyze themes of the body, motherhood, and temporality in music. In her doctoral dissertation, “Temporal Process, Repetition, and Voice in Björk’s *Medúlla*” (2007) she writes about different means of expanding perceptions of time in music, including harmonic oscillation.

Malawey’s writings on oscillation serve as my model for analyzing oscillating fragments and harmonies in *Midnight Sun Variations* for Chapter 2. In a discussion of stasis in terms of style, Malawey quotes Leonard Meyer: “A timeless world, or one in which the distinction among past, present, and future becomes obscured, is static . . . It is a world without goals, without progress. However actively it may fluctuate it does not

¹⁸ Victoria Malawey, “Temporal Process, Repetition, and Voice in Björk’s ‘Medúlla’” (PhD diss., University of Indiana, 2007), 118.

¹⁹ Malawey, “Temporal Process, Repetition, and Voice in Björk’s ‘Medúlla’,” 118.

move *toward* anything.”²⁰ She also quotes Lewis Rowell, who echoes several of Meyer’s ideas: that musical stasis evokes timelessness, and further that static music “fails to imply a sense of progression, goal direction, increasing or decreasing tension, movement, hierarchy, structural functions, contrasting rates of motion, cumulation, phrases or other internal units that might suggest a temporal scale of periodicities.”²¹

Malawey develops her explanation on oscillation in her article “Harmonic Stasis and Oscillation in Björk’s *Medúlla*” (2010).²² Here, she explains that oscillation limits the path forward, and this is why oscillation leads to a sense of music staying in one place.²³ When a musical harmony or fragment moves back on itself, it cannot move forward, and thus the listener experiences stasis.

Peter Long has also written about musical stasis and discusses what he calls “internal processes,” which are musical processes that have movement but do not give the listener a sense of forward progression. He states that internal processes like drones and arpeggios that stay on the same harmony lead to stasis as the music does not move forward in time.²⁴

Like oscillation, the use of fragments in place of melody limits forward momentum. September Russell has developed a theory of melody and form in post-tonal music, which shows how various melodic features in neo-classical music project a sense of beginning, middle, or end in order to create an unfolding in time and forward

²⁰ Ibid., 178.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Malawey, “Harmonic Stasis and Oscillation in Björk’s *Medúlla*,” *Music Theory Online* 16, no. 1 (March 2010).

²³ Ibid., par. 4.

²⁴ Peter Long, “Spatio-Temporal Suspension and Imagery in Popular Music Recordings,” *IASPM Journal* 7, no. 2 (2017): 19.

momentum. Because Russell defines the characteristics of phrase structure in music that verges on post tonality, I am able to use her definitions to demonstrate when Tarkiainen, in the absence of conventional melodies that may have melodic boundaries, subverts the listener's expectations by using fragments instead. Russell argues that conventional melodies give the listener a pulse and a referential pitch to hold on to, thus generating a feeling of forward time.²⁵ She explains that conventional melodies begin with a singable melody, and that the music is usually easy to follow. The music ends in a cadential progression leading closure.²⁶ I use Russell's theory to explain how a lack of conventional melody, wherein melodies are replaced by fragments, leads to stasis.

Processive Growth, Emergence, and Decay

In her dissertation, Malawey also theorizes notions of processive growth (how various sections of music interact with each other), emergence (growing), and the opposite, decay (shrinking). Emergence is musical growth and represents an idea becoming "fuller" and moving forward. She defines emergence as "...the gradual materialization, introduction, or becoming of a fuller texture or more complete musical idea, and the process of emergence implies openness and continuation. Emergence often involves an increase in musical activity."²⁷ I use emergence as a major part of my thematic analysis in Tarkiainen's *Midnight Sun Variations* because the growth towards the birth/climax in the second section of the piece (R7-R10), which I discuss in Chapter 3 of this thesis.

²⁵ September Dawn Russell, "Passé Recomposé: Neoclassical Sonata Form in Interwar France" (PhD diss., University of Toronto, 2020), 30.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 55.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 61.

Malawey's concept of processive growth combines with other elements such as emergence, and I use it as a way to examine textural change between sections. As we will see in Chapter 3, there are different levels of processive growth: a) *intra*-sectional growth: "a purely textural growth as defined by levels of textural activity that emerge one at a time"; and *inter*-sectional growth: "growth among multiple sections."²⁸ In Chapter 3, I draw on the concepts of *intra*-sectional growth to examine music within one section (mainly one single labour contraction), and *inter*-sectional growth as a way to compare textures between different contractions and marked areas of growth.

When emergence combines with processive growth, it can be a lens to examine how the music builds up to the climax. Malawey explains, "Sometimes growth manifests as a build-up or accumulation... Other times growth is created by dynamic increase or intensification in some aspect of a song's sound – often, but not necessarily, textural."²⁹ Buildup is a main theme in Chapter 3, as I examine the growth towards the climax at R10.

In Chapter 3, I also analyze the "shrinking" of music from the climax at R10 to the ending. Malawey marks that decay is the opposite of emergence:

Nearly the opposite process of textural accretion, ... textural decay occurs when sound and activity gradually cease through textural reduction... As emergence enacts beginning, decay suggests conclusion... Decay may also involve dynamics ... Finally, decay projects deceleration, a gradual cessation of musical activity.³⁰

²⁸ Malawey, "Temporal Process, Repetition, and Voice in Björk's 'Medúlla'," 208-209.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 205.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 86.

With decay, the music starts “fuller” and then slowly decreases through various means to mark a conclusion. Decay in *Midnight Sun Variations* is through decreased texture and dynamics, as well as themes becoming liquidated.

Methodology and Chapter Description

To analyze *Midnight Sun Variations*, I have adapted scholarly discussions on Loy’s poem and linked them to Tarkiainen’s piece. Loy covers themes of stasis in her poem, and I use the writing of Prescott and Smart to link representations of pregnancy in poetry to music. As many of the themes in *Midnight Sun Variations* feature stasis, I draw on the work of various scholars to discuss the methods that Tarkiainen uses. I examine texture (drawing on Pearsall), metric suspension (drawing on Malawey and Long), octatonic collections (Messiaen, Bernard), oscillations and melodic fragments (Long, Malawey, and Russell) to examine how Tarkiainen creates stasis through the above means.

For analyzing the sections that represent labour contractions in Chapter 3, I link Prescott and Smart’s analyses of the narrative and rhythm of contractions in Loy’s poem, which I then link to processes of musical growth in *Midnight Sun Variations*. I rely on Malawey’s concepts of processive growth, emergence, and decay for the majority of my analysis in Chapter 3.

Thick Texture

Although discussions of texture permeate the whole of my thesis, I talk about texture in two different ways. In Chapter 2, I examine how thick texture creates a sense of stasis

using Pearsall's methods. In Chapter 3, I use Malawey's methods on processive growth and emergence (I will discuss this methodology in their respective sections).

Pearsall explains that one method for creating stasis involves thicker textures that eliminate the ability to hear individual notes, rhythms, and melodies. I draw from Pearsall's discussion on static music to analyze the thick textures in the opening of *Midnight Sun Variations*.³¹ Particularly, Tarkiainen writes many different overlapping octatonic collections in the opening six measures.

Metric Suspension

Metric suspension is the component that binds the opening six rehearsals in *Midnight Sun Variations*, and it will be analyzed within most sections of Chapter 2. In my thesis, I begin by identifying parts of the music that feature elements of stasis until the end of R6. All of the sections analyzed in Chapter 2 feature stasis as there are not many predictable phrases in the opening sections up until R7. I also identify areas that lack beginnings and endings (I discuss this in more detail below in the section about fragments); to do so, I combine Pearsall's discussion of thick texture with elements from Malawey's discussion on metric suspension.

Octatonic Collections

For my analysis of Chapter 2, I draw from scholars who have written on the symmetrical nature of the octatonic collection and how it can be used to represent stasis and the cycles of life. I first look at the symmetrical nature of the octatonic scale in the opening section

³¹ Pearsall, "Anti-Teleological Art," 53-54.

of *Midnight Sun Variations*. I relate Messiaen's concept of symmetrical scales in relation to temporality to Tarkiainen's work. I then look at Taruskin's work on octatonic scales and at how Tarkiainen uses them as a way to avoid tonal hierarchy. Finally, I borrow Bernard's approach for discussing how different octatonic collections interact with each other to explain Tarkiainen's unique treatment of the octatonic collections in the work's opening section.

Bernard develops a way to analyze and categorize six different methods of interacting octatonic collections. Some of these definitions describe how an octatonic collection begins as one collection and then shifts to another, how some octatonic collections play in parallel motion, and how they change to chromatic collections. I draw on Bernard's terminology to analyze how the very opening of *Midnight Sun Variations* mixes octatonic collections.

Harmonic Oscillation and Fragments

By identifying sections with oscillation and fragments, I am able to recognize how the music lacks forward momentum in Chapter 2. Music that lacks elements of beginning, middle, and end creates feelings of suspension. As *Midnight Sun Variations* has many sections of stasis, I discuss sections that lack these elements, as well as sections that feature motifs cycling back on themselves. I begin by examining oscillation at the opening of the work. I also discuss distinct moments where "improvisatory"-like lines create unpredictable melodies. These unpredictable melodies make the listener feel "in the moment" as they do not know where the melody is going. Particularly, this happens at

mm. 32-39 where different fragments lack beginnings and ends. Because these lines do not unfold in a way that the listener can follow, the music evokes stasis.

Processive Growth: Emergence/Decay

In Chapter 3, I examine three main topics: emergence and processive growth (which I combine together), and decay. As discussed above, Malawey defines various levels of processive growth: a) intra-sectional, textural growth and b) inter-sectional growth, which can include textural loss, gaining new textures, and dynamic, registral, timbral, and motivic changes.³²

To analyze the music from R7 to R10, I begin by combining the concepts of emergence and processive growth. I examine how growth takes place in one “contraction,” which would be inter-sectional growth. I observe how one small fragment grows in intensity. Once I examine the inter-sectional growth, I move on to intra-sectional growth between R7 and R8, where there is a distinct feeling of growth, as well as the increase of texture, motifs, and timbre between contractions in R8. Finally, I compare the processive growth between R8 and R9 using the same methods.

For the analysis of R10 to the ending, I examine how the themes decay through textural manipulation, dynamic recession, and liquidation of the themes. I link the decay through the motivic change of a melody that starts at R10, and I examine how it “shrinks” until the conclusion of the piece.

³²Malawey, “Temporal Process, Repetition, and Voice in Björk’s ‘Medúlla,’” 208-209.

Outi Tarkiainen: A Brief Biography

Tarkiainen was born 1985 in the Finnish Lapland, which is the land she often uses as an inspiration for her works. She studied composition with Eero Hämeenniemi and Veli-Matti Puumala at the Sibelius Academy. She then continued her studies with Ron Miller at the University of Miami and with Malcolm Singer at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama in London. Many organizations have commissioned her to compose works, including the Ottawa National Arts Center Orchestra, the BBC Philharmonic and Symphony Orchestra, and the Finnish Radio Symphony.³³

Additionally, she assumed the role of artistic director for the multidisciplinary Silence Festival in Finland in 2018.³⁴ Much of her music and creative outlook involves the Sámi peoples. In an interview, she explains: “The Sámi minority has been in Lapland for thousands of years... they lost their land and almost lost their culture... I do feel united with the Sámi.”³⁵ Some of her works, like *Midnight Sun Variations*’ sister piece (*Songs of the Ice*), include poetry from the Sámi people. Additionally, she bases her concerto for saxophone (*Saivo* 2016) on the Sámi philosophy of life beyond the physical plane of existence.³⁶ Though the scope of this thesis does not allow me to delve into Sámi culture and philosophy, *Midnight Sun Variations* also draws from Sámi philosophy by relating the cycle of life with childbirth and the seasons.

³³ Outi Tarkiainen, “Outi Tarkiainen: Life,” Outi Tarkiainen, accessed June 4, 2024, <https://www.outitarkiainen.fi/en/life/>.

³⁴ Tarkiainen, “Artistic Vision: Outi Tarkiainen between two worlds,” interview by Markus Luukkonen, *Music Finland*, published June 18, 2018, <https://musicfinland.com/en/news/artistic-vision-outi-tarkiainen-between-two-worlds>.

³⁵ Tarkiainen’s connection with the Sámi people relates to her feelings of isolation as a woman in a male-dominated field. Her artistic philosophy includes bringing minority voices to the forefront so that everyone has a voice. See Tarkiainen, “The Voice of Freedom,” interview by Andrew Mellor, *Finnish Music Quarterly*, published September 7, 2018, [https://fmq.fi/articles/the-voice-of-freedom](https://fmq.fi/articles/the-voice-of-freedom;);

³⁶ Ibid.

Tarkiainen's works often exist in a post-tonal space between diatonicity and atonality. The composer acknowledges that she often draws from the northern landscape and from motherhood for inspiration.³⁷ She combines her experience of being a woman and a mother with nature, while linking the wonders of the universe to the miracle of creating life and giving birth. Birth serves as a main theme in her works *The Lustful Mother* (2018) and *Songs of the Ice* (2019); in a recent masterclass, she explained that her intuition as a composer increased and changed after the birth of her first child.³⁸ She also draws inspiration from poetry and book excerpts. *Midnight Sun Variations* marks an important marriage between nature, the mother's body, and the miracle of childbirth through story telling in music.

³⁷ Tarkiainen, "PROMS 2019: Pre-Première Questions with Outi Tarkiainen- 5:4," interview by Simon Cummings, *Five Against Four*, published July 24, 2019, <https://5against4.com/2019/08/04/proms-2019-pre-premiere-questions-with-outi-tarkiainen/>.

³⁸ Tarkiainen, "Q & A: Outi Tarkiainen and the Mission of Her Opera 'A Room of One's Own'," interview by John Vandevent, *Opera Wire*, published May 31, 2023, <https://operawire.com/q-a-outi-tarkiainen-and-the-mission-of-her-opera-a-room-of-ones-own/>.

Chapter 2

Although this chapter only discusses the music up until the end of rehearsal (R) 6, the whole of *Midnight Sun Variations* explores themes of dream and reality mixing together, while the composer also relates themes of nature and childbirth to one another. In her program notes and score, Tarkiainen features a quote from the writer Robert Crottet: “*Ce n’est pas notre faute, si dans ton pays, le rêve et la réalité sont si étroitement liés qu’on ne les différencie pas bien l’un de l’autre*” (It is not our fault if, in your country, dream and reality are so closely bound together that one cannot well distinguish one from the other).³⁹ This quote comes from a documentary called *Kaisa’s Enchanted Forest* (2016), in which Sámi story-keeper Kaisa, the movie’s protagonist, shares stories of the land and the Sámi people with writer Crottet to preserve them. They are discussing the miracles of the Finnish landscape, which is the inspiration for *Midnight Sun Variations*.⁴⁰ With this quote, as we discussed in Chapter 1, Crottet highlights the natural wonders of the Lapland and their capacity to create states that transcend reality into the realm of the dream-like.

For this chapter, I cover the first section of the music (R0-6). I interpret the themes of dream and reality to correspond with the blurring of temporal boundaries as the sun is up at midnight. Tarkiainen also includes this quote in the score at R7 (as discussed in Chapter 3) to accompany the pulsating chords that represent the sunbeams of the midnight sun. I also detect elements that I interpret as mingling dream and reality from

³⁹ Tarkiainen uses both the English and French version (English in the program notes, and French in the score. See Outi Tarkiainen, liner notes for Outi Tarkiainen, *Midnight Sun Variations*, trans. Susan Sinisalo (Copenhagen: Wilhelm Hansen, 2019), accessed June 4, 2024, <https://www.wisemusicclassical.com/work/60055/Midnight-Sun-Variations--Outi-Tarkiainen/>.

⁴⁰ Katja Gauriloff, dir., *Kaisa’s Enchanted Forest*, Oktober Production, 2017, 1:18:00, accessed June 4, 2024, <https://areena.yle.fi/1-2731009>.

the beginning of the work to the end of R6, namely processes through which Tarkiainen blurs temporal boundaries.

The opening of *Midnight Sun Variations*, which represents a stagnant summer evening, features many elements of metric and harmonic stasis. I argue that this stasis participates in blurring temporal boundaries, as the lack of a distinct pulse and Tarkiainen's use of motives instead of themes lead to the music not moving forward. Thus, beginnings and endings blend together. In this chapter, I explore musical processes that express different types of temporalities. I suggest that the above-mentioned elements create the feeling that dream and reality mix during the unnatural state of the sun being up at night. I also link themes on temporality explored by Mina Loy in her poem "Parturition" and selected aspects of Bjork's music on her album *Medùlla* with the opening of Tarkiainen's work. I then demonstrate how Tarkiainen mingles perceptions of temporality by analyzing metric suspension, ambiguous use of octatonic collections, harmonic oscillation and improvisatory-like fragments, and extended tonal and instrumental techniques.

Stasis and Temporal Blurring in Mina Loy's "Parturition"

Although Tarkiainen herself did not mention the poem "Parturition" (1914) in her own discussions of *Midnight Sun Variations*, I use this poem as a starting point in my analysis, as both Tarkiainen and Loy explore expanding boundaries in regards to pregnancy. The English-American poetess Mina Loy (1882-1966) explores themes of blurred temporal boundaries as well as the cycle of life in her poem "Parturition." In this poem, birth

expands spatial boundaries and allows the mother to experience the liminal “in-between zones” between pregnancy and life-giving. Though Loy was one of the first mothers and artists to explore these themes in the early-twentieth century, she was not the last. One century later, composers like Bjork and Tarkiainen also explore related concepts of life cycles, cyclical forces, and eternity, as I will discuss later.

Before discussing the poem, touching briefly on Bjork’s *Medúlla*, and analyzing the first part of *Midnight Sun Variations*, a quick history of “Parturition” is important. Loy broke social boundaries by writing about pregnancy and labour at a time where this was not acceptable. The literary scholar Tara Prescott quotes Loy’s biographer, Roger Conover: “As the putative first poem ever written about the physical experience of childbirth from the parturient woman’s point of view... ‘Parturition’ is a significant event in the history of modern poetry as well as the literature of modern sexuality.”⁴¹ Loy focusses on labor and painful contractions, while also celebrating the power mothers have due to their ability to reproduce. Loy’s narrator also discusses the altering of time and senses. This deviation from boundaries blurs the perception of real and unreal, or what feels like mingled dream and reality. These blurred boundaries are exacerbated by the fact that the birth takes place at night, causing fatigue and disorientation.⁴²

Blending senses and perceptions is a major theme in “Parturition”; this is one way dream and reality mix in the experience of giving birth in this poem. Loy’s narrator, in her pain, has a strong experience of distortion and disorientation: “Something in the delirium of the night hours/ Confuses while intensifying sensibility/ Blurring spacial

⁴¹ Tara Prescott, “Moths and Mothers: Mina Loy’s ‘Parturition,’” *Women’s Studies* 39, no. 3 (2010): 197.

⁴² Prescott, “Moths and Mothers,” 207.

contours” (lines 49-51).⁴³ Prescott argues that in the heightened feelings of childbirth, boundaries break as the mother’s senses blur.⁴⁴

While the narrator’s perceptions blur and become confused, she experiences an expansion of temporal boundaries as she participates in the “miracle” of life cycles. Loy’s narrator states: “Mother I am/ Identical/ With infinite Maternity” (lines 96-98).⁴⁵ For Loy, reproductivity creates eternity. Loy treats birth as “an impossible realm beyond the known cosmic universe.”⁴⁶

Prescott also argues that the speaker exceeds the boundaries of time. She affirms, “The speaker declares, ‘Gaining self-control/ I should be consonant/ In time (lines 21-23).’ Because she ‘should’ be consonant in time, the line implies that she in fact is not.”⁴⁷ By participating in childbirth, “she is one woman in a long succession; she is part of the past, vividly experiencing the present, and participating in the future.”⁴⁸ Prescott further states, “She in fact experiences a much more profound shift. During the course of her labor and the following morning, she is able to transcend spatial and temporal boundaries, to understand the specific place she holds in the world as well as the universe at large, and the role she is playing in the endless cockle of birth and death.”⁴⁹ The cycles of life then become eternal and extend beyond time through the miracle of continuing life and the lineage of maternity.

⁴³ Mina Loy, “Parturition,” in *The Lost Lunar Baedeker: Poems Of Mina Loy*, ed. Roger L. Conover (New York: The Noonday Press: 1996), 5.

⁴⁴ Prescott, “Moths and Mothers,” 203.

⁴⁵ Loy, “Parturition,” 7.

⁴⁶ Genevieve Smart, “Impossible Births: Childbirth Beyond the (M)Other in Jacques Lacan and Mina Loy,” *PsyArt* 25 (January 2021): 52.

⁴⁷ Prescott, “Moths and Mothers,” 201.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 206.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 208.

The themes portrayed in Loy's poem also take place in music. Bjork's album *Medúlla* (2004) explores themes such as labour, birth, and breastfeeding. Victoria Malawey has argued that music's cyclic harmonies and repetition can represent the cycles of life, particularly in Bjork's *Medúlla*.⁵⁰

Bjork's concepts on birth and motherhood echo those of Tarkiainen when it comes to exploring temporality within motherhood and the creation of life. Malawey quotes Bjork from an interview: "I became really physical and really aware of my muscles and bones. My body takes over and does incredible things, and it has nothing to do with me."⁵¹ Bjork links motherhood with nature, and many of the themes in this album alludes to mother nature being the mother for humans. Tarkiainen too expresses this: "Being a mother myself, and motherhood of nature for us, human beings, have something in common. Mothers develop a sixth sense to care for their little ones, but we as a human race come from nature and are part of it, born from it. The connection with it is something that I think we should preserve."⁵²

Both composers were inspired by the birth of their children and the body's processes. Bjork was inspired by how her body felt during and after childbirth, as well as by the sensations of breastfeeding and bonding with the child. Tarkiainen, on the other hand, explores body expanding with the child, and the process of giving birth. Tarkienen clarifies, "*Midnight Sun Variations* is also about the opening of a woman's body to accommodate a new life, about giving birth, when the woman and the child within her

⁵⁰ Malawey, "Temporal Process, Repetition, and Voice in Björk's 'Medúlla'" (PhD diss., University of Indiana, 2007): 296.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Tarkiainen, "Outi Tarkiainen, Unveiling the Music," interviewed by Wise Music Classical, *Wise Music Classical*, accessed June 12, 2024, <https://www.wisemusicclassical.com/features/2021/02/outi-tarkiainen-unveiling-the-music/>.

part company, restoring her former self as the light fades into autumn.”⁵³ In what follows, I argue that the opening of the piece (opening to R6) represents the stasis and blurred temporal boundaries when the sun is up at midnight.

Overview of Opening

Tarkiainen takes the inspiration for her piece from the birth of her first child under the midnight sun. I argue that the sun being up at night leads to merging temporal boundaries and marks a sense of dream and reality blending. This piece is also about stasis. When talking about the textures in the opening of the piece, Tarkiainen explains, “I was... imagining a silent, stagnant summer night and thinking about its colours and the atmosphere.”⁵⁴

In the opening of the piece, there are two musical ideas that repeat interchangeably. The first grouping (G1), which takes place at rehearsal R0, R1, and R4 features three different musical gestures (see Tables 2.1-2.2 and Examples 2.1-2.3).⁵⁵ The three musical gestures are: a) tumbling octatonic scales (Example 2.1); b) oscillating motives (Example 2.2); and c) wind effects which act as a transition to the next section (Example 2.3). All three ideas take place in succession. There are various ways in which these gestures repeat and change—or are “varied,” in the loose sense to which the work’s title refers through pitch collections. Each repetition of the groupings is very similar in

⁵³ Tarkiainen, liner notes for Outi Tarkiainen, *Midnight Sun Variations*.

⁵⁴ Tarkiainen, email message to author, February 23, 2024.

⁵⁵ All musical examples and reductions are my own (note that the full score is too big to be fully reproduced in the musical examples).

musical motives, but there are changes in tonal collections: namely the central pitches change between the three repetitions of the groups. Each time the central pitch steps up by semitone, and highlights a tritone.

The three musical gestures that succeed each other have varying musical gestures (Table 2.2). Although all of the sections (besides the wind transitional gesture) feature mixtures of OCT 01 and 02, they have different textures. The first tumbling octatonic collections are thick, and immediately the texture thins and moves to high woodwind motives and low drones in the strings. Finally, the texture fades even more as the notes cut out and only wind sounds take over.



Example 2.1: *G1, m.2, tumbling octatonic motive*



Example 2.2: *G1, mm. 6-7, oscillating motive*

Flute

B \flat Clarinet

B \flat Clarinet

-tu - tu - tu-tu - tu-tu - tu - tu-tu

tu - tu - tu - tu - tu - tu - tu - tu - tu

tu-tu - tu-tu - tu - tu - tu

pp *mp* *p* *pp*

7

Example 2.3: G1, mm. 11-12, wind effects

The second main grouping, G2, occurs at R3 and R5 and is pulsating chords (which are later interpreted as labour contractions and sunbeams in Chapter 3, R7-R10) and improvisatory lines (Table 2.1- 2.2 and Example 2.4-2.5). The pulsating chords (Example 2.4) have a thin texture with the main emphasis on the pulsating chords themselves, and then the chords move to the improvisatory-like melodies with sparse texture and drones. (Example 2.5). Between the two groups, there is not much variation except in the motivic elements of the improvisatory-like melodies. Both of the groups feature interchanging OCT 01 and OCT 02 collections.

Example 2.4: G2, m. 29, pulsating chords

5

Example 2.5: G2, mm. 32-35, improvisatory-like melodies

R0 (mm. 1-12)	R1 (13-23)	R2 (24-28)	R3 (29-40)	R4 (41-51)	R5 (52-66)	R6 (67-74)
G1	G1²	Fragments from G1	G2	G1³	G2²	Fragments From G2
Tumbling octatonic motive (0-6) Oscillating motive (6-10) Wind effects (11-12)	Tumbling octatonic motives (13-17) Oscillating motive (18-21) Wind effects (22-23)		Pulsating chords (29-31) Improvisatory like melodies (32-40)	Tumbling octatonic motives (41-46) Oscillating motive (47-51) (no wind)	Pulsating chords (52-54) Improvisatory like melodies (55-66)	
Varied Elements Tonal center: C and G flat Oscillating notes: C, D flat, F, G flat (OCT 01)	Varied Elements Tonal center: C sharp and G Oscillating notes: C sharp, D, F sharp, G (OCT 12)	Varied Elements Tonal center: A and D	Varied Elements Improvisatory like lines vary in contour	Varied Elements A and E flat tonal center	Varied Elements Improvisatory like lines vary in contour	Varied Elements Improvisatory like lines vary in contour

Table 2.1: *Motivic overview of R0-R6*

R0 (1-12)	R1 (15-25)	R2 (24-28)	R3 (29-40)	R4 (41-51)	R5 (52-66)	R6 (67-74)
Textural Elements Thick octatonic collections turn to sparse texture High timbre with low drone*	*	Textural Elements Sparse texture High timbre with low drone	Textural Elements Improvisatory like melodies interplay in high timbre while low drone plays^	*	^	Textural Elements Sparse texture High timbre melodic fragments and low drones
Tonal Elements Octatonic 01 and 02 interchanging until just 01	Tonal Elements Oct 01 and 02 interchanging throughout Occasional OCT 12	Tonal Elements OCT 01	Tonal Elements Begins OCT 02 and moves to OCT 01 F sharp center (tritone away from C at the beginning)	Tonal Elements Octatonic 01 and 02 interchanging	Tonal Elements Oct 01 and 02 interplay F sharp center (tritone away from C at the beginning)	Tonal Elements Octatonic 01 and 02 fragments with an A sharp drone

Table 2.2: *Textural and tonal elements of R0-R6*

As we will see in more detail below, the music from R0 to R6 creates suspended time through various means, such as texture, metric suspension, ambiguous use of octatonic collections, oscillation and improvisatory-like lines, and harmonic and instrumental extended techniques.

Suspended Time

As stated above, Loy’s narrator experiences an expansion of time, which is also an effect that takes place in Tarkiainen’s *Midnight Sun Variations*. With the sun being up at night, dream and reality blur and yield a strange effect as elements of night and day blend temporal boundaries. In addition, until R7, Tarkiainen also represents a stagnant day and thus creates a sense of being “in the moment” instead of forward momentum. Tarkiainen suspends time and creates stasis in the opening of the piece through various means:

texture, metric suspension, ambiguous use of octatonic collections, elements of oscillation (harmonic oscillation and repeating motives) and improvisatory-like, and extended harmonic and instrumental techniques.

Many scholars, who I will discuss below, argue that musical stasis comes limited forward momentum. Music that creates suspension often lacks a clear pulse, subverts traditional hierarchies of notes and harmonies, and deploys thick textures, all of which leads to difficulty in perceiving beginnings, middles, and ends. Malawey quotes Leonard Meyer, who describes timelessness, or stasis, as follows: “A timeless world, or one in which the distinction among past, present, and future becomes obscured is static.”⁵⁶ Malawey also quotes Lewis Rowell. Rowell explains that musical stasis evokes timelessness because static music “fails to imply a sense of progression, goal, direction, increasing or decreasing tension, movement, hierarchy, structure functions... phrases or other internal units that might suggest a temporal scale of periodicities.”⁵⁷ Malawey argues that harmonic stasis usually means that the composer focuses more on texture than harmonic progression and hierarchy.⁵⁸ Peter Long also observes: “When music is so immersive that time and space appears momentarily suspended it allows the imagination to enter liminal ‘between’ zones of experience.”⁵⁹ These authors all argue that musical stasis takes place when music lacks a sense of progression and harmonic hierarchy, and thus time loses a sense of past, present, and future.

⁵⁶ Victoria Malawey, “Harmonic Stasis and Oscillation in Björk’s *Medúlla*,” *Music Theory Online* 16, no. 1 (March 2010), par. 4.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹ Peter Long, “Spatio-Temporal Suspension and Imagery in Popular Music Recordings,” *IASPM Journal* 7, no. 2 (2017): 19.

Texture

Thick textures, such as the complex ones Tarkiainen composes at the start of *Midnight Sun Variations*, can create a lack of forward motion as the contours of melodies, harmonies, and rhythms blur together. Edward Pearsall notes: “thick textures in which the notes cluster together, thereby losing their identity as individual tones,” are “the result of a purposeful effort to produce a static, spatial quality in which the texture itself becomes the focus of attention.”⁶⁰ The tumbling octatonic sections in *Midnight Sun Variations* in G1’s first gesture (mm. 1-6) deploys thicker textures, creating focus on the soundscape and not on the individual melodies.

The piece (mm. 1-6) begins with multiple voices moving all at once: here, all the woodwinds, celeste, harp, and strings play their individual lines (Example 2.6 and Table 2.3). Overall, 20 different instruments play octatonic lines, and during the densest part (m. 3), 12 instruments play the octatonic collections (OCT 01 and OCT 02) at the same time. Because the music becomes so “busy” with these thick textures, it makes the notes sound like they cluster together, thereby creating stasis. In example 2.6, I display the woodwinds in mm. 1-2 to demonstrate the score’s density; the textural thickness is apparent even if not all instruments are included in the example, and this thick texture creates a blurring effect. Table 2.3 provides a visual representation of all the instruments and which bars feature the running lines (shaded in the table) to show how thick the texture is.

⁶⁰ Edward Pearsall, “Anti-Teleological Art: Articulating Meaning through Silence,” in *Approaches to Meaning in Music*, ed. Byron Almén and Edward Pearsall (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006), 53-54.

Flute 1

Flute 2

Piccolo

Oboe 1

Oboe 2

Clarinet 1

Clarinet 2

Bass Clarinet

Fl1

Fl2

Pic

Ob1

Ob2

Cl1

Cl2

B Clarinet

Example 2.6: *Mm. 1-2, thick textures in the woodwinds*

	1	2	3	4	5
Flute 1	■	■	■	■	
Flute 2		■	■	■	
Piccolo	■	■			
Oboe 1		■	■		
Oboe 2			■		
English Horn			■	■	
Clarinet 1		■	■	■	■
Clarinet 2	■	■	■	■	■
Bass clarinet			■	■	■
Bassoon 1				■	■
Bassoon 2				■	■
Contrabassoon					■
Vibraphone		■	■	■	
Harp		■	■	■	■
Marimba		■	■	■	
Celeste RH	■	■	■	■	
Celeste LH	■	■	■		
Violin 1		■			
Violin 2	■	■	■	■	
Viola (1)	■	■	■		
Viola (2)		■	■	■	
Cello			■	■	■
Double bass					■

Table 2.3: *G1, mm. 1-5, visual representation of thick texture*

Metric Suspension

Metric suspension is another means to blur temporality due to the ambiguity of pulse, an ambiguity that makes it difficult for listeners to define temporal boundaries and hierarchy. Malaway marks metric suspension as the source for a different experience of temporality:

Metric suspension occurs when the music is freed from the constraint of meter. Often it results from incongruence of metric implications of multiple parts... or

deliberately unmeasured style. Sometimes metric suspension, as freedom from measured pulse, enables listeners to lose themselves in the sound *in the moment* so much so that they don't attend to the periodic counting of time... layers are consistent and project a sense of moments strung together. In this case, metric suspension may be felt as timelessness.⁶¹

Malawey thus describes music that sounds unmeasured that creates an experience for the listener to feel "in the moment". Similarly to the note clusters that Pearsall describes, unmeasured time makes it hard for the listener to feel a hierarchy of beats in the absence of a clear harmonic or melodic rhythm.

Tarkiainen's work fits these criteria in its opening six measures; contours of rhythms blur together as complex rhythms go against each other (Example 2.7). She begins the piece with tumbling scales with 32nd notes in the flute against septuplets in the celeste. As more voices are added with tumbling octatonic collections, more triplet, quintuplet, and septuplet rhythms are juxtaposed, increasing the sense of temporal disorientation. In m. 3 of example 2.7, which is the ending of the first musical gesture in G1, the juxtaposed rhythms feature septuplets, triplets, and 32nd-note run at the same time.

The music in example 2.7 has a time signature of 2/4, so it does have an implied pulse. Though the rhythms in m. 3 do not necessarily negate the meter, the juxtaposed rhythms do create a metrical dissonance that works against the guiding pulse. The timeless feeling therefore comes from both the thick texture and the complex rhythm. The blurring of these temporal spaces creates a sense of "dream and reality," as rhythmical subdivision and melody become harder to follow due to thick texture and juxtaposed rhythms.

⁶¹ Malawey, "Temporal Process, Repetition, and Voice in Björk's 'Medúlla'," 118-119.

The image displays a musical score for Example 2.7, featuring 13 staves for different instruments. The score is in 2/4 time and includes various rhythmic patterns. Three specific sections are highlighted with black boxes:

- Clarinet (Staff 6):** A sextuplet of eighth notes, indicated by a bracket with the number '7' below it.
- Marimba (Staff 10):** A sextuplet of eighth notes, indicated by a bracket with the number '7' below it.
- Celesta (Staff 12):** A triplet of eighth notes, indicated by a bracket with the number '3' below it.

Other instruments shown include Flute (two staves), Oboe (two staves), English Horn, A Bass Clarinet, Vibraphone, Harp, Violin, Viola, and another Viola staff at the bottom. The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings.

Example 2.7: *G1, m. 3*, boxes show the sextuplets and triplets vs. the running 32nd notes

Ambiguous Octatonic Collections

Along with thick textures, Tarkiainen opens the piece with octatonic collections (01 and 02) that loop on themselves. These function in two ways: they create stasis through their symmetrical nature, which engenders a lack of harmonic and melodic hierarchy, and they can represent the cycles of the season and life cycles that Tarkiainen describes in her program notes. Like Loy's poem, Tarkiainen's work on a large-scale level highlights the cycles of life and eternity and the growing and shrinking of the seasons: "*Midnight Sun Variations* for orchestra is about the light in the arctic summer night, when the northern sky above the Arctic Circle reflects a rich spectrum of infinitely-nuanced hues that, as autumn draws near, are once again veiled in darkness."⁶² As mentioned earlier in this chapter, it also represents the opening and closing of the mother's body, as the piece evokes the woman's body opening, giving birth, and then when the body returns to its former self as the season fades."⁶³

On a smaller formal scale, these octatonic collections also represent the symmetry of life cycles and the seasons. Tarkiainen explains, "I use the octatonics as it is symmetric – the Sámi who originally inhabited the North-Finland have eight seasons (mid-seasons between all the common seasons have names). And Sámi believe the time is cyclic too. I thought it is a setting from where it's good to start to build. Everything going in circles. As the sun does circles in the sky in the midsummer."⁶⁴

The cyclical and symmetrical nature of the octatonic collection represents blurring of temporal boundaries for other composers besides Tarkiainen. For instance, the scale's

⁶² Tarkiainen, liner notes for *Midnight Sun Variations*.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Tarkiainen, email message to author, February 23, 2024.

limited number of available transpositions evoke eternity for certain scholars and composers. Messiaen used symmetrical scales, which he identified as “modes of limited transposition,” to represent eternity in his works. Messiaen states: “[Symmetrical] modes which achieve a kind of tonal ubiquity, melodically and harmonically, here draw the listener towards eternity in space or the infinite. Special rhythms, beyond metre, contribute powerfully in dismissing the temporal.”⁶⁵ For Messiaen, these modes draw the listener to the infinite since these collections may be used without a tonal centre.

As well as representing life cycles, the way Tarkiainen employs octatonic collection can also express stasis due to its difference from the hierarchies inherent to the diatonic scale. Richard Taruskin argues:

To be sure, an octatonic tonality will never be precisely analogous to a diatonic key, since the structure of the collection precludes the exclusive a priori hierarchal dominance of a single pitch class. Although the octatonic collection can create harmonies that mimic the diatonic collection, composers may choose to use it in such a way that the scale lacks a tonal hierarchy.⁶⁶

Although the octatonic scale can be used in a way to create a strong pull towards a central pitch, composers can also employ it to have its alternating semitone-whole tone pattern set in a way to negate strong pulls towards a tonic center.

Tarkiainen uses the OCT 01 and OCT 02 in this way: the octatonic collections tumble in their characteristic alternating semitone-whole tone patterns without a distinct melody, rhythmic pulse, or harmonic hierarchy in mm. 1-6. If the listener were to isolate one of the octatonic lines and try to determine a central pitch, they may struggle to feel a

⁶⁵ Olivier Messiaen, “Modes of Limited Transposition,” in *The Technique of My Musical Language*, trans. by John Satterfield, (Paris: A. Leduc, 1956), 64-67.

⁶⁶ Richard Taruskin, “Chez Pétrouchka: Harmony and Tonality ‘Chez’ Stravinsky,” *19th-Century Music* 10, no. 3 (1987): 267.

strong pull to the central pitch, C, due to the constant pattern of alternating semitones and whole tones. The lack of a leading-tone pull adds to the brief ambiguity of the central pitch.

To explain how Tarkiainen uses her octatonic collections, I use Jonathan W. Bernard's study of Joan Tower's octatonic collections in *Silver Ladders* (1986), which applies similar techniques to Tarkiainen's *Midnight Sun Variations*. Tower employs multiple octatonic collections at once in such a way that they morph into one another. She writes her passages in upward scales with whole-tone and semitone alternation to represent the ladders. Bernard writes:

Such shifts occur at many different rates of speed and are accomplished through textural variation that verges at times on the positively kaleidoscopic. In other words, the listener is not encouraged to track pitch-class members in octatonic collections and to make sense of the music in that fashion; rather, it is the indirect effect on the shifts in the collections, and their groupings, that yields satisfying aural result.⁶⁷

Here, Bernard argues that the listener experiences aural effects with the changing collections and scale passages. The listener, therefore, is in the moment.

Bernard states that six kinds of octatonic shifts take place in *Silver Ladders*, and I found that two of these shifts apply to *Midnight Sun Variations* (Example 2.8). Variant 4 is where multiple octatonic collections are taking place at once. Bernard explains that Towers uses octatonic collections that “are projected as separate strands, played by different instrument parts; but without any rhythmic, timbral, or other means of

⁶⁷ Bernard outlines 5 variants. For this thesis, I use 4 and 5, and I have summarized his other variants here. Variant 1: single scales presented in their simplest form with whole-tone step to semitone; Variant 2: octatonic collections play in thirds or sixths, so that the running lines are from the same collections; Variant 3: the scales double in a way that that two octatonic collections take place at once; Variant 6: The octatonic scales shift from or to chromatic collections. Bernard, “Joan Tower, *Silver Ladders* (1986),” 87.

differentiating them within their compositional texture, the chances of the listener being able to hear them as truly separate entities would seem dim.”⁶⁸ As I portray in example 2.8, two octatonic collections (OCT 01 on top, and OCT 02 on bottom) sound at once. This causes blurring between the two so it is hard to distinguish one from the other.

The image shows a musical score for two staves in 4/4 time. The top staff is labeled 'OCT 01' and the bottom staff is labeled 'OCT 02'. Both staves contain a sequence of eight notes: C4, D4, E4, F4, G4, A4, B4, and C5. The notes are written as quarter notes. The top staff has a treble clef and the bottom staff has a bass clef. The two staves are grouped together with a brace on the left side.

Example 2.8: *Demonstration of OCT 01 and 02 both at the same time*

This phenomenon takes place many times during the opening section of *Midnight Sun Variations* (Example 2.9). For instance, in m. 2, OCT 01 and OCT 02 sound at the same time in the piccolo (OCT 01) and second clarinet (OCT 02). Having both collections playing at once disorients the listener as the two collections begin to merge together.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 75.

Db added for clarity

OCT 01 OCT 02

Example 2.11: *Mm. 1-3, clarinet I, OCT starting as 01 and shifting to 02*

Through these two ways of manipulating octatonic collections (having 01 and 02 play at the same time as well as shifting from one collection to next), Tarkiainen is able to manipulate the listener’s perceptions as they are experiencing boundaries blurring between the two collections while representing cyclical seasons. She encapsulates the suspension that comes from the mystery of the sun being up at night. The repetition of the octatonic collection, thick texture, and mixing of octatonic collections blurs melodic contours making the music seem static.

Oscillation and Improvisatory-like Lines

After the tumbling octatonic collections end in m. 6, Tarkiainen continues to evoke suspension in the next part of the piece (second gesture of G1) through internal processes of repetition and oscillation. Malawey describes oscillation as follows:

At times, the harmony appears to be “static,” i.e., comprised of a single harmony... or comprised of “oscillating” harmonies, i.e., alternating chords nearly equal in status. In a discussion of stasis in terms of style, Leonard Meyer writes: “A timeless world, or one in which the distinction among past, present,

and future becomes obscured, is static . . . It is a world without goals, without progress. However actively it may fluctuate it does not move toward anything.⁷⁰

Long similarly describes stasis as internal movement without a hierarchical goal: “A few sonic characteristics are employed within popular music to lead to a sense of suspension. . . Although [music appears] to lack movement, internal processes evolve constantly, characterized by use of repeated arpeggios and motifs, drones and grounds.”⁷¹ Like the octatonic collections that create stasis in their cyclical nature, the oscillating motifs circle on themselves and lack forward momentum as a result.

Tarkiainen writes a repeating motive in the clarinet and flute at the opening of the second musical gesture in G1 (mm 6-9). The melody oscillates between G, G-flat, D-flat, and D in a quintuplet rhythm (Example 2.12); as a result of this uneven configuration, the melodic pattern (four notes) and rhythmic pattern (five articulations) do not align. This creates further instability and metric suspension. Once the clarinet finishes this motive, the flute echoes the same pattern in mm. 7-9. It takes five full rotations through the melodic pattern for it to line up again with the beginning of the rhythmic motive; this however does not happen as Tarkiainen only repeats the flute four times.

⁷⁰ Malawey, “Temporal Process, Repetition, and Voice in Björk’s ‘Medúlla’,” 178.

⁷¹ Long, “Spatio-Temporal Suspension and Imagery in Popular Music Recordings,” 19.

The image shows a musical score for measures 6 through 9. It consists of three staves: Flute (top), Clarinet (middle), and Fl. (bottom). The key signature has one flat (B-flat) and the time signature is 2/4. Measure 6: Flute has a whole rest; Clarinet has a quarter rest followed by eighth notes G4, A4, Bb4, A4, G4, with fingerings '5' under the eighth notes; Fl. has a quarter rest. Measure 7: Flute has a whole rest; Clarinet has eighth notes G4, A4, Bb4, A4, G4, with fingerings '5' under the eighth notes; Fl. has a quarter rest. Measure 8: Fl. has eighth notes G4, A4, Bb4, A4, G4, with fingerings '5' under the eighth notes; Clarinet has a quarter rest. Measure 9: Fl. has eighth notes G4, A4, Bb4, A4, G4, with fingerings '5' under the eighth notes; Clarinet has a quarter rest.

Example 2.12: *Mm. 6-9, oscillating melody creating metric suspension*

Using improvisatory-like lines is another way in which Tarkiainen creates stasis in the second musical gesture of G2. By “improvised,” I do not mean that they are actually improvised by the performer; but I use that word as the lines in the following section are played freely and almost independently of each other in their contours and rhythms.

Like in Malawey’s description of oscillation, these independent motives and improvisatory-like lines blur temporal boundaries because they do not express forward-unfolding. Malawey draws from Kramer, who argues that music that lacks recognizable

phrases, feature starts and stops, and does not have beginnings, middles, and endings feels static.⁷²

September Russell also uses Kramer's ideas on "moments in music" and explains the importance of beginnings, middles, and ends for creating music that moves forward. She argues that beginnings initiate a thematic process in which the music can unfold and have forward momentum.⁷³ Russell explains Kramer's proposal that music unfolds in time in a way that listeners can understand.⁷⁴ To have forward momentum, a melody must project unfolding and characteristics of a beginning. These features give the listener a guide to how long the section will be, aiding them in understanding the length and pulse of the melody and helping them understand where beginnings and endings take place.⁷⁵ Without them, the listener becomes lost.

Russell explains that there are many elements that ensure that melodies create a forward momentum that listeners can follow. She expands:

[The basic idea's] formal function is to establish characteristic melodic and rhythmic material, to provide a referential length that will guide the listener in terms of proportion, and to suggest the referential pitch material. Characteristic material... is the combination of pitch and rhythm profiles that makes a musical line recognizable and unique. Referential pitch material is the pitch, pitch class, or pitch class set that is the "stable" point of departure for the piece of the whole. In essence, the basic idea is the launching point from which all other pitch and rhythm material within a specific thematic area must be considered.⁷⁶

In order for musical gestures to situate the listener in time so that they experience a forward progression, Tarkiainen would need to make sure that her melodies are

⁷² Malawey, "Temporal Process, Repetition, and Voice in Björk's 'Medúlla'," 118.

⁷³ September Dawn Russell, "Passé Recomposé: Neoclassical Sonata Form in Interwar France" (PhD diss., University of Toronto, 2020), 88.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 38.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 90.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 90-91.

recognizable and easy to follow. In the following analysis, I will demonstrate that due to unpredictable melodic contour and rhythmic patterns, the music feels “in the moment.”

In mm. 32-40, the second musical gesture in G2, Tarkiainen writes various improvisatory-like motives in the flutes, clarinets, and oboes that are “unmetered” because these lines do not lend themselves to continuation between each other (Example 2.13). Although the melodic gestures use OCT 01 and 02 collections, they do not express predictable patterns in their contour and rhythms.

A conventional and easy to follow melody usually begins with scalar passage or a cadential progression. She explains: “In regards to pitch, a conventional material usually takes the form of a scale passage, a tonal formula, or an ostinato... a musical moving line moving on one direction through a scale or a predictable pattern is farm more common.”⁷⁷ The lack of conventional melody in this section of the piece focusses the listener’s attention on the moment-to-moment succession of melodic units rather than on their teleological unfolding, thus there is no beginning to create a progression. Russell further affirms: “Conventional material is also principally stepwise but it frequently contains skips of a third or leaps of a fourth or more.”⁷⁸ The first line begins in the clarinet with improvisatory-sounding quintuplets and sextuplets.

The runs in the clarinet are unpredictable in direction and melodic intervals, as seen in example 2.13. The clarinet has unpredictable arpeggio up-and-down motion, and the melody is made up of mostly leaps in succession. There are not many steps moving in

⁷⁷ Ibid., 55.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 56-57.

one direction, and thus the listener may struggle to recognize the tonal center despite the pervasive presence of the collections from OCT 02.

Additionally, the rhythm that Tarkiainen uses does not give the listener a benchmark of how long the line will last, as all of the arpeggios have their own rhythmical contour and length. Russell claims, “Conventional material... is predictable and nondescript because it generally consists of a single note value; ever-increasing or ever-decreasing durations; or a predictable pattern of duration.”⁷⁹ Even during beat 2 in m. 32, a tempo marking indicates that the clarinet’s sextuplet run must begin slowly and then speed up, leading to another element of rhythmic and motivic ambiguity. The lack of predictable contours and rhythms means that the listener struggles to hear music that unfolds thematically, and therefore the music feels unmeasured and blurs the boundaries of time.

The way in which the instruments interact with each other creates another element of being “in the moment” as the lines do not have a lot in common with each other, which limits their forward momentum. In example 2.13, Tarkiainen marks both the clarinet and oboe as *solo, dolce et espressivo*, implying both instruments must play independently and freely simultaneously. Although both clarinet and oboe begin with a long note and run going down and then up, that is where the main similarities in melodic contour and rhythm end. Each instrument uses their own intervals, and the listener may not perceive the two lines as a continuation of each other. The voices thus lack forward momentum on account of the absence of beginning, middle, and ending functions. All of the

⁷⁹ Ibid., 55.

improvisatory-like passages from mm. 32-35 have this performance “solo” instruction, indicating that they should be understood as separate entities.

Oboe

Clarinet

solo, dolce et espressivo

solo, dolce et espressivo

tr

ppp *mp* ³

³

mp *mp* ⁵ ⁶ *pp*

⁵ **Example 2.13:** *G2*, mm. 32-35, contrasting improvisatory like ideas in clarinet and oboe

In such a context where the music sounds unmetered despite the presence of a time signature, the listener may struggle to hear the pulse and have a sense of where they are in the formal unfolding, and the music creates the effect that dream and reality mix together. Like the clarinet line that does not develop into thematic material that would express direction, all the other voices that pop out of the texture act in the same way. The static themes also do not interact with each other, as each has its own gesture and rhythms. The lines do not create continuation between each other as a result.

Russell also argues that for unfolding themes, the beginning of the material should determine a referential pitch and length (Example 2.14).⁸⁰ All of the lines that Tarkiainen writes have their own, different referential pitch. As demonstrated in example 2.14, the clarinet repeats D-sharp/E-flat many times, but the oboe’s referential pitch is G-sharp. These disjointed notes continue to inhibit forward progression.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 30.

The image displays two systems of a musical score for woodwind instruments. The first system includes Flute, Piccolo, Oboe, and Bb Clarinet. The second system includes Fl., Picc., Ob., and Bb Cl. The music is in 3/4 time. Dynamics range from *mp* to *ppp*. Expressive markings include *solo, dolce et espressivo*. Referential pitches are indicated by boxes: 'Referential pitch A' (Flute), 'Referential pitch D#/Eb' (Bb Clarinet), 'Referential pitch G#' (Oboe), and 'Referential pitch A#' (Flute). The score shows various melodic lines with slurs, ties, and articulation marks.

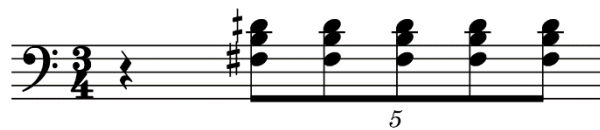
Example 2.14: *G2*, mm. 32-40, different referential pitches between all the voices

Extended Instrumental and Harmonic Techniques

Like all of the elements listed in this chapter, extended harmonic and instrumental techniques create a blending of contours through tonal ambiguity. Long discusses extended harmonic and instrumental techniques when examining stasis in psychedelic music. He argues that in Western conventions, Western audiences lose their sense of time and direction when listening to music with harmonies that feature quarter-tones or lack of musical pitches (such as blowing into an instrument without making a note).⁸¹

⁸¹ Long, "Spatio-Temporal Suspension and Imagery in Popular Music Recordings," 19.

In the starting musical gesture of *G2*, Tarkiainen uses quarter-tones in mm. 29-32, creating an ambiguity between B major and B minor (Example 2.15). This ambiguity comes from strings playing a tone between D natural and D-sharp. Long argues that quarter-tones are used in music to create suspension, as the music lies in between a conventional note according to Western tradition, so the listener does not know where the notes will go next.⁸²



Example 2.15: *G2*, m. 29, pulsating chords quarter-tones

Tarkiainen also uses extended instrumental techniques in the final gesture of *G1* (blowing into an instrument, hitting an instrument, etc.) to distort sounds that may be familiar to Western audiences, such as pitch and traditional harmonies. This leads to feelings of suspension. Long asserts: “Extended and non-standard instrumental techniques, are employed to produce unusual sounds and timbres... The sound medium is manipulated to distort, diffuse or otherwise alter the characteristics of instruments and sounds.”⁸³ This happens in mm. 10-11 (Example 2.17), where performers blow into their flutes, clarinets, trumpets, french horns, trombones, and tuba, creating a wind effect instead sounding pitches. The woodwind players are instructed to make the sound “tu-tu” into their instrument, while the brass players use air only without creating a buzz.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Ibid.

Without notes and rhythms, this section feels as if it cannot move forward as it is suspended in time. The flow is disrupted as the listener tries to find where they are.

The image displays a musical score for Example 2.17, spanning measures 10-11. The score is written for a variety of instruments, including Flute, Bb Clarinet, Horn in C, Trumpet, and Trombone. The music is characterized by complex rhythmic patterns, often involving triplets and septuplets, and dynamic markings such as *pp* (pianissimo), *mp* (mezzo-piano), and *p* (piano). The score includes numerous articulation marks, including slurs and accents, and features a change in time signature from 3/4 to 2/4 between measures 10 and 11. The instruments are arranged in a standard orchestral layout, with Flute and Bb Clarinet at the top, followed by Horns, Trumpets, and Trombones at the bottom.

Example 2.17: *G1. mm. 10-11, extended instrumental techniques*

Conclusion

Tarkiainen's use of thick texture, metric suspension, ambiguous use of octatonic collections, oscillation and improvisatory-like lines, and harmonic and instrumental extended techniques combine to create an effect of blurred temporal boundaries (dreams and reality). Inspired by the midnight sun, the stasis of the sun being up at night, and the spectacle of colours that the midnight sun produces, Tarkiainen paints a beautiful soundscape for the listener to experience being "in the moment".

Some mothers, such as Loy, Bjork, and Tarkiainen, have portrayed temporality in relation to motherhood in their works. Loy explores how temporal boundaries blur during childbirth as the mother experiences delirium during the painful process of labour. She then examines themes of the cyclicity of life and motherhood as she notices her place in the lineage of mothers. Bjork, too, creates cyclicity in her music. Malawey summarizes various ways in which Bjork evokes temporality, including metric suspension and oscillation. Many scholars write on temporality in music, and I combine analysis on metric suspension, thick textures, octatonic collections, oscillation, and improvisatory-like sections to analyze how Tarkiainen composes static music from R0-R6.

In the following chapter, I link Tarkiainen's portrayal of childbirth to the growing and shrinking of daylight as the seasons change from summer to fall, as well as to the mother's body growing with the child, and then returning to itself after she gives birth.

Chapter 3

Poetry and music's aural artforms allow both of them to evoke emotions through rhythm and sound. In Chapter 3, I examine the representation of labour contractions in Mina Loy's poem "Parturition." I then discuss section 2 and 3 of *Midnight Sun Variations* as Tarkiainen's narrative is about the days getting longer and then shorter, contractions, and sunbeams, from rehearsal (R) 7 to the end of the work.

I begin by discussing the second section of the piece and the growth that Tarkiainen creates through textural manipulation between R7 and R10 as she aims to portray labour contractions and the sunbeams of the midnight sun. In this section of the music, Tarkiainen varies pulsating chords that evoke labor contractions, each beginning mildly and growing in intensity and texture. While increasing the texture to create more tension and represent growth, she also adds higher registers to add a fuller sound as the pulsating chords progress. These pulsating chords also represent shimmering sunbeams. Tarkiainen explains: "The waves remind of contractions, the body opening and being part of a journey which one cannot lead... [I]n *Midnight Sun Variations* I was still a bit [less concrete] with that, I was not only thinking about waves as contractions, but also a light phenomenon."⁸⁴ While evoking the contractions and the light beams, Tarkiainen uses different methods to create music with a strong forward momentum, and thus a feeling of emergence (growth).

The second part of the chapter surveys the piece's final section. R10 to the end of the piece as Tarkiainen closes the metaphorical cycle of the seasons; as summer advances

⁸⁴ Outi Tarkiainen, email message to author, February 23, 2024.

the days eventually get shorter and so the music decreases through decay (music shrinking). In her program notes, she states: “*Midnight Sun Variations* for orchestra is about the light in the arctic summer night, when the northern sky above the Arctic Circle reflects a rich spectrum of infinitely-nuanced hues that, as autumn draws near, are once again veiled in darkness.”⁸⁵ The ending of the piece from R10 onwards also represents the mother’s body shrinking back to its former self: “*Midnight Sun Variations* is also about the opening of a woman’s body to accommodate a new life, about giving birth, when the woman and the child within her part company, restoring her former self as the light fades into autumn.”⁸⁶ In the second part of the chapter, I analyze the ways in which Tarkiainen creates decay from R10 to the end of the work.

I first turn to poet Mina Loy (1882-1966) for my own comparison between pregnancy in Loy’s poem and pregnancy in Tarkiainen’s work. As I have already discussed in Chapter 2, her poem “Parturition” (1914) shares many similarities with Tarkiainen’s piece. Loy not only depicts a woman experiencing pain while in labour, but she also devises aural effects evoking labour by using pauses, large spacing between words, and tension in the poetic flow. She also expresses pain building up, which I link to a process of “emergence” in the music from R7-R10. For analyzing the music in the first part of the chapter, I adopt Victoria Malawey’s methods of examining processes of “emergence” while also applying her concept of “processive growth” (how different layers of textures evolve between sections) from R7-R10.

⁸⁵ Tarkiainen, liner notes for Outi Tarkiainen, *Midnight Sun Variations*, trans. Susan Sinisalo (Copenhagen: Wilhelm Hansen), 2019, accessed June 4, 2024, <https://www.wisemusicclassical.com/work/60055/Midnight-Sun-Variations--Outi-Tarkiainen/>.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

Labour in Mina Loy's "Parturition"

Poetry gives a point of entry into analyzing the labour contractions in *Midnight Sun Variations*, as poets create aural effects through rhythm and various elements of language while also sharing distinct messages. Though Tarkiainen herself does not reference "Parturition" in her comments about the work, I find that the poem's use of rhythms to portray building contractions offers an apt hermeneutic window to demonstrate how rhythmical elements in the music portray contractions. In "Parturition," Loy illustrates the narrator's building pain as the contractions progress. She also evokes the contraction's physical reality through rhythmic techniques in the poetic flow.

Literary scholar Tara Prescott describes Loy's language portraying the narrator's pain as "crisp, precise, tense, and self-aware... the poem follows her attempts to understand and articulate her experience as her labour progresses... The speaker... experiences pain at the center of the body; thinning and dilation of the cervix, the relentless and increasing muscle contractions, and the pressure of the unborn child."⁸⁷ Loy's representation of muscle contractions describes what the narrator is experiencing, as lines 6-9 show:

In my congested cosmos of agony
From which there is no escape
On infinitely prolonged nerve-vibrations
Or in contraction⁸⁸

⁸⁷ Tara Prescott, "Moths and Mothers: Mina Loy's 'Parturition,'" *Women's Studies* 39, no. 3 (2010): 197-198.

⁸⁸ Mina Loy, "Parturition," in *The Lost Lunar Baedeker: Poems Of Mina Loy*, ed. Roger L. Conover (New York: The Noonday Press, 1996), 4.

The stanza lengths also manipulate the pacing of the poem by making the reader move quickly. After the stanzas on contractions and pain finishes (roughly half of the poem), Loy expresses the moment of the birth; as Prescott writes: “The first line of the eighth stanza, ‘Relaxation,’ indicates that the excruciating pain is over, and therefore, the baby has been born.”⁹² Up until the birth of the baby, the stanzas are shorter, forcing the reader to follow the quick pacing that evokes contractions. Prescott explains: “The ‘Relaxation’ stanza is the longest stanza of the poem, a marked shift from the shorter and more condensed ‘mountains of pain’ stanzas which lead up to it.”⁹³ This increasing waves and quickening tension moving towards the poem’s climax also presents itself in the “growing” section of Tarkiainen’s *Midnight Sun Variations* (R7-R9), and I relate these elements below.

Overview of R7 to the End

Before looking in detail at the second and third section of the music from R7 to the end, I offer an overview of the music for each rehearsal number (Table 3.1). The music from R7 to the end evokes emergence (growth and momentum) and decay (decreasing of textures) in order to first represent summer’s growing days in relation to contractions, followed by the mother’s body shrinking as autumn approaches. Within a contraction, the music builds in texture and dissonance.

⁹² Prescott, “Moths and Mothers,” 204.

⁹³ Ibid.

Emergence			Climax (and start of decay)	Decay
R7 (75-89)	R8 (90-103)	R9 (104-113)	R10 (114)	R10-End (114-151)
Beginning of contractions (pulsating chords)	Increase in dynamics and new motives	Motives introduced at R8 take over	Birth motive followed by pulsating chords	Birth motive repeats and fades
Textural Elements Pulsating chords in strings	Textural Elements Pulsating chords in strings and ascending chromatic lines in woodwinds	Textural Elements Ascending chromatic lines overlapping in woodwinds and strings	Textural Elements Lush homophonic chords in upper register of strings	Textural Elements Lush homophonic chords in upper register of strings slowly fading over multiple repetitions

Table 3.1: *Overview of motives and texture in R7-R12*

At the beginning of the second section of the music (R7), Tarkiainen inserts the following quote at the top of the score: “*Ce n'est pas notre faute, si dans ton pays, le rêve et la réalité sont si étroitement liés qu'on ne les différencie pas bien l'un de l'autre*” (It is not our fault if, in your country, dream and reality are so closely bound together that one cannot well distinguish one from the other).⁹⁴

As mentioned in the previous chapters, this quote is from the documentary *Kaisa's Enchanted Forest* (2016, directed by Katja Gauriloff), which is about the beauty of the Laplands, and the Sámi story keeper, Kaisa. Kaisa is reassured by writer Robert Crottet that it isn't Kaisa and Crottet's fault that the Lapland is so beautiful that it is hard to distinguish “myth” from reality in the beauty of the forests.⁹⁵ Tarkiainen uses this quote at R7 and states, “In the music the quote is in the beginning of the part where the light changes from cold (everything before that) to warm (everything after that), and the ‘slightly untimed’ repetitions of the strings are [rays] of light, blurry and in a way

⁹⁴ Katja Gauriloff, *Kaisa's Enchanted Forest*, Oktober Production, 2017, 1:18:00-1:19:00, <https://areena.yle.fi/1-2731009>.

⁹⁵Gauriloff, *Kaisa's Enchanted Forest*, 1:18:00-1:19:00,

unreal.”⁹⁶ In this section of the work, pulsating chords act as variations of different sunbeams from the midnight sun. I argue that the growing chords from R7-R10 represent sunbeams growing stronger as the days get longer, in tandem with labour contractions.

From R7-R9, the music has three distinct sections, shown in Table 3.2: 1) at R7 (mm. 75-89), pulsating quintuplet chords in the strings; 2) at R8 (mm. 90-103), thickening textures over the quintuplet chords in the woodwinds; and 3) at R9 (mm. 104-113), the woodwinds and strings create chromatic lines that quickly overlap, thereby evoking contractions that become more intense. Rehearsal 9 is also when the contractions reach their peak. Chromatic runs take place in the woodwinds and strings, and these two groups of contractions wash over each other. The earlier contractions, although dissonant, had small pauses between each other. Now, the contractions take place one on top of each other, evoking the real phenomenon of contractions increasing during labour. Just like Loy follows a mother whose contractions grow through summits, Tarkiainen also expresses waves of tension and release that grow in intensity overall.

From R10 to the end of the piece, the music begins to shrink through motivic liquidation and textural thinning. At R10, “the strings break away, ascend to the heights and impart maybe the most important message of all.”⁹⁷ Though Tarkiainen does not specify what this message is in her program notes, we may assume that this coincides with the climax (birth) that represents the midnight sun on the longest day of the year. Although up to interpretation, I believe that this message is the miracle of life cycles, like the ones that Loy explores in her poem. After this climax, a new motive (the “birth

⁹⁶ Tarkiainen, email message to author, November 11, 2023.

⁹⁷ Tarkiainen, liner notes for Outi Tarkiainen, *Midnight Sun Variations*.

motive”) introduced at R10 and the remnants of the pulsating chords from the labour contractions and sunbeams repeat with varying amounts of textural and dynamic reduction. The decay represents the body shrinking and the days getting shorter (as the sunbeams shrink) in preparation for autumn.

R7		R8	R9
Textural Elements Pulsating chords in low to high register in strings		Textural Elements Pulsating chords low to high register in strings Slow ascending chromatic lines in high register of the woodwinds	Textural Elements Ascending chromatic lines in strings and woodwinds, now a bit faster
Tonal Elements B flat in the bass		Tonal Elements Ascending bass over the repetitions of the “waves”: B to D in bass	Tonal Elements Eb in bass

Table 3.2: *Textural and tonal overview of R7-R9*

In what follows, I begin by analyzing processes of intra-sectional and inter-sectional growth through the lens of Malawey’s concepts of emergence and progressive growth from R7-R10. I then analyze decay (the opposite of emergence) from R10 to the end.

Emergence and Processive Growth

Textures gradually build throughout the music from R7-R10, creating forward momentum. To discuss this music, I rely on Malawey's processive growth and emergence.

Though Malawey studies processive growth in popular songs, the concept can apply to any music when comparing different formal sections. She states that "ongoing musical processes articulate the changing senses of becoming (or changing musical "moods")... Put most simply, processive growth is a strategy of change over time, which may or may not culminate in some sort of specific goal."⁹⁸ Malawey describes processive growth as a process of change in music through different means, such as textures, dynamics, shifting music. She further explains that this "process connotes action, an ongoing course or series of events, and the idea of becoming in contrast to being."⁹⁹ Unlike the music from R0-R6, which was static, the music from R7-R10 features change and action.

As the music from R7-R9 includes many aspects of growth, emergence is a productive tool to analyze these methods of texture increasing. "Emergence," in Malawey's words, "implies openness and continuation. Emergence can be textural, dynamic, structural, tonal, or metric. Moreover, emergence can feature a combination of two or more of these parameters."¹⁰⁰ "Openness and continuation" compared to the music from R0-R6, is the main shift in texture and musical processes from R7 to the climax at

⁹⁸ Victoria Malawey, "Temporal Process, Repetition, and Voice in Björk's 'Medúlla'" (PhD diss., University of Indiana, 2007), 205-206.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 206.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 61.

R10. Now the mother's body begins to open in preparation for birth, and energy moves towards the climax as Tarkiainen creates swells, increases texture, adds new motives, and adds higher timbres. I will begin by looking at the individual contractions, and then compare processes between sections.

Emergence as an Intra-Sectional Process

In this section of my analysis, I adopt Malawey's framework of processive growth when analyzing emergence as manifested in textures changing between sections. The first level is intra-sectional growth (change within one section), and then inter-sectional growth (change between sections). By observing how emergence takes place and how the different sections interact with each other, I explain how Tarkiainen evokes growth towards the climax at R10.

The first level of growth describes interacting textures inside one section of music. For this analysis, I examine each individual contraction as its own unit, so anything observed within one contraction is "intra," and "inter" compares texture between contractions. This means that when observing changes between contractions in R8, I will be using inter-sectional growth as a means to compare them. Malawey explains, "At the most local level... *intra*-sectional growth... is a purely textural level of growth as defined by levels of textural activity that emerge one at a time."¹⁰¹ In Tarkiainen's music, we see individual layers of activity in added textures through thicker chords and added voices.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 208.

At the intra-sectional process starting at R7 (m. 75), emergence takes place as individual waves. Each wave starts with one chord in the strings, and gradually Tarkiainen adds more voices to create a thicker texture, and also a thicker harmony by adding pitches. As stated above, Malawey explains that in intra-sectional growth, layers enter one at a time. Between R7 and R9, I identify 14 contractions, each identifiable through harmonic and textural features. Each contraction starts with a chord, and then swells through dynamic and textural growth.

Within each contraction, layers build on top of one another to create increasing tension, marking a “summit,” just like the one Loy described in her poem. Each contraction then washes to the next. The contraction units also represent the different sunbeams, and I argue they get stronger to evoke the days getting longer as the earth approaches the summer solstice.

As example 3.1 shows, the contractions at the first grouping of R7 (m. 75) begin with a B-flat-major triad, and the music feels stable for the beginning of the first contraction. The quarter note is 44bpm, making a slow tempo, as the music needs room to grow. The strings play pulsating eighth-note quintuplet chords, which is the contraction rhythm until R9. At first, only the double basses and cellos play (3 voices), creating a mild texture. On beat 3, the violas (split into two different voices) and second violins (4 voices) are introduced, adding six voices for a total of 9 string voices. Tarkiainen continues this pattern of adding voices from low to high register. The rise in frequency gives a sense of growth as the music expands to a higher register. A miniature dynamic swell sounds within a group of quintuplets (m. 75), as well as a larger swell within a single contraction through acceleration (mm. 75-76) and *ritardando* (m. 77-78).

Swell with
accelerando
and
ritardano

The image shows a musical score for Example 3.1, featuring six staves: Violin I, Violin II, Viola I, Viola II, Violoncello I, and Contrabass. The score is in 4/4 time with a tempo of quarter note = 44. It includes performance markings such as 'poco accel.' at the beginning and 'poco rit.' towards the end. Dynamic markings range from piano (p) to pianissimo (pp). There are two specific annotations: a box labeled 'Small swell' under the Contrabass staff in the first measure, and a larger box labeled 'Larger swell' spanning the Violoncello I and II staves in the second measure. An arrow points from the text 'Swell with accelerando and ritardano' to the first measure of the Violin I staff.

Example 3.1: R7, mm. 75-78, various sizes of swells evoke contractions

My orchestral reduction in example 3.2 demonstrates the chords building texture as another method for building tension. Each chord lasts 2 beats (half the bar) except for the last contraction, which lasts a full bar. The first chord is a B-flat major chord (three notes), and eventually building to a cluster chord with five notes in R7+3. The first chord is the most “consonant,” and then the harmony becomes increasingly dissonant with an 11th chord, an augmented chord, and then finally two cluster chords.

R7		R7+1		R7+2
B \flat	B \flat 11	B \flat X	Cluster	Cluster
3 notes	4 notes	3 notes	4 notes	5 notes

Example 3.2: *R7, mm. 75-77, chord reduction of the addition of notes and tension*

All of the contractions from the start to the end of R7 grow in texture in similar ways. The music begins with a triad (or cluster chord as the music builds in intensity), and then expands outwards in texture and register. Each contraction features a brief acceleration and deceleration, creating a swell of growth and recession. As this is representing labour contractions, this intensity and then release evoke a growing of pain, and then the slow release as the contraction begins to lessen. Like Loy in “Parturition,” Tarkiainen manipulates the pacing, by using swelling tension and release with dynamics and tempo to create this building and shrinking.

Emergence as an Inter-Sectional Process

Inter-sectional growth creates a framework to observe change between sections. Malawey defines inter-sectional growth as such: “At an intermediate level of processive growth, there are tiered sectional changes that articulate *inter*-sectional growth, which is growth

among multiple sections.”¹⁰² I will analyze inter-sectional growth in three sections: 1) the overall change between R7 and R8, 2); the change between the sections representing different contractions in R8; and 3) the change between R8 and R9. In each, I will discuss texture, range, and the addition and subtraction between voices.

Change Between R7 and R8

An immediate change takes place at R8 where Tarkiainen marks the new section with an increased tempo from quarter note = 44bpm to quarter note = 56bpm. The composer begins to construct thicker textures at the start of each contraction. As can be seen in example 3.3, all of the contractions in R7 begin with a triad, but the first contraction in R8 begins with four notes, increasing the intensity right away. Additionally, the first contraction of R8 is marked *mezzo piano*, which is dynamic growth from the *piano* at R7. The contractions progress in intensity, and the chords shift from triads to four notes (R8) and eventually to seven notes (R8+15). The increase of the overall section represents contractions and sunbeams getting stronger.

¹⁰² Ibid., 208-209.

7 It is not our fault if in your country dreams and reality are so closely linked that they cannot be distinguished from each other

7+4 7+5 7+12

B \flat chromatic chromatic B

8+6 8+9 8+15

C cluster C \sharp cluster B \flat m 9 B \flat harmonic minor on E \flat

Example 3.3: R7-R8, chordal reduction showing addition of notes and tension

Changes within R8

In contrast to my analysis of the contractions within R7, my analysis between contractions in R8 reveals inter-sectional change. The changes between contractions in R8 include new motives, which introduce new timbres and build texture through new musical patterns (whereas at R7, most of the contractions are similar between each iteration). Building texture is one way that the music begins to grow, but Tarkiainen also makes each contraction shorter than before. These shorter contractions yield a new urgency, and this compression creates a stronger sense of growth.

New motives

Starting at R8 (m. 90) as shown in example 3.4, Tarkiainen adds a new chromatic motive in the flute and clarinet to the pulsating chords in the strings. Like the contractions in the strings, the flute and clarinets are also a contraction motion due to its swell in dynamics. In addition to the new rhythm, chromatic runs in the flute and clarinet also add new timbre, which was dominated by the strings up to this point. This building of timbral

layers creates emergence, and also represents the growth that takes place as the sunbeams grow stronger in the narrative of the piece.

Flute and clarinet

Swell

Example 3.4: *Mm. 92-93, swell in the fl. and cl. chromatic line*

After the first contraction of R8, the timbre thickens with the addition of the oboe in m. 96 (Example 3.5). The instruments play different parallel chromatic lines overlapping each other, creating more tension as they cause thicker texture and a stronger desire for release. The listener has been used to Tarkiainen's cluster chords in the strings slowly shifting between voices and timbre, so this new motive of parallel movement catches the listener's attention as a they hear a new timbre, motive, and overall addition to texture.

The musical score is divided into four systems, each with three staves (Flutes and piccolo, Oboe and clarinet, and Clarinets).

- System 1 (mm. 96-98):** Flutes and piccolo play a triplet of eighth notes (p) in m. 96, followed by a 7-measure phrase (mf) in m. 97, and a triplet of eighth notes (p) in m. 98. Oboe and clarinet play a 7-measure phrase (p) in m. 97, followed by a phrase (mf) in m. 98, and a phrase (pp) in m. 99. Clarinets play a 7-measure phrase (p) in m. 96, followed by a phrase (mf) in m. 97, and a phrase (p) in m. 98.
- System 2 (mm. 99-101):** Flutes and piccolo play a 7-measure phrase (mf) in m. 99, followed by a phrase (pp) in m. 100, and a phrase (p) in m. 101. Oboe and clarinet play a phrase (p) in m. 99, followed by a phrase (mf) in m. 100, and a phrase (pp) in m. 101. Clarinets play a phrase (p) in m. 99, followed by a phrase (mf) in m. 100, and a phrase (pp) in m. 101.
- System 3 (m. 102):** Flutes and piccolo play a phrase (mf) in m. 102. Oboe and clarinet play a phrase (mf) in m. 102. Clarinets play a phrase (mf) in m. 102.
- System 4 (mm. 103-104):** Flutes and piccolo play a phrase (mp) in m. 103, followed by a phrase (f) in m. 104. Oboe and clarinet play a phrase (mp) in m. 103, followed by a phrase (f) in m. 104. Clarinets play a phrase (mp) in m. 103, followed by a phrase (f) in m. 104. The section is marked *Tutti*.

Example 3.5: R8, mm. 96-104, chromatic lines in the fl., cl., and ob., overlapping

Shorter groupings

As Tarkiainen continues to increase the texture, she also arranges shorter groupings because now the contractions move closer (Example 3.6). Loy also does this in “Parturition,” where she forms shorter lines during the more intense parts of the labour, which forces the reader to go at a quicker pace. At R8, the labour contraction groupings are now two measures in length (instead of the earlier four measure or longer ones). In example 3.6 (mm. 95-97), the thick textures in the woodwinds overlapping with the shorter groupings work together to evoke units that are rushing into each other. The contractions do not get a sense of a break with the woodwinds linking the pulsating chords. Like Loy mentions in her poem, the contractions come without repose or break.

New voices

Contraction

Contraction

Example 3.6: R8, mm. 95-97, closer contractions and overlapping woodwinds

Changes Between R8 and R9

A drastic change takes place between the end of R8 and start of R9. As R9 nears the end of the emergence process that leads to the climax at R10, the music already begins strongly for the final push. Like Loy's poem depicting the big waves of tension and pain, this section of the piece is the most intense part of *Midnight Sun Variations*, preparing for the climax and birth of the child. Tarkiainen creates growth with a change of articulation, dynamic, and texture. Tarkiainen directs the orchestra to play "*con forza*" (with force), now inserting another layer of texture (new chromatic runs taking place instead of the pulsating chords) with a new articulation. The strings play *fortissimo* at the beginning of R9 (m. 104), already much stronger than the final contraction in measure 101 which was played *forte*. This growth in dynamics between R8 and R9 gives a big movement towards the climax.

The biggest textural change takes place between R8 and R9 as the pulsating chords in the strings cut out and give way fully to the chromatic motive introduced in R8 (Example 3.7). Although the pulsating chords from before are no longer featured, I believe that the new chromatic lines in the woodwinds and strings still represent the sunbeams, but now they are transformed and stronger as they prepare the climax in R10. The chromatic lines in the flutes, clarinets, and oboe continue and now dominate the texture in R9. These new contraction gestures now overlap with chromatic tremolos in the strings. The listener, and the mother, wait for the release of the tension.

The image displays a musical score for Example 3.7, R8, mm. 104-106. The score is divided into two main sections. The top section, enclosed in a box, features woodwind parts for Flute and Piccolo (Fl. and Picc.) and Oboe and Clarinet (Ob. and Cl.). The tempo is marked 'Con forza' with a quarter note equal to 48 (♩ = 48) and the performance instruction 'sempre marcato'. The woodwinds play a complex, overlapping pattern of sixteenth notes, with dynamic markings of *f*, *ff*, and *mf*. The bottom section, also boxed, shows the string parts for Violin I, Violin II, Viola I, and Viola II. These parts feature similar overlapping patterns of sixteenth notes, with dynamic markings of *f*, *ff*, and *fff*. A label 'Contractions (based off of woodwind motive from R8)' with an arrow points to the woodwind part, and another arrow points to the string part, indicating the relationship between the two. The score includes various musical notations such as slurs, accents, and dynamic markings.

Example 3.7: R8, mm. 104-106, overlapping contractions

Climax and Decay: R10 to the end

The music leading up to R10 from R7 is all emergence and growing. It results in a climax at R10, which will be briefly discussed before we turn to Tarkiainen's processes of decay. The narrative of the piece from R10 to the end is about light decreasing and the mother's body as it shrinks to its former self, and thus, the music and analysis in this section is about how the music fades away.

Climax

The piece's climax takes place at R10 (Example 3.9). Tarkiainen describes the climax in her program notes: "the strings break away, ascend to the heights and impart maybe the most important message of all."¹⁰³ As Tarkiainen does not explicitly state what this message was, there is room for interpretation. This whole piece encapsulates the miracle of life and of the mother's body, as well as the cycles of seasons and life. Loy and Bjork also echo these sentiments in their own works. As discussed in Chapter 2, Loy explores the miracle of childbirth and her place in the continuation of life. Bjork, also inspired by her child, wrote *Medúlla*. The message that Tarkiainen infers at the climax is the miracle of life itself, and how the body makes room for the child during pregnancy. The message also includes the cycles of nature matching those of the human body, and the magic of the sun being up at night.

Tarkiainen evokes this powerful moment in the strings at the climax of the piece (Example 3.8). At R10, the strings create a new motive that, according to Tarkiainen's program notes, "break away" as the tension that was built from R7-R10 finally reaches a climax.¹⁰⁴ I call this motive the "birth motive." The birth motive is the first time that Tarkiainen has featured a motive that has some predictability to rhythm and melodic contour. The three-measure motive has the strings playing homophonic chords, and unlike the pulsating chords from before, they do not build in texture or tension. These homophonic chords differ so much from the oscillating and polyphonic textures, as well

¹⁰³ Tarkiainen, liner notes for Outi Tarkiainen, *Midnight Sun Variations*.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

as timbre (now higher) from before that the audience automatically recognizes this as a new section.

The piece's climax is short, and only lasts for the first iteration of a three-measure motive before it returns to the pulsating sunbeam chords from before. The first iteration of the birth motive is the strongest. The birth motive starts *fortissimo* in the strings, creating a burst of energy with strong dynamics. The motive begins with a swell and crescendos into a strong, *sforzando* tremolo with an energetic quintuplet pattern. The pulsating chords that the listener has become accustomed to follows the high energy birth motive.

The image shows a musical score for a string ensemble, including Violin, Viola, Violoncello, and Double Bass. The score is divided into three measures. The first measure is marked with a tempo of 48 and a dynamic of *ff*. The second measure is marked with a dynamic of *ffz*. The third measure is marked with a dynamic of *ffz*. The score is labeled "Loud dynamics" and "Homophonic texture".

Example 3.8: R10 Mm. 114-116, strong dynamics and homophonic texture

Decay and Liquidation

From the climax at R10 to the end, the music fades, evoking the shrinking of the body and the days becoming shorter as autumn approaches. Although Loy discusses the contractions and growing pain of labour in her poem, she does not write about the

mother's body after the birth. The following section only has Tarkiainen's program notes to accompany the analysis: "My first child was born on just such a night, as the summer's last warm day gave way to a dawn shrouded in autumnal mist, in a flash wiping away a whole season. *Midnight Sun Variations* is also about... when the woman and the child within her part company, restoring her former self as the light fades into autumn."¹⁰⁵

Tarkiainen reflects this fading in the rest of her music (R10 to the end) by thinning the texture, fragmenting the motives, and varying the motives to create a sense of shrinking and closure.

Just as emergence could be used to describe the growing of the music, textural decay describes the opposite. Malawey writes:

Nearly the opposite process of textural accretion, textural decay occurs when sound and activity gradually cease through textural reduction. As emergence enacts beginning, decay suggests conclusion. Decay is a temporal process because it marks a conclusion— either to the end of a song... or to a section... Decay is also textural because it results directly from gradual processes of textural reduction. Decay may also involve dynamics [like] dynamic decrescendo. Finally, decay projects deceleration, a gradual cessation of musical activity.¹⁰⁶

In Tarkiainen's music, decay is important to the piece's narrative to finish the cycle of the seasons; the days grow with emergence, and the days get shorter with textural decay.

Tarkiainen reverses the methods she used in R7-R10 for creating decay from R10 to the end (Table 3.3). In this section of the music, Tarkiainen varies a musical idea that is made up of two segments: a) the short birth motive followed by b) the pulsating contraction chords from before. As each group repeats (five iterations), variations in melody and texture create decay and liquidation. The variations take place from the

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ Malawey, "Temporal Process, Repetition, and Voice in Björk's 'Medúlla,'" 86.

starting chords in the birth motive (and the chord progressions after), the dynamics (slowly shrinking), and at R11, the melody either expands, gets interrupted, or starts to repeat small fragments of the original melody.

For most of the ending, the birth motive alternates with the pulsating chords that Tarkiainen used from R7-R9. Example 3.9 demonstrates the first version of the pulsating chords in R10 (mm. 117-120), which begins *forte* as it needs room to decrescendo. The liquidation and decay begin almost immediately, as the birth motive followed by the pulsating chords from R7 to the end of R8 become less strong with each iteration.

R10				R11		R12	
mm. 114-116	mm. 117-120	mm. 121-122	mm. 123-126	mm. 127-130	mm. 131-133	mm. 134-143	144-151
G sharp min	B flat maj	G sharp min	G flat min	G flat dim	E flat maj	D sharp, A C sharp, G	F sharp Maj
<u>Variation</u> <i>ff</i>	<u>Variation</u> <i>mp</i>	<u>Variation</u> <i>ppp</i>	<u>Variation</u> <i>f</i>	<u>Variation</u> <i>ppp</i> Expanded melody	<u>Variation</u> <i>mf</i> Last time	<u>Variation</u> <i>ppp</i> Interrupted melody	<u>Variation</u> <i>p</i> Three repetitions of the last fragments

Table 3.3: Tonal and variation elements in R10-the end

The image shows a musical score for measures 117-120. It includes staves for Violin, Viola, Violoncello, and Contrabass. The tempo is marked as $\text{♩} = 44$ and *poco accel.* at the beginning, and *poco rit.* later. The score features a sequence of pulsating chords with dynamic markings such as *mf*, *f*, *ff*, *p*, and *pp*. There are also performance instructions like *poco accel.* and *poco rit.* and some markings like *5* and *8* above notes.

Example 3.9: Measures 117-120 pulsating chords following the “birth motive”

The birth motive begins to “shrink” with each of its repetitions. Tarkiainen achieves this by liquidating the motivic material introduced at the start of R10.

Liquidation is a means which composers may attempt to fragment music at the end of a piece, as it marks closure and lack of need for continuation.¹⁰⁷

The second iteration of birth motive does not feature notable changes, but by the third iteration of the birth motive at pickup to m. 127 (Example 3.10), the music has

¹⁰⁷ Arnold Schoenberg defines liquidation as follows: “Liquidation consists in the gradually eliminating characteristic features, until only uncharacteristic ones remain, which no longer demand a continuation. Often only residues remain, which have little in common with the basic idea.” Liquidation works as a way of creating closure as the fragments progressively eliminate the need for continuation. See Arnold Schoenberg, “Construction of Simple Themes,” in *Fundamentals of Musical Composition*, ed. by Gerald Strang and Leonard Stein (London: Faber & Faber, 1967), 58.

already begun to “shrink” significantly. The birth chord begins *pianississimo*, already with less momentum than the first motive at R10. Instead of leading to a strong tremolo chord, the music evaporates with a decrescendo to the pulsating chords. One way that Tarkiainen lowers momentum is by dragging out the motive; the first iteration was three measures, and she expands this motive (five measures) to slow the progression towards the pulsating chords. This lack of forward momentum leads to the first notable feeling of decay. The pulsating chords that follow begin *mezzo forte* instead of *forte*.

The image shows a musical score for Example 3.10, covering measures 126 to 131. The score is written for Violin, Viola, and Cello and Bass. The tempo is marked as ♩ = 48. The music begins at measure 126 with a *ppp* dynamic. The first iteration of the birth motive is three measures long, and the second iteration is five measures long. The dynamics progress from *ppp* to *f*, then to *mf*, and finally to *mp*. The score is annotated with "Starts ppp" and "Fades away". The final section of the score is labeled "Pulsating chords".

Example 3.10: *Mm. 126-131, liquidation of the birth motive*

The liquidation at m. 135 (Example 3.11) is significantly more drastic than the preceding iteration at m. 127. The motive has a measure-long pause in the middle while the lower strings (cello and double bass) interrupt the fragment, which breaks into two dying fragments as a result. This interruption causes a pause in forward action. Again, this repetition of the motive begins *pianississimo* instead of the *fortissimo* introduced

The final repetition of the birth motive is the most liquidated as the shortened motive represents shorter days (Example 3.12). The celeste and harp play along with the strings from m. 146 to the end at m. 152, adding a new, mysterious timbre. Unlike the motives from before, the only characteristic material features a short fragment from the birth motive, but now shortened and “incomplete.” These repeating fragments only feature remnants of the once energetic birth motive. The first fragment is *mezzo piano*, already faded away in dynamics. The next repetition in m. 148 fades to *piano*. The final repetition in a *pianissimo* dynamic, and Tarkiainen removes the harp to create another sense of decay. She ends the piece on a quiet F sharp-major triad, closing the circle of growth to decay from R7 to the end.

The image displays a musical score for Example 3.12, spanning measures 146 to 152. The score is arranged in four staves: Harp, Celesta, and two Violin parts. The key signature is F# major (three sharps: F#, C#, G#) and the time signature is 4/4. The music is characterized by a gradual decay in dynamics, starting with *p* (piano) and ending with *pp* (pianissimo). The birth motive is presented as fragmented and incomplete, with brackets labeled "Fragment" above the Harp and Celesta parts. The Harp part includes a "let ring" instruction. The Celesta part also includes a "let ring" instruction. The Violin parts feature a melodic line with a "let ring" instruction. The score concludes with a quiet F#-major triad.

Example 3.12: *Mm. 146-152, fragments of the birth motive*

Conclusion

Inspired by the midnight sun, the growing days and the parallel pregnant mother's body growing, and then by the shrinking of the days and the mother's body returning to its former self after the child's birth, Tarkiainen writes music that features emergence (which I analyze with processive growth) from R7-R10, and then decay from the climax at R10 until the end. The pulsating chords, which grow from R7-R10, depict both the labour contractions and sunbeams as the days grow longer towards the longest day of summer and the birth of the child. Poets, like Loy in "Parturition," not only discuss the pain of contractions, but evoke the tension and release of overlapping contractions. Like Loy describes in the poem, each contraction builds to a summit, and then washes over into the next one so that there is no release for the listener. Gradually, the pulsating chords that represent contractions and the sun beams grow stronger until the climax at R10, representing the birth of the child.

As mentioned above, Tarkiainen talks about "the most important message of all" in her program notes. Many mothers who have gone through the child birth process have discussed themes surrounding the wonders of the body, and the wonders of the cycle of life. In Chapter 2, I have discussed Loy's "Parturition" and Bjork's *Medúlla*. Loy's narrator examines the miracle of life cycles, and her place in the reproduction process. In *Medúlla*, Bjork discusses how she was fascinated in her body's communication to her during and after pregnancy. Tarkiainen too wrote this piece as she was inspired by the birth of her first son. The message at R10 is the miracle of birth, and the miracle of the body as it creates the baby.

To complete the piece's narrative, elements of decay and liquidation take place from R10 to the end. Tarkiainen creates a birth motive at the climax, and then repeats the pulsating chords that represented sunbeams from R7-R9. Instead of growing, these two motives shrink to represent the days getting shorter as they get farther into autumn, as well as the mother's body shrinking after childbirth.

All of these elements—growth, climax, and decay—create the narrative of the piece. More composers and artists are starting to explore musical ways to evoke contractions, and more ways to include the mother's perspective in artistic narratives about birth.

Conclusion

The intertwined themes of dream and reality run through all of Tarkiainen's *Midnight Sun Variations*. In Chapter 2, I examined blurred temporal boundaries that evoke dream and reality from R0 to the end of R6, and in Chapter 3 I analyzed the music from the point where Tarkiainen directly mentions dream and reality in the score (R7) to the end. In *Midnight Sun Variations*, the composer also explores themes of stasis as the sun is up at night, as well as the mother's body as it grows simultaneously with increasing daylight towards the solstice, and then as it shrinks to its former self while the days get shorter as autumn approaches.

In Chapter 2, I examined dream and reality and how boundaries blur by analyzing ways in which Tarkiainen explores temporality in music. I first turned to poetry, specifically Mina Loy's poem "Parturition," as Loy captures the experience of temporal disorientation in the mother's senses during labour, as well as how her temporal experience shifts as she contemplates her place in the cycles of life. I linked the temporal boundaries and life cycles to *Midnight Sun Variations*, and I then explored the methods that Tarkiainen uses from R0 to R6 to blur temporality.

Genevieve Smart's and Tara Prescott's analyses of "Parturition" guided my approach to linking dream and reality with *Midnight Sun Variations*. In the poem, Loy's narrator experiences delirium because of the pain she is in, and the narrator expresses confusion and disorientation. Smart and Prescott's analyses involve Loy's narrator as she breaks temporal boundaries by her participation in life cycles. Loy's narrator recognizes her place in the life cycles, as she observes that she has given birth, and at one point, her mother gave birth to her. Bjork, and later Tarkiainen, also express this in their music.

Bjork uses means such as repetition to evoke life cycles and stasis in *Medúlla*. Tarkiainen relates life cycles and stasis to her pregnancy and evokes them in *Midnight Sun Variations* by manipulating harmonic and temporal boundaries, as I summarize below.

To analyze how Tarkianian's music mixes dream and reality, I looked at various means that Tarkiainen uses to blur temporality in the music. I first drew on Edward Pearsall's work, who explores how thick texture in post-tonal music creates stasis as it becomes difficult for the listener to perceive rhythm and melody, and consequently to feel forward movement. I also relied on Victoria Malawey's definition of metric suspension, which applies throughout R0 to the end of R6. Malawey explains that metric suspension breaks boundaries as music sounds unmeasured. This leads to the listener feeling in the moment instead of experiencing forward momentum.

Octatonic collections play a large role in stasis in the opening of the piece. Tarkiainen uses the octatonic collection due to its cyclical nature, stating that it evokes the symmetrical nature of life and the seasons that the Sámi people follow. The cycles of life and the cycles of the seasons are a main theme in *Midnight Sun Variations*. These cycles are present in the opening six measures of the piece, as well as the overall narrative. The octatonic collection also represents merged temporal boundaries in many ways. Tarkiainen exploits the octatonic collection for undermining traditional tonal or harmonic hierarchy. I drew on Jonathan Bernard's study of Joan Tower's *Silver Ladders* leveraging terminology to discuss how Tarkiainen uses the octatonic collections, as he analyzes octatonic collections that break into different strains. Tarkiainen uses OCT 01 and 02 at the same time, and pivots between both within the span of one instrumental line. The thick textures, as well as the complex interactions of the octatonic collections,

have the listener feel “in the moment” as pitch and metric hierarchy cannot be established.

Tarkiainen also evokes blurring temporal boundaries by employing oscillation and improvisatory lines. Malawey explains that oscillation evokes stasis because the repetitive lines does not allow for forward motion in the music; thus, it overlaps with metric suspension. I identified such moments in *Midnight Sun Variations*, which I argued correspond to moments where dream and reality merge. I drew on September Russell’s study of melodic form in post-tonal works to discuss how Tarkiainen relies on starts and stops as well as on unpredictable improvisatory lines to create more metric suspension. If the listener cannot predict the next steps in the music, they do not experience progression to mark where they are in the temporal space.

In the final section of Chapter 2, drawing on Peter Long’s studies on temporal suspension, I explored extended harmonic and instrumental techniques that produce stasis and blend temporal boundaries, namely quarter-tones, which Tarkiainen uses in chords so that the listener cannot tell if it is a major or minor quality. I also analyzed moments where Tarkiainen has the wind players blow into their instruments without making a tone. I show that such moments disorient the listener as they do not have notes and harmonies to identify where they are in the music.

My main argument in Chapter 2 thus observed merged temporal boundaries that represent dreams and reality. In Chapter 3, I analyzed opposite processes: I explored progression through growth and shrinking in the musical contents from R7 to the end of the piece.

I began by looking to Loy again, and I drew on Prescott's and Smart's analyses involving the narrator's pain as labour progresses. Loy writes about summits of pain while also evoking contractions by manipulating the speaker's rhythm. I then linked Loy's poem to the build-up starting at R7 to the climax at R10. I compared the increasing pain and rhythmic manipulation by using Malawey's concepts of processive growth and emergence while also analyzing the tension and rhythms in the musical representations of contractions.

Tarkiainen's music from R7 to the climax at R10 is about contractions increasing and about growing sunbeams as the days get longer. As a result, I looked at methods employed by Tarkiainen to create growth. In the first part of Chapter 3, I compared the rhythmical manipulation in Loy's poem as well as the narrator's description of increasing pain, drawing on Malawey's concept of emergence to explain how the music builds up. Within one contraction, Tarkiainen builds tension through swelling dynamics, pulsing chords, and additive texture. Over the span of three rehearsal numbers, the music grows in dynamics, and Tarkiainen adds new motives and timbre to represent the growing days.

Midnight Sun Variations turning point takes place at the climax (R10), after which the music begins to gradually shrink away to represent the days getting shorter and the body returning to its former self. I looked at methods of "decay," again drawing on Malawey's theories, such as decrease in texture and dynamics. I also analyzed the liquidation of motives that Tarkiainen introduces at the climax.

Tarkiainen introduces a new motive at the climax at R10, and it immediately begins to fade away with each iteration. Like emergence, decay has elements of change in dynamics, texture, and timbre, but it decreases instead of increasing. Other methods used

by Tarkiainen include the creation of gaps in the music so that there is a loss of momentum, as well as motivic fragmentation so that the music becomes less recognizable. All of these elements lead to a decrease in energy and represents the days getting shorter, and the body shrinking back to itself.

The whole piece encapsulates the miracle of the mother's body, the seasons, and the miracle of the midnight sun. The opening stasis blends temporal boundaries as the sun is up at night, and then as the days grow longer and the mother experiences contractions, the music grows. After the baby is born at the climax in R10, the music shrinks again, preparing for autumn.

In addition to *Midnight Sun Variations*, much of Tarkiainen's output connects motherhood to nature. In 2018, she wrote *The Lustful Mother* for orchestra and solo voice. This cycle features poems by Sámi poets Rauni Magga Lukkari and Rose-Marie Huuva, and presents notions of sexuality leading to birth. Tarkiainen aims to create a "primitive, matriarchal beat" to explore ideology of motherhood being linked to nature.¹⁰⁸

Songs of the Ice (2019) for orchestra is the sister piece to *Midnight Sun Variations*. Tarkiainen explains:

When I composed the piece, I was expecting our second child, due to be born in the heart of winter when the bitter cold strengthens the ice, making it powerful and solid again, and I was physically reminded of the weeks and months after the birth of our first-born. *Songs of the Ice* also describes the emptiness and reclosing process that begins in a woman's body when she parts company with the life inside her in giving birth.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁸ Outi Tarkiainen, liner notes for Outi Tarkiainen, *The Lustful Mother* (Copenhagen: Wilhelm Hansen: 2018), accessed June 4, 2024, <https://www.wisemusicclassical.com/work/59021/The-Lustful-Mother--Outi-Tarkiainen/>.

¹⁰⁹ Tarkiainen, liner notes for Outi Tarkiainen, *Songs of the Ice* (Copenhagen: Wilhelm Hansen: 2018), accessed June 4, 2024, <https://www.wisemusicclassical.com/work/60640/Songs-of-the-Ice--Outi-Tarkiainen/>.

As *Midnight Sun Variations* is about the growing and shrinking of the body during the process of labour in summer leading to autumn, *Songs of the Ice* portrays the absence of the child after it departs the body. Like *Midnight Sun Variations*, octatonic collections are featured. Many moments between the two pieces feature similarities, like the pulsating chords, but instead of building tension, they shift from one collection to the next. Future research could be done to compare the similarities between these two sister pieces, and to examine the ideology surrounding different perspectives of motherhood.

At the moment of writing, namely five years after *Midnight Sun Variations* was written, topics on women's and trans' bodies are still being discussed. Restrictive policies dictate women and trans' healthcare in many parts of the world, and many people fear for their reproductive rights. I believe that people are discouraged from discussing reproduction health and processes that the body goes through before, during, and after childbirth.

With these subjects slowly becoming more acceptable, people become more educated and can gain more control of their own bodies, whether it is due to learning how to safely engage in sexual acts to prevent STI's and unplanned pregnancies, or by working with allies to gain control of their bodies. These open discussions also lead to a movement for parental support. With social media, art, and feminist focus groups, mothers' experiences of their bodies are now being discussed in more public settings. Pieces like *Midnight Sun Variations* open up discussions on mothers' bodily anatomy. Despite the everyday difficulties with which mothers have to deal, many mothers express that their children, and their ability to give birth, is a miracle. As stated above, Loy, Tarkiainen, and Bjork all use art as a way to express wonder at the gift of being a mother.

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Appendix

“Parturition” (1914), Mina Loy¹¹⁰

I am the centre
Of a circle of pain
Exceeding its boundaries in every direction

The business of the bland sun
Has no affair with me
In my congested cosmos of agony
From which there is no escape
On infinitely prolonged nerve-vibrations
Or in contraction
To the pin-point nucleus of being
Locate an irritation without
It is within
Within
It is without.
The sensitized area
Is identical with the extensity
Of intension

I am the false quantity
In the harmony of physiological potentiality
To which
Gaining self-control
I should be consonant
In time

Pain is no stronger than the resisting force
Pain calls up in me
The struggle is equal

¹¹⁰ This poem is in the public domain; Mina Loy, “Parturition,” in *The Lost Lunar Baedeker: Poems Of Mina Loy*, ed. Roger L. Conover (New York: The Noonday Press: 1996), 4-8.

The open window is full of a voice
A fashionable portrait-painter
Running up-stairs to a woman's apartment
Sings

“All the girls are tid'ly did'ly
All the girls are nice
Whether they wear their hair in curls
Or—”

At the back of the thoughts to which I permit crystallization
The conception Brute
Why?

 The irresponsibility of the male
Leaves woman her superior Inferiority.
He is running up-stairs

I am climbing a distorted mountain of agony
Incidentally with the exhaustion of control
I reach the summit
And gradually subside into anticipation of
Repose
Which never comes.
For another mountain is growing up
Which goaded by the unavoidable
I must traverse
Traversing myself

Something in the delirium of night-hours
Confuses while intensifying sensibility
Blurring spatial contours
So aiding elusion of the circumscribed
That the gurgling of a crucified wild beast
Comes from so far away
And the foam on the stretched muscles of a mouth
Is no part of myself
There is a climax in sensibility
When pain surpassing itself
Becomes exotic
And the ego succeeds in unifying the positive and negative poles of sensation
Uniting the opposing and resisting forces
In lascivious revelation

Relaxation
Negation of myself as a unit
 Vacuum interlude
I should have been emptied of life
Giving life

For consciousness in crises races
Through the subliminal deposits of evolutionary processes
Have I not
Somewhere
Scrutinized
A dead white feathered moth
Laying eggs?

A moment
Being realization
Can
Vitalized by cosmic initiation
Furnish an adequate apology
For the objective
Agglomeration of activities
Of a life
LIFE
A leap with nature
Into the essence
Of unpredicted maternity
Against my thigh
Touch of infinitesimal motion
Scarcely perceptible
Undulation
Warmth moisture
Stir of incipient life
Precipitating into me
The contents of the universe
Mother I am
Identical
With infinite Maternity
 Indivisible
 Acutely
 I am absorbed
 Into
The was—is—ever—shall—be
Of cosmic reproductivity

Rises from the subconscious
Impression of a cat
With blind kittens
Among her legs
Same undulating life—stir
I am that cat

Rises from the sub-conscious
Impression of small animal carcass
Covered with blue-bottles
—Epicurean—
And through the insects
Waves that same undulation of living
Death
Life
I am knowing
All about
 Unfolding

The next morning
Each woman-of-the-people
Tip-toeing the red pile of the carpet
Doing hushed service
Each woman-of-the-people
Wearing a halo
A ludicrous little halo
Of which she is sublimely unaware