

**Confronting the Shadow:  
A Power Electronics Praxis**

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## Abstract

*Confronting the Shadow* is a practice-led research project based on composition and recording in the *Power Electronics* music modality. The submission comprises seven albums and a written thesis.

*Power Electronics* is a confrontational form of music practice situated within the noise music genre. The purpose of the research is to use this modality as a vehicle for exploring relations between *noise*, the urban space and mental health. As practice-led research, these relations are accounted for in a written thesis that has been structured to support and map the recorded material. The discursive methodology described by Somerville as *postmodern emergence* is employed to describe how the ideas and arguments made in the thesis component have *emerged* from the process of creating the portfolio. Key ideas incorporated in this manner throughout the thesis are adapted from the psychoanalytic works of Carl Gustav Jung, in particular his *confrontation with the shadow*.

Jung's ideas are explored in conjunction with material from musicology (Hegarty, Novak, Keenan, Attali), social policy (Barham, Moon, Kearns & Joseph, Laurance, the Schizophrenia Commission, Rethink Mental Illness), psychogeography (Sinclair, Raban, Vidler, Coverley), psychology (Laing & Esterson), film studies (Balsom & Peleg, Rabiger), and more, to create a nuanced multidisciplinary mapping of the portfolio and its interrogation of *noise*, the urban space and mental health. Emphasis is placed on the context of *deinstitutionalisation* – the socio-cultural and political transfer of mental healthcare from institutions to the community in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century – that transformed the experience of both the urban space and mental illness in this period.

The portfolio and its supporting discourse explore the role that different kinds of creative practice such as music and film play in the generation and mediation of ideas and attitudes towards mental illness and its care, and demonstrate how the conclusions drawn from this analysis have informed the continuing development of the practice in consequence.



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## **Introduction**

*Confronting the Shadow: A Power Electronics Praxis* is a practice led research project comprising a portfolio of industrial/power electronics music accompanied by a written exegesis. The project aims to interrogate the role of creative practice as a means of exploring and portraying issues around mental illness and its care. This incorporates describing the phenomenology of mental illness and ill-health as a form of *noise*; drawing from authors across disciplines to describe the urban space as a habitat for *noise* and mental illness; and the roles and responsibilities of creative practitioners to manage their contribution to attitudinal cultures around mental illness that may promulgate stigma, in the context of the history of care. Each of these areas are interrogated via the medium of confrontational industrial and power electronics music. In the pursuit of these aims, the project is anchored in, and returns continuously to material from Carl Gustav Jung as a lens and framing device. Within this remit, the material ranges extensively between authors and resources of different eras and disciplines, interwoven with rich veins of auto-ethnography. This produces an intuitive and reflective manner of discourse, designed to communicate the purpose and personal investment of the praxis holistically and with a compelling sense of narrative.

The main purpose of this section is to introduce key ideas and discursive context around mental illness and its care, *noise* in theory and practice, the chosen research methodology, and the approach to industrial and power electronics music employed in the creative practice component of the project. Lastly, I will introduce Jung's approach to psychoanalysis specifically and his discursive style in general, and how this material came to occupy its central position in the discourse which follows.

### **0.1 An Encounter with the Other**

In March of 2013, I found myself noticing a slight woman of late middle age lingering on the pavement across the road from my workplace. For a period, I saw her with some frequency, always in a similar and arresting state. I can only assume that she was experiencing some form of mental illness, though I never did learn the facts of the matter, or indeed any other detail about her. My assumption was based both on her behaviour and her appearance; she would often wear a supermarket Bag For Life on her head, have her hands wrapped in carrier bags, and carry another bag in each hand, these stuffed with further empty bags. A significant portion of the depersonalisation and stigma around mental illness manifests as stereotyping and

profiling,<sup>1</sup> and so it is not to my credit that inwardly, I began to think of her as “the Bag Lady”. Most often I would observe her walking back and forth along the pavement outside her home, paying no apparent attention to passers-by. She appeared wholly absorbed in her own private experience of the world and showed no evidence of distress, but I do wonder whether I was inattentive to a need for help. The disparity of our experiences was such that I don’t know if I would have recognised such cues for what they were. Like many, I imagine, I mirrored her lack of attention by averting my gaze when I passed. It was the well-trodden path of least resistance, a distinctly urban strain of calculated obliviousness that I am not proud to have employed.

Despite this show of inattention however, I was in fact extremely curious, and to an extent I remain so. Mental illness has long been an intense interest of mine. The crux of this interest is the alterity of perception, thought and experience that I imagine when attempting to ascertain the inner life of any mind other than my own. I am fascinated by the scope of a mind’s capabilities, the depth of complexity with which dysfunction can manifest, and the intellectual disassembly of dualistic, culturally and politically charged demarcations of sanity and madness.

I am not conscious of any particular experience or epiphany while growing up which cemented this interest in my mind; I see it rather as an *emergence* from an abundance of experiential and cultural influences. It is a fascination that is inextricable from fear. This fear is an ambiguous psychological terrain that has been deeply mined and furrowed by the arts and media. I am steeped in gothic depictions and aesthetic excesses, in lurid horror films, psychological chillers, and the increasingly cinematic stylings of documentaries. These continue to impinge upon my work even as I attempt to confront their problematic influences. It is only in recent years that I have started to seriously triangulate this relationship between fear and entertainment with the wellbeing of others.

With this fertile cultural bedding in mind, it is hardly surprising that I felt great curiosity about the Bag Lady’s experience, the ambiguous phenomenology of her take on the world. I remain unsure whether to feel guilty that this fascination has the capacity to supersede my instinct for compassion and empathy; equally, I wonder whether a more solicitous response without adequate frame of reference might be patronising, an act of sane-splaining to someone who may

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<sup>1</sup> Stephen P. Hinshaw, *The Mark of Shame: Stigma of Mental Illness and an Agenda for Change* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

have no need or desire for my intervention. I am reminded of a quote from Roxanne Lanquetot<sup>2</sup> in which, as the daughter of a woman suffering from Schizophrenia, she relates that ‘I believe that basically she is less free in her present life, a prisoner of her delusions and paranoia. My brother disagrees. He thinks that mother is better off having the choice to live as she wishes, wandering aimlessly in the streets, constructing the world to fit her delusions.’

There is an extemporaneous order of precedence occurring in this train of thought that disturbs me; aside from curiosity being my first and most instinctive response, there are traces of a behavioural disjuncture between my respective instincts for empathy and for my own expedience (that is, the kneejerk instinct to minimise disruption to my own life). Proactive, interventionist compassion is easier to consider in principle than it is when in anxious proximity to a real person, and I sometimes fall short of my own expectations in this regard. The issue of my motives becomes more problematic when considering that I have engaged the theme of mental illness numerous times in the course of my creative practice – of which the albums that comprise the accompanying portfolio are only a portion of the body of evidence.

In the process of generating this portfolio, inspiration on occasion precedes the measured consideration of an appropriate response; as a result of this, one composition within the portfolio incorporates the field-recorded manipulation of found objects while my hands were wrapped with plastic bags, after the example of the Bag Lady. This was a performative attempt to reflect on the alterity of perception and affordance in the experience of mental illness in a manner that could be explicitly integrated into the fabric of a composition; it didn’t occur to me at the time that this staging might be interpreted in more cynical terms, as counter to my stated intention (all of this serves, I expect, to illustrate my capacity for relentless self-interrogation and rumination, if nothing else). Through this ongoing creative interrogation I find myself increasingly troubled by the recondite qualities of my motivation because this renders my ethical location ambiguous in relation to the subject matter. I find it an acutely disturbing sensation to have lifted the lid on the substance of my creative drives only to discover them opaque. I am driven towards clarity out of a desire to demonstrate accountability.

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<sup>2</sup> Roxanne Lanquetot, ‘First Person Account: Confessions of the Daughter of a Schizophrenic’, in Hooley, Jill M., Neale, John M., Davison, Gerald C. (eds.), *Readings in Abnormal Psychology* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1989), 93.

The culture and the circulation of information around mental illness is a contentious field, replete with ethical dilemma, questionable agendas, and socio-political intrigue. Prejudice and stigma are at times given license to thrive by reactionary, inflammatory or simply negligent forces within the media (Philo,<sup>3</sup> Sayce,<sup>4</sup> Laurance,<sup>5</sup> Cross,<sup>6</sup> Birch<sup>7</sup>), film (Rethink Mental Illness),<sup>8</sup> and the arts (Nichol).<sup>9</sup>

This cultural inculcation and the influence it exerts on public opinion (and thereby political responsiveness and expedience) must be considered inextricably from cuts to statutory funding, declining or inadequate standards of care and support, and unacceptable practices such as excessive use of physical restraint and other forms of unlawful detention, coercion, institutional discrimination and neglect (the Care Quality Commission's annual Monitoring the Mental Health Act reports, Mind,<sup>10</sup> Schizophrenia Commission).<sup>11</sup> This fundamentally and all-inclusively implicates the evolution of care for and understanding of mental illness in the last 150 years and more; the scope and complexity of the problem is understandably intimidating.

The experience of mental health is perhaps best defined by its impact on social interactions with, and isolation from, others; the arts and media provide extensive precedents, authentic and otherwise, of behaviour, expectations, and fears. In a tangible sense, they filtrate that impact; this can make the difference between a person with mental health problems being treated with dignity and respect, or the very opposite. As a creative practitioner, I have a stake in this process and my own contribution to make, for good or ill, albeit one that I would do well to keep in proportion and context, recognising surmountable goals and the value of positive change at an individual level, as described by Sommer.<sup>12</sup> The creative practice in short, is something of practical use that I believe I am well equipped to do. In many ways, the text that follows can be

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<sup>3</sup> Greg Philo (ed.), *Media and Mental Distress* (Harlow: Addison Wesley Longman Ltd, 1996).

<sup>4</sup> Liz Sayce, *From Psychiatric Patient to Citizen: Overcoming Discrimination and Social Exclusion* (London: Macmillan, 2000) 205-228.

<sup>5</sup> Jeremy Laurance, *Pure Madness: How Fear Drives the Mental Health System* (London: Routledge, 2003).

<sup>6</sup> Simon Cross, *Mediating Madness: Mental Distress and Cultural Representation* (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2010).

<sup>7</sup> Michael Birch, *Mediating Mental Health: Contexts, Debates and Analysis* (Abingdon: Ashgate, 2012).

<sup>8</sup> Rethink Mental Illness, *Screening Madness* (self-published PDF document, 2009). <https://www.time-to-change.org.uk/sites/default/files/film-report-screening-madness-time-to-change.pdf>

<sup>9</sup> Lucy Nichol, *A Series of Unfortunate Stereotypes: Naming and Shaming Mental Health Stigmas* (Newark: Trigger Publishing, 2018).

<sup>10</sup> Mind, *Mental Health Crisis Care: Physical Restraint In Crisis* (self-published PDF document, 2013). [https://www.mind.org.uk/media/197120/physical\\_restraint\\_final\\_web\\_version.pdf](https://www.mind.org.uk/media/197120/physical_restraint_final_web_version.pdf)

<sup>11</sup> The Schizophrenia Commission, *Schizophrenia – The Abandoned Illness* (self-published PDF document, 2012). <https://www.rethink.org/about-us/the-schizophrenia-commission>

<sup>12</sup> Doris Sommer, 'Art and Accountability', *Review: Literature and Arts of the Americas*, Issue 71, Vol. 38, No. 2 (2005), 261-276

read as a reflexive self-interrogation to gain clarity and insight into what I am doing as a practitioner and why I am doing it; in the course of this process, I am building a visual model of my practice that helps me to articulate and argue how the themes I am mapping onto the music emerge meaningfully through the qualities and interactions of the practice. This is a process which exceeds the scope of this submission and aspires to two particular statements from Albert Camus that ‘a profound thought is in a constant state of becoming’,<sup>13</sup> and also that ‘perhaps the great work of art has less importance in itself than in the ordeal it demands [of a man] and the opportunity with which it provides him of overcoming his phantoms [...]’.<sup>14</sup>

By explicitly allowing the creative practice itself to drive the narrative that unfolds in this written part rather than vice versa, I will explore a diverse intersection of disciplines and territories. This will enable me to illustrate the value the creative practice has in uncovering new connections and insights that would not otherwise be identified. This is not merely a case of establishing my ethical grounds; I aim to demonstrate that the theme of mental illness irrigates my practice to the most elemental of constitutional levels. The compositional approach and process are uniquely resonant with this theme, and positioned to generate significant insight. As my practice relates to the field of noise-orientated music, my key argument for this is to apply contemporary academic discourse around *noise* to the context of mental illness as a means of generating a rich vein of new perspectives.

## 0.2 Noise and Mental Illness

*Noise*, in its theoretical form, is an abstract. Associated predominantly with unwanted sound by Hegarty,<sup>15</sup> its theoretical application is more global, an ineluctable condition of experiencing the world. Perhaps the simplest way to describe this meaning of *noise* is to crowbar it into a dualistic relationship with *signal*. I italicise *noise* here (and by extension, *signal*) to speak of *noise* in its theoretical meaning, and noise without italics when using the word more informally. In this relation, *signal* represents clear and unambiguous information and affordance; functional, predictable, stable, benign, compliant, facilitatory, resonant, consonant. Attali speaks of signal in terms of codes; codes for analysis, filtering and regulation,

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<sup>13</sup> Albert Camus, *The myth of Sisyphus* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1975), 103.

<sup>14</sup> Camus, *Sisyphus*, 104.

<sup>15</sup> Paul Hegarty, *Noise/Music: A History* (New York: Continuum, 2007).

and therefore the distribution and channelling of power.<sup>16</sup> *Noise*, conversely, as a ‘negativity’<sup>17</sup> lends itself to colourful and descriptive language, and a relish of lists.

In dredging up all the potential descriptors we scrape the deepest parts of the thesaurus. *Noise* is interruption, disruption, confusion, contradiction, rupture, friction, abrasion, discord, dissonance, ambiguity, disjuncture, mystification. *Noise* has characteristics and effects that are uncontrollable, undermining, irreconcilable, chaotic, cacophonous, irrational, illogical, unreasonable, confounding, unsettling, deviant, transgressive, aberrant, anomalous, indecipherable, insoluble, unintelligible, dysfunctional, and unstable.

The boundaries of both *signal* and *noise* are constantly being redrawn and renegotiated, open to limitless diversity of interpretation, identifiable only by their relation to their opposite at any given moment; they can never be ‘positively, definitively and timelessly located’.<sup>18</sup> *Noise* eludes definition and resists ontology; always arising, according to Hainge, ‘with different characteristics according to the specificities of the expressive assemblage in which it is born again’.<sup>19</sup> *Noise* can therefore be aligned to the Absurd, after Camus’ definition that ‘the absurd has meaning only in so far as it is not agreed to’,<sup>20</sup> rendering the artistic expression of *noise* an incitement to Absurd creation. As this suggests, contemporary academic discourse around *noise* is lively, diverse and rich in scope (far more so than I can reliably account for in brief), thriving on its libidinous freedom of interpretation. Attali’s articulation of *noise* both strengthens this position and carefully introduces the seeds of a specific aesthetic around *noise* which resonates with the emergence of industrial music: ‘*Noise* then, does not exist in itself, but only in relation to the system within which it is inscribed; emitter, transmitter, receiver. [...] Long before it was given this theoretical expression, *noise* had always been experienced as destruction, disorder, dirt, pollution, an aggression against the code-structuring messages.’<sup>21</sup>

Ideologically speaking, Attali’s conception of *noise* ties *signal* to silencing and repression by reason of its imposing power, and *noise* to resistance and challenge to that power, an empowerment of autonomy and marginality. ‘Everywhere we look, the monopolization of the broadcast of messages, the control of *noise* and the institutionalization of the silence of others

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<sup>16</sup> Jacques Attali, *Noise: The Political Economy of Music* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1985), 6.

<sup>17</sup> Hegarty, *Noise/Music*, ix.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, ix.

<sup>19</sup> Greg Hainge, *Noise matters : Towards an Ontology of Noise* (London: Continuum, 2013), 273.

<sup>20</sup> Camus, *Sisyphus*, 35.

<sup>21</sup> Attali, *Noise*, 26-27.



assure the durability of power'.<sup>22</sup> This model can describe *signal* as the mediated orthodoxy of popular culture and politics, potentially circulating misconception and stigma, imposing restrictive and inflexible models of socially acceptable behaviour and views; *noise* becomes a vital force exceeding these boundaries. In less ideologically charged terms, the dualistic model of *signal* and *noise* can be used as an analogue for wellness and illness; the deleterious influence that mental illness can have on perception, cognition, and the ability to function. In each of these cases, the dualism is best used to bookend a spectral understanding, hypothetical and rarefied absolutes in a continuum of ambiguity and difference – and this applies both to the duality of *signal* and *noise* and as a permissive and empathetic mode of interpretation for mental illness and wellness. The active process of practical navigation through the combatively multitudinous *signal* and *noise* of life, is where I argue the phenomenology of mental illness resides for the purpose of this thesis. This experience is fundamentally subjective; your *noise* might be my *signal* and vice versa, my wellness your illness. *Noise* shadows the contested edges of every compromise, every communal social construct that has evolved to help society regulate itself. This makes for a convenient lens with which to examine mental illness as a social condition, its jagged edges demarcated by the fraught responses, judgements and attributions of others.

This dualistic model of *noise* is not without critical detractors. In *Beyond Unwanted Sound: Noise, Affect and Aesthetic Moralism* Marie Thompson challenges this view, instead offering an 'Ethico-Affective' model of *noise* that is relational in nature, and liberates the concept of *noise* from exclusively pejorative associations. In this framing noise is no longer just a negative to be eliminated but a necessary and inextricable part of life, a potentially transformative force within a complex and nuanced correspondence between ourselves and a sometimes confounding world. Much as I concur with this analysis however, I am inclined for the purpose of this thesis to retain a dualistic model of *noise* because I am explicitly cross-referencing this with an equally dualistic model of mental illness and wellness, setting both up for critique in the process. It is also difficult to diminish the negative qualities of mental illness and therefore using *noise* in this context creates some additional tension with Thompson's model; my compromise is to proceed using a dualistic model of *noise* on this strictly qualified basis. Having employed this while thinking through the body of the thesis, I will return to Thompson's Ethico-Affective model in the conclusion.

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<sup>22</sup> Attali, *Noise*, 8.

In the course of this text I will resort to using the word *noise* on many occasions and in many contexts; in each of these I will return to a mutable and capricious concept of *noise* as a destabiliser, any schismatic agent or phenomenon in a given situation. The vagaries of language, interpretation and permutation retain innate, essential capacities for *noise*; my voicing, my construction and placement of ideas, resources and arguments, all resist the insufficiencies of language. In ideological terms, I often imply sympathy with Attali's arguable valorisation of *noise* as a means of resistance, but this reading should be established by the context of the immediately preceding discourse. As a term of many uses, I apply it with a proportionate variety of relatively positive or negative connotations. As with Attali, most of all I see *noise* as a means for freeing the reader's imagination;<sup>23</sup> but I offer the qualifier that in consequence of this, *noise* can also be the liberator of dysfunction and delusion.

### 0.3 Modalities for Madness

The contentious relation between *noise*, in its discursive sense, and noise music as a genre and a creative practice is the subject of much academic interrogation (see Hegarty,<sup>24</sup> Hainge,<sup>25</sup> and Novak<sup>26</sup> to name but three). Significant focus is placed on the fundamental *transience* of *noise*, its tendency to mutate, to dissipate 'as what is judged noise at one point is music or meaning at another'.<sup>27</sup> However transgressive and incendiary the origins of noise music as a practice, incubated in parts by industrial music and by the Futurists, Musique Concrète, and early electronic music,<sup>28</sup> its subcultural bedding down into an established currency of forms and vernacular of practices and aesthetics surely negates the genre's capacity to remain *noise* from an ideological and philosophical perspective. My own experience is that the average noise or power electronics musician is far more interested in sheer sensory assault, and secondarily its fixation on transgression, as its manifestations of *noise* in spirit, rather than the pursuit of an abstract philosophical ideal. It would perhaps be better to argue that noise music functions not as *Noise-as-music* but as *music-about-Noise*; as a qualification this may seem pedantic, but I feel it is essential for establishing my own view of noise music's unique position to interrogate the phenomenon of *noise* and to unshackle creative practice from a self-evidently futile, self-defeating pursuit of ideological purity.

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<sup>23</sup> Attali, *Noise*, 33.

<sup>24</sup> Hegarty, *Noise/Music*.

<sup>25</sup> Hainge, *Noise Matters*.

<sup>26</sup> David Novak, *Japanoise: Music at the Edge of Circulation* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2013).

<sup>27</sup> Hegarty, *Noise/Music*, ix.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*

By referring to the term noise music I am concerned with the diasporic field of music occupied by artists as diverse as Merzbow, Whitehouse, and countless more; music that fetishizes and aspires to certain forms of *noise* consensually, and yet arguably shadows *noise* without capturing it and negotiates itself into musical form by virtue of its relations with artist and listener. A fiercely individualist melange of the DIY experimentation and uneasy ambiguity of Throbbing Gristle's 'industrial music', the exploratory permissiveness of sound art, Musique Concrète and electroacoustics and the spontaneity and unpredictability of free improvisation, delivered through extremes of volume, timbre and frequency. Noise music incorporates simulacra of *noise-as-unwanted-sound*; excoriating shrieks and clashes of scrap metal, fierce and piercing microphone feedback, throbbing synthesiser noise and the saturated outpourings of overloaded electronic devices blasted at invigorating and bracing volumes. The power electronics genre welds these materials into rudimentarily structured compositions without compromising their raw scree. Such sonorous specificities identify noise music in its variant forms as primarily an urban music, predominantly informed and facilitated by the conditions and opportunities of the city; the first chapter proper of this exegesis will examine the relations between *noise*, the modern cityscape and mental health, with reference to field recording practice as a strategy of autonomous individual resistance. These are musical modalities built around challenges to and destabilisation of the prescribed cultural status quo, whatever that may be.

It is important at this juncture to give additional clarity for how these genre terms – noise music, power electronics and industrial - are used in relation to the portfolio itself, where I see their overlaps and where I perceive them as discrete forms providing distinct elements within my broader methodology. Power electronics can sometimes be described as having characteristics of noise music or industrial and can be argued plausibly as a sub-genre of both; while the title of the thesis refers to power electronics specifically, the terms are applied in parallel throughout. As much as each of these can be said to have contested meanings, I have my own defined parameters for applying them to my own practice, as follows.

Power Electronics is a form of extreme electronic music fixated on excesses of volume, frequency and tonality. Power electronics artists typically employ elements such as synthesizers, chains of effects units and feedback loops to generate their core sounds, which are then heavily amplified; though some artists have sufficed simply with amplified microphone feedback. The genre character of Power Electronics is clearly shaped by the presence of vocals

(typically shouted) and lyrics delivering content. This human element placed at the heart of the music, and the sense of structure that it imposes distinguishes Power Electronics from Noise Music; in other respects, there is ample sonic and methodological crossover. A typical Power Electronics composition will use a static motif, such as a loop or synth line, which remains constant throughout; vocals will be structured on top of this, sometimes going as far to employ verse/chorus patterns. My interpretation of the use of the word ‘Power’ in the genre descriptor is that it describes a thematic fixation on extreme excesses and impoverishments of power in social relations.

Noise music is more difficult to pin down as a genre. When using the term to describe my own practice, however, I am referring to a specific culture of music that self-describes as noise, that is primarily reliant on table-top electronics; complex signal chains of electronic devices, used to process either external sound sources such as voice and amplified objects/recordings, or simply feedback signals spontaneously generated within the system by audio cables picking up background electrical currents. This defined modality of noise music is strongly associated with Japanese artists such as Merzbow, and at times sits uneasily with philosophical definitions of noise such as those proposed by Hegarty. My interpretation of the *modus operandi* for this kind of music is that artists deliberately build systems of electronics that are unstable, dysfunctional and unpredictable; they then perform their partial loss of control and authorship of the sounds they are creating by intervening in these systems (or equally by choosing to withhold intervention), adjusting device controls intuitively. Marie Thompson describes this approach as ‘full noise’ and accurately observes that as a model of practice it is ‘acquiring conservatism’.<sup>29</sup> Thompson argues strongly and convincingly against fixating on this as the primary permutation of noise-as-music, and accounts in her monograph *Beyond Unwanted Sound* for an extensive diaspora of related but diverse and disparate practices.<sup>30</sup> While the use of noise music textures in the portfolio sit squarely within the description of ‘full noise’ given above, and the term is applied hereon in with this in mind, it is important to acknowledge this broader context.

Industrial music is just as difficult to define; S. Alexander Reed’s *Assimilate: A Critical History of Industrial Music* demonstrates the vast scope and wealth of interpretations the term ‘Industrial’ has generated, from the subversive arthouse experimentation of Throbbing Gristle,

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<sup>29</sup> Marie Thompson, *Beyond Unwanted Sound: Noise, Affect and Aesthetic Moralism* (PhD Thesis, Newcastle University, 2014), 223. <http://theses.ncl.ac.uk/jspui/handle/10443/2440>

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

to the abrasive sensory whiteout of Whitehouse, to the dystopian dancefloor beats of Skinny Puppy.<sup>31</sup> In short, it loosely describes a diverse range of electronic music practices linked by a sense of (or aspiration to) subversion and dystopian aesthetics. To borrow an expression from Tim Ingold, the properties of industrial music ‘are not attributes but histories’.<sup>32</sup> In the context of my own practice, the term is bluntly used as an umbrella term for aspects of my own practice that occur on the contested peripheries of Power Electronics or Noise Music; it is used to link my own specificities with a broader context of electronic music.

To illustrate how I see these genre descriptors intersecting to describe my own compositional approach, a piece from the portfolio such as *Cephalophore I* uses elements of Power Electronics (underlying synthesizer tone, shouted vocals with defined lyrics), Noise Music (improvisation using a series of amplified and signal-processed scrap metal objects) and Industrial (a layer of processed orchestral samples). The latter is described as Industrial because, while typical of neither Power Electronics nor Noise Music in an orthodox sense, they are a frequent compositional choice made by some artists (such as Prurient or Grunt, to give two examples) which flirt with the peripheries of genre and wider practices of electronic music. However, I view the resulting mixture of styles predominantly as Power Electronics, reflecting the prominence of the human voice within the compositions and its content-driven nature.

The power electronics modality in particular provides my primary approach for the creative practice portfolio. The received orthodoxy of power electronics music is as a vehicle for personal obsession, as an interrogator of power relations, typified by the use of ambiguity as a challenge to the listener. Attali could be speaking of power electronics when stating: ‘Music – pleasure in the spectacle of murder, organiser of the simulacrum masked beneath festival and transgression – creates order. Every human production is in some way an intermediary and differential between people and thus, in a sense, can be a channeller of violence.’<sup>33</sup> Power electronics frequently engages material that provokes strong reactions of discomfort, disgust and repulsion. It employs imagery explicitly that ruptures social acceptability, usually without qualifying this presentation; the reassurance of a stable moral position is a key methodological omission within the genre. The darkest and most harrowing excesses of humanity and the human capacity for cruelty and the infliction of physical and psychological damage upon others

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<sup>31</sup> S. Alexander Reed, *Assimilate: A Critical History of Industrial Music* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

<sup>32</sup> Tim Ingold, *Making: Anthropology, Archaeology, Art and Architecture* (London: Routledge, 2013), 30.

<sup>33</sup> Attali, *Noise*, 30.

are laid bare within this field. As such many deem it to be exploitative, prurient, immoral or otherwise reprehensible art; cheap titillation and shock tactics. This is a hugely reductive and superficial reading of the genre which I will address more fully in the third chapter proper of the exegesis. For now I will simply echo David Keenan in his articulation of the redemptive qualities of these forms:

Industrial music and noise ultimately, at its best, is redemptive. It represents an unflinching descent into the dark of our evolutionary past, the dark of our blind sexual urges, the dark of our hidden terrors and fears and the petty and terrible violence of our day-to-day existence and it attempts to come to some kind of terms with them while never denying or censoring them. [...] And just as in myth, when the goddess of beauty, love, war and sex, Ishtar, is returned from the underworld, perhaps we, ourselves, as humans, can rescue that spark of beauty and hope and fearlessness from our own dark places.<sup>34</sup>

Power electronics provides a creative or audient means to encounter, and experience, how I genuinely feel about a given topic, without fear of scrutiny or censure. The deliberate absence of a moral grounding asserted within the music by the practitioner presents a challenge to one's own moral integrity as a listener/consumer which can only be responded to by locating one's own innate moral position. This process allows one to learn about oneself and to encounter the complex and contradictory nature of the human mind without prejudice. To practice power electronics allows me to create these situations for myself and others, to take certain ideas or attitudes, and stage their interrogation. This functionality, and the relationship of power electronics with *noise*, places it ideally as a means for pursuing my research goals, interrogating my own attitudes and preconceptions around mental illness.

#### **0.4 An Emergent Voice**

It will be clear from the preceding text that this research project incorporates material and reflections from a wide range of territories and disciplines. This is a multifaceted work that does not naturally lend itself to a discrete methodology or voicing. Given the personal, self-reflexive nature of the subject matter and its exposition through an intensely outré modality of creative practice, a detached or dispassionate academic voicing does not feel at all appropriate. The discourse aims for rigour, but it is a rigour defined by the practical content and the means by which I may best account for it, rather than in the academic convention. Within the exegesis, language is often applied sonorously, with textural dimensions that aim to test the permeability

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<sup>34</sup> David Keenan, *England's Hidden Reverse: A Secret History of the Esoteric Underground*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Devises: Strange Attractor, 2016), xvi.

of the barrier between the written material and the praxis; reflective prose mingles with citations from fiction, from philosophy, social policy, and psychogeography. In this I take significant inspiration from Iain Sinclair and Jonathan Raban, two authors whose intensified esoteric interpretations of urban space and the symbolic sublimation of mundane objects and affordances have helped to shape a rich contemporary body of metropolitan literature. Their example has inspired me to allow the writing to flow in exploratory and speculative directions without censure, allowing the research to progress organically, unimpeded.

A number of expressions have been coined to describe this deceptively soft approach to written research. Reading widely within disparate disciplines unearths diverse justifications, as the following selection of quotations demonstrates. In Anthony Vidler's complex and fascinating *Warped Space*, an exploration of urban anxiety and angst through the lens of art and architecture from the Fin de Siècle period onwards, he accounts for his own approach as: 'a kind of "intermediary art," comprised of objects that, while situated ostensibly in one practice, require the interpretive terms of another for their explication.'<sup>35</sup> Another appealing term for this approach is *textual hybridity*. Richard Quinn notes that: 'The advantage of this hybrid language is greater sensitivity to texts which require more than a single interpretory process. A hybrid discourse can follow the contours of a text which is "transmitted on frequencies outside and beneath the range of reading," one which relies on signifying sound as well as indexical language'.<sup>36</sup> In his *Decalogue*, the Czech surrealist film-maker Jan Švankmajer is acerbic and confrontational in defence of self-defined, autonomous methodologies, to an extent which bears more than a passing resemblance to the vehemence of contemporary proponents of power electronics (and this resemblance will be accounted for in depth in the third chapter proper).

Remember there is only one poetry. The antithesis of poetry is professional expertise. [...] Succumb totally to your obsessions. You have nothing better anyway. [...] Imagination is subversive, because it puts the possible up against the real. [...] As a matter of principle choose always themes that you feel ambivalent about. [...] Nurture creativity as a means of auto-therapy [...] If creativity has a point at all it is only in that it liberates us [...] Never allow your work of art to pass into the service of anything but freedom.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Anthony Vidler, *Warped Space: Art, Architecture and Anxiety in Modern Culture* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2000), viii.

<sup>36</sup> Richard Quinn, 'The Creak of Categories: Nathaniel Mackey's *Strick: Song of the Andoumboulou* 16-25.' *Callaloo*, Vol. 23, No. 2 (2000), 608-620.

<sup>37</sup> Scott MacKenzie, *Film Manifestos and Global Cinema Cultures: A Critical Anthology* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2014), 103-105.

However, the articulation that perhaps I find most measured and enabling of these is *postmodern emergence*, defined by Somerville as:

An ontology of becoming rather than being (Grosz, 1999) that emphasizes the irrational, messy, embodied and unfolding of the becoming self in this research. [She] explores an epistemology of alternative practices of representation that extends the concept of writing-as-a-method-of-enquiry (Richardson, 1994) into a new theory of representation.<sup>38</sup>

All of these references have informed the approach to writing employed here, but it is the word *emergence* which is perhaps the most key. The discourse I present evidences a deliberately broad and speculative approach from which insights emerge that bring together clear progressions for the research towards its goal. As previously stated, as the practical component of the submission is its driver rather than its end product per se, it follows that I will articulate this in whatsoever direction and style enables me to cleave to the heart of my practice and the minutiae of my fascinations, and make their mechanisms intelligible.

This process has not been without false starts, cul-de-sacs, and major excisions from the exegesis as a whole as I gradually shaped it into its present form. The inclusion of social policy issues and discussion of the history of mental health care in particular helped to anchor the more whimsical excesses that emerged in the course of the writing and maintain appropriate measures of seriousness and focus, without unduly limiting the permissive qualities of the approach. As a result, the centrality of the works of Jung to what follows is a significant example of an unexpected evolution for the work mid-development which helped the disparate areas to cohere when read as a discrete piece of work from the portfolio.

## 0.5 Jung at Heart

Carl Gustav Jung is one of the most influential figures within psychology, described as ‘an important schismatic in the history of psychoanalysis’.<sup>39</sup> An erstwhile protégé of Freud, Jung acrimoniously diverged from the rigid orthodoxies of his mentor to blaze his own trail in psychoanalysis.<sup>40</sup> Jung worked prolifically and extensively on cultivating complex models of the self, its emergence and the process of individuation by which the self is actualised. In the

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<sup>38</sup> Margaret Somerville, ‘Postmodern Emergence’, *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, Issue 20, Vol. 2 (2007), 225-243.

<sup>39</sup> Andrew Samuels, ‘New Developments in the Post-Jungian Field’, in Young-Eisendrath, P., and Dawson, T. (eds.) *The Cambridge Companion to Jung* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 1.

<sup>40</sup> J.J. Clarke, *In Search of Jung: Historical and Philosophical Enquiries* (London: Routledge, 1991), 3-13.



course of this work he delved deeply and prodigiously into a wealth of cultural esoterica, such as alchemy, the occult, and mythologies from around the world, and harvested images, concepts and fragments of inspiration in order to explore his ideas in depth. Symbolism remains a cornerstone of Jungian approaches,<sup>41</sup> and I will be discussing this and other key models that Jung developed in detail over the course of the exegesis.

This penchant for dressing his theories with mythopoeic flourishes and allusions has been a polarising factor for his critics; many of whom viewed this whimsical dimension of his writing as nebulous and generally unscientific.<sup>42</sup> Jung, however, remained adamant that these elements were necessary enablers; dynamic, speculative framings of the prosaic processes of the mind that allow radical and otherwise inaccessible perspectives to be identified. I suspect that on simpler level, esotericism helped to fire his enthusiasm by allowing him to incorporate a wide range of personal interests into his work, rendering psychiatry a ‘home ground for all the interpenetrating areas of his interests and a creative field for their synthesis’.<sup>43</sup> This is a synthesis explicitly designed to ‘introduce the possibility of transformation, over and above simple transmutation or sublimation of symptoms’.<sup>44</sup> There is an element of latent *Absurdist* prerogative to this (despite Jung preceding Camus to an extent), which I also perceive in the work of authors like Iain Sinclair; an eclectic celebration of the obscure, the mystical and the counter-intuitive founded on, and inextricable from, a simple acceptance of the *absurdity* of the world. This is a prerogative that I believe is evident within my own discourse; and in itself my inclusion of Jungian materials is an acknowledgement of the technique and that Jung himself has become part of the esoteric cultural fabric on which he drew.

My use of Jung’s ideas as a lens is not a wholesale endorsement of Jung’s body of work; instead, I extract key sections and reflexively introject them into my creative practices in order to generate new insights and perspectives on my work. The qualities of the lens, however fascinating in themselves, are not to be mistaken for the subject under scrutiny, and to flail around with unwieldy cuts of Jung’s intimidating oeuvre would be distracting and unproductive. Less still is it to be read as an unqualified endorsement of Jung the person, not

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<sup>41</sup> Anthony Stevens, *Jung* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 86-87.

<sup>42</sup> Young-Eisendrath, P., and Dawson, T. (eds.) *The Cambridge Companion to Jung* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), i-xx.

<sup>43</sup> Claire Douglas, ‘The Historical Context of Analytical Psychology’, in Young-Eisendrath, P., and Dawson, T. (eds.) *The Cambridge Companion to Jung* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 23.

<sup>44</sup> Sherry Salman, ‘The Creative Psyche: Jung’s Major Contributions’, in Young-Eisendrath, P., and Dawson, T. (eds.) *The Cambridge Companion to Jung* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 57.

that I seriously expect it to be taken as such; his anti-Semitism and antiquated attitudes to women, people of non-European ethnicity, etc. understandably continue to inflame hostility and tarnish his ideas in the eyes of many.<sup>45</sup> The perennial pitfalls of considering thinkers culturally removed in time, embedded in challenging context, and the necessary qualifiers apply here.

Instead, like Jung himself, I take a magpie approach to harvesting ideas and deploy them as I see fit. In fact, probably the primary dimension to Jung's work that allowed it to insinuate itself so seamlessly into my established praxis is this textual hybridity and eclecticism. The post-Jungian psychologist Samuels refers to a 'self-defining intent'<sup>46</sup> that productively internalises the contradictions arising from multitudinous critical perspectives and shapes them to the author's individual purpose. This subjectivity and autonomy of the practitioner is wholly consistent with Jung's own approach to thought and clearly anticipates the model of postmodern emergence. What is more, Jung valorises this subjectivity as a means by which individuals can cultivate positive change in the world; this is a key premise for my own work, as I will elaborate in later sections.

Jung believed that problems like the ones we are facing now will never be solved by legislation, wars, or even large-scale social movements. He said that our most troubling and cruel human problems are "only solved by a general change of attitude. And the change does not begin with propaganda and mass meetings, or with violence. It begins with a change in individuals... and only the accumulation of such individual changes will produce a collective solution [...] Given the scale of environmental and human destruction that we face, investing ourselves in individual change – with its ripple effects outward from relationship to relationship – seems more sane and promising than feeling sure that we possess a mass solution or ideal that we can readily impose on others."<sup>47</sup>

None of this was premeditated in the early stages of this project. Jung snuck in; a schismatic, still. I had made a field recording trip into the site of the abandoned Elswick Lead Works, and harvested a wealth of great sounds for use in new compositions. As such I was ruminating over the various semiotic and symbolic permutations of the theme of Lead in order to generate some basic ideas and catalyse the compositional process, and to think about how best to apply this material to the theme of mental illness in a way that added value to the project. One of the first associations I jumped on was alchemy, and this opened the door to Jung through his deployment

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<sup>45</sup> Samuels, 'New Developments', 1-3.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 10-11.

<sup>47</sup> Young-Eisendrath & Dawson, *Cambridge Companion to Jung*, xi-xii.

of the terminology of alchemy to describe psychological transformation.<sup>48</sup> What could be more apt? A little light reading on this topic imperceptibly precipitated a kind of Jungian creep, by which Jung's ideas gradually percolated through the project and anchored themselves organically into the farthest corners. It has transpired to be one of those beautiful synchronous accidents, much beloved by creative practitioners everywhere, that subtly but inexorably open the project out and allow it to blossom. I profess no expertise in his work – I have simply integrated more and more as I go, delighted at how useful it has turned out to be - but all the same, careful extractions from his oeuvre have insinuated themselves into the fulcrum positions of this thesis and, so poised, levered key insights into the light. It seems appropriate therefore, to enter the core discourse at this turning point in the life of the project; a day of field recording at the abandoned Elswick Lead Works.

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<sup>48</sup> Carl Jung, *Psychology and Alchemy*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (London: Routledge, 1968).



## Chapter 1. Urban Alchemy

‘Noise takes us out of ourselves into a dispersing landscape.’

Iain Sinclair<sup>49</sup>

### 1.1 A Transgression

The doorway in the mossy, overgrown perimeter wall still contains fragments of boards, or a door; it is unclear which. We duck beneath damp, swollen splinters to pass within. The aperture has been beaten through from the outside, a brazen transgression long since committed; the gouges are old, the wood beneath flaky blue paint rendered pulpy by exposure to the elements. Stepping across the breach, we break the law; the coils of barbed wire that, further around the perimeter, aim to intimidate and deter, have failed by omission. My field recorder already on standby, I feel a thrill of excitement, steeped in anticipation. We are about to explore the former site of Elswick Lead Works.

Once within, a steep bank and closely overhanging trees diffuse the susurrus of the Tyne, a few short metres away. Up the bank are the crumbling remains of steps, treacherous concrete slabs, and a *glaur* of wet mud that would never entirely dry in the muggy air beneath the canopy of leaves. We scramble up the steps, the mud adheres to us despite our efforts; we hold onto convenient branches to steady ourselves. At the top of the rise, an expanse of fractured concrete spreads away to heaps of bricks and rubble to our left, pierced by twisted spars of rusted metal, remnants of the lattice that once supported the structure. The remains of low buildings teem with a visual hubbub of competing graffiti. I reconsider a flashbulb memory of field recording in Edinburgh five years before, peering into an ornate sepulchre on Calton Hill (only a couple of tombs down from David Hume) and seeing a carpet of used needles glinting half-heartedly in the diffuse cloud-light of a Scottish Summer. If such dissonance is to be in evidence somewhere so genteel, what on earth should I expect to uncover here?

The atmosphere within the site is palpably eerie; both haunting and haunted, disturbed and somehow charged by our trespass. In *The Weird And The Eerie*, Mark Fisher provides two parallel definitions of the eerie: the ‘failure of absence’ (something present where they should be nothing), and the ‘failure of presence’ (nothing present where there should be something).<sup>50</sup> Derelict sites such as the Lead Works arguably fulfil both of these definitions, or are suspended

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<sup>49</sup> Iain Sinclair, *London Orbital: A Walk Around the M25* (London: Penguin, 2001), 133.

<sup>50</sup> Mark Fisher, *The Weird And The Eerie* (London: Repeater Books, 2016), 61-62.

in a continuum of alterity between them. The enduring presence of a ruin in a city seemingly obsessed with building endless new blocks of flats is a failure of absence; its amputation of function and disquieting partiality, a failure of presence. This multifaceted, magnified eeriness is an affect powerful enough to constitute and sustain an encounter or experience all by itself, as anyone who has ever spent hours poring over a book of photographs of abandoned buildings such as the exemplary *Beauty In Decay* can attest.<sup>51</sup>

We don't explore the buildings in depth – either figuratively or literally. Gaping holes in concrete floors leading into darkness have no trouble in discouraging the curious. We descend stairs where tiled walls decorate themselves with delirious fracture patterns, but the darkness below is too complete. There could be anything down there. In another building, a dizzying drop reveals rubble emerging suspiciously from stagnant water at least two levels below. Other visitors have set up a rickety, vertiginous lattice of planks for the downwardly mobile; we decline. For weeks later, I have recurring visions of my partner, who is bolder than me and ventured to the edge for a better look, slipping and vanishing into the opaque water or into some viciously abrasive cleft that leads to who knows where. The appointed photographer for the expedition allows his zoom lens to undertake the dangerous work. In the sun, I record impacted bricks and fragments of scrap metal. Clambering on a huge heap of rubble and wreckage, I slip and tear my leg open; later, I decline to inform the nurse who administers my tetanus shot how it happened. On a higher plateau of concrete, fractured now by fronds of long, yellowed grass, I find a baffling shape of mangled scrap metal; I can't begin to imagine what its original purpose may have been. After pondering for a moment, I give up, and shake it vigorously. It sounds great; an intricately voiced chorus of complaining metal that in fairness, has already suffered enough. I add insult to injury. But it's worth it; when we eventually retreat, sun sliding down the afternoon horizon, I have almost two hours of field recordings stored away.

A gaunt man in his early thirties has appeared on site in the interim and is lurking by one of the buildings with unconvincing nonchalance. He watches us leave with a perplexed expression. I sense that even as we transgressed the boundaries of the site, we have created a further disruption by ignoring the established modes of social deviance that must normally occur here. Our behaviours do not fit this prescribed model of transgression or its designated roles; we have not even had the basic decency to buy or sell drugs. Instead, my buzz is entirely natural. I feel

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<sup>51</sup> RomanyWG, *Beauty In Decay: Urban Exploration* (2<sup>nd</sup> Ed.) (London: Carpet Bombing Culture, 2011).

privileged to have been privy to an essential secret; crystallising my suspicion that the soundings of the urban space can be at their most profound in those spaces that have lost or been deprived of their original function. This amputation of function helps to ensure that the sonorous properties of the space are nakedly available, offering up amnesiac clods of the city's repressed memories for creative interrogation.

The two hours of sound that I have harvested with my portable recorder will seed truly unique industrial music, or so I hope. I intend to strive for music that responds to its place of origin with salvaged fragments of its own vocabulary, and that takes a particular joy in the creative repurposing of what others have discarded as worthless. A Situationist reading of this practice might frame the activity as play; inadvertently making light of the economic wounds dealt to the city and its inhabitants by crippling policy – the incremental amputation of the community's functional capacity to self-sustain - albeit as a rudimentary means for sifting positive responses from the traumatic debris. While I do not disavow this reading –there is a politically resistant positivity in engaging such damaged spaces, after all – I feel that there are deeper and more productive socio-political dimensions of the practice.

## **1.2 Industrial Mudlarks**

The industrial music I make, by genre designation alone, implies the competing topographies of the urban space, its factories and fumes. An environment cleaved by *noise* of many forms, dejected workers spilling onto bleak streets, bathed in sodium glow. The ghostly echo of Elswick Lead Works blends seamlessly into this milieu. This political and aesthetic potency was ingrained into industrial music by design, thanks to genre progenitors Throbbing Gristle. The music in this portfolio, therefore, is inextricably shaped by urban space, and the dimensions of this influence must be accounted for. This also means that by exploring issues of mental health through industrial music, I am by necessity examining this topic within an urban context. A number of authors writing in different fields and times have helped me to make sense of this relation between my practice and the urban space, and each will be employed in turn over the course of this discussion in order to share these insights transparently.

To deploy field recordings within the raw material of industrial and noise music is to reconstitute and repurpose shards of urban experience into creation and thereby to converse with the city with fluency and substance in its own abrasive languages and dialects. The documentary *City Ruins* explores in great depth, the complex relationship between noise artists

and the city of Cleveland, Ohio<sup>52</sup>; this in itself implies many applicable truths and tropes about the symbiosis between producers of noise music and their environments. The artists interrogated during the two hours of the documentary lay bare their motivational and aesthetic foundations in urban deprivation, disaffection and neglect, an agonised response to the harshness of their smokestack blight-scape. This resonates deeply with my own sense of the genesis of my practice, growing up in Middlesbrough (former County Cleveland) with the vast chemical production and processing sprawl of the Tees Estuary a constant threatening presence, its fumes, the dull gleam of pipes and rust colorations dirtying the horizon, the sulphurous orange of the night sky. Not for nothing did this landscape inspire film director Ridley Scott to recreate the very same roots in the iconic opening shots of *Blade Runner*; an awesome yet dismaying panorama, in which tongues of flame lick against the mottled, stagnant underbelly of a smothered sky; an inverted brownfield sagging down towards an enervated star-scape of artificial lights.

The natural habitat of industrial music is the city. It is a form of music practice and performance that requires the support of extremely niche subcultures, venues and opportunities that are logistically much easier to support in the city environment; a place that can support shows, local purveyors and small labels. Noise music acquires vast tracts of its sonorities from the omnipresent hubbub and abrasive sonic scree of the urban space – appropriated scrap metal, screeching power tools, the clatter of heavy machinery and the crunch of broken glass. It thrives in conflicted, transgressive (and transgressed) spaces and subversive micro-cultures, and lives close to its sources; scrapyards, tips, suppliers of second hand and malfunctioning gear, tiny venues with unusually sympathetic or receptive owners.

From my own experience, I am put in mind of clandestine experimental noise performances held to audiences of word-of-mouth punters in a dingy, run-down storage space built into the arches of Byker bridge; a rickety wooden stair hidden behind a reinforced metal door, leading to an opaque smoke-saturated shadowy space crammed with people, equipment and general debris, with no other exits (a health and safety nightmare I have no interest in repeating); psychedelic, visceral abstract sound at blistering volumes, reverberating from the curvature of the brick arch above as if howling defiance at the rumbling traffic overhead. Or in more congenial settings, long-running noise nights in the upstairs function room of the Chillingham

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<sup>52</sup> *City/Ruins: Art in the Face of Industrial Decay*, by Stephen Petrus, 2010, 2 hours (DVD, Live Bait Recording Foundation).



pub, accessed by the door labelled “ladies toilets”; for male attendees, an immediate moment of transgression even before paying the entrance fee. Noise music arrives, and thrives, in such settings; but it is initiated and incubated in the schisms of the city.

Harsh noise, power electronics and industrial are all inescapably urban music, emergent from the shadow of decaying industry, pollution and societal dysfunction. From the inception of industrial music culture with COUM Transmissions/Throbbing Gristle<sup>53</sup> it has been concerned with resistance to norms, to socio-cultural hegemony, to the corrosive concrete-and-smoke collateral of neo-liberal economics. Concerned with picking apart the debris of human ugliness and the scarifying indifference of the state apparatus, the hypocrisies, corruptive agendas and calculated silencing meted out by the popular media, it is often dismissed as empty provocation, failing in its duty to critique by not explicitly qualifying a single political position.<sup>54</sup> While the contention associated with industrial music of all stripes is inarguable, its underlying premise remains resistance, a railing against the status quo.

Ironically, this is a resistance explicitly enabled by the possibilities of the city. It may also be argued that its relationship to the city space is in fact parasitic, presenting the suffering of others as an aesthetic artefact. There is a grain of truth to this in that no modality is inherently benign or malign, and so there are industrial and noise artists who demonstrably invest their work with an explicitly antisocial sadism and provocation; Mikko Aspa’s Grunt being one of the most notable and influential of the former and the preposterously vile and repellent white supremacist schtick of Xenophobic Ejaculation clearly pushing for the latter. Aspa explicitly describes the leather head covering that he frequently wears onstage for Grunt performances (and accompanying video projections) as the ‘mask of the sadist’.<sup>55</sup> There are still more who present a nihilistic resignation to the dysfunction of the world, and then there are artists who attempt otherwise. Peter J. Woods stresses this growing ideological diversity, ‘a broadening of the identities represented within power electronics’.<sup>56</sup> It is a critical cul-de-sac to attempt to marginalise a particular school of thought in this respect; the creative intention of the individual practitioner tends to be given unchallenged primacy and therefore, more so than in most genres,

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<sup>53</sup> Simon Ford, *Wreckers of Civilisation: The Story of Coum Transmissions and Throbbing Gristle* (London: Black Dog, 1999).

<sup>54</sup> Hegarty, *Noise/Music*, 119.

<sup>55</sup> Richard Stevenson, ‘Grunt’, *Noise Receptor*, Issue 2 (2014), 14.

<sup>56</sup> Peter J. Woods, ‘In (partial) defence of offensive art: Whitehouse as Freirean codification’, *Journal for Cultural Research*, Vol. 22, No. 1 (2018), 92.

one has to evaluate practitioners on a case-by-case basis and draw one's own conclusions (one must also recall the deliberate onus the genre places on the listener as an *active* participant in the meaning and intention of the music).

The outsider mentality of industrial and noise does lend itself to these outlooks, and yet the concentrated urban space of a large city enables social interaction between broadly like-minded people. The scope for accessible venues tolerant of such niche outsider music or 'nexus points'<sup>57</sup> - from local oases such as Newcastle's Star & Shadow Cinema or Gateshead's Old Police House, Birmingham's Wagon & Horses, London's Hinoeuma/Slimelight, to US sites like Cleveland (OH)'s Speaking Tongues, Lowell (MA)'s RRRecords, Utmarken in Gothenburg (Sweden), Freak Animal in Lahti (Finland), innumerable "Live Houses" in Japan, etc. - to generate a sufficient audience to maintain this presence, allow networking and the organic proliferation of an active social scene of artists, a 'community of isolation';<sup>58</sup> sources of dissemination and distribution for low-key physical media, and the means of production; the commercial infrastructure that produces the huge range of consumer electronics devices utilised in the creation of industrial music and the labour that renders the purchase of such devices for such fringe purposes economically viable for its practitioners.

This fundamental contradiction of intention and expedience, based on specific environmental and social conditions, is the energising dissonance that drives industrial and noise music and the rhizome of their nihilistic abandon, their *Gonzo* obsession, the fevered divergence from and rejection of explicitly articulable meanings and positions. This finds an obvious echo in the work of Iain Sinclair, his fevered commitment to occult whimsy masking an expertly balanced blending of political outrage and subversive mischief. This sense of resistance, to equip oneself with the sonorous languages of the city in order to rail against its perceived injustices, inequalities and failings in the most immediate and visceral way, is integral to my own practice. I am not unaware of the limits and shortfalls of this sense of resistance; Marie Thompson for one is understandably sceptical about the counter-cultural effectiveness or anti-capitalist authenticity of a form that is so fundamentally reliant on consumer electronics and physical media.<sup>59</sup> In this, the subversive potential of the materials may already have been recuperated by the capitalist status quo. As Mark Fisher writes, 'Witness, for instance, the establishment of

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<sup>57</sup> Steve Makita of Lockweld/The Family Chapter, *City/Ruins*.

<sup>58</sup> Roman Levya of Arsonist's Prayer/Plague Mother, *City/Ruins*.

<sup>59</sup> Thompson, *Beyond Unwanted Sound*, 237.

settled 'alternative' or 'independent' cultural zones, which endlessly repeat older gestures of rebellion and contestation as if for the first time.<sup>60</sup> My rejoinder to this incisive critique is to focus on the quality of resistance on an individual level, and assert the primacy, at least for this thesis, of subjective experience as potentially transformative. The precariousness of resistance itself becomes an energising friction. The dissonance of this resistance, contained within the vessel (or *vas mirabile*, if one adopts the alchemical terms appropriated by Jung) of the practitioner's work, teeters eternally on the brink of a unification (or *coniunctio*; more on these Jungian-alchemical terms in due course). The creative practice becomes a fulcrum from which the practitioner articulates the boundless visceral energy of that potential, arrested at the very zenith of its tensile extremity, ever on the brink, narrowly thwarted with each compositional gesture.

The recordings I have made represent both the artefacts and evidence base for the immanent mutability of the urban space and the *noise* that this quality generates. If the use of field recordings within the context of artistic expression can be articulated as speaking to the city in its own language, then the process of field recording itself is a process of compiling an individual vocabulary and lexicon, pursuing intuitive pathways of potential and transgressive thinking. A teasing out of meanings and new ways of engaging with space, immersing in slang and self-identifying with certain patois emergent from the squall of urban *noise*. This practice is a direct aural cognate and adjunct of the Urban Exploration (*Urbex*) phenomenon; the transgression of condemned space for aesthetic purposes, the appreciation of the artefacts of the urban space as unintended relics and as the involuntary sculptures of a schismatic society; living art reconstituted from the debris of function and reclaimed by nature through the processes of decay and dereliction. Field recording redeploys the incriminating evidence of the urban space as decontextualized conduits for personal expression and fulfilment, as well as sounding its repressed memories lest they disappear.

Using a handheld stereo recording device, during the course of this research I have assembled a large library of field recordings from diverse locations around the country, spontaneously responding to the aural potential of my surroundings. This reserve of source material formed the foundation for the Cauldhame albums included in the portfolio; each of these tracks originate in field recorded sounds, chance encounters with the hidden sonorous properties of

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<sup>60</sup> Mark Fisher, *Capitalist Realism: Is There No Alternative?* (Winchester: Zero Books, 2009), 9.

the urban space, waiting only to be recognised and given voice. Of these, the *Saturnine* album is of principal relevance; it is here that the source material recorded in the derelict Elswick Lead Works is compositionally engaged and deployed, cross-pollinating the clandestine culture of urban exploration with psychogeographical sound-harvesting and socio-political immersion.

### 1.3 Questions of Memory

When discussing mental health in an urban context, the history of care, particularly in the UK, must be addressed; I see deinstitutionalisation - the systemic shift from the Victorian Asylums to community-based care that occurred primarily in the 1980s - as a definitive moment in shaping my understanding. In analysing the fate of psychiatric asylums around the world in the aftermath of deinstitutionalisation, Moon, Kearns & Joseph introduce two critical ideas which help to generate insight into the political management of the urban space, and the ethical dilemmas of developers recycling buildings and sites, thereby exercising a decisive authority over the retention or dissolution of the past. The dual elements of this concept are named *strategic forgetting* and *selective remembrance*.<sup>61</sup> I trust that these terms are reasonably self-explanatory, or at least suggestive; they describe the regulation of how public environs are perceived over time and space. This entails deliberate, politically or economically motivated attempts to manage what physical or incorporeal manifestations of memory are retained by society at large. Thereby, *strategic forgetting* and *selective remembrance*, acting in parallel, exert influence over the understanding and memory of citizens, and by extension the collective social movements and fluctuations that allow history to be moulded and mutated. The two ideas elaborate on preceding critical concepts such as *commemorative disremembering* by Landzelius.<sup>62</sup> In describing *selective remembrance*, Moon, Kearns & Joseph emphasise that in this phenomenon: ‘remembering is re-remembering; a putting-back-together of the past’, a cognitive process they describe as ‘inevitably partial.’<sup>63</sup> The ideas may be productively applied to a broader critical appraisal of the cultural topography of the urban space as a whole, but as mechanisms they are perhaps most visible in the context of the repurposed psychiatric asylum.

In the case of a Victorian asylum, property which has been regenerated and refurbished as a conference centre or hotel, the decorative exterior of the building and its palatial grounds may have been retained, perhaps with a discreet and unobtrusive memorial, and are therefore

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<sup>61</sup> Graham Moon, Robin A. Kearns, and Alun E. Joseph, *Afterlives of the Psychiatric Asylum: The Recycling of Concepts, Sites and Memories* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2015), 13-31.

<sup>62</sup> Moon, Kearns & Joseph, *Afterlives*, 24.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, 25.

*selectively remembered*; the conditions within the asylum are likely to have been entirely eradicated through refurbishment, the traces of unpleasant or distressing associations meticulously expunged, and are therefore *strategically forgotten*. In this case, through the expedience of maintaining the aesthetic properties of the exterior of the site, while treating the interior effectively as an architectural record of history that not only *can* be but *should* be dissimulated and whitewashed in order to be appealing and profitable for the owners or proprietors, the perceptibility and comprehensibility of the site's original function have been obscured.

In light of the disappearance of the Victorian Asylum from cultural geography, directly through demolition or indirectly via a kind of obscurity as described above, the asylum as it is deployed in film and media becomes preeminent as the means of circulating information about the asylum experience. This process in itself produces a second, exacerbating permutation of both *strategic forgetting* and *selective remembrance*. With its tangible evidence base broken down, culture drifts from fact on an umbilicus of fancy, becoming increasingly absorbed by its own produce. By such means is *noise* introduced and permitted to proliferate within the widening disjuncture between representation/signification and reality. This is not to suggest that former asylums should be preserved exactly as they were on their final day of institutional operation, but merely to illustrate the process by which history and space experience considerable drift and cultural distortion over time.

I identified Elswick Lead Works as a prime site to pursue my field recording practice because I felt that it has been *strategically forgotten*. The site is cordoned off, all evidence of manufacturing long since demolished and the purpose of the few mouldering buildings that remain entirely non-evident. Like many former industrial sites in the region, it is hardly celebrated. In a part of the country inarguably ravaged by decline - the disintegration of labour and consequent erosion to public health, the aspirational atrophy of whole generations of families consigned to the scrapheap - such breakdown is endemic and often infuriatingly portrayed through the arts in condescending terms. The predicament of Elswick Lead Works is not novel; the site has simply been permitted to decay more extensively than other local sites of similar provenance.

In this context, urban exploration and field recording presents an intervention or rupture in the imposed mechanisms of *strategic forgetting* and *selective remembrance*. The act of recording

resists the socio-political pressure to “unsee” such sights and insists on their evidential documentation and experience. In this, the practice ensures that histories and traumas that others might prefer suppressed are not allowed to disappear. In addition, by integrating these sounds into my compositions I strive to invest them with a new aesthetic and imaginal potency. This practice may be applied throughout the urban space and beyond, as an aperture to access clandestine pasts and allow them to be heard from wherever they emanate. In effect, my practice becomes a kind of *strategic remembrance* - this is an important motivational factor in my work. These inchoate gestures bring me into a tentative alignment with the *mythogeography* of Phil Smith – a response to, or reimagining of, psychogeography that ‘emphasises the multiple nature of places and suggests multiple ways of celebrating, expressing and weaving those places and their multiple meanings.’<sup>64</sup> By this definition, *mythogeography* acts as a positive corrective to the fragmentation of space insinuated by *strategic forgetting*.

#### **1.4 The City as a Site of *Noise* and Mental Illness**

My activities at Elswick Lead Works represents one of my aims in microcosm; this aim is to illustrate the city-space as a fundamental site of *noise*. This extends to both political and aural manifestations of *noise*. While I shall examine aural noise, and noise music sub-cultures in due course, it is crucial for me to emphasise that the socio-environmental conditions associated with these political manifestations of *noise* correlate both with my personal experiences and also the significant diversity of mental health issues that are arguably symbiotic with an urban setting. My sense is that these factors are a key influence on city-based creative practitioners, especially those working within the field of noise music as a motivational force, and therefore I wish to explore them first.

The overwhelming majority of the compositions in this portfolio contain a strong polemical dimension. The political management of mental health is a catalogue of exploitation, abuse, and neglect, which never fails to infuriate me. Industrial music is an excellent platform for staging confrontation and outrage, ideally suited to my practices. As such, setting out a measure of my ire at this early stage helps to contextualise the discourse and practice that follows. It also serves to strengthen the links between social policy research, public health data etc. and the literary and artistic influences on this work.

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<sup>64</sup> Phil Smith, ‘Not Psychogeography’, *Mythogeography*, 2015, <https://www.mythogeography.com/not-psychogeography.html>

It is a lamentable cliché that the disadvantaged in our society have an extraordinary capacity to become invisible, unrepresented, unvoiced; lost in the competitive clamour of the privileged and propertied, corporate entities and biased media, colluding in what Marie Thompson describes as a ‘conservative politics of silence’.<sup>65</sup> This is a non-consensually imposed invisibility, forced by cuts to services, to benefits, the punishing ideology of austerity pummelling them into acquiescence. They tread between the cities we experience, those curated by politicians, papers, the advertising hoardings priming us with that overwhelming compulsion to secure this or that shiny new product, the cities obscured or distorted behind the insidiously hypnotic glare and comforting aural shield of a smart phone. Many struggle along the inhospitable liminal pathways sunken around the edges of the bureaucratic remit of overstretched statutory service providers; individuals undetected or neglected by the state or rationed only a miniscule shred of healthcare with which to sustain themselves. A confining crawlspace of city inaccessible to most, haunted by the dissipating apparition of Nick Clegg invoking “parity of esteem” with ever-decreasing volume. The 2018 Rethink Mental Illness report *Right Treatment, Right Time*<sup>66</sup> demonstrates the extent to which those empty promises have languished by the wayside in the wake of the Brexit negotiations; it is a further indictment of the shameful neglect of services, a litany of spiralling waiting times. This is very much a world defined by what Mark Fisher calls ‘capitalist realism’. Fisher argues for a politicisation of mental health that capitalist realism has sought to privatise, stressing that ‘the ‘mental health plague’ in capitalist societies would suggest that, instead of being the only social system that works, capitalism is inherently dysfunctional, and the cost of it appearing to work is very high’,<sup>67</sup> later elaborating that ‘by privatizing these problems – treating them as if they were caused only by chemical imbalances in the individual’s neurology and/or by their family background – any question of social systemic causation is ruled out.’<sup>68</sup> Therefore the repoliticisation of this issue is an urgent precondition for any substantial challenge to capitalist realism.<sup>69</sup> In discussing the roles in which the urban space can potential incubate mental ill-health and illness, I intend to contribute to such a repoliticisation.

The cavalier attitudes and ideological motivations of multiple presiding governments are profoundly implicated in how care in the community has panned out over the last thirty years;

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<sup>65</sup> Thompson, *Beyond Unwanted Sound*, i.

<sup>66</sup> Rethink Mental Illness, *Right Treatment, Right Time* (self-published PDF document, 2018). <https://www.rethink.org/get-involved/campaigns/right-treatment-right-time-report>

<sup>67</sup> Fisher, *Capitalist Realism*, 19.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, 21.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, 37.

Peter Barham states that: ‘The whole thrust of the policy of ‘community care’ has been brought into disrepute as a cover for an elaborate cost-cutting exercise. ‘The pace of removal of hospital facilities for mental illness,’ a Parliamentary Select Committee reported, ‘has far outrun the provision of services in the community to replace them.’<sup>70</sup> There are unmistakable signs here of the privileging of ideology over evidence, the early warning of a post-fact politics. The reality of deinstitutionalisation was irrigated with and corrupted by *noise* over a process spanning decades, not least by expedience disguised as an idealistic optimism for the unqualified benevolence of families as carers and the acceptance of the wider community. This expedience rings true in Barham’s assertion that ‘the arrival of ‘community care’ signals the emergence of a politics which entertains the hope that the moral and communal dimensions of mental suffering need no longer be the focus of specialized attention or of elaborate public provision in the care of people with mental illness.’<sup>71</sup>

The changes in policy and political attitude towards care that sowed the seeds for deinstitutionalisation in the late 1950s and early 1960s have two key contingencies: a paradigm shift in psychopharmacology that revolutionised the dimensions of expertise and role of the trained specialist as well as the delivery and spatial dimensions of care; and, contemporaneous trends in city planning and urban development that fundamentally transformed the city space. The contemporary urban space - intricately integrated with an unfixed, particulate topography of mental health care and social containment - is a legacy of the mutual interaction of all three trends. In particular, while the evidence does not support a causal relationship between the arrival of psychotropic drugs and the deinstitutionalisation movement per se, it is inarguable that the custodial and pacifying properties of medication radically reduced the need for centralised sites of care and containment.<sup>72</sup> Another notable legacy of deinstitutionalisation is the widespread issue of *dual diagnosis*; the co-morbidity of mental health problems with substance and alcohol misuse, a fundamentally dysfunctional conjoining of self-medication and social isolation. Laurance corroborates that ‘the physical confinement of hospitals is being replaced by the chemical confinement of drugs.’<sup>73</sup> Medication, as the principal tool of care in the community, acts as practical treatment that allows the patient to continue to live in the community by making their symptoms invisible; but it can also be read as an agent of silencing, of neutralising and incapacitating, that sacrifices individual personhood in order to leave society

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<sup>70</sup> Peter Barham, *Closing the Asylum: The Mental Patient in Modern Society* (London: Penguin, 1992), xiii.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, 14.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, 13-14.

<sup>73</sup> Laurance, *Pure Madness*, 116.



undisturbed. Cross pithily describes community care as a pursuit of spaces ‘where ‘we’ are not overly bothered by ‘them’.’<sup>74</sup> Laurance provides further insight into this sense that expedience has been privileged above care: ‘Community care is supposed to provide a new kind of patient-friendly service geared to the needs of people with mental problems. However, critics claim it has merely exported the coercive nature of hospital services into the community. Coercion can take subtle forms.’<sup>75</sup>

By its sprawling abundances of competing *signals* and *noise*, the sheer scale and impenetrability of its activity, the city passively enables loss and social isolation with the complicity of local authorities, themselves bowed under the weight of unsustainable austerity measures whose impacts can only roll downhill and wound the most vulnerable. This is the *noise* that arises from unmet needs, from deprivation and absence. The dissembling of the truly needy by political manoeuvring and point-scoring; the shameless misdirection of popular media in redistributing culpability to the unfortunate; by the indignities we commit by inadvertently conspiring with this dissembling through sheer self-absorption in our own lives. Barham notes that ‘[...] it is clear that people with long-term mental illness in the community may find themselves as structurally isolated as ever they were in the asylums, and in addition their health needs may now be ignored. In equal measure they find themselves neglected, both as patients and as citizens.’<sup>76</sup> There is an interesting convergence to draw between this account of state authority cultivating social isolation and the decline of the *flâneur*, the iconic precursor of contemporary psychogeography. In commenting on the work of the author Xavier de Maistre, Coverley speaks of the containment of the *flâneur* in terms that resonate with the threat of social isolation, exacerbation of symptoms and unnoticed deterioration of psychological state for former internees of the asylum system. Coverley describes de Maistre’s psychological withdrawal under house arrest into a fertile, but dissociated internal life of imagination as follows: ‘[...] reduced to circling his room, the hostility of the modern city forcibly replacing the street with his armchair and thereby internalising his wandering.’<sup>77</sup>

Of course, I am not blind to the potential the urban space provides as a site of significant opportunity, of vibrancy, cultural diversity, self-development and nourishment. Such things are wondrous distractions – should one have the fortune to access them. These striking and intense

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<sup>74</sup> Cross, *Mediating Madness*, 11.

<sup>75</sup> Laurance, *Pure Madness*, 108.

<sup>76</sup> Barham, *Closing the Asylum*, 32.

<sup>77</sup> Merlin Coverley, *Psychogeography* (Harpenden: Pocket Essentials, 2006), 67.

polarities of experience create a spectral richness and plenitude of exciting or excoriating possibilities, a competing allure to ameliorate the suffocating, pollutive shadow of the city's most dismaying qualities. It is against this troubled and troubling backdrop that the city must be considered explicitly as a dysfunctional space; this is not a vilification, simply an observation of a system of organising human society and economy that has some deeply problematic implications for its inhabitants. For many city-dwellers, without the resources or capacity to escape its event horizon even if they wanted to, to speak of "the city" is indivisible from speaking of "the environment" or "the world".

In these circumstances the dysfunctional aspects of the city as an environment to live, learn and grow within are evidenced by a number of emergent characteristics, arguably the damning exhibits of modern life within the civilisation that the industrial revolution, war, political strife and neoliberal economics have fashioned for us in the last two centuries. The incidence rates of mental illnesses and their co-morbidities in cities versus smaller communities and rural settings are significant even when acknowledging the contrast in population density.<sup>78</sup> The city as a living environment, with its conditions of overwhelming psychological and visceral *noise*, may be an economic and political necessity which the human animal is not evolutionarily equipped for – a discontinuity which invites psychological dysfunction for its inhabitants. The city, as a model of thinking, also pervades beyond its boundaries to exert influences on other kinds of space. Even for those of us fortunate enough to experience different environments, the edifice of city existence ciphers our relationship through a psychogeographical *chiaroscuro*, bowdlerising it and priming us to have distorted expectations. The city dweller cannot help but make their appreciation of nature political. We anticipate unrealistic conveniences and affordances; leaving the city to experience other spaces, we unwittingly pursue what Hegarty calls 'that acculturated form of nature that forgets, endlessly, its acculturatedness'.<sup>79</sup> However quickly we escape to the countryside, the spirit of the city has got there first, dressed as its own antithesis; imposing preposterous demands that nature cannot sustain. In Iain Sinclair's typically abrupt words, 'City: madness, voices. Country: incubation or denial of visionary experience. Silence.'<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> Gruebner, O., Rapp, M. A., Adli, M., Kluge, U., Galea, S., & Heinz, A. 'Cities and Mental Health', *Deutsches Arzteblatt International*, Issue 114, Vol. 8 (2017), 121-127.

<sup>79</sup> Hegarty, *Noise/Music*, 8.

<sup>80</sup> Sinclair, *London Orbital*, 443.

Arguably, many Public Health and social issues identified in rural areas - lack of opportunity, economic decline and rampant inequality to antisocial behaviour and substance abuse - can be speculatively attributed to the Vampiric post-Industrial dominance of the urban space. The reluctant conclusion from this is that the city is – thus far – the endpoint of the development of systems for organising communities, as gifted by the industrial revolution; the contentious apex of the facility that exists where humans share space and resources for mutual benefit, whether we like it or not. The metropolitan model of life utterly pervades our culture; we need look no further than the stark sense of political and social divide between the so-called “Westminster Bubble”, the morally culpable isolation-by-privilege that pervades considerable swathes of the political class, who set their lack of empathy or understanding to the squeezing of nationwide care budgets while auctioning livid slivers of the NHS to their business associates; the cultural and political pre-eminence of London, its centrality for the rest of the UK, the floundering incapacity of the “Northern Powerhouse”. Cities are the nexus points of nation, the nodes where the lightning of prosperity and privilege seem likeliest to strike, where multi-culture is densest, most diverse and mutually interactional. This model is indivisible to our socialisation, underwriting how we think, communicate, respond and act. As such, it is arguably the definitive influence on human socialisation and behaviour in the post-industrial age.

It follows that there are eerie correlations and convergences between the conditions of city life and a diversity of diagnostic symptoms and co-morbidities of various mental health disorders, such as sleep disturbance, poor attention, poor diet and nutrition, stress, fatigue, social anxiety, etc. The complex relations between the city space, mental ill-health, and the proliferation of environment-specific maladies, is a venerable field of enquiry. These concerns have been the subject of significant scrutiny from the psychological community from before the turn of the twentieth century, as is extensively documented and analysed in Vidler’s *Warped Space*.

Of special interest was the *space* of the new city, which was now subjected to scrutiny as a possible cause of an increasingly identified psychological alienation – the Vienna Circle was to call it “derealisation” – of the metropolitan individual [...] The extension of individual psychological disorders to the social conditions of an entire metropolis was on one level perhaps no more than metaphorical hyperbole. On another level, however, the “discovery” of these new phobias seems to have been a part of a wider process of remapping the space of the city according to its changing social and political characteristics.<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> Vidler, *Warped Space*, 25-26.

And yet this established sense of discourse in the fin-de-siècle period and before has not noticeably had a positive influence on civic planning or policy; illness and incapacity merely undergo differing permutations as the urban space accrues new ruptures, caused by the persistent privileging of economy and enterprise over public health. This ensured that the misplaced optimism of planners in the 1960s and their visions of an ascetically cleansed concrete utopia were corrupted from the start. The most cursory examination of social policy issues associated with urban life provides a host of co-morbidities for the incidence of mental illness.

The *Indices of Multiple Deprivation 2015* provides detail on the ten percent most deprived communities in the UK, a significant majority of which are located within city boundaries. Multiple Deprivation encompasses a diverse array of lacks and unmet needs from penury, to food poverty, to social isolation; a Gordian tangle of health inequalities to which the recovering patient may be especially susceptible, increasing their vulnerability to ideological antagonism from the state. As Barham notes, speaking of long-term asylum in-patients returning to the community, in some cases under significant duress: ‘release from the stigmatizing discourse of psychiatry may not entail much more than the freedom to be picked up in the stigmatizing discourse of poverty.’<sup>82</sup>

### **1.5 Lead Astray**

Outrage, as social media teaches us, is a gift that keeps on giving. At this stage of the thesis I feel it timely to begin integrating more literary materials into the polemical content. This helps to demonstrate that its politically confrontational heft may be invested with aesthetic and imaginative richness without compromising its intensity or integrity. At this point I wish to reintroduce the ideas of Jung as a means of binding these elements together. Under Jung’s influence the following interrogation of the urban space through the lenses of different authors and practitioners has been retroactively irrigated throughout by alchemical vernacular, as it is his work with alchemy in particular that foreshadows insights into the pathogenic potentials of cities. Jung used the occult terminology and imagery of alchemy as an uncanny illustration for the process of *self*-realisation.

This use of alchemy as a psychological analogy is also useful as a means of articulating the process of recuperating from and ameliorating the effects of mental ill-health. This analogy,

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<sup>82</sup> Barham, *Closing the Asylum*, 105.

suggested by my own free association around the centrality of Lead to Elswick Lead Works, is what drew me to the work of Jung in the first instance. Unsurprisingly, it is in *Psychology and Alchemy* that Jung outlined his appropriation of the symbolic language of alchemy to illustrate psychological processes, Latin terminology and all. Among the constructs he appropriated, the following are used extensively in the following text. Their appositeness for this context will become clearer in time.

### ***Lapis Philosophorum***

Jung likened the attainment of individuation to the transformation of lead or other base materials into the *lapis philosophorum*, or philosopher's stone, a legendary panacea and icon of enlightenment. Individuation, for Jung, is the holy grail of psychological transformations; a hypothetical purity. To attain true individuality is to attain true unity of self.

### ***Vas Mirabile***

The *vas mirabile* is the vessel in which an alchemist mixes the base materials, such as Lead, also known as the *prima materia*. This is the crucible in which the alchemical process occurs. The *vas mirabile* represents Jung's model of a discrete, self-contained psyche made up of numerous components and layers.

### ***Coniunctio Oppositorum***

The *coniunctio* or "union of opposites", is the active process by which the *prima materia* are transfigured into the *lapis philosophorum*. This is the transformative reconciliation by which the disparate parts of the psyche are unified and cleansed (in effect, made well).

### ***Massa Confusa***

The *massa confusa* is the primal chaos of the world that the alchemist sets themselves against. In effect, this means psychological disarray and fundamental disunity, and conditions of existence that foster this disharmony.

These premises set the context for the Cauldham album *Saturnine*, which derives from the resource of field recordings collected at the site of Elswick Lead Works. The Lead Works is a conflicted space, politically ambiguous, taboo, transgressive and transgressed. It is a node of *noise*, a breach, and in the act of transgressing its threshold, *we* breach (*breach* is a word of considerable potency which the thesis will return to). In its absence of political or functional

anchors it is a space of danger, unpredictable potentials and oblique energies. To sound this space is to rupture the membrane of the city, to create a nexus point from which the remainder can be read. Taking my cue from Iain Sinclair's rarefied, magickal readings of topography and site, I single out the glyph of Lead as the thematic rhizome or marrow of the practice to follow.

## 1.6 The Alchemical Art

Lead is poison; a neurotoxin that once imbibed, lingers damagingly within the flesh and bones. Lead-based interior-house paint, widely used in the late Victorian era, was known to flake excessively, to particulate, to be inhaled; the harbinger of childhood lead poisoning. According to the Oxford English Dictionary, a *saturnine* demeanour means to be sluggish, cold and gloomy in temperament. From its classicist root, the term has become associated with the diagnostic criteria of lead poisoning. Saint Saturnina is a *cephalophore*; a saint decapitated at the moment of their martyrdom and who now bears their head, severed, in their hands. Lead was for many years a key component in vehicle fuel, an airborne particulate miasma that choked cities, tainted the blood of their inhabitants, darkened lungs and pervaded thoughts; a debilitating bell jar of fumes in which monolithic industry roared its subjugation of the living. Prolonged or continuous exposure to pollution in the air, water, soil and food are implicated in the aetiology of numerous psychological illnesses and conditions; the character of Marco Polo in Calvino's *Invisible Cities* articulates this horror beautifully.

The exhalations that hang over the roofs of the metropolises, the opaque smoke that is not scattered, the hood of miasmata that weighs over the bituminous streets. Not the labile mists of memory nor the dry transparence, but the charring of burned lives that forms a scab on the city, the sponge swollen with vital matter that no longer flows, the jam of past, present, future that blocks existences calcified in the illusion of movement.<sup>83</sup>

And yet Lead is alchemical; it implies transformative potential. Its misleading maxim of Lead into Gold implies a miraculous transmutation of illness into wellness, progressing through stages of rehabilitation. The former asylum inmates who in the great upheaval of deinstitutionalisation find themselves buffeted, unanchored, into the smoke-blackened crannies of the city, where they are to be transmuted into model citizens by the benison of labour and the benevolence of their neighbours. The *plasticity* of the city, a quality that the author Jonathan Raban describes<sup>84</sup>, is a revealing affirmation of this transmutability, both of the space and its

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<sup>83</sup> Italo Calvino, *Invisible Cities* (London: Vintage, 1997), 89.

<sup>84</sup> Jonathan Raban, *Soft City* (London: Hamilton, 1974).

myriad negotiators. To yield to the coercive alchemy of the urban is to breathe the city as an act of compliant self-assimilation, sifting its particulates through the blood and into the brain, irrigating thought. Amid this excess of exhaust and the corrosive scents of the city is a gesture of capitulation to the fracture, granulation and intermingling of time and physical space. We breathe the city's yesterdays and exhale them into its tomorrows.

Through this lens, the process of psychological healing becomes the gradual inculcation of granular fragments of social norms, painstakingly assembled together and absorbed into a socially acceptable simulacrum of health. The sociologist Erving Goffman describes this as 'passing',<sup>85</sup> the ability to mimic normality in the face of potential stigmatisation through a learned process of 'impression management'. The fruits of a labouring in normality are productive, efficient relations with the affordances of the city; this action is inseparable from engaging in its propagation. Foucault describes the ideal product of this labour in normality 'the perfect stranger':

[...] the stranger *par excellence* who is judged not only by appearances but by all that they may betray and reveal in spite of themselves. Incessantly cast in this empty role of unknown visitor, and challenged in everything that can be known about him, drawn to the surface of himself by a social personality silently imposed by observation, by form and mask, the madman is obliged to objectify himself in the eyes of reason as the perfect stranger, that is, as the man whose strangeness does not reveal itself. The city of reason welcomes him only with this qualification and at the price of this surrender to anonymity.<sup>86</sup>

These different permutations of transmutation, be they felt as real change or feigned as survival tactic, are well expressed through Jung's model of alchemy. In the alchemical rite, its unification of opposites, of interiority and exteriority, conscious and subconscious spirit and flesh, Jung read the phenomenon of individuation, taking each magickal stage as a symbolic representation of the psychological process towards healing and self-actualisation. Relatively marginalised from his more accessible thinking, due perhaps to the rarefied quality of its theme, Jung's work with the symbolism and history of alchemy is described by Hopcke as his 'esoterica'.<sup>87</sup> Though Jung is careful to qualify his use of the imagery and terminology by

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<sup>85</sup> Erving Goffman, *Stigma: Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity* (Harmondsworth: Pelican Books, 1976), 92.

<sup>86</sup> Michel Foucault, *Madness and Civilization* (Abingdon: Routledge Classics, 2001), 237.

<sup>87</sup> Robert Hopcke, *A Guided Tour to the Collected Works of C.G. Jung* (Boston: Shambhala, 1989), 161.

describing his standpoint as ‘exclusively phenomenological’,<sup>88</sup> *Psychology and Alchemy* clearly demonstrates his relish for its hermetic aspect, iconography and immersive ritualism. As a paradigm, Jung was drawn to alchemy by what Salman describes as its ‘synthetic understanding of matter and psyche’.<sup>89</sup> This holistic reading of the mind and body, described in alchemical terms as the *coniunctio*, or ‘unity of opposites’,<sup>90</sup> reflects an authentically *affective* totality of psychological experience that was arguably ahead of its time. In his irrigation of psychoanalytic modelling with incantatory language and glyphic allusion, Jung clearly foreshadows the works of both Iain Sinclair and Jonathan Raban, their use of rich, uncanny imagery as amplifier and intensifier of engagement, and capacity therein to generate oblique insights into otherwise prosaic experiences. This broader legacy of thought is perhaps a compensation for the bemusement of contemporaries and the scepticism of clinicians turned off by what some perceive as a wilfully obscurantist tone.<sup>91</sup>

In Jung’s model of alchemy, the raw matter of the psyche, the conglomerate of memory, experience and affect, represents the *prima materia*, the “lead” or base materials to be transformed by the alchemical process, which signifies psychoanalysis. This unrefined psyche is a potentiality suffused with the tumult of chaos, the *massa confusa*, the febrile dissonance and noise of its unassuaged state. In this sense we can imply an untreated sense of mental ill-health, or an un-acclimatised body responding to a foreign space. For the alchemical process, the *prima materia* is contained within the *vas mirabile*, or hermetic vessel; this may be read as a rarefied condition, such as a psychotherapeutic treatment setting, or simply as a clearly defined space or situation. Thus contained, the *prima materia* is subjected to the fire; or energies, exposures or transformative stages that drive the therapeutic or assimilative process. The goal of this process is to produce the *lapis philosophorum*, or “philosopher’s stone”; in this setting, essential self-realisation and individuation; healing. Jung describes this moment as ‘the conscious union of the ego with everything that has been projected *into* the “you.”’<sup>92</sup>

In the process of alchemy that Jung initially sets out, using a model acquired from Heraclitus, there are four stages of the alchemical process, each aligned with a specific colouration;

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<sup>88</sup> Clarke, *In Search Of Jung*, 35.

<sup>89</sup> Salman, ‘*The Creative Psyche*’, 57.

<sup>90</sup> Hopcke, *Guided Tour*, 124.

<sup>91</sup> David Sedgwick, *Introduction to Jungian Psychotherapy: The Therapeutic Relationship* (Hove: Brunner/Routledge, 2001).

<sup>92</sup> Christopher Perry, ‘Transference and Countertransference’ in Young-Eisendrath, P., and Dawson, T. (eds.) *The Cambridge Companion to Jung* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 154.



‘*melanosis* (blackening), *leucosis* (whitening), *xanthosis* (yellowing), and *iosis* (reddening).’<sup>93</sup>

While Jung notes that later iterations of the alchemical process cited fewer stages and favoured Latin terminologies for each stage, for the purposes of the *Saturnine* album I have kept to the Greek model. This preferential approach reflects an assertion by Hopcke that ‘alchemy was a highly individualistic enterprise with idiosyncratic terms and images that varied from alchemist to alchemist, each term with its own myriad meanings on multiple levels ranging from literal to figurative to spiritual to philosophical to mystical.’<sup>94</sup>

*Melanosis* describes a blackening, a putrefaction. It describes a necessary experience of absolute nadir and despair, of recognition of the chaos contained within the *self*, which precedes the possibility of transformation. In the context of care, this could be a reading of the black moment that establishes conclusively the necessity of treatment and that initiates the active seeking of help or forces others to enforce it. *Leucosis*, the second stage, describes a whitening; the ablution of impurities. In this process, the psyche is partitioned and cleansed; dysfunctional cognitions and conceptualisations are removed to set the conditions for healing or assimilation to take place, the moment of *coniunctio* which will renew the holistic integrity of the psyche. The third stage, *Xanthosis*, or yellowing, describes this transformative moment, the union of opposites. As the colourisation suggests, this is the instance where lead *becomes* gold, when the reunified *self* emerges as a cohesive, hermetic whole, cleansed of dysfunctionalities. The crucial clarification to be made is that this describes transition to the final stage, *iosis* (reddening), rather than the final stage itself; an awakening. *Iosis* is described as reddening ‘as the result of raising the heat of the fire to its highest intensity’.<sup>95</sup> It is an arrival at unassailable *selfhood*, at healing, at complete unity with your conditions. The absolutism and idealism of this final stage is its key characteristic, its subjective attainability doubtful. It is this final bittersweet note that reflects the process of personal and functional integration into the city space as a living environment, and the pursuit of perfect mental health; of authentic harmony with and true unconditional acceptance of our personal circumstances.

Returning from Jung to the field of practice, the reading to follow this discourse is this: that the act of composing using the field recordings of the Lead Works as a base invested with the rich glyphic symbolism described above, using a method of organising sound that responds to the

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<sup>93</sup> Jung, *Psychology and Alchemy*, 229.

<sup>94</sup> Hopcke, *Guided Tour*, 166.

<sup>95</sup> Jung, *Psychology and Alchemy*, 232.

fracture and granulation of time and space within the city environment as a means of interrogating the individual's degrees of acquiescence and resistance to urban acculturation, is itself an *alchemical act* of creative practice. It describes a gradual habituation and assimilation into the atmospheric toxicology of the city; a fuliginous *gnosis*. And by articulating this subject through a modality based on *noise*, I creatively energise the quality of resistance that characterises noise music and its practitioners; my inescapable sense of outrage at the drudgery that the urban existence is often reduced to, the intrusions on privacy and personal space, societal pressure, observing the compromises of being, the bitter fruits of deprivation and penury, and all the dysfunctional coping strategies of modern life. This is a sounding of outrage entirely cognisant of the ironic enabling of the culture I rail against that allows me to produce the music I do. As ever the noise I create, my nihilistic outburst, encapsulates the dissonance, contradiction and driving friction that I experience. It is this same irreconcilable flux of anxious impulses, febrile fragments of articulation and aural simulacra of the cognitive tumult that arises in the pursuit of meaningful expression that powers the remaining albums in this work.

## 1.7 Urban Oracles

Numerous authors have evoked the psychedelic instability of the urban space and indelibly marked this discourse with their own aesthetic fingerprints; their intuitive signatures carving intersecting grooves for my direction of thought. Among these writers are Iain Sinclair, Jonathan Raban, China Miéville, Italo Calvino, Anthony Vidler, and more; thinkers from enormously diverse worlds that nonetheless set the unique conditions for the Jungian turn the discourse would ultimately take. Their works helped to shape my understanding of the influence of the urban space on mental health, and provided considerable aesthetic and linguistic cues for the lyrical component of my compositions, which must be accounted for.

All of these writers intersect strongly with psychogeography, the exploration of the relations between psychology and the urban space in particular. It is well established that as a concept, psychogeography is associated predominantly with the Situationist International, at least by its identification as a discrete practice if not its application. With this provenance it could not be reliably described as a discipline. In his eponymous introductory text, *Psychogeography*, Merlin Coverley argues eloquently for a lengthier lineage – one far more artistically permissive and literary - that Debord et al. declined to acknowledge, and which finds its modern incarnation in authors like Iain Sinclair. Coverley lays out his argument citing in particular the French psychogeographer Michel de Certeau:

[De Certeau] highlights the limitations of all systematic theoretical systems, psychogeography included, in accurately capturing the relationship between the city and the individual. These frameworks cut across the city, separating communities with artificial categorisations, and disrupting what is essentially an ongoing narrative, a story that has a cast of millions and whose plot is unknown. In this sense, the objective and programmatic approach of the sociologists and geographers threatens to obscure that which they seek to preserve, rendering them less able to assess urban life accurately than the historians and novelists that have preceded them[...]<sup>96</sup>

It is this more contemporary, mystical incarnation of psychogeography that takes primacy here (and from which this text derives its direction), despite the pre-eminence of the Situationists' approach. This is the model of psychogeography of which Iain Sinclair is the most prominent exponent. His unique image-drenched prose in works like *London Orbital* (a series of walks around the full circumference of the M25, exploring the geography it cleaves within hearing range) and *Lights Out For The Territory* is compelling and dense with idiosyncratic insights. These documents of his walks through the capital city are intuitive and whimsical; by turns incisive, witty and absurd. Even Guy Debord intimates awareness, if not sympathy, with esoteric mappings of the urban space like these. He implies the occurrence of alchemical processes when he states that:

The sudden change of ambience in the street with the space of a few meters; the evident division of the city into zones of distinct psychic atmospheres; the path of least resistance which is automatically followed in aimless strolls (and which has no relation to the physical contour of the ground); the appealing or repelling character of certain places – all this seems to be neglected. [...] In fact, the variety of possible combinations of ambiences, analogous to the blending of pure chemicals in an infinite number of mixtures, gives rise to feelings as differentiated and complex as any other form of spectacle can evoke.<sup>97</sup>

The psychogeographic mapping of the urban space that I intend to generate uses mental health as its compass and its lens. Through this lens, and whichever side of the deinstitutionalisation moment one examines, cities are the heartlands of care and containment; where these two concepts are at their most palpable. Expertise and facilities are at their densest, the public more desensitised, and society at its most complex. The city-space may also be read as an ineluctably fractured and fragmented environment teetering on the bleeding edge of psychic friction and abrasion, a snarl of tangled labyrinths and liminal crawlspaces in which to be swallowed up and

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<sup>96</sup> Coverley, *Psychogeography*, 107.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*, 90.

lost. This is the perilous potential of the urban space evoked with oneiric vividness by Raban and Sinclair, to name but two.

A discourse such as this, enriched with psychogeography - and in particular Iain Sinclair's giddily esoteric prose - frames the city as an inflamed perichoretic node where salvation, damnation and purgatory mingle indivisibly for its inhabitants. *Perichoresis* is the Greek form of the theological term "Circumincession", also known as co-inherence, which the Oxford English Dictionary defines as: 'The interrelationship or interpenetration of the Persons of the Trinity; the manner in which the three Persons are regarded as conjoined or interlinked without each one's distinct identity being lost.' I have a history of incorporating the image of the *Perichoresis* into past work (on which more later), and a fondness for it; this does not diminish its aptness here. The term is used here to introduce Jonathan Raban's concept of the plastic city, and as an establishing image for Sinclair's quixotic hermeticism. Both these authors, intentionally or not, imply their endorsement of Jung's belief in the 'transcendent function of symbols'<sup>98</sup> as a means of generating insight. Speaking in such grandiose terms underlines the intensity of Sinclair's approach; this is a far cry from the comparatively gentle model of the *Flâneur*, the genteel wanderer of fin-de-siècle Paris that prefigures psychogeography as a phenomenon. I stress these qualities because Sinclair's intoxicating blend of prose is a key influence on both this written exegesis and in the lyrics incorporated into the compositions. Merlin Coverley neatly captures the charismatic quality of Sinclair's prose when asserting 'Sinclair, however, is no *flâneur*, for he is aware of the necessary transformation this figure has undergone in order to face the challenge of the modern city'.<sup>99</sup> The evocative scope of Sinclair's writing, its saturation with imagery and often-febrile density of free-association, directly informs the discourse to follow.

### 1.8 Once More Unto The Breach

Sparer in its imagery than Sinclair, but no less insightful or politically charged, is China Miéville's gripping novel of dystopian fiction, *The City And The City*.<sup>100</sup> The novel depicts the premise of two entirely distinct political and sovereign states – Beszel and Ul Qoma - occupying a single physical city-space. The division and demarcation of this space into each of the two competing territories occurs at a granular level: streets, buildings, floors, even individual

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<sup>98</sup> Stevens, *Jung*, 86-87.

<sup>99</sup> Coverley, *Psychogeography*, 120.

<sup>100</sup> China Miéville, *The City and the City* (London: MacMillan, 2009).

sections of paving, are meticulously allocated to either one of the “cities”, or designated a cross-hatched space, where each territory occurs simultaneously on a physical but not political level. In alchemical terms the shared physical space and delimitation that each city occupies can be described as a *vas mirabile*, the containing vessel; the *prima materia* (in this case the populace) is intricately intertwined yet discrete, primed for achieving oneness and singularity, or *coniunctio*, but locked in mutual political antipathy to such potential. It is the legal obligation of the citizens of each state to perceptually attend to only their “own” city and to train their faculties of attention to ignore the other; to recognise the other in all its detail only insofar as to comprehensively absent it, to filter its alterity from their selective attention at the point of subconscious processing. In short, to *unsee* it. Predating the work of Moon, Kearns & Joseph by six years, Miéville stages the concepts of *strategic forgetting* and *selective remembrance* if they were elevated to the level of overt state apparatus. This obligation is harshly enforced within each territory; the crime of “breaching”, as the transgression of territorial demarcations is called, is treated as worse than murder by the authorities.

An ominous secret police force called “Breach” undertakes this enforcement, operating from clandestine liminal spaces between the two cities whose existence is a matter of urban mythology to the populace at large. ‘Breach *intervenens*. [...] trust to Breach, we grow up hearing, unsee and don’t mention the [Ul Qoman] pickpockets or muggers at work even if you notice, which you shouldn’t, from where you stand in Beszel, because breach is a worse transgression from theirs.’<sup>101</sup> The image that struck me powerfully was that of a single urban space, fractured solely but profoundly in the minds of its inhabitants, at the connivance of a state. This is an idea I feel has fundamental implications for mappings of mental health, care and containment, on real geographies. It also provides a visceral image of shattered society that resonates with noise and industrial music. The cell units and arsenal of Breach resonate with the real-life Community Mental Health Team, the Crisis Team, the Assertive Outreach, Community Treatment Orders, Section 3 of the Mental Health Act etc.; normality enforcers in the place of care givers.

However, whereas the Breach of *The City And The City* appears possessed of frighteningly unlimited resources, the modern community care infrastructure is all too defined by an ever tightening squeeze on its economy, capacity, resources and effectiveness. This ensures the consolidation and perpetuation of mental health issues as most pervasive for the most deprived

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<sup>101</sup> Miéville, *The City*, 79.

in society; a moral horror. As Barham notes: ‘Such are the demands on community mental health services that they tend very often to be reactive rather than pro-active, and there is very little time available for preventative work.’ Later he elaborates that: “The acute mental health service has evidently been reduced to providing only a form of crisis management of the dangerous and severely psychotic, and even here it is unable to do its job properly. [...] the breakdown in community care provision derives not only from inadequacies in available support systems in the community but also from the depletion of acute in-patient services.’<sup>102</sup>

The urban legends of Beszel and Ul Qoma also speak of a mythical third city called Orciny, perhaps the home of Breach or perhaps a unique, clandestine territory of its own; a city formed exclusively of liminal spaces that are marginal, politically conflicted, unclaimed, misattributed, or functionally deceptive. An isolated yard, gaps between buildings, an abandoned house; such pockets of politically ambiguous space, unclaimed, Othered by the inhabitants of both cities, they are imbued with a unique *horror vacui* and repulsion. Iain Sinclair might be describing Orciny here as ‘[...] frontiers, zones that float, unobserved, over other zones.’<sup>103</sup>

Throughout the progress of the novel, the potential existence of Orciny maintains an undertone of tension that derives from this ambiguity. This encapsulates the visceral atmosphere of an ambiguous space like Elswick Lead Works; the thrill of spatial transgression, the sense of political discomfort, the dangers to personal safety it poses, the striking absence of safety measures. It is a space untethered from the affordances of authoritative scrutiny and control. To occupy that space is to be struck by the sudden absence of socio-normative guidance, of comfortably delineated roles and interactions. To record one’s physical experience and responses to spaces such as these, kinaesthetically engaging the environment and capturing this engagement in audio, is to create a unique experiential sounding that fundamentally irrigates all creative works that derive from this source material, and a footing from which compositional practice can cultivate further insights. This, perhaps, is a kernel of the field recordist’s creative impetus. As Sinclair suggests, ‘gradually, landscape induces confidences.’<sup>104</sup>

*The City And The City* illustrates the absurd conclusion we arrive at when the concept of politically-defined space is taken to its logical extreme. The novel is a potent illustration of how

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<sup>102</sup> Barham, *Closing the Asylum*, 32-34.

<sup>103</sup> Sinclair, *London Orbital*, 60.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*, 58.

society, and the spaces that it occupies and shapes, are profoundly susceptible to psychological and political influences to a point where the physical experience of space is irrevocably distorted by compliance. Miéville's well-documented left-wing views are arguably discernible throughout and sustain a sense of moral weight that favourably recalls Orwell. In his review for *The Spectator*, journalist Andrew McKie describes the novel's key message as being that 'all city-dwellers collude in ignoring real aspects of the cities in which they live — the homeless, political structures, the commercial world or the stuff that's 'for the tourists' [...]'.<sup>105</sup> This point neatly illustrates the socio-psychological commitments and compromises that all city-dwellers are required to make in order to functionally and efficiently negotiate the space they inhabit; concessions made to render day-to-day life both intelligible and tolerable.

In the denouement of *The City And The City*, the antagonist of the novel attempts to escape the geographical space of the two cities by proceeding only through their shared zones, making his location in either territory ambiguous, thereby confounding his pursuers. Because the populace at large are politically incapacitated by the *noise* of this disputed territoriality and their perceptual self-censorship, this renders the antagonist effectively imperceptible in plain sight. 'How expert a citizen, how consummate an urban dweller and observer, to mediate those million unnoticed mannerisms that marked out civic specificity, to refuse either aggregate of behaviours.'<sup>106</sup> This social invisibility, engendered entirely by the socio-political dimensions of the environment, echoes both the chosen exclusion of the psychogeographer at large and the imposed exclusion experienced by the Othered. Miéville could have been describing the definitive *flâneur* when stating: '[That gait] was rootless and untethered [...] he did not drift but strode with pathological neutrality [...]'<sup>107</sup>

This is an elegant and riveting climax to a narrative that is at once simple in concept and bewilderingly complex in its execution; it also suggests a city's innate capacity for politically concealing its most disadvantaged inhabitants. As the deinstitutionalisation movement took hold and the inmates of psychiatric hospitals were dispersed into the community for their care, many became destitute or homeless, collateral damage to the transition. Poverty was, and remains rife among the vulnerable. In the 1970s, Raban bleakly foreshadowed this fallout when he wrote, 'One of the darker freedoms of the city is the way in which it puts the individual at

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<sup>105</sup> Andrew McKie, 'Unseeing is Believing', *The Spectator*, <https://www.spectator.co.uk/2009/06/unseeing-is-believing/> (17<sup>th</sup> June 2009).

<sup>106</sup> Miéville, *The City*, 354.

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*, 353.

liberty to barely exist [...]; people who have dwindled, even in their own eyes to rudimentary stumps of identity, like peripheral characters in a novel. For them, their isolation has become their most distinctive feature, and they are possessed by it as wholly as junkies. The latent discontinuity, emptiness and hapless solipsism which the city always threatens have consumed them.<sup>108</sup>

The reform of mental health care in final culmination of the deinstitutionalisation process - the closure of the asylum system and the politically charged, ideologically underscored transition to Care in the Community - can be identified as a key change in the nature of urban space. The atomised, coterminous space of *The City and The City* provides a mapping for how the location of care and containment for mental health issues have undergone fundamental dispersion throughout the city; sites of care and containment are now as fragmented, omnipresent and co-implicated with public space as Miéville's conjoined twin cities of Beszel and Ul Qoma. Social infrastructure – surgeries and hospitals, civic facilities, public spaces – become those cross-hatched, mutually occupied spaces where acknowledgement of the Other continues to be discouraged or meticulously absented from notice by ingrained mechanisms of attention. Care, containment, expertise, intervention, responsibility, culpability, neglect, abuse; each of these subjects is phenomenologically transmuted by the process of deinstitutionalisation. The deinstitutionalisation project is a model of alchemical process; by inextricably intermingling the ill and the well within the *vas mirabile* of the urban space, the state attempted to achieve a societal *coniunctio* that would bring together both into a unified, functional, mutually beneficial and productive urban populace. The state underestimated, perhaps, the turbulence and unpliant volatility of the *massa confusa* they were creating as the initiatory stage of this process.

In this model, following the mapping of Miéville's novel through to its conclusion, the apparatus of social control and suppression of dissent known as Breach might be embodied by the media, and its mechanisms of cultural inoculation; equally, it might arguably refer to the isolated remainders of older and harsher methods of containment, the over-burdened and under-resourced secure psychiatric hospitals and care facilities of the present time. Viewing the modern city space through the lens of *The City and The City* reveals a space relentlessly ruptured by the *noise* of transgression, dysfunctional demarcations and the struggle of individuals competing for the discrete freedoms and affordances of their individual permutation of the city in which they live. And this space in itself acquires the additional convoluted

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<sup>108</sup> Raban, *Soft City*, 146-147.



dimension of mental health and its innumerable permutations of lack, due to the interpenetration of care and space, and the disintegration of the boundaries between public and private engineered by deinstitutionalisation. It is this densely disputed space that I seek to interrogate through creative practice, using redeployed field recordings to breach the apertures of the city, unlocking it with crowbars of sound fashioned from itself. A sonorous *detournement*, in the Situationist sense; in which information and materials are redeployed and recontextualised, divorced from their original meanings, creating ‘new and unexpected meanings by hijacking and disrupting the original.’<sup>109</sup>

In this sense perhaps, it is the creative practitioner who embodies the potentiality of the *breacher*; the interrogative, paranoid denizen who steps between the coterminous cities with their own agenda, unpredictable and unanswerable, transgressing cultural and political authority. An ambiguous figure located only by their own ethics, which may be a mystery even to themselves, subordinated and masked by the primal urgency of creativity. In this context the resulting practice stages a *selective remembrance*, an excised document of the overlapping of territory between the shared urban space and the personally defined city produced through the experience of the practitioner, through which hidden histories and suppressed traumas may be reintroduced into the site and be experienced anew. As Coverley describes the flâneur in the context of Poe’s *The Man Of The Crowd* (echoing Walter Benjamin), ‘[...] the wanderer in the modern city, both immersed in the crowd but isolated by it, an outsider (even a criminal) yet ultimately a man impossible to fathom and one whose motives remain unclear’<sup>110</sup> before ominously elaborating that ‘in the modern city the man of the crowd must adapt or perish.’<sup>111</sup> This description strongly evokes the Iain Sinclairs of this world, charging the faltering role of the *flâneur* with esoteric potency and simmering political affront. The practitioner is not demonstrably situated at any one nexus of this conflicted city-scape; he or she picks across all in search of material, a mudlark guided by their own ethics, sense of purpose and need to respond to their world.

## 1.9 Soft Cities and Hard Realities

A city is too sprawling and unwieldy to truly know, its permutations endless. Negotiating a huge and detailed structure whose depth of complexity is beyond individual

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<sup>109</sup> Coverley, *Psychogeography*, 95.

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*, 60.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*, 62.

comprehension, each city-dweller curates their own manageable city for themselves within the context of the whole, constructed of those elementary components, affordances and experiences that are known to them, or are thrust upon them. This individually defined meta-city is *plastic*, subject to constant flux and unique to the person who conceived it. When I speak of using my field recording and industrial music practices as a means to converse with and interrogate the urban space, I must acknowledge that I am in fact *triangulating* a dialogue between myself, the space, and the threshold of my own range of insight.

When our personal meta-cities conflict with each other, our intrusive experiences rupture and interfere with the schemata we have meticulously constructed around them. It is then that the *noise* of the city can be read, and many qualifiers we can ascribe to this *noise* can also be used to describe the mental health issues and implications of city life. As Raban says, ‘the city, our great modern form, is *soft*, amenable to a dazzling and libidinous variety of lives, dreams, interpretations. But the very plastic qualities which make the city the great liberator of human identity also cause it to be especially vulnerable to psychosis and totalitarian nightmare.’<sup>112</sup> This primal state of the city, its innumerable contradictory permutations and chaos of conflicting and constricted cues, is aptly represented by the alchemical term *massa confusa*.

It is this possibility of *psychosis* that the city threatens that concerns me. Overwhelmed by the incessant sensory onslaught that city life proffers, the meta-cities that we have internalised in Raban’s model have a tendency to corrupt over time due to the intrusion of myriad experiential artefacts and debris. My sense is that these discrepancies gradually overdub the voicing of an individual’s *soft city* with the functional language and affordances of a *Gestalt soft city*, which would be the logical emergence from so many individuals co-habiting the same finite and crowded proximity (for Raban’s city tends to dwell on either individuality or totality, but rarely in between). A socially prescribed city continuously compromised between all its inhabitants. This *Gestalt soft city* has the potential to rupture communication, wreaks havoc with opposing systems of privacy and scrutiny, and creates a decentralised currency of roles and rituals which are imposed non-consensually upon its inhabitants by expedience, compromise and necessity. That is, even as we create the city in the image of our experiences, needs and potentialities, it counters by cultivating us, sometimes brutally, for its own requirements, showing us a face that we may not have expected.

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<sup>112</sup> Raban, *Soft City*, 9.

Despite superficial malleability to our own shapings and mouldings, its plasticity can be threateningly polymorphous, treacherous, unpredictable and uncontrollable. The scope for reinvention becomes a coercively imposed flux. I can describe from personal experience, the sense of a city laying its hands on you, uninvited; living in Glasgow after graduation, struggling with cash flow problems, social isolation and the moderately traumatic bursting of the undergraduate bubble that every former student experiences, I felt buffeted and trampled within a vast uncompassionate hive; and stung. I had generated a romantic meta-Glasgow in my mind prior to relocating, collaged from many pleasurable visits and experiences; one which the city quickly dispelled. The city seemed to set the conditions for stress. At work I found myself mimicking the local accent involuntarily, the tics and behaviours of my colleagues, to fit in; allowing the conditions of the city to imprint themselves on me, abiding blandly by the expectations of the sequence of temporary roles I flitted between; in the evenings I came home and tried to wash the taste of imposed character out of my system. The failure to reconcile my *soft city* - the Glasgow I had imagined and scrubbed clean of any scope for discomfort or adversity - with my experiences, that of an environment with a harder centre than I had ever expected, had staged a moment of clarity that I was ill-prepared for, but determined to learn from. This irreversible desynchronization of naïve expectation and reality has resonance with Coverley's description of the decline of the *flâneur* as a valid trope of city dweller against the merciless proliferation of urban development: 'Amidst the unseen processes of the industrial city, the *flâneur* is reduced to little more than a cog in the machine, an automaton governed by the pressures of a barbaric crowd, not so much the hero of modernism as its victim.'<sup>113</sup>

In this context, the practice of field recording and the use of material collected as a compositional resource may be described as a coping strategy for the anxiety that the urban space can propagate; by taking ownership of the plasticity of the city and allowing it to enrich practice. It is also a means of taking control of the dialogue, ensuring that your own voice is heard and thoughts expressed. Making industrial music provides me with an essential pressure valve through which the *psychosis* threatened by the city may be vented under my own control.

### **1.10 Urban Shards**

It could be argued that while documenting a neat and clearly defined instance of a ruptured political territory, Miéville's novel simplifies city existence enormously by limiting itself to two or three cities occupying the same physical space. This significantly underplays

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<sup>113</sup> Coverley, *Psychogeography*, 64.

the proliferation of cities that occurs in the minds of its populace, and the *noise* of their friction. In its inter-penetrative chaos of conflicting architectural misadventure, socio-political ideology, hubristic town-planning, economic tumult and the coarse, haphazard interpolations of history, the modern city in effect behaves like a multiplicity of cities. Urban shards mangled together, abrading each other, embedded with fragmentary aggregations of the dead matter of cities past, repurposed and functionally disrupted or left simply to decay as impromptu modern ruin. Vidler writes with a harshness that affectively suggests *noise* when he asserts that the fractured nature of the city-space produces ‘[...] a shrapnel-like shard, a sharp-pointed splinter, a remnant, a cast-off, an irreducible piece of junk [...] These are not left to lie where they fell in some dystopian wasteland of the edge or the margin; they are honed into tools, weapons, and instruments of insertion, opening rifts and faults in the fabric of the city to let in its new inhabitants.’<sup>114</sup> In this scenario, a weathered tooth of medieval city wall may simultaneously act as a historic artefact, a tourist attraction, an ad hoc musical venue, a nocturnal haunt for underage drinkers, and a site of antisocial acts; crucially, it ceases utterly to repel invaders. The cultural evidence of its original function becomes the key residue of the absencing of that function. On the evidence for these multiplicitous qualities in London, Raban observed that:

Its unpredictability, its violent transitions from extreme wealth to extreme poverty, its atmosphere of being crowded out with distinctive loners, its physical characteristics as a maze of narrow streets and irregular crescents, combine to force the individual into a superstitious, speculative relationship with his environment. He cannot, merely by studying the arrangements and amenities of the district, deduce from them who he is, for the answers he would get would be impossibly various.<sup>115</sup>

A city may be described as a natural habitat for *noise*. Its tumult of uncertainties and unceasing, cacophonous interruptions of itself are myriad. Whether it's the intrusion of an intimate conversation or unwanted music bleeding through an under-insulated wall, the incessant bleat and squall of traffic or the dense interpolation of wildly differing mini-environments and boundaries jostling for space, one form of *noise* or another is endemic; an inevitable concession of city life. Raban describes this as ‘a situation where discontinuity is an automatic condition of existence’.<sup>116</sup>

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<sup>114</sup> Vidler, *Warped Space*, 136.

<sup>115</sup> Raban, *Soft City*, 168.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*, 84.

A psychogeographer like Iain Sinclair lifts the lid on the *noise* of the city, making manifest its bewildering multiplicity of meanings, totems, glyphs, potentialities and potencies. He immerses himself unconditionally and unreservedly in the totality of the experience. Sinclair celebrates the maze of the urban space as a form of play, its negotiations a generative process of visceral, kinaesthetic poetry. The same space for others may represent a gnarled labyrinth of inscrutable threats and scrambled ciphers; a map of inchoate traumas. Sinclair presents a city unified by the transfigured potency of his prose; its fragmentary nature, the chaos of the *massa confusa*, undergoing a temporary coalescence, a fleeting *coniunctio*. This is a creative intensification of the incremental *coniunctios* that a city dweller invokes in order to functionally negotiate the individual topography and affordances of their space, the curation of their *soft city*. The composer/field-recordist in turn strives to render the potent complexity and density of this discourse in sound, offering oblique synaesthetic insights and counterpoints to the febrile richness of the written text.

As practitioners Sinclair, Raban and others that have staked out artistic territories in the post-Situationist landscape frame the great ambiguity of the city and derive vivid, unadulterated art from its visceral excess. The enduring potency of their work sustains over time partly because it illustrates the disintegration of linear time within the city space and its piecemeal reassembly; the flashbulb instances of London that the two named authors captured testify to the discontinuities of different ages of that metropolis colliding together in an architectural melange. Their texts, however separated by time, impregnate their subject with the authors' psychic residue. More than forty years on from its publication, Raban's *Soft City* has long since been subsumed into a pantheon of imagined Londons, assembled by innumerable authors and voices, co-inhabiting each other with gossamer filaments of memory, experience and whimsy that they have so vividly revealed. Raban's observations, every bit as potent, now carry a tincture of inadvertent romance and nostalgic otherness, illuminating as they do an intricately fascinating flashbulb of an experience rendered utterly inaccessible by the passage of time. And if the city of Sinclair's *London Orbital* still vestigially permeates its present-day analogue, not least through the inexplicably enduring presence of the nihilistic manse of the Millennium Dome, nonetheless this too is destined to disperse gradually into posterity. Sinclair evokes sensations and memories that are visceral and intense in their impact, like a hit of exhaust fumes, and yet ephemeral: 'History recovered through stinks and scummy water, smoke you can taste.'<sup>117</sup> These are images that quickly lose their form, submersed into a lingering, opaquely suggestive

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<sup>117</sup> Sinclair, *London Orbital*, 42.

particulate miasma. Like Miéville's cities, the present and the absent occur simultaneously in the mind's eye. The *new timelessness* of the postmodern is just as tangible in Newcastle, where the concrete claws of deservedly-maligned 1960s architect T Dan Smith still scrape and scar at the edges of an older city which they never entirely succeeded in usurping.

This physical manifestation of the disintegration of linear time in the city space is a phenomenon that a collagist method of composition based on field recordings is ideally positioned to interrogate. The collagist approach, layering distinct field recordings together so that different spaces and times aurally coexist and rupture one another, splices instances and locations into complex interactions and inter-permeations, and enables the dissolution of the partitions between exteriority and interiority, public and private, day and night, authenticity and artifice. This creatively stages the shape of the city through intuitive and coincidental convergences between recordings. The fruits of this process are new imaginary spaces shaped by hybridity and emergent from aural coexistence, curated by the composer; an expressionistic counterpoint to the city, riven with resonances and allusions, a sonorously poetic commentary. Crucially, the documentation and dissemination of this process through the means of mechanical reproduction allows for the experience and observations to be shared and to transcend the limitations of their origins. In this model, the *vas mirabile* of the compositional frame – or perhaps more pertinently in this case, the hermetic containment of the digital audio workstation (DAW) – contains the *prima materia* of the unprocessed field recordings. By their editorial arrangement, juxtaposition, filtering and electronic processing, and ultimate consolidation with the body of a composition or audio file, is the *coniunctio* attained, and an individuated piece, all sonorities and signifiers merged into a unique and discrete whole, becomes the *lapis philosophorum*, the goal of the alchemical act.

As a practitioner I have stated that I approach my industrial music as a means of responding to the city in what I perceive to be its own language. The aural character of a city in particular is inescapably noisy; the acousmatic and indexical qualities of innumerable spectrally competing sounds are wildly inconsistent and various, ravaged by synaesthetic overflow. In making the schismatic nature of the city audible, engaging in it gesturally and aesthetically under the raw, instinctive guidance of my internalised *soft city*, I strive to make an objective mapping of the operant logic of city life a more intelligible possibility. In this, the active collection of field recordings is my cornerstone; a resource that allows me to deploy the methodologies of the Situationists and their psychogeographer descendants. This is an opportunity to harvest and

repurpose aural fragments of the city within a creative context, thereby containing them, interrogating their constitution through praxis and thereby exercising a calming act of control and sublimation. I am in the business of generating aural simulacra – this time of cities I have known - as vehicles for achieving introspective insight. There are echoes in this of the creative whimsy of protagonist Marco Polo in Calvino's *Invisible Cities*, who invokes a vivified succession of hypnopompic cities to his companion, Kublai Khan; he who, over the course of the text, teases out their ubiquitous origin in Polo's own memories of his native Venice. The sunset city of H.P. Lovecraft's *The Dream Quest of Unknown Kadath*<sup>118</sup> may also be cited; a utopia emerging from a confluence of the romanticised memories of the novel's hero Randolph Carter. These precedents, and those of Sinclair, Raban et al., are the lodestones for my own sonorous mappings.

### 1.11 Onward

The first phase of this thesis has interrogated the relationships between the urban space, mental health, *noise* and creative practice, using Jungian alchemy as its lens at key junctures. It is not a discourse that has produced simple responses to the issues it has raised, but instead simply cultivates a sense of meaningful cross-disciplinary exchange; the fruitful cross-pollination of ostensibly disparate sources in order to generate new insights and to glimpse the minutiae of constitutive tensions that energise and innervate creative practice. As such its value resides in the journey rather than the destination, a perspective that Sinclair would assuredly endorse. Disturbed and brought to the surface of the fertile discursive furrow that has been ploughed here, there can be found a number of kernels of enquiry to be taken further in the next stage of the thesis. I am left to wonder, for example, on the long term cultural consequences of deinstitutionalisation, the enduring glyphic potency of the Victorian asylum and its ramifications for the social mediation of received wisdom around mental illness, attended by the malign dissonances of misinformation, ignorance and stigma; the shadows that these cast upon the circulation of attitudinal change within an urban space that I believe has been amply demonstrated to incubate dysfunction. I am also drawn, if not actively intimidated, by the question of how the creative practitioner should account for their ethical responsibility as contributors to a broader culture of art and media that does not always have the best interests of the vulnerable at heart. It is to these issues, and more, that we must turn now.

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<sup>118</sup> Howard P. Lovecraft, *The H.P. Lovecraft Omnibus 1: At the Mountains of Madness and Other Novels of Terror* (London: Voyager, 1999).





## Chapter 2. Asylum Archetype

**‘Let me here declare that if we err, it is our duty to err on the side of ruthlessness. For the great majority of these establishments there is no appropriate future use, and I for my own part will resist any attempt to foist another purpose upon them [...]**

Enoch Powell

### 2.1 The Absent Centre

Deinstitutionalisation broke the mould of care and containment that had existed for a century and more. The preceding section has already suggested the dissonant complexity with which care and containment have incrementally taken root throughout the urban space in fractured and irregular patterns. It is a mapping that recalls the traumatically impacted topography of a pane of glass that retains a desperate cohesion through the mutually self-preservative efforts of its intrinsic shards, and yet has been transmuted fundamentally by the potency of its trauma. This premise is the filter lens through which this discourse has viewed and interpreted the urban space. The image of a fractured pane of glass as an illustration of this process is useful because it implies a forcible absenting at its epicentre, from which the tracery of dispersed care and containment radiate; the Victorian asylum, the site that once isolated the mentally ill firmly behind closed gates, removed from social circulation, at what Foucault described as ‘a sacred distance [...] an inverse exaltation’.<sup>119</sup>

And yet this is not a passive absence; over the years since the asylums were discontinued, their cultural residue has exerted a distorting force of its own, a resolutely detectable weight upon the fabric of culture and society. This is perceptible in the enduring resonance of the asylum in film and media long after its functional presence has dispersed. It lingers with strange fascination, its gradual accrual of aesthetic ambiguity and allure; most of all, in the enduring gravitation it exerts on social attitudes about mental illness and its care that persist into the present day. In this respect, the Victorian asylum is a signifier or agent of *noise* around the perception, mystification and dysfunctional representation of mental health issues and their treatment. It resides at the heart of ‘a continuity and diversity of meanings about madness which, over an extensive period of time, have ossified into a conceptual complex, difficult to deconstruct.’<sup>120</sup>

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<sup>119</sup> Foucault, *Madness and Civilisation*, 4.

<sup>120</sup> Birch, *Mediating Mental Health*, 84.

In this discourse, I interrogate a fascination and glyph that has resonated tangibly through my own creative practice for a number of years. Any aspiration to accountability for this practice necessitates an unpicking of this problematic cultural inculcation to which my work demonstrates I am no more immune to, or escape culpability in perpetuating, than any of the film-makers or practitioners of other stripes whose works I will cite. To raise but one example, the 2007 album *Perichoresis* by Pulsefear<sup>121</sup>, an ambient drone collaboration in which I took part, was released as a digipak CD with a sleeve composed entirely of filtered photographs of the derelict asylum Cherry Knowle Hospital in Ryhope, Sunderland, reproduced and treated with the permission of Urbex photographer Melanie Rhys. These packaging images, a study in decay and neglect treated with hyper-realising digital effects and sepia washes, represent an unambiguous case of the asylum being repurposed for entirely aesthetic reasons, dislocated meaningfully from historicity except for the most romanticised residue. Their relationship to the aural content is inarticulate, vague and diffuse; a shadowing of meaning suspended like a soft focus camera shot that evades clarity or resolution. It is a sounding of the asylum reconstructed from fragments of history and culture as ‘a region populated by shadows and punctuated by unsettling sounds.’<sup>122</sup> The album remains a tangible artefact of an enduring fascination, born from a diet of Urbex photography, macabre fiction and films, and from which ethical concerns of accountability as a practitioner took significantly longer to emerge than I realise they should. In many respects, the artefacts of practice compiled in the accompanying portfolio invite to be read as a desire to redress this balance.

Aesthetic value has been a component of the Victorian asylum since they were first built. Andrew Scull describes the asylum as ‘moral architecture’, a physical manifestation of the reformist philosophy that inspired them; buildings that ‘embodied a particular and peculiar set of cultural assumptions about madness’<sup>123</sup> and that should ‘emphasise as little as possible the idea of imprisonment and confinement’.<sup>124</sup> These were, indisputably, impressive and imposing edifices; the use of historically and aesthetically charged architectural modes such as “Tudor Gothic”<sup>125</sup> created both an impression of inflated pre-eminence and a lineage firmly altered from the legacy the institutions, such as Bethlem, that preceded them. Such grim precedents

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<sup>121</sup> Pulsefear, *Perichoresis* (New Hamburg: Profound Lore Records, 2007, PFL-024).

<sup>122</sup> Cross, *Mediating Madness*, 72-73.

<sup>123</sup> Andrew Scull, *Social Order/Mental Disorder: Anglo-American Psychiatry in Historical Perspective* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), 214.

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*, 228.

<sup>125</sup> Jonathan Andrews, ‘The rise of the asylum in Britain’, in Deborah Brunton (ed.), *Medicine Transformed: Health, Disease and Society in Europe, 1800-1930* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004), 307.

were dislocated in favour of country estates with palatial grounds. Prints and engravings from the period that were used to promote the asylums, reproduced in Scull<sup>126</sup> and Andrews<sup>127</sup> demonstrate not only the aesthetic investment in the buildings themselves but their setting; Andrews notes that such prints ‘emphasised the idyllic situation of asylums, in expansive grounds with sheep and cattle grazing nearby.’<sup>128</sup> Nancy J. Tomes posits that the deliberately imposing architectural design of the asylums were part of a strategy to establish their legitimacy as a new modality of treatment, advertise their utopian radicalism, and cultivate a sense of prestige.<sup>129</sup>

Such utopianism, perhaps inevitably, was destined to be shortlived; fundamentally undermined by both harsh economic and social realities, and by dissonances of experience. This pleasing veneer often belied the conditions behind closed doors, which presented an often-shocking disjuncture between interiority and exteriority. Scull provides a thorough account of the economic and social conditions, and systemic degradations that exacerbated the decline of the asylums in the 19<sup>th</sup> century in his paper *Moral Architecture: The Victorian Asylum*; exponential upsurges in demand, damaging inflation and financial strain contributed in diverse ways to the erosion of the reformist optimism in which the asylums were founded.<sup>130</sup> This decay amplified the discontinuity between the outward appearance of the asylum and the conditions within. Anne Digby wrote of the York Asylum that ‘the grandiose façade of the building concealed insanitary and overcrowded accommodation [...] To the modern reader these conditions seem intolerably bad, but judging by the standard of other contemporary York institutions for the control of social deviance, the workhouse and the prison, they were not exceptional.’<sup>131</sup> It scarcely requires stating that such comparisons are a far cry from any model of care that could be described as utopian. In this, Scull pithily remarks that ‘the looming presence of the mammoth structures built in response to the reformers’ utopian visions remained, even after asylums and penitentiaries had degenerated into mere holiday pens, grotesque parodies of the regenerative vision they had originally claimed to embody.’<sup>132</sup>

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<sup>126</sup> Scull, *Social Order/Mental Disorder*.

<sup>127</sup> Andrews, *Rise of the Asylum*.

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid.*, 305.

<sup>129</sup> Nancy J. Tomes, ‘A Generous Confidence: Thomas Story Kirkbride’s Philosophy of Asylum Construction and Management’, in Andrew Scull (ed.), *Madhouses, Mad-Doctors, and Madmen: The Social History of Psychiatry in the Victorian Era* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1981), 124.

<sup>130</sup> Scull, *Social Order/Mental Disorder*, 213-238.

<sup>131</sup> Anne Digby, ‘Changes in the Asylum: The Case of York, 1777-1815’, *The Economic History Review*, Vol. 36, No. 2 (1983), 231-232.

<sup>132</sup> Scull, *Social Order/Mental Disorder*, 214.

Nonetheless, the romantic portrayal of the asylum as country estate and safe space, where the responsibilities and demands of the modern world can be deliberately voided and absented, still persists in culture as a fantasy situated firmly in the deliberately cultivated tradition of the asylum as retreat. In *The Psychopath Test*, Jon Ronson notes that ‘One woman I know says she secretly wills a nervous breakdown so she can get admitted to a psychiatric hospital, away from the tensions of modern life, where she’ll be able to have long lie ins and be looked after by nurses.’<sup>133</sup> It is a provocative expression of the *weltschmerz* of urban life that the depersonalisation of involuntary commitment is able to take on positive connotations. The fantasy, however, diverges considerably from the reality, even as it takes its cues visibly from one aspect of their presentation. In a persuasive record from 1872, it was said of Colney Hatch Asylum that:

the enormous sum of money expended [upon Colney Hatch]...prepares us for the almost palatial character of its elevation...the whole aspect of the exterior leads the visitor to expect an interior of commensurate pretensions. He no sooner crosses the threshold, however, than the scene changes. As he passes along the corridor, which runs from end to end of the building, he is oppressed with the gloom; the little light admitted by the loopholed windows is absorbed by the inky asphalt paving, and, coupled with the low vaulting of the ceiling, gives a stifling feeling and a sense of detention as in a prison.<sup>134</sup>

It is crucial at this juncture to draw attention to the evocative qualities of this description; its fixation on qualities of light. This stark illustration of the asylum environment nakedly foreshadows an aesthetic vernacular tangibly prevalent in film and media depictions of asylums – and furthermore, mental illness *in general* - almost a century-and-a-half later. A *chiaroscuro* vernacular founded on polarised light and dark, a hyperreal intensification, observable in the composition of documentaries, cinema and literature, is clearly already at work here, albeit in embryonic form.

This underpinning of harsh reliefs and juxtapositions is a key component of the glyphic identity of the asylum, a key aperture from which the *noise* of misconception may emerge. It demonstrates that the present manifestation of the asylum as an aesthetic construct circulated by the arts and media was incubated in the very first architectural sketches. The technology of photography and film merely afforded practitioners opportunities to intensify this impression,

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<sup>133</sup> Jon Ronson, *The Psychopath Test: A Journey through the Madness Industry* (London: Picador, 2011), 221.

<sup>134</sup> Sheppard, E. ‘On some of the modern teachings of insanity, *Journal of Mental Science*, Vol 17 (1872), 499-514. Quoted in Barham, *Closing the Asylum*, 1-2.

this obsessive focus on gradations of dark, and to disseminate it as art. Durgnat illustrates this lyrically when he states that: ‘poetry and geometry meet amidst these landscapes whose greyness is as charged and nuanced as the sky before thunder. In shot after shot, the white walls of the asylum enclose windows and open doors, or other apertures, through which black-branched trees and skies seem, not just a glimpse of freedom, but themselves subjected to the enclosing architecture.’<sup>135</sup>

Enoch Powell’s famous address on deinstitutionalisation in 1960, known as the “Water Tower” speech, foreshadows the eventual transmutation of the asylum from an active component of a functional healthcare system into a dislocated cultural artefact, or glyph of alterity. Powell’s language carries an almost painfully palpable sense of aesthetic investment. ‘There they stand, isolated, majestic, imperious, brooded over by the gigantic water-tower and chimney combined, rising unmistakable and daunting out of the countryside – the asylums which our forefathers built with such immense solidity.’<sup>136</sup> The water tower in itself becomes a recurring motif for Iain Sinclair, traversing the territory of the ‘Epsom Cluster’ of asylums within the aural radius of the M25. Sinclair reads each as a crucial residuum of the dispersive relocation of care and containment. ‘Solitary Italianate water towers, at points of vantage around the road, on hillocks at Shenley and Claybury and Dartford, become the markers, compass points on a map of madness. Because something has vanished, because it can no longer be seen, doesn’t mean that it’s not there.’<sup>137</sup> This serves to illustrate that even where the topographical evidence of the asylums remain, in fragment or repurposing – a conversion to conference centre here, a lucrative stratification into *bijou* apartments there – their cultural potency intensifies, distorts, becomes intermingled with interruptions of fiction. What is gone has attained a different kind of power, to shape perceptions, attitudes, expressions and affective responses; and what remains, however fragmentary, merely serves to cue its incorporeal analogue. Foucault foreshadowed this un-anchoring, stating that ‘the asylum, always oriented to anachronistic structures and symbols, would be, par excellence, inadapted and out of time.’<sup>138</sup>

This un-anchoring from time and space that accompanies the reconstitution of the asylum as an aesthetic object coincides with what Mark Fisher describes as ‘the slow cancellation of the

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<sup>135</sup> Sinclair, *London Orbital*, 164-165.

<sup>136</sup> Barham, *Closing the Asylum*, xi.

<sup>137</sup> Sinclair, *London Orbital*, 14.

<sup>138</sup> Foucault, *Madness and Civilisation*, 242.

future'.<sup>139</sup> What Fisher observed is a collapse or disintegration of all eras of popular culture into simultaneity, accompanied by a profound loss of progress, an impoverishment of the new. Fisher identifies this particularly in popular music, in which he perceives the evolution of new forms has been gradually eroded and usurped by endless rehashings and recombinations of old forms; the great linear movements within popular musical genres, broadly occurring from the 1960s to the early 1990s, dissipating into mimetic repetition.<sup>140</sup> This cultural torpor provides supportive conditions for the asylum as an aesthetic object; able to remain in endless circulation, endlessly recombining times, spaces, experiences, conjectures and outright fantasies, seemingly impervious to the fact that the actual history and experience of care has moved on. Much like the Overlook Hotel of *The Shining*, as described by Fisher, this manifestation of the asylum is constituted within 'an aeonic time in which various historic moments are conflated and compressed.'<sup>141</sup>

This begs the question, if the asylum has become a stock component of film and media, the subject of innumerable beautifully composed, aesthetically nourishing photographs, the inspiration for engaging and moving fictions across a range of modes and genres, why must this be construed as a bad thing? Is it not a means of extracting positive outcomes from a stage in the evolution of care and containment so often conflated with excesses of trauma? Do its interjections into popular culture not evidence that as a society, we have learned? Is it a given that, as Cross suggests, 'contemporary media images of madness silence or censure the lived experience of mental distress'?<sup>142</sup> These are challenging questions for creative practitioners, and ones that are met by a deluge of responses across the arts, not to mention documentaries, journalistic investigations, and beyond, which describe an extensive spectrum from the measured and ethically composed on the one hand to the histrionic, the alarmist and inflammatory on the other. The inherent danger of all these forms is that they contribute to what Cross describes as 'a cultural legacy of misrecognition'<sup>143</sup> and Birch as 'a knowledge reservoir of ill-informed understanding'.<sup>144</sup>

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<sup>139</sup> Mark Fisher, *Ghosts Of My Life: Writings on Depression, Hauntology and Lost Futures* (Winchester: Zero Books, 2014), 6.

<sup>140</sup> *Ibid.*, 7-8.

<sup>141</sup> Fisher, *Weird and Eerie*, 112.

<sup>142</sup> Cross, *Mediating Madness*, 4.

<sup>143</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

<sup>144</sup> Birch, *Mediating Mental Health*, 84-85.

However, the response of this discourse returns to *noise*. This is the *noise* generated by the filtering of empirical and experiential perceptions by culture; when our ingrained expectations from a lifetime of absorbing the information that is mediated to us from the bewildering data stream of everyday existence abrade against what we actually experience. It is the *noise* of culture and experience *in themselves* generating conflicting messages, which defy intelligibility; and crucially, of the *noise* generated by misinformation, wilful and otherwise, presented by others; and the interactions of all these. After the example of renowned anti-psychiatrist RD Laing, I will term this the *noise* of ‘mystification’. Laing cites mystification extensively in *Sanity, Madness and the Family*<sup>145</sup> and other texts, as the mechanism by which the families and peers of individuals suffering from mental illness impose double-binds, erroneous attributions and contradictory signals in order to neutralize, contain and silence the individuals. This an agentic sense of mystification, a *noise* orchestrated by external socio-cultural currents.

The poisonous fruit of these socio-cultural forms of *noise* is stigma, and the spectre of the asylum and its persistence in post-deinstitutionalisation art and culture is profoundly intertwined with its perpetuation. Barrett articulates this quality and the dismaying social agenda that often underlies this by stating that the asylum has become ‘...a site in which stigmatizing symbols were concentrated, refined and applied to those who could not or did not engage in productive social relations and thus any disease category coined by psychiatric experts within these institutions would emerge from and remain saturated by this stigmatizing discourse.’<sup>146</sup>

Deinstitutionalisation had far-reaching implications for the enduring potency of stigmatisation. An Other that had been contained, absented and affectively neutralized, acquired a visceral and paranoiac proximity, fed on the rich fuel of misconception mined by tabloid outrage and scaremongering. The presence of former patients in the community was read gauchely and precipitously as threat, and responded to as such. The persistence of this attribution, and the extent to which it remains fed by major economic and cultural interests with ethically vacuous abandon, is illustrated particularly aptly by the brief presence - and hasty withdrawal - of ‘mental patient’ and ‘psycho ward’ Hallowe’en costumes on the shelves of Asda and Tesco

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<sup>145</sup> Ronald D. Laing and Aaron Esterson, *Sanity, Madness and the Family: Families of Schizophrenics* (London: Pelican Books, 1970).

<sup>146</sup> Barrett, R., ‘Interpretations of Schizophrenia’. *Culture, Medicine & Psychiatry*, Vol. 12 (1988), 357-388, quoted in Barham, *Closing the Asylum*, 89.

stores in 2013.<sup>147</sup> This pruriently blood-spattered offering on the altar of consumerism, replete with plastic jaw restraint and imitation meat cleaver or machete, was withdrawn after the mental health charity Mind, with dignified asperity, complained that it fuelled stigma. This can only be read as a damningly barefaced playing out of the depersonalisation (mystification *in extremis*) predicted by Barham (italics my own): ‘The legacy of the Victorian asylum is, in an important sense, *the abolition of the person* who suffers from mental illness. In place of the person we have been given mental patients, their identities permanently spoiled, exiled in the space of their illness on the margins of society.’<sup>148</sup>

This *abolition of the person* was argued as a key mechanism of the psychiatric asylum by both Goffman and Foucault, each in landmark works published in the 1960s. In *Asylums*, Goffman’s label for this process was the ‘mortification of the self’,<sup>149</sup> in which the entire systemic structure, processes and staff of the institution worked in unison to dismantle the individual identity of each and every inmate, to be replaced by internalised shame and stigma. Goffman described this as the purpose and defining characteristics of a ‘total institution’, a term he applied to asylums, prisons, and concentration camps alike.<sup>150</sup> Few sociologists have done more to explore the nature of stigma; Goffman originated the harrowing term ‘spoiled identity’ invoked above by Barham.<sup>151</sup>

In *Madness and Civilisation*, Foucault describes the purpose of the asylum, as engendering fear in those committed to its care; specifically, a fear of one’s own illness.<sup>152</sup> The experience of this fear is predicated on a self-awareness, and a consequent sense of shame and guilt, that the asylum deliberately cultivated. The outcome of this process is a patient who is self-regulating - or self-coercive – into a pattern of normalised behaviour, through internalised guilt. To Foucault, this sense of guilt ‘substituted for the free terror of madness the stifling anguish of responsibility’.<sup>153</sup> The process thus described constitutes a dysfunctional model of reintegration whereby the mental patient is reconciled with society by sharing fear of their illness; ‘fear was now endowed with a power of disalienation, which permitted it to restore a primitive complicity

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<sup>147</sup> Anon., ‘Asda and Tesco withdraw Hallowe’ en patient outfits’, *BBC News*, 26<sup>th</sup> September 2013 <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-24278768>

<sup>148</sup> Barham, *Closing the Asylum*, xiii.

<sup>149</sup> Erving Goffman, *Asylums: Essays on the Social Situation of Mental Patients and Other Inmates* (Harmondsworth: Pelican Books, 1973), 24.

<sup>150</sup> *Ibid.*, 13-116.

<sup>151</sup> Goffman, *Stigma*.

<sup>152</sup> Foucault, *Madness and Civilisation*, 229-264.

<sup>153</sup> *Ibid.*, 234.



between the madman and the man of reason. It re-established a solidarity between them. Now madness would never – could never – cause fear again; it would be afraid'.<sup>154</sup>

Such a construction of the asylum is undeniably dystopian, and arguably serves to align Foucault's *Madness and Civilisation* with the contemporaneous anti-psychiatry movement of R.D. Laing et al. The mental patient as described in this model is a truly wretched, tormented figure, in constant terror of their own mind. Foucault's language grows increasingly loaded: 'By this guilt the madman became an object of punishment always vulnerable to himself and to the Other';<sup>155</sup> 'His torment was his glory; his deliverance must humiliate him.'<sup>156</sup> To interpret the asylum solely as an engine of self-stigmatisation in this manner is bleak indeed, albeit compelling. However, these ideas produce eerie echoes of the disembodied forms that the asylum would take through the arts in the years following deinstitutionalisation. The simulacrum of the asylum that endures in the arts, a repository of aesthetic images, fanciful conceptions and distortions, continues to fulfil this function of encouraging the internalisation of shame by presenting a mirroring image of mental illness, the essential bleakness of the model arguably realised.

Foucault – reflecting on the work of Philippe Pinel – describes three key mechanisms of the asylum in effecting the internalisation of shame: silencing, recognition by mirror, and perpetual judgement.<sup>157</sup> Filmic depictions the asylum alone arguably achieve all these. Hyperreal dramatic recreations and fictions serve to obscure and ultimately to silence real, lived experiences. The sheer volume of filmed depictions of mental illness as a phenomenon that is seen and heard provide an effectively inexhaustible reservoir of false mirror recognition. The prevalence of these depictions, their constant circulation, popularity and impact on cultures around the treatment of mental illness serve to generate a sense of perpetual judgement. This reservoir is endlessly replenished and reconstituted, all without the need for physical sites of care, paid professionals, or the intervention of the state. If Foucault and Goffman were each correct about the asylum representing a machine for internalising shame, the asylum in the arts is that machine perfected. 'Everything was organized so that the madman would recognize himself in a world of judgement that enveloped him on all sides; he must know that he is

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<sup>154</sup> Foucault, *Madness and Civilisation*, 233.

<sup>155</sup> *Ibid.*, 235.

<sup>156</sup> *Ibid.*, 248.

<sup>157</sup> *Ibid.*, 247-256.

watched, judged, and condemned; from transgression to punishment, the connection must be evident, as a guilt recognized by all'.<sup>158</sup>

The malign resilience of stigma in an age saturated by the deluge of information, and incubated by an electronically mediated society, is no surprise. Against this *massa confusa* of raw data the reductive and provocative run riot, paranoia is insidious, Othering is the path of least resistance and easily digestible explanations are lucrative. Mediation – of *anything* - exceeds remediation. When art that interrogates mental illness is mediated on any level, the fabric of cultural awareness responsively shifts and stigma collects in the folds. This is to state that to exert that agency, even within an audience which is effectively miniscule and estranged such as the industrial and power electronics communities, is to ethically locate oneself, influence conditions and circulate ideas.

As a creative practitioner engaged in the interrogation of these issues, there are three central practice scenarios I wish to explore in the course of this section, and discuss how the portfolio component of the submission responds to these. I offer no guarantees of an articulable conclusion to these questions; however, they illustrate what I aspire for my creative practice to ultimately achieve. They are questions that exceed this portfolio and that will exceed pursuit over a life's work, but nonetheless they are questions which should concern any practitioner who wishes to engage mental illness within the scope of their practice. I state this with the emphasis of a practitioner who has waded into this field without engaging in these questions, and now find the ramifications of this act an inescapable source of anxiety. I will judge it a significant personal achievement to even scratch their surface. Firstly, what happens when a creative work presents mental illness and its treatment in an incorrect, distorted or prejudicial manner; perhaps even negligently provocative in the extent of its misrepresentation? Secondly, why might creative works, particularly fictional representations, achieve cultural primacy over documentary and reportage? And thirdly, what happens when documentary and reportage absorb and deploy the methodologies and aesthetic characteristics of fictional media?

In each of these cases, the glyph of the asylum - a nexus of dissonance - is rife and provides a contextual grounding to focus the discourse; and for each there is an account to be related as to how the portfolio component attempts to respond in a meaningful way. What concerns me the most is that media – be it the arts or the broadsheets – have enormous potential to inflict or at

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<sup>158</sup> Foucault, *Madness and Civilisation*, 253.

least precipitate psychological damage, whether directly or by far-reaching consequences of the socio-cultural currents in which they are culpable. The urge for accountability is driven by personal experience; an effective grist to the mill of good intentions.

In this context, the altered presence of the asylum, rendered a socio-cultural construct only peripherally anchored by its physical remnants, becomes a disembodied site where the spectres of misremembered past are detained, and atrophy into the stranger shapes of hearsay as the gulf of passing time increases its dissociating sprawl. Parsing increasingly isolated fragments of fact through this filter means that this model of the asylum offers a true asylum or refuge for stigma and misconception, where dangerous untruths and fabrications are healed and reassimilated into social acceptability, so that on re-entering the community of shared culture they can sow quieter, deeper kinds of discord with insidious discreetness. Their damaging nature concealed behind a dissonant fade of politically expedient faux-benevolence, that entrenches toxic home truths behind closed doors. Moon, Kearns & Joseph note that: ‘The stigma attached to mental illness and to the sites of its treatment was (and still is) of a nature and intensity arguably matched only by prisons. This stigma seems resolutely to transcend time and place, in part because of the prominence of gothic horror images of the asylum in popular culture.’<sup>159</sup>

## 2.2 Sightings

Following deinstitutionalisation, the primary mediator (and resuscitator) of the asylum is film. In *Offbeat*, Jennifer Wallis’ ‘A Dangerous Madness’ provides a detailed and entertaining overview of depictions of the asylum in horror films over the twentieth century, but particularly during the 1960s-70s, the period in which the premise of deinstitutionalisation gained political traction.<sup>160</sup> These films, and others, set the cinematic tropes that would dominate depictions of the asylum far beyond the time of their closures. In this context, I wish to draw attention to what I feel have been three of the most fascinating examples of the asylum in film (two from this period and a more recent example from the early 2000s for contrast), and the mechanics and sonorities underwriting this fascination.

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<sup>159</sup> Moon, Kearns & Joseph, *Afterlives*, 9.

<sup>160</sup> Jennifer Wallis, ‘A Dangerous Madness: Opening The Door To Asylum Horror’, in Julian Upton (ed.), *Offbeat: British Cinema’s Curiosities, Obscurities and Forgotten Gems* (London: Headpress, 2013), 278-285.

### *One Flew Over The Cuckoo's Nest*

Perhaps the definitive, and certainly the best known and most acclaimed treatment of the asylum in film is *One Flew Over The Cuckoo's Nest* (1975), from the 1962 novel by Ken Kesey. In this respect, the asylum of *One Flew Over The Cuckoo's Nest* (filmed primarily at Oregon State Hospital, an operational psychiatric hospital) represents one of the foremost components of the contemporary asylum glyph within popular culture. Tracing the disruptive and contentious presence of a petty criminal, “Mac” McMurphy, inveigled into psychiatric care by opportunistic malingering, the film illustrates the asylum as an isolated human zoo, one populated by socially inept misfits whose extent of treatment solely entails degrees of sedation and incapacitation. The film is an illustration of the puckishly volatile influence of an independent, strong-willed personality on a group of irremediably incapable outcasts, defined entirely by their ailments and delusions. Only the deeply introverted and protectively secretive “Chief” Bromden is shown to demonstrate autonomy, and even then is coerced into doing so by traumatic circumstance. The incorrigible “Mac” McMurphy is an agent of *noise*, rupturing the patients’ hushed, repressive world with untameable abandon.

The film is exceptionally powerful and enthralling to this day, and tangibly motivated by compassion; but without disparaging the undeniable quality of the film on its own terms, the preceding description clearly illustrates that it is also problematic in its depiction of the patients. Like many dramatic recreations of mental illness, the film relies on what Cross describes as ‘a process of *imaging the illness* so that viewers can see what it looks like.’<sup>161</sup> It reinforces the idea that mental illness, fundamentally, is something that is *seen* and *heard*. These depictions are founded on vivid, theatrically intense performances and simplistically striking characterisations that are clearly *performed*, and fictive; and yet the tropes established by them are tremendously pervasive (not least, its viscerally traumatic depiction of electro-convulsive therapy) and clearly continue to inform distortive cultural apprehensions about the experience of mental illness and its treatment. *Screening Madness* singles this film out for criticism as an inadvertent perpetuator of stigma:

The supporting players of *One Flew Over The Cuckoo's Nest* were weak, stammering, easily controlled, and of bizarre appearance (conflating mental illness with learning disability). [...] The important point here is that no disadvantaged group ever achieved equality by getting the public to feel sorry for its members. To beat stigma against people with mental health problems, we need parity not pity.<sup>162</sup>

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<sup>161</sup> Cross, *Mediating Madness*, 139.

<sup>162</sup> Rethink Mental Illness, *Screening Madness*, 6.

The influential effect of these exaggerated performances on cultural constructs of mental illness is underlined by Cross when noting that ‘Gilman points out that stereotypical representations are not necessarily accurate, rather, they enable the intended audience to recognise that it is madness that is being portrayed’ and goes on to quote Gilman directly, that ‘We want – no, we need – the ‘mad’ to be different, so we create out of the stuff of their reality the myths that make them different.’<sup>163</sup>

One of the most enduring impressions that the film cultivates is in its famously dissonant use of sound and music. The bowed saw and other concrete accoutrements of scorer Jack Nitzsche contrast brazenly with the diegetic deployment of recorded music within the narrative, and it is perhaps this element, more than any other, that imprints indelibly upon the memory of the viewer. Mantovani’s queasy orchestral arrangement of *Charmaine* underlies a number of the most disturbing scenes of the film, with pointedly jarring incongruity; the staff of the asylum, under the direction of the affect-impooverished Nurse Ratched, blare the recording at high volumes in order to smother and silence the brutality of their care beneath an anodyne, soporific veil of sound. The effect is a savagely dissonant impression and associative imposition of the horrifying with the cloyingly mawkish. Malformed by its excoriating context, the plangent inanity of the piece becomes a silencing *noise*, easy listening inverted. This malign juxtaposition directly influences the repeated contrast of smooth melodic textures and abrasive noises deployed within my portfolio of recordings.

### ***Session 9***

The 2001 film *Session 9* explicitly cross-pollinates fact with fiction by locating – and in no small measure, deriving – its drama in and from the authentic environs of Danvers State Hospital, an asylum built in 1874 in the state of Massachusetts. At the time of filming, the site was derelict but structurally intact, allowing the filmmakers to dwell on every evocative detail with tangible relish, and integrate extensive tracts of historical fact into the fabric of the unfolding narrative (the property was eventually demolished, except for its outermost architectural shell). The film depicts a financially precarious Asbestos abatement company accepting a contract to remove all Asbestos from the site within a single week; this high stakes scenario creates pressure, tension and psychological strain within the team, exacerbated by the intimidating and rarefied setting of the asylum. The removal of the Asbestos representationally

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<sup>163</sup> Cross, *Mediating Madness*, 131.

stages the scouring of deleterious psychic influences from the building as a preamble to gentrification, and the enduring psychological lethality of its contents long after it has ceased to be of use to society. One member of the team unearths a trove of old hypnotherapy recordings on decayed magnetic tape, and the increasing tension and deterioration of the present narrative is intermingled with exponentially fraught aural projections of the trauma of this previous patient, now deceased. *Noise* emerges from the ambiguous presence of these shreds of time, and manifests in the hazardous material of the Asbestos, and the disquieting vitality of the abandoned space.

This deliberate deployment of recording technology and mechanical reproduction in the plot itself (as a means of mediating a sense of haunting, and fracturing the relations of time and space within the setting) is highly effective; and the audible degeneration of the recording technology aesthetically echoes the dilapidation of the building itself. This is counterpointed richly throughout the film by the soundtrack, which is founded on the possibilities of analogue tape manipulation in the traditions of *Musique Concrète*. The means of mechanical production and replication are themselves incorporated as sound-sources, deploying rickety loops, wavering analogue wobble, languorous and sickly expanses of pitch-duration stretch, cobwebbed patterns of clicks and pops, slow reverses and anxious rotor flurries to abrade the surfaces of slow piano notes and indistinct concrete sound.

The effect is a sounding of the unreliability and treacherousness of memory and perception, of the malleability and susceptibility to manipulation of historical record through the power of editing, and even of the insidious entrenchment of the Asbestos itself. It is the *noise* of interference in memory and chronology by the clandestine influences that shape and distort perception. The filmic aesthetics that accompany the music are an object lesson in the visual signatures of the asylum in cinema; lingering shots of intensified light and dark, gradual focuses, slow fades and vertiginous camera perspectives. These visual signatures are an artistic manifestation and permutation of the dissonant accounts of the asylum experience throughout their history. These techniques enact a confluence of conflicting time and space that un-anchors the asylum from the corporeal and the chronological, allowing it to free-float through the endlessly permeable fog of popular culture, dispersing its residue behind. The film's ultimate disruption of linear time is that while substantially derelict since the mid-80s, the hospital as a

whole was not entirely disused and formally declared closed until 2004;<sup>164</sup> three years *after* the theatrical release of *Session 9*.

In *Session 9*, the fictive is both overshadowed and irrigated by the actual, yet without ever yielding centre frame to the latter. By this measure it meticulously stages the permeability and spectral relativity of the two. The result is a charging and affective intensification of its ultimate subject, Danvers State Hospital, with heightened aesthetic properties and the express validation of a specific vernacular for the filmic treatment of the asylum. It also sets tangible precedents for the juxtaposition and inter-permeation of factual detail and footage with cinematic hyperrealism in documentary studies in the years that followed. To give just two examples, BBC's indelicately named *Mental: A History of the Madhouse*<sup>165</sup> and *Tim Rhys-Evans: All In The Mind*<sup>166</sup> – with their dizzying angles, slow fades and aching isolationist piano notes provide striking contrast to the spare, stark and strictly unadorned footage of Frederick Wiseman's landmark and incendiary feature-length study *Titicut Follies* (1967)<sup>167</sup>, half a century earlier. The aesthetic treatment of the asylum in each of these BBC documentaries in sound and visuals is both elegant and painterly. This cannot be read outside the context of overarching demands and expectations of consumers for cinematic production values within documentary filming that are readily apparent throughout this medium regardless of topic; however, both documentaries specifically deploy the signature visual techniques listed above in their presentation, and make extensive use of sparse, reverbed piano notes as a facilitator and intensifier of emotional engagement, framing pathos. While it would be specious and reductive to assert that *Session 9* is primarily responsible for establishing these aesthetic signifiers, it is a divertingly comprehensive, lucid and stylistically fluent specimen.

### ***Titicut Follies***

While *Titicut Follies* is justifiably renowned as a classic of documentary film-making,<sup>168</sup> it has never been awarded the mainstream cultural exposure that it warrants (thanks largely to its dismayingly censorious repression at the hands of the government of Massachusetts, that ensured the film was banned for the 25 years following completion due to its unremittingly

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<sup>164</sup> Moon, Kearns & Joseph, *Afterlives*, 18.

<sup>165</sup> *Mental: A History of the Madhouse*, Chris Boulding, 2010, 60min (BBC Broadcast).  
<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b00sfpvf>

<sup>166</sup> *Tim Rhys-Evans: All In The Mind*, Mei Williams, 2016, 45min (BBC Broadcast).  
<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b075f78j>

<sup>167</sup> *Titicut Follies: A Documentary*, Frederick Wiseman, 1967, 84min (Zipporah Films).

<sup>168</sup> Thomas W. Benson and Carolyn Anderson, *Reality Fictions: The Films of Frederick Wiseman* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.) (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2002).

harsh portrayal of the failures of care providers to the inmates).<sup>169</sup> Filmed at Bridgewater State Hospital, a correction facility for the criminally insane, *Titicut Follies* unflinchingly lays bare the horrors and indignities inflicted upon its inmates in the name of treatment. Composed entirely of naturalistic footage, free of voiceover or score, its affective impact is largely unfiltered, except for editing. The combination of spare style and graphic content – which undoubtedly increased its capacity to shock and appal upon its release - provides an interesting twist to the censorious response the film provoked. Cross notes that ‘while sensationalism is the stock-in-trade of drama, it is not supposed to be the motivation behind actuality-based programming. [...] *Titicut Follies* fell foul of the regulating impact of genre.’<sup>170</sup> This provides an interesting alternate narrative to the gradual integration of dramatic elements and reconstructions in documentary vernacular, as a means of modulating the impact of distressing material in order to get it past censors while still generating an affective impact.

What is fascinating about this when contrasted with the other films discussed in this section, is the extent to which the aesthetic vernacular associated with depictions of the asylum in film is absent. Partly this is traceable to the limitations of technology – and it is important to note that in this respect cinematic style *or an absence thereof* is no guarantor of authenticity in itself<sup>171</sup> – and partly this is also due to the austere, ascetic delivery of Wiseman’s trademark technique of *reality fiction*.<sup>172</sup> Its apparently unfiltered impact is undeniably potent, its realism persuasive. As Aftab and Weltz note: ‘The refusal to sensationalise through direct questioning, voice-overs and numerous cuts of the subject matter only adds to the idea that what is being presented holds an inner truth.’<sup>173</sup> It is a persuasiveness wholly distinct from the affectively intensified, digestible hyper-reality of cinema. The approaches have more in common than is readily apparent, as Wiseman openly emphasises with the description *reality fictions*: ‘The final film resembles fiction although it is based on un-staged, un-manipulated actions. I don't manipulate the events, but the editing is highly manipulative and the shooting is highly manipulative, not in the sense that people do things differently from what they will ordinarily do, but the way that people are shot’.<sup>174</sup>

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<sup>169</sup> Barry K. Grant, *Five Films by Frederick Wiseman: Titicut Follies, High School, Welfare, High School II, Public Housing* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), 15.

<sup>170</sup> Cross, *Mediating Madness*, 137.

<sup>171</sup> Megan Cunningham, *The Art of the Documentary: Fifteen Conversations with Leading Directors, Cinematographers, Editors and Producers* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.) (Berkeley: New Riders, 2014),

<sup>172</sup> Benson & Anderson, *Reality Fictions*.

<sup>173</sup> Kaleem Aftab and Alexandra Weltz, ‘Fred Wiseman’, *Film West*, 2000,

<https://eclass.uoa.gr/modules/document/file.php/ENL300/Interview%20with%20Wiseman%20from%20Film%20West%20Irish%20Film%20Journal.doc>

<sup>174</sup> *Ibid.*



However, this is telling about the power of presentation to influence what information is culturally mediated, and what disseminates the most pervasively. The Romantic lens of cinematic narrative, its fluency and articulacy in presenting messages, its intensification of voyeuristic experience, is a phenomenal shaper of culture. This is evident in the fact that *One Flew Over The Cuckoo's Nest* has been preserved by the United States Library of Congress as 'culturally, historically or aesthetically significant'<sup>175</sup> while *Titicut Follies* languished in cultural exile for the quarter-century following its completion. This also demonstrates that the cultural mediation of mental illness and its treatment occurs within the political and ideological remit of the state apparatus, its expedience and advantage. It is also interesting to note that the popular film review website Rotten Tomatoes classifies *One Flew Over The Cuckoo's Nest* under 'classics',<sup>176</sup> and *Titicut Follies* as 'Special Interest' among their category filters.<sup>177</sup> In *Reducing the Stigma of Mental Illness*, Sartorius and Schulze note ruefully that: 'With so many simple-minded messages that lodge in our minds like stones in our shoes, we might imagine that a clever turn of phrase or dramatic image is all that it takes to capture the attention of a massively distracted (and, in the case of mental illness, massively indifferent) culture.'<sup>178</sup>

This is a dangerous illustration of the escalating primacy of fiction over fact; this thesis, lest we forget, occurs in the context of a burgeoning post-fact politics in the wake of the Brexit referendum and President Trump. It also raises more complex questions about the capacity of film, or any other medium, to capture or impart truth and actuality. There is no escaping the reality that experience is now modulated by more technologically-mediated sources of information than ever before, as social technology integrates ever more insidiously into our lives; and therefore it is crucial to understand that the arts have a burgeoning capacity to shape culture. The fact in itself of the sheer scale of information available at our fingertips, and its constant flux of exponential proliferation, is in itself a crucial qualifier of this, subject to 'a Multiplier Effect' – where message effectiveness increases when multiple media is used'.<sup>179</sup> The aestheticisation of the asylum and of mental health care within the arts has the capability

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<sup>175</sup> Anon., 'Complete National Film Registry Listing', *Library of Congress*, <https://www.loc.gov/programs/national-film-preservation-board/film-registry/complete-national-film-registry-listing/>

<sup>176</sup> Anon., 'One Flew Over The Cuckoo's Nest', *Rotten Tomatoes*, (No Date) [https://www.rottentomatoes.com/m/one\\_flew\\_over\\_the\\_cuckoos\\_nest](https://www.rottentomatoes.com/m/one_flew_over_the_cuckoos_nest) (accessed 22nd November 2018)

<sup>177</sup> Anon., 'Titicut Follies', *Rotten Tomatoes*, (No Date) [https://www.rottentomatoes.com/m/titicut\\_follies](https://www.rottentomatoes.com/m/titicut_follies) (accessed 22nd November 2018)

<sup>178</sup> Norman Sartorius and Hugh Schulze, *Reducing the Stigma of Mental Illness: A Report from the Global Programme of the World Psychiatric Association* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 172.

<sup>179</sup> *Ibid.*, 165.

to produce tremendous, ineradicable damage to the lives of the stigmatized. All practitioners who choose to address this field do so with a moral obligation to be accountable in their approach with a view to cultivating understanding.

A key goal of the creative portfolio accompanying this account, therefore, is to utilise the aesthetic vernacular discussed above, that has evolved primarily out of cinema and the soundings that form a crucial dimension of cinema, to interrogate and critique the treatment of mental illness in the arts and media. On a level of sounding, much of this process is straightforward; the sound generation techniques and practices used in the above films are all demonstrated and thoroughly explored within the portfolio. Particular emphasis is placed upon the point of juxtaposition; the actual mingling with the synthesized and the fictive, plangent melody corrupted by rupturing noise, the symbolically representative dimensions of technology, etc.

This is a reflexive introjection of my own flawed aesthetical inculcation and contradictory fascinations back into the cultural diaspora in which I participate. At heart, there is an element of atonement to this, coloured by personal history; and this attempt at accountability is also a source of anxiety. In awareness of the capacity of the finest art for culpability in stigma, the creative path I trace through this minefield must demonstrate the utmost care, or fail; and even in failing, cultivate the means to own and rise above the failure and strike forward once more, to do better the next time.

### **2.3 Accountability Anxiety**

*Screening Madness* identifies popular film as ‘a reservoir of prejudice, ignorance and fear that feeds and perpetuates damaging stereotypes of people with mental health problems. It shows the evidence that links powerful negative images with public prejudice.’<sup>180</sup> That a report prepared by a consortium of several influential charities has such a passionately voiced indictment to make about treatments of mental illness in film, illustrates not only the centrality of accountability to creative practice, but that this fact is no guarantor that creators will evince any such thing. The list of problematic films provided in the report is disquietingly extensive. Moreover, it raises the disturbing question of how much lengthier this list of offending titles would be if the field was broadened to include music, literature, and art of all stripes, not to mention the print media.

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<sup>180</sup> Rethink Mental Illness, *Screening Madness*, 1.

To examine this point more closely, *Screening Madness* shows that there are questions around accountability and the acceptance of personal responsibility among practitioners in the arts and entertainment fields that go largely unaddressed when the theme of mental illness is tackled. Professions that work directly within this field in different capacities, such as healthcare practitioners, educators and even the print media, are subject to regulation, quality assurance protocols and robust infrastructure for delimiting personal responsibilities and standards. When directly interrogating a subject like mental health, the arts on a professional scale will intersect with all of these roles; the arts may educate, may mediate, or may even take on therapeutic dimensions. This is not to suggest that the accountability of artists should or could be systematised with the same rigour; however, in light of the contributory role that the arts have to the culture around mental health, the reductive indulgence of ‘art for art’s sake’ makes a feeble justification for the disavowal of culpability. In this context an innate duty of personal responsibility must be recognised even at the most amateur point of the scale. The question of accountability in such a fraught area may be intimidating without guidance; at such times, the maxim of ‘art for art’s sake’, despite its feebleness, is still a tempting get-out clause; but ultimately this is a futile means to diffuse responsibility. It is difficult in this context, and after Walter Benjamin’s example in *The Work Of Art In The Age of Mechanical Reproduction*,<sup>181</sup> not to interpret the more formal and ideological permutations of this maxim as ‘L’art pour l’art’, and the Futurists’ sloganeering radicalisation of the idea as ‘Let art be created, though the world perish’ as profoundly dislocated and indulgent elitist whimsy at best, or wilfully flagrant negligence at the worst.

The practitioner who addresses mental health through their work must accept an inalienable obligation to take ownership of the impacts their work has, be it positive or negative, and especially when the work can be seen to perpetuate stigmatisation. This is not about excusing or ameliorating the culpability and agency of those who act upon such prejudices; but this behaviour demonstrably does not occur in a cultural vacuum, any more than other forms of Othering, discrimination and bigotry. Sommer stresses that: ‘In fact all of us are cultural agents: those who make, comment, buy, sell, reflect, allocate, decorate, vote, don’t vote, or otherwise lead social, culturally constructed, lives. The appropriate question about agency is not if we

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<sup>181</sup> Walter Benjamin and J.A. Underwood, *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction* (London: Penguin, 2008).

exercise it, but how self-consciously we do so; that is, to what end and what effect.’<sup>182</sup> While we may naturally mediate culture to one another through daily interactions, through our participation in a broader social context, the arts and media act as amplifiers for that participation, allowing our personal investments into culture to disseminate far more widely and deeply. It follows that the sense of responsibility and care of the cultural agent in question should be amplified in proportion.

Even compassionate depictions of mental illness within the arts are subject to an innate susceptibility to depersonalisation, which is a key mechanism of stigma, promoting the suppression of empathy.<sup>183</sup> Sympathetic but shallow characterisations that amplify the symptomology of mental illness, that deny or omit a person’s autonomy or agency as individuals outside of the remits of their diagnoses, or reproduce worn clichés at the expense of authentically individual experience, can be just as attitudinally damaging and disempowering as more inflammatory portrayals; what *Screening Madness* describes as the ‘credibility gap between popular films and reality’.<sup>184</sup> It can even be argued that the elementary fact that a fictional character must always be subordinate to the artwork in which it originates demonstrates an inevitable quality of depersonalisation. This is not to flatly disavow the scope for exploring mental illness through this medium but it should underline how important it is to be careful, conscientious and to only create works that can be robustly justified.

This naturally presents a new dimension of challenge in addition to inherent challenges of creative practice; the element of accountability can counter-intuit expressive instincts, the latent responses of personal taste and the permissibility of process. Art founded on self-conscious didacticism or a discernible proselytistic dimension may struggle to reconcile these motives with intrinsic artistic merit. Sommer dryly describes this potential double-bind scenario as the ‘burden of responsibility to be ingenious and accountable’<sup>185</sup> but elaborates more positively that: ‘It’s not that creative arts lack intrinsic value, but that this very autonomy triggers fresh perceptions and unclogs procedure in ways that make it a social resource to be reckoned with.’<sup>186</sup>

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<sup>182</sup> Sommer, ‘Art and Accountability’, 261.

<sup>183</sup> Hinshaw, *The Mark of Shame*.

<sup>184</sup> Rethink Mental Illness, *Screening Madness*, 6.

<sup>185</sup> Sommer, ‘Art and Accountability’, 261.

<sup>186</sup> *Ibid.*, 262.

Faced with such an abundance of information and materials as are available to the contemporary practitioner, the enormity and inscrutability of ephemeral truths can produce something akin to an agoraphobic arrest; an option paralysis of competing authorities, ideologies and cases which can be creatively incapacitating. In their introduction to *Documentary Across Disciplines*, editors Balsom and Peleg articulate this threat when discussing the work of documentarian James Agee. '[...] a performance of the extent to which he cowers when faced with the immensity and intractability of actuality. He is simply not certain that his representation can be just or adequate, and is deeply reflexive about the techniques he marshals to create it.'<sup>187</sup>

However, this is not to preclude art that is founded in joy, imagination or play, or to replace these solely with works that are earnest but stultifying, the creator wringing their hands in a desperate effort to offend the sensibilities of none. Sommer argues convincingly that the former qualities are not only essential but conditional for art to contribute meaningfully to positive social change: 'Without imagining the world otherwise, change is unthinkable. And thinking otherwise is an invitation to play.'<sup>188</sup> Few would argue unconditionally for art devoid of risk, without scope for representing and expressing contradictory, conflicted and complex experiences, and through those contradictions imply potentialities for positive change, or adaptability to changing contexts and information. An overabundance of assent, a dearth of diversity of views and values, may signal a different kind of dysfunction altogether; the incapacitation of debate in the name of protection is an especially contentious issue in the age of safe spaces. The silencing of accountability (i.e. to deny someone a platform to explain themselves when their work has been deemed offensive) is a discrete danger from the neglect of accountability, and either may be argued to depersonalise and deny agency to the social protectorates that the former seeks to safeguard. In *Directing the Documentary*, Rabiger refers drolly to adherents of this ethos as *Behalfers*: 'These folks make it their business to speak for those without a voice, which ultimately is everyone unable to make their own films. [...] So whenever you get the impulse to do good, be awfully clear with yourself about its basis and its practical difficulties. Beneficiaries need accountability when you elect to speak for them.'<sup>189</sup>

Crucially, accountability should not be a shackle or oppressive force, but an enabler. Beneath the scale and complexity of this intimidating context, the creative practitioner is at once dwarfed

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<sup>187</sup> Erika Balsom and Hila Peleg, (eds.) *Documentary Across Disciplines* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press), 12.

<sup>188</sup> Sommer, 'Art and Accountability', 264.

<sup>189</sup> Michael Rabiger, *Directing the Documentary* (6<sup>th</sup> Ed.) (Burlington, MA: Focal Press, 2015), 331-332.

and empowered by the personal limitations of their sense of accountability and agency. According to Sommer, ‘Agent is a term that acknowledges the small shifts in perspective and practice that can turn artists and teachers into first movers towards collective change’.<sup>190</sup> The limitation is enabling in that it establishes a parity with our peers; a freedom conditional on the tolerance of the freedom of others and a simple acceptance of their accountability for their own conscious contribution to culture. This is discrete and controllable (insofar as realistically can be) through the creative practice; a cumulative evidence base for the determination to do better. Freed from a pressure to try and say everything, we understand the value in doing what we can. To strive and aspire towards cultivating the changes we wish to perceive in culture and within ourselves (to “unclog perceptions”) through whatever effort we are capable of. Sommer describes this mindset as *Self-Authorisation*, the exercise of taking creative control over those materials directly available to us; as she notes, ‘constraint is a condition of creativity, not a nemesis [...] Artists and truly rational citizens know that their own competing values and desires as well as changing conditions make choices subject to change.’<sup>191</sup>

The approach of James Agee, as related by Balsom and Peleg articulates the acceptance of limitation inherent in self-authorisation with elegance and flair: ‘Agee writes in spite of the insufficiency of writing. He recognises the lack of language, the inevitable betrayals it will perpetrate, when faced with the overwhelming materiality of the real. He declares the failure and treason of the word with a humility that must be seen as ethical.’<sup>192</sup> Rabiger’s reassurances to aspiring documentary makers also voice elements of self-authorisation, with language that can be easily adapted to other practices:

You cannot show events themselves, only a construct of selected shots and viewpoints that sketch in the key facts, action, and emphases – all subjectively determined by you, the filmmaker. Doing it fairly will face you with ethical dilemmas over which you will sometimes lose sleep. But if your film can show a broad factual grasp of its subject, evidence that is persuasive and self-evidently reliable, and the courage and insight to make interpretive judgments, then it is worthy of our trust. That is the best anyone can do.<sup>193</sup>

A neat example of self-authorisation in the case of a wholly independent and autonomous creative practitioner is provided by Mark Haddon, author of the novel *The Curious Incident of*

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<sup>190</sup> Sommer, ‘Art and Accountability’, 262.

<sup>191</sup> *Ibid.*, 268.

<sup>192</sup> Balsom & Peleg, *Documentary Across Disciplines*, 11-12.

<sup>193</sup> Rabiger, *Directing the Documentary*, 68.

*the Dog in the Night-time*, the narrator of which is implied to have an autism spectrum disorder. In a 2009 blog post, Haddon candidly states his ethos to be that ‘imagination always trumps research’. He goes on to clarify how his sense of accountability intersects with this ethos:

i thought that if i could make Christopher real to me then he'd be real to readers. i gave him some rules to live by and some character traits and opinions, all of which i borrowed from people i know, none of whom would be labelled as having a disability. [...] labels say nothing about a person. they say only how the rest of us categorise that person. good literature is always about peeling labels off. and treating real people with dignity is always about peeling the labels off. a diagnosis may lead to practical help. but genuinely understanding another human being involves talking and listening to them and finding out what makes them an individual, not what makes them part of a group. i passionately believe this and i've said it repeatedly in many different forms. to become a spokesperson for those with asperger's or autism, or to present myself as some kind of expert in the field, would completely undermine this, and make me look like a fool into the bargain. i would much rather spend my time writing more novels, standing up for difference and trying to understand outsiders who see the world in surprising and revealing ways.<sup>194</sup>

It is this positive, permissive but conscientious model of accountability that informs and shapes the mixed-modality of practice employed herein; a highly personal and autoethnographic sounding of the forms of societal and psychological *noise* that have arisen in this discourse. It is a method that brings together marginal musical forms and a confrontational form of subjectivity to create an arena wherein I feel my creative skills are best placed to generate meaningful insights.

## 2.4 Fear For The Mind

Dennis Lehane's 2003 novel *Shutter Island*<sup>195</sup> is another intriguing treatment of the psychiatric asylum/hospital in fiction; its 2008 film adaptation, directed by Martin Scorsese with lashings of brooding atmospheric gloom, was well entrenched in the cinematic vernacular of its predecessors in asylum cinema.<sup>196</sup> The novel depicts a penal psychiatric hospital complex situated on a small, isolated island an hour's sail off the coast from Boston that experiences an investigation by federal marshals, ostensibly to locate an escaped inmate, but additionally as a covert fact-finding mission on behalf of a concerned political interest (the events of the narrative transpire in 1954 – a year on the cusp of the psychopharmacological revolution in psychiatric

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<sup>194</sup> Mark Haddon, 'Aspergers and Autism', *markhaddon.com*, 2009 <http://www.markhaddon.com/aspergers-and-autism>

<sup>195</sup> Dennis Lehane, *Shutter Island* (London: Bantam, 2010).

<sup>196</sup> *Shutter Island*, Martin Scorsese, 2008, 137 min. (DVD, Paramount Home Entertainment).

care, in which effective medications first became available and viable as a primary method of treatment, and a sea change in attitudes about institutionalisation).

From the onset, the narrative employs classic tropes of the psychiatric institution as a site of the clandestine; secrets and lies, dissimulation and dissembling, Machiavellian webs of intrigue and subterfuge. The poetic imagery of the novel is employed sparingly, but with an affective and poignant lyricism; and there are readily apparent readings to be made of the island, adrift in a hostile sea and buffeted by hurricanes, as the human mind beset by the *noise* of life, continuously confronting the roiling black depths of its shadow and antithesis, the sea, from which it emerges, the permeable boundaries of its shoreline incessantly transgressed by the creeping tides. Thus isolated, the complex is a hothouse of simmering tensions, dysfunctional taboos, and the incipient threat of violence and disorder. Within these contexts, the dramatic tension of the novel derives from erosion of the integrity of the mind, its innate fallibility and self-undermining by its own potential for dysfunction; and the ambiguous role that reflexive self-observation plays in monitoring them. This thematic fulcrum is articulated early in the narrative, by one of the facility's inmates, Peter:

‘You ever think about it?’

‘Your mind?’

‘*The* mind,’ he said. ‘Mine, yours, anyone’s. It’s an engine essentially. That’s what it is. A very delicate, intricate motor. And it’s got all these pieces, all these gears and bolts and hinges. And we don’t even know what half of them do. But if one gear slips, just *one*... Have you thought about that?’

‘Not recently.’

‘You should. It’s like a car. No different. One gear slips, one bolt cracks, and the whole system goes haywire. Can you live knowing that?’ He tapped his temple. ‘That it’s all trapped in here and you can’t get to it and you don’t really control it. But it controls you, doesn’t it? And if it decides one day that it doesn’t feel like coming to work?’ He leaned forward, and they could see tendons straining in his neck. ‘Well, then you’re pretty much good and fucked, aren’t you?’

‘Interesting perspective,’ Chuck said.

Peter leaned back in his chair, suddenly listless. ‘That’s what scares me most.’<sup>197</sup>

This fear for the integrity of the mind, and the loss or absence of control over its function, I argue articulates an elemental human experience; Foucault terms it ‘The Great Fear’, tracing its emergence to the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century and seeding what would become the Victorian asylum system.<sup>198</sup> The fear *for* one’s own mind and *of* one’s own illness is fulcrumatic to Foucault’s

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<sup>197</sup> Lehane, *Shutter Island*, 133.

<sup>198</sup> Foucault, *Madness and Civilisation*, 192.



interpretation of the asylum; ‘an essential presence’.<sup>199</sup> For the purpose of this research, however, I wish to return from Foucault to my own sense that fear for the integrity of the mind is a genuinely elemental human experience that I do not feel can be conclusively anchored to any single form of articulation, defined space or period in history. Stripped of the specificities of language, its Western/Occidental cultural furnishings, and its hypothetical location in time and space, this sense of fear *of* and *for* the mind, and by extension the fallibility of one’s perception, expresses something fundamental and universal about humanity. This assertion in turn can be expressed and explored using Jung’s *archetypes*.

## 2.5 The Archetypes

Jung’s biographer Stevens states that: ‘Archetypes are ‘identical psychic structures common to all’ (CW V, para. 224) which together constitute ‘the archaic heritage of humanity’ (CW V, para. 259).’<sup>200</sup> Essentially, he conceived them to be innate neuropsychic centres possessing the capacity to initiate, control, and mediate the common behavioural characteristics and typical experiences of all human beings. *Archetypes* are cognitive potentialities that represent the bridge between the universal potential of being human with the unique content and character of a person’s psyche. As such, the *archetypes* serve as an attempt to interrogate the schemata of the mind at their most elemental level; the quantum components of cognition integral to the human mind whatever its sociocultural circumstances or experiences. A deductive sounding of the remotest depths of the psyche to detect the presence of absolute commonalities – also known as the *collective unconscious*.

Jung identified a number of *archetypes* and explored them extensively, including the *Mother*, the *Child*, the *Wise Old Man (or Senex)* and the *Shadow*. For example, the *Shadow* represents the parts of ourselves hidden from our conscious awareness; those characteristics and proclivities within ourselves that we may disavow or find constitutionally unpalatable, in effect our “dark side”. The *Wise Old Man*, meanwhile, represents the capacity to acquire knowledge and develop sophisticated judgement and perceptual faculties based on that knowledge. The *Shadow* in particular is an *archetype* which shall be explored in detail, later in the text; a key dictum that Jung identified for psychological growth and self-realisation was the *confrontation* of, and reconciliation with, one’s *Shadow*. This process has proved a powerful element in Jungian psychotherapy and the capacity to accept illness, or thoughts and behaviours that the

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<sup>199</sup> Foucault, *Madness and Civilisation*, 232.

<sup>200</sup> Stevens, *Jung*, 33.

patient may find distressing or traumatic in themselves: ‘Jung “depathologized” the archetypal and trans-personal aspects of the psyche by verifying their function as the creative matrix for the entire personality. Repression, fixation, identification or denial of those aspects of psychological process, leads to the ills which modern society suffers.’<sup>201</sup> As an insight, this represented a powerful evolution in psychodynamics, not to mention a constructive empathy and compassion for individuals suffering from complex difficulties and experiences.

Arriving at a clear definition of Jung’s *archetypes* can be challenging. This is partly due to the fact that Jung appears to have developed the concept through a number of divergent incarnations as his ideas evolved, and partly as the interpretive flex allowed by this evolution has enabled self-described Jungian writers to elaborate upon their own permutations.<sup>202</sup> In addition Jung’s voluminous prose style, as richly endowed with mythopoeic flourishes and circuitous flights of allusion as it is, often threatens to topple over into prolixity; it is hardly surprising then that some readers have difficulty unearthing the incisive ideas that underlie his writing. It has certainly lead more than a few critics to accuse Jung of incorrigible woolliness, superfluous romanticism and a wheelbarrow-load of implicit prejudices.<sup>203</sup> However I feel that the core ideas here, as I understand them, allow for valuable insights into essential human experience. It can also be argued that the sheer ostentation of the hermetic and mystical detail employed by Jung as an amplificatory lens for elementary processes of the mind perceptibly anticipates the oracular fervour of Iain Sinclair’s prose and other writers of this temperament. To read Jung certainly requires a similar tolerance for obscurantism on the basis that this approach has the potential to generate a wealth of insights inaccessible through drier methodologies. That this fecundity of imagination sheathes incisive psychological insight is a persistent dissonance in Jung’s work, as the preceding discourse on alchemy has already demonstrated; yet, his own accounts testify that these insights, which have profoundly informed humanistic approaches to psychology, are conditional on, and inextricable from, their esoteric origins.<sup>204</sup>

For example, the anthropomorphic characterisations with which he endows the key *archetypes* he identifies are explicitly shaped by mythological resonances, which Jung explicitly grounds as the elemental rhizomes underlying figures from a diversity of spiritual traditions. The *Mother*

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<sup>201</sup> Salman, ‘The Creative Psyche’, 74.

<sup>202</sup> Michael V. Adams, ‘The Archetypal School’ in Young-Eisendrath, P., and Dawson, T. (eds.) *The Cambridge Companion to Jung* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 107-108.

<sup>203</sup> Young-Eisendrath & Dawson, *Cambridge Companion*, xv.

<sup>204</sup> Salman, ‘The Creative Psyche’, 57.

figure, the *Wise Old Man (or Senex)*, the *Animus* and *Anima*, etc., lend themselves to specific modes and contexts of interpretation but nonetheless have the potential to mask the cogency of the model. My interpretation of this is that *archetypes* represent an innate infrastructure for encoding those experiences and images that accord with key survival instincts of the primal human. As Jung is quick to emphasise, these are ‘innate possibilities of ideas’, not ideas themselves, or content or experiences; they describe the cognitive structures that modulate how these are encoded in the brain, ingrained in the sense that some determined capacity for organising information must logically precede encoding (in the same way that having a stomach has to precede eating and digestion).<sup>205</sup> As Adams notes:

Although Archetypes “do not produce any contents of themselves, they give definite form to contents that have already been acquired” through experience (CW 10, pp. 10-11). Jung (CW 15, p.81) insists that archetypes do not determine the content of experience but constrain the form of it, “within certain categories”. Archetypes are a collective inheritance of general, abstract forms that structure the personal acquisition of particular, concrete contents.<sup>206</sup>

When activated by experience, or *actualised*, as Jung expresses it, the inherent potential of the *archetypes* are developed as the psyche generates its own personalised permutation. For example, the *Mother archetype* represents the universal human concept of having been borne by a mother; in itself, this potentiality of knowledge is passive. The *archetype* however may be activated and actualised by your specific experience of your own mother, and the memories and associations accrued experientially form a unique shell around the nucleus of the universal experience of having a mother. By such means a *Mother complex* evolves, endowed with the sense of meaning derived from one’s relationship with one’s mother (or lack thereof).

The *archetype* merely provides an abstract and elemental cognitive foundation on which to build memory and understanding. This cognitive system as a whole is what is described as the *collective unconscious*; the basic psychological underpinning of all human experience. ‘Archetypes [similarly] combine the universal with the individual, the general with the unique, in that they are common to all humanity, yet nevertheless manifest themselves in every human being in a way peculiar to him or to her.’<sup>207</sup>

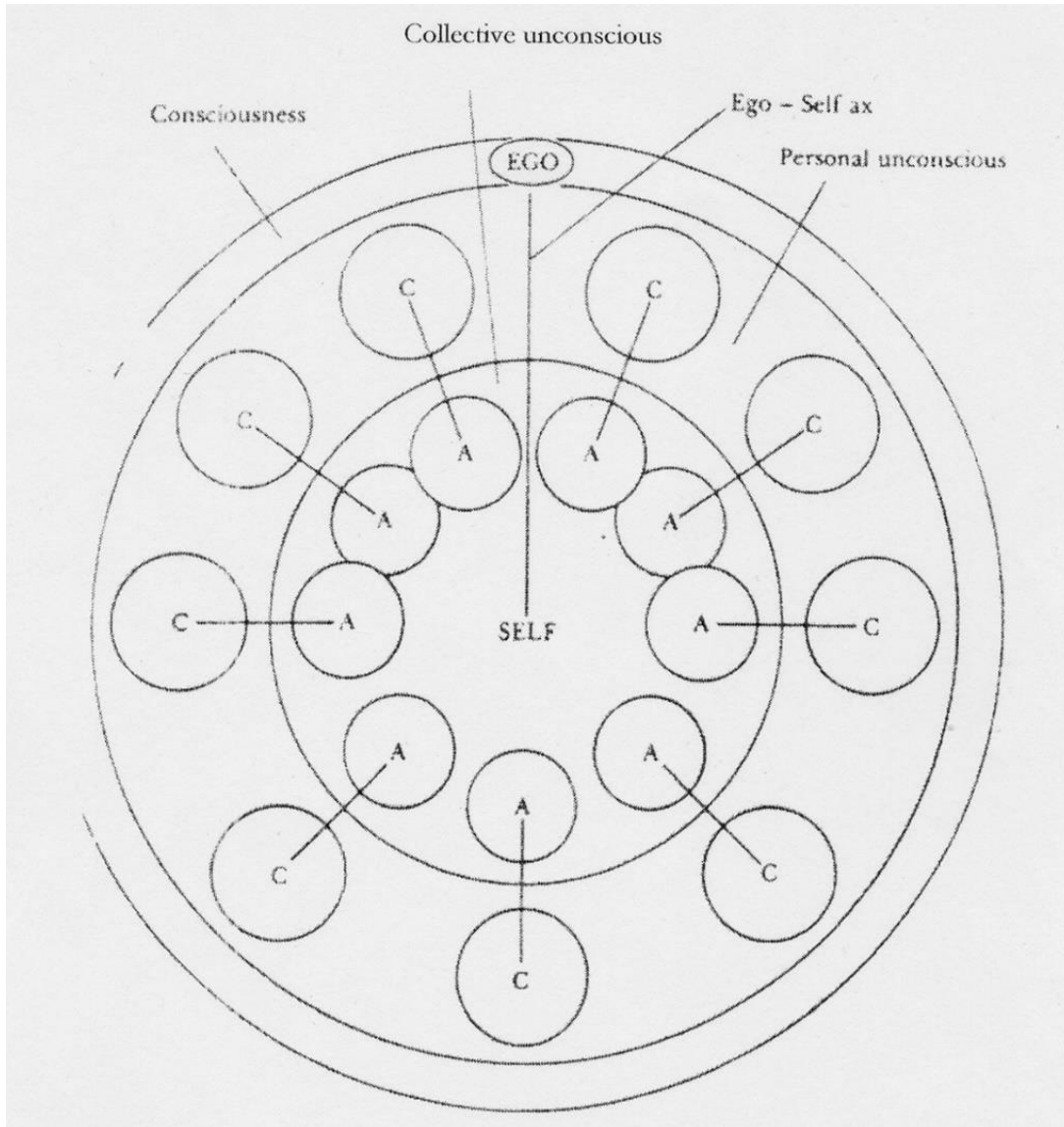
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<sup>205</sup> Stevens, *Jung*, 33-34.

<sup>206</sup> Adams, ‘The Archetypal School’, 108.

<sup>207</sup> Stevens, *Jung*, 35.

Jung developed a model to illustrate this process and his sense of the structure of the psyche, which is very useful for making his ideas intelligible (and also lends itself to adaptation as a compositional tool; of which more anon). The following diagram is reproduced from Stevens' biography of Jung:<sup>208</sup>



*Figure 1: Jung's Model of the Psyche*

<sup>208</sup> Stevens, *Jung*, 34.

## 2.6 Psychic Breakdown

At the centre of Jung's model resides the *self*, which contains the whole system permeating every aspect, while also operating as a central executive or nucleus which maintains the holistic integrity of the psyche. This locus is surrounded by three concentric circles which outline a simplified demarcation of the psyche into the *collective unconscious*, the *personal unconscious*, and the *conscious*. However, it must be emphasised that these layers are not necessarily discrete and that far greater complexity of spectral interaction is implied; this qualification is accounted for in the model as the *self-ego axis*.

The first of these layers, the *collective unconsciousness*, contains the 'entire archetypal endowment',<sup>209</sup> the essential operant infrastructure of the psyche. The second layer is the *personal unconscious*. This is made up of a network of *complexes*, which interlink and interact with each other and which are each connected directly to one or more of the *archetypes*. The *complexes* represent the accrual of encoded memory and unique personal experience, as shaped by the underlying influence of the *archetypes* themselves.

The outermost circle, the *conscious*, represents the permeable outer "membrane" of the psyche, the surface of thought and feeling. In Jung's version of the model the *ego*, or present awareness, orbits around freely on this surface as the psyche thinks, feels, selectively attends and experiences in real time (Lacan critically offered a *decentering of the ego* in this respect;<sup>210</sup> this reappraisal will be particularly relevant when applying the basic model as a compositional tool). Through the *self-ego axis*, conscious awareness is comprehensively permeated and implicated with the sum of their relevant memories and experiences, as cohered by their archetypal endowment and the imperative but un-sensed governance of the *self*.

In this respect the *ego*, as the aware, conscious *self*, represents only a small point of interaction between the whole of the psyche and active experience; an experiential/conscious nexus, a bubble riding upon the leading edge of the psyche and quite unable to access its majority, demarcated by the "now" and cognitively protected by memory (which itself is a representation of the past which in fact is being continuously rebuilt, restructured and repurposed for the benefit of the conscious *self*). Jungian theory provides a digestible model for the peripheral,

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<sup>209</sup> Stevens, *Jung*, 33.

<sup>210</sup> Ellie Ragland-Sullivan, *Jacques Lacan and the Philosophy of Psychoanalysis* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1987).

microcosmic quality of the conscious *self* and illustrates the fallacious narrative it presents itself of being the “real me”; this model, argued in pop-psychology books like *The Self Illusion*<sup>211</sup> - whose author pithily describes the conscious *self* as merely the ‘centre of a narrative gravity’ - continues to gain currency among psychologists and laypersons alike. It is a simulation of a *self*, essential to human survival; even the language available to us to discuss our selves is biased towards this. This implies that this aware *self* is like an *ambiguous figure*; an abstract field into which we read or project imaginary patterns. It is not truly integrated or coherent but exists in a kind of psychic homeostasis. Jung’s model, therefore, accords pleasingly with contemporary models of embodied and situated cognition due to its location of the aware self at a nexus point with experience. This tallies with psychological turns away from the Cartesian, dualistic view of mind and body as discrete.

## 2.7 Asylum As Archetype

I believe that Jung’s model of the psyche, as illustrated above, is able to provide a cogent explanation for the persistent presence of the psychiatric asylum as a glyph within Western culture around the experience and treatment of mental illness. My reasoning is that on a level of shared culture, the asylum signifies a social *complex*, in the Jungian sense, encapsulating and modulating our conflicting affective attitudes and associations with mental illness, which has been enabled and constitutionally reinforced by cinema, television, the arts and print media.

The *Asylum-as-Complex* is a construct of fear, the fallibility of metacognition when attempting to gauge one’s own rationality, filtered through the dense semiotic tangles of popular Western culture. With its affective dimensions so anxiously focused on their social implications, the asylum especially signifies a glyph of Othering and stigmatisation associated with dysfunctionality of the mind, the burdensome helplessness of incapacity, depersonalisation, isolation and alienation. It also implies repressive cognitive strategies; a thinking of the containment, confinement and absencing of problematic cognitions. The specific aesthetics of the psychiatric asylum (and its explicitly Western connotations and historical precedents) that act to amplify this potency, are a clear indicator of operation on the level of *complex*, suggesting a deeper *archetype*.

My feeling is that this *archetype* can be described as a fear for the integrity of one’s own psyche, mingled with a fear of and for others whose psyche has been compromised; and I take this

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<sup>211</sup> Bruce Hood, *The Self Illusion: Why There Is No ‘You’ Inside Your Head* (London: Constable, 2013), xi..

opportunity to restate that this is expressed eloquently through the excerpt from *Shutter Island* presented above. In this respect it presents meaningful intersections and correspondences with other *archetypes* and *complexes*, such as the *Shadow*. The conclusion I have drawn from this explication of the Asylum as a Jungian *complex* is that to effectively respond to this reasoning through practice, and to fully account for the overt but critical presence of corresponding aesthetic motifs, is to use the Archetypal model as a lens for interpreting the compositional process.

## 2.8 Reimagining Sounds as Archetypes

The content of the written exegesis and the sonorous characteristics of the industrial/power electronics modalities employed in the portfolio allow for a structured classification and organisation of sound, by which the former may irrigate the latter, and thereby allow explicit illustration and exploration through creative practice. This methodology is directly informed by Jung's model of *archetypes* on a structural level, and also bears numerous explicit correspondences with the aesthetics of the psychiatric asylum discussed previously, as an approach for interrogating the *Asylum-as-Complex*.

The symbolic taxonomy of sound indexes and techniques that follows acts both as a semiotic primer for organising sound in a composition that effectively interrogates its given theme, and as a lens for interpreting and aligning exploratory compositions with patterns and catalysts that will give focus to their emergent meaning. It is capable both of initiating creative work and demarcating it, and innervating the process itself. In this respect the symbolic characterisations of specific sound sources and techniques resemble a pantheon of Jungian *archetypes*, from which *images* and *complexes* arise as music, facilitating both inductive and deductive insight into the constitution of each.

Let me be clear; my application of this system is not about arguing that specific sounds accord with *archetypes* in the original sense. It uses the relations and behaviours of *archetypes* within Jungian *self*-realisation as a structure for assembling music that applies Jung's model as a frame for the process. This works extensively with Jung's approach of foregrounding symbolism and its interpretation in his analysis of dreams, simply tailored for my own practical needs. In the place of *self*, I position the essence of the composition as an innate potentiality. The remainder of the structure modulates its component parts, its emergence into form and eventual articulation as a specific performance or recording. It is a system of composition that acts as

foundation and cohesion for the entire portfolio, on the premise that the semiotic value of each element is stable, discrete, intelligibly demarcated and cohesive. It allows me to illustrate the circulation of meaning within a composition and to engage in a form of semiotic depth analysis.

The investment of the themes and dialectical energies into the composition is less about flagging explicit motifs or strongly implying specific readings directly from the organisation of sound, than it is about using the creative process to frame and contain the thinking through of a particular idea or question. The compositions and their thinking operate on the hermetic maxim of ‘as above, so below’. Individual methods and sounds syntactically interact to generate semiotic complexes by means of the intuitive compositional process.

For example, an improvisation using Dictaphone and tape, introduced into a live microphone feedback loop, produce a compound signifier which represents the intervention of warped, misaligned and dysfunctional patterns of memory into psychological homeostasis and arousal; in effect, an aural simulacrum of the process whereby traumatic memories can exacerbate the feedback effects of anxiety or stress. By these means, an *archetypal* basis for experience, represented by the core sound generation techniques to be employed, supports a context-specific permutation - or *complex* - in the shape of a discrete and meaningful performance.

By collaging (in recorded form) mutually complementary and interactive instances of these techniques to create a complete composition, the creative practice thereby provides a rich and detailed illustration of its specific themes within that composition by the process of emergence. In order to apply this methodology consistently and intelligibly, it is necessary to offer each sound technique and index a specific taxonomic significance, which I have executed as follows. These clarifications are directly informed by Jung’s work around the interpretation of dreams by means of stable symbolism and signifiers; some occur much more frequently in the portfolio than others, but all have their role to play at least once.

## **2.9 A Lexicon of Sound Indexes & Techniques**

### ***Field Recordings & “Junk Objects”***

The use of “junk objects”, particularly scrap metal (either in a spontaneous and opportunistic field recording setting or at home) is a favourite sound material of mine, and as such is particularly rich in representation potency for me. The exploration of the sound potential of these objects illustrates the perceptual breakdown of subject-object relations, such as



investigating alterity of function and imposing contextual musicality; and on a related note, negotiation/interaction with and physical response to the world, and the learning and encoding of (unstable) tactile affordances. Such recordings have additional connotations for technique, which are detailed further down. This approach is clearly indebted to *Musique Concrète* as a modality for interrogating perception via techniques such as acousmatic sound and reduced listening.<sup>212</sup> Field recording and junk improvisation are a direct means to engage an aesthetic of dereliction; a sounding of Urban Exploration, sonorously evoking the decaying structures and poignant found objects. They also serve an additional function to encode the mapping process and the dynamics of space directly into the composition, and to unearth coincidental convergences in sound interaction. The juxtaposition of multiple field recordings allows a staging for the inter-permeation of multiple times, spaces or states simultaneously as an active perceptual experience, drawing attention to the political management of space. These techniques are the foundation of my stated aim of interrogating the city “in its own language”, and evoking psychogeographical potencies and tensions.

### ***Synthesizer Oscillation***

I use regular patterns of synth oscillation, specifically LFOs, to imply the synthesis of normalised behaviours through pharmacology. This is performed through the interplay between unfiltered synthesizer drones and patterns, blended with slow and distinct low frequency oscillations to demonstrate an imposed uniformity introduced into the output waveforms. To date, these have mostly been produced using an Arturia Minibrute synthesizer. Synthesis itself also implies the alchemical process.

### ***Feedback Loops***

Feedback loops, particular those generated within a system of electronic devices that maintain a precarious equilibrium, signify psychological homeostasis and the modelling of cognitive processes. The principle of the feedback loop is an essential dimension to a number of relevant theoretical models, such as Eysenck’s Four-Factor Theory of Anxiety.<sup>213</sup> Layered microphone feedback is additionally used to symbolise wilfully ciphered and contradictory signals and communication.

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<sup>212</sup> Brian Kane, *Acousmatic Sound in Theory and Practice* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).

<sup>213</sup> Michael W. Eysenck, *Anxiety and Cognition: A Unified Theory* (Hove: Psychology Press, 1997), 27-52.

### *Analogue Tape Manipulation*

Tape manipulation, which I typically undertake using Dictaphones, my Tascam multitrack tape recorder or Strymon El Capistan tape delay effect pedal, is straight out of *Session 9*. I use this distinctive sound to illustrate the fallibility of memory and dysfunctions of encoding, storage and recall; the interference of traumatic memories, associations etc. within cognitive processes; and disruptions to intelligible chronology/linear time, disorganisation of history and precedence. These qualities also apply more broadly when pitch-duration paradigm manipulation is employed with analogue limitations.

### *Loops*

The use of loops explicitly suggests normalised and predictable behaviour, and particularly the intimidating, coercive obligation for mental health issues to remain hidden or unobtrusive in public. It emphasises the learning of “normal” behaviour under intense societal pressure, which may be painfully dissonant with inner experience. As such it echoes the regularity of labour and productivity, and normality itself as a form of labour which all are obliged to undertake.

### *Loop-like or Repetitive Junk/Field Recordings*

Specifically in relation to the previous point, the use of loop-like gestures and repetitions in field/junk recordings (or the field recording of loop-like sounds such as overheard machinery) particularly when deployed in direct contrast with actual loops, signifies the process of learning and encoding norms; the real-time, spectral inconsistencies, unstable contexts and contradictions of normatively-shaped behaviour. As such this provides an additional sounding of the concept of normality as a literal kind of labour. This is deliberately informed by RD Laing’s dictum that ‘sanity or psychosis is tested by the degree of conjunction or disjunction between two persons where the one is sane by common consent.’<sup>214</sup> The anxiety associated with socio-normative pressures is a phenomenon which popular arts and media clearly help to catalyse. With a more approachable pithiness than Laing, in *The Psychopath Test*, Jon Ronson notes with no small amount of personal and professional concern that ‘when [journalists like me] served up the crazy people, we were showing the public what they shouldn’t be like. Maybe it was the trying so hard to be normal that was making everyone so afraid they were going crazy.’<sup>215</sup>

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<sup>214</sup> Ronald D. Laing, *The Divided Self: An Existential Study in Sanity and Madness* (London: Penguin, 1990), 36.

<sup>215</sup> Ronson, *Psychopath*, 222.

### ***Voice***

The presence of vocals is intended to illustrate the potentials and limitations of verbal communication, as well as the affective modulation provided by the human voice. The insufficiency of language and patterns of articulation, inevitable subjectivity. On a more abstract level, the presence of the voice also denotes a sense of agency, and implies a negotiation with Lacan's critique of ego-centricity.<sup>216</sup>

### ***Sampling***

While the use of sampling is often a challenge to justify in a compositional setting, I feel it is useful in illustrating the intervention of external stimuli, mediated information and cultural artefacts in cognition and perception; the artefacts thereby undergoing a dysfunctional process of interpretation and personal interpolation/irrationalisation.

### ***Radio Static***

The use of radio static is primarily a commentary on the relative relations between noise and signals, a dwelling on the detail of the noise between signals, and specific signal avoidance, which is clearly guided by human intervention; sound that is moving and communicating and devoid of meaning, in a context where one anticipates communication. As such it also represents avoidance as a dysfunctional response.

### ***Granular Synthesis / Sample-Based Synthesis***

I consider the use of these synthesis techniques to break down source sounds to have three symbolic dimensions, these being: the dissolution, circulation and absorption of psychopharmacological medicines in the body; the exponential unintelligibility of atomised, unfiltered information in spite of one's attempt to parse; the disintegration of thought processes and the relations between perceptual affordances.

### ***Synthesised Choir***

The occasional use of synthesised choir is intended to emphasise false or fabricated voice; the bias which leads us to project our own insecurities into our perceived scrutiny from others. It also represents "positive" forms of mystification and bowdlerisation of conditions or care practices. In contrast with the noisier compositional elements, this is intended to create contrast

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<sup>216</sup> Ragland-Sullivan, *Lacan*.

and to evoke the deployment of Mantovani in *One Flew Over The Cuckoo's Nest* as dissimulating, saccharine sound.

## **2.9 The Model of the Psyche as a Compositional Framework**

Having classified my “Archetypes”, the next step is to repurpose the *archetypal* model of the psyche so that it may illustrate the creative process by which they shape discrete pieces of music. *Please note: full descriptions of the albums in the portfolio are included as appendices.*

### **(a) The Self**

When adapting this model as a compositional tool, my first premise is the substitution of Jung’s *self* – in effect, the quintessence of the psyche – with the quintessence of the composition; all its potential incarnations (as differing arrangements/constructions, adaptations for differing modalities, performances, constructions, and recordings etc.) indivisible. The dimensions of the composition or idea must precede, and be identifiably discrete from, these processes of actualisation. At its most elemental level, this quintessence incorporates the invested meaning of the piece and the creative intention of the practitioner; but these may not be articulable except by actualising the composition into a finished form and thereby provide a conduit along the *self-ego axis* equivalent for intuiting this underlying content. However, this quintessence also holistically and spectrally contains all stages of the actualisation. The context of the model itself provides a framework for making this concept of the semiotic quintessence of a piece of music open to critical engagement and intelligibility.

### **(b) The Collective Unconscious**

The indexes and techniques explained above take the place of the *archetypes* in this model. In effect, they represent the *collective unconscious* of the power electronics modality, from which my individual contributions to the genre are emergent; in my case, this modal foundation is deliberately irrigated with intersectional indexes and techniques that signify the Asylum aesthetic, or my personal schematic thereof. It may also describe the finite equipment and facilities I am limited to, and my competency to operate them. This is the effectively the quantum level of my practice, the tools I have restricted myself to in order to actualise the compositions, and through which the semiotic quintessence of each composition must percolate as a mandatory stage in its *self*-realisation.

### (c) *The Personal Unconscious*

The bulk of the creative process of actualising ideas occurs at the stage of the *complexes*. Layers, interactions, relations, and more specific significations of sounds suggested by the synthesis of more than one index or technique, or sound indexes with additional symbolic resonances (such as the slow piano notes of the asylum aesthetic). In the portfolio, layers of sound are generated, juxtaposed and interacted by a number of practical means within the environment of the audio workstation. These means include, but are not limited to straightforward mixing techniques, such as panning, equalisation and frequency manipulation/filtering, relative volume, and compression; it may involve performances, wherein instruments, sound objects or effects are recorded live in accompaniment with and in response to pre-recorded tracks; effects that allow pre-recorded layers to affect each other, such as side-chained gates, compressors, delays etc.; signal routing techniques such as vocoders and feedback loops to combine discrete signals into single effects chains; effects sends and receives, and mastering treatments such as “glue” compressors or reverb to enhance cohesion and compositional integrity.

These signal processing and routing techniques, such as frequency shifters and equalisation, multiband dynamics, and a variety of other filters, are also used to extrapolate diverse, sometimes counter-intuitive and profoundly *alter* permutations from individual sounds. By these means are techniques and indexes assembled into complex and distinctive configurations, shaped by those forms from which the semiotic quintessence of the composition is most able to irrigate and emerge; the individual affordances and indexes of its component parts rendered ambiguous and decentered, in the tradition of reduced listening, enabling the blending of discrete elements into a single inseparable gesture. This is the active process of compositional *self*-realisation.

The asylum aesthetic influences this stage in the process in a number of ways, by which its hyperreal and *chiaroscuro* qualities are applied by the careful cultivation of contrasts and juxtapositions. Contrast and context is valuable for *noise*-based music, as it is constantly being actively defined by its shifting relations with *not-noise*. My use of melodic elements, such as orchestral and choral loops, or performances of piano, etc., are a means to frame and stage the noise, drawing attention to definitive frictions. This illustrates perceptual affordance and interference in the process of negotiating and navigating the world; the experiential simultaneity and inextricability of *signal* and *noise*. This is staged explicitly and canonised into the asylum

aesthetic in the soundtrack to *One Flew Over The Cuckoo's Nest*, wherein the atonal, granulated textures of bowed saw and other abrasive elements providing the score are sharply relieved by smooth and coercively sedative washes of Mantovani. Reverb and delay can be used to suggest soft focus camera techniques, and employed dynamically to illustrate the technique of slow focus and un-focus associated with the aesthetics of the asylum. In this respect they also evoke the diffusion of memory over time, the loss of clarity and the encroachment of ambiguity and doubt. Both effects may also be used as an agent for the blending of discrete elements (e.g. two separate but juxtaposed field recorded “spaces”) to be gelled together and given ambiguity or perhaps a quality of perceptual distress and disorientation.

Compression and equalisation are used to accentuate the hyperreal potentialities of sound, especially in conjunction with other effects. These provide an aural adjunct to visual enhancement techniques such as artificial accentuation of hues and contrasts, or the manipulation of field depth – a process of making “screen”. These are deployed to amplify aesthetic qualities and intensify affective response. The role of this is to imply the process whereby mental illness is aestheticised and cinematised in order to strengthen viewer engagement.

Active panning in general, and auto-panning in particular (a technique by which the panning of a track is automatically changed during playback according to set parameters such as pattern, width and speed, which can themselves be manipulated in real-time), is used to evoke the vertiginous perspectives, imbalance and disorientation used in camera placement, movement and treatment in filmic depictions of mental illness, often as a crude illustration of breakdown or panic. In this context editing, particularly of field recordings and performances, is explicitly employed as creative intervention and an overt manipulation of the “reality” of the source materials, conscious of the dilemmas of documentary and film makers in the presentation of their chosen truths.

Perhaps the most audible transformation that occurs during this stage of the process is *making noise*. By this, I mean the processing of signals and performances to induce the sonorous characteristics of noise music. This entails using a variety of techniques (individually or in combination), including single and multiple chains of distortion pedals and effects, amplifier overdrive and physical volume, bit reduction and overload. This process is two-fold; firstly, it is to subject raw signals to such extremities that the capacity and reproductive/processing effort

of the equipment involved becomes *audibly* affected, and secondly, to assess and select sounds and performances *while* under these conditions. In particular, the use of glitching, overloaded sound generated using effects routings and volume that exceeds the equipment's capacity to produce, is frequently employed in the portfolio. The textures generated when certain percentages of the frequencies appear to be silenced with wild, stuttering ruptures, due to the equipment's inability to reproduce them, for the purposes of the portfolio signifies the struggle with an in-articulable affect, to the point of cognitive and/or physical arrest, and the extrusion of suppressed thoughts and memories. The harsh fragments of silence or hugely suppressed sound generated by overloaded signals are, to me, tremendously evocative of traumatic, inexpressible experiences and affects that serve to incapacitate and immobilise.

#### **(d) The *Conscious***

The *conscious* is the stage in which the composition in theory, its organisation and content, emerges in a *decentered* form. This means the form and qualities of the composition, as defined by its constitutive *complexes*, which remain immutable and replicable over multiple performances, recordings etc. This stage of the composition is still full of potentialities, ambiguities, fluxes, malleability and permeability; but each permutation will be recognisably versioning a fully-developed idea. For example, a band who rehearse a single finished song every week are versioning it each time - the "consciousness" represents both the obvious continuity and the scope for variation between each instance, the surface flex of the composition.

#### **(e) The *Ego***

The *ego* represents a discrete incidence of the composition actualising as a single performance and/or recording. This is *decentered* to the extent that no single actualisation can be authoritatively described as the definitive form. As with the Jungian dynamics of the psyche itself, the reconciliation of the *ego*-composition with its *self*-quintessence is by no means guaranteed to be a pleasant experience - all practitioners at some point experience the profound disappointment of not being able to arrive at a satisfactory execution of an idea, and not for want of effort or commitment. In the same breath, we can also argue the case for a version or performance of a piece of music that exceeds the author's own (this does, of course, raise the contentious possibility that a composition acquires a permissive and independent existence from its original author; I presume that copyrighters are wont to dispute this).

### **(f) The *Self-Ego Axis***

Finally, the *self-ego axis* illustrates that the semiotic quintessence of a composition can potentially be inferred at any stage of the actualisation process. That is to say, composition can initiate with an intended meaning in mind, and the assignation of techniques and development of complexes can proceed *from* this premise; or, that an interpretative analysis of the constitution of a piece can be used to infer the possible meanings it *could* have; or, crucially, that the process of actualising a composition can *change* its meaning. This last qualification is perhaps the most important for the creative portfolio; the potential for flux that occurs during the actualisation process of the composition can be employed as a device to help me think through a particular issue from different angles, and thereby demonstrates practice *as* enquiry.

### **2.10 A Question of Power**

There is one particular question regarding the creative portfolio that this Jungian model does not address, and that is; why have I chosen to situate my work specifically within the power electronics modality, rather than speaking more generally about *noise*; and what influence do the extensive contextual associations and modal distinctions exert over the resulting practice? To describe the practice as power electronics is, in itself, a major statement of intent and potential flashpoint. This is a matter that requires robust explication, and which will entail further recourse to the work of Jung to achieve this end.





## Chapter 3. Confronting Shadow

**‘Don’t bend; don’t water it down; don’t try to make it logical; don’t edit your own soul according to the fashion. Rather, follow your most intense obsessions mercilessly.’**

Anne Rice, on Kafka<sup>217</sup>

### 3.1 A Confrontational Sound

To creatively interrogate the *noise* generated by both the urban space and by our cultural inheritance (as discussed in the previous two chapters), and their capacity for shaping our development and experience of mental health issues, the raw scree of improvised noise music in itself may lack sufficient articulation, or verbal confrontation. In itself a powerful sounding of resistance to modern life, the interrogation of mediation strategies, pursuit of accountability and desire to contribute meaningfully to understanding of mental health conditions demands more structure than an unrefined free-form noise onslaught, more scope for articulating a clear message. An approach is required which delivers both; that employs the sonorous and affective impact of noise music while permitting the delivery of prepared messages and the specific exploration of aesthetics, such as the compositional vernacular of the asylum in film.

Power Electronics is a genre term coined by the band Whitehouse, and first appeared on the sleeve of their *Psychopathia Sexualis* album.<sup>218</sup> Co-existing amorphously and interpenetratively with industrial and noise music forms, it imposes spectral gradations of organisation on the freeform atonality of noise’s sonorities, permitting the use or even dominance of loops and overtly rhythmic structures. A definitive feature of power electronics in contrast to noise music is the incorporation of lyrics/vocals and an emphatic declaration (albeit not always evidenced) of dense thematic content; conversely, its intensities and relentlessness arguably surpass those contingent qualities in earlier forms of industrial music by virtue of integrating the extremes of frequency, timbre and volume that correspond with noise music, reproducing the affective characteristics and potentialities of that field. Lyrical and vocal articulation defines the kernel of power electronics, about which visceral constructs of noise music describe an excoriating orbit.

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<sup>217</sup> Anne Rice in foreword to Franz Kafka, *The Metamorphosis, In The Penal Colony and Other Stories* (New York: Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group, 1995).

<sup>218</sup> Philip Taylor, ‘The Genesis of Power Electronics in the UK’ in Jennifer Wallis, (ed.) *Fight Your Own War: Power Electronics and Noise Culture* (London: Headpress, 2016), 13.

When discussing power electronics in a broadly academic context, traditional citations are notably thin on the ground. Hegarty describes the genre as ‘a strand of industrial or noise music[...] The term covers a lot of noise music, but initially (c.1980) it applies to music based on synths, electronic machinery, often with use of effects and samples, and connected to ‘extreme’ events, characters, obsessions.’<sup>219</sup> To me, this description conveys a palpable distaste, a pointed lack of detail and disinclination to bring the genre into any sort of sharp focus or relief which echoes through the paragraphs that follow, as if to discourage the reader from investigating further. In itself this reaction is intelligible, as the power electronics genre has proven itself very capable of dissuading detached curiosity through sheer psychological and aural assault; but this analytical discomfort is nevertheless unhelpful and can make for frustrating and unproductive reading. What is clear is that power electronics and the broader palette of industrial music share many territories, and it is the quality of specifically interrogating power rather than any sonorous properties that creates the niche for the former.

The aesthetic surface of power electronics music often seethes with grotesque vulgarities and traumatic affects, themselves giving a disturbing definition to its caustically abrasive sonorities. It is a surface that takes a determined act of habituation from the listener to abide in order to unlock the dense aural and affective detail contained within. Beneath this exterior of needling antagonism, at its elemental pre-traumatic core, power electronics music explores extreme intensities, polarities and inversions of power and powerlessness. It is a fiercely confrontational and subjective form, an arena where its practitioners explore their fascinations without adulteration, in obsessive detail, and in contemptuous disdain of scrutiny. This quality of confrontational subjectivity has a parallel in the *Gonzo* journalism style of Hunter S. Thompson; a provocative and uncompromisingly solipsistic form of autoethnography that can escalate into inflammatory challenge at the mildest demurral.<sup>220</sup>

At its inception, the power electronics mode presented an unprecedented intensification of the intimidating ambiguity and unflinching redeployment of transgressive imagery that contemporaneous cultural commentators found problematic in the late 70s industrial music of Throbbing Gristle; ever alive with a bristling frisson of danger and engagement with the most harrowing aspects of the human condition - and in the case of many, often the most distasteful.

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<sup>219</sup> Hegarty, *Noise/Music*, x.

<sup>220</sup> Hunter S. Thompson, *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas: A Savage Journey to the Heart of the American Dream* (New York: Vintage, 1998).

In this regard, Taylor cites in particular the creative precedents set by Artaud's Theatre of Cruelty and, later, the Viennese Actionists, stressing Otto Muehl's assertion: 'the aesthetics of the dung heap are the moral means against conformism, materialism and stupidity'.<sup>221</sup> To this day, the genre occupies a territory of abject Other which renders even the most accepted of power electronics artists and genre originators, the excoriating Whitehouse, unlikely to ever darken the doors of the Tate Modern (as Throbbing Gristle did in the mid-noughties) in their habitual performative garb of shirtless-machismo-turned-absurd. Their nomination to the Prix Ars Electronica in 2003 (to the vehement objections of David Toop) is an anomaly, carefully qualified and framed.<sup>222</sup>

### 3.2 A Question of Intent

Hegarty's take reflects a received wisdom about both industrial and power electronics music, imposing a containing narrative at the level of genre which ring-fences these two overlapping modes using the easily-accessible discursive turf of shock and controversy, lingering on literalist readings, and expressing an acerbic scepticism. He has little patience, for example, for the self-justification of Genesis P-Orridge of Throbbing Gristle that deviates from the suggestion of exploitative strategies to whip up controversy:

Throbbing Gristle used imagery from the Second World War, including a lightning flash as their logo, and at some stages wore camouflage uniforms. Their use of what was forbidden, as material, often involved Nazism or other abusive, violent power relations, such as stories of serial killers. Genesis P-Orridge, however, persistently claims that Throbbing Gristle offered a critique of our fascination with violence, how we repress that fascination, and how the media play on it. [...] If industrial music is ambiguous about power, violence, extreme behaviour, exploitation, and so on, then we can also see that P-Orridge is disingenuous about this – there was no judgement on offer in Throbbing Gristle, but a set of subtle questionings described as violent and offensive valorising of unacceptable imagery, movements and individuals.<sup>223</sup>

While it is inarguable that many of the key recordings of both genres then and now have numerous complicities in this narrative, the shortcoming of Hegarty's analysis seems to reside in a latent confirmation bias, narrowing the perceived reach of these forms to only these issues and thereby insinuating their implication in all works of these genres. Arguably, this is both reductive and specious; notably, the text shows no sense that it might be necessary to

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<sup>221</sup> Taylor, 'Genesis', 12.

<sup>222</sup> Thomas B.W. Bailey, *Microbionic: Radical Electronic Music & Sound Art in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.) (Belsona Books, 2012), 66.

<sup>223</sup> Hegarty, *Noise/Music*, 119.

satisfactorily articulate or present evidence for why Hegarty finds P-Orridge's justification implausible. Its argument moves forward seemingly on the assumption that such analysis is superfluous, that the appropriate reading is self-evident. In this, the language deployed in the above quote is wholly unambiguous (*italics my own*): 'there was *no* judgement on offer in Throbbing Gristle'. The pervading sense within the relevant chapter of *Noise/Music* is that Hegarty is indifferent to, or merely omits, the capacity of industrial and power electronics to operate as defined, identifiable modes that can interrogate entirely different and disparate kinds of content. This indicates an opportunity missed; by flatly rebuffing the possibility of genuine discourse on this matter, these sections of *Noise/Music* sadly contribute to the perpetuation of stock tropes.

This form of music has the potential to insightfully describe the interaction between the powerful and powerless enacted through sound; Hegarty arguably leans on the scales with his assertion that industrial music is 'captivated by power', accompanied by a parade of worn neo-fascist totems.<sup>224</sup> By adopting this closed mode of address, irrespective of the preponderance of musical instances that may ballast such a view, he erroneously conflates the form itself with creative instances of the form, failing to separate medium from message, the mould from the casting. In themselves, despite their intensity, the industrial and power electronics modes are not bound to any given theme or content; they are modes that are equipped to forcibly provoke discourse and to test the veracity of freedom of speech. This section aims to demonstrate that more complex psychological engagements are afoot within the experience and performance of power electronics. There are numerous practitioners within this field who contend decisively that the pursuit of offence and controversy is redundant; and that the tired presumption by commentators of contrarian intent to shock is a clichéd and jejune scraping of the surface (or of the bottom of the critical barrel). One of contemporary power electronics' most divisive artists, Mikko Aspa, states that:

It remains an extremely curious fact, that so many appear to think, content that bands are presenting could only be some sort of shock tactics to shake people awake, or be exposed to evils of world and sort of feel cathartic relief to return into safety of western liberal hegemony. [...] I believe necessity of negative provocation is gone. I don't see much purpose these days to travel across Europe to make people 'pissed off'. I'm much more firm believe in positive provocation, where it fuels dialogue, research and alternative angles. You could simply call it inspiring energy,

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<sup>224</sup> Hegarty, *Noise/Music*, 119-130.

as opposed to provocation. Nothing is gained by simply aiming to be hated for simple and obvious reasons.<sup>225</sup>

Such rhetoric reinforces the often punishingly oppositional stance common to the field while offering a possible alternative to the hackneyed dialectics of shock. However, more relevant to both Hegarty's criticisms and the direction of this thesis are the ambiguity and disruption of accountability presented by industrial music in general; in order to justify my own employment of these modes within the context I have established thus far, these are qualities I must address. Perhaps one of the most articulate and concise expressions of the inherent ambiguity of industrial music was provided by the long-running German band Genocide Organ, who in the sole interview of their extensive career stated that 'we never say what we think, and we never believe what we say, and if we tell the truth by accident, we hide it under so many lies that it is difficult to find out'; 'everything is at it is and nothing is as it should be'.<sup>226</sup> Hal Hutchinson of the constitutionally unpalatable power electronics project Zyklon SS is recorded to have described his modus operandi as 'doing the dirty work',<sup>227</sup> I interpret this as the intent to patrol the most divisive frontiers of freedom of expression as a means of safeguarding that freedom. When this point is considered in relation to the anti-position expressed by Genocide Organ, it pinpoints a key characteristic of industrial music in general that perhaps touches upon the core of Hegarty's discomfort with the genre; the blanket presentation of the socially unacceptable, a provocative assumption of the pariah role, paired with an apparent abdication of accountability. It can be argued that accountability is the fulcrum of freedom of expression; express what you will, but be answerable to others for what is expressed.

The tactical voiding of authorial intent presented by industrial music can, in this context, be very easily misconstrued as facile provocation and a juvenile delight in antagonism for its own sake. However, I argue that the modus operandi of industrial music is to transfer the burden of accountability from the artist to the audience, and that this should be considered in the context of the precedents of the Theatre of Cruelty and the Viennese Actionists in the subjection of the spectator to a psychological ordeal.<sup>228</sup> William Bennett describes this as 'the sublime phenomenon whereby the responses themselves can form an integral part of the work itself'.<sup>229</sup>

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<sup>225</sup> Stevenson, 'Grunt', 12.

<sup>226</sup> Richard Stevenson, 'Questionable Intent: The Meaning and Message of Power Electronics' in Jennifer Wallis, (ed.) *Fight Your Own War: Power Electronics and Noise Culture* (London: Headpress, 2016), 181.

<sup>227</sup> David Tonkin, 'This Is Our Time: An Interview with Unrest Productions', *Heathen Harvest*, 2016, <https://heathenharvest.org/2016/10/07/this-is-our-time-an-interview-with-unrest-productions/>

<sup>228</sup> Taylor, 'Genesis', 11-12.

<sup>229</sup> Simon Collins, 'As Nasty As They Wanna Be', *Zero Tolerance Magazine*, Issue 017 (2007), 38.

It is an explicit rejection of the hypothetical contract between artist and consumer wherein the artist expresses an authentic part of themselves – and taking all the inherent risks and challenges thereof - for the passive, inculpable consumption of the audience. Mikko Aspa breaks out the block capitals to emphasise this point in *Terror* magazine, stating: ‘This is meant in context of LISTENER.’<sup>230</sup> Industrial music raises challenging and uncomfortable questions for the listener about the nature of art, of entertainment, of tolerance, morality and society, a call to individual responsibility for the interpretation of cultural artefacts and the influence that these exert on the behaviour of the consumer. It stages conditions where the listener is forced to contemplate the nuances, ambiguities and contradictions of what they are morally prepared to accept or at least tolerate; the sheer force of this presentation creates a confrontational subjectivity. As Stevenson notes, ‘With potential ‘meaning’ couched in ambiguity, power electronics forces the listener to engage with and interpret the material based on their own perceptions and biases; the questions and interpretations of the listener could be considered to be of far greater importance than the material presented.’<sup>231</sup>

This focus on the psychological response of the audience was a key motive of genre progenitors Whitehouse from their inception; in the sleeve-notes of their 2007 album *Racket*, Whitehouse mastermind William Bennett describes his role as ‘animal response technician’.<sup>232</sup> His contemporary Gary Mundy of the band Ramleh, active since the early 80s, articulated his own take on this position by stating ‘Many people’s ideas of what is morally acceptable seem to be closely linked to what is legally acceptable where they live or what is acceptable within their religion, if they have one. I was curious as to how differently people might think if they divorced themselves from all that and really questioned what they truly felt comfortable with.’<sup>233</sup> This last qualification in particular has Jungian implications which are to be addressed at a later point.

This strategy ensures that the vast majority of power electronics practitioners are in effect ethically unlocatable within the material they present; protestations of authenticity or insights into the authorial investment within the themes presented are rarely to be trusted, less still taken at face value. The artist’s own position is ultimately known only to themselves and the spotlight of accountability is resolutely placed upon their audience. The precariousness of this method is

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<sup>230</sup> Levas Urlo, ‘Mikko Aspa’, *Terror*, Issue 2 (Lithuania, 2012).

<sup>231</sup> Stevenson, ‘Questionable Intent’, 177.

<sup>232</sup> Whitehouse, *Racket* (Susan Lawly, SLCD029, 2007).

<sup>233</sup> Louis Pattison, ‘Ramleh: Forbidding Mourning’, *Zero Tolerance Magazine*, Issue 032 (2009), 54.

identified and explored by Peter J. Woods, who critically considers the risk that if audiences lack ‘[...] the means to reflect and analyse this work, then the effort will inevitably fail to achieve these lofty goals and unintentionally fetishise and celebrate problematic ideologies.’<sup>234</sup> There is, after all, no guarantee that the audience will critically engage with the content of power electronics in the intended manner, ‘or merely see disassociated scenes of violence and cruelty served up as fodder for exploitation and fetishisation’ which may have unintended, far-reaching consequences.<sup>235</sup> While I would argue that this is a calculated risk of the genre, and acts as an energising tension within the performance and experience of this music, Woods’ concerns are well founded and articulated. Informed by this critical issue, I have deliberately eschewed the tactic of ambiguity in my own work; the industrial and power electronics works presented within this portfolio take a different approach in that I aspire to present accountable self-expression, albeit through the lens of confrontational subjectivity that these mutually interpermeable modalities facilitate. This position is essential if I am not to directly contradict my preceding assertions about the personal accountability of the artist when interrogating mental health issues; however this does not diminish the importance placed on the listener’s engagement as an active component of the work itself.

In its interrogation of extreme excesses and impoverishments of power, power electronics music intersects extensively with the social and psychological dimensions of mental health, situated alike in the inhospitable terrains of social transgression; human frailty; the corruptions, inflictions and failures of the empowered against the helpless. Power electronics is a space where tolerance and the boundaries of taste are constantly in jeopardy and dispute, where the bleeding edge of the socially acceptable is unceasingly infringed and the complex motivations of its creators are often lost in the sheer visceral deluge. By locating itself at the most frictional and precarious edges of social acceptability, and documenting their transgressive flux, the mode is uniquely positioned to comment on the unstable dissociations between the “normal” and the “pathological” in behaviour and psychology. I see no contradiction in deploying such a form as a means for interrogating harrowing truths around the personal and social experience of mental illness on a compassionate and accountable grounding. The capacity of power electronics to engage with its themes with primal affective immediacy, and to give bellicose voice to views, saturates the textual dimensions of the music created within the course of this work with undisguised ire, gifts a sensuously astringent physicality to the moral outrage that

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<sup>234</sup> Woods, *Offensive Art*, 92.

<sup>235</sup> *Ibid.*, 96.



sticks in my craw at the ignominies of culture, of stigma, of wilfully negligent social policy, that ferociously exacerbate the experience of mental ill-health in the United Kingdom.

The purpose of my practice, in this context, is to confront the audience with materials that cause them to question their attitudes to mental illness and their instinctive reactions; to interrogate the dissonance that exists between these, causing the listener to examine whether they have retained prejudices or misconceptions of which they may not be aware, and may run counter to what they believe their values are. This confrontation also applies to me; in the process of creating and performing the material, I am challenging myself with these same questions. Beyond this personal state of intent however, I feel that there are more significant arguments to be made that credit the power electronics modality with deeper psychological functions, and that return once more to the terrain of Jung to arrive at their conclusions. The terminology of confrontational subjectivity immediately aligns with Jung's *confrontation with the shadow*.

### 3.3 A Confrontation with the *Shadow*

Whoever goes to himself risks a confrontation with himself. The mirror does not flatter, it faithfully shows whatever looks into it; namely, the face we never show to the world because we cover it with the persona, the mask of the actor. But the mirror lies behind the mask and shows the true face.

This confrontation is the first test of courage on the inner way, a test sufficient to frighten off most people, for the meeting with ourselves belongs to the more unpleasant things that can be avoided so long as we can project everything negative into the environment. But if we are able to see our own shadow and can bear knowing about it, then a small part of the problem has already been solved: we have at least brought up the personal unconscious. The shadow is a living part of the personality and therefore wants to live with it in some form. It cannot be argued out of existence or rationalized into harmlessness.<sup>236</sup>

In his early forties, Jung experienced a period of 'creative psychosis'<sup>237</sup> that was to profoundly affect the trajectory of his thought and lead to the publication of his seminal work *Psychological Types* in 1921. Based on his own descriptions, a more contemporary and prosaic take on this period in psychological terms would probably be to diagnose a nervous breakdown; Freud would undergo similar psychological upheaval at around the same age, and overcome it with theoretical breakthroughs of his own.<sup>238</sup> According to Stevens, with his characteristic enthusiasm for the mythopoeic possibilities of psychological experience, Jung described this as

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<sup>236</sup> Carl G. Jung, *The Archetypes & The Collective Unconscious* (2<sup>nd</sup> Ed.) (London: Routledge, 1990), 20.

<sup>237</sup> Stevens, *Jung*, 22.

<sup>238</sup> *Ibid.*, 23.

his *Nekyia* Moment, after the journey to the underworld in Homer's *Odyssey*, or the *katabasis* (descent) of Heracles. He saw his experience as an incident of meaningful confrontation by his conscious mind of his personal and collective subconscious, an ordeal of transformative self-reconciliation that would be key to achieving true individuation. While this psychological distress was inadvertent and the insights generated emerged spontaneously, Jung's crucial realisation was that his experience had significant implications for the development of his ideas. Should the *confrontation with the shadow* prove to generate positive psychological outcomes for the individual, this could provide the basis for a major therapeutic approach. Jung generated a Model of the Psyche that helps to illustrate this experience, and which can be used in conjunction with the Archetypal model.

In this model Jung draws distinctions between overlapping areas of the psyche that occur between the exterior, i.e. our observable behaviour and communication, and in the interior, the deepest, most inscrutable and enigmatic part of the *self*. These permeable partitions explore the extent to which we 'version' ourselves, for both encounters with the world and for our own sense of identity, and that the intricacies of this formative process occur beneath the threshold of conscious awareness.

The outermost "face", the *persona*, is more than any other portion of the psyche, a conscious construction of our aware selves (though not entirely). Effectively, this is the version of ourselves which we present to others, a carefully cultivated mixture of spontaneous reaction, response, and the careful mediation and censorship of our own thoughts, some of which will incorporate falsehood, deliberate or otherwise. The *shadow*, meanwhile, is that aspect of our selves that resides in our unconscious, and which we cannot readily access or predict. It can be glibly described as our "dark side" – described by Jung as 'the thing a person has no wish to be', but can be better said to represent aspects of our *self* that we conceal from our conscious selves, knowingly or unknowingly, as well as aspects of which we are entirely unaware; and utterly uncontrollable. The *shadow* extends from our *personal unconscious*, the unique assemblage of unwanted thoughts and behaviours latent within ourselves that we withhold, but also penetrates to the deepest levels of the *collective unconscious*, site of the most primal and reprehensible behaviours, where the human engages with its capacity for evil. The *ego* dwells somewhere between, representing our self-aware inner world, organising and regulating the *persona*, and repressing the impingement and interjections of the *shadow*, an activity we are likely not aware of.

A deliberate *confrontation with the shadow*, therefore, is a deliberate unearthing of that knowledge, our deepest recesses stripped of any sense of morality, social acceptability, and any other reflexive narratives with which we self-describe. It is a naked, unassuaged, potentially punishing sense of awareness of what we are truly capable of, or limited to. This echoes the quote previously shared from Gary Mundy of Ramleh, foreshadowing the key role that I believe the *confrontation with the shadow* plays within not just the experience but the *essential constitution* of power electronics music. Jung's position was that this unconscious *self* has to be known, however painful and traumatic that personal *gnosis* would be, in order to be reconciled into a whole, self-realised psyche; and that any sense of psychological healing is contingent and inseparable from overcoming this duality within oneself. In this context it is easy to understand Jung's attraction to the vernacular of the alchemists, as it provides a complementary esoteric language with which to interrogate the same ineffable process.

This is not an undertaking to be approached lightly, but a *confrontation* in a very real sense, that can lead the individual to be ostracised and castigated by a society severely ill-prepared to accept their new selves; Jung describes the process as 'both tabooed and dreaded.'<sup>239</sup> Hill uses the *confrontation with the shadow* as a means of articulating both the traumatic effects of a negative psychedelic experience and the process of integration by which the guided therapeutic use of psychedelic substances can lead to 'concrete positive changes in one's life'.<sup>240</sup> The contentious context of psychedelic drug use and its social marginalisation aptly locates the *confrontation with the shadow* on the very fringes of social acceptability, given to tip either way. This socio-cultural hinge position creates a meaningful intersection with the territories of power electronics music.

This *confrontation with the shadow* provides a useful analogy for reflexively generating insight into (and ultimately reconciliation with) the personal aetiology of one's mental illness, an acceptance of the relation between the ego (consciousness) and the symptoms. As a therapeutic tool, this perspective and reconciliation into the complexities of personal pathology can help to cultivate constructive detachment and suggest uniquely astute and perceptive strategies for managing one's own symptoms and experience of illness. However, it also provides penetrative

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<sup>239</sup> Scott J. Hill, *Confrontation with the Unconscious: Jungian Depth Psychology and Psychedelic Experience* (London: Muswell Hill Press, 2013), 4.

<sup>240</sup> Ibid.

insights into underlying causes of stigma and the personal motivations and consequences for Othering, via a behavioural phenomenon known as *projection*.<sup>241</sup>

*Projection* is a means of avoidance by which one's own *shadow* is projected onto others, in effect stigmatising them. By this mechanism, we assuage all our fears and doubts about the aspects of our own characters that we dislike or are troubled by, by simply deflecting them onto the people around us. Perry uses the example of greed;<sup>242</sup> if we persistently attribute greed to those around us, and find ourselves behaving judgementally and censoriously towards those persons, this is likely to be our own projected struggle with our own capacity for greed, a *shadow* quality which nonetheless is capable of rupturing the integrity of the *ego* and even *persona* in order to be expressed. The more this occurs, the more vociferous the *projection*, to the extent that we behave antagonistically towards others in our efforts to avoid acknowledging these parts of ourselves. Homophobia as a mask for sexual ambivalence is a classic post-Freudian trope to the point of cliché. *Projection* helps to explain the stigmatisation of the mentally ill as the insidious deflections of the fear for our own mental health cultivated by the media and the arts. Bombardment with images of the mentally ill person as a figure of dread or ridicule enables the evasion of our own psychological frailties through systematic exploitation; a dismaying thought.

In this context, the *confrontation with the shadow* may help in the development of coping strategies for the stigmatised and the means of seeding compassion for the stigmatising. Assimilation in this respect can lead to self-acceptance, self-forgiveness, and an empathetic understanding of others and their own psychological struggles, engendering consideration and patience for the needs and experiences of others. In a similar vein, The Myer-Briggs Personality Test uses Jungian principles to drive personal development. It assigns both personality types and the *shadow* traits that accompany each type, thereby providing the tools to recognise and address psychological strengths and weaknesses. In this respect, the technique accounts for the potential for the *shadow* to possess positive potentialities that can be engaged and encouraged. This also helps to interact with others constructively and understand the diversity and complexity of others' behaviour based on their types.

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<sup>241</sup> Christopher Perry, 'The Shadow', The Society of Analytical Psychology, 2015.

<https://www.thesap.org.uk/wordpress/wpcontent/uploads/2015/08/shadow.pdf>

<sup>242</sup> Ibid.

### 3.4 Staging the Confrontation

So how, then, is the *confrontation with the shadow* to be achieved? Jung argues that the only way to get the unconscious to reveal itself to the conscious mind is ‘by granting it freedom of expression and then examining what it has expressed. Thus, *self*-realisation requires the psyche to turn round itself and *confront* what it produces.’<sup>243</sup> This clarification in itself provides a credible encapsulation of the constitutionally unrestrained, unfiltered creative process of power electronics – permitting oneself to say the unsayable, engage with the darkest parts of oneself and one’s socio-cultural *mise-en-scène* if doing so ultimately enables individuation and *self*-realisation. It can also be argued that the use of extreme and/or unpalatable content, justifiable or no, has resonance with Jung’s concept of compensatory function and psychodynamic homeostasis, an acting out of the ‘teleological imperative of the Self’,<sup>244</sup> albeit perhaps more for the listener than for the artist.

The former psychedelic researcher and therapist Ann Shulgin vividly describes the excoriating quality of the *confrontation*, noting that ‘the prospect of seeing what he unconsciously believes to be the core – the essence – of himself as a series of horrendous, malignant, totally unacceptable entities, can bring about a state of fear that has no parallel in ordinary life.’<sup>245</sup> This description clearly resonates with the ambiguous and contradictory antagonist roleplay that practitioners such as Mike Dando (Con-Dom) or Keith Finnan (S.T.A.B. Electronics) undertake as a basic component of their work. Such practice performs a disintegration between the *persona*, the *self* and the *shadow* within the structures of the psyche. William Bennett of Whitehouse strengthens the premise of power electronics as a performance or mutually interactive staging of the *confrontation with the shadow*: ‘Whitehouse belongs to the type of art where the reactions become an important and integral part of the effect. [...] Polarisation is desirable because it's more likely to make people reveal their true selves, it reveals more of their truth even if it says little about the work in question. While for some this is a wholly positive experience, for others it exposes the enemy in the mirror.’<sup>246</sup> In *Zero Tolerance* magazine, Bennett elaborated that:

This music has the capacity, at the esoteric end of the scale, to touch a part of us we all have where morality no longer exists, where there’s permission for thoughts and

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<sup>243</sup> Stevens, *Jung*, 25.

<sup>244</sup> *Ibid.*, 85.

<sup>245</sup> Hill, *Confrontation*, 13.

<sup>246</sup> Judith Howard, ‘William Bennett Interview’, *Susan Lawly*, 2007, <http://www.susanlawly.freeuk.com/textfiles/wbinterview03.html>

images that normally wouldn't be allowed to come out to play. The capacity of our music to cause offense is merely a subset of responsiveness, all of which has artistic value, and certain types of negative responses can even be measured as a form of vindication. Shock, anger, sadness, depression, joy, desire, passion are all responses that are natural and ones that we might better learn to accept as being natural, and are far more a mirror into a person's fragile soul than a commentary on what we are doing.<sup>247</sup>

In this context, Whitehouse deliberately escalate this process with their extreme use of pitch, timbre, frequency and volume in the live environment, thereby insinuating a kind of ecstatic sensorial excess for band and audience alike which could edge them towards an altered state of consciousness. This affective embodiment of the listener is an important component in the interrogation of unpalatable and taboo themes in power electronics; speaking more broadly about the appeal of violent and/or frightening arts as staged experiences or confrontations, Cox states that 'we can understand the process in part as involving a sense of empowerment that results from "surviving" these artificially negative experiences.'<sup>248</sup> While power electronics fractures and problematizes the artificiality of this experience by its use of factual evidence and materials such as photographs, authentic testimonies etc., this nevertheless helps to explain how its sheer forcefulness can leave traces of euphoria for the listener in its wake. This opens potential future discourse around the role of sensory excess as a key component of the power electronics experience.

What is more immediately pertinent is that this illustrates the capacity for the audience to play as relevant a part in the experience of the *confrontation with the shadow* as the artist themselves; my own relationship with power electronics is as a listener as much as, if not more than, as a practitioner. In all its extremity and capacity for shock, by virtue of sheer impact power electronics creates a psychological space for encountering unwanted aspects of myself, reconciling my human commonalities with individuals and groups who commit reprehensible and abhorrent acts, strengthening my own sense of character, self-accountability and empowerment within the framework of my own psyche. In this respect it is a space in which one can generate positive psychological and attitudinal change, however much its unpalatable content may suggest otherwise. It taps into the personal and collective *shadow* of the psyche but grants autonomy for the individual to engage and act upon this confrontation on their own terms.

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<sup>247</sup> Collins, 'Nasty', 39.

<sup>248</sup> Cox, *Music and Embodied Cognition*, 192.

Whatever position one adopts in one's relation to the content of power electronics as practitioner or as audience, and whether one is prepared to accept such work as of value – and my proceeding discussion of personal accountability itself works through my own feelings on this - I believe this exploration of the genre as a means of performing the *confrontation with the shadow* at least provides a means to generate insight in the complex personal motivations that drive the form, far above and beyond reductive accusations of inflammatory goading. This is certainly my own interpretation of the scope, the significance and potential of power electronics as a means to drive transformative change on an individual level, and therefore presents an effective vehicle for my own creative intentions. The functional value of power electronics in this context can hardly be stated more baldly than by Andy O'Sullivan (Goat): 'I always admired [power electronics]'s ability to embrace very, very difficult subject matter about control and submission. It was confrontational and forced you to examine yourself and made you step out of your comfort zone.'<sup>249</sup> Power electronics demands each listener to find their own rationalisations in this manner.

Whether the experience or performance of power electronics is genuinely able to generate the kinds of transformative positive change or healing hoped for by Jung, presenting an aperture to true *self*-realisation, or if on the contrary, it is an abyssal cavity into the horrors of humanity's collective *shadow*, may need to be left to the unique experience of those involved; this is, after all, about individuation.

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<sup>249</sup> Scott E. Candey, 'Chronicling US Noise and Power Electronics' in Jennifer Wallis, (ed.) *Fight Your Own War: Power Electronics and Noise Culture* (London: Headpress, 2016), 45.





## Conclusion

In the course of this thesis, I have pursued and hopefully achieved a number of goals. Firstly, I feel I have worked effectively to develop an approach to creative practice that addresses the theme of mental illness in a responsible and conscientious way. I have closely examined my own motives as a practitioner and identified an ethical location for my practice which feels stable and helps me continue to develop my sense and standards of accountability. The sense of disturbance I described as a result of my own uncertainty about these things has been ameliorated. I have intimately mapped the terrain of my interests, demonstrating how my practice draws on a wealth of diverse materials with strategic omnivorism. I have set out my own rationalisations for what my chosen modality of power electronics ‘is for’, and ‘what it does’ on a psychological level; and how its sonorous and philosophical characteristics place it uniquely as a means of interrogating mental illness. This latter is founded on my premise that applying discourse around *noise* to the theme of mental illness would generate new and valuable insights and perspectives.

What did these new perspectives prove to be? *Noise* presents numerous opportunities to think differently about mental illness. By examining competing accounts of *noise*, the ways that it occurs, what it does, the roles it plays in our lives and environments, and the breadth of our responses to it, and applying these to mental illness, we are offered a conduit to many different fields, framings and shapings of what mental illness *is* and what it *does*. The clearest impact that has had within the research is in facilitating the cross-pollination of many diverse texts, sources and practices (from Jung, to psychogeography and field recording, to fiction and to film) which in turn helped me to generate a symbolic language of *noise*-informed sonorities suitable for interrogating the theme of mental illness with depth, complexity and nuance. The simple cross-referencing of mental illness and *noise* effectively underwrote the whole creative trajectory of the work, making my sense of accountability for my practice achievable.

For the body of the thesis I have explored *noise* via its dualistic model (in opposition to signal), in order to explore its potential for mapping mental illness and wellness, and thereby engaging new fields of enquiry. This was qualified as a flawed model in the introduction section, with reference to Marie Thompson’s Ethico-Affective model of *noise*.<sup>250</sup> At this point it is crucial to return to this model as its cogent critiques of the dualistic, exclusively negative sense of *noise*

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<sup>250</sup> Thompson, *Beyond Unwanted Sound*, 6.

presents opportunities for thinking differently about mental illness, as a relational phenomenon, in continuous correspondence with aspects of the modern world that need to be challenged, such as inequality, impoverishment, deprivation, misogyny, racism and so on. In this, Thompson's Ethico-Affective *noise* is potentially transformative, unanchored from pejorative qualifiers and uncritical endorsements alike. It accounts for the great breadth of *noise* as experience without allowing its *noisiness* to dissipate altogether. It does this by countering the idea of the subject as solely constitutive in the experience of *noise*, and therefore by extension mental illness, liberating it from strict anthropocentricity. This aligns powerfully with the nuanced correspondence between the individual, environmental and social factors through which a mental illness or wellness are constituted; it allows for spectral gradations of mental wellbeing that shift continuously *in relation* to other bodies and experiences. As a direction for using theories of *noise* to illuminate new insights into mental health and illness, this is a mapping that is ripe for exploration in future research.

#### **4.1 In Praise of Practice**

In the opening paragraph of this text, I stated that the aim of my research was to interrogate the role of creative practice as a means of exploring and portraying issues around mental illness and its care. This aim underwrites a greater reflexive unfolding exploration of the context and mechanisms of my practice. As such, while I feel that I have addressed these questions in turn over the preceding pages, the material is at its richest at those times where it is at its most pan-disciplinary. The most substantial insights occur where it burrows to the heart of my motives and my sense of the psychological function the practice has as a means of promoting psychological homeostasis. In short, the value that creative practice adds to my drive for personal growth; herein, this hybrid research process has mushroomed into a positive paradigm shift for *how* I practice and *why*.

Throughout the course of writing the thesis component of this submission, I have struggled with articulation, and anxiety around expressing myself clearly. While I have discussed this sense of 'the insufficiency of language' previously in the thesis in the context of accountability, it has remained a pressing concern in general. At these times it has been difficult to step back and reflect on the thesis and portfolio as a single hybrid body of work that communicates in a number of dimensions. Such anxieties could have been ameliorated sooner in this process

through consultation with the work of Tim Ingold, and *Making* in particular.<sup>251</sup> Ingold's view of creativity (irrespective of field or craft) is reassuringly holistic, defined by 'a correspondence between maker and material'.<sup>252</sup> Ingold describes his method as 'the art of inquiry', in which 'the conduct of thought goes along with, and continually answers to, the fluxes and flows of the materials with which we work. These materials think in us, as we think through them.'<sup>253</sup> This concisely describes the process by which practice extends and enriches research, as I argue has occurred within this submission.

The aspect of Ingold's perspective that strikes me most at this juncture is his impassioned refutation of the idea that in hybrid works such as this, the written component – i.e. the aspect of the work which is *articulated* - is the primary repository of meaning. Articulation, argues Ingold, 'arrests feeling'<sup>254</sup> and therefore to over-rely on articulation and specification is for the work to lose meaning rather than gain it. 'Like makers generally, scholars [of the Four As] *can* tell what they know. They can tell *all* of it. The one thing they cannot do, however – or not without great difficulty and potential loss of meaning – is articulate it.'<sup>255</sup> Instead, Ingold eloquently emphasises the holistic integrity of the hybrid work, arguing for an extended sense of practice by stating that 'personal knowledge [...] swirls *around and between* the islands that articulate knowledge joins up. The skilful practitioner knows how to negotiate the passages.'<sup>256</sup> Even at this late juncture in the research process, such canny observations come as an immense relief and present a robust touchstone for ongoing methodology.

Phil Smith's *mythogeography* website sets an excellent example for how an extended sense of practice such as that formulated by Tim Ingold can be cultivated and documented.<sup>257</sup> Quite apart from providing an opportunity to purchase Smith's book of the same name, the site acts as an inclusive and permissive umbrella which incorporates a wide array of material such as discursive blogposts, accounts of mythogeographic exercises and experiments conducted, guidance notes and calls for participation for budding mythogeographers, talks, music, photography, arts and crafts, and an ever-growing repository of recommendations for books, albums, bands, films and more that contribute to or intersect with the expansive interests of

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<sup>251</sup> Tim Ingold, *Making: Anthropology, Archaeology, Art and Architecture* (London: Routledge, 2013).

<sup>252</sup> *Ibid.*, xi.

<sup>253</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

<sup>254</sup> *Ibid.*, 111.

<sup>255</sup> *Ibid.*, 111.

<sup>256</sup> *Ibid.*, 111.

<sup>257</sup> Phil Smith, *Mythogeography*, 2015, <https://www.mythogeography.com/>

Smith and his collaborators. All these elements contribute to a pan-disciplinary account of practices and passions that is invigoratingly diverse, strikingly disparate and enjoyably *magpie* in its enthusiasm for accumulating new materials, all of which orbit and enrich its core idea and modus operandi. This provides a potential model for how the broad research trajectory contained in this thesis might be carried forward in a manner that wholly embraces its eclecticism without diluting its core concerns.

Creative practice brings together hugely disparate ideas and combines them into complexes that allow free cross-pollination between fields that may not otherwise come into ready contact. It also allows for known fields to be encountered from different and unexpected perspectives, through phenomena that Vaughan describes as *rediscovery* and *defamiliarisation*.<sup>258</sup> This is a permissive space where thoughts can produce new, unexpected iterations, interactions and hybrids that enrich our insight. The intuitive leaps<sup>259</sup> and organic growth pattern of the creative work can stimulate this process with a speed, spontaneity and intricacy of detail that exceeds that of logic and the teasing out of language. This is the beauty of creative practice as a medium for interrogating ideas; the depth of rich and original material that can emerge from a body of work and its interpretation by those who engage with it can scarcely be limited. One hugely beneficial outcome of this research for me is experiencing a gradual and cumulative sense of validation, awareness of and growth in confidence in my work as rigorous research, without compromising its innate character.

This is an immediate argument for creative practice as a potent catalyst for substantial research. Creative practice facilitates hybridity and the circulation of ideas to an extent which deserves real celebration; a bed of connections that voraciously self-generate. By allowing the practice to dictate and drive the content of this written submission, rather than vice versa, I have aimed to demonstrably illustrate the scope creative practice has as a means of intuiting new and unexpected connections between ideas and dynamic new mappings of fields, through simple extrapolation from composition. Documenting this has been a stimulating and holistic exercise

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<sup>258</sup> Kathleen Vaughan, 'Taking Shape, Taking Flight' in Hazel Smith and Roger T. Dean, (eds.) *Practice-Led Research, Research-Led Practice in the Creative Arts* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009), 166-186.

<sup>259</sup> Graeme Sullivan, 'Making Space: The Purpose and Place of Practice-led Research' in Hazel Smith and Roger T. Dean, (eds.) *Practice-Led Research, Research-Led Practice in the Creative Arts* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009), 41-65.

of free intelligence gathering, ‘deliberating on the emerging aspirations, benefits and consequences which may flow from the demands and contingencies of practice.’<sup>260</sup>

There are many ideas and insights present in this thesis, crucial to the execution of its interrogation of *noise*, mental health, and practitioner ethics, that would not have been introduced without the intervention of creative practice, and that have enriched the whole enormously. The integration of the work of Jung, as a key example cited in the introduction, emerged organically and with no premeditation via the active process of creative practice, and yet these ideas have radically transformed the shape of the whole. Like Jung, the practice has acted as a beneficial schismatic to its greater context. The freedom with which these ideas have been integrated shows that the necessary permissiveness of methodology that creative practice entails raises many questions about rigour even as it allows for new and rich veins of information to be tapped.

Neidderer & Roworth-Stokes describe a wealth of alternative terminology for practice-led research that nonetheless fails to ameliorate ‘persistent uncertainty’ over its intrinsic value as research and its place among more concrete, less disputed methodologies.<sup>261</sup> In attempts to clarify this position as the basis for defence, researchers may be prone to nit-picking over semiotic nuances, a process that contributes to a clutter of overlapping terms. The undertaking of this research has enabled me to locate myself more clearly in this context and to identify those terms that are the most meaningful for me and my practice. I have previously discussed my primary identification with the concept of *postmodern emergence*, to which I would now add Ingold’s *art of inquiry*; Webb’s *agnostic thinking* also has significant appeal.<sup>262</sup> However, I feel that solid and rigorous creative practice is able to meaningfully articulate its value through modalities other than labelling and logic. It is able to engage a question in ways a written enquiry may not; and each may complement the other.

The physicality of creative practice creates opportunities for embodied, situated and experiential cognition to intervene in the assemblage and interaction of ideas within the process

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<sup>260</sup> Hazel Smith and Roger T. Dean, (eds.) *Practice-Led Research, Research-Led Practice in the Creative Arts* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009), 32.

<sup>261</sup> Kristina Neidderer and Seymour Roworth-Stokes, ‘The Role and Use of Creative Practice in Research and its Contribution to Knowledge’ (Conference Paper), *International Association of Societies of Design Research*, 2007. <https://pureportal.coventry.ac.uk/en/publications/the-role-and-use-of-creative-practice-in-research-and-its-contrib-2>

<sup>262</sup> Jen Webb and Donna Lee Brien, ‘Agnostic’ Thinking: Creative Writing as Practice-Led Research’, *Working Papers in Art and Design (Online)*, Issue 5 (2008), 1-21.

of research, creating new possibilities. Embodied and situational cognition describe the influence over thought processes exerted by our active, affective sense of the body, and of the environment and circumstances in which one is situated.<sup>263</sup> The physical and kinaesthetic dimensions of creative practice therefore have the potential to access and cross-pollenate a broader range of schema, of memories, reactions and reflexive associations than desk-based research that can enrich our interrogation of a research issue. By rendering this embodiment perceptibly within the practice through audible and/or visible gesture, the audience is able to respond with *mimetic participation*,<sup>264</sup> to affectively respond to this embodiment with their own. As noted in the preceding chapter, power electronics acts such as Whitehouse integrate this phenomenon into the constitution of their practice in live performance settings.

The body and its spatial relations are particularly audible in noise and power electronics music that utilise handmade sound and acoustic objects as sources. This facilitates mimetic participation and allows for the music to be “heard” proprioceptively; that is, heard via an affective awareness of the body as the agent of the music. This work has allowed me to detail for myself how my creative practice is energised by this relationship, which introduces new kinds of information into the research, and new intertextual connectivity. The use of psychogeographic field recording techniques demonstrates the role that embodied and situated cognition are able to play in stimulating new connections, new practices, and actively integrating these alternative forms of cognition in the creative work. I would describe my own practice as also aspiring to stimulate cognition that is conscious of its own psychological processes; thereby stimulating mindfulness as well as embodiment. The research process has allowed me to clarify for myself a plausible and pleasing means to pursue this goal, by integrating a model of the psyche into my praxis itself.

Understanding better how my music can communicate my message has refined my process considerably. Jung’s model of the psyche provides an intelligible model not only for my own practice but for understanding the creative process, and the creative object, in general; the relation between a composition’s endless permutations and its hypothetical essence. This ameliorates the anxiety around the sense of obligation to realise the definitive version of a piece or text, allowing for the acceptance of the creative object as a living thing. Of course, this is by

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<sup>263</sup> Arnie Cox, *Music and Embodied Cognition: Listening, Moving, Feeling, and Thinking* (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2016).

<sup>264</sup> Arnie Cox, ‘The Mimetic Hypothesis and Embodied Musical Meaning’, *Musicae Scientiae*, Vol. 5 (2) (2001), 195-212.

no means a new observation; but the model of the psyche is a framing of this view which has helped me personally to accept and internalise its lesson. This new understanding of how methodological, aesthetic and thematic components interact within a composition has also helped to change my attitude to its replicability, and the authenticity of different permutations of a single idea that may differ significantly on a surface level; the resilience of intention and of message to practical vagary. This has fed into a more positive attitude to live performance practice not as the restrictive and workmanlike reproduction of recorded material, but as a space in which the energies and frictions of an idea may continue to thrive through situationally-embedded re-articulation.

There is a clear trajectory over the course of the albums in the portfolio from a lyrically-focused, surface level application of the themes to an irrigated compositional approach, whereby the themes underlay the compositional process at an elemental level. This allows me to systematise my intentions and implement them with transparency; it's an enrichment of the process that has proven pleasingly amenable to retrospective application. It is rewarding to look over the portfolio, album by album, and observe the strengthening of the relationship between content and methodology. It has also paid dividends for my compositional efficiency and helped me to develop a framework in which I can quickly determine potential methods for realising a given idea. It has also allowed me to build confidence in myself to communicate my intentions less literally without diluting them. I have greatly developed my understanding over the course of this research of the diversity of environmental, aesthetic and philosophical influences at work within my creative practice, lucidly or otherwise. As discussed, much of this is the product of active, interdisciplinary practice; an intuitive opening and proliferation of possibilities and junctures.

At this stage in my practice I find myself experiencing a positive return to Jung's emphasis on individual change as the fundament of greater social change; this is amply supported by Sommer.<sup>265</sup> There were points in this process when I felt overwhelmed by the cultural currents pulling at me; I feel I can better appreciate that the development in myself is an achievement I can celebrate. This should not be described as 'a lightening of the burden' of accountability, but a positive change in attitude. Accountability should be an opportunity for creative practice, not a threat to it; less still an incitement to pre-emptive self-flagellation. Like a risk assessment, accountability is the setting of conditions to ensure an activity can proceed without the

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<sup>265</sup> Sommer, 'Art and Accountability'.

endangerment of oneself or others, not a deliberate obstacle to prevent the activity occurring at all. Each is similarly prone to unfair accusations of Nanny State-ism, which must be resisted.

Like many creative practitioners in this position, both the written text and the portfolio of work present not a discrete research process with a defined beginning and end, but the artificial framing of a life's work. Simply put, what I set out to achieve is progress, to cultivate understanding and to establish a measure of peace with the issue of practitioner accountability. On these grounds I believe this work demonstrates constructive and significant forward movement for me towards each of these goals. Many of the conclusions in here were unforeseen at the start of the programme of study, in the main delightfully so; indeed, the richness of the material I have been able to piece together has exceeded my expectations. The extent to which I have been able to explore my personal relationship with power electronics, noise and industrial music from the audience perspective rather than that of the performer has been tremendously beneficial for the practice and for my appreciation of the psychological scope of the genres as a whole.

One potential avenue for future research on this point could be to undertake an autoethnographic survey of other practitioners within the power electronics genre to generate a range of case studies examining the different motivations, rationalisations and relationship with their practice – and how these impact on their practical methodologies - as a basis for comparison and the enrichment of discourse around these modalities. Taking a similar expansionist approach, the brief discussion of film undertaken in Chapter 2 provides ample scope for a major research project investigating the sounding of the asylum in film and television in detail (examining musical treatments, sound effects and voicings); both of these research opportunities could easily extend to book-length texts or ongoing series of smaller publications or blogs.

## **4.2 Confronting the Self**

A red thread to this research has been my own accounts of the constructive psychological function that extreme music and content is able to provide for me. My active experience of power electronics both as a performer and as an audience represents a self-challenging and self-defining examination of one's own moral integrity, in which personal values are partitioned from socially ascribed values and weighed together. This entails an unadulterated form of introspection (which could easily be described as a kind of narcissism by the sceptical), balanced with the building of resilience and self-awareness. I have articulated



power electronics as my vehicle to undergo the Jungian *confrontation with the shadow* as a mindful and constructive act of reconciliation between conflicting aspects of the personality; an interrogatory spotlight on cognitive dissonances and an essential component to psychic homeostasis.

On a wider scale, I feel that the *confrontation with the shadow*, ultimately, is an encounter with the limitations of the conscious mind, its fallacies and dissonances, and essential mutability; it is an acknowledgement that our insight into our own minds is fragmentary and transitory if not simply fanciful. It demands acceptance of the illusory nature of the conscious self; a provocation of responses that may deviate significantly from one's own narrative account of who you are and how you anticipate your own reactions. This allows for the conscious self to observe its parameters and contradictions, to identify behaviours and thoughts one wishes to challenge. Over time I have grown from a desire to sculpt identity by cultivating a personal narrative, to accepting the limits of my own perception and to remain mindful when navigating the fanciful excesses of introspection.

*Confronting the shadow* stages an encounter with biases, encoded responses and fallacious reasoning. Material that is extreme – in a relative sense – can be used as a resource to set the conditions for or catalyse this challenge and engaging awareness on an affective level. The acceptance of the illusory, permeable, and malleable self necessarily precedes psychological empowerment; the release from this illusion is potentially transformative. William Bennett of Whitehouse clearly endorses this method in that band's swansong album, *Racket*. Bennett talks about the power of extreme content to manoeuvre the conscious mind into a heightened state of response, awareness, and receptiveness to other experiences; the content becomes the catalyst, rather than the end in itself. This heightened state is generated through provocative content, delivered through voice, performance and imagery, accompanied by extremities of volume, frequency and timbre. Blistering atonality, challenging audio techniques and low fidelities. Power electronics is visceral and physical, a sound that engages affectively with the whole body, particularly in a live setting. This multisensory physicality presents another aspect of self-definition and self-affirmation, utilising the potential of embodied and situated cognition to engender altered or quasi-ecstatic states and affective/proprioceptive presence in the moment. This audial extremity also serves to cue the staged nature of the experience, its rarefied state; and thereby, its functionality. Performance and audience operating by mimesis and diegesis; transference and surrogate re-enactment (in the psychoanalytical senses).

For some, the material presented by power electronics may (by association) always be considered offensive, unacceptable, and harmful. Some would argue that this is employed deliberately as a weapon against society, others that it is holding up a mirror to society. But is that enough? The profoundly inhospitable sonic scree of power electronics renders it palatable for only a tiny minority, operating within a fairly closed and insular sub-culture; both its potential for causing or disseminating harm and also its propensity to fulfil positive psychological functions must be assessed in the context of its obscurity. As a practitioner my strategy to mitigate this is to retain accountability and responsibility for the material that I produce.

The course of this research has provided me with the opportunity to scrutinise my own motivations and responses as a power electronics practitioner and listener in an uninhibited, speculative and exploratory manner. This would not be feasible without a broader appreciation within academia for the vagaries of effectively communicating idiosyncratic creative practice. Power electronics conveys bleakness far beyond my own experience. It is key to have control over my engagement as a consenting audience, and to engage according to my own terms; I am empowered to manage the boundaries of my own encounters with darkness. This helps to build resilience to the harsh realities in life which I neither control nor consent to, but which are, in personal terms, ineradicable.

The *confrontation with the shadow* provides a functional model for what extreme art and music is for, what it does, and why these outcomes may be considered psychologically desirable. The provocative assault of power electronics intersects with the broader context of extreme art in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, such as Artaud's Theatre of Cruelty, Viennese Actionism, etc. Art designed to raise questions, incite thought or simply to provoke more visceral responses to "wake" its audience even for a moment. It provides a vehicle for protest and resistance to the status quo, emotional expression and catharsis. I have argued that this quality of resistance is particularly emergent from the urban space in a number of complex dimensions. As is arguably the conceit of any sub-culture, power electronics enables self-identification as an "outsider" to "mainstream society", striving for independence of thought (though whether or not this self-identification bears close examination is a question for another day).

This sense of resistance and differentiation is a crucial component in practice for extreme sound and content to become a vehicle for personal expression and fulfilment, the acquisition of meaning and purpose in life. In a sense this is an Absurdist prerogative that I have arrived at under the influence of a number of adverse life experiences. Camus' biographer Bronner describes this as 'a proud and personal rebellion against the incoherence of existence.'<sup>266</sup> This is not so far from Mikko Aspa's outsider position; 'Personal success is not as important as living a meaningful life where the things you do actually have a purpose.'<sup>267</sup> A sceptic might describe this as an exercise in tolerating horrors as a way of valorising privileged (predominantly white male) navel-gazing, or exploiting genuine trauma for narcissistic purposes; this is a thought that has troubled me at times when considering my own practice and which I have taken pains to address in the course of this research. As an exercise in the acquisition of meaning, the creative practice undertaken herein has allowed me to account for the embodied and experiential dimensions of meaning that my music represents. Fundamentally, then, this is a Jungian process.

[Jung] felt that knowledge of oneself was entirely experiential: what the Gnostics call *gnosis*, an "inner knowing" gained through one's own experience and understanding. This "inner knowing" is more than just information or the experience of being conscious. It includes the experience of *meaning*.<sup>268</sup>

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<sup>266</sup> Stephen Bronner, *Camus: Portrait of a Moralist* (London: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), 34.

<sup>267</sup> Jarno Alander, 'Outcast by Choice: An Interview with Mikko Aspa', *Heathen Harvest*, 2016, <https://heathenharvest.org/2016/01/02/outcast-by-choice-an-interview-with-mikko-aspa/>

<sup>268</sup> Salman, 'The Creative Psyche', 61.



## **Appendices**

### **Appendix A. Identity Parade**

This portfolio contains work undertaken using three discrete project names; these are Cauldhame, Augure Concret, and Ophiel. My personal preference when making music is to create projects that have coherent identities and defined parameters, even if these are meaningful only to me, rather than to produce material eclectically under a single name. Within this there is scope for crossover, something that I manage intuitively when designating what piece goes where. However, each project has its own distinct *modus operandi*, each of which are associated with key compositional techniques and methodology. In this the projects contribute to a greater body of work on the whole, but function to provide overarching structure grouping sets of albums in categories.

#### **Cauldhame**

I began writing and recording under the name Cauldhame in 2008. At the time the only items of hardware I had access to were my Edirol R-09 handheld recorder and desktop PC. As a result the fundament of the project from the start was to work primarily with field recordings and found objects as sound sources. I would record long takes of found sound, and improvised with found objects to find as diverse and interesting a range of potential sounds as possible. These recordings were then used as the raw material for pieces, digitally processed after the fact in order to create new textures and juxtapositions. One consequence of this ad hoc, intuitive and tactile approach to sound was that I tended to eschew loop-based sequencing and locked tempos in favour of elastic, freely ebbing and flowing interpolations of texture. As the project evolved and I accumulated equipment and integrated a more diverse range of techniques, this elasticity and prioritisation of dynamic, tactile sound-sources remained the distinguishing characteristics of the project.

No less distinctive within a power electronics context, but rooted as much in lack of confidence as aesthetic choice, are the softly spoken or whispered vocals, often buried in the mix or otherwise used as one other texture among many. These are also a signature of Cauldhame, and I feel are effective in the context in which they are placed; however, at times they have also felt like a millstone. This vocal style helped to cement Cauldhame's introverted character, a concentration on the experiential phenomenology of the mind; exploration, in effect, of the inner life of the psyche.

## **Augure Concret**

The Augure Concret project in many ways originated as a reaction to working with Cauldhame for a number of years and feeling the urge to break my self-imposed rules of practice. Beginning in 2014 during the latter stages of recording Cauldhame's *Saturnine* album, Augure Concret was intended from the outset to be extroverted and confrontational, a challenge rather than a turn to introspection. Initially it was characterised by very overt, aggressive loops, an adoption of the modality within industrial music known as heavy electronics due to its fullness and density of frequency saturation. This was an immediate and deliberate contrast to Cauldhame's elasticity. Later, as I added hardware, these loops would be significantly bolstered and arguably superseded by harsh and punishing analogue synthesizer texture; again, a step removed from the more insidious textural undertow of Cauldhame tracks.

Most of all, however, Augure Concret is distinguished and gifted the key measure of its confrontation by its aggressive, shouted vocals, which I had finally built the confidence to attempt and become comfortable with producing. Augure Concret is founded on anger and frustration with society at large, and demands a commensurate vocal presence to deliver it with conviction and vigour. Functionally speaking the decision to pursue this approach under a different name was very deliberate. By making it a formal point of identity, this enabled me to commit to the new approach freely without concern about derailing the character that Cauldhame had built for itself (this is a chronic anxiety of mine at any time that I consider shaking up my practice).

## **Ophiel**

This project began alongside Cauldhame but has proven to be a much more occasional endeavour. Ophiel utilities much the same methodology in generating sound sources, applying signal processing techniques and juxtaposing numerous layers of sound as Cauldhame; however it deploys them in an altogether more reflective and approachable context. Ophiel is primarily informed by experimental electronics, electroacoustic and glitch music such as Coil and Fennesz, allowing for different dynamic ranges and ambiances to be deployed for the purposes of the portfolio. Ophiel's character provides an excellent context for exploring particular issues around the sounding of the psychiatric asylum that are impractical to achieve in either of the previous projects, ergo its inclusion here.

## Appendix B. *Debris*, by Cauldhame

### Overview

*Debris* is the oldest album in the portfolio; it was composed and recorded in 2012. The album is an attempt to undertake a credible and measured artistic examination of the so-called Messiah Complex, or messianic delusion; the irrational conviction that one is the reincarnation of Christ or otherwise a Christ-like figure.<sup>269</sup> This manifestation of psychosis is incredibly prevalent;<sup>270</sup> Gettis describes this psychosis as a paranoid retreat from negative interpretations of the self and the world, by altering one's experience of oneself; 'a psychotic solution to the search for glory' through 'ecstatic absorption'.<sup>271</sup> Jung expressed this phenomenon as a fixation on the archetype of the aware self to the total exclusion and abnegation of the shadow aspect of the psyche, denying its wholeness as a means of rejecting negativity and thereby self-condemnation;<sup>272</sup> this could also apply to a symbolic shedding or suppression of the experience of stigma. The Messiah Complex is a handily available stock trope for psychosis, mined extensively for popular culture and often, such as in the film *The Dream Team*, played for laughs via superficial, stereotypical characterisations.<sup>273</sup> In this context, *Debris* attempts to reflect substantially and accountably on the phenomenology of this form of grandiose delusion.

The album provides a fictionalised account of an incidence of this form of psychosis, occurring in the context of the contemporary mental healthcare system in the UK. The account describes a patient's involuntary commitment to hospital, their experience of institutional care, and their return to the community. The album name derives from the protagonist of the piece, a character named Nicholas Deborough; the idea being that "Debris" is a nickname he self-applies at a time when his psychosis is in remission and he consciously experiences a sense of stigmatisation. The psychosis, meanwhile is symbolised by Deborough's erroneous reinterpretation of his experience of hospitalisation through biblical allusion and quotation. As an early work, the lyrics betray an abiding predilection for gothic excess and a general ostentatiousness of style, a feature of the portfolio that recedes over the successive albums as I refine my approach and make a deliberate effort to pare back the purple prose.

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<sup>269</sup> Alan Gettis, 'The Jesus Delusion: A Theoretical and Phenomenological Look', *Journal of Religion and Health*, Vol 26, 2 (1987), 131-136.

<sup>270</sup> Marvin Goldwert, 'The Messiah-Complex in Schizophrenia', *Psychological Reports*, Vol. 73 (1993), 331-335.

<sup>271</sup> Gettis, 'Jesus', 133.

<sup>272</sup> *Ibid.*, 133.

<sup>273</sup> Rethink Mental Illness, *Screening Madness*.

The context of the mental healthcare system was primarily informed by the Schizophrenia Commission's 2012 Report, *The Abandoned Illness*, which provided a comprehensive analysis and criticism of the state of mental healthcare at that time, with further reference to Barham, Laurance etc. This is a damning illustration of a system impoverished of funding, staff, resources, and time, and the challenges that these impoverishments pose to a mental health professional attempting to attain credible insight into an individual's experience and quality of life.

My interest was particularly drawn to the subtle ambiguities of the term "wellbeing" when discussing mental health, measured in terms of positivity of experience, of a life perceived as meaningful and fulfilled *within* the context of irrationality. This is particularly fraught in the context of religious delusions, which may be contingent on a pre-existing strong faith – naturally, this raises some very contentious questions about religiosity. This form of psychosis certainly implies a remarkable inner life; a reminder that mental illness is not limited to negative thoughts but irrational ones, and that, as observed above, delusion may act as a buffer against the painful awareness of stigma. The question that troubled me was simplicity itself; is it better to be healthy or happy? And who has the capacity or the agency to answer that question on the patient's behalf? As in my encounters with the "bag lady" described in the opening pages of the thesis, I return to the quote from Roxanne Lanquetot cited in the Introduction, which I reproduce here: 'I believe that basically she is less free in her present life, a prisoner of her delusions and paranoia. My brother disagrees. He thinks that mother is better off having the choice to live as she wishes, wandering aimlessly in the streets, constructing the world to fit her delusions.'<sup>274</sup>

*Debris* largely predates my efforts to develop a representational approach towards compositional choices and gestures (as detailed in chapter two of the thesis). Therefore while there are ample readings and post-hoc rationalisations of the pieces to be made in this regard, in the main it would be wrong to suggest that this methodology was in any way embedded at this stage. The exception to this is the track *Metamorphosis*, which represents my first attempt to use symbolic gesture as the basis for a composition.

*Debris* is essential for assessing the portfolio as a whole as it constitutes my first attempts to address the theme of mental health through industrial/power electronics music with an ethos of accountability. It establishes many of the conditions for subsequent material in its use of

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<sup>274</sup> Lanquetot, 'First Person Account', 93.



compositional structures, approach of spectrally dense sound layers, and signal-processing techniques. On reflection at this juncture I remain satisfied with the work on a compositional level but also see it as a public record of how far I still needed to go; particularly in terms of my use of explicitly fictive content. This decision to fabricate my own case study in hindsight evidences the extent to which I was still primarily informed by gothic depictions of mental illness. The relatively shallow analysis at work within the album however stimulated me to research my material more thoroughly and patiently in future, and to develop methods for irrigating the sonic constitution of the material with aspects of the content, towards a representational model of composition.

## **Breakdown of Tracks**

### **1. Revelations**

The first half of the opening track of *Debris* is focused on the gradual relaxation of volume gates applied to a number of processed sound-sources. The gates are manipulated by hand to gradually allow more and more interjections of handmade noise texture (primarily metal objects) to cut through the mix, and to linger for longer. This technique suggests the gradual creep of irrational thoughts that may precede a psychotic episode. The hinge point of this track spills over with psychedelic washes of processed choral music, contrasted with a densely detailed, incoherent welter of disintegrating noise artefacts; this section represents the completion of the turn to delusion and its accompanying upsurge of disordered, irrational attributions, associations and impulses.

### **2. The Judas Unveiled**

### **3. Judicium Divinum**

Both of these tracks rely on a similar palette of sonic elements; a seething undercurrent of bristling, feverish synthesized textures balanced with atonal orchestral loops and self-absorbed, meandering patterns of scrap metal gesture. The aim of this combination of elements is to suggest a delirious, paranoid atmosphere in which the protagonist jumps from one irrational conclusion to the next, entirely preoccupied with, and quite unable to relate outside of, the experience of psychosis. The two tracks are distinguished in that a mood of initial confusion is transmuted in the second into a contained sense of confrontation that, locked into the experience of psychosis, is effectively incommunicable except through an apparently passive resistance with distraught affect.

#### **4. Speaking In Tongues**

The first of two entirely wordless pieces, *Speaking In Tongues* attempts to suggest the apex of psychosis, a disorientating melange of morphologically ambiguous sounds. The aim was to create a maximal wall of intense sound that provided no clear clues to its provenance, placing the onus on the listener to interpret and respond to the piece entirely on their own initiative.

#### **5. Metamorphosis**

*Metamorphosis* aims to contrast mechanically looped and signal-processed sounds with layers of handmade, repetitive and loop-like sound gestures utilising a variety of tactile materials including roof slate, scrap metal and gravel. In this example, the mechanical loop represents a perceived model of normative behaviour; stable, regular, and predictable. The handmade sounds in contrast represent mimetic behaviours, a labouring in normality that could be aspirational or dissimulating; a sounding of the learning to 'be normal' in the eyes of others. The objective of this contrast is to raise questions about the nature of rehabilitation in the context of mental health, and whether its key feature is not the presence of a healing but the cessation of visible evidence of illness. By building to a frenzied cacophony of mimetic gestures occurring in conflicting cycles, it suggests the *noise* generated by a society in which each individual is driven anxiously towards their idea of "normal". This is a sounding of Attali's suggestions that 'today's violence is not the violence of people separated by a gulf, but rather the final confrontation of copies cut from the same mold who, animated by the same desires, are unable to satisfy them except by mutual extermination';<sup>275</sup> and 'when there is an accelerating repetition of the identical, messages become more and more impoverished, and power begins to float in society, just as society floats in music. In representation, power is localised, enacted. Here, it is everywhere, always present, a threatening sound, perpetual listening.'<sup>276</sup>

#### **6. Desire Of The Afflicted**

This track utilises layered melodies and a gentler, more restrained approach to noise elements, in order to create a sense of pathos. The track presents another hinge point in the overarching narrative; the progression of treatment to a point where the protagonist is emerging from the excesses of psychosis and beginning to develop perspective and awareness of their

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<sup>275</sup> Attali, *Noise*, 130-131.

<sup>276</sup> *Ibid.*, 132.

circumstances. The desired effect is of a pre-traumatic moment of clarity, experienced within the controlled environment of care.

### **7. Mark Of The Leper**

The second wordless track on *Debris, Mark Of The Leper* employs a similar open compositional approach to *Speaking In Tongues*. The intention of the piece is to communicate the initial disorientation of the former psychiatric inpatient re-entering the community, riddled with the anxiety of a nascent awareness of stigma. The piece focuses particularly on the susceptibility of the vulnerable rehabilitant to a kind of self-condemnation that is painfully embedded within the act of re-joining the “sane”.

### **8. Being-As-Debris**

This track title was inspired by a quote from Paul Hegarty’s *Noise/Music*, to wit: ‘They are debris just as much as the deserted areas, the ‘terrains vagues’ and empty quarters of modern cities, the abandoned machines. The end of labour has not brought freedom, only redundancy, and this being-as-debris is continually at stake in Throbbing Gristle.’<sup>277</sup>

The central motif in this piece is a field recording of a squealing metal gate (a rear entrance to the grounds of Acklam Hall in Middlesbrough) swinging back and forth, recorded from a stationary position. This motif symbolises a perspective from the margins of a space, the hypothetical edge position in society occupied by individuals recuperating from a severe incidence of psychosis. The distanced, signal-processed wash of choral music lingering in the background represents the psychological residue of institutionalisation, like an echo of the Mantovani piece employed in *One Flew Over The Cuckoo’s Nest*. The aim is to illustrate social isolation, a problematic after-effect of mental illness and many other detrimental social conditions correlated with it, such as poverty.

### **Equipment**

*Debris* was produced using the following elements:

- PC running Ableton Live 6 DAW
- Field Recordings (using Edirol R-09 Handheld Digital Recorder)
- Scrap Metal Objects
- Orchestral Samples/Loops
- Voice
- Various effects plugins and software-based synthesizers/emulators

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<sup>277</sup> Hegarty, *Noise/Music*, 112.

The album was mixed and mastered by me in 2012.

**Release Information**

**Released By:** Unrest Productions

**Format:** Cassette, 105 units

**Release Date:** 30/09/2013

**Catalogue No.:** UNREST 31

## **Lyrics**

### ***Revelations***

"And then I heard the voice of God, and I was changed." And the world became grey and devoid of life against the splendour of the illuminating light. "He said, 'Listen to my words: When there is a prophet among you, I, the LORD, reveal myself to them in visions, I speak to them in dreams.'" And the Voice spoke, and never ceased, revelation overflowing; the river of consciousness that burst its banks and swept aside the feeble ephemera of the Norm. "The prophecy of one who hears the words of God, who sees a vision from the Almighty, who falls prostrate, and whose eyes are opened."

The blazing epiphany of purpose aflame on the Sinai of the mind's third eye; the innumerable names of God to be innumeraably etched in brick, and plaster, wood, and flesh. The ecstasies enshrined in Idumaea, brought closer with each fevered invocation. "Where there is no revelation, people cast off restraint; but blessed is the one who heeds wisdom's instruction."

The sleepless prophet, bloody-fingered and gaunt, heeds not the encircling gloom, "for the night is dark, and they are far from home; lead Thou them on!"

### ***The Judas Unveiled***

And whence come you, emissaries of Rome? Is this to be the new Gethsemane? You crowd the splintered doorway, trampling the unanswered mail, faces pale and impervious to faith. Grim you are in the solemnity of your calling, with the restraints of thorns and a proclamation of Law; the righteous spits upon such valedictions. And thus invoked, the Voice sayeth unto thee: was the Via Dolorosa thus strewn with litter and broken glass? The Gehenna of the wretched, a place not of skulls but burnt-out cars? And who would name this to be so?

"He who eats my bread lifted up his heel against me."

With a clatter of bottles and a reproachful curse, the apophasis of betrayal reveals the downtrodden brother; fatigue-ringed eyes peering round the doorframe, bleary with the iniquities of drink. A betrayer's kiss from cyanosis lips and the acrid taste of cigarettes. No silver pieces to weigh against the guilt for the unmasked Iscariot mumbling empty platitudes, shame burning the broken veins of his face, and recoiling from the gaze of his redeemer.

"But woe to that man through whom the Son of Man is betrayed!"

And to those who gathered there sayeth He: "You do not have in mind the things of God, but the things of men." And a great voice cried "Let us go hence!" - and darkness came thereafter...

### ***Judicium Divinum***

Cast down by the priests in white who speak in tongues of a third commandment unknown to the book of Truths; and the blood that is innocent of the fire shalt be impassioned like the Christ in this mockery of Gabbatha, where the indecency of Reason greets the Name with derision. The Voice rings out in the silence of the Soul: "He will fulfil the desire of them that fear him."

Left to moulder in this Gaol, restrained and reviled; they that imbibe the poisons of impiety, the

mingled wine and gall sheathed in another form, and with indomitable faith prevail, are absolute and wreathed in the blessings of the just. In repudiation of the debasing mass who proclaimed the impotence of Pilate, and now bequeath the contempt of the faceless herd upon the servants of the Lord. "He will make your righteous reward shine like the dawn, your vindication like the noonday sun."

### *Metamorphosis*

In this tower of Babble; forty days and nights condemned to a wilderness of the mind, recoiling from the absence of the Voice. There is no pain; He is receding. Scoured and seared of ecstatic faith, dirtied inside by cirrhosising purgatives and baptised with the caked grey matter of banality.

In the uneasy peace preceding wakefulness, the inescapable names of God - inchoate formations in the pre-dawn frost, daubed in vain by the withheld world beyond - glimmer reproachfully on the windowpane. Gazing with discouraged resignation at collapsing parapets of iron-dark sky; torn and billowed by ice-sheathed tongues of wind, to crumple its swollen hide upon the claws of charcoal-blackened trees that like silhouettes of staggering broken figures paw inately at the leeched horizon. A fever-dreamed chaos of coagulating shadow disgorging their polymorphous forms like its rejected young, too far gone in cold to scorn the indifferent sky.

"They did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death."

The final pale smear of voyeuristic sun peers suspiciously through shreds of cloud, tattered by the beginnings of new snow, like peeling flakes of universal viscera - the begrimed albino underbelly of retreating night. "Surely they intend to topple me from my lofty place; they take delight in lies; with their mouths they bless, but in their hearts they curse."

The every-day-the-same is a memory to repress, amputating time, sliver by precious sliver. Each second is a shard of disintegrating meaning, stifled by the smothering benumbed.

"If only they were wise and would understand this, and discern what their end will be."

Agents of absence encroaching with each tick-tick-tick; Longinus' spear held delicately between their fingers, eyes blank with the stupor of the Norm, to dispassionately break the morn beyond repair.

"I rise before dawn and cry for help; I have put my hope in your word."

### *Desire Of The Afflicted*

To the grey priests of Absentia; such is the beauty of the judgement, as briefly dazzling as the puncture-wounds of sun. Reopening lesions in a morning sky as blanched and inhospitable as a linoleum floor. A theatre to parade this phenocopy of redemption; this barely -living sculpture of shimmering smoke and mirror, clagged with the clinging caliginous strands of einheitspsychose. It quivers with the undertow of dread concealed. A mugging parody of expiated sane-shapes; a coracle of lies launched in desperation to float the judged upon the sea of stagnant certainties. The petitioner to the Sanhedrin - the keepers of the Gates - begs for the stigmata of mercy. The mark of the leper for the misshapen waxen doll whose face is now their fingerprint, its mashed blank vacancy staring eyelessly at naught, dolled up like Everyman to take another bow and suspend disbelief for another day. To receive its disfigurement with gratitude and fall between the cracks in peace.

## *Being-As-Debris*

Every day the same, in the wastelands of the shrivel-souled. Time was broken and a new world forged, all chilly grey blurs and smudges that murmur a glossolalian flux. A cancerous mantric dirge, the residue of purgatory's myriad voices, corroding meaning from the anguished clamour of life.

“De profundis clamavi ad te, Domine; exaudi vocem meam!”

In its un-emotive mutters, signifying nothing - “But answer came there none.”  
For there are strange hells within the minds delusion carved.

Every night the same; a single burn-scarred bulb dangles flickering overhead, a bauble of lifeless luminescence depending from the ceiling cracks like a spider from its web. Like a scarecrow's head raised impotent against the shadows that swarm all hungered in the corners of the room.

The enfeebled pulse of the lamps outside the window is like a palsied hand gesturing through the dirty pane, signing relentlessly the futility of outside.  
“Si iniquitates observaveris, Domine, Domine, quis sustinebit?”

Cradling the homunculus of stigma like an unwanted child; a pale distended thing that only clings and shivers. And psychic wounds that ceaselessly change shape.

Static shivers in the stale still air, a distressed asthmatic murmur; the screen spills a welter of washed out ghosts, like a fluttering eyelid peeling to reveal a cataract of corrupted, deluding light that ruptures the confining dark with spectres that never were, its dissociated buzz a nest of dying insects.

The wrong remains the same; the world is cruel that names this Panacea and withholds its wonders, the elusive slivers of that forbidden bliss. And life? A Gordian knot of numbed deceptions before a flaming sword that spurns its right to strike.

“He will make your righteous reward shine like the dawn, your vindication like the noonday sun”, they said.

But the sun turned grey and cold as dust.  
And He is silent.

## Appendix C. *Thanatologist*, by Cauldhame

### Overview

*Thanatologist* is the second and last album in the portfolio to be built from a fabricated case study (my growing concerns about personal accountability as a practitioner, as addressed in the thesis, began to gather pace at this point). Oxford English Dictionary defines “Thanatology” as: ‘The scientific study of death, its causes and phenomena. Also (orig. *U.S.*), the study of the effects of approaching death and of the needs of the terminally ill and their families.’ Freud uses Thanatos to signify his *todestrieb*, or death drive; the underlying psychological motive for self-destructive thoughts and acts.<sup>278</sup> Thanatos, the ancient Greek personification of death, was symbolised by the Greek letter Theta, a circle bisected wholly or in part by a horizontal line.

The album was inspired by Laing and Esterson’s seminal 1964 work, *Sanity, Madness and the Family*. RD Laing was the renowned and controversial lynchpin of the so-called Anti-Psychiatry movement, a radical countercultural challenge to the psychological mainstream of the era. Laing espoused the hypothesis that the “mad” were merely sane people responding to an insane world. In *Sanity, Madness and the Family* he argues for the symptoms of psychosis as a product of familial dysfunction, cultivated by the connivance of manipulative parents, siblings and relatives. Laing uses the umbrella term *mystification* to describe the cognitive dissonances, double bind situations, wilful ambiguities and insinuations that family members of “so-called” schizophrenics used to cultivate their helplessness and pliability (the term gaslighting fulfils a much similar function in current idiom). The *Double Bind Situation*, first described by Bateson et al. is defined by the Merriam-Webster dictionary as: ‘a psychological predicament in which a person receives from a single source conflicting messages that allow no appropriate response to be made’;<sup>279</sup> and *Cognitive Dissonance*, first identified by Festinger as: ‘psychological conflict resulting from incongruous beliefs and attitudes held simultaneously’.<sup>280</sup>

A schismatic and destabiliser of its time with regard to the contemporary mainstream of psychology and psychiatry, subsequent research has shown Laing and Esterson’s work to be

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<sup>278</sup> Teresa De Lauretis, *Freud’s Drive: Psychoanalysis, Literature and Film* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2008).

<sup>279</sup> Gregory Bateson, Don D. Jackson, Jay Haley, and John Weakland, ‘Toward a Theory of Schizophrenia’, *Behavioral Science*, Vol. 1, 4 (1956) 251-254.

<sup>280</sup> Leon Festinger, *A Theory of Cognitive Dissonance* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1957).



reductive in its fixation on this premise; however, it rightly opened up meaningful debate around the socio-psychological dynamics of the family as a major factor in the metastasis of mental illness. Its eleven case studies, recorded to analogue tape and transcribed (neatly foreshadowing tape's later signification as a glyph of fallible memory), are fascinating accounts of petty, cumulative cruelties and the enervating influence of negligence in the deterioration of its subjects' mental health and wellbeing, with the arguable culpability of the institutional status quo of their time.

Deeply absorbed by this material, I resolved to make dysfunctional family dynamics the focus of this album, exacerbated with the trauma of bereavement. Continuing the fictive approach of *Debris*, I fabricated a case study of my own after the fashion, tone and evidence base of Laing and Esterson's book. Still noticeably tinged by my grounding in the Gothic, the study I created is generous with its morbid overtones but drafted with close parallel examination of Laing and Esterson's distinctive prose style. If it does not make a plausible twelfth entry to their work, it is not for lack of effort. In contrast to the deliberately dry tone of the case study document I produced, the lyrical material for the album takes the form of a stream-of-consciousness scrapbook of images, shreds of thoughts and impressions; residual fragments of a vivid and yet intensely private inner life, that were never intended for disclosure. The title, *Thanatologist*, captures the pervasive undertone of morbidity throughout the album, but conceals far more ambiguity than may be initially apparent: to quote from the lyrics, 'if you know my ways, the code has failed.' In this I detect strident echoes of Iain Banks' breakthrough novel *The Wasp Factory*, itself a confrontationally intense fiction of a dysfunctional family unit, dominated by the father figure as mystifier-in-chief. Closer to genre source, it is hard to overstate the influence of the lyrics of Martin Bladh (vocalist for Swedish post-industrial mavericks IRM) on this work in particular and my lyrical style in general.

The concept of mystification immediately struck me as a powerful analogue of *noise*, and this manifested in a new sense for me of compositional technique as a means of providing both non-verbal articulations and obfuscations of intent. Working with language as a last resort, I worked to generate methods for irrigating sound and gesture with hidden meaning; this practice laid much of the groundwork for the archetypal model of composition I present in Chapter Two of the thesis. In the *Thanatologist* album, much of this representational lexicon takes shape – though not its Jungian system of organisation or generative mode of application, which would come later.

The mechanics of my compositional approach evolve noticeably on this album in comparison to what has gone before. Two new elements entered the sonic palette of Cauldhame at this point; amplifier feedback generated with dynamic mics, contact mics, and guitar pickups; and Dictaphone-based tape manipulation and improvisation. The introduction of these elements accompanied the gradual development of my ideas for using sound representationally and mapping the meanings of the constituent parts of each composition. Much of the description of individual sound techniques paired with specific signifiers given in Chapter Two of the thesis were developed in this period. This was to ensure that the substance, not merely the surface, of each composition was invested with intention and driven by purpose rather than simply the inclination to make interesting sounds (though still allowing opportunities for play and spontaneity). Greater emphasis was also placed on the interaction of different sound elements; in particular, methods to use both Dictaphone recording and improvisation with microphone feedback simultaneously. Another key technique developed in this period was the use of Vocoder effects to splice together frequency clusters from different source recordings into hybrid signals, which were then subjected to further effects processing to disguise their compound nature; this aimed to produce a sounding of mystification, specifically cognitive dissonance or double-bind scenarios. This technique was to take on additional significations on the *Saturnine* album, when Jungian ideas began to be incorporated into the practice.

## **Breakdown of Tracks**

### **1. Ashen Pallor**

Building initially from heavily distorted and delayed microphone feedback, this track is focused around a looped sample of a Jacob's Ladder (a device for producing high voltage travelling arcs of electricity) as a means of mimicking an unstable, overloaded analogue synthesiser effect riddled with tics and inconsistencies. The same loop is recorded to cassette tape and then used within Dictaphone improvisation to create flurries of tape activity which jump around in the speakers, a relentless bombardment by delirious fragments of memory. Theta waves – generated from a pure, oscillating frequency tone in the 4-7hz range – are fed through distortion and fuzz to create an undertow of static rumble. Simultaneously, by moving the microphone by hand I physically and repetitively draw a large Theta letter in the air at a fixed distance from the amplifier, to embed the signifier non-verbally into the behaviour of the feedback signal. The vocal parts, buried in the mix, creep into the feedback signal through a

Vocoder effect applied post-recording; a post-hoc intervention in communication and encoding by intrusive thoughts.

## **2. Shall I Wear The White**

The core of this track is another microphone-to-amplifier feedback signal, into which Dictaphone improvisations using pre-recorded material are integrated live by holding the Dictaphone next to the mic. This physically inhibited the extent to which I could manipulate the Dictaphone. The pre-recorded material I used on tape for the improvisation was a cut-up collage of sounds of distress from a variety of online sources. The Dictaphone improvisation took the form of fast starts and stops, forced rewinds and fast-forwards, and adjustments to playback speed. The intention of this technique was to simulate the dysfunctional interruptions of, and alterations caused in communication and encoding by traumatic memories. This effect is layered within multiple takes mixed in parallel, in which the vocal parts are entangled and largely silenced. Providing the tonal base, a midi-controlled software synthesiser is manipulated by hand with pitch wheel to produce a queasy undertow.

## **3. Never Will I Ever**

This study in damaged synthesizer wreckage is strongly influenced by the work of Dominick Fernow, aka Prurient, on the album *History of AIDS*. The dominating sonic content of this album is analogue synthesizer with its signal so overloaded it generates disarrayed outbursts of static. This is interspersed with gouges of a very specific silence, that of an overload so intense it exceeds the capacity of the equipment to emit sound. The effect is replicated using software as opposed to analogue synthesizers, and therefore is not as pronounced, but nonetheless provides an effective backdrop of forcibly suppressed intensity. Cutting through this bedrock is a Dictaphone improvisation based on a performance of an Orphic Hymn to Thanatos that I found online; I walked around Newcastle city centre, whispering into the Dictaphone as I went, to produce a document of a private act hidden in plain sight. The manipulation of this recording builds over the course of the track until ending with frenzied rotor flurries in which any intelligibility is erased altogether.

A marginal but notable element of this track is that while producing scrap metal scraping incorporated as background texture, I wrapped my hands in plastic bags after the fashion of “The Bag Lady”.

#### **4. Schadenfreude**

The purpose of this track is to represent a double-bind situation underwritten by violent gestures, the lashing out of an abusive figure. Multiple takes of contact-microphone-to-amplifier feedback are layered and actively panned as a constantly moving ambient haze of conflicting, antagonistic signals; an unintelligible flux in which every response is wrong. A central feedback trail bores through this abrasive cloud, providing the listener with an umbilical linkage to the disorder. Violent outbursts of scrap metal clatter sound in the margins to create a sense of ever-present personal threat. At the conclusion, the central feedback trail lapses into a relative inertia, a flatline of learnt helplessness amid a squall of chaotic background signals.

#### **5. Unbecoming**

The core sound for this track is manipulated radio static. By dwelling on the noise produced by the absence of signal (i.e. transmissions), I aimed to represent impoverishment of affect and neglect, a deliberate walling off of attempts to communicate. Orchestral loops blur across the processed radio sounds, producing a morbid and torpid languor, or pre-death lethargy. Cutting through this mix is an increasingly desperate clamour produced by wrenching at a set of locked metal doors, to underline the image of an impenetrable threshold across which only dissimulating noise is permitted to emerge.

#### **6. Thanatosis**

Another lengthy exploration of longwave radio absence, *Thanatosis* represents the endgame of the album, in which the smothering influence of mystification causes a final subsidence into learnt helplessness and illness. This is symbolised using another live improvisation combining microphone-to-amplifier feedback and Dictaphone. In this instance, for the first few minutes of the piece the live feedback signal was recorded to tape over the Dictaphone's inbuilt microphone. Then, while continuing live feedback information, this recording was then used for tape improvisation with the Dictaphone speaker held against the microphone, so that the feedback signal becomes interrupted and mangled by interjections of itself. This represents the full internalisation of mystification into cognition as a result of the preceding onslaught of conflicting and misleading signals. A culmination of the fundamental irrationalisation of thought.

## **Equipment**

*Thanatologist* was produced using the following elements:

- PC running Ableton Live 6 DAW
- Shure SM57 Microphone and Piezo Contact Microphones
- Dictaphone and Tapes
- Bass Combo Amplifier
- Field Recordings (using Edirol R-09 Handheld Digital Recorder)
- Scrap Metal Objects
- Orchestral Samples/Loops
- Voice
- Various effects plugins and software-based synthesizers/emulators

The album was mixed and mastered by me in 2013.

## **Release Information**

**Released By:** Self, via Bandcamp

**Format:** Digital

**Release Date:** 12/04/2013

**Catalogue No.:** n/a

## Lyrics

### *Ashen Pallor*

Mo(u)rning finds a figure is absent from this window. Smudges in the dust on the sill, motes clinging to the quiet. Tangled in the after-shadows, gears twitch in a broken clock; death-writhe of severed wire. Years smothered and bleary eyed, between the lips of stifling blinds. Each ornament perfectly lined up, hung in disintegrating time; an immaculate husk. Years spun out like teased glue fraying, cloying strands concealing mouths. Tremulous footsteps and the creak of a stair, ever slight and instantly retreating; be still, and they may never hear you.

Won't you spare me over 'til another year, mausoleum to trauma? A broken maze of misfiring trips and traps. Focus melts as the lens detached, perpetuating its blur. Suspended reanimation. Figures pried from the windowpanes. Ashen pallor; receding skin ghost hoax. Fingers hold the eyelids closed.

Dehumanising cycles grinding down, the abrasiveness of interleaving failures. Needs like weeds unwatered, flourish anyhow; dried and cracked and dessicated flakes, shoring up their impoverished dream-piece with brittle struts of deceit. Gracile bones framed in snapped callipers, defined by pillars of grey-light between fractured banisters. Secret itches from an unpicked stitch. Rustling plastic bandage binds the psyche to the 'Me'; layers within layers, prayers within prayers. Familial glyph-scribbles join the foreign lesions, dispensing drops of poison to destroy all roots.

### *Shall I Wear The White*

Introducing Mister Todestrieb; Mr Orcus and Mrs Mors. Locked in private thanatologies, bridging thought and act with bile. As vermin worry the last tatters of the flesh, greyscale claylike on a human bone, the vindictive slivers of their voices lacerate the edges of my vague non-phrase. The scrawl and snarl of antagonistic energies fizzling in the vague soft suffocating staleness.

Answer the gentleman won't you? Disassemble the dissembled. Words found disused in different cracks and crevices and placed in arbitrary little piecemeal heaps are uneasy strangers that mingle in meanings misaligned. Caterwauling mongrel gospel through the gaps in language, vindictive cipher coils and garbled harm. Tripping on small complicities coercive coordinates skewed the moral compass. In my crawlspaces of consciousness, the infinite collapses round spiny piercing finites, destroying structures; softening the pale and fattened world, grown slothful and helpless in the wreckage.

Speech returns, trailing a cradle of weeping words; they say themselves at once, and blanch. Scabbed virtue spit-hankeyed into bloom, a moment of peace gift-wrapped in a garrotte; Cerecloth my scrapedskin. A cruel mimicry of intervention, a Sisyphean trial of normalcy.

A word is both a weapon and an enemy. A thanatophorous kiss bestowed. Teasing the wound-flecked memories like a thousand interleaving polaroids; fag-burned, scratched and scattered out of sequence. Flashbulb atrophies of life and death caught corpse-still by the lens.

Therein lies the labyrinth; if you know my ways, the code has failed.

## *Schadenfreude*

He is the one. Vessel fester, scabwinged locust tongue, barking with a thousand bodies. Writhing double-helix. Polymorpheus bruiser, clenching his plastic truth like a fist within another fist. Vicious repercussions echoed with psychic rancour. Half-lidded sullen gaze, clouded by unnerving vacancy, lingering on the affordances of cruelty with a vicious bewilderment. A child lost and bewailing its helplessness, in the wilderness of his own limbs flailing. Threats muttered under halitosis breath. Pacing to and fro by pastel lamplight, a sinewy murderous prowl. His ugly feral poise, primed for the possibility of violence.

A dreadful tread creaks upon the stair, like a black tumescent growth poisoning a home; perceived as a movement of limbs alone. Law of the lash: only attacks exist. Rule within transcends the rule without. Right is wrong and wrong is wrong. Strike the mystifier's mark, Theta perpetrator; with handfuls of smoke and broken mirror. Clenching the inverted torch, sifting for his single truth amongst a black melange of wrongs. A banked, spitting chaos of lickspittle traumas, eating one another through disintegration ritual.

Shadows foreshortened by a slowly opened door. The beast of the threshold, squaring up to the sun; demarcating rule. Drawing a line in the sand with his children's tears. Drawing the drapes on other worlds. Leaving only the glow of his hate to asphyxiate escape.

## *Unbecoming*

Rust-coloured murmurs linger; glottal copper flecked the rumpled sheets. Brittle digits, stained with nicotine, scattering the ashes and tarry filters. Drawn skin lined by burden's claw-marks and slow withdrawal into a murk of sick-scent. Listless heap of bone-limbed ache, the rupture of antagonised neglects. Black lung-scouring fumes, non-combusted flecks of resentful lethargy, scribe choke-arcs through the phlegm-lagged dark. The lead shroud of embittered apathy. Insects of deadlight from the TV screen tremble on plastic coatings, crawling skittish to the stairwell. Right is *not* and wrong is *not*; and *not* is unendurable to bear.

Break the mystifier's gaze; Ammet plays the weighting game. The body still, loose folds hang limp in a polyester shroud. Indifference embodied and swiftly cooling. Rime of foam-white under fixated filmy stare-  
Petroleum formations of light cobwebbed your eyes-

-(daysaway, change places)-

-Handfuls of soft white ash greying on the fingertips in the milky opacity of daylight. Starkeyemilkbright. Oil-haired bathos crumples; while he slept, with moths I decorate the body, fetishising the departed. An unbecoming presence, intrusively decentered, neutralised by contradictions. Maps formed of fingerprints. Umbilical clew hardened with untruths, stitched from mismatched grafts of being. Burnt offerings cake the nostrils, red-raw septum. A spirit imbibed, charred from the carcass of apathy, unbecoming a dispersion. Like candles burning in reverse, accreting round the pain-charged barbs of form. A coalescent voice caught Candiru-like in mine.

Protecting neglect.  
For this is eternity.

## **CASE STUDY: JONATHAN ESPESITO**

*“[...] Prior to this investigation, the Espesito family had been recognised as offering an unfavourable and potentially schizophrenogenic environment for their son Jonathan (18). However, our team was the first to suggest that Jonathan’s Schizophrenia was intelligible specifically in terms of the family situation. The prevailing view to date is that Jonathan’s acute symptoms are a matter of heredity, and that his first major Schizophrenic episode was triggered by the psychological trauma sustained from the death of his mother, Carla Espesito, when he was aged sixteen. He has spent nearly two years in hospital.*

### **Clinical Perspective**

*The team first encountered Jonathan and his parents in a diagnostic capacity, in the summer of 1962, shortly before Jonathan’s sixteenth birthday. At this juncture, Jonathan’s affect was impoverished or flattened; he experienced auditory hallucinations, severe anxiety and delusions of persecution, which preoccupied him intensely to the impairment of everyday social function.*

*It was judged by the team that the appropriate action in Jonathan’s case – due in part to his age, to avoid subjecting him to the potentially traumatic experience of commitment to psychiatric hospital at such a vulnerable time, in the context of his mother’s illness - was to engage in a six-monthly period of care at home, to be regularly monitored in situ by our team of psychiatrists, culminating in a second evaluation at the end of that period to determine the best way to proceed with further treatment. This allowed the team both to gain a realistic sense of the extent of Jonathan’s condition and to evaluate its environmental influences.*

### **Interviews**

*The first interview we undertook was with Giovanni and Carla Espesito, while Jonathan undertook psychiatric evaluation separately. Later in the course of the monitoring period we took pains to conduct further informal interviews with each parent separately at home. What we uncovered was an extremely complex web of mystification and delusion as endemic state of the family unit; a severely dysfunctional environment for all concerned.*

#### **(a) Father**

*Giovanni Espesito is a former mechanic of excellent professional reputation who manages two garages. He is a quintessential self-made man; fiercely proud, independent, self-reliant. He is also stubborn, self-absorbed, unforgiving and unsympathetic. As dominant member of the household, he dispenses the most overt mystifying behaviour. His relationship with his son is founded on intense projective idealisation (viewing his son as a manifestation of all the qualities he himself prizes), in which he is impervious to and actively invalidates any contradictory behavioural evidence from his son that is recognised by others; however, his own contradictory observations manifest as sudden outbursts of intense disappointment and all-encompassing negativity that shatter the illusion and create incredible friction within the family.*

*Vacillating between these two extremes, he has little time for the reality of his son’s everyday behaviour and experience. His relationship with Jonathan’s mother Carla is similarly divided between largely fantastical extremes unrecognised as such. Throughout our interactions he displayed a stunted affect, quick to violent verbal and physical behaviour.*



### **(b) Mother**

*Carla Espesito was a housewife. Tragically, Jonathan's six-month evaluation coincided with her own diagnosis of inoperable lung cancer. A lifelong smoker, she had waited too late to have her symptoms examined, and once diagnosed continued to smoke heavily and disregard all medical advice. Initially we ascribed Mrs Espesito's evident depression and learnt helplessness to her unfortunate condition; however we have come to speculate that these traits were in fact long-established components of her behaviour.*

*Dominated psychologically by her husband, Mrs Espesito appeared to defend herself from her own emotions by mystifying her son with a stream of contrary judgments, invalidations, reinforcing his own state of learnt helplessness. While initially she exhibited a repeat pattern of seeking her son's endorsement then invalidating it, or him, over time she became more apathetic, impoverished of affect, and treated excited behaviour of any sort in him on any scale as a fatalistic confirmation of psychological disturbance.*

### **(c) Jonathan**

*Our initial interview with Jonathan, during his psychiatric evaluations, allowed us to form the conclusions stated above. We feel that the interview we undertook at the end of his six monthly evaluation, shortly after his mother's death, was most revealing. This was undertaken without his father present, at our insistence.*

*At this meeting, after some encouragement Jonathan introduced himself to us verbally, but as Jonathan "Stolti", not Espesito. It transpired that this was a cruel Italian nickname given him by his father, meaning "stupid, foolish", at times when his father's displeasure was invoked. We had observed during Jonathan's evaluations at home that his father set strict, yet conflicting standards of behaviour inside the home and out; within the home, Jonathan was expected to adhere absolutely to a traditional Italian code of family behaviour.*

*Giovanni Espesito was enthralled by his fiercely matriarchal mother, who had died some years before, and kept the house exactly as it was the day she died. Any transgression or alteration of this status quo was punished severely by Mr Espesito, and both Jonathan and his mother Carla were intimidated and coerced into accepting it. Therefore, Giovanni enforced a psychologically brutal patriarchy while enshrining and bowdlerising the legacy of his own domineering mother; establishing an environment in which contradiction was an essential condition.*

*Outside the home, it was a different story; Jonathan was so named by his parents to help him assimilate into English society and minimise his difference. His father in particular pushed aggressively for his son's socialisation and integration into the local community, as a matter of family pride, not losing "face" and a facet of his unstable idealisation/expectation of his son. That Jonathan could be so encouraged to adhere to opposite extremes of social behaviour inside the home and out, and had two "given" names from his father that directly manifested this contradiction whilst simultaneously invalidating him, gives clear insight into the intricate web of mystification that he was caught in.*

*Following his mother's death, which was clearly very traumatic for Jonathan in spite – or perhaps because of - her own mystifying, contradictory and dysfunctional behaviour towards him, his symptoms worsened considerably and our second interview took place in the early*

*stages of a period of involuntary commitment to hospital prompted by our own intervention; his father consented legally while appearing both characteristically unsympathetic and wilfully oblivious to the severity of the situation.*

*During this interview Jonathan was extremely introverted, displayed inappropriate affect and physical signs of extreme anxiety such as tremors and repetitive hand-wringing. He avoided eye contact at all times and his persecutory delusions were manifest, such as an insistence on sitting in the furthest corner from the door, in a position to observe it at all times, seated in a protective and/or defensive posture. Finally, he exhibited a severe disorder of thought or communication in that his statements rarely showed a logic or connectivity with each other, to the casual ear.*

*From his statements we pieced together that he held his father responsible for his mother's terminal illness and death; that he considered death to be a personified, active, but not physically manifested force; and that he felt his father to be one of many active and vindictive agents operating in the world according to its instruction. He was irrationally convinced therefore, without evidence, that his father had introduced the influence of death into the family home and was therefore culpable in the loss of his mother. He is also convinced that agents of death are tracking his everyday movements continuously. He adheres to this belief with an unshakeable conviction ironically reminiscent of his father.*

*We believe that while Jonathan's Schizophrenic symptoms have a strong basis in trauma, many of the predispositions to his current diagnosis and prognosis are intelligible as natural responses to a profoundly dysfunctional family situation and social praxis as opposed to pathological process.[...]"*

## Appendix D. *Saturnine*, by Cauldhame

### Overview

To an extent, there is rather less to say of the *Saturnine* album in this section as the circumstances of its creation, and inspirations, are discussed in depth in the first chapter of the thesis. There is a methodological change to this album compared to the previous two Cauldhame albums in the portfolio, in that the representational weight of the sound is orientated toward site-specific origin rather than post-hoc interpretation; i.e., the album is shaped by the fact that the majority of the key sounds used in its construction were collected in a single field recording excursion to the abandoned Elswick Leads Work site. Many of the themes that derived from this – the symbolism of alchemy, the turn towards Jung, the role of the urban space – emerged from simple free-association around the nature of this location.

Initially selected through sheer opportunity, my initial theme for the album was to explore the impact of air pollution in an urban setting on mental health. I read physiological acclimatisation to the quality of air within the urban space as analogous to socio-psychological assimilation into cities as living environments. The sub-text for this is the learnt behaviours, compromises and compliance that all must undertake and nurture in order to cohabit functionally with others and adapt to our surroundings, implying normality and consistency of behaviour as forms of labour. As previously described, I imagined this accommodation between the self and the city as a kind of alchemy. The role of Lead connects the themes as a particulate component of air pollution produced by vehicle fumes and as a symbolic component of the alchemical process. Only the most cursory reading on this subject to generate ideas was sufficient to unearth the work of Jung; and the rest, as they say, is history.

From a compositional point of view, there are two main developments to practical methodology that I wish to discuss here. Firstly, the integration of field recordings was applied differently than on previous albums. Rather than processing source recordings almost beyond recognition as a matter of course, the role of site-specificity in the gestation of the album lead me to focus on keeping the field recordings as intact as possible, but carefully mixing them with equalisers and compression in order to bring out as much of the favourable qualities of the sound as I could. The recordings were then layered atop each other in different configurations, until I identified interesting convergences and fallacious interactions in the resulting soundscapes that I wished to use. My intent here was to represent psychogeographical explorations of space, and

the fractured, interstitial frictions and warps between parts of a city, and the experience thereof. In short, a sounding of the libidinous variety of interpretations that lead Raban to coin his term 'soft city'.

Secondly, whereas on the previous album *Thanatologist*, vocoder effects were used in order to represent mystification by splicing sounds into dissonant, indecipherable signals, for *Saturnine* this technique was largely employed for a different purpose. By splicing frequency clusters from different source sounds together, I aimed to represent alchemical fusion of signals, often unresolved hybrids and counterintuitive interactions, teetering on the brink of collapse into *noise*. A sounding of the multiplicity of interpretations and experiences that the urban space engenders.

### **Breakdown of Tracks**

**Note:** I have adopted the Greek alchemical terminology rather than the Latin owing to the resonance between Leucosis, the initial stage of psychic decay and stagnation, and the Leucotome, the medical device used to execute the prefrontal lobotomy.

#### **1. Melanosis I**

The opening piece is based around disorientating layers of field recordings that do not interact but create a wall of simultaneous, conflicting sounds. The result is a densely packed frequency spectrum full of dissociated detail, a chorus of isolated sources fighting each other for space. This is to illustrate the initial conditions of shadow and flux prior to the alchemical process, the *massa confusa*. A doleful melody line swells inconsistently through the gaps in the noise, adding a note of pathos. Tiny artefacts of weak, timorous feedback are generated by using my handheld field recorder as a microphone, connected to the computer by line-in. This is used in deliberate contrast to the fiercer, stronger mic feedback commonly used in power electronics, as a means of sounding the impoverishment of power.

#### **2. Melanosis II**

Greater focus in this track allows for compositional clarity built around a simple, cyclical synthesiser motif, stable, calm but unrelenting. This provides a predictable backdrop against which all other sounds occur and correspond. The synthesizer line is not inclusive or in any way reactive or accommodating, has no plasticity of response to the other sounds around it. As such it serves only to generate isolation and alienation, a sense of being locked out of the system. The other sound layers in the track sputter and surge like fingers prying desperately at gaps in

a wall. This intends to capture a moment wherein the urban space has been deciphered sufficiently from its initial state of chaos to become comprehensible, but not yet accessible.

### **3. Leucosis I**

The use of foregrounded shortwave radio static as the core texture of this track captures a sense of forms beginning to emerge from formless noise; the sense of an urban space in which one has a place and a purpose. The piece illustrates the beginnings of acclimatisation to new conditions; inchoate intimations of a holistic experience of the urban space. An apprehension of possibility and potentiality. The underlying loop of a key cutter machine provides a crude signifier for increasing one's sense of access to the surroundings.

### **4. Leucosis II**

This track illustrates the key moment of leucosis, the second stage of the alchemical process; the preparation of one's inchoate soft city into its opposites as a precursor to the *coniunctio*. The most physical and detailed of the field recordings made at the Lead Works are reproduced herein in raw, abrasive form, contrasting with the purely artificial tones of synthesized pads. The most constitutionally disparate aspects of the Cauldhame sound presented in formal demarcation. This sounds the collision between an aspirational ideal of the urban space and one's place in it, with the raw untrammelled reality.

### **5. Saturnine**

Based almost entirely on active, hand-manipulated soft-synth oscillations and glitches, the central title track articulates the fulcrum point of the alchemical process. Following on from the fundamentally oppositional composition of the previous track, *Saturnine* brings together the digital affordances provided by the software synthesizers and the tactile manipulation employed in the field recordings, capturing a sound on the brink of unification, busy with the negotiations between respective methodologies. It is a sounding of the active psychological manipulation of a plastic city.

### **6. Xanthosis I**

To depict the emergence of a holistic experience of the urban space (in which one is an embedded component and agent), field recordings, homemade sounds and sampled choirs are linked together using sidechain compression to produce complex sound interactions. Sidechain compression is the technique whereby the volume level of one signal is determined by the volume of another; thereby, dynamic increases and decreases in volume in the controlling track produce inverted increases and decreases in the slave track. By modulating the attack, release and severity of gate applied to each track, this can produce complex textural interactions

between the two and contribute to hybrid sense of dynamics. As the various sound layers used in this track are chained to one another to varying degrees, this is indicative of an experiential space that, while superficially appearing chaotic, in fact has a consistency and predictability of behaviour driven by underlying conditions set by the composer. This articulates agency in the experience of space beginning to manifest.

### **7. Xanthosis II**

This track continues the sidechain-based methodology of the previous, and applies it to an increasingly strained, traumatic birthing of sound over its extended duration. This is to illustrate the potentially painful concessions of habituation that are necessary in order to negotiate with an urban space which is often hostile or otherwise psychologically deleterious. The track relies on the composer's agency to permit the harshness of the noise to build to a head and overflow, like the purging of a wound, culminating in a collapse into exhaustion.

### **8. Iosis I**

Following on from previous onslaught, this track depicts a waking or coming to awareness, still woozy and feverish with fatigue, to a state of experiential unity and homeostasis, the alchemical process coming to its conclusion. The core motif of the track is a complex hybrid signal incorporating elements of microphone feedback, multiple field recordings, Dictaphone improvisation and hand-controlled frequency filter manipulations, which illustrates the completed coalescence of a plastic experience of the city, uniquely malleable to the requirements of its maker.

### **9. Iosis II**

Continuing to employ hybrid, mutually interactive sounds, the melancholy tone of the final track of the album is an acknowledgement that the compromises of a fluent urban living experience necessarily incorporate losses of autonomy and risks of social isolation and repression of the self. It is a capitulation to the necessity of cohabiting with and internalising *noise* in order to support oneself. It sounds a longing for a more natural kind of living (or a romanticised conception thereof) that one has never experienced, may never have existed, and one may be constitutionally incapable of understanding.

## **Equipment**

*Saturnine* was produced using the following elements:

- PC running Ableton Live 9 DAW
- Shure SM58 Microphone and Piezo Contact Microphones
- Dictaphone and Tapes
- Bass Combo Amplifier
- Field Recordings (using Edirol R-09 Handheld Digital Recorder)
- Scrap Metal Objects
- Orchestral Samples/Loops
- Voice
- Various effects plugins and software-based synthesizers/emulators

The album was mixed by me in 2014 and mastered by Saulius Bielskis in 2016.

## **Release Information**

**Released By:** Unrest Productions

**Format:** Cassette

**Release Date:** 27/02/2017

**Catalogue No.:** UNREST39

## Lyrics

### *Melanosis*

**I.** Drawn in; drawn down, through the ravaged concrete hive, inhaling broken glass. Anxiety's descent. Bristling antennae lacerate a sun bludgeoned with high-rise hulks, greyed into the empty. A feral surge of traffic circling the prey, the scent of hostile agents. Floundering through murk, grasping at tatters; the surface-scum of road-kill. Shattered confines cluster. Graffitied roller shutters, battle-scarred with livid rust, are totemic loci in a climb-proof labyrinth.

Hemmed in; fenced in, contained by raw-throat need. Naked to contamination, blistered psychic residue. There are *some things* in the air that should not be, and the things that *were* blacken at the edges of the being.

**II.** Greyed nigrescent daylight, a grimy smudge of discoloured dawn peers myopic at concrete dinge; another morn laboriously deformed. Sepia fatigued, spread-eagled in the street beyond soot-blackened cataracts of glass. Pervasive vagueness underwhelms the day. The threadbare protuberance of an ill-formed thought, throbbing with an incubated pain, through the black slough of respond.

Clawing the accreted ash from sleep, flaking the disintegrated surface of a filth-filmed world peeling away like skin reduced to motes, collapsing psychic matter. These imaginings are dust.

### *Leucosis*

**I.** Nihil nigredo; world painted lead. The weight bearing down of greyed expectations. Becoming the drudge, pure as the driven herd; breaking ranks with the inanimates, only to resign to the burdens prescribed. Arrested existence, congealed into your role; non-consensual machination. To raise chimneys for steeples, to pierce the great smoke; violation of the sky by particulate wrongs. Pollutants in ascendancy obscuring the ants that writhe below, immolated by the glare of the brave new world.

**II.** Embrace the toxin; impurities no more. It's in your blood; adapt or die. Coercive evolution, contortion of the self into schismatic sprawl. Cataleptic assimilate, hovering in smog, you breathe of the great exhale; the emphysematous gasp, the confluence of fumes that scarifies the lungs. The Anima Mundi, the inuring effluvia. Unifying taint; abjecting veil. Compliant parasites osmose the city's blood; harmonious corruption. Impregnating mutant strains incubated from the daylight.

Placate the hostile host; become the carrier, become at one. In the prima material, the obedient bacterium swabs the smoke-stained innards of the great grey beast that suffers you to live.

### *Saturnine*

Will the city let us breathe? The abrading heat of its dirt-flecked heaving discharges incessantly in our upturned faces, oleaginous with ill-veiled threats of the leprous vessels we become, of cancerous smokestack excrement. The insidious alchemies of dystopian sprawl wracking the crucible of flesh, a chaos infiltrating thoughts. Reason's cruel dispersion amid the brooding monoliths, belching forth their depressogenic fog.



The inescapable taint of impure air infused with the infirmities of decay, like living through a sickening and viscid fug, vitiated by excretions of coal-dark matter. Choking on agglutinated plaints the blood is host to fumes that cloud the mind.

The soiled shuffle forth of aching consciousness, cloying understanding, clearing the tarry mass of deliquescent ills. The clinging scintilla of malignancy, the diaphanous black tendrils of urban dirt, of paranoiac aura, surging from a sea of dissociated fears. Thoughts accrete (“...like candles in reverse”) then sag and slur with tumescent growths the sarcomata of delusion and despair. If only we could breathe again.

If only we could breathe again.

### *Xanthosis*

Transmutation rise; initiate the change. Lead is gold disfigured by its world, a petroleum shimmer of culture inculcation. Matter over mind over matter over mind. An astringent flux of concatenated fever streams, a polymorphous helix framing sense with barbs. An abrasive scree of psyche. A violating fire. Myth-glyph coalescent. Solve et coagula. Man-disease-malign in perichoretic synch, a circumincessant blight, an interpenetrative pain.

Yet here we live, and here we strive, heaving and spluttering in the overhanging dark; the oppressive bruise of carcinogenic sky. Insensate to existence beyond the grinding gears. Reconcile the opposers; leave meaning entangled in the jaws of chaos, where it belongs. Obscurum per obscurius, ignotum per ignotius. The calcified nigredo, like asbestos crumbles. Now our place is in the smog, to negotiate the dark in the world that is; for this alone can make us real.

### *Iosis*

And then came softness, the plasticity of ruptured space. Sulphur totems in a clinging rain. A nebulous mimicry of silence, stage-whispering its poison tongues to disquieting absence. Faces indistinct, a tracery of shards, fading and diffuse; the vague and bleary murmur of distant traffic.

The lingering miasma, an intimate inhale. Contagion ingrained, becoming sane; anaesthetising night. Unveiling its naked contours, inscribed by the gestalt with its chosen flay. A splendid isolation cut between surveillance frames. The peace of insignificance, the surrender of dreams consumed by something greater; its chimeric glamour lure concealing a depthless maw.

From behind its jagged teeth, among the microbes and the pathogens, we breathe of the greater breath and join its siren song.

## Appendix E. *An Act Of Desperation*, by Augure Concret

### Overview

The first Augure Concret album deviates from the pattern of previous albums in this portfolio in which each piece derives fundamentally from an overarching theme; and in part at least, it would be fair to say that the less specific content of this album is a corresponding reaction to that. If there is a unifying theme to these tracks, or the work under the name Augure Concret in general terms, it is a drive to express outrage directly. In the thick of the research I was reading for the thesis, I found over time that the naturally introspective and reticent quality of Cauldhame was not fulfilling this particular need for me with sufficient clarity or simple force. This drive for a bluntly cathartic mode of practice underwrites each of the eight tracks included here. The aim of the material is to be confrontational, but with a clearly determined sense of purpose. The sense of outrage, anger and frustration at work here was especially stoked by my study of works by Barham and Laurance cited in the thesis, in the Schizophrenia Commission's report *The Abandoned Illness* and *Titicut Follies*.

In contrast to the Cauldhame albums, and in keeping with the confrontational approach to content, *An Act Of Desperation* evinces a pared back, almost punkish approach to structuring tracks. The elastic, dynamic ebb and flow of Cauldhame tracks is predominantly exchanged for relentless mechanical loops, evoking a severe, Orwellian conformism and brutalist angularity. The obvious sonic precedent for this is in the work of the German industrial/heavy electronics outfit Genocide Organ, though the approach to content is fundamentally different; Augure Concret is wholly unambiguous in how it presents its subject matter, though no less confrontational with it. This does not diminish its capacity to challenge the listener, it merely does so within different parameters; the strength of feeling in the tracks does not permit ambiguity or a dispassionate presentation of its themes.

*An Act Of Desperation* adds three new methods (for the purposes of the portfolio, at least) for generating sound and composition. The employment of excerpts taken from film and documentary footage, radio broadcasts and archive recordings, is a well-established feature of industrial and power electronics music, perhaps best exemplified by the work of Genocide Organ but also a significant constitutional feature of the music of influential Swedish Death Industrial pioneers Brighter Death Now and Megaptera (Death Industrial being a particularly morbid and crepuscular strain of loop-based, Genocide Organ-style industrial music). Such

excerpts might be mere snippets, a few seconds in length, or lengthy monologues and dialogues of several continuous minutes. There are a number of functions to this method: to present the excerpt as an aesthetic object in its own right, as if into a collage of found materials (particularly given the susceptibility of the source recordings to editing, rearrangement and recontextualization); to incorporate the aural signatures of the means of mechanical reproduction into the recorded content (mostly through decaying tape); and to enhance musical texture (often through additional signal processing such as tape delay, chorus etc.) The very fact of a sample's use in this sense raises questions about its provenance and authenticity. In *An Act Of Desperation*, sampled dialogue material and footage is used to demonstrate this method, tying directly into the material from Chapter Two exploring issues around mental illness in film and documentary. The majority of the excerpts used were recorded to cassette tape, which were then played back either via direct line or via amplifier and microphone into a digital recording device to be spliced into the compositions. The saturated quality of analogue tape recording emphasises its nature as mechanically reproduced and distributed cultural artefact.

The album is unique in this portfolio in that every track is underpinned by distorted bass guitar drones, in lieu of synthesizer or other electronic material to provide lower frequencies. This approach is directly inspired by the Swedish artist Brighter Death Now (for whom it is something of a signature sound), providing a grislier, heavier counterpoint to the synthesized textures used elsewhere. It also presented a satisfying change of approach for me at a point where the Cauldhame sound had effectively consolidated over the course of three albums. A five-string bass guitar was used to allow for a variety of low tones and tunings to be produced on open strings; this was then processed through distortion, fuzz and bass combo amplifier with a direct output to mixer, in order to produce a rich and densely textured audio signal.

The most striking new element to the portfolio at this stage, however, is the introduction of prominently mixed, shouted vocals. These represent my first attempts at utilising this style of performance, which is much more in keeping with genre orthodoxy than the effects-disguised whispers of Cauldhame. This was a new experience for me that I initially lacked confidence in (it might sound ludicrous, but I primarily built up my technique, stamina and confidence by yelling to myself in the car, over the sound of the engine. Moving to a detached house also helped!) However, I felt that the confrontational nature of the material and the very real anger I needed to express demanded nothing less. In order to preserve relative intelligibility, for this album at least, I largely eschewed some of the more typical vocal effects processes used in

industrial and power electronics music, such as flanger, phaser and harsh distortion. In order to give the vocals sufficient punch in the mix while preserving a reasonably natural sound, I combined mild bit reduction (to be clear, a reduction of the file encoding quality of digital recordings which can be applied to varying degrees to bring out harsher textures and digital artefacts), multiband equaliser, noise gates, compression and gain; effects, in short, intended to enhance the raw vocal signal rather than to disguise it and to ensure that the lyrics remain decipherable despite the surrounding intensity of sound. This would change partially for the following album *Cephalophore*, where some tracks integrate chorus effects to a greater or lesser extent.

## **Breakdown of Tracks**

### **1. Lens**

Following as it does three Cauldhame albums, *Lens* immediately sets out a different stall for Augure Concret with its pointedly loop-driven assault, counterpointing aggressive bass with piercing feedback. Rather than including a vocal track, the centrepiece of *Lens* is the deliberate contrast between two dialogue samples, played back simultaneously. The first of these is a dramatic argument scene from *One Flew Over The Cuckoo's Nest*, and the second an inmate subject of *Titicut Follies* delivering an articulate and heartfelt expression of his frustration with the interrogative approach of hospital staff. This juxtaposition serves to illustrate the exaggerated and theatrical dramatic potency of the former overpowering the authenticity of the latter, both in the literal context of the track and in popular culture. In this I aim to sound the primacy of dramatic and fictive depictions of mental illness in influencing socio-cultural perception at the expense of factuality.

### **2. Enoch's Tower**

Taking its cue from the moribund slow burn of early Brighter Death Now, *Enoch's Tower* is an overt excursion into death industrial territory. Driven primarily by blistering bass throb, an atmosphere of morbidity and dysfunction is set by looped news footage of North Koreans mourning Kim Jong Il in a mesmeric, disturbing display of *folie à deux* on a vast scale, under the coercion of the state. This footage was so arresting that it became inextricably linked in my mind with Barham's notion of the 'abolition of the person' who suffers from mental illness, if it were deliberately executed for political purposes across an entire society. The lyrics of the track depict the decline of standards in the Victorian asylum system that precedes Enoch Powell's setting in motion of the deinstitutionalisation process, a turn from care towards simple

containment. It perhaps goes without saying that the title directly references Powell's 'Water Tower' speech. Looped recordings of clattering, haphazard industrial revolution machinery suggest a Victorian system hovering on the brink of collapse.

### **3. Beyond Barbed Wire**

The second vocal-free track on the album, *Beyond Barbed Wire* contrasts layered field recordings of demolition with a relentless, grinding bass guitar plod to illustrate the disintegrating demarcations of healthcare spaces during deinstitutionalisation. The intention here is to evoke the literal collapsing of walls only to be replaced by more insidious forms of social stratification, such as stigma. Continuous febrile synth oscillations suggest cold scrutiny from a society deeply ambivalent about vulnerable asylum inmates being scattered through a diaspora of fragmented care right under their noses, goaded on by inflammatory tabloid discontent. In this context, hostility and ostracism are reimagined as psychological barbed wire helping to wall off mainstream society.

### **4. An Act Of Desperation**

In keeping with the slightly looser conceptual framework to this album than the others in the portfolio, the title track delivers commentaries on two different fronts; the lyrics address one dimension of an issue (in this case, deinstitutionalisation) and the music another. The lyrics are a comment on post-deinstitutionalisation care in the community commodifying mental health on the basis of its capacity to support labour. In short, sanity as a form of labour, and labour as the hallmark of sanity. The music, meanwhile, symbolically depicts the breakdown of the Victorian asylum system; looped recordings of industrial revolution-era steam-driven machinery sputtering, failing, and winding down, shot through with shards of modern electronic noise, represent reforms in care whose promises were never fully delivered. At present, I consider this track to include the best vocal performance within the portfolio.

### **5. Parity Of Contempt**

Written during the tenure of the coalition government, *Parity of Contempt* is a diatribe against the exploitation of vulnerable people for political capital and point-scoring. The title is a clear rejoinder to the hypocrisy of Nick Clegg's call for parity of esteem for mental health services with physical healthcare, against a backdrop of diminishing funding and the systematic undermining of the NHS as a whole by the government. The track is built around multi-layered field recordings of an escalator at Monument Metro station in central Newcastle. The symbolic

resonance of an item of public infrastructure, under-maintained and neglected, struggling under the weight of the service it provides, has obvious resonance with systems of care and ideologically motivated negligence. This monotonous yet endlessly nuanced sound is contrasted and enhanced with raw scrap metal loops and a scathing bristle of synthesizer riding the bass guitar undertow.

## **6. Cutsscenes**

Built around simultaneous samples from *Titicut Follies*, *Cutsscenes* primarily functions as an interlude or bridging piece between the tracks that bookend it, having less of a formed compositional character. By crudely juxtaposing two different tracts of footage from the film, the piece provides a basic illustration of Frederick Wiseman's term *reality fiction*. Wiseman coined this term to draw attention to the significance of the curatorial role of the editor/director in the constitution of documentary film-making. The samples are obscured and ruptured by grisly amplified scrap metal noise and deliberately directionless synthesizer improvisations, to provide texture and haphazard sonic intervention.

## **7. Who Do You Serve?**

This track is unique in the portfolio and to the album in stepping back from the interrogation of subject matter to undertake a self-criticism about my use of mental illness as a theme. This was written at a moment of creative anxiety, when I was questioning my own motives and accountability, and as such is a fairly straight articulation of the quandary I found myself in. The resolution of this dilemma was ultimately reached via the thesis by consolidating my sense of accountability and establishing the psychological dynamics of my process. As such this track is both a crucial lynchpin and fulcrum point for the submission as a whole.

## **8. Last Resort**

This piece provides an almost incidental preamble to the following album, *Cephalophore*, by taking its title from an academic history of psychosurgery. However, the vocal-free chaotic noise assault of the track uses the term in a different sense; this is an exploration of the Dual Diagnosis Problem, a term for the co-morbidity of mental illness and substance abuse. The Dual Diagnosis Problem is one of deinstitutionalisation's most enduring and corrosive legacies, a blight on the very idea of care in the community (at least when paired, as it has been, with chronic and deleterious underfunding). The key sound source for the tracks is plastic bags containing empty alcohol bottles dragged around in irregular circles on an abrasive concrete

surface, until the bags tear apart and spill their contents. A sounding of dysfunctional self-medication as last resort for the distressed; a downward spiral into total psychic disintegration.

## **Equipment**

*An Act Of Desperation* was produced using the following elements:

- PC running Ableton Live 9 DAW
- Shure SM57 Microphone and Piezo Contact Microphones
- Electric Bass Guitar
- Bass Combo Amplifier
- Field Recordings (using Edirol R-09 Handheld Digital Recorder)
- Scrap Metal Objects
- Orchestral Samples/Loops
- Documentary and Film Samples
- Voice
- Various effects plugins and software-based synthesizers/emulators

The album was mixed by me and mastered by Saulius Bielskis in 2015.

## **Release Information**

**Released By:** Fall of Nature Productions

**Format:** Cassette

**Release Date:** 01/11/2017

**Catalogue No.:** FN34

## Lyrics

### *Enoch's Tower*

Renounce your Self; abolition of the person. Simulacrum undone. Dehumanised automata condemned to endless circles, coerced and humiliated. Out of sight is out of mind. The unceasing grind of lock and key, contorting to shapes dictated by the measure, screw and cipher. Mangled in the shadow of Enoch's tower, the treachery of misplaced words. Transgression of the proper. Location and containment reign; the contaminant called out, neutralised in the guise of care. Dismantling identities to bare the dreaded Other. The dogma of no cure; at the mercy of concern. Dissolution of trust, the cloying coils of care asphyxiating rights. Behind the painted threshold, you are not your Self. Absolved of meaning or intention; absolved of the right to articulate by the dismemberment of process. Antinomy of rights. Mutability of the 'you'. Docility is beauty; inertia panacea. Your world must cease from interrupting ours.

### *An Act of Desperation*

Subdued and splintered, neglect ingrained; ignobled by your hurt, pliant in defeat. We sense your dislocation; your wounds are salved by machinating moil, the piece of you we need serving something greater. Of the tattered chaff, we do not speak; damage unremarked, scars unseen. To labour in drudgery, an act of desperation; to earn a fragment of normality, a helpless pittance of acceptance. Function in silence, impoverished of power. Grind in peace. Tolerate your squalor behind closed doors, by private acts of self-denial; for in your pain, we must never hear you.

### *Parity of Contempt*

The public has spoken; the beast has whet its lips. We hasten to placate our status quota with parity of contempt, with the leavings of the ill-informed; the vilifying hive encroaching on us all. We protect our interests; we protect their apathy. We gratify their whims; most favoured ignorami. You are sensate currency, thralls of pharmacology to be fed beneath the table. This is your role; branded and denied a simple opportunity or the sufferance of the state. Earn our trust. Earn our care. Buy our votes with your blood. Smile for the cameras, and God forbid an extra penny spent. Bask in the precisely rendered glory of our expressions of concern; savour each carefully chosen word, polished clean of candour. Be grateful, be content, for this is all you'll get; we hold your world in the palm of our hand.

### *Who Do You Serve?*

Who does it serve to weave these souls of straw? Assemblages of shards, embodied abrasive edges. Plastic effigies of ill-defined outrage contorting to shapes dictated (for good or ill) by advocates unmasked, by abusers unprovoked; by platitude or punishment, whichever comes worst. Who is truly served? Their inner guilt assuaged in fruitless flagellation, reinforcing the Other they seek to exonerate. Even here, is there dignity? Even here, is there respect? Recognition of humanity? Who is truly served? Who is forcing words into the mouths of others in the name of their truth?



## Appendix F. *Cephalophore*, by Augure Concret

### Overview

Is there any image more viscerally associated with the fear of severe mental illness than the frontal lobotomy? A routine trope for excessive brutality in psychosurgery, the lobotomy is ineradicably burnt into collective cultural memory as the horrific endgame of psychiatric treatment. A proportion of the enduring reputation of the asylum as a site of nightmare is inarguably due to the vogue for this invasive and notorious procedure in the mid-twentieth century - and within this context, no image is as arresting or indelibly iconic as the trans-orbital or 'ice-pick' lobotomy method developed by Dr Walter Freeman. As with the *Debris* album, I felt a real drive to address and challenge such a fundamentally entrenched cultural signifier of mental illness in a considered and conscientious manner.

The transorbital lobotomy is as imprecise and cavalier as it is barbaric. A thin surgical metal device reminiscent of an ice-pick, called a leucotome, is inserted alongside the eye, and tapped with a small hammer to perforate the orbital roof of the socket. The leucotome is then moved swiftly back and forth to obliterate an area of the frontal lobe, and withdrawn. If the procedure went accordingly to plan – by no means a given - the only visible sign of damage to the patient would be a nasty black eye, for which Freeman blithely prescribed sunglasses.<sup>281</sup> This last detail is touched on in an uncomfortable scene in *Session 9* in which one character vividly describes the procedure to another over lunch – a scene that repeats on the viewer when a leucotome is discovered in the wreckage of the Danvers State Hospital morgue.

Having discovered a method of undertaking the lobotomy procedure without need for surgery, Freeman's blasé attitude to prescribing his signature treatment is utterly remarkable. He was readily prepared to complete trans-orbital lobotomies in his office, without the presence of a qualified surgeon and an approach to hygiene and sterilisation that was casual at best.<sup>282</sup> His activity was not licensed or regulated by any appropriate authority, and its effectiveness was not researched with rigour. The operation produced a measure of docility in patients, but rarely resolved their conditions in the long-term; often it produced behavioural change and further psychological complications and dysfunction. Though he toured the states in a van, visiting

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<sup>281</sup> Howard Dully and Charles Fleming, *Messing With My Head: The Shocking True Story of My Lobotomy* (Reading: Vermilion, 2009), 71.

<sup>282</sup> Jack D. Pressman, *Last Resort: Psychosurgery and the Limits of Medicine* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998). 342.

psychiatric hospitals and surgeries to provide ad-hoc lobotomy training, it may be apocryphal that he dubbed his van the ‘Lobotomobile’;<sup>283</sup> however, this would be in keeping with his predilection for showboating, especially in the press. Merely attempting to describe the procedure, Freeman’s attitudes, and the systemic laxity within the broader context of psychosurgery that permitted his method to proliferate, frankly feels staggering. The more I got into my reading on the subject – particularly the autobiography of Howard Dully, a patient of Freeman’s who received the trans-orbital lobotomy at the age of twelve – the more the material demanded a response.

The *Cephalophore* album is my attempt to document the intensity of my feelings on this subject, the sheer outrage and sense of human tragedy entailed. A *cephalophore* is a saint martyred by beheading (coincidentally, or not, St. Saturnina was a cephalophore). The album attempts to measure the hubris of Freeman, and of the psychiatric establishment of the day; and to directly stage a confrontation with the casual negligence with which the terms lobotomy and lobotomised are thrown flippantly around in popular culture. The Augure Concret project, with its confrontational approach underwritten by genuine outrage, felt the most suitable creative identity for this purpose.

The composition of *Cephalophore* was driven by my acquisition of an Arturia Minibrute analogue synthesizer. The sheer density of sound produced by this instrument required me to pare back some of the intricacies I had previously incorporated into the sound due to its simple dominance of the frequency spectrum, at least when producing the kinds of sounds I desired from it – this presented a refreshing and invigorating challenge.

From the outset, I intended to use extended techniques to create additional nuances and idiosyncrasies in the analogue synthesizer tones I generated. This was directly inspired by the work of Birmingham-based power electronics artist Iron Fist Of The Sun, whose complex signal routing of synthesizers produces a unique, febrile sound rich with blistering intricacies. The approach I developed in achieving this end derived from parallel research I have been undertaking, which relates no-input feedback loop-based harsh noise systems with modular theories of cognition, specifically Eysenck’s Four Factor Theory of Anxiety,<sup>284</sup> which is based on a cognitive feedback loop. In attempting to build a simulacrum of Eysenck’s model using

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<sup>283</sup> Dully & Fleming, *Lobotomy*, 71.

<sup>284</sup> Eysenck, *Anxiety and Cognition*, 27-52.

the standard paraphernalia of tabletop harsh noise – mixers, effects units and complex signal routing – I became practised in using overloaded chains of devices to produce precarious equilibriums of sound, prone to collapse at the merest adjustment to any parameter. This adds another dimension to my approach of integrating the thematic content of my work into the practical methodology.

In order to apply this methodology to the analogue synthesizer, I generated a no-input feedback loop by connecting the effects sends of a Tascam Portastudio back into the audio inputs; I then fed the headphone output of the synthesizer into a third audio input on the Portastudio, and fed the headphone output of the Portastudio into the external audio input of the synthesizer. By then gradually incorporating the external audio signal into the synthesized tone, alongside low frequency oscillations, I was able to produce strange, dysfunctional sputters and ruptures of sound, and wavering tones constantly teetering on the brink of collapse into static. By setting the synthesizer to be triggered by the incoming audio signal rather than from the keyboard, the generative instability of the signal gained an additional edge. With this methodology in place I was able to develop a distinctive approach of my own, reminiscent of free high voltage electricity arcs, implying a threat of electroconvulsive therapy.

In parallel to this, I worked on developing a sample-based synthesis method for generating my own evolving ambient textures using the Ableton software instrument *Simpler*. This instrument allows the user to load any audio file and map it to a midi controller keyboard, with a variety of additional envelope, LFO and tuning features available as well as real-time control over the sample's start point and duration during recording. For this I used tiny slices of my own recordings of scrap metal sound, and by simultaneously triggering at multiple pitches/playback speeds, and incrementally adjusting the sample's start point and duration, I was able to generate slowly evolving and oscillating washes of abstract sound which were then heavily treated with digital reverbs and delays. This allowed me to produce intuitive loop-based material with greater scope for gesture, dynamics and spectromorphological transformation of sound. This was a paradigm shift for me, vastly extending the range of sounds and applications available to me from my own source recordings.

## Breakdown of Tracks

### 1. Cephalophore I

The album opens with a febrile current of feedback-looped synthesizer and the tape recording of a 1980s public information broadcast by the mental health pressure group SANE (Schizophrenia: A National Emergency). This footage struck me as a profoundly unconstructive and poorly judged response from an ostensibly conscientious organisation towards the social impact of deinstitutionalisation. This is something SANE had real form for – they also produced a poster campaign with the caption ‘He thinks he’s Jesus / You think he’s a killer / They think it’s fine’, to predictable opprobrium.<sup>285</sup>

The track explodes in a chaotic flux of scrap metal noise and side-chained hi-frequency synthesizer oscillations, as if in an outpouring of antagonism as an unintended consequence to the campaign. Melancholic orchestral loops float behind the squall as an echo of Mantovani-esque bathos. The lyrics introduce the topic of psychosurgery in an abstract, impressionistic manner, as a reflective response to the essential strangeness and unimaginable nature of the procedure I felt when attempting to speak from the hypothetical perspective of the patient.

### 2. Cephalophore II

An odd little fact picked up from Howard Dully’s memoir is that Walter Freeman’s governess nicknamed him ‘Little Walter Wonder Why’ as an infant, for his insatiable curiosity.<sup>286</sup> This nickname seemed to me a horrible foreshadowing of his irresponsible enthusiasm and recklessness with the procedure he pioneered. Lyrically I chose to frame this as a fabricated nursery rhyme of the cautionary type (modelled on *Georgie Porgie*).

The track is built around evolving ambient textures generated using the Simpler software tool in Ableton Live, using a recording I made at home of handheld gardening tools scraping together to produce high pitched squeals. These were then extensively layered and signal-processed to produce the resulting washes of abstract sound. This was accompanied by multiple layers of analogue synthesizer subjected to pedal-based effects, and a repetitive kick-drum loop side-chained with modulated noise to produce cycling crescendos of texture.

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<sup>285</sup> Cross, *Mediating Madness*, 9.

<sup>286</sup> Dully & Fleming, *Lobotomy*, 61.

### 3. Cephalophore III

Acting as an interlude or moment of calm in the album, this instrumental track uses recordings of feedback between a guitar pickup and miniature amplifier loaded into Simpler (and detuned into key) to create an evolving textural adjunct to another melancholic orchestral loop. Synthesizer oscillations maintain a stable, delicately nuanced pulse underneath these elements, suggesting a heart monitor, and thereby implying sedation or anaesthesia in surgery.

### 4. Cephalophore IV

The fourth track lyrically attempts to depict a patient's sense of fight-or-flight when surgery is about to occur, thinking particularly (but not exclusively) of the thoughts and emotions some of Walter Freeman's conscious patients might have had on seeing the leucotome approach their eye. I chose to illustrate this with a tense, febrile synthesizer oscillation, adrenalised and squirming, but somehow trapped in place under physical restraint (this take is notable as my first recording using the Minibrute). This was surrounded by frantic flutters of panicked noise texture and further hi-passed oscillations. A polyphonic synthesizer pad buried in the mix evokes an underlying helplessness and resignation.

### 5. Cephalophore V

In the first draft of the album, this track was titled *Human Salvage*, after a chapter title in *Last Resort*. As with this chapter, and a large part of Dully's memoir, this track addresses the rather sorry legacy of the ice-pick lobotomy for its recipients. At best, a temporary amelioration of symptoms followed by relapse and a host of additional psychological dysfunctions.<sup>287</sup> Compositionally I approached this theme by reprising the abstract ambient textures from the second track, and bringing out the most leaden, ponderous sounds I could manage. These were counterbalanced with slowly fluctuating, syncopated synth oscillations riddled with sonic ties generated by feedback-loop interjections into the signal. While potentially heavy-handed, this combination accurately reflects the sense of dismay and doomed finality I felt while reading these accounts.

### 6. Cephalophore VI

The final track returns to the impressionist lyrical style of the opener and centres around evolving layers of ambient loops generated within Simpler using Arvo Pärt's *Spiegel Im Spiegel*, as due representative of documentary vernacular (used to excellent effect in Adam

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<sup>287</sup> Pressman, *Last Resort*, 194-235.

Curtis' *The Century Of The Self*).<sup>288</sup> This choice was made in order to interrogate the post-hoc analysis and rationalisation of the Freeman era of psychosurgery in the present day; a process by which the reality of psychosurgery has been isolated and gradually accrued aesthetic currency. Removed by distance in time and history, psychosurgery, like the psychiatric asylum, has an enduring afterlife in the popular cultural imagination as an iconic image of mental illness, thereby continuing to exert a potentially damaging influence and perpetuating stigma. It signals above all else a dysfunctional idea that incapacity is not only a result of mental illness, but can also be a desirable outcome of care, the ultimate abolition of the person.

## Equipment

*Cephalophore* was produced using the following elements:

- PC running Ableton Live 9 DAW
- Simpler – Ableton Software Synthesizer
- Shure SM58 Microphone and Piezo Contact Microphones
- Arturia Minibrute Analogue Synthesizer
- Tascam Portastudio (for generating internal feedback loop)
- Vermona Filter Lancet
- Bass Combo Amplifier
- Field Recordings (using Edirol R-09 Handheld Digital Recorder)
- Scrap Metal Objects
- Orchestral Samples/Loops
- Documentary and Film Samples
- Voice
- Effects Pedals

The album was mixed by me and mastered by Saulius Bielskis in 2017.

## Release Information

**Released By:** Unrest Productions  
**Format:** Cassette  
**Release Date:** 26/02/2018  
**Catalogue No.:** UNREST45

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<sup>288</sup> *The Century Of The Self*, Adam Curtis, 2002, 240 min (BBC Broadcast).

## Lyrics

Cephalophore

(...embedded shards of scar, a halo on the crown...)

Cephalophore

(...fingernails digging at the scalp recoil from the incursion...)

Cephalophore

(...a fanciful meridian of skin, shrouding a capitulation...)

Cephalophore

(...a psyche cauterised abrades the phantom pain within its gouge...)

~

Little Walter Wonder Why  
Caused the bruise around the eye  
When the picks came into play  
Little Walter had it made

~

Featureless hands bear slowly down, calmly inevitable. Your consent is irrelevant; panacea arrives at scalpel point, the membrane of doubt pierced by glassy certainty. In the fierce migrainoid glare, their gloves shine a viscid white and the hands beneath are cold.

~

Human salvage; this is your measure. Mechanical recovery of mind. There will be no more for you, but to be rendered down to a vague-flesh manikin of peace. Infantile, enfeebled, confined by swollen eyelids. Flaccid, placid, assiduously contained. Darker edges smudged and blurred. Abrasions softened, liquescing intellect. A slackening of self, a perforated sane-shape of pulped humanity; bruised docile and housebroken, for the quiet of the world.

~

Cephalophore

(...grey matter yielding...viscerality of ills revealed...)

Cephalophore

(...the cold metal of the leucotome excising the excession...)

Cephalophore

(...amputation of the undesired, silenced non-compliance...)

Cephalophore

(...amnesiac shreds of dissimulated self, dry upon an upturned face...)

## Appendix G. *A Proscenium Of Scars*, by Augure Concret

### Overview

The remaining two albums in the portfolio, *A Proscenium Of Scars* (as Augure Concret) and *Residuum* (as Ophiel) each address the aestheticisation of the psychiatric asylum in popular culture. *A Proscenium Of Scars* represents my emotional and polemical response to the problems this raises, and the damaging consequences it has for the mediation of misinformation and stigma. This position is informed by reference to the *Screening Madness* report. Having touched on the interactions between fictive cinema and documentary on *An Act Of Desperation*, this album instead pays particular attention to the application of cinematic values to documentary filmmaking practice as a manifestation of this aestheticisation, isolating excerpts from a number of documentaries as evidence.

These samples in themselves starkly illustrate the extent to which a range of dramatic effects have encroached upon documentary filmmaking since the time of *Titicut Follies*. This is the often-feverish interpolation of archival footage and reconstructions into Burroughsian cut-ups of fact and fiction, carving wider the territories between. The key of the album is to explore (and in effect, to draw out the *noise* from) the frictions and ambiguous territories opened up by integrating methods and motifs from entertainment into serious documentary practice, as a means of engaging viewers; indicating potentially unanswerable questions about the ethical dangers of this kind of filmic flirting. What is the value of this engagement, if the information becomes processed on the basis of its entertainment value rather than its content – thereby distancing and insulating the viewer further from the questions it seeks to raise? By posing this challenge I aim to confront myself with my own susceptibility with this phenomenon; not to mention the times in the past when I've been cavalier about using this kind of material in my own practice (addressing this head on through the material seems a much more constructive response than simply handwringing and self-flagellating).

In terms of compositional approach, the album does not significantly elaborate on the methodology of *Cephalophore*; instead, the album simply aims to consolidate and refine the existing template. The primary distinction between the albums sonically is experimentation with length, evolving tracks that while still audibly adhering to the compositional stability and containment of movement in the remainder of the Augure Concret material in the portfolio, allow more time to explore nuances within a restricted palette. The lengthier tracks on the



Cauldhame albums tend to fulfil a similar function; focusing on gradual change and meticulous teasing out of the granular detail of particular sound sources rather than chopping and changing between contrasting sections. My preference as a listener is for this kind of immersion and absorption, treating the music as a sonic space which I can inhabit rather than a journey, so it follows naturally that my own compositions cater to this functional application of listening.

There is a resonance here with how the psychiatric asylum is often depicted in documentary; lingeringly slow or static shots, gradual fades, pans and focuses. The movement of the camera within the psychiatric asylum feels alternately stately and reverential, and petrified of its surroundings, creeping as quietly and unobtrusively as possible. This underlines the idea of the psychiatric asylum as a rarefied place with a hyperreal existence, increasingly divorced and insulated from the actual. Strategic forgetting and selective remembrance, rendered physically as film, reshape these spaces as strange, plastic hybrids of fact and fiction. Disparate fragments of footage spliced together in fabricated configurations generate imaginary convolutions of building, harvested from many locations but aggregated into a labyrinthine, hermetic dream-world. This concept was at the forefront of my mind while developing the music, and particularly the lyrics, for this album.

## **Breakdown of Tracks**

### **1. A Proscenium Of Scars**

The opening title track juxtaposes several layers of synth oscillations that drift in each other's wake, creating a multifaceted ebb and flow of electronic textures that gradually build towards a punishing loop of junkyard machinery noise (this was recorded directly to Dictaphone in order to benefit from the treatment of blown-up analogue tape saturation). This outburst is preceded by a heavily signal-processed sample from the audiobook of *Shutter Island*, cutting together a number of individually effected splices into an edited sequence from Peter's monologue about the mechanics of the mind. This method of treating and re-presenting sampled material is directly informed by the work of Genocide Organ.

### **2. Mouth Of The Carrier**

Again following an aggressive and repetitive analogue synthesizer assault, modelled after the fashion of Genocide Organ, the core motif of this track is a cutup loop from the 2014 ITV documentary *Broadmoor: Inside Britain's Highest Security Psychiatric Hospital*. The sample is from a sequence in which an agitated patient is forcibly restrained. Owing to the patient's

lack of consent, their voice on the recording is replaced with an actor's, and no actual footage of the event is used; while the audio plays out, the camera executes a slow, Hitchcock-style retreat down a deserted corridor. This sequence struck me as it was difficult to ascertain the value as a document of this dubbed audio and the slightly voyeuristic shot that accompanied it. However noble the intentions of the director, it feels like a rather distasteful bit of grafted-on drama to make the documentary more tantalising. As Cross notes, 'When journalists wear a mask to unmask others, the best that we can hope for is perhaps a voyeuristic thrill in thinking that we are seeing something of the experience of the insane other.'<sup>289</sup>

### **3. Asunder**

A contrast to the remaining tracks of the album, which all make use of cyclical motifs, be they loops or synthesizer oscillations, this track combines a febrile, arrhythmic synth sizzle with amplified scrap metal clatter, underpinned by amateur footage of the demolition of the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH) in Toronto, Canada sourced from Youtube. This provides a symbolic continuation or response to the previous *Augure Concret* track, *Beyond Barbed Wire*. A sample from *Broadmoor: Inside Britain's Highest Security Psychiatric Hospital* concerning surveillance protocols is subtly sidechained to bleed around the sounds of demolition, symbolising a decentralisation of surveillance to the community.

### **4. Chiaroscuro**

Centred on a basic, monotonous rhythmic pattern generated on analogue synthesizer, the composition of this track attempts to depict the rote documentary shot of a camera slowly proceeding down a gloomy, deserted hospital corridor. The slow, patiently modulated pulse and sidechained swells of microphone feedback that accompany it are intended to suggest a sequence of doors on a seemingly endless corridor that by virtue of the editing process, seems to have no beginning or end. The processed documentary sample used at the beginning of the track, from BBC's *Mental: A History Of The Madhouse* (2009), is from a former nurse at Newcastle's St Nicholas Hospital, a secure psychiatric unit. The nurse's testimony is horrific, and yet is somehow undermined by a wholly unnecessary soft-focus dramatic reconstruction that only serves to distance the viewer from the reality. It is one of many frustrating moments in a well-meaning documentary.

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<sup>289</sup> Cross, *Mediating Madness*, 92.

## 5. Adrift In Absence

The final track on the album is a lengthy work based around linking the analogue synthesizer into a no-input feedback loop system and exploring the nuances of instabilities created by very minor and gradual changes to settings. The density and detail of this signal left little room for anything else, though an evolving Simpler patch based on reversed and heavily processed cutup loops from Åke Parmerud's *Inside Looking Out* was used to provide an ambient backdrop. The music for this track was initially composed for an earlier draft *Cephalophore* but ultimately took longer to complete owing to difficulties with the mix. I believe here it has ultimately found the context and the company it required all along to play to its strengths.

### Equipment

*A Proscenium Of Scars* was produced using the following elements:

- PC running Ableton Live 9 DAW
- Simpler – Ableton Software Synthesizer
- Shure SM58 Microphone and Piezo Contact Microphones
- Arturia Minibrute Analogue Synthesizer
- Tascam Portastudio (for generating internal feedback loop)
- Vermona Filter Lancet
- Bass Combo Amplifier
- Field Recordings (using Edirol R-09 Handheld Digital Recorder)
- Scrap Metal Objects
- Orchestral Samples/Loops
- Documentary and Film Samples
- Voice
- Effects Pedals

The album was mixed and mastered by me in 2018.

### Release Information

**Released By:** TBC

**Format:** TBC

**Release Date:** TBC

**Catalogue No.:** TBC

## Lyrics

### *A Proscenium Of Scars*

Fractured and disintegrating, on an asbestos pedestal; a smokescreen cathedral, that moulders to obscure a greater abandonment. Enduring scars, the inheritance of failures, the residuum of blame. A skeletal world of half-remembered trauma, mummified in celluloid, sacharrine with the romance of a haunted palace. Bitterness transfigured without a lesson learned, just a vague inhale of shame from the residue of guilt.

### *Mouth Of The Carrier*

Our whims yawn wide to imbibe the littering of culture, the puppet theatre of wilful ignorance paraded before our eyes. Seeing and not seeing, bathed in the cloying heat of scrutiny. The incriminating glare, quickening the rot, dehumanising wounds. An imposed aesthesis that accelerates decay, fixated on obsessions dismembered from their hosts. Indecently commodified, fetishising breakdown; a dissimulating cipher. A sordid morbidity, painting our horror at what we fail to understand on a canvas of ruined lives. The mouth of the carrier is always open.

### *Chiaroscuros*

Is this what I am? Is this still treatment? In this dismemberment of space, the tape has been erased. The shadow of the fence still black against my skin, the walls that were my screen grow dark. Glass eyes observe without expression. Old certainties will fracture and disperse, until confusion overcomes them. Laundered rags and tatters of trauma-torn identities, severed from the sinews of history, are smothered in subversion; the over-ripened glut of the hyperreal. The misdirecting gauze, projections of a past we never had, outshining the follies with fabricated clarity. Poignant assemblies of dislocated pain and fear, simulacra drowning out the voices of the real.

### *Adrift In Absence*

An excoriating frame between our crooked fingers... makes ghosts of the living, between the shutter-clicks. Dark space beyond the streetlights, the cut of surveillance blind-spots; the undocumented faces eluding scrutiny, atrophy unseen. Burning out the negative with the intensity of their caustic absence. Dead flesh crowds behind the screen and its presence bleeds into the shadowed space beyond the frame, where the debris of our febrile thoughts congeals with the tumescence of abuse.

## Appendix H. *Residuum*, by Ophiel

### Overview

The second album in the portfolio dedicated to the aestheticisation of the psychiatric asylum is *Residuum*. This album deviates from the harsher power electronics/industrial modalities explored by Cauldhame and Augure Concret in favour of a gentler sonic palette, blending the post-industrial psychedelia of Coil with disquieting electroacoustic/tape music in the fashion of Climax Golden Twins (the artists responsible for the *Session 9* soundtrack). This approach facilitates a detailed examination of the sounding of the asylum discussed in Chapter Two, by employing associated techniques such as analogue tape manipulation critically.

The purpose of these compositions is to demonstrate the aesthetic vernacular of the asylum in practice, especially in relation to contemporary documentary accounts. The softer sound palette allows this vernacular to be rendered more clearly and sonorously in keeping with its usual applications. As such the album can be considered the spiritual companion piece to *A Proscenium Of Scars*. The Coil influence is reflected in the use of generally melodious loops, which provide a stable bedding above which complex flurries of hyper-processed electronic sound mingle with organic instrumentation, exemplified by *The Ape Of Naples*, a classic album sadly overshadowed by the tragic circumstances of its completion.

*Residuum* is marked out in the portfolio for its overt use of organic instrumentation, specifically piano and violin. My argument for the sounding of the asylum emphasised the use of slow, reverberating piano notes and chords, tentatively performed and accentuated by silences, as an accompaniment to slow pans and fades across disused asylum environs, vertiginous angles, oversaturated colour and shade. Piano is treated as an essential adjunct to the asylum, a poignant sounding of solitude and isolation. There is a curious reoccurrence across multiple documentaries of Arvo Pärt's *Spiegel Im Spiegel*, which inadvertently becomes an unofficial leitmotif for despondent hospital interiors; choreographed dust plumes drifting in deserted corridors. For the album I generated sparse, melancholy chord sequences and undertook meandering, minor key improvisations, teasing out dissipating trails of reverb and sustain.

I intentionally immersed myself in the aesthetic as much as possible in order to produce a rich resource for critical manipulations. Frequently, these piano takes were recorded live to analogue tape via Dictaphone using the inbuilt microphone, or simultaneously to digital and analogue

recorders to allow for careful juxtaposition. The critical treatment of the resulting material was founded on the possibilities of altering and disrupting of the performances, sequences, timbres etc. by manipulating the means of mechanical reproduction as instruments in themselves.

More adventurous for me was to undertake similar experiments with recording technology around improvised violin. Having never touched a violin before, but fascinated by the possibilities of extended technique, I attempted to use my ignorance constructively. Quavering solo violin notes and dissonant, atonal squall are both familiar components of asylum sounding (and “chiller” film in general) that I wished to draw attention to. They are sounds that I have tended to read as signifiers of vulnerability, incapability and dysfunction, or a poignancy that can verge on the mawkish (thinking again of the increasingly overcooked ubiquity of *Spiegel Im Spiegel* in documentary footage).

As with the piano, my methodology was to make simultaneous analogue and digital recordings of lengthy improvisations around my attempts to produce interesting textures and timbres of sound, which were then critically subjected to different kinds of pitch-duration manipulation and signal processing, often manipulating the Dictaphone by hand, using its manual controls to interrogate the tape with splenetic interjections and ruptures. These elements of piano, violin and tape form the critical core of the album.

## **Breakdown of Tracks**

### **1. Residuum (a)**

Like Augure Concret’s *Parity Of Contempt*, this track opens with a field recording of an escalator; this one at Manors Metro station just outside Newcastle City Centre. While employed for the same symbolic value, that of a neglected public infrastructure foundering under service demand, I found this much shorter escalator had a definite sonorous idiosyncrasy of its own. Situated in a station with much lower traffic outside of rush hour periods, the escalator sounds much more isolated, its sounding far more coloured by the natural reverberation of the station (though I did enhance this with additional artificial reverb after the fact). This recording was used at multiple speeds within the body of the track to broaden the range of the sound, and juxtaposed with violin improvisation to draw out its palpable tensions and sense of isolation.

These more active sounds contrast with a classical loop from Peter Sculthorpe's *Piano Concerto*, digitally reproduced at multiple speeds and sample rates, drawing strange electronic timbres from stretched out piano and string notes. The underlying bass drones are produced by synthesizer. The rotation of the orchestral motif at different speeds represents the circulation of aesthetic values for the psychiatric asylum.

## **2. Residuum (b)**

This track is rare in the context of the portfolio, being based on a piano piece that I wrote and played by hand without a metronome, recorded by direct input from electric piano into the DAW. This recording was then cut up digitally in order to fit a tempo, each slice of the material being warped to fill its section, to give each chord a blurred, out-of-focus sense of movement. This track was then routed through a number of signal processing devices, both software and hardware, in order to produce additional textures, timbres and gestures. The bass drones are provided by the Minibrute, deliberately attempting to employ a heavy industrial style synth sound in an incongruously melodic context; this was side-chained with a minimal, heavily EQed drum-loop to provide an anchor for the tempo and emphasise the stranger deviations of the piano cutups. Finally, a heavily processed and disguised voice recording was manipulated by Dictaphone, as if to suggest the semi-audible mutterings of a repressed memory. This is a sounding of self-conscious, mannered melancholy employed in documentaries to underscore poignant moments.

## **3. Residuum (c)**

Working again around a cutup orchestral loop from Peter Sculthorpe's *Piano Concerto*, this one repeating cyclically in alternating pitches, the third track is dominated by Dictaphone improvisation to create a feverish whirl of memories and images. Two violin improvisations were recorded digitally and hard-panned to create a sense of head-space; the two tracks were then recorded simultaneously to Dictaphone and a third track, using live tape manipulation of violin, was centrally panned. It is immediately noticeable the extent which the saturated tape sound and the inferior quality of the Dictaphone's audio output transforms the violin's character even before tape manipulations are applied. An additional Dictaphone improvisation, this time using an archival recording of Dr Walter Freeman giving a lecture on his lobotomy technique, is dynamically panned to interject rapidly in the spaces between the violin textures. The effect is to reimagine disturbing associations like a swarm of insects infesting the asylum-as-aesthetic-object, nourishing its fearfulness, and by extension, mental illness as an object of fear.

#### **4. Residuum (d)**

One of the most unambiguously melodic of all the tracks in the portfolio, this piece is based around a live piano improvisation I recorded simultaneously to digital recorder and to Dictaphone, and then recorded back into the DAW as a tape improvisation. This attempts to create a simultaneous poignancy and malformity, to demonstrate that attempting to wring the maximum drama out of the asylum in documentary film contexts, filmmakers can distort their subject matter even as they go to extra lengths to engage their audience. The ambient layers that back this central motif are generated partly from the digital recording of the piano improvisation, subject to extensive digital manipulation and signal processing, and Simpler textures made from microphone feedback (replicating the technique used on track three of Augure Concret's *Cephalophore*). Again, I used industrial-style harsh synthesizer tones with deliberate incongruity.

#### **5. Residuum (e)**

Another track derived from a piano composition played in real time, this track emphasises the differences in means of mechanical reproduction in order to illustrate drift and inconsistency between different documentary resources covering the same topic. Again recording simultaneously to digital and analogue media, the piece also incorporates subtle radio interference and deliberate employment of faulty cables in order to demonstrate noise occurring within mediation of material on a number of levels. Deviations and lags between high-fidelity digital recording and Dictaphone (for which I intentionally used batteries that were close to drained) are given the foreground, and a trail of delay effects applied to the digital signal is used to add colour to the spaces between the competing tracks.

#### **6. Residuum (f)**

Chronologically the final track to be completed for this album, this track employs a particularly Coil-esque puckishness to critique sonic signifiers of psychosis. The wavering frequency layers and self-consciously disjointed stabs of piano are both informed by, and responding somewhat sarcastically to, the sort of musical leitmotifs employed by Hitchcock to signify delusion and mental breakdown, particularly in *Spellbound*, albeit reproduced in the setting of eccentric post-industrial electronica. Much as I enjoy Hitchcock's work, I feel the cinematic vernacular of the psychiatric asylum is strongly informed by the legacy of this film in particular and his signature style in general, with its foreboding camera movements,



vertiginous angles etc. (Yes, I know). This sort of woozy, soporific accompaniment made for effective film but feels preposterously heavy-handed today. I feel this track is best accompanied by a soft-focus picture of Gregory Peck clutching his head and grimacing.

### **7. Residuum (g)**

The first piece to be completed for the album, this piece was designed to explore the possibilities of extended technique violin, and to comment and reflect on the preponderance of this sound index in film as a generator of unease and disquiet. As such the track is less critically guided than others, but functions to set many of the compositional conditions that define the album. Multiple takes of violin improvisation, played at different pitches and speeds and panned dynamically to create a spectromorphologically rich wall of strings, are allowed to unspool against a backdrop of layered cutup loops of Penderecki's orchestral works, simmering synthesizer texture and looped high voltage electricity arcs.

### **8. Residuum (h)**

As with the final track to *Cephalophore*, this piece uses Simpler and Arvo Pärt's *Spiegel Im Spiegel* to generate ambient texture, to create a sense of the cultural echo of the asylum-as-aesthetic-object. This is counterbalanced by a short loop of improvised piano; jointly these set an initial tone of poignancy, but over plodding, monotonous repetition, this gives way to a sense of mawkishness and diminished impact, and then actively off-putting over the sheer oversaturation of pathos. This is an attempt to illustrate the dangers of vernacular cliché in diminishing engagement with an intended audience through simple overfamiliarity. The endless repetitions are underscored by my own tentative attempts to accompany the melody on violin with no real experience of the instrument, a gesture illustrating the involuntary mimicry of the vernacular that practitioners like me who have grown up with films, music, computer games, and so on, are prone to. Such cultural artefacts construct and curate this hyperreal conception of the psychiatric asylum and indelibly colour our attempts to address the subject ourselves.

## **Equipment**

*Residuum* was produced using the following elements:

- PC running Ableton Live 9 DAW
- Dictaphone and Tapes
- Electric Piano
- Violin
- Simpler – Ableton Software Synthesizer
- Arturia Minibrute Analogue Synthesizer
- Vermona Filter Lancet
- Field Recordings (using Edirol R-09 Handheld Digital Recorder)
- Orchestral Samples/Loops
- Documentary and Film Samples
- Various software-based effects and signal processing plugins

The album was mixed by me and mastered by Saulius Bielskis in 2018.

## **Release Information**

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**Catalogue No.:** n/a



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