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DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

**Composing in and out of the (Post-)Club
Resynthesis of club music and the personal past**

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Composing in and out of the (Post-)Club:

Resynthesis of club music and the personal past

Liam McCartan (B.Mus, M.Res)

Portfolio:

<https://soundcloud.com/sonzept/sets/portfolio-1/s-64I6i54M4I3>

**Portfolio of creative work and written commentary submitted for the degree of Doctor of
Philosophy (PhD)**

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**Sonic Arts Research Centre
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Abstract

This is a portfolio-based PhD thesis within the academic framework of Composition in Sonic Arts. Interpreting resynthesis to mean recombination as well as reproduction, this thesis investigates the resynthesizing of club music's past along with the personal past as a form of compositional practice. This results in a portfolio of 23 pieces ranging from 3 to 9 minutes in length that explores the tropes, structures and techniques of jungle, grime, techno, hardcore and garage, while also containing hauntological works that explore false memory and the sonically re-produced past as sources of inspiration for composition. The thesis offers insights which grow from an exploration of this combination of personal experience, club music and memory through the practices of sonic art and composition.

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First and foremost, I would like to thank my mother, father and brother who have all in their own unique way played an integral role in getting me where I am today. I thank you for your unconditional support and encouragement: I love you all very much.

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List of Works in Portfolio

(In order of appearance)

Title	Year	Time
Broke	(2018)	[03:08]
Digital Frost	(2018)	[08:32]
ILMMAD	(2019)	[03:32]
Untitled #2	(2019)	[06:21]
Blood Gloss	(2018)	[04:35]
31 Roads and 3 Houses	(2019)	[06:03]
Trophy Run	(2020)	[06:36]
Projector	(2019)	[06:04]
Million Machines	(2020)	[04:33]
Staring Back	(2020)	[04:17]
Blue Morning	(2019)	[06:08]
Hold Your Breath	(2020)	[05:40]
Deluge	(2019)	[06:17]
Axis Praxis	(2019)	[03:58]
Kingdom	(2018)	[06:00]
BPM	(2018)	[08:14]
Glass Rush	(2019)	[03:50]
Unlearn	(2019)	[03:35]
Cold	(2020)	[04:16]
Level	(2019)	[04:01]
Bruteful Violins	(2018)	[07:48]
Eartheat	(2021)	[03:39]
Cuts	(2021)	[02:55]

Introduction

This commentary is written for the purpose of facilitating access to the compositional approaches presented in my portfolio and to illustrate the concepts and construction that underlies my creative practice. Certain works in the portfolio will be discussed at greater length than others, as they serve to better exemplify the specific concepts. Additionally, while all of the pieces presented here contain some amalgamation of techniques and concepts, some are more allied to particular topics than others, or served in experimenting with techniques related to particular concepts; therefore, I will discuss some pieces in detail in relation to specific topics but make more broad mention regarding other aspects. In this commentary I make reference to various influences of mine in order to better convey how I conceptualise my work: Film genres, cinematic techniques, philosophical concepts, poetry book titles, neurological phenomena, TV moments, video essays, and of course music.

As is typical with most practice-based PhDs, there is an extensive period of exploration and experimentation. At the beginning of my PhD, I had a provisional title that I now view as naively too broad: “The Borders, Bridges and Practices of Experimental Electronic Composition”. From there I progressed to the still overgeneralised: “Self-Critical And Experimental Practice In Electronic Music Composition”. Then I further defined my research in the wrong direction with: “Altering The Experience Of Time In Experimental Electronic Musics: 3 Compositional Methods”. Although these titles proved to be unsuccessful, my research was not marred due to my continuing compositional practice providing me with work to reflect upon. When I started my research I made the decision to compose close to every day with an importance placed on bringing an idea to a state of conclusion rather than leaving it open-ended. This brought more focus to the structuring of compositions but also allowed more opportunities for new ideas as I would not be working on a single piece for a prolonged period of time. I was still editing and expanding pieces later on but this part of the process was helped with the benefit of time. I would allow a piece to sit for a few weeks and then I would be able to return to it with fresher ears. This proved to be a method of remedying what I would consider a compositional version of ear fatigue.

Of course, not every piece would prove to be a success but I have now found that involving a compositional routine was similar to that of recurring exercise at the gym. If this routine was kept up then progress would show in the form of a more successful piece or novel idea that could be expanded upon. If however, I broke my routine I would find that the frequency of fruitful ideas would lessen. It is with this level of activity in my compositional practice that upon the completion of my PhD I had accumulated 250 finished pieces. This was brought down to 23 works that I felt best displayed the concepts that I explored throughout my PhD research time. The portfolio does include works that I would view as stepping stones to more successful compositions. The inclusion of these works is to aid in the understanding of the progression of these concepts and ideas. For example, the use of pitch-time relationships as a technique is overtly used in “Deluge” to a point that the piece is rather stale, but experimenting with this technique is what then led me to create “Hold Your Breath” and “Staring Back” which I find to be much more accomplished compositions.

The research of this PhD has allowed for an excursion into my own creative practice, and thus created a better personal understanding of what it means to me to be writing music of this nature - the ‘personal’ here being a key element. The quote from musicologist Joanna DeMers, included in my differentiation in the first year of the PhD, still stands: “Because of its breadth of activity, no one single participant or informant can speak about all of electronic music with equal facility.”¹ Ergo, an importance here lies upon the uniqueness of perspective. The perspective I can provide is that of a composer that has engaged in a near decade of attendance and performing at club nights, raves, free parties, and festivals. I also took on the role of an organiser and resident for the Resist events here in Belfast. We brought artists such as Lorenzo Senni, Aisha Devi, M.E.S.H., Lee Gamble, Renick Bell, Shiva Feshareki over to perform while sometimes including visual art installations in the crowd space.

This then progressed to the creation of the Resist record label with which I have released a portion of my music. Over the course of my PhD I released 23 works with four of those works being included in the portfolio. All were released and distributed digitally with the six works that form my *Q2B EP* also being produced on vinyl. This led to press coverage from relevant music

¹ Demers, Joanna. *Listening through the Noise : The Aesthetics of Experimental Electronic Music*. Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2010, p. 5.

media such as music video premieres, album reviews, and interviews. I found this to be quite valuable in understanding others' contextualisation of my work in a wider narrative of music classification. My music has not been clearly broken down into categories or genres, possibly because of the diverging approaches to re-contextualising the beats, timbres and idioms of club music whilst on the same releases including music that pulls completely out of the club. This led to my own classification of the music; Post-club.

When I introduce Post-club into the commentary it is to describe artists familiar with the established genre's tropes, sources, techniques, medium, audience, limits to which they are musically reacting or responding. The title "Composing in and out of the (Post-)Club" refers to the portfolio containing works of mine that are closer related to works intended for club use. Other works distort and manipulate club music by playing with its tropes and senses of functionality, whilst yet others exist completely disconnected from the club world and explore themes of a more personal nature. The subtitle "Resynthesizing Club Music and the Personal Past" concerns the conceptual framings I have used to describe the inner workings of my music. The use of the term resynthesis here is to describe the recombination and reproduction of both musical styles and experience and how I implement this in my compositions. The use of the term resynthesis here is to describe the recombination and reproduction of both musical styles and experience and how I implement this in my compositions.

This incorporates an important concept for the compositional portfolio which is the reproduction of memory as a compositional approach and the concept of re-experiencing memory. In chapter two I begin to explain the various conceptual avenues of composition I have explored along with their connection to memory with the reproduction of experience and the personal past. This is seen in compositions such as "Broke" and "Trophy Run" as interacting with memories that are closer in time. For example the experiencing of music in a nightclub and then composing of club music material shortly thereafter, calling attention to the time-related second meaning of post-club. Within chapter two I expand on the compositions "Untitled #2" and "Blood Gloss", which reach further back in time into the personal past to evoke memories that are difficult to access. Resynthesis here being a dominant element to my compositional practice as each piece

draws from some source of memory and reproduces new material to re-experience memory anew.

This terminology did not always exist in my PhD. I initially classified my work that concerned itself mainly with memory as work that explored the hauntological - a term coined by Jaques Derrida to describe how Marxism will haunt society despite the fall of communism, existing as a ghost, both absent and present, although, my interest came from Mark Fisher's writing about the hauntological connection with electronic music in artists like Burial and Leyland Kirby who in their work have evoked elements of cultural memory and aesthetics of the past. Fisher would link their work to a yearning for the past born out of a mournful sense of lost futures felt here in the present. Fisher encapsulates this by highlighting the title of the Leyland Kirby album: *Sadly, The Future Is No Longer What It Was*². However, as I reflected upon my own compositions that I approached with a hauntological lens it became apparent that I was engaging with something more personal than cultural. Through conversations with friends and family I came to the realisation that I had been lacking large spans of time in memory from my teenage years. Instead of compositionally staring into the absence of a cultural future I was staring into the absence of my own personal past. This will be explored further in my writing on resynthesis. I understand that it is not easy to draw conclusions about musical meaning and intention because of the multitude of compositional approaches and ideologies surrounding what I deem to be Post-club music. I can however outline my own compositional strategies with descriptions of my influences using some of my own terminology to explore the work in my portfolio.

The first chapter in this commentary highlights the electronic genre situation with its extensive discourse, terminology and history. I then go on to discuss that the adoption of the personal computer as a means of making this music has created a turn for the individualistic. This combined with the internet as our means of distribution increases the reach of the music and lessens the space for geologically tied and community grown genres.

This brings me to chapter two where I introduce and explain Post-club as a suggested way of describing a practice that reacts to this genre situation. From there I further explain Resynthesis

² Kirby, Leyland. *Sadly, the Future Is No Longer What It Was*. History Always Favours the Winners, 2009, www.youtube.com/watch?v=fjH7NzFpKCo. Accessed 17 June 2021.

with its various aspects and connect the Horror film genre as a parallel to club music to describe the relationship between club music and its audience. Within this I begin to speak about the concept of the biomythical and how I relate it to the reproduction of memory in my compositions.

In chapter three I expand upon the influence of film on my compositions however this is more concerned with the more technical aspects in film rather than whole genre constructions. Here I make reference to *mise-en-scène* as well as diegetic sound and explain how both of these are represented in my compositions with references to film as a means of explanation. From there I give an extended look into a singular piece in my portfolio to portray my application of these techniques.

Chapter four concerns two concepts inspired by Deleuze and Guattari, the rhizome and the body-without-organs. Here I write about how club music can benefit from being viewed with a rhizomatic framing and then go on to describe a compositional reinterpretation of the body without organs: the club without DJs and a DJ without clubs. The former describes a concept that I link to Mark Fisher's description of the Eerie: the absence of something that should be present. The latter highlights the introspective turn that artists may take into an exploration of techniques in music making. I show my introspective compositional turn here in six works that explore pitch-time relationships found in pitch controlled variable speed sampling.

Chapter five as the title suggests navigates the Post-club through descriptions of my work and highlighting of key performances along with my work during my directorship at Catalyst Arts. This chapter includes the remaining ten works from my portfolio and describes how they offer up different elements of Post-club practice that I have written about and contextualises them with work from other artists. This chapter includes more of a focus on the recombination of genres but still contains examples that show that reproduction of experience is a prevalent element throughout my work.

CHAPTER 1:

The Electronic Genre Situation

Arielle Saiber, a professor of romance languages, has written about how the discourse of electronic music can offer “new models and a rich vocabulary for speaking about such things as labeling, canon, and the relationship between author and audience.”³ Saiber uses this article as a means of inviting literary scholars to “listen awry”⁴ to the “indeterminate musical complex that simultaneously lobbies for, rejects, and eludes categorization”⁵. Through this written invitation we gain an insight into electronic music’s many forms, be they all encompassing or micro-existent.

Saiber's writing starts similarly to that of the theoretical writings of Aviva Freedman and Carolyn R. Miller in which genre is regarded as a typified response to a recurrent situation, and genres are presented as important for and dependent on communities.⁶ Saiber follows this by highlighting the geographical variety in electronic sub-genre being created in the late eighties and early nineties. “Detroit techno, Chicago acid house, New York hip-hop, Dutch gabba, London jungle, Norwegian minimalism, Japanese industrial noise, Miami freestyle”,⁷ suggesting geography as an additional factor among the growing sub-genres of the time. Others such as hardcore, breakbeat and trance are arguably less geographically specific. To anyone outside of the electronic music’s genre discourse and nomenclature, *Ishkurs Guide to Electronic Music*⁸ [Fig 1.1] is a road-map of what could be deemed a very confusing terrain. The guide is personally candid and makes use of genealogy trees: sub-genre descriptions in which the author makes clear his love or hatred for a particular sub-genre, illustrating this with sound clips, all set out in a precise timeline. Ishkur provides a self-critical, informative and at times sardonic commentary on his avoidance of certain genres which he deems not worth categorizing, such as breakcore. It’s also important to note his last addition to the guide was 2016, leaving out many subsequent shifts in electronic music that are still difficult to categorize, such as the PC music movement.⁹

³ Saiber, Arielle. “The Polyvalent Discourse of Electronic Music.” *PMLA*, vol. 122, no. 5, Oct. 2007, p. 1613, 10.1632/pmla.2007.122.5.1613.

⁴ A reference to the Slavoj Žižek Book *‘Looking Awry’*, Slavoj Žižek, and Mit Press. *Looking Awry : An Introduction to Jacques Lacan through Popular Culture*. Cambridge ; London, The Mit Press, 2006. - which uses a method of indirectly approaching the famously difficult work of philosopher Jaques Lacan through critiques of popular fiction and film theory of the films of Alfred Hitchcock

⁵ (Saiber, p. 1613)

⁶ Mary Jo, Reiff, and Anis S. Bawarshi. “Book Review: Anis S Bawarshi and Mary Jo Reiff, *Genre: An Introduction to History, Theory, Research, and Pedagogy*.” *Discourse & Society*, vol. 24, no. 6, Nov. 2013, pp. 833–835, 10.1177/0957926513490318c. Accessed 23 Nov. 2020.

⁷ (Saiber, p.1614)

⁸ Taylor, Kenneth John AKA Ishkur. “Ishkur’s Guide to Electronic Music.” *Music.ishkur.com*, 2017, music.ishkur.com/. Accessed 18 June 2021.

⁹ A London record label that focused on exaggerated electronic pop music that focused on the aesthetics of cyberculture, corporate branding, consumerism. Musicians outside of the label that had been influenced by PC music such as Dorian Electra and 100 Gecs came to be described as Hyperpop.



[Fig 1.1] - Ishkur's Guide To Electronic Music (2nd Edition)

Despite its quirks, *Ishkur's Guide* is a good way to view larger community based genre-development through time, because it draws attention to genre as a method of communication between musicians. If a hypothetical band is making a song together or bringing to a practice session new ideas thought of in isolation, that band member has to be able to verbalise how they want another player to play or how they want their imagined musical idea to extend fully-fledged into the real world. This makes for an outcome that draws upon their own genre-terminology influenced dialogue. “Play it with a metal tone”, “Sing operatically”, “Jazzier?”. Each member of the band has their own understanding of these genres and what these suggestions mean. This can be understood as a musical variation of Wittgenstein's ‘beetle in a box’ thought experiment, which is part of his private language argument.¹⁰ Wittgenstein invites us to imagine a group of individuals who each have a box that contains a ‘beetle’. No individual can look into anyone

¹⁰ Wittgenstein, Ludwig. *Philosophische Untersuchungen = Philosophical Investigations*. 1953. Oxford [U.A.] Wiley-Blackwell, 2011.

else's box, but each agrees that they have a beetle in their box by their language-based understanding of what a beetle is. It is entirely possible that each person has something completely different in their box, but the individuals continue to discuss their beetles assuming that what is in each other's box is the same. For Wittgenstein this is analogous to the issues raised in naming and communicating those inner experiences of human life that we cannot be certain are shared, such as pain. In music when the musician is creating alone this back and forth of genre misidentification and communication is removed, resulting in a more instantaneous process. I am not suggesting that this frees the musician entirely from the supposed chains of genre but that for some, it loosens the grip. Then, in the case of electronic music, this loose grip is combined with the common instrument of choice being that of the personal computer, the technology of which is constantly being upgraded to help speed up the process of production. More specifically, better software with which "...you can do more with more and even more with less: process more information more quickly; integrate more notes, tones, pitches, and rhythms; have more control over the product-performance; and gather more sound information than ever before."¹¹ As Saiber suggests, one of the major components of electronic music's genre situation is the use of personal computers as the instrument and how this increases the speed of production.

Electronic musician and theorist Kim Cascone has made a similar point in writing about glitch music but furthers the conversation by bringing the internet into play, noting how it increases the speed of music's distribution. "What is new is that ideas now travel at the speed of light and can spawn entire musical genres in a relatively short period of time."¹² He goes on to write that the musician is the piece that completes a cultural feedback loop in the circuit that is the internet. "Artists download tools and information, develop ideas based on that information, create work reflecting those ideas with the appropriate tools, and then upload that work to a World Wide Web site where other artists can explore the ideas embedded in the work."¹³

However, Cascone does not state whether or not this is a troublesome aspect for electronic music. With the personal computer as means of production and the internet as a means of distribution, Cascone writes about how this is an important combination for electronic music. "For the first time in history, creative output and the means of its distribution have been inextricably linked".¹⁴ He rightfully places this point under the sub-heading of 'Power Tools'. These tools are tremendously more powerful and accessible than when Cascone wrote his article in 2000 and they are now contributing to a creative state that leaves little

¹¹ (Saiber)

¹² Cascone, Kim. "The Aesthetics of Failure: 'Post-Digital' Tendencies in Contemporary Computer Music." *Computer Music Journal*, vol. 24, no. 4, Dec. 2000, pp. 12–18, 10.1162/014892600559489. Accessed 9 Nov. 2019.

¹³ (Cascone)

¹⁴ (Cascone)

time for genre to solidify. Saiber continues in saying: “Perhaps names and genres mean little to something moving so fast, and yet how are we supposed to relate to something we can barely keep up with. E-Music is a hyperreal phenomenon and traditional categorisations, labels and nomenclature have to be rejigged quickly and often.”¹⁵

Music journalist and author Simon Reynolds recently attempted to rejig these categorizations and provide an answer as to “Why so much electronic music this decade felt like it belonged in a museum instead of a club?”¹⁶ His response was “conceptronica”. He states that, “Conceptronica isn’t a genre as such, but more like a mode of artistic operation—and audience reception—that cuts across the landscape of hip music, from high-definition digital abstraction to styles like vaporwave and hauntology.”¹⁷ I was hopeful that there might be a way of describing the practices of artists such as Lorenzo Senni, Lee Gamble, Burial, Arca, M.E.S.H, Holly Herndon and Sophie. However, I feel that Reynolds seems to frame conceptronica as being (at least somewhat) pseudo-intellectual. This is further seen in his references to specific artists or their work in which an irreverent tone develops.. Describing Lee Gamble’s exploratory Jungle album trilogy he adds “or, as he prefers to put it, a “triptych””, and he writes of Jam City’s “heavy-handed” work. I am not sure how to decode his description of Holly Herndon where he writes - “she can come across a bit like the Elizabeth Warren of electronica”. He then connects conceptronica to what he considers to be a failing of post punk, in that there is a “feeling, at times, of being lectured”. So come the end of the article, Reynolds creates Conceptronica as a means to describe and unify practitioners' through their use of conceptualization but then criticises their work by means of his own definition. Although I view conceptronica to be a dead-on-arrival attempt at a framing device mainly due to the titular exclusionary nature of music without concept, I do however want to run with the initial proposed unifying qualities that I feel conceptronica suggested. Constructing something that is less like a genre and “...more like a mode of artistic operation” that ranges “...from high-definition digital abstraction to styles like vaporwave and hauntology” while is also “able to ransack the archive of dance history.”¹⁸

¹⁵ (Saiber p.1616)

¹⁶ Reynolds, Simon. “The Rise of Conceptronica.” *Pitchfork*, Condé Nast, Oct. 2019, www.pitchfork.com/features/article/2010s-rise-of-conceptronica-electronic-music/. Accessed 17 June 2021.

¹⁷ (Ibid)

¹⁸ (Ibid)

CHAPTER 2:

Post-Club, Resynthesis and Horror Film

The use of the prefix ‘Post-’ before an established genre means that the new post-genre (Post-rock, Post-punk) has been created by artists familiar with the established genre’s tropes, sources, techniques, medium, audience, limits and are musically reacting or responding. From this knowledge the artists subvert features of the prefixed genre. The genre then takes self-awareness as its new subject. When using Post-club as a descriptor, it allows for the inclusion of a multitude of sub-genres under club music but still unites them in practice or outlook. In the case of a genre like Post-punk, Reynolds would say that the bands who would go on to be considered Post-Punk had the opinion that “Punk had become a parody of itself. Many of the original participants felt that something open-ended and full of possibilities had degenerated into a commercial formula.”¹⁹

Another key aspect of the use of ‘Post’ here comes from its literal meaning of that which comes after. In one sense this includes work preceding the club interaction that takes form in the hauntological club such as the work of Burial²⁰ and Leyland Kirby’s (AKA the Caretaker) *the Death of Rave* series. It also includes the understanding that we are Post-club in our requirement for such spaces. ‘Club’ is a mega-genre tag that takes the intended destination of music as its definition, making the physical walls into a literal boundary as well as metaphorical genre-categorizing one. Even the names of such genres stem from their singular territorial routes with House being named after the Warehouse club in Chicago, Garage taking its name from the Paradise Garage in New York. But as my earlier Cascone quote indicates, writing about how the internet has changed electronic music because “...ideas now travel at the speed of light and can spawn entire musical genres in a relatively short period of time”, there is now less need for a localised space to develop genre and thus genre based scenes.

At the time of writing this commentary, we are very much living in a Post-club world. The Coronavirus (COVID-19) has placed 70% of nightclubs in jeopardy²¹ while illegal raves have exploded around the UK seeing audiences of several thousand.²² In the Pitchfork review for Overmono’s *Everything U Need EP*,²³ they viewed the pandemic as a force that entered us into a “netherworld of dance music”. The reaches of

¹⁹ Reynolds, Simon. *RIP IT UP AND START AGAIN: Post Punk 1978-1984*. Faber and Faber, 2009. p. 5

²⁰ Mark Fisher makes many references to Burial in his work (<http://k-punk.abstractdynamics.org/archives/007666.html>- london after the rave)

²¹ Arts, Lanre Bakare. “‘We Lost the Love’: UK Nightclubs Using Covid Crisis to Reassess Scene.” *The Guardian*, 21 Aug. 2020, www.theguardian.com/music/2020/aug/21/we-lost-the-love-uk-nightclubs-using-covid-crisis-to-reassess-scene.

²² Halliday, Josh. “Six Thousand People Attend Two Illegal Raves in Greater Manchester.” *The Guardian*, 14 June 2020, www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2020/jun/14/six-thousand-people-attend-two-illegal-raves-greater-manchester.

²³ Ravens, Chal. “Overmono: Everything U Need EP.” *Pitchfork*, 2020, pitchfork.com/reviews/albums/overmono-everything-u-need-ep/. Accessed 17 June 2021.

this netherworld are unknown but Pitchfork assert that club releases created during Covid have in mind: “a home-listening scenario which favors melody over repetition, intricacy over seismic subs” which I can see in pandemic released Post-club albums such as Gabor Lazar’s *Source*, Lorenzo Senni’s *Scacco Matto*, and Zora Jones’s *Ten Billion Angels*. The sentiment of lost clubs is still felt in the more functional/basic dance music tracks that do not change their compositional form or techniques in the way Post-club does, like DJ Elkka’s Techno track *I Miss Raving*. I feel it would be difficult and improper to predict or assume musical advances based on Post-club releases during lockdown. However in explaining the aspects of this music further it will become clear that a lockdown situation may accelerate a Post-club artist’s practice. From here I would like to introduce the resynthesizing of the past as the main theme for the compositions that make up my portfolio.

Resynthesis and Horror Film

This use of the term resynthesis combines the various aspects of Post-club that I have alluded to as the meaning here takes the form of re-combination as well as re-production. It enables connections, commonalities and reflection of club music but does not close down opportunities for difference in the way genre typically does. Additionally, resynthesis as re-production makes reference to the hauntological aspects of recreating the past. With this view, resynthesizing club music’s past through genre manipulation as well as one’s own personal past through the hauntological can both be considered methods of renewing one’s own musical experiences.

To take an example from another medium, Jean-Luc Godard once observed that “every film was a documentary of its actors.” Fellow member of the French New Wave movement Jacques Rivette later altered the axiom, proposing that “every film is a documentary of its own making.”²⁴ Of course, the film captures what has been recorded both visually and sonically in that moment in time and extending the “documenting of its own making” includes not just the nuts and bolts of lighting, set design, costume but also possible budgetary struggles, post-production censorship, or most importantly the emotions and relationships of people involved that run deeper than the fiction displayed.²⁵ The compositions in my portfolio act in a similar way. At times these compositions are creating a fiction through resynthesis, that fiction being a club that does not exist and the compositions being conceptually a “documentary of (the club’s) own making”. This Post-club practice lets me document and renew my experiences and then

²⁴ Lim, Dennis. “It’s Actual Life. No, It’s Drama. No, It’s Both.” *The New York Times*, 20 Aug. 2010, www.nytimes.com/2010/08/22/movies/22hybrid.html. Accessed 17 June 2021.

²⁵ Take stories of Stanley Kubrick’s relentless refilming of scenes from *The Shining* comes to mind, such as the baseball bat confrontation scene where he made Shelly Duvall act hysterically 127 times in the baseball bat scene: Greene, Andy. “Flashback: Shelley Duvall and Stanley Kubrick Battle over ‘the Shining.’” *Rolling Stone*, 17 Nov. 2016, www.rollingstone.com/movies/movie-news/shelley-duvall-and-stanley-kubrick-battle-the-shining-188549/.

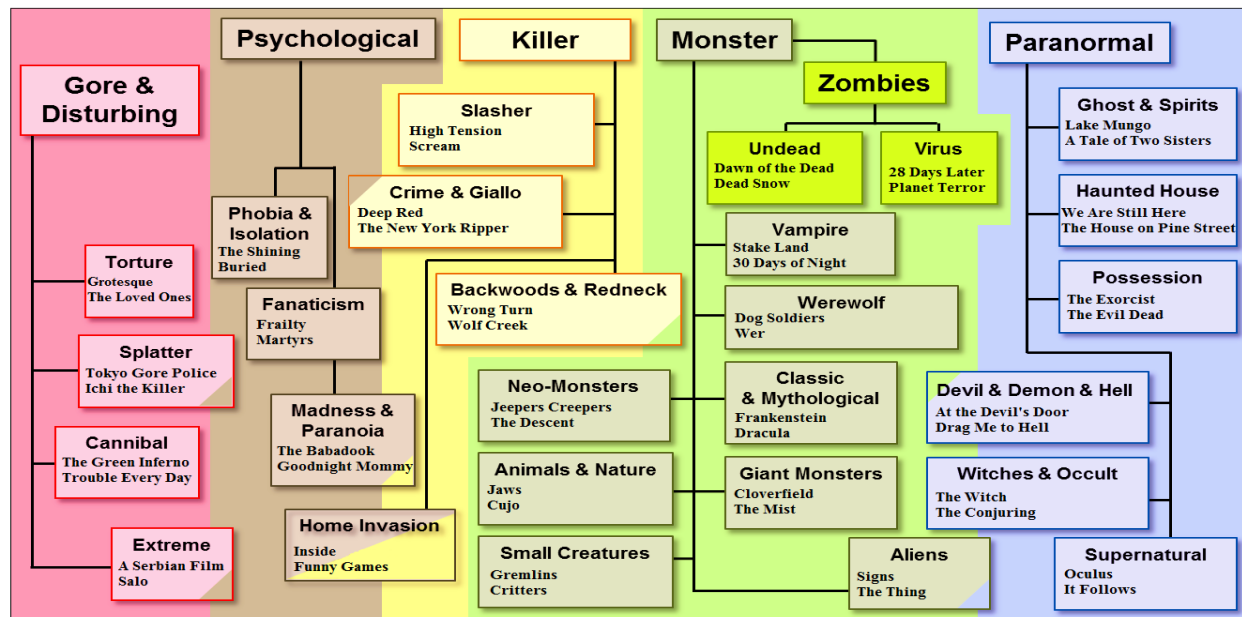
transform them into worlds which are not real. Some of this work has been released and exists publicly in a critical context with this understanding. In a review for my album *B*, online music and pop culture magazine *The Quietus* reflected on my releases from 2018-2020

What started ostensibly as a way for McCartan to explore and celebrate everything he loves about electronic music within and beyond its supposed conventions in order to discover his own sensibilities has become a far reaching project that draws you into its own imagined worlds... Yes, it's a love letter to Techno, Jungle, house, power ambient and even atmospheric black metal, but McCartan's own voice bears too distinct an imprint to be audibly timestamped to an era other than the present. (Lennox, 2020)

I would like to now highlight that throughout this commentary, I have made use of quotations taken from journalistic articles from various online music related press. These often include articles that are written about my own work in the form of a review, premiere or interview. I understand that some may query whether I believe the perspectives of these publications to be impartial. I would respond by saying that my inclusion of these quotations from press do not include text from my or my label's press releases - rather they use original writing from journalists from reviews etc; and that the reason for their inclusion is to capture the dialogue between journalistic interpretation of the work and my ongoing research.

At this point in my thesis, I feel that the use of the horror film genre as a parallel to club music will advance the understanding of the relationship between club music and its audience. This will help describe what the Post-club practice does with this relationship. Like Horror, Post-club practitioners are aware of their own genre transgressions and expand out successfully by utilising and engaging with its audience's awareness of the genre's past. Below is a diagram that shows Horror film's sub-genres and sub-sub-genres²⁶ [Fig 2.2]:

²⁶ Screen, Horror on. "Horror Genres and Sub-Genres." *Popcorn Horror*, 16 Mar. 2014, popcornhorror.com/genres/. Accessed 17 June 2021.



[Fig 2.2] - Horror genres and sub-genres by horrormscreen.com

Similarities to the previously referenced Ishkur's Guide [fig 1.1] can be seen in the level of genre nuance. However, it is not bound to the chronological order of Ishkur's guide which means this diagram does allow for the showing of sub-genres bleeding between their own supposed divisions, this being shown through the use of colour. *The Thing* and *Drag me to Hell* occupy sub-sub-genres of 'Aliens' and 'Devil & Demon & Hell' respectively but both occupy two sub-genres of 'Paranormal' and 'Monster'. All of these instances of transgressive genre behaviour in horror films are of course not uncommon. However, this is not to suggest that horror has been attempting to successfully destroy the notion of categorization. As Phillip Brophy writes: "It is not so much that the modern Horror film refutes or ignores the conventions of genre, but it is involved in a violent awareness of itself as a saturated genre."²⁷ As I have indicated, this can most certainly be said for the overloaded world of club music. It is this saturation that turns Horror, and thus Post-club, into a genre about genre.

Video Essayist Grace Lee states in *Horror Is The Best Genre (and here's why)*: "Genre as structure delights in boundaries, horror is a genre which delights in transgressing boundaries"²⁸ which correlates with the genre diagram that showed various genre bleedings [Fig 2.2], although this was still restricted to only bleeding into the neighbouring sides, whereas the truth is that Horror has the ability to mine a rich history for its transgressive movement. As Ralph Cohen asserts when he rhetorically asks *Do postmodern*

²⁷ Brophy, Philip. "Horrority— the Textuality of Contemporary Horror Films." *Screen*, vol. 27, no. 1, 1 Jan. 1986, p. 5 10.1093/screen/27.1.2. Accessed 27 Mar. 2020.

²⁸ Lee, Grace. "Horror Is the Best Genre (and Here's Why)." *YouTube*, 25 Oct. 2019, www.youtube.com/watch?v=w6cKCjC6ZWE. Accessed 8 Mar. 2020.

genres exist?; “The notion of transgression presupposes existing genres to be transgressed.”²⁹ This brings Horror into being as a self-aware genre, not only in a creator's mind but also in that of the audience members. Early signs of this can be seen in the promotional material for Wes Craven’s 1972 film *The Last House on The Left* that tells the audience “to avoid fainting, repeat the phrase ‘It’s only a movie.’”³⁰ This self awareness in Horror is evident in its use of metacinema, e.g. *Evil Dead 2*, *Seed of Chucky*, *Cabin in the woods*. Craven’s work especially would later fully venture into creating metacinema. In *Wes Craven’s New Nightmare*, the 7th installment of his *Nightmare On Elm Street* series, Freddy Krueger is now portrayed as a fictional movie villain who invades the real world, and haunts the cast and crew involved in the making of previous films about him. Actors play themselves as well as their film roles and the scene following the death of Freddy has the lead actor finding the film’s script which contains a thank you note from Wes Craven. 2 years after *New Nightmare* Craven releases the poster child for metahorror, *Scream*. To create a believable reality in his 1990s horror film, Craven could not ignore the fact that the horror-movie-loving killer’s victims would know the rules which previous horror films played by. This makes the horror audience both the victim and killer in *Scream*, and they recognise what Craven is doing. Concerning how the audience recognises the tropes of the horror genre, Brophy writes, “The contemporary Horror film knows that you’ve seen it before; it knows you know what is about to happen; and it knows that you know it knows you know.”³¹ Most genres do operate by using a genrefied language understood by the audience but Horror is operating on a higher level. Grace Lee states “horror cinema, more than any other genre, has built its conventions around a conscious cannibalisation of past productions.”³² With this, resynthesis could be viewed as a form of cannibalistic style of genre communication spoken by the creator and understood by the audience.

Cultural studies researcher Sara Bragg recognises this in saying that Horror audiences know what deviations of form to look out for. “Fans, on this understanding, are skilled and competent, not passive or ‘bombarded’ by images with which they cannot cope. Critics commonly emphasise the importance of the ‘insider knowledge’ of conventions acquired by seasoned audiences, which enables them to read and play with the different levels of meaning in the text rather than responding only to its ‘violent’ content.”³³ Like Horror, Post-club is engaging with an audience that is very much aware of a genre’s past. This means Post-club has the ability to swallow any sub-genre it is aware of and resynthesize itself as the conventions

²⁹ Cohen, Ralph. “Do Postmodern Genres Exist?” *Genre Theory and Historical Change*, 2017, pp. 105–121, 10.2307/j.ctt1v2xtv6.11. Accessed 17 June 2021.

³⁰ HD Retro Trailers. “The Last House on the Left (1972) Original Trailer.” www.youtube.com, 2018, www.youtube.com/watch?v=gftu8RjqJ_o. Accessed 17 June 2021.

³¹ (Brophy, p. 5).

³² “Horror is the best genre (and here’s why)” Grace Lee *What’s So Great About That*

³³ Bragg, Sara Gillian. “Media Violence and Youth Violence.” *Journal of Media Psychology*, vol. 20, no. 3, Jan. 2008, pp. 79–96, 10.1027/1864-1105.20.3.79. Accessed 1 Mar. 2019.

that create boundaries are not only known to the composer - they are also known to the club community. Like the horror audience, the club community recognises when those boundaries are being transgressed and can then perhaps actively respond to elements beyond typical functionality, danceability or tonality. Thomas Gorton, writing for *The Guardian*, says that Aphex Twin's music is full of "intricately woven electronic tapestries that appear to have absorbed almost every trope from every genre, be it industrial Techno, acid house, drum 'n' bass, classical or hip-hop."³⁴ I agree, particularly in examples like Aphex Twin's *Windowlicker*³⁵ which can combine elements of garage, deep house, and R&B and throw them together through the glitchy edits typical of IDM. Similarly in *Come To Daddy*³⁶ there are supposed jokey death metal imitations³⁷ and harsh noise fused together with fast drill and bass. Gorton continues by saying that Aphex Twin's music "has remained exempt from the perils of ageing, perhaps because it always seemed like a glimpse far into the future."³⁸

When the experimental club musician AYA (FKA LOFT) was asked how she developed her sound, she responded: "I definitely learned through a process of imitation and recombination... On those earlier EPs, it's like 'an imitation of a tech house tune' or 'here's an attempt at a slowfast d'n'b track'. It was about learning all of those sound worlds, all the tropes, so that when I had an understanding of the forms and sound palettes of different genres, I would have the ability to repurpose and reform them as I wished." AYA's work *That Hyde Trakk*³⁹ is a complete obliteration of Jungle/happy hardcore form that uses the 'Think Break'⁴⁰ as its main compositional tool. The chirping high notes inside the rising drums come from the recognisable vocal outbursts in the original 'Think Break'. This is similar to the breakcore genre where the complex processing of recognisable breakbeats is taken to the extreme and becomes the defining characteristic of breakcore. Where AYA's production shifts from being solely breakcore is that it is a resynthetic construction of breakcore's excessive drum complexity, Techno's machinic pattern sensibilities, futuristic metallic sound design while dipping into spacious ambient pads that never rest too long on a given key. Resynthesis in terms of reproduction of experience and memory is also seen in AYA's own words on her music: "Everything on this record has been consolidated into a final state,

³⁴ Gorton, Thomas. "Aphex Twin: Music Exempt from the Perils of Ageing." *The Guardian*, 19 Aug. 2014, www.theguardian.com/music/2014/aug/19/aphex-twin-syro-electronic-music-maverick-composer-influence. Accessed 17 June 2021.

³⁵ Aphex Twin. *Windowlicker*. Warp, 1999, www.youtube.com/watch?v=5ZT3gTu4Sjw.

³⁶ Aphex Twin. *Come to Daddy*. Warp, 1997, www.youtube.com/watch?v=TZ827lkktYs.

³⁷ Williams, Phillip. "The Most Terrifying Music Video Ever Is 20." *Redbull.com*, 2017, www.redbull.com/gb-en/aphex-twin-come-to-daddy-5-facts.

³⁸ (Gorton)

³⁹ Who went by LOFT during the release of this work and used the release to express a crisis of identity: Bruce-Jones, Henry. "LOFT Debuts on Tri Angle with and Departt from Mono Games." *Fact Magazine*, 5 Apr. 2019, www.factmag.com/2019/04/05/loft-tri-angle-debut/. Accessed 17 June 2021.

⁴⁰ You can click the time above each video to compare

[https://www.whosampled.com/sample/660160/LOFT-\(Producer\)-That-Hyde-Trakk-Lyn-Collins-Think-\(About-It\)/](https://www.whosampled.com/sample/660160/LOFT-(Producer)-That-Hyde-Trakk-Lyn-Collins-Think-(About-It)/)

reimported and rearranged...The result is sedimentary slabs of experience compounded to form a sound ecology in which the arrow of time splits along the shaft.”⁴¹ When speaking about her compositional work more generally and connecting club music’s physicality, she said her music “is primarily concerned with the transfigurative power of experience and memory on the physical body.”⁴² Two works of mine that act in this fashion but take different approaches are *Broke* and *Digital Frost*.

Digital Frost

The sounds used in *Digital Frost* are all taken from grime sample packs, the most obvious of which is eski beat plucks that enter at 0:51. For me this sound is emblematic of a style of grime production that was created by rapper and producer Wiley, who’s nickname was “Eskiboy”³⁸. The synth sounds are harsh and the percussion has minimal effects processing on it, bringing out the similar sense of rawness I get from early eskibeat instrumentals. When writing *Digital Frost* I was also attempting to channel the work of artists like SD Laika who morphs grime’s aesthetics and signifiers. These appear in the interweaving square-wave synths of *Great God Plan*⁴³, heavy bass pulses of *You Were Wrong*⁴⁴, and skewed eski-beat bleeps of *I Don’t*⁴⁵. The major compositional difference between *Digital Frost* and SD Laika’s work is mainly found in my frantic drum sequencing but another contrasting distinction is in the ways that *Digital Frost* reaches out to other genres. Plain sailing, a publication that premiered the work online wrote that “‘Digital Frost’ is a sonic journey at breakneck speed through grime, leftfield broken Techno and post-industrial metal.”⁴⁶ The connection to Grime is most apparent in the use of eskibeat samples and the heavy distorted squarewave bass line. I feel that the post-industrial metal influence that Plain Sailing mentions comes from the use of harmonic minor tonality with emphasis on the major 7th scale degree to increase the sense of dissonant tension. Another metal connection is the heavy use of distortion on various instruments much like Aphex Twin’s death metal genre play in *Come to Daddy*. The distortion increases as the track progresses and the ability to perceive each element in the mix is exchanged for sheer intensity.

Broke

Broke on the other hand approaches the resynthesis of genre differently. The use of mutated breakbeats and bass is my attempt to recreate a stranger form of hardcore and Jungle music while cutting through early house music sensibilities in its use of vocals and toying with the roles of individual instruments. In

⁴¹ (Bruce-Jones)

⁴² AYA. “AYA · Biography · Artist / RA.” *Resident Advisor*, www.residentadvisor.net/dj/aya/biography. Accessed 17 June 2021.

⁴³ SD Laika. *Great God Plan*. Tri Angle Records, 2014, www.youtube.com/watch?v=VG16mveFeb0. Accessed 17 June 2021.

⁴⁴ SD Laika. *You Were Wrong*. Tri Angle Records, www.youtube.com/watch?v=vqRiWYBEyCQ.

⁴⁵ SD Laika. *I Don’t*. Tri Angle Records, 2014, www.youtube.com/watch?v=XJfv857FQHI.

⁴⁶ Peter. “Son Zept - Digital Frost.” *Plain Sailing*, 2020, plainsailing.live/debuts/son-zept-digital-frost/. Accessed 17 June 2021.

Broke the bass and plucking melody come from the same tuned 808 kick drum that is played octaves apart. The sonic character of the 808 bass is changed due to the waveshaping distortion I have applied to it. The resulting sound brings about a feeling that the sound created is almost too powerful for the speakers to handle, emulating the sound of a destroyed subwoofer. The bass is later run through amplification LFOs changing the hard thudding effect the bass had when the work began into a deep pulsating low that plays with the expected functionality of bass in hardcore and Jungle. It throbs around the drums while the glassy synth arpeggios shimmer in the higher registers. The audio cuts and chops that enter at **0:50** create micro bursts of texture that are cut from long choir chords but the length of the samples are so short that the source of the sound is difficult to recognise. Then at **1:29** a looping vocal sample enters but instead of being used in a typical energy heightening fashion the vocals act as though they are ghostly versions of 90s house music diva style singers that warble through distortion and shaky pitch manipulations. The key change at **2:11** moves all instruments up a whole tone and breathes more air into the work because of the strong spectral shift upwards. The vocal loop continues until **2:37** when it then starts to sing in an improvisatory melismatic style. This sinister vocal combined with the fast drums and distorted bass I feel conjures up images of horror and the occult. In an aesthetic sense, the sound of this work is reaching into a more sinister and broken club sound that I would compare to the work of Demdike Stare, a duo named after the 17th century English witch Elizabeth Southern, her nickname being Demdike meaning ‘demon woman’.⁴⁷ This link to the occult is emphasised by their sampling of horror films and the fact that the original intention of their project was to create a horror soundtrack.⁴⁸ Their later catalogue is filled with more overt club mutations with the *Passion*⁴⁹ album and *Test Pressing*⁵⁰ series being the most club--focused but I feel that sonically they do not lose their intended link to the occult. A direct inspiration for *Broke* comes from their track *At it again* from *Passion*. The track is- harsh and dark and starts with a slow fade into high frequency distortions and then declines into a wall of bass heavy melodious noise that is later paired with fast breakbeats to bring about the full sonic image of a more occult version of hardcore music. To refer back to the Pitchfork review of another duo of Post-club resynthesizers, Overmono: “In these blue remembered hills are emotions that run deeper than nostalgia: this is where British ravers buried our collective joy and catharsis.”⁵¹ I feel that Demdike Stare and my track *Broke* attempt to portray a sound that connects the buried collective joy and catharsis of the ravers with the spirits of the occult buried underground long before ravers arrived.

⁴⁷ Hoyle, George. “The Pendle Witch Trials.” *Cunning Folk*, 15 Mar. 2017, cunningfolkmusic.com/2017/03/15/the-pendle-witch-trials/.

⁴⁸ Earbuds, Little White. “LWE Interviews Demdike Stare – Little White Earbuds.” *Littlewhiteearbuds*, 2011, www.littlewhiteearbuds.com/feature/little-white-earbuds-interviews-demdike-stare. Accessed 29 June 2021.

⁴⁹ Demdike Stare. *Passion*. Modern Love, 2018, www.youtube.com/watch?v=rTKAQPatwfg. Accessed 29 June 2021.

⁵⁰ Demdike Stare. *Patchwork*. Modern Love, 2013, www.youtube.com/watch?v=PSciW_hcpJU. Accessed 29 June 2021.

⁵¹ (Ravens)

Resynthesis as Re-production

Film critic Roger Ebert called cinema ‘a machine that generates empathy’.⁵² Of course, a documentary can bring you closer to understanding and empathizing with lives you may have never encountered but a drama also opens up the opportunity for you to empathise with humanity in fiction, through combining performance, music, and a myriad of filming techniques that influence us to help create that empathy. I feel that music has an ability to tap in more directly with experiential responses in memory that result in an empathy or self-empathy which does not have to be confirmed by a narrative or text. In a sense, certain genres of films are restricted in setting concrete narratives that dig for truth to create empathy. Horror attempts to reach for something deeper. Grace Lee feels that horror is an attempt to reach what we have always felt but struggle to explain:

Horror has evolved from these primordial stories that were used to explain the unknown, to a tool for expressing the known but intangible. We recognise the impossibility of sharing experience, but boy are we going to try anyway. And, in doing so, horror questions the dichotomy so often established as objective=good, subjective=bad - when what we're left with isn't a matter of truth but rather the competing discrepancies of personal experience. (Lee, 2019)

Horror finds itself here as an artform that showcases the problems Wittgenstein raised when he spoke of private language (referred to earlier). When we speak about pain there is no way to know for certain that the other has experienced that same pain. We recognise pain in our own understanding and can not confirm the other's. As essayist, and appropriately named when speaking about horror, Elaine Scarry writes “to have great pain is to have certainty; to hear that another person has pain is to have doubt.”⁵³ To translate experience into art horror uses the audience's awareness of its own past and shows it back to us now altered, showing us what we recognise to bring us closer and allowing us to see what is different. As Grace Lee writes:

[...] in order to understand something abstract - something like our pain or, even more so someone else's - *it's easier if it's given a form we can see*. Though horror equally relies on the demonstration that just because you can't see something doesn't mean it

⁵² “Video: Roger Ebert on Empathy | Empathy | Roger Ebert.” <https://www.rogerebert.com/>, 2018, www.rogerebert.com/empathy/video-roger-ebert-on-empathy.

⁵³ Scarry, Elaine. *The Body in Pain : The Making and Unmaking of the World*. New York ; Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1985.

isn't there - and so it always encourages us to reconsider *what we might be missing*.
(Lee, 2019)⁵⁴

For most of my life, memory has been a strange and difficult thing to grapple with. Ever since I was 11 my mother has been unwell. Thankfully she is now manageably healthy but has a severely damaged immune system due the chemotherapy treatment and transplant procedures used to fight the three forms of cancer that developed one after the other over the course of 10 years. Only through conversations with family and friends do I realise years later that I have forgotten large amounts of that time: long blackouts with cloudy bits and pieces that do not quite fit together. Not long after my mother initially fell ill, I developed epilepsy. To help this I was prescribed a daily medication that I was told would affect memory in unpredictable ways. It is most noticeable in my short term memory and was more prominent when I started the medication but still persists to a lesser extent today. This combined with moments of depersonalisation in aura seizures which cause overwhelming moments of *deja vu* and a strong feeling you know what is meant to happen next but have no idea what. This is not a panic of unpredictability, because you irrationally feel you know what will happen while also feeling a strong sense of familiarity.

There are pieces of mine that I feel are a method for reproducing this persistent past that I can not quite get to: *31 roads and 3 houses* being the long dark winding country back roads that lead up to my home that my father built; *ILMMAD*, standing for I love my mum and dad, captures nights that I would practice and play guitar, learning songs I would later play for my parents, but the piece is not about capturing a memory. It is capturing how it feels in that cloudy memory because it is not me playing that guitar. In reharmonizing, sampling and performing with that guitar in the present moment I am creating a new memory. I wrote earlier that this Post-club practice lets me document and renew my experiences. This is a furthering of that. I am renewing missing experiences to create memories born old.

Resynthesis as a biomythical remedy

The struggle that arises from addressing my situation and acting creatively is one of identity. What makes you, you? When attempting to identify yourself through a present subjective perspective, the weight of your memories is seismic. This is summarized simply in the sentimental advertising of photography companies: “You are your memories. Replace all that you remember and you would be someone else”⁵⁵ Then who am I and who was I? I am existing and behaving now as someone who has been formed by experiences that I am made knowledgeable of by others, but I myself can not recollect. In self-analysis, I

⁵⁴ Italics added for emphasis

⁵⁵ FUJIFILM EMEA. “You Are Your Memories | FUJIFILM.” [www.youtube.com](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4k5hLTgG9Mg), 2018, youtu.be/4k5hLTgG9Mg. Accessed 17 June 2021.

now distrust many memories that once felt more concrete. I did not have a choice in forgetting: a corrupted hard drive that had to be erased for its own good.

In composition I am staring into these blackouts. In a way, I am attempting to incite something that resembles a memory based ganzfeld effect - a ganzfeld being an unstructured and uniform visual field, entirely featureless and composed of only one colour. The effect begins when neural noise is amplified in an attempt to fill in missing information. You begin to see something out of the nothing: an effect that can be experienced when viewing Derek Jarman's film *Blue*.⁵⁶ The film is a static shot of International Klein Blue, a colour created by artist Yves Klein, along with a soundtrack used to represent the loss of Jarman's sight as a result of suffering from AIDS-related complications and side effects from medical treatment, with a 2nd narrative that tells stories of blue as a character and colour. The film's first lines of dialogue are: "In the pandemonium of image I offer to you the universal blue. Blue, the open door to soul. An infinite impossibility becoming tangible." These lines are emblematic of Jarman's films as they are often creative vehicles used to bring out aspects of himself. As a long term collaborator and muse of Jarman, actor Tilda Swinton said "He was the material of his own work, telling his own story over and over again"⁵⁷ Jarman furthers this sentiment in his own words when speaking about the subtext of his film being his method of "putting myself back into the picture"⁵⁸. This turns his filmography into a body of work where you find a film like *Caravaggio*,⁵⁹ a biography of the Italian artist that is "as much an autobiography of Jarman as it is a biography of Caravaggio."⁶⁰ Through putting himself into the picture the film gains the "ability to continue beyond the limits of its historicism."⁶¹

In the book *Zami: A New Spelling of My Name*⁶², writer and poet Audre Lorde tells of her life and how she changed over time to become the person that she is. However, it is not an autobiography. Lorde fuses fact, history and myth to create what she calls biomythography. Lorde writes about being a black woman in the 1940s-50s in America, a leftist in the McCarthy era and a lesbian when sodomy laws were still in effect in various states. These aspects of her identity lead to tensions in her life. Communist organisations will not allow her to join due to her sexuality but she does not let this disavow these as part of her identity. This is why she uses biomythography. In chapter 3 she opens with a description of a memory:

⁵⁶ *Blue*. Directed by Derek Jarman, Zeitgeist Films, 1993.

⁵⁷ Mota, Miguel. "Derek Jarman's Caravaggio : The Screenplay as Book." *Criticism*, vol. 47, no. 2, 2005, pp. 215–231, 10.1353/crt.2006.0013. Accessed 1 Oct. 2019.

⁵⁸ Rogers, Holly. "Audio-Visual Biography: The Collaboration of Music and Image in Derek Jarman's Caravaggio" *Journal of Musicological Research*, vol. 27, no. 2, 30 Apr. 2008, pp. 134–168, 10.1080/01411890801989570. Accessed 17 June 2021. (p.142)

⁵⁹ *Caravaggio*. Directed by Derek Jarman, Cinevista, 1986.

⁶⁰ (Rogers, p.142)

⁶¹ (Ibid, p.142)

⁶² Audre Lorde. *Zami : A New Spelling of My Name*. United States, Persephones Press, 1982.

When I was 5 years old and still legally blind, I started school in a sight-conservation class in the local public school on 135th street and Lenox Avenue. On the corner was a blue wooden booth where white women gave away free milk to black mothers with children. I used to long for some Hearst Free Milk Fund milk, in those cute little bottles with their red and white tops but my mother never allowed me to have any, because she said it was charity, which was bad and demeaning. (Lorde, 1982)

Lorde is telling us that she recalls the colours blue, red, black, white but makes sure to say ‘legally’ blind. To look upon the description poetically, if you recall only a factual reality from memory you can deny the ability for the emotion you feel that constructed you. It is Lorde’s feelings of what she remembers that are a part of her, not the imposition of reality that denies her being true or correct. In a biomythography Lorde, being the authority over her own life, can tell her history whether or not it is true to reality. A biomythography is “a writing down of our meanings of identity...with the materials of our lives.”⁶³ These compositions of mine are a form of ‘writing down’ the identity fight that has formed out my loss of memory. I feel that these pieces work in a psychedelic fashion but in the original etymological sense. A combination of psych, referencing the mind, and dēlos being greek for manifest.⁶⁴ These biomythographic compositions could be a form of remedy because of how they formulate memories out of the blackouts. To return to the quote from Grace Lee: “[...] in order to understand something abstract - something like our pain or, even more so someone else's - *it's easier if it's given a form we can see*. Though horror equally relies on the demonstration that just because you can't see something doesn't mean it isn't there - and so it always encourages us to reconsider *what we might be missing*.”⁶⁵

Lorde’s writing and biomythography as a concept bring to light that memory is much more than simply factual. Cognitive and behavioural neurology studies show that emotional memory has the ability to last much longer without the factual event memory. A study that sought to investigate “feelings without memory” found that “patients with Alzheimer disease can experience prolonged states of emotion that persist well beyond the patients’ memory for the events that originally caused the emotion.”⁶⁶ While another report of two cases of dementia patients found that long after immediate family members had

⁶³ King, Katie. “Audre Lorde’s Lacquered Layerings: The Lesbian Bar as a Site of Literary Production.” *Cultural Studies*, vol. 2, no. 3, Oct. 1988, p. 330, 10.1080/09502388800490211. Accessed 9 Jan. 2020.

⁶⁴ “PSYCHEDELIC | Definition of PSYCHEDELIC by Oxford Dictionary on Lexico.com Also Meaning of PSYCHEDELIC.” *Lexico Dictionaries | English*, Oxford, www.lexico.com/definition/psychedelic. Accessed 17 June 2021.

⁶⁵ (Lee, Italics added for emphasis)

⁶⁶ Guzmán-Vélez, Edmarie, et al. “Feelings without Memory in Alzheimer Disease.” *Cognitive and Behavioral Neurology*, vol. 27, no. 3, Sept. 2014, pp. 117–129, 10.1097/wnn.0000000000000020. Accessed 31 Mar. 2020.

passed away, both “verbally expressed feelings of desolation and loneliness.”⁶⁷ This brings me to the hauntological work of Leyland Kirby. When Kirby composes (under the Caretaker alias) he processes vinyl and wax cylinder records of ballroom jazz from the early 20th century to create his work, looping and stretching samples while clouding all sound in a dense reverb fog. In his large-scale work, *Everywhere At The End of Time*, he takes the concept of hauntology and memory to its dark conclusions of dementia and communicates it musically. The work is 6 hours 30 minutes long and comprises 6 albums released over the span of 3 years. The releases are individually named Stage 1 through 6 and these “stages have all been artistic reflections of specific symptoms which can be common with the progression and advancement of the different forms of Alzheimer’s.”⁶⁸ Using a consistent soundscape of hisses, pops and crackles and sampling different recordings throughout, The Caretaker creates a unified growing sense of nostalgia, fear, confusion, and loss. We see allusions to this in the titling of the individual tracks.

In Stages 1, 2 and 3 we find titles such as: *My heart will stop in joy*, *It’s just a burning memory*, *The way ahead feels lonely* and *A lonely battle rages on*. By Stage 4 the titles have changed to medical diagnosis: *Post Awareness Confusions*, *Advanced plaque entanglements* and *Synapse retrogenesis*. The same samples from previous stages can be heard but this time they are only in short bursts and dart from ear to ear amongst a now murkier discordant reverb haze. When Stage 6 finally arrives, it begins with the lowest dirge of reverberant fog we have heard yet. It is difficult to find any familiarity to where we began in this long-form work. The six and a half-hour album is a means of musically depicting dementia, and in doing so, the inaccessible experience of a person’s dementia is brought out to us. In the most positive sense, “The experience, as a result, becomes impersonal. It becomes all of ours, no longer enclosed within the mind of the subject but is instead opened up to the rest of us.” As with the Caretaker’s work, which evokes the individual experience of dementia, my work can be thought of as a musical evocation of the memories I thought I had lost. I resynthesize memories so I can engage and live with them. I create a sonic memory born old that I have made that helps me understand. These pieces have the possibility of revealing some aspects of the human condition that emerge when we attempt to understand ourselves through our memories but either fail to or become more confused as fact clashes with emotion. I feel that pieces of mine like *Untitled #2* and *Blood Gloss* represents this clash in different ways.

At this point I would suggest that you listen to these works as the nature of the writing will change. It is more difficult to deal with what I have written about in discussing my own work because the work is my

⁶⁷ Okada, Akira, and Junko Matsuo. “Emotional Memory in Patients with Alzheimer’s Disease: A Report of Two Cases.” *Case Reports in Psychiatry*, vol. 2012, 2012, pp. 1–3, 10.1155/2012/313906. Accessed 5 Nov. 2020.

⁶⁸ The Caretaker. “Everywhere at the End of Time by the Caretaker.” *Bandcamp*, 2016, thecaretaker.bandcamp.com/album/everywhere-at-the-end-of-time. Accessed 17 June 2021.

way of addressing it. I do believe there are artistic elements of the work that I cannot articulate and if I could articulate accurately in words what these are, I may not need to make the work. What has been written up until now has been setting up a context in which these pieces might be heard. What follows is a description of my experience of the works and how I carried out the composition of those works.

Untitled #2

It's 3 o'clock in the morning. As usual, I am sitting in my living room with headphones on. I have waited for everyone in my house to go to bed and fall asleep so I can begin to approach making works like these. When composing this way silence is a necessity. With no outside noise or interruptions I feel that I can start to manifest this memory space I can step into and start to create. *Untitled #2* begins with a low-fidelity sonic landscape of buzzing and humming. Already this evokes an agedness that correlates with the reaching-into-memory I have focused on. This could be interpreted as a sonic establishing of a cold room with the hums of electrical equipment like fluorescent lighting, but for me it is closer to the sound of guitar amplifiers left on too long. Then there is a small tapping sound that repeats 4 times and then leads to an inhaling breath. The taps and clicks set depth to the noise and the breath feels much more upfront. It then begins to loop. The tapping and breathing begin to bring in a sense of pacing. I mean this dually in the sense that it has created pace through a rhythm and flow that arises from looping any material, but also in the sense that someone would pace nervously in the room. I feel that the low-fidelity electrical humming and buzzing enhances this feeling.

This disjointed beginning of the composition has no musical context against which to align my ear to so instead I feel it draws me much closer to the tapping on the wood and inhaling of breath. For me this creates an intimacy within the composition. An intimacy that aids in the evocation of personal experience. The intimacy and droning background can be likened to the Satanicpornocultshop work *Next Year's Snow*⁶⁹, a plunderphonic work that uses lowercase-esque sounds with little processing that establishes a sense of space and is then followed by a strong foregrounded vocal. The song uses the lyrics of singer Vashti Bunyan's song *Glow Worms* which is itself a lament to the passing of time and making something untrue, real, with lyrics such as: "Holding moments in the depth of care / Whisper fairy stories till they're real / Wonder how the night could make us feel / Loving, living more with love to stay / Long past sadness that was in our way"⁷⁰

⁶⁹ Satanicpornocultshop. *Next Year's Snow*. Some Bizzare, 2010, www.youtube.com/watch?v=vwrweOPRzCk. Accessed 17 June 2021.

⁷⁰ "Vashti Bunyan – Glow Worms." *Genius.com*, genius.com/Vashti-bunyan-glow-worms-lyrics.

In *Untitled #2* the sound of looping finger-tapping on a desk and the fluorescent lighting lasts for 20 seconds. What then enters is a low-fidelity recording of a woman's voice. The repetition of the phrase 'I can't help...' twice, 'I can't help but...' once, and again 'I can't help' but this time with sorrowful tone of self-confirmation and understanding. Of course, this is not me in this audio clip saying "I can't help". This is a recording of which I do not know the origin, and this allows me to use it in the composition conceptually. The audio is memory-related due to its agedness but can still be completely set apart from myself. My use of this audio brings out a sense of feeling without memory, and the phrase being "I can't help" suggests an awareness of memory loss. The hard cut offs in the audio of the voice are a way of representing a sense of persisting struggle in the inability to remember, a technique that is also used in *Next Years' Snow* in its barest stages to jarring effect as Satanicpornocultshop cut off the words *Springtime* and 'moments' half-way through their utterance.

In my piece the repetition of "I can't help" grows into a form of mantra that later gets enveloped by sound. At **0:48** I introduce the first sense of tonality. A strike of a Db on a Rhodes keyboard, then a C, Ab, F, forming a Dbmaj7. Each note is held until the end of the song with infinite sustain. An impossibility when using an actual Rhodes keyboard in reality but this is now entering into the biomyth. Low-pass filter chords sway in an unrecognisable motion out of sync with tapping of the wood and the "I can't help" mantra. As time goes on the low pass filter opens up revealing higher parts of the spectrum. The sound is difficult to truly distinguish: It reaches somewhere between only hearing the echoes of dream pop guitars and only the reverberations of choirs against the walls of large cathedrals. The bass slowly enters on a B shifting the tonal perspective to the relative minor. The notes warble and pulsate due to the heavy detuning of the multiple saw waves that make the bass. It grows and grows in volume and register but still has a heavy low pass filter placed on it that intensifies the feelings of restriction and frustration. "I can't help" has been repeating the entire time through this development. For me this piece is about realising that there is a struggle in attempting to stare into the blackout of memory and forming something tangible.

Blood Gloss

It's 3 o'clock in the morning again. Headphones on and everyone is in bed. It's quiet. While a piece like *Untitled #2* brings about this feeling of struggle for me, a work like *Blood Gloss* embodies something beyond that struggle. I get this optimistic and melancholic scenario by sonically delving into the memory-rich territory of organs and bells but compositionally it does not offer up a feeling of resolution. *Blood Gloss* also does not fog a memory with reverb and delay effects in the way the Caretaker approaches his hauntological works. Instead its sonic palette and compositional structure bring about an exploration of the acknowledgement of loss through evoking memory.

It begins with the ringing of bells against a digitally time-stretched sound. It sounds somewhere between running water and lightly whirling wind but not exactly either. The synthesized tonal instruments used have a sense of consistency due to a majority of the audio being sourced from distorted guitars. I used the Harmor synthesizer VST plug-in to sonically alter plucked harmonics to create bell and chime like sounds and to layer filtered power chords to create the bass-heavy organ sound. I feel that using a synthesizer like Harmor to imitate a sound that could evoke memory but, like the water and wind background sounds heard at the beginning of the piece, it is an imperfect replication that brings out a different sense of familiarity that for me brings out an awareness of the sense of difference. There is a strong focus on orchestration in that each instrument has a role and spectral place.

The work also toys with structural expectations, which is made clear by the bass volume swell in the first 32 bars. Harmonically it only follows two chords, F and G, which can be viewed as another play on the structural expectation as they are the IV and V chords so there is no true resolution in the track other than the removal of those chords come the end of the piece. I understand that the use of the IV and V chords could be seen as a method to create a sense of constant tension. The repetition of this chord sequence brings the listener to explore the content surrounding it. The chords start as a strong foreground due to their volume and as they become familiar this foreground element becomes part of the background while still carrying its impact. Then the listener's ear gravitates to the other aspects inside the immersive sound world. This balance of tension and exploration within the piece conceptually correlates with the attempt to retrieve and reproduce memory.

At **0:53** I bring in reversed arpeggiated fingerstyle guitar lines. These can be seen as the memories of guitar playing slowly creeping backwards into view. These high-mid frequency lines creep in but then arrive concretely in a pronounced form at **1:11** to provide a constant 16th note sense of double time pulse on top of the bass swells. From 2 minutes onwards a guitar pluck is being looped very fast with a tape effect so that when the pitch rises the loop also accelerates in speed. At **3:15** the first instance of formulated melody occurs. B is the most consistent note in the melody which again stirs a tension of sorts against the repeat F chord as the flattened 5th and less tension as the third of the G chord (leading note of the key of C). Even with the removal of the bass at the final 32 bars, the frequency spectrum is still perceived as large. The interplay between instruments becomes slightly more audible and easier to understand. When the piece has ended the F and G chords have been heard so often that the harmonic effect they imposed on the instruments around them can still be felt. It ends with the reversed arpeggiated guitar lines fading back out of existence. The constant tension combined with lack of resolution in *Blood*

Gloss would be analogous to the struggle I have spoken about when explaining *Untitled #2*. However, when *Blood Gloss* concludes I feel there is more of a sense of closure, almost like a form of acceptance. Upon hearing *Blood Gloss* without any prior knowledge of conceptual compositional intent a ‘non-musical’ friend said about the piece: “it’s so familiar, it’s not exactly nostalgic because it doesn’t sound like the past but feels like something that has just existed for a long time, like a mountain.”

CHAPTER 3

Film's influence: Sonic Mise-en-scène and Diegesis

I have written at length about film in an analogous manner but there is still an influence from film that aligns more with the creation of film. Mise-en-scène - 'placing on stage' - is the method of designing an environment for a scene wherein meaning is conveyed through visual aspects. Mise-en-scène asserts that everything put in the frame has the potential to have meaning and convey visual information about the narrative of the film. In the case of David Lynch's *Eraserhead*,⁷¹ some effective and clearly deliberate



Fig. 3.1 - Framed Picture in Eraserhead



Fig. 3.2 - Henry and pot plant from Eraserhead

examples can be found in the bedroom of the film's main character, Henry. Firstly, there is a framed picture of a mushroom cloud caused by an atomic bomb (*Fig. 3.1*). This of course could be taken as a singular symbol of death due to the image being the result of a weapon of mass destruction. But more fitting to the tone of the film is the fact that it is framed in Henry's bedroom, which cements the thought of death as part of Henry's daily life. Another reading of the image being framed could be that it is communicating to us that the film takes place in a post-nuclear world with the framing denoting that some time has passed since the explosion.

There is also a pot-plant shown on Henry's bedside table without any leaves and without its pot (*Fig. 3.2*). This could suggest to us that Henry is unable to nurture something as simple as a pot-plant, but it could also represent how this

nuclear winter world is no longer suitable to support life. The plant is a constant reminder from the very early moments of the film that the environment in which Henry lives and his character traits are not conducive to nurturing life. Things will not grow here. The plant's significance is even further established later in Henry's dream sequence where it is presented to him 6 feet tall and bleeding on a stage. This is a good creation of Mise-en-scène because it directs us as viewers to the theme and meaning of the film's narrative which is that Henry is terrified of his imminent introduction to fatherhood but also communicates the fear of bringing new life to a dangerous world. This is what *Eraserhead* is about at its core but this theme however is not conveyed to us using a strict narrative or dialogue. Instead it is

⁷¹ *Eraserhead*. Directed by David Lynch, American Film Institute, 1977.

communicated in the film as absurd extreme visualizations and sounds as a means of seeing the world through Henry's perspective. When we accept the language by which the film is communicating with us, we can better engage with it.

What I have taken from the use of communicative *Mise-en-scène* is that the placement of the objects (sounds) can carry meaning. This of course correlates with my use of *sonic identifiers*⁷² in my description of my memory focused compositions as well as the resynthesizing of genre. In an abstract sense, I view certain pieces of mine as partly being a snapshot of a scene instead of a piece of music soundtracking the events of a narrative. By this I mean that the development of these sounds are more of a means of directing the listener so that they may pull meaning from the sounds already perceived, as if they were looking at a still image of a scene or a painting and they themselves constructed more meaning the longer they held their stare. I understand that a listener or even a musical theorist could dismiss this due to the linear nature of composition and the inherent desire for the listener to formulate this linearity into a narrative structure. However, I would say this misses the point as it is not my end goal to successfully create a listening experience that coherently follows a sort of semiotic rule that is found in the method of *Mise-en-scène*. Instead the influence is about considering the meaning behind a sound while composing which could then lead to unlocking further interpretations for the listener. To make sure that I do not fall deep into the issues surrounding the intentional fallacy⁷³, I would say that I align my view on the subject of musical interpretation with Iannis Xenakis:

Music is not a language. Every musical piece is like a complex rock, formed by ridges and designs engraved within and without, that can be interpreted in a thousand different ways without a single one being the best or the most true. By virtue of this multiple exegesis, music inspires all sorts of fantastic imaginings, like a crystal catalyst. (Erraught, 2019)

Taking into consideration the statement I made earlier about these compositions being like snapshots for the listener to delve deeper into, a conceptual comparison could be made that the pieces are ambient like the soft synthetic style of Aphex Twin's looping tracks *Stone in Focus* or *Rhubarb*⁷⁴ or to drone-based

⁷² Meaning I use sounds with awareness of the associations to the sound for example: A gated reverbed snare evoking the 80s

⁷³ Referring to judgement of a work of art by assuming the intent or purpose of the artist who created it. The Editors of Encyclopedia Britannica. "Intentional Fallacy | Literary Criticism." *Encyclopædia Britannica*, 16 Oct. 2016, www.britannica.com/art/intentional-fallacy.

⁷⁴ Both songs originally lacked titles on the album 'Selected Ambient Works Volume II' instead being represented by images on the album's artwork. Titles were eventually collated by Greg Eden, an IDM list member and eventual Warp Records employee. Though unofficial, they become canonical; If you rip the CDs into your computer, the tracks will be tagged according to the fan-sourced titles: Richardson, Mark. "Aphex Twin's Selected Ambient Works Volume II." *Pitchfork*, 2014, pitchfork.com/features/paper-trail/9388-aphex-twins-selected-ambient-works-volume-ii/. Accessed 17 June 2021.

work like the lengthy guitar distortions of *Frost (C)* by Sunn O))))). I would say that this static style of ambient/drone composition is an influence due to them having a spectromorphological⁷⁵ aspect to the listening and the understanding of sonic perception over time. My compositions that are most informed by film are at a crossroads of ambient soundscapes and linear narrative song. They begin to create a world and then keep the listener there but then proceed to progress into a compositional arc. *Untitled #2, 31 roads and 3 houses, Hold Your Breath*, and *Blue Morning* are all examples of this. I suggest that these types of composition are locked in a wavering balance between stasis and motion. With the perception of a composition being time-bound to a linear sense of expression it can make it so world-building has to formulate itself to a narrative. I believe that this ebb and flow of stasis and motion toys with conventional senses of form.

I am reminded of an example from a medium other than film that manipulates inherent expectations. Poet Matthew Welton's book *We needed coffee but we'd got ourselves convinced that the later we left it the better it would taste, and, as the country grew flatter and the roads became quiet and dusk began to colour the sky, you could guess from the way we returned the radio and unfolded the map or commented on the view that the tang of determination had overtaken our thoughts, and when, fidgety and untalkative but almost home, we drew up outside the all-night restaurant, it felt like we might just stay in the car, listening to the engine and the gentle sound of the wind.*⁷⁶ Of course, the manipulation of expectation is found in the title asserting itself clearly in a manner that plays with the nature of what a title must be. Generally a title must be a preliminary component for what will be contained in the book and could be considered not to be content itself. A title could be seen as having a role to summarize, contextualise, or pique interest. However, Welton's title is acting as something more. It sits in a space in between. It informs us of the experimental approach to poetry Welton has by blurring the boundaries that a title has set. The pieces I make that are influenced by film also sit in a place between. To quote Lynch again, this time speaking about a late night hallucination in a studio that brought him to make film: "I'm looking at this painting of a garden at night, mostly black, and it started to move. From the painting came a wind. There was sound, and moving picture, and I said, 'Oh, a moving painting,' and that's what led to film for me."⁷⁷

Here I have been writing on how *mise-en-scène* occupies an influence on a wholly conceptual understanding of my compositions but now I will address what influences a more mechanical component

⁷⁵ Zagorski-Thomas, Simon. *The Spectromorphology of Recorded Popular Music*. Oxford University Press, 2018. - A concept by Denis Smalley that was introduced to explain the listeners perception of a sound spectrum as it manifests in time

⁷⁶ Welton, Matthew. *We Needed Coffee But...* Manchester, Carcanet, 2009.

⁷⁷ Belcove, Julie. "David Lynch: 'All I Wanted to Be Was a Painter.'" *Financial Times*, 22 June 2018, www.ft.com/content/7f049c9e-746a-11e8-bab2-43bd4ae655dd. Accessed 17 June 2021.

of that concept, *diegesis*: the nuts and bolts of crafting the sonic mise-en-scène. In film studies, diegesis refers to whether something is or is not inside the world of the film. If something is diegetic it is inside the film's world and if something is non-diegetic then it is outside or interacting with the film's world. (i.e. diegetic = environmental sound and dialogue, and non-diegetic = the score of the film, the voice of a narrator). Where the inspiration lies is in the manipulation of this sonic understanding that blurs a sense of reality and fantasy, and more specifically, the use of environmental sound to create this sort of hidden abstraction. To help me communicate this I will return to David Lynch's *Eraserhead*. Throughout the film Lynch makes use of exaggerated sound, as evidenced by the release of film's soundtrack⁷⁸ consisting of industrial clangs, deep rumbles and quiet-erratic hissing, interrupted by full scenes of dialogue. In a review by Pitchfork's 2011-2018 editor-in-chief Mark Richardson remarked that, "This is no 'music from and inspired by' set and it doesn't gather orchestral cues from the film's score. *Eraserhead* is a sound track (two words) in the literal sense. It contains 38 minutes of the sound that accompanies the 89-minute film's picture. When you are listening to this LP, you are hearing a movie. And it works, because Lynch and his late collaborator, Alan Splet, had a rare ear for the immersive and emotional possibilities of sound."⁷⁹ I feel this immersiveness and opening of emotional possibility is due to their clever toying of the film's sense of sonic diegesis and this clearly realised in the use of room tone and the environmental sound of a space.

We seldom hear true silence when we watch a film. As a non-analytical film viewer we may think we do, but this is not the case. What we do hear is the room tone and environmental sound. The treatment of room tone *Eraserhead*, is particularly noteworthy. Lynch and Splet use it to establish a norm, but then transform it into an abstraction in order to influence the experience of the viewer/listener. The environmental sound of the movie is that of a post-industrial world, so Lynch and Splet arrange sounds that will conjure that aural image. Industrial machinery, clanging factory pipes, and harsh whistling wind. This gives the filmic world its sonic personality and serves the diegesis of the film. These are the sounds that exist in the world of *Eraserhead*. What Lynch does with his work is blur the reality and fantasy, the diegetic and the non-diegetic: In regards to my work, truth and myth.

31 roads and 3 houses

The piece begins and before any pitched content is introduced there is movement. A bed of muffled noise that is not static creates the room tone for the piece. Static offers a dual meaning here in the sense that it

⁷⁸ "Eraserhead: Original Soundtrack Recording." *Sacred Bones Records*. N.p., 2012. Web. 25 Apr. 2020.

⁷⁹ Richardson, Mark. "David Lynch / Alan R. Splet: *Eraserhead*." *Pitchfork*, 2012, [Pitchfork.com/reviews/albums/16948-eraserhead/](https://pitchfork.com/reviews/albums/16948-eraserhead/). Accessed 17 June 2021. Web. 29 Apr. 2020.

does not lack movement and it is not electrical white noise. Quiet shuffling sounds sprout out atop the bed of noise and further define the space we are in. It is clearly reverberant but our proximity to the sound source is unsure. It conjures up imagery of a musician sitting upon a wooden chair preparing to play, then chords begin **[0:09]**. G, A, B minor played freely until the end of the piece. These chords were played in a single take on a nylon string guitar and then pitch-shifted down an octave in a sampler which uses pitch scaling, meaning that the pitch of the audio would be changed without affecting the playback speed of the audio. This creates this imitation of an acoustic bass-stringed instrument but since the audio source is a nylon string guitar the timbral qualities are different.

An artifact of this pitch-scaling manipulation is that it alters sonic qualities of un-pitched content, such as the higher frequency scraping sound created by moving the fingers over strings. This can be heard throughout the piece at different volumes when changing chord from A to Bmin. The pitch manipulation has brought this scraping sound down from 3000Hz range to 1200-1500Hz. Those who have played a guitar may recognise it as a very human sound - a sound that is buffered out in polished, well-played recordings. This, for me, denotes a sense of human agency as well as a sense of intimacy that correlates with the sonic-image created by the shuffling creaking sounds heard at the beginning of the composition. Even though the scraping sound is connected to the playing of a guitar: the pitch manipulation has left the sound slightly altered. This familiar sound is now ever-so-slightly unfamiliar. It is also being amplified by an equalization I have added which cuts below 500Hz and above 2500Hz with a boost at 1900Hz. This equalization is used to imitate low-fidelity or present the sound as if it were being played on low-quality speakers. I will address this use of equalization shortly, but the importance of it now is that the amplifying the scraping of the fingers which makes it reverberate longer as the chords ring out. Hearing this loud scrape echo along with the chords creates somewhat of a sonic juxtaposition. A sound that denotes intimacy is loudly reverberating in this space. The woody creaking and shuffling from the beginning are still tangible **[0:55, 1:30]** so we have not left this space or our proximity with the sound source of the chords.

By **0:55** a smaller sound is creeping into perception. We start to hear a small boxy and completely non-reverberant guitar playing with a traditional Irish style in D major. It plays completely independently from the recurring large chords and is ever so slowly getting louder. It is independent in style as it is played dance-like with quick flourishes and grace notes while also being independent in time. There is the plausibility of a dual meaning to this being independent in time, one is more evident in that it is played with a completely different sense of tempo and meter to the surrounding material. The lurching chords have created this plausible human agency and combined with the creaking and shuffling sound, there is a

sense that the chords are happening in real-time. Even though the small traditional guitar also carries a human agency in the liveliness of its playing, the other meaning linked to its independency in time arises from the combination of two decisions in the processing of the audio, a lack of reverb and use of low-fidelity imitation equalization that I mentioned earlier. The lack of reverb detaches it from the sense of space that has been established throughout the composition so far and the low-fidelity evokes an agedness, like the framing of the mushroom cloud picture in *Eraserhead* (**Fig 3.1, Pg. 30**). Using fidelity as the method of framing, we ask what is its existence? Is it audio played from the small speakers of a tape-recorder? What history is this evoking? Is that history a memory held in the mind of the performer of these lumbering chords as they continue to play them in this meditative manner? Is this a piece they played once before and now play alongside the memory? If we listen back to the beginning we realise the chords once existed in a state of lower fidelity and have evolved over time into a much fuller range **[3:00]**, but the small traditional guitar continues unchanged. The lowest fidelity instruments are at a point placed further back in time and we follow the large chords develop through time. Feeding further into this hauntological melancholy is the lamenting sustained notes that appear far in the distance **[first appearance 1:04]**. They too exist independently of the chords with their own melodic contours but again the audio processing adds another layer. The reverb tail is long causing the sound to resonate further, blurring the line of distinction for the instrument be it vocal, pipe, violin, or accordion. But more importantly, the dry signal has been completely removed, leaving only the reverberations of the space. Recalling the scene in *Mulholland Drive*'s Club Silencio,⁸⁰ where the master of ceremonies declares over and over that "there is no band, and yet we hear a band". As we come to the end there is an increasingly higher frequency (first entry at **5:15** and rises in volume around the chord strikes) that does not seem to directly attach itself to any of the instruments playing.

On reflection of the work, it can be viewed as an inverse of a song. The few elements that make up the song are not introduced to us in an order fitting to their conventional roles. The bass chords that we hear first could have been the harmonic changes to the traditional Irish playing or the ambiguous lamenting tones heard later. - They are elements out of time -. I feel that the piece is a recalling of a song –a retrospective piecing of it together in fragments. We are building up the parts as we go along but some are clearer to us than others, each of them different and independent, but related with a feeling of fluctuating familiarity that pushes it into a dream-like memory. The parts never unite in time to create the song as a whole but as the listener we keep the relationship together. After the last chord, the fidelity can be heard lowering again. As if the composition is shrinking in on itself, rewinding time or forgetting.

⁸⁰ "Mulholland Drive (2001) - Club Silencio Scene." [www.youtube.com, www.youtube.com/watch?v=6wCfl2Czhjc](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6wCfl2Czhjc). Accessed 17 June 2021.

CHAPTER 4:

A Club Without DJs and a DJ Without Clubs

When writing this commentary, I was searching for terminology to communicate the practices available in Post-club. What ended up being described as resynthesis began partly in the work of Deleuze and Guattari. The work of Deleuze and Guattari is commonly cited in my field. Christoph Cox writes that although “Gilles Deleuze wrote about music only in passing...[he] has become the intellectual hero of experimental ‘electronica’”⁸¹. I am not a critical theorist, however I can speak from authority as a composer. I do feel Deleuze and Guattari create some meaningful concepts and observations but here I invoke my privilege as a composer by taking this as a fertile ground to reinterpret their concepts in the realm of music making. It has been noted that “Gilles Deleuze, like Michel Foucault, has often described theory as a “tool box,” the tools being the concepts a philosophy creates and makes available to others in different fields of research. The rhizome and the body without organs (BwO) are two concepts found in Deleuze & Guattari’s *A Thousand Plateaus*. Despite the many new concepts it develops, *A Thousand Plateaus* comprises a rather unwieldy tool box, since both authors refuse to offer their readers a closed system or “recipe” to work”.⁸² This has led me to seeing *A Thousand Plateaus* as an igniter of creative thought. From here I will make reference to the writings that inspired my own creative outlook and changed how I perceived my own work, whilst referencing practitioners to help further explain the traits and inner workings of what I mean by Post-club.

The rhizome is characterized by complex interconnecting networks which build metastructures that do not accord with the neat separations found in the tree-like structures. The rhizome appeals to me as it helps to describe the complexities I am trying to address in this formation of Post-club and helps alleviate the time-determined restriction of categorization. If we return to *Ishkur’s guide of electronic music* [Fig 1.1 pg.11], we see the parallel lines that make up its restrictive genealogy tree structure and do not fully reveal the rhizomatic nature of electronic music’s genre that I am suggesting. However, a glimpse into its rhizomatic nature comes from the reading of the genres descriptions where Ishkur provides links to other genres that overlap with one another. Such is the case with Ambient Techno which Ishkur places in the IDM scene, yet this is disconnected from Ishkur’s actual Techno tree while also being an “off-shoot of

⁸¹ Cox, Christoph. “How Do You Make Music a Body without Organs? Gilles Deleuze and Experimental Electronica – Deutsch/English – Non.copyriot.com.” *Non.copyriot.com*, 2016, non.copyriot.com/how-do-you-make-music-a-body-without-organs-gilles-deleuze-and-experimental-electronica-deutschenglish/. Accessed 17 June 2021.

⁸² Colombat, Andre Pierre. “A Thousand Trails to Work with Deleuze.” *SubStance*, vol. 20, no. 3, 1991, p. 10, 10.2307/3685176. Accessed 17 June 2021.

Bleep genre”⁸³, which itself was a “valiant attempt by the United Kingdom to make Detroit Techno.”⁸⁴. In the case of “Brostep” which Ishkur places in the UK Garage scene but also stating that “Brostep is the singularity of the UK Garage black hole”.⁸⁵ This is due to Dubstep’s conception being the experimentation of making half-time Garage music (the step suffix coming from 2-step Garage), which then became more influenced by reggae (hence the dub prefix) and grime,⁸⁶ but then progressed through the production influences of drum and bass, distorted Electrohouse and glitch-hop to the previously mentioned Brostep. Ishkur further pronounces his disdain by saying that “Brostep is not even technically music. It is a music technique, a short-snippet audio aesthetic that is barely enough to constitute a genuine genre. It is jacked up on texture, timbre, resonance and blistering midrange frequencies rather than actual harmony, melody and rhythm.”⁸⁷ I feel that this is true in the sense that around Skrillex’s rise to fame, Brostep could be recognised as a competition of the sonic-extremes of the bass-drop. The formula was the same: 32 bars of intro, 8 bars build-up, 32 bars of bass drop, 32 bar breakdown, 8 bars build-up, 32 bars slightly altered drop, outro. This led musicians (e.g. Flux Pavilion, Kill the Noise, and Excision) to focus on displaying multiple forms of synthesis acrobatics⁸⁸ rather than experimentations with form, style, or musicality. As Ishkur mockingly says, “There is nothing you can add to it or change to make Brostep better. If you attach a violin to Brostep, it just makes the violin worse... It’s the nu-metal of electronic music.” This displays how the rhizome can be used to highlight the multidirectional and interconnected web of the electronic club genres. A subgenre (Brostep) has the possibility to be connected to a multitude of other subgenres (Glitch-hop, distorted Electro-house) without sharing the same ‘roots’ (Garage>2step>Dubstep>Brostep). However, I recognise as a sense of incompleteness as Brostep could be described as rhizomatic but this does not necessarily make it Post-club. Post-club takes advantage of this rhizomatic nature in club music and uses it to act musically through subversion. Although Brostep does further experiment with many forms of audio synthesis, it was born out of a formula and does not interact with any type of subversion. Instead it repeats the formula into oblivion.

I have another interpretation of the rhizomatic concept that I feel is useful in the explanation of Post-club and thus also my own music. Resynthesis can be useful here as a tool for sparking compositional ideas, as I suggested earlier in calling *A Thousand Plateaus* an igniter of creative thought. If we consider Post-club’s resynthesis in terms of reproduction, through the relationship of the DJ and the clubber/listener rather than in relation to my earlier explanation of the biomythic (while still recognising

⁸³ (Taylor, <https://music.ishkur.com/?query=AmbientTechno>)

⁸⁴ (Taylor, <https://music.ishkur.com/?query=BleepTechno>)

⁸⁵ (Taylor, <https://music.ishkur.com/?query=Brostep>)

⁸⁶ An example of a dubstep through grime through reggae is: The Bug. *Skeng Feat. Killa P & Flow Dan*. Ninja Tune, 2008, www.youtube.com/watch?v=zwmUOJR-GwA. Accessed 17 June 2021.

⁸⁷ (Taylor)

⁸⁸ Kill The Noise. *Jump Ya Body (Feat. Mercedes)*. Owsla, 2012, youtu.be/Ji4ZxnQ86p0. Accessed 17 June 2021.

memory as an ample compositional tool). In an article concerning Deleuze and glitch music aesthetics, DJ Tobias van Veer describes, “the DJ as the memory selector, putting memories into new contexts to trigger associative, rhizomatic thoughts.”⁸⁹ I consider this is a crucial element in understanding Post-club. What could be regarded as just playing of familiar songs in new club environments to create a resynthesis of genre (e.g. playing garage at a Techno night) is instead refocused on the furthering of thought and connections that this juxtaposition brings about. A DJ is constantly at play with sonic identifiers. These are sounds which carry memory and can become stable methods of identifying genres. An organ can call upon memories of church or motown music. A gated reverb on a snare drum encapsulates ‘80s-ness’. Looking to electronic music, an Amen break is the foundation of all Jungle and drum n’ bass by sheer volume of repeated use. A DX7 piano sound or Korg M1 organ is retro acid house/rave à la Baby D *Let Me Be Your Fantasy* or Robin S *Show Me Love*. This is true even for that which is found in umpteen genres: the drum sounds generated from the Roland TR808 create connections. Knowing these connections and manipulating them is Post-club practice. One work of mine that has been recognised by the electronic music press as exploring these ideas is *Trophy Run*.

Trophy Run

As Henry Bruce-Jones writes for Fact Magazine: "Starting with the radioactive bones of hardcore and acid, McCartan injects the track with crystalline synth stabs and cortex-searing drum programming, which act as the catalyst for high-velocity, rave-ready sonic mutations. While Son Zept may draw his influences from the rich history of the hardcore continuum, his intricate, genre-exploding club constructions transport the listener so far past his house, Techno and electroacoustic touchstones you’ll be left scratching your head, trying to work out just where it was he started in the first place.”⁹⁰

Trophy Run is a compositional venture into a storytelling structure, but putting it through an experimental version of a lightning fast never-made CJ Bolland track, who blurred lines in his Techno, Electro and drum ‘n’ bass work in the 90s. When writing with the rave aesthetic in mind, it is easy to become very attached to certain sonic material, melismatic house diva vocals, squelchy FM basslines, euphoric synth riffs. These are all present but they all have some sort of alteration and come together in a stranger context. Trophy run’s use of heavily repeated synthetic basslines and sampling of block chords that toy with the tonal centre bring out a common sonic setup to that of hardcore rave and acid house. Then the change to the four to the floor rhythm at [2:18] is my merging of the sonic material into an early Aphex Twin

⁸⁹ Ashline, William L. “Clicky Aesthetics: Deleuze, Headphonics, and the Minimalist Assemblage of ‘Aberrations.’” *Strategies: Journal of Theory, Culture & Politics*, vol. 15, no. 1, May 2002, p. 97, 10.1080/10402130220127861. Accessed 10 Apr. 2019.

⁹⁰ Bruce-Jones, Henry. “Son Zept Mutates Rave Aesthetics with ‘Trophy Run.’” *Fact Magazine*, 23 Oct. 2020, www.factmag.com/2020/10/23/son-zept-trophy-run/. Accessed 17 June 2021.

Techno-inspired style. The rolling breakneck speed, unusual percussion sounds with unpredictable syncopation and shimmering synthetic lead melodies alter the world these historic sounds call upon and rip them from their “hardcore continuum.” All of this is visually portrayed in the music video that accompanied “Trophy Run”. My collaborator Dervla Hillan, out of my suggestion to dig into rave aesthetic and iconography, created a mangled and melted distortion of the Acid Smiley to show a representation of the rave era travelling through a newly created landscape. [Fig. 4.1, Fig 4.2]



[Fig. 4.1] - Acid House Smiley



[Fig. 4.2] - Digital Avatar from ‘Trophy Run’ Music video

Again, Fact Magazine recognises this pairing of sonic and visual as they write: “Digital artist Dervla Hillan perfectly visualises these mutations, plunging us into a technicolor ravescape of undulating organisms and virtual architecture. An acid-dipped rave smiley ricochets around Hillan’s world, acting as the ghost of the sounds McCartan catapults into the bleeding edge.” To draw attention back to the connection between the creators of Post-club and the DJ. It is typical for Post-club artists to also be or have been DJs⁹¹ and even those who are not DJs are regularly engaging with this memory system in club music. The artist is the DJ and the DJ is the memory selector. This memory selector is not just calling upon memories one at a time but providing new context for memories by stacking these sonic identifiers “so that during recall, layers of memory surface anew.”⁹²

Take the false nostalgia effect created by the youtube video “Mr Brightside from another room”⁹³ which I have used as a simple example of altering memory contained within audio when I taught undergraduate composition. I spoke about it in a 2018 interview I had with Irish music and culture magazine/website *The Thin Air*:

⁹¹ Objekt [who was given Mixmags DJ of year 2018 in the same year as his club influenced electroacoustic album *Cocoon Crush*], AYA, Lee Gamble, Sophie, M.E.S.H., Demdike Stare and many more examples occupy this demographic. The term DJ/producer casts the net even wider and is a commonly used in press descriptions.

⁹² Ardoin, Paul. *Understanding Deleuze, Understanding Modernism*. New York, Bloomsbury Academic, 2016.

⁹³ Bella P. “Mr. Brightside from Another Room.” [www.youtube.com](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SOEa6NzTSOo), 2017, www.youtube.com/watch?v=SOEa6NzTSOo. Accessed 17 June 2021.

you can create a fake memory that is still attached to you - you know those videos you see, like "Mr Brightside from another room" - why does that feel so sad? There are recollections of that song that many people possess but it's been taken and twisted. You almost create a false nostalgic experience of maybe a party when you're hearing 'Mr Brightside' - someone knocks on the bathroom door and asks "Are you alright?" and you're looking at your phone. It's a memory that's not real but is strongly felt.⁹⁴

A Post-club artist is one who is familiar with the DJ practice of memory selection and thus is familiar with the ability to recall memory and the immediate effect this can have. This is why Post-club artists who use memory as a source of inspiration are not only plentiful but effective. This is overtly shown in the hauntological artists I have referred to before such as Burial and Leyland Kirby (the Caretaker). Mark Fisher has written of Burial's music:

The introspective turn in 21st century (post)dance music was therefore not a turn towards emotion, it was a shift from collectively experienced affect to privatised emotions. There was an intrinsic and inevitable sadness to this inward turn, regardless of whether the music was officially sad or not. (Fisher, 2014)

As I stated earlier, Post-club is inclusive of the meaning 'after the club' this rightfully so makes Post-club music inherently introspective. An introspective turn can lead to "an intrinsic and inevitable sadness" as Fisher says in the case of Burial. Other hauntological artists such as Boards of Canada, Demdike Stare, and Andy Stott occupy (arguably) varying degrees of sadness, but all toy with memory using multiple methods. Boards of Canada's use of tape recordings of TV and Film, Demdike Stares use of library music and Andy Stott's 80s reverberated distortions of 80s sonic identifiers. With each artist using degraded sound sources or degrading them digitally. And while the hauntological does influence many of my compositions, I wish to extend the thought that introspection does also lead to more forms of experimentation in Post-club. AYA (FKA LOFT), Objekt, Lee Gamble, Rian Treanor, Lorenzo Senni, and Skee Mask are all playing with sonic genre identifiers in new compositional contexts to trigger a play with associative memory. Many of these artists are included on the official editorial Spotify playlist 'Genre Glitch' which has as its description "Instrumental bliss beyond genre classification".⁹⁵ To revisit

⁹⁴ Lennox, Stevie. "If I Couldn't Define It, I Thought I Was Doing Something Good: Introducing Son Zept." *The Thin Air*, 7 Nov. 2018, thethinair.net/2018/11/what-defines-divides-an-interview-with-resists-son-zept/. Accessed 17 June 2021. - My remark on the creation of that experience can be further evidenced by reading the comments section of the *mr. brightside from another room* video on youtube.

⁹⁵ Spotify. "Genre Glitch." *Spotify*, open.spotify.com/playlist/37i9dQZF1DWUraJYejk11q?si=uww-YE35RJ6WN4uoENwCFg. Accessed 17 June 2021.

AYA's definition of her own music referenced in chapter 2: "The result is sedimentary slabs of experience compounded to form a sound ecology in which the arrow of time splits along the shaft."⁹⁶ AYA later continues in saying it "is primarily concerned with the transfigurative power of experience and memory on the physical body."⁹⁷ In reference to the physical body, I would now like to move on to a second concept from Deleuze and Guattari from which I took inspiration.

A body without organs (BwO) and dancing wrong-side-out

When you will have made him a body without organs,
then you will have delivered him from all his automatic reactions
and restored him to his true freedom.

Then you will teach him again to dance wrong-side-out
as in the frenzy of dance halls
and this wrong side out will be his real place.⁹⁸

The body without organs (BwO) "consists of an assemblage or body with no underlying organizational principles."⁹⁹ and "provides the smooth space through which movement can occur. Rather than the unifying principles of a system of organization."¹⁰⁰ Deleuze and Guattari also state that reaching the BwO is an impossibility. You cannot attain it but are forever trying to attain it, meaning that the BwO is a form of never-ending limit.¹⁰¹ Deleuze and Guattari also write that the BwO "is already under way the moment the body has had enough of organs and wants to slough them off, or loses them."¹⁰² From this I would suggest that the naming of Post-club is much the same as naming the BwO itself. The use of the term starts the process. Rather than the naming of a genre which leads to processes falling into a state of categorization, it is instead in a constant flow of musically expressive renewal. Pairing with this is the fact that Deleuze names music itself as a method for creating the body without organs - "Music strips bodies of their inertia, of the materiality of their presence: it disembodies bodies."¹⁰³ Perhaps coincidentally, Deleuze played the musical saw and would play it for his students when he felt tired,¹⁰⁴ a surgical tool to

⁹⁶ Bruce-Jones, Henry. "LOFT Debuts on Tri Angle with and Departt from Mono Games." *Fact Magazine*, 5 Apr. 2019, www.factmag.com/2019/04/05/loft-tri-angle-debut/. Accessed 17 June 2021.

⁹⁷ (AYA)

⁹⁸ This is the inspiration for the phrase Body Without Organs and is taken from Antoine Artaud's avant-garde play 'To Have Done with the Judgment of God'

⁹⁹ "Rhizome Glossary." *Rhizomes.net*, rhizomes.net/issue5/poke/glossary.html#:~:text=BODY%20WITHOUT%20ORGANS%3A. Accessed 17 June 2021.

¹⁰⁰ (Ibid)

¹⁰¹ Gilles Deleuze, and Félix Guattari. *A Thousand Plateaus : Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. 1980. London [U.A.] Bloomsbury, 2017. Pg. 159

¹⁰² (Ibid, Pg. 150)

¹⁰³ Gallope, Michael. "Is There a Deleuzian Musical Work?" *Perspectives of New Music*, vol. 46, no. 2, 2008, pp. 93–129, 10.1353/pnm.2008.0000. Accessed 17 June 2021.

¹⁰⁴ Wolters, Eugene. "13 Things You Didn't Know about Deleuze and Guattari – Part II." *Critical Theory*, 20 June 2013, www.critical-theory.com/13-deleuze-guattari-part-ii/. Accessed 17 June 2021.

remove the organs from the body in the physical world being tied to the conceptual outer-body power of music. So, musically speaking, what is the BwO and what effect may it have?

The musical body without organs is one in which the familiar aspects and functions (organs) of recognizable systems (bodies) are no longer apparent... we are confronted with new possibilities in situations in which such functions (organs) are no longer predetermined.¹⁰⁵

Organs represent functions and the Body is a system that has been Organ-ized. Following this understanding, if we take club music as the organ-ized body, Post-club practice can be the removing of the organs. We can look at the music of Rian Treanor as a Post-club example, when he was asked about the dance functionality of his *ATAXIA*¹⁰⁶ album:

Well, I see it as being made for a club context with the beats, basslines and chords. There are all these functional elements at play, and similarly with the rhythmic structures, they're all pretty much 16-bar loops. Within that though, the process involves seeing how far you can test things and work with those elements before they collapse.¹⁰⁷

Considering that his album name *ATAXIA* is a medical term used to describe the loss of control over bodily movements, a superficial connection to the body without organs could be made, but I argue this connection runs deeper. Treanor describes his music by acknowledging how he balances what he sees as the functional and dysfunctional. He says that he is “drawn to things that throw you off in that sense as a listener in a club, that make you wonder how is that even working or why is it doing that?” He does rightfully state that his whole back catalogue has been linked to “starting with a basic loop or pattern and looking at how far you can push it in different directions.”¹⁰⁸ I perceive that his music is furthermore asserting the Post-club practice due to his overt play with memory. *RAVEDIT A1*¹⁰⁹ is completely composed using sounds taken from Italian Eurodance project Whigfeld’s song ‘Saturday night’, a number 1 hit in the United Kingdom in 1994 and a commonplace at weddings and childrens discos. To me the sampling in *RAVEDIT A1* is not clear until 20 seconds in but on the same release, *RAVEDIT A2* makes use of the iconic 80s synthpop song *Oh Yeah* by Yello and its source material is overt. Both are entitled *RAVEDIT* so as to not indicate their source material. I understand this as a suggestion that memory play

¹⁰⁵ Campbell, Edward. *Music after Deleuze*. London, Bloomsbury, 2013.

¹⁰⁶ Treanor, Rian. *ATAXIA*. Planet Mu, 2019.

¹⁰⁷ Eede, Christian. “The Quietus | Features | Escape Velocity | Dysfunctional Modulation: Rian Treanor Interviewed.” *The Quietus*, 2019, thequietus.com/articles/26347-rian-treanor-ataxia-interview.

¹⁰⁸ (Ibid)

¹⁰⁹ Rian Treanor. “A1.” *Www.youtube.com*, 2015, www.youtube.com/watch?v=IEpeRIUblVw. Accessed 17 June 2021.

was intentionally involved in the work. The use of a work like *RAVEDIT AI* in a club disorients listeners on multiple levels, firstly, and more obviously due to Treanor's pattern style being unpredictable, disorientating and exciting, but secondly in the blurring of the instant stimulus of a familiar sound - as I previously wrote about sonic identifiers and their capacity to trigger memory within the listener, be that of a decade, genre, or in this case one song. If that sound source or connection is blurred, the listeners' recall is disorientated and this enters us into the hauntological, though not in the sense of Burial's ghostly work. To communicate better what I mean, I would like to show two ways I have thought about the Post-club body without organs: ***a club without DJs*** and ***a DJ without clubs***.

A club without DJs brings about the notion of the eerie in Mark Fisher's book *The Weird and Eerie*. The weird is the presence of "that which does not belong", but the eerie is more nuanced in that it is the absence of that which belonged before, a space once lively that has been "emptied of the human." A work of Leyland Kirby's that is emblematic of this hauntological Club without DJs is the aptly named album *The Death Of Rave*. In an interview with Fisher, Kirby speaks of the project as such:

I think *The Death Of Rave* is about the loss in that spirit and a total loss of energy in most electronic music across the board. I feel sorry these days for people when I go to clubs as that energy isn't there any more... That is the key word - 'energy'... It's the one thing I have always been inspired by. For me, those Death Of Rave tracks are about stripping rave music from all its energy and spirit of fun - taking the audio from the rave to the grave, if you like... There is a full range of emotions in the music, from loss to happiness, dislocation, regret, longing. Maybe it's the source music which inspires this... maybe some of my own memories are intertwined in there. (Fisher, 2014)

An example from *The Death Of Rave* that shows this stripping of sound sources from their rave energy clearly is the track *Acid Alan, Haggis & Scott*. It is constructed using a repeating loop of time-stretched sonic identifiers attached to 90s Acid house music. The high frequency ringing of Roland TR909 open hi-hat followed by the sound of a Roland TB303 bass hit with a closing low pass filter envelope and high resonance setting. I identify this combination as Acid, plain and simple. The TB303 is enough on its own as it is the instrument used to create acid basslines found throughout club music but its combination with the TR909 encapsulates the sound further. The stretching and pulsating along with the heavy reverberant fog creates a distance that Fisher describes when writing about Kirby's work as "a horribly accurate sonic metaphor, perhaps, of our current state of exile from the future-shocking rate of innovation that dance music achieved in the 80s and 90s." Along with Kirby's feelings that the energy is gone in the music he once loved, Fisher's viewpoint is very much steeped in nostalgia and thus creates a call of despair for a

lost future. A despair further stated by Fisher's own interpretation of current nostalgia: "it may best be characterised not as a longing for the past so much as an inability to make new memories."¹¹⁰

"In Greek, nostalgia literally means the pain from an old wound. It's a twinge in your heart far more powerful than memory alone"¹¹¹ says Don Draper in the television programme *Mad Men* as he pitches an ad campaign for the Kodak Carousel Photo Slide Projector, showing images of Don carrying his wife on their wedding day and playing with his children in the snow. The translation statement is not etymologically true¹¹² as the Greek 'Nostos' meaning homecoming and 'Algos' meaning pain, culminate in a latin word used to describe a severe homesickness that was considered a disease. However this does not matter, it is more importantly the entire statement is effective and telling. The second sentence in the quote echoes filmmaker Werner Herzog's view on his documentary style, saying that what he does in film is "modify facts in such a way that they resemble truth more than reality"¹¹³ and with the etymological statement being a falsity, it proves what it is explaining. The idea of a "memory alone" can be read as calendar dates, number combinations, sterile thoughts that hold only information devoid of emotion. But when memory and emotion are held together and left to decay over time, that is when the nostalgic fog creeps in. We then become clouded in our own experience. Clouded more by the emotion because it does not demand a sense of reality, it is the subjective element that makes nostalgia work for us. Of course the subjective can be false, which brings into play the false nostalgia I remarked on earlier. When my compositions venture into the hauntological, as in *31 roads and 3 houses*, *ILMMAD* and *Untitled #2*, they bring about the sense of melancholy that is common with such hauntological pieces, but my works also have a pull towards optimism or the positive. Maybe this could be simply down to my age, in the sense that I do not have the same feeling of lost futuristic despair that Fisher speaks of. Is this optimistic melancholy a compositional recreation of a shared false nostalgia? Or the remedying result of creating biomythographic composition. If what Fisher says is true about an inability to create new memories, then maybe it is only true for those longing for what they have experienced and unable to renew those experiences. As Boards of Canada have said: "We're not trying to accurately pastiche the past, it's about inventing a past that didn't really happen."¹¹⁴ We may not imitate the past as a means of revivalism or re-creation for recreation. Instead creating memories differently by having memories born old.

¹¹⁰ (Fisher, 2014)

¹¹¹ "Mad Men - the Carousel." *YouTube*, 15 May 2008, www.youtube.com/watch?v=suRDUFpsHus. Accessed 4 Nov. 2020.

¹¹² "Nostalgia | Origin and Meaning of Nostalgia by Online Etymology Dictionary." *Wwww.etymonline.com*, www.etymonline.com/word/nostalgia.

¹¹³ Werner, Herzog. "Werner Herzog Makes Trump-Era Addition to His Minnesota Declaration." *Walkerart.org*, 2017, walkerart.org/magazine/werner-herzog-minnesota-declaration-2017-addendum#:~:text=Andr%C3%A9%20Gide%3A%20%E2%80%9CI%20modify%20facts. Accessed 17 June 2021.

¹¹⁴ Murray, Robin. "Archive Piece: Boards of Canada." *Clash Magazine*, 2012, www.clashmusic.com/features/archive-piece-boards-of-canada. Accessed 17 June 2021.

A DJ without clubs brings out what I have stated previously as an introspective view of music composition in a way different from Fisher's understanding of sadness being the inevitable end space of introspective club music. A DJ without clubs deviates from defining characteristics. As House and Garage developed their genre names, and initial tropes, from the clubs they originated from. To develop without a club gives the opportunity to develop singularly, something that I stated is more apparent due to the lack of localised scenes. This has the potential to break these sounds free from some canonical limitations by making the sounds more personal through introspective production. The music that comes from a DJ without a club is a music that is not necessarily bound to the organ-ized functions of dance music that could restrict their composition.

The far reaches of the DJ without a club idea would have works of music where the artist ventures much more in depth on a particular compositional technique or particular aspect of form. If there were a club then the technique would be nestled in a piece of music that engages with the functional dance.

In the case of altering an aspect of form the work of Lorenzo Senni, such as the writing in his *Persona EP*¹¹⁵, focuses on the melody writing style and supersaw synth textures found in trance music breakdowns/build-ups. He uses this approach to evoke the emotive euphoria with the genre, but deviates from form as it never enters into a drop or brings the song into a drum filled release. Similar work can be heard in the 2019 album *Utility*¹¹⁶ by Barker. Barker offers a similar trajectory as Senni but has a different set of source material. His percussion&bassdrum-less Techno makes use of pulsating synthetic pads and stabs that reverberate in rhythmic bursts. As music publication pitchfork puts it: "For anyone who has ever fantasized about dissolving into the dancefloor, the debut solo album from Techno artist Sam Barker is as close as it gets...By using ambient materials to remake Techno, Barker has come up with the exact opposite of a purposefully percussive DJ tool. Instead of rote functionalism, *Utility* is distinguished by its surfeit of feeling."¹¹⁷ Lorenzo Senni and Barker have created compositions based around isolating and focusing on certain club music related techniques. In regards to my own work, I was inspired by my listening experience of a certain sampling technique in rave and Jungle music and wanted to explore compositional possibilities and restrictions. This led me to creating process-based compositions using samples with set pitch-time relationships. The compositional examples I will showcase do appear to lack an aesthetic congruence as my exploration of the technique grew. I did not restrict my use of sound source to be that of a rave or Jungle genre aesthetic as Lorenzo Senni does with trance music, and this resulted in a variety of sonic palettes and assortment of compositional styles that range in from minimal to maximal

¹¹⁵ Senni, Lorenzo. *Rave Voyerism*. Warp, 2016.

¹¹⁶ Barker. *Utility*. Ostgut Ton, 2019.

¹¹⁷ Sherburne, Phillip. "Barker: Utility." *Pitchfork*, 2019, pitchfork.com/reviews/albums/barker-utility/. Accessed 17 June 2021.

intensity. Where the club without DJs led me deeper into a connection with the haungtological in my work, the DJ without clubs sent me further down a rabbit hole focused upon a singular technique I associate with club music: an introspective excursion into pitch-time relationships.

Pitch-Time Relationships in Composition

The pitch-time relationship is heard throughout early rave tracks that made use of samplers that used variable speed pitch control or varispeed. In other words the relationship of pitch and time is sustained rather than more modern methods of time stretching or pitch scaling. Time stretching being the process of changing the speed or duration of an audio signal without affecting its pitch and pitch scaling being the opposite: the process of changing the pitch without affecting the speed. This relationship between pitch and time sampling can be heard in many songs showing the rave aesthetic. The opening riff to *Frequency*¹¹⁸ by Altern-8 displays a sequence of dissonant synth chord stabs that slightly change in length corresponding to their pitch. The opening piano line in *Trip To the Moon Pt.2*¹¹⁹ by Acen repeatedly triggers the sample on a - Dotted Crotchet + Dotted Crotchet + Crotchet - rhythm but the change in pitch causes the rhythm to bend and turns into a stumbling swing. There are examples in Jungle where this pitch-time relationship can be used to create a stronger more pronounced rhythmic effect in the pitch manipulation of drum breaks. In Remarc's *Sound Murderer*¹²⁰ use of drums, from the drop you hear the snare being pitched down and how that affects the sonic quality. A display of pitch and time related play at **2:09-2:34** shows the drum break with no accompanying instruments. The snare is pitched down as before but creates a high pitched drum fills on the last beat using the break pitched up an octave **2:11** and then down an octave **2:13** to create a plodding version of the original drum break.

A simple method of explaining the inner workings of this pitch-time relationship is to compare it to the electro-mechanical instrument, the rhythmicon. The rhythmicon, also known as the polyrhythmophone,¹²¹ was a concept created by composer Henry Cowell who commissioned Leon Theremin to construct it.¹²² Cowell often explored complex rhythms in his work and had felt limited by a performer's inability to recreate certain rhythms. The reason for the rhythmicon's construction was to break human limitations. Its rhythms were relative to the overtones of the harmonic series and functioned like so: "Each of sixteen keys, when depressed, sounded its own specific rhythm - from one to sixteen equal divisions of a beat - on a pitch that corresponded to the same number in the overtone series. The lowest pitch (or fundamental)

¹¹⁸ Altern 8. *Frequency*. Blue Chip Studios, 1992, www.youtube.com/watch?v=1luY_vtX1nY. Accessed 17 June 2021.

¹¹⁹ Acen. *Trip to the Moon Pt.2*. Production House, 1992, www.youtube.com/watch?v=NgwkU2SW5kk. Accessed 17 June 2021.

¹²⁰ Remarc. *Sound Murderer*. White House Records, 1994, www.youtube.com/watch?v=mQgTzkO5rzM. Accessed 17 June 2021.

¹²¹ Welt, Haus der Kulturen der. "Presentation by Andrey Smirnov 'Rhythm "N" Light. The Story of Leon Theremin's Rhythmicon (Aka Polyrhythmophone) and Beyond' | Mediathek 50723." *HKW*, www.hkw.de/en/app/mediathek/video/50723. Accessed 17 June 2021.

¹²² Glinsky, Albert. *Theremin : Ether Music and Espionage*. Urbana, University Of Illinois Press, 2005. pg.135

sounded one note per beat, the second harmonic (the next adjacent key) sound two notes per beat, the third harmonic (the next key) sound three notes per beat, and so on, up to the sixteenth harmonic with sixteen divisions to the beat...”.¹²³ The pitch-time relationship of each note would be as follows:

- Unison - C to C - 1/1
- Perfect Fifth - C to G - 3/2
- Major Third - C to E - 5/4
- Minor Third - C to Eb - 6/5
- Tritone - C to F# - 7/5
- Whole Tone - C to D - 9/8
- Semitone - C to C# - 16/15
- Octave - C to C1 - 2/1
- Perfect Fourth - C to F - 4/3
- Major Sixth - C to A - 5/3
- Minor Sixth - C to Ab - 8/5
- Minor Seventh - C to Bb - 9/5
- Major Seventh - C to B - 15/8

Even though it produces only pitches and not drums or percussion, the rhythmicon is attributed to be an early prototype for the drum machine due to it being polyphonic and could play a multitude of rhythms simultaneously. The pieces made solely using the machine begin by showing the process of the machine¹²⁴. The fundamental is sounded and the following harmonics play out in succession and show their relationships with the fundamental. Similar to the compositions made using the rhythmicon, works of mine such as *Projector* and *Million Machines* are dictated by the processes being used and explain the relationship of these sounds in a linear fashion. These pieces that use this pitch-time technique unfold as they show you their own construction and relative harmonic-rhythmic rule set. To return to Jacques Rivette’s comment I referenced in Chapter 2: “A film is a documentary of its own making.”

Million Machines is a strong example of using this technique to dictate its structure. When reviewing my ‘B’ album *The Quietus* rightfully perceived it as “reverse engineered, pointillist Philip Glass, reassembled from its constituent sonic granules” and found a description of the sonic aesthetics in correspondence with the title when they referred to the work as sounding “like you’re alone in a casino in a William Gibson novel, and every machine just hit the jackpot.” I start it by showing the initial looped audio clip. A bouncing synth leaping between Eb octaves tones layered with an effected hi hat drum sound. For 15 seconds I am leaving time to get to know the loop and recognising where its elements are in the frequency spectrum. From there I play the loop one octave above, then at **0:30** the fifth above that octave is sounded and then a major third sounded below that fifth. When I change the pitch I am transposing the time domain as well as the frequency domain. As the sample is played in higher and lower pitches you start to

¹²³ (Ibid)

¹²⁴ Ableton. “Leon Theremin’s Rhythmicon Played by Andrei Smirnov | Loop.” *YouTube*, 10 Dec. 2019, www.youtube.com/watch?v=zyjOZPiW5dw. Accessed 26 Nov. 2020.

hear the frequency spectrum expand but not just in reference to actual tones played. The denser frequency information found in the sounds of the effected hi hats become crisper and tighter when played at a higher pitch. When I compose these type of pieces I am investigating these changes in texture using the same audio source in a way that it becomes a structural part of the music more so than just when the rhythmicon shows the process and its function as a machine in its composition. In a piece like *Million Machines* the initial audio clip that sounds is what orientates my ear to the piece and lets me acknowledge the relationship to other pitches through difference. Like the rhythmicon it explains the rules of listening to the piece as it plays. However, to also speak in a phenomenological sense it also orientates my ear to the initial pitch to perceive change from low bassy slow moving thuds to the high treble speeding sounds. I am working with my perception of the correlation of pitch with size and speed. The slow mammoth to a speeding hummingbird. Sampling with this in mind it feels as though you are starting to create a one-source-orchestra of different sized instruments. Changing the pitch of the sample brings about a similar interlocking relationship to that of a double bass - cello - viola - violin. This is noticeable in dense layering of samples in *Staring Back*.

Staring Back takes the pitch-time relationship in a different direction. Instead of rhythms dictating the structure the use of the pitch-time relationship turns the piece into a floating ametric wash of harmony. The audio clips are triggered using a midi keyboard and performed arhythmically in the sense that I am reacting to how the sound plays out. The audio clip is a recording of a distorted electric guitar staring on a G and rising up a fifth to D. The guitar is continually sustaining with the use of an E-bow. The beginning of the composition is the original audio clip and from there the harmonies expand higher and lower to create a wash of natural minor tonality. This one-source-orchestra creates this elongated textural droning stacks of shifting harmony that brings out an element of Sci-fi and early 80s reference, like the work of Vangelis in his score for *Blade Runner*¹²⁵ or Oneohtrix Point Never's more atmospheric synth pieces.¹²⁶ Originally this work was instrumental but then through a collaboration with singer Chris Ryan I feel that the piece has been greatly elevated by his vocal performance. As the gradual pitch rises and the filters sweep upward we reach the peak of the work and the additional heavy detuned bass enters aligning with Chris's vocal arch. As his vocal fades away into reverberations the last of triggered audio clips follow.

Staring Back uses the triggering of these audio clips as the performative element but a work like "Blue morning" takes the looping of audio clips played at different pitches and lets their relationship play out while I perform around them. Because of this *Blue Morning* uses the pitch-time relationship as a lulling

¹²⁵ *Blade Runner*. Directed by Ridley Scott, Warner Bros, 1982.

¹²⁶ Oneohtrix Point Never. *Physical Memory*. Software Recording Co., www.youtube.com/watch?v=uHrWHXL065g. Accessed 18 June 2021.

bed of sound that borders drone music whilst also veering into the hauntological and sense of past that I mentioned in previous chapters. This piece begins firstly not with a sample but with the sound of the Korg MS-20 analog synthesizer paired with a guitar octave pedal as a means of creating an imitation of a pipe organ. The sound of the pipe organ is remarkably strong in terms of its ability to evoke sonic memories within the listener. With the use of the pipe organ in both sacred and secular music for many centuries, as well as an extensive classical repertoire, its sonic qualities are familiar to many. However, my reasoning for not making use of a sample of an organ is a compositional choice I have made in previous portfolio submissions, such as *Blood Gloss*. By creating a synthesized distance from the true sound of the organ, I have removed a layer of familiarity from the sound. Thus evoking a different hauntological experience that would not occur by simply sampling the sound of the organ. However, the next sound to appear in the composition at **0:10** began as an audio sample of a violin playing three notes in succession, a root note, minor 3rd, and 2nd. Its first utterance in the piece is played 17 semitones below the samples original pitch. Giving the sample a quality of a half-brass and half string sound and placing the piece in the key of D minor. As heard in the next utterance of the sample which is played the 4th above the first utterance, or 12 semitones below the samples original pitch. The 4th has the ratio $\frac{4}{3}$, so for each time the first uttered sample loops three times the 4th will have looped four times. The original audio sample did not use any reverb, I have added a reverb effect on the violin sound and then resampled that audio so that when the pitch changes the tone of the reverb is affected also. This means that the room's reverberations become brighter and decay quicker, essentially creating an interplay between different spaces as each sample is uttered. These pitch manipulations continue to expand along with my imitated pipe organ providing the bass harmony. Finally to alter the experience of time one touch further. At **4:38** I place a high frequency arpeggio from the imitated organ that plays at its own separate speed. All of this together gives the piece a sense of inevitability due to the regular pitch-time relationship looping, but consistently toys with this given sense of inevitability due to how the layers that occupy different frequency bands perform at their own pace.

Hold Your Breath uses the technique in a similar manner to *Blue Morning* in that it lets the relationship play out while I sculpt sounds around it but there are clear differences in style between the pieces. While *Blue Morning* is mournful and sparse, *Hold Your Breath* is dense and is centered around feelings of horror and fear. It begins with a far away reverberant note that brings about the sense of being dropped into the middle of the unknown. We do not hear the attack of the note but instead we hear it quickly decay and a mid-range frequency reverberant tail that leaves only the low. For this introduction I am not intending to inform the listener of a space I will remain consistently in. It is more a preparation for elements that I intend to appear separate from the space. As a form of alienation using sound that is pertinent to the

horror dynamic of the work. A looping waivering mid range synth is what first suspends the sense of time and never leaves the composition, this helps to introduce the temporal distortions that will come throughout the piece. Not long after, at 14 seconds we hear the first of the wide stereo throbbing bass tones. This begins the abnormal but of course mathematically coherent cycle. The bass notes audio clip are played a semitone apart, this starts the slowest ratio cycle of 15/16 with the lower of the notes taking 8 seconds to repeat. The near pitch of the bass notes also creates this undulating sound similar to binarel beating and the volume of the bass creating a strong presence in the foreground of the piece. To me this combination of glacial pacing and foreboding volume creates a seismic perception of the sound. As if it were a revolving planet or celestial sized entity. This enters the work into the realm of cosmic horror/awe of something so much larger than you that has lasted longer than you can perceive but conceptually I do not disregard the feeling of the piece being of purely psychological horror. There is an initial restraint to adding new material to the work but as it goes on more and more dissonant details enter the frame. The distress continues and continues in the distance while the bass continues its revolutions until the discordant climax of the piece when I repeat 3 of the semitone bass clusters and have a frequency spectrum filled with a dominating and discordant wall of sound.

One last application of this relationship is found in the work *Deluge*. It uses what I would call a pitch-time phrase window. The audio clip used is the sound of repeating plucks from a synthesizer that I bring into the sampler to allow it to loop. The starting pluck loop is played at middle C on the piano roll and loops in conjunction with the tempo of the track. This means that the clip appears to be looping indefinitely but is really being triggered again every 4 bars. This also means I can play the pattern on loop and introduce new clips played at a different pitch and they will retrigger every four bars. This causes a strong pronounced chord of every note introduced and the subsequent cascade of pitches from high to low that plays out the pitch-time relationship of each interval. The high range pitches loop fast enough so that they create a form of textural ornamentation while the middle range provides what is most like a melody and the lowest pitch provides a bed of slow moving bass.

CHAPTER 5:

NAVIGATING THE POST-CLUB

To further explain aspects of Post-club composition I would now like to highlight a festival performance I attended a few months before the start of my PhD. Following that I will write about the work of two artists that I curated as part of sound-art exhibitions during my directorship in The Catalyst Arts gallery in Belfast. The festival performance I am referencing was Aphex Twin's Field Day set in 2017.¹²⁷ Aphex Twin sets have garnered a reputation of being important diverse showcases of far reaching corners of underground electronic music.¹²⁸ I believe that Aphex Twin's Field Day set is a strong example of a Post-club practice being displayed in one performance. The set was held in an aircraft-hanger sized venue placed in London's Victoria Park that was nearly filled despite its size. The choice of venue already takes us far away from a typical club orientation [Fig 5.1]¹²⁹. In reference to my comparison above between Post-club and horror film, Aphex Twin was communicating to an audience aware of club music's past and presented that past back in altered form. The Post-club approach of this performance can be heard in the first few minutes. He begins with a low bass drone that is then accompanied by 'The Realm' acapella by C'hantal.¹³⁰ The significance of using this acapella is that it is one of the most used acapellas in electronic music, having been used in garage, drum and bass, Techno, house etc.¹³¹ and is thus recognisable as a significant identifier of club culture across genres. Aphex Twin processes the acapella by putting it through what sounds like a ring modulator effect. Aphex Twin also created a similar combination of effects processing on spoken vocals for the promotional material of the NTS recording of the Field Day set.¹³² In this video he used the Fingers Inc acapella for *My House (Jack Had A Groove)*¹³³ which tells of the creation of house music in the style of a biblical tale as "In the beginning, there was Jack, and Jack had a groove... Jack boldly declared "Let There Be House" and House music was born." This recognisable vocal telling of a genre's creation being manipulated frames what Aphex Twin does throughout the set, taking an awareness of club music's past and expected functions, and then resynthesizing differences.

¹²⁷ NTS. "Aphex Twin Live at Field Day 2017 (Alt. Audio)." *Www.youtube.com*, 2017, www.youtube.com/watch?v=nzvLiwUK3R8. Accessed 18 June 2021.

¹²⁸ Garber, David. "What Is It like When Aphex Twin Plays Your Music?" *Mixmag*, 2019, mixmag.net/feature/when-aphex-twin-plays-your-music. Accessed 17 June 2021.

¹²⁹ McCallum, Rob. "10 Pictures That Prove the Barn Is the Most Exciting New Stage on the Festival Circuit." *DJMag.com*, 5 June 2017, djmag.com/news/barn-field-day-aphex-twin-10-pictures. Accessed 18 June 2021.

¹³⁰ C'hantal. *The Realm*. Powertraxx Records, 1992, www.youtube.com/watch?v=T7m1u9-Cq3I. Accessed 18 June 2021.

¹³¹ <https://www.whosampled.com/C%27hantal/The-REALM/>. Accessed 18 June 2021

¹³² NTS. "NTS X Aphex Twin." *Www.youtube.com*, 2017, www.youtube.com/watch?v=sAuCsx3-o70. Accessed 18 June 2021.

¹³³ Fingers Inc. *My House Acapella (Jack Had a Groove)*. Desire Records, 1988, www.youtube.com/watch?v=YO9KEKnnlKs. Accessed 18 June 2021.



[FIG 5.1] - Aphex Twin at Field Day 2017

The Post-club approach is also recognisable in the set's inclusion of deconstructionist trance of Lorenzo Senni, the Grime and Jungle influenced Trap beats of Eprom and then a finale of Intense Gabber leading into 6 minutes of extreme noise with constant strobe lighting. I would like to briefly focus on the music of the first half hour. The music that follows the manipulated vocal introduction is 10 minutes of original material from Aphex Twin starting with unreleased music from his Selected Ambient Works era leading to music that was only sold on a vinyl record produced for the Field Day festival. After this we then hear the Detroit Electro sound of *Caves of Steel (Convexion Remix)*¹³⁴ played at the incorrect speed on a turntable, 33rpm rather than 45rpm. Shortly after this Aphex Twin plays Kamixlo's *Splxcity*¹³⁵, a distorted reggaeton track accompanied by air raid sirens that then leads into the throbbing, bass-heavy rhythmic noise in Black Rain and Shapednoise's *Autonomous Lethality*¹³⁶. When the lasers lights begin on stage we hear the strange, heavily-syncopated spectrally dense textures of obscure soundcloud artist nms89's *4 - Dez - 2015*¹³⁷ which move into the amplified bass movements of Chino Amobi's *WARSZAWA*¹³⁸. Finishing off the first half hour is a collaborative work from Mark Fell and Gabor Lazar, *Untitled #7*¹³⁹. This track

¹³⁴ Interstellar Funk. *Caves of Steel (Convexion Remix)*. Berceuse Heroique, 2016, www.youtube.com/watch?v=JOCBBfubdyc. Accessed 18 June 2021.

¹³⁵ Kamixlo. *Splxcity*. PAN x Codes, 2015, www.youtube.com/watch?v=DyS7nJoJMOc. Accessed 18 June 2021.

¹³⁶ Black Rain, and Shapednoise. *Autonomous Lethality*. Cosmo Rhythmic, 2015, *Autonomous Lethality*. Accessed 18 June 2021.

¹³⁷ nms89. *4 - Dez - 2015*. 2015, soundcloud.com/nms89/4-dez-2015. Accessed 18 June 2021.

¹³⁸ Chino Amobi. *WARSZAWA*. NON Worldwide, 2016, www.youtube.com/watch?v=IWUs7kW0_Tg. Accessed 18 June 2021.

¹³⁹ Mark Fell, and Gábor Lázár. *Untitled 7*. The Death of Rave, 2015, www.youtube.com/watch?v=yhALzEd5yY. Accessed 18 June 2021.

left a lasting impression on me because the synth work of the track creates focused spectral rhythmic displacement, and draws attention to the small changes in the automation of the synth. Hearing this type of work on a large scale brought out so much more attention to the minute details within the synthetic sounds and movements. I was already aware of both artists but this experience led me to reaching out to Lazar during my directorship in Catalyst Arts. I was curating an exhibition entitled *Synthesis*¹⁴⁰ that looked at how light and sound affects the way we experience spatial elements and their physical context. Lazar's installation [Fig 5.2 with me pictured far right] contributed to this by using MAX/MSP to create algorithmic patches that linked the DMX lighting shown to his compositions.



[FIG 5.2] - Gabor Lazar Installation for *Synthesis* Exhibition at Catalyst Arts Belfast

From the image alone the connection to the nightclub is already apparent, with symmetrically structured lightning, neon colours and illumination from multiple sides. In this light-sound synchronisation with Lazar's synthetic compositions the nightclub connections/boundaries are manipulated as even though sonically the bass hits and chords are club-like the compositions are also filled were filled with spectral rhythmic stabs, microsecond filter-sweeps and a sense of unpredictability due to their ametric structure.

Another artist I worked with whilst at Catalyst Arts who I believe can be characterised as a Post-club practitioner was TJ Hertz aka Objekt. Objekt took part in *Resonance*¹⁴¹ which was a sound-art exhibition

¹⁴⁰ "Synthesis." *Catalyst Arts*, 2018, www.catalystarts.org.uk/synthesis/. Accessed 17 June 2021.

¹⁴¹ "Resonance." *Catalyst Arts*, 2019, www.catalystarts.org.uk/resonance. Accessed 17 June 2021.

that explored the ways sound influences that which surrounds it, as well as its ability to evoke mental and emotional reactions. It contained work from Sunn O))), Holly Herndon, Objekt, and Phurpa in a cyclical exhibition presenting one sound piece at a time. The gallery was kept in darkness except for one light bulb in the centre of the gallery above the tall black audio construction that contained and concealed 8 speakers and two subwoofers [Fig 5.3]¹⁴².



[Fig 5.3] - Resonance Exhibition at Catalyst Arts Belfast

As part of *Resonance* I chose three pieces from Objekt from his album *Cocoon Crush*¹⁴³: *Silica*, *Rest Yr Troubles Over Me*, and *Lost and Found (Future Mix)*. On this album, Objekt samples his own previous club tracks and brings them into new electroacoustic formulation. I feel Pitchfork correctly identified my intentions with the installation when reporting: “It shows a total disregard for club music’s strictures, concerned primarily not with floor-filling, but world-building.”¹⁴⁴ *Silica* is a work that manipulates its master tempo to remove the sense of groove and create a sense of push and pull.¹⁴⁵ It also borrows some

¹⁴² (Ibid)

¹⁴³ Full album can be accessed here: Objekt. *Cocoon Crush*. PAN, 2018, www.youtube.com/watch?v=jIVzBfd_eKg. Accessed 18 June 2021.

¹⁴⁴ Phillip Sherburne. “Objekt: Cocoon Crush.” *Pitchfork*, 2018, pitchfork.com/reviews/albums/objekt-cocoon-crush/. Accessed 17 June 2021.

¹⁴⁵ Red Bull Music Academy. “Objekt on DJing, Sound Design and Engineering | Red Bull Music Academy.” *www.youtube.com*, 2018, youtu.be/TKZQavysmkM?t=2532. Accessed 18 June 2021.

drum and bass elements from *Ganzfeld*¹⁴⁶, a track that occupies a Detroit Electro style in the sequencing of its sounds but that style becomes unrecognisable in *Silica*'s temporal manipulations. Objekt elongates this self borrowing chain by taking elements from his own tracks that already have parts taken from other works. *Nervous Silk* from the *Cocoon Crush* album features synthetic pads and percussive clicks taken from *Needle And Thread*¹⁴⁷, which in turn has manipulated that material from *One Stitch Follows Another*¹⁴⁸ and *The Stitch Up*¹⁴⁹. This creates a lineage of resynthesis of his own club of sound to his new world building. To return to the Aphex Twin's DJ set, Musicradar writes that Aphex Twin changed "DJing into something that's more than just dance music; where it's an expression of experimentation and an attempt to find new sounds in an environment that's very centred on reducing the senses; dark, dingy nightclubs where all you're really focused on is the music"¹⁵⁰ An understanding and consideration for space and experience along with a drive for experimentalism and the unconventional, a sentiment that rings true with my own compositional goals when creating the works I am about to describe. These descriptions will collectively serve as a navigation of the Post-club and the different aspects of it I find within my compositional practice.

Axis Praxis and Kingdom

The references in my work to that selected by Aphex Twin for his Field Day set are not solipsistic. They prove sufficiently audible for The Quietus, reviewing my *A* album release in January 2020, to write: ""*Axis Praxis*, with its haywire beat and maximal synth lead, feels tailor-made to be played out by Aphex Twin."¹⁵¹ The sound mix of *Axis Praxis* is dense from its frenzied distorted breakbeat beginning leading into the introduction of futuristic synth riffs. The aesthetic of the track takes inspiration from trance music in that it has similar pacing and synthetic lightness but increases the sense of drive and power by replacing the 4 to floor rhythm typically associated with trance with a 5 dotted quavers kick drum pattern. This pattern is locked together with the futuristic rave stabs that make up the main riff. It is a Post-club track filled with syncopation but not like the misshaping patterns found in Rian Treanor or the repeating morphing rhythms of Gabor Lazar that I have referenced earlier. The focus on syncopation in *Axis Praxis* takes it away from dance music's normal groove, and brings it closer to a sense of propulsion similar to my work *Trophy Run*. As the Quietus points out, my music tends to possess a "favour perpetual

¹⁴⁶ Objekt. *Ganzfeld*. Leisure System, 2014, www.youtube.com/watch?v=D3WIkUv2dY4. Accessed 18 June 2021.

¹⁴⁷ Objekt. *Needle and Thread*. © Objekt, 2017, www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y3_4wFnQLCM. Accessed 18 June 2021.

¹⁴⁸ Objekt. *One Stitch Follows Another*. PAN, 2014, www.youtube.com/watch?v=hG2O7kIoKak. Accessed 18 June 2021.

¹⁴⁹ Objekt. *The Stitch Up*. Fabric, 2014, www.youtube.com/watch?v=f58xGp_y_Q. Accessed 18 June 2021.

¹⁵⁰ D. J. Expo, and Danny Turner. "Aphex Twin, Actress, Objekt: DJs Who Changed the Game." *MusicRadar*, 2014, www.musicradar.com/news/dj/aphex-twin-actress-objekt-djs-who-changed-the-game-598126. Accessed 18 June 2021.

¹⁵¹ Murray, Eoin. "The Quietus | Features | Anois, Os Ard: March in Irish Underground Music by Eoin Murray." *The Quietus*, 2020, thequietus.com/articles/28048-senior-infants-queef-god-knows-nun-attax-irish-music-review. Accessed 18 June 2021.

forward-motion.”¹⁵² Later on, in the breakdown of *Axis Praxis*, there is an element of dub echoes, filtered scratching and phasing effects that bring a hybrid ‘acoustic/not-quite-acoustic’ quality to track. I feel that these sounds act like liquid, swimming between the futuristic synths and percussion and adding to the sense of frenetic forward-motion. DJ Mag wrote of the premier of *Axis Praxis* “Evoking the likes of Lee Gamble and Aphex Twin... 'Axis Praxis' is the album's frenzied centrepiece with a haywire breakbeat propelling its maximal synth riffs and making for a killer peak time dancefloor cut.”¹⁵³ Although I do not disagree with DJmag that the track is best suited for peak time due to its high energy, to me the track brings out something more cinematic. It feels as though there is narrative attached or that there should be visual events synced to the sonic events in the track. Another work that brings out this cinematic sense while using a similar language is *Kingdom*.

Kingdom is a work that I feel captures the sense of attitude that came from the extravagance of breakbeat hardcore and rave music. When composing the work I took influence from the hard drum timbre of L.A. Style’s *James Brown is Dead*¹⁵⁴ combined with the drum break edits of *Djs take control*¹⁵⁵ by SL2. Along with this I also wanted to create a high energy synth work out of a reinterpretation of the aesthetics I heard in works like Drax Ltd. II *Amphetimine*¹⁵⁶ and The Prodigy’s *Music Reach (1,2,3,4)*.¹⁵⁷ I applied this to detuned sawtooth bass that plays in a somewhat angular fashion framing the chord progression while leaping round various octaves. The initial drop is just this bassline and the irregular 5 bar kick drum pattern, side stepping the trappings of 4 to the floor bass drum rhythms or drum break loopings. After 8 bars we introduce the bassline now imitated in a flute like synth creating an orchestral element to the rave instrumentation. This orchestral suggestion is furthered by the return of the chords heard in the beginning of the work, except now heard through an automated volume saw-wave LFO. This sound consists of bells and chimes being struck, and then that same audio reversing back to be hit again, causing a rushing effect that elevates the drive created in the heavy bass and percussion. Then I introduce a 16 bar breakdown and the return of a crucial component I have not yet mentioned, the vocal. Instead of incorporating an old disco era diva sample as a way of calling upon rave and hardcore, as in *Trophy Run*, *Kingdom* instead centres around a sample of the Bulgarian State Television Female Choir's version of the *Houbava Milka (Beautiful Milka)*¹⁵⁸, a christmas carol that tells a story about the kidnapping of a hardworking, beautiful,

¹⁵² (Lennox, 2020)

¹⁵³ Murray, Eoin. “Premiere: Son Zept ‘Axis Praxis.’” *DJMag.com*, 30 Jan. 2020, djmag.com/music/premiere-son-zept-axis-praxis. Accessed 18 June 2021.

¹⁵⁴ L.A. Style. *James Brown Is Dead*. ZYX Records, 1991, www.youtube.com/watch?v=DYEK50203bI. Accessed 18 June 2021.

¹⁵⁵ SL2. *DJs Take Control*. XL Recordings, 1991, www.youtube.com/watch?v=PaBLXLn8cOY. Accessed 18 June 2021.

¹⁵⁶ Drax. *Amphetamine*. Trope Recordings, 1994, www.youtube.com/watch?v=GIkRVHaAVKs. Accessed 18 June 2021.

¹⁵⁷ The Prodigy. *Music Reach (1,2,3,4)*. XL Recordings, 1992, www.youtube.com/watch?v=MxgVMXtYTm0. Accessed 18 June 2021.

¹⁵⁸ Bulgarian State Television Female Choir. *Houbava Milka (Beautiful Milka)*. Elektra Entertainment, 1994, www.youtube.com/watch?v=IU4gDP6ZRcU. Accessed 18 June 2021.

and skillful girl by a trader named Marco. The recording is on the album *Le Mystere Des Voix Bulgares: Ritual*, and I feel the album title hints at the qualities that the vocal creates: Magical, haunting, beautiful, mythical, eerie. I was apprehensive about using the sample as I had thought it would be difficult to improve upon the original recording, but improving should not have been my concern. Instead, I focused on resynthesizing it into something entirely new. *Kingdom* is a clearer example of how I practice Post-club composition in that it shows combinations that bring about variations that are infused with the influence of euphoric experience. Electronic music duo Bicep have also sampled the Bulgarian Choir in their track *Apricots*¹⁵⁹ and the compositional execution is very different from mine. This is not to imply that any sample of a particular group or artist inevitably generates the same results but as the title of their feature with Mixmag suggests, Bicep and I could be interpreted as having similar compositional goals: “Melancholy and Euphoria: Bicep Capture The Emotional Spirit Of Rave.”¹⁶⁰ I do believe Bicep are conjuring a rave-influenced emotional resonance through melancholy, and it is highly effective, but if it is to be classed as euphoria, it is certainly subdued. I feel that ‘*Kingdom*’ shows that for me the “emotional spirit of rave” is found more in the eccentric than in the understated. The Bicep feature title brings another work of mine to mind, *BPM*, but again this sounds very different from Bicep’s output.

BPM

BPM is part of a search for that compositional eccentricity I find in rave euphoria which is also concerned with the melancholic. *BPM* takes a different approach from *kingdom*, most notably in structure as I specifically created it to be included in my live performances. I wanted a work that brought everything to a halt and then shifts in and out of the compositional extremes of 200bpm breakbeats and beatless ambient synths. I use the work to finish my sets and with its super-high speed, leaps in energy, extended breakdowns and overall euphoric tone it has worked perfectly as a climactic peak to end on, especially in a festival setting. As the work progresses the differences between the sparse soft arhythmic synthetic ambience and 200bpm hardcore drum patterns are intensified. The sound of a far off air-raid siren echoes out twice alone - a singular sound source set in a large reverb. Then it is joined by the same siren a major 3rd lower to form a moving dyadic harmony. The music floats in this ambient water and is then flung into all-drum beat-heavy drop with percussion filling rhythm patterns. Using a combination of blast beats and syncopated Jungle breakbeats on top of the four to the floor gabber kicks. Further variation comes from the four to the floor beat being constructed out of changing kick drums. Every 4 bars the kick has a different character and gets heavier which goes against the repetitive hardcore kicks. I gradually increase the tension with slow moving rising synths and automating the volume of repeating impactful synth

¹⁵⁹ Bicep. *Apricots*. Ninja Tune, 2020, www.youtube.com/watch?v=Govg_XmORLE. Accessed 18 June 2021.

¹⁶⁰ O’Reilly, Séamas. “Melancholy and Euphoria: Bicep Capture the Emotional Spirit of Rave.” *Mixmag*, 2021, mixmag.net/feature/bicep-isles-rave-belfast-dj-cover-interview. Accessed 18 June 2021.

sounds. The work drops back down into the interweaving siren tones with trance like supersaws adding a textural layer before a brief silence. One solo siren plays out and then the final drop lands with the tracks densest layering of drums and loud but not abrasive rising synths and rushes of noise panning left and right. The newly introduced melody that plays in the last drop in reflection sounds almost romantic to me now. Its low attack volume envelope brings out the bowing of a synthetic violin. The 7th and 2nd scale degree circling round the tonic I feel creates a sense of yearning out of its recurring tension and release. I composed this as a hard collision between the euphoric and the melancholic whilst always being fixated on the sense of experience the work could offer. When composing *BPM* I was visualizing late night, large crowds, strobe lights, smoke, lasers and cinematic oscillations between slow motion and fast action. I had the opportunity to use it as the closer track for my midnight set at the main stage at Open Ear festival in 2019. The immediate response once I got off stage was excited sweat drenched hugs from strangers and excited questions of “what was that?!” Later the set was mentioned in Wire magazine’s review of the festival: “Son Zept delivers deft shock and awe veering between blast beats and Amen breaks on a heady surge towards 200 bpm.” This experience makes me consider *BPM* to be successful in its exploration of a sense of euphoria.

Glass Rush and Unlearn

Navigating now to another area of the Post-club, on reflection I realise that unrelated works *Glass Rush* and *Unlearn* have unifying factors. Both started with compositional goals based around genre aesthetics and drifted unrecognisably forward over time. *Glass Rush* began as an attempt at combining grime with hardstyle aesthetics while *Unlearn* was a venture into expanding the typically vintage styles of garage with futuristic techno. However with both pieces what resulted out of the compositional process was far removed from their initial sources of inspiration. Each work is now quite difficult for me to describe in a strict genre sense and I feel that any sense of influence is notably distant. One initial unifying factor of these two works was the influence of Darren J. Cunningham AKA Actress’s music. At face such influence might seem hard to hear, but what I take from his work is his general approach to texture. He has jokingly described his early work as “R&B Concr te”¹⁶¹ but now finds difficulty in describing it altogether.¹⁶² Actress focuses on the feeling of a work by combining interesting textural components as a way to explore familiar frameworks like Techno and house so the listener can “immerse themselves in the contrasts”.¹⁶³ I also feel that his ideas resonate with my own when speaking about resynthesis in terms of

¹⁶¹ Bloomfield, Phil E. “Actress Walks Us through His Moody, Atmospheric Albums.” *Bandcamp*, 2020, daily.bandcamp.com/lists/actress-discography-list. Accessed 18 June 2021.

¹⁶² (Ibid)

¹⁶³ (Ibid)

experience. In an interview with the Guardian, Actress states: “It just reverberates as the years go on, the studio evolves, you evolve as a person, you dabble in different chemicals, you go to different nightclubs. Your dreams influence what you do, your nightmares, your family. It's osmosis, totally subconscious; you're just this vessel... I just started playing with samples, blurring them to the point where they just became like ink, like paint.”¹⁶⁴ Furthering this metaphor, with *Glass Rush* and *Unlearn* I feel that these are the positive result of the overmixing of colours to form a new shade all too difficult to describe. There are elements that I can speak of that went into the mixing of colour: The use of stop-start machinic drum styles in *Glass Rush* recalls the abstract grime music of Bloom in works like *Cold Grip*¹⁶⁵ but differs in the overly distorted crunch of each kick before moments of true digital silence. The plethora of zapping percussion in *Unlearn* along with its bowing lofty synths and field recordings of street noise that all come together to conjure sonic images of some neon laden future. To me both these works are very much in a Post-club sensibility but at the same time I do not feel they are wildly experimental. Both are very dance-orientated and structurally functional, but are removed from genre restrictions. The next two works described operate in a related but different way.

Cold and Level

Following my extension of Actress’s paint metaphor, in which *Glass Rush* and *Unlearn* are characterised as containing an overmixing of colours leading to an indescribable result, *Cold* and *Level* contain shades that are much easier to describe but still toy with the same blurring method. These two works were composed with the thought of melding retro aesthetics and senses of emotion with different forms of resynthesized club music. The opening section of *Cold* brings out the sonic texture of the late 80s/early 90s with references to more futuristic sounds in the melodic and harmonic content in the introduction. Synthetic choir and muffled vocal phrases are paired with chimes that lead into a zither-esque instrument providing the melody. Around this are granulated electronic tones that reverberate in the stereo field but at **0:57** arrives we drop into a stripped back variation on Jungle music. Chopped-up breaks and short saturated vocal samples play over heavy sub-bass but instead of the bass being used in the manner typically found in Jungle, this is used in a more melodic manner with phrasing leaping diatonically in octaves whilst shaping the chord sequence. Melismatic vocals float in the distance before the zither melody returns. These components create a ‘resynthesized Jungle’ with surrounding retro colourings. The song continues in this fashion until I bring the piece up to a breakcore level. Heavily processed glitches contort every instrument. The bass is amplified and the clear melodic elements are gone. I use this as a

¹⁶⁴ Beaumont-Thomas, Ben. “Actress, More Cerebral than Your Average Techno Artist.” *The Guardian*, 13 Apr. 2012, www.theguardian.com/music/2012/apr/14/actress-darren-cunningham-rip. Accessed 18 June 2021.

¹⁶⁵ Bloom. *Cold Grip*. Crazylegs, 2015, www.youtube.com/watch?v=fMJLeByWoGQ. Accessed 18 June 2021.

point of contrast between the material that has been previously shown and create a compulsive tension out of the unpredictability of the glitches. I feel that this sense of aesthetic contrast can bring out interesting results, as in *Level*, in which I wanted to bring together the hauntological synth work found in the music of Boards of Canada with gabber influenced broken beat Industrial material. Aesthetically these styles are typically very distant from one another and in their combination I feel a unique style of work emerges. The low fidelity synthetic pads that start create a duality of emotion in the piece. The texture of the pad sound itself feels nostalgic due to the qualities of graininess and saturation but the choice of pitches in the looping phrase creates a triumphant feeling. This is paired with the constant hammering percussion patterns that are played through a vocoder producing a sound somewhere between a helicopter and strange synthesized war drums. At **1:01** the heavy distorted kick drums that I associate with Dutch gabber¹⁶⁶ enter but instead of using the constant four to the floor rhythm that is typical of gabber I use a broken beat that is more like Detroit Electrostyle rhythm¹⁶⁷. This combination of these sounds and styles brings out an interesting duality. As a novel representation of this, on the Mixmag premiere of the track on soundcloud one can see the names of user-created playlists that the song is being added to. One user, ‘hollymolecule\’, added *Level* to both her ‘crush me’ and ‘move me’ playlists.¹⁶⁸ Here I see a recognition of the mixture of distortion and bass heavy elements providing what would be described as crushing and the emotional ambient pads that would be described as moving. These works came out of an objective to create aesthetic contrasts from disparate sources while this next work was more concerned with cutting back from the work that influenced it.

Bruteful Violins

On *Bruteful Violins* I took strong influence from the music of Blanck Mass. The link may not be clear as I acted in a reductionist attitude towards his work, taking elements from his melodic power-electronics aesthetics and toning them down from noise and distortion. The *Animated Violence Mild*¹⁶⁹ album is brilliantly aggressive combining electro-industrial rave combining harsh trance synths and chopped vocal manipulations with his own brand of euphoria. A work like *Death-drop*¹⁷⁰, while a reference to the dance move found in ballroom music, is filled with heavy pounding guitar leading into a nearly black metal variation on jumpstyle with its screamed vocals, supersaw leads and triplet rhythms. When I wanted to channel that sense of amplified euphoric catharsis in Blanck Mass I took most influence from the

¹⁶⁶ DD Zion. *Blue Sky*. Twilight Records, 1996, youtu.be/ErNjAlKk6zo?t=298.

¹⁶⁷ DJ Overdose. *Brain Cartments*. Hypress, 2017, www.youtube.com/watch?v=tHwBbHN2tfE. Accessed 28 June 2021.

¹⁶⁸ Wheeler, Seb. “Premiere: Son Zept ‘Level.’” *Soundcloud.com*, 2020, soundcloud.com/mixmag-1/premiere-son-zept-level/sets. Accessed 18 June 2021.

¹⁶⁹ Blanck Mass. *Animated Violence Mild*. Sacred Bones Records, 2019.

¹⁷⁰ Blanck Mass. *Death Drop*. Sacred Bones, 2019, www.youtube.com/watch?v=SXasTgAzc9s. Accessed 18 June 2021.

percussion and synth play of works like *House vs. House*¹⁷¹ and *Love is a Parasite*¹⁷² but I did not go the distorted extremes that are found in both of those works. In *Bruteful Violins* I also wanted to have Autechre-like metallic drums but turned to 11 and with a much more 80s tone. Obviously I did not wish to have the frantic beat work found in Autechre but more simply call upon what I hear as being closer to part of their *Elseq*¹⁷³ era drum aesthetic. Back when my PhD supervisors first listened to this work in a studio in SARC they commented that it had aesthetic connections to goth club culture but also due to its repetitive style of rhythm it also drifted into a salsa-esque endurance test. Of course the difference between listening to this in a studio rather than a club is huge. What is an endurance test in the studio could be an invitation for elevation in the club and it is important to note that this work does sound fantastic on a club system. The low thudding drums hit hard and feel more traditionally ‘live’ than most of the overly synthetic music I make. Hearing it back now sitting at home makes me view it as an extended club edit of the song, as if it were intended to be used in multiple hour long DJ sets. I rarely included it in my live performances because of its length, but to me its slight indulgence in duration is its selling point. The repeated synth riffs tell you as a listener that you have the time to get to know these sounds. Of course that sentiment within the work does not feel so close to me now because of the lack of club experience due to COVID-19 related lockdowns.

Eartheat and Cuts

Under lockdown I created two tracks that, on reflection, express an renewed eagerness to experience these sounds in a club environment. The lack of clubs has led me to create streamlined genre-hopping works that fill up a club fantasy in my head. They are not structured in a club-oriented way with long stretches of breakdown and set-up, or restriction to a style. It is as if I was consolidating the music from a night of multi-genre DJs but using similar sonic materials throughout. *Eartheat* starts with 11 seconds of a distant syncopated rhythm and low unintelligible speech that slowly approaches the foreground, until a bar of silence before the beat kicks in. The overtly synthetic chime-like texture of the syncopated rhythm is now front and centre and is accompanied by a sparse trap beat made up of heavy 808 bass hits, quick kick drum fills and zapping laser sounds for snare drums. This only lasts 24 seconds before the sonic palette is altered. I swap out the synthetic chimes for a granulated whooshing in the low mids with the same beat used for 8-bars until new percussion appears that sets up the new changes. I now bring back the synthetic chimes in a double timed footwork-style with percussion flying and frenzied kick drum patterns. I

¹⁷¹ Blanck Mass. *House vs. House*. Sacred Bones Records, 2019, www.youtube.com/watch?v=7DJ12asti2k. Accessed 18 June 2021.

¹⁷² Blanck Mass. *Love is a Parasite*. Sacred Bones Records, 2019, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6ZzKqSYcQx4>. Accessed 18 June 2021.

¹⁷³ Autechre. *Elseq 1-5*. Warp, 2016.

introduce new textures as the piece continues in this playful manner, and I am consciously trying out different combinations. *Cuts* is constructed in a similar fashion.

At the start of *Cuts* I create a sequence of futuristic synthetic percussion that briefly sets up the heavy distorted Electro-type beat which lasts for only 30 seconds before delving into a bass heavy dubstep style half time beat. This club fantasy continues in a different way when the breakdown begins. Instead of falling into a much quieter section and building up slowly I instead bring in the shiny futuristic percussion as it hits above an FM bassline for 13 seconds. Then after a reversed noisy electroacoustic-esque swell there is a booming dotted quaver rhythm with the distorted kick. Letting out different harmonics as I automate the levels of distortion then letting in layers of rising rind modulated synth tones and heavy percussion. This section does not turn to any particular genre. From my perspective this is imagined soundsystem indulgence - spectrally dense but more importantly consistently bass-heavy in order to create a moment that I know will bring out the full-bodied multisensory sonic experience of sound blasting out of a club system.

Conclusion

The works included in my PhD portfolio are diverse, covering a broad range of styles, techniques and influences, reflecting the fact that during three and half years of compositional research I have created over 250 works. 24 of those tracks have been released publicly with other works being performed by myself in clubs, concert halls, art galleries, specialist-acoustic spaces, fashion shows, and contemporary music festivals. Further forms of dissemination of my pieces can be seen in radio play on BBC radio 3, BBC Radio Ulster, Dublin Digital Radio, Noods Radio and the reach to international club spaces such as Berlin's Berghain in sets by renowned DJs Avalon Emerson and Objekt. Following this PhD I intend to release more work including pieces found in the portfolio. I will continue my contact with record labels as means of expanding the reach of this work to a wider audience.

Considering the amount of work created, it is therefore of little surprise that over the course of this PhD my understanding of my own compositional output has changed. Through the releasing and performing of my own work, whilst composing every day, I was able to dig deep into the personal experience of creating my own music whilst also being informed by press reaction and performance of my work. When I started this PhD my compositional research was more concerned with understanding the current climate of the electronic music which I deemed 'experimental' and 'self-critical'. This over-generalised pair of classifications was refined over time into the identification of a Post-club music. I recognise that the expansion of my creative practice during the PhD, and subsequent critical analysis of my work, may have resulted in a more inward conclusion rather than an outward one, but the research has brought about a better understanding of how I interpret and use genre along with my connection of sound to memory to create compositions that evolve beyond their formative inspirational material while holding close to a personal source. As the *Quietus* review for my album *B* said: "Yes, it's a love letter to techno, jungle, house, power ambient and even atmospheric black metal, but McCartan's own voice bears too distinct an imprint to be audibly timestamped to an era other than the present."

Resynthesis and the Post-club

In writing the commentary for these compositions I realised that ‘resynthesis’ can be used as a manner of describing the multiple approaches I have taken to composition. I have explained myself and my compositions by using the term resynthesis to signify a form of re-production and re-combination which references the music and practices of other musicians I recognise as being Post-club practitioners. This commentary has shown how these compositional approaches have grown from my active interest in club music, while also referencing art practices outside music, such the horror film genre, in order to illuminate these compositional approaches. Horror film here helped to advance the understanding of the relationship between club music and its audience and how a Post-club practice uses this. Films influence in my work was described in my descriptions of how Diegesis and Mise-en-scène relate to the understanding of my compositions in that Diegesis made me consider the setting of my compositions through what exists in/out of room-tone and environmental sound while Mise-en-scène brought further consideration to the meaning of what elements I place within that environment. My approach was further elucidated in my reading of Deleuze & Guattari’s concepts of the rhizome, which I used to highlight how club music can benefit from being viewed with a rhizomatic framing, and the body without organs, which I reinterpreted into two concepts: the club without DJs and the DJ without clubs. The latter of which explains an introspective turn into techniques in music making with mine being pieces that play with pitch-time relationships which make use of pitch controlled variable speed sampling to explore new compositional structures. Finally, through Mark Fisher’s writing on the Hauntological and the Eerie which both express absences of something that should be present, I was brought to a different understanding of my work in conjunction with my own personal past. Acknowledging the extent of my memory loss I then took from Audre Lorde’s concept of the biomythic and extended it to a compositional practice in the biomythical remedy as a means of formulating memories out of blackouts, reproducing memories born old.

In the wake of a global event as significant as the Covid-19 pandemic I feel that most approaches to composition and their performance have had to be reinterpreted in their new context; the term Post-club as I use it has certainly been recontextualised. At the time of writing this commentary, we are very much living in a Post-club world and this could be compositionally explored further in a post-doctoral study. It is unknown with which way the future will lead us but with clubs

being without their DJs and DJs being without their clubs for so long it could be postulated that there will be trends in two directions. An even stronger presence of revivalism to reach for a past of better times or a rise in experimental works as artists took to an introspective turn during lockdowns and expanded their work beyond the dancefloor but will now return.

The attention I have given to my musical experience and the links to the personal past are readily demonstrated here in my written commentary and the works that I have included in my portfolio. Despite this I regard resynthesis as a set of compositional approaches that can be taken on by any composer beyond the scope of what I have explored. Whether it be reproduction of musical experiences then re-combining those with new ideas or styles; or a manifestation of lost memories to feel them again and again and again. Along with this I believe that my articulation of Post-club offers a way to both better understand forms of critical electronic music making practices and to (re)imagine new futures once found to be lost. Here I would like to direct you back to my portfolio and invite you to listen anew in light of all that I have said, as well as to that which can only be said through repeated listening.

“The advantage of a bad memory is that, several times over, one enjoys the same good things for the first time.”

— Friedrich Nietzsche, *Human, All Too Human*

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