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**Sonic autoethnographies: six | records | of | the | listening | self**

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Portfolio contents

1. Commentary (including portfolio on USB flash drive)
2. plastic 2 x CD case - corresponding to *postface*
3. 1 x CD wrapped in packing tape - corresponding to *In Posterface: 1*
4. 12" art print in PVC sleeve - corresponding to *Somehere in*
5. removable vinyl sticker - corresponding to *\_omiting in the changing room*

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## Abstract

This commentary accompanies a portfolio of pieces which combine soundscape composition and record production methods with aspects of autoethnographic practice. This work constitutes embodied research into relations between everyday auditory experience, music production and reception, and selfhood. The commentary draws together the methods and practices from which the pieces have emerged - which range across field recording, sound collage, installation, audio-visual composition, and performative action - to present the project as a cohesive series of *sonic autoethnographies*. Recent theory and practice in sound and in autoethnography is considered in relation to the portfolio, which presents a personal listening culture through multiple and layered representations of self. Discussion of the pieces is used to propose generalisable insights in the related areas of personal listening, record production, and soundscape composition.

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## Introduction

...autoethnographic performance constitutes speaking oneself into existence within relations of power. (Grant, Short and Turner, 2013: p. 7)

...an individual, rather than being a self-conscious 'I', is a location where thoughts may emerge. The act of writing opens the writer to what is not yet known... (Grant, Short and Turner, 2013: p. 7)

Sound triggers knowledge as sensate knowing: passing but concrete, testifying to experience but never concluding it; and thus it does not start in language but searches for it. (Voegelin, 2010: p. 177-178)

For the past five years I have been developing sound recording and composing methods as primary means of doing autoethnographic research. This activity emerges from my earlier sound art practice, which combined everyday field-recording with record production methods, and which itself evolved from prior practices of songwriting, instrumental performance and studio recording. This doctoral project is part of an ongoing effort to gain deeper understanding of relations between everyday auditory experience, music production and reception, and selfhood. I feel the complexity of these relations fleetingly as I listen, and have been exploring ways to record and reframe them. The artistic practice discussed in this commentary has been developed as embodied research in this area, as activity through which to experience, document, critique and re-present listening encounters. My auditory experiences while living in an urban centre in the UK are the shifting subject of this work, which is focussed purposefully on a particular and local personal listening culture. The practice and resulting pieces under discussion here yield generalisable insights into the related areas of sound art, soundscape composition, record production, and personal listening.

Each composition in the portfolio can be understood as a reflexive self-narrative, which has been generated through processes of recording, collecting, reflecting on, and reordering everyday auditory experiences. The sound of my compositional activity - of recording, typing, walking - was

also frequently recorded, and these recordings find their way back into the content of the pieces.

This is one of a number of ways that the subject-position of both recordist/composer and listener are problematised in and through the work. The pieces consist of multiple and layered representations of self, and often combine field-recordings with appropriated, found audio in fragmentary collages. Some of the pieces can be understood as idiosyncratic record releases, others as rhetorical soundscape compositions. Each is presented in tension with its reception.

This commentary draws together the disparate methods and practices through which the compositions have emerged - ranging across field recording, record production, installation, audio-visual composition, reflexive writing, and performative action - to present the project as a necessarily messy, yet coherent series of sonic autoethnographies. The main aim of this writing is to illuminate the portfolio through a discussion of key aspects of the practice, proposing the pieces as research of use to those theorising sound and self, and particularly to those working on related concerns through artistic practice. A secondary aim is to demonstrate more generally the usefulness of autoethnographic methods to reflexive music practices which aim towards cultural research. Below, each piece is discussed chronologically - in the order in which I stopped working on them. The commentary relates each piece to existing theory and to relevant compositions and artworks. First I will begin by briefly outlining what I think are resonances between some recent ideas in sound studies, and autoethnography, in order establish some theoretical ground for detailed discussion of the portfolio.

## Sound studies, autoethnography and subjectivity

In recent years, a number of key writers in sound studies have drawn upon a similar and closely related set of ideas to advance theories on the relationship between sound, listening and subjectivity. Evolving during a period when the emphasis in musicology 'has shifted to cultural context, reception, and subject position' (Scott, 2012: p. vii), this recent thinking and writing on sound (Voegelin, 2010; LaBelle, 2010; Connor, 1997; Bull, 2004; DeNora, 2000) has built upon the ideas of a range of mid-to-late twentieth century philosophers and cultural theorists to conceptualise listening as an activity of self-becoming.

Drawing on Theodor Adorno and Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Salome Voegelin suggests we are 'sonic subjectivities' who 'meet not in reason but affection' (2010: p. 189-190), while for Brandon LaBelle, focussing on sound helps to emphasise 'individual identity as a relational project' (2010: p. xxi). For Steven Connor 'the auditory self is an attentive rather than an investigatory self, which takes part in the world rather than taking aim at it' (1997: p. 219). Michael Bull echoes Jean Baudrillard to propose listening as an activity through which 'sound colonises the listener' (2004: p. 283). Tia DeNora, with reference to both Adorno and Michel Foucault, proposes recorded music as a 'technology of self' (2000: p. 46-74). While there are significant distinctions between each writer's perspective on sound and listening, they all posit listening as a kind of already-immersed, intersubjective experiencing which relies on and encourages inter-connectedness and responsiveness, in contrast to the distancing and othering tendencies of 'western ocularcentrism'. These ideas on listening also build on the work of R. Murray Schafer (1977 / 1994) and the acoustic ecology movement, and on the work of field recordists active throughout the past half-century, to which I will return later.

This way of understanding relations between sound, listening and subjectivity corresponds with some of the key concerns and aims of autoethnographers. Autoethnography has emerged in recent years as a set of related methods and practices within sociology and anthropology, whereby autoethnographers reflexively write about their own experiences as the basis for their cultural work. The emergence of autoethnography can be understood as a collective, heterogeneous attempt to deal with problems relating to representation, authorship and authority which have developed in social research fields throughout the twentieth century, in response to post-structuralist and post-colonial critiques of power.



As Stacy Holman Jones writes,

The crisis of representation... motivated researchers to acknowledge how their own identities, lives, beliefs, feelings, and relationships influenced their approach to research and their reporting of “findings”. This focus on representation encouraged qualitative researchers to search for more transparent, reflexive, and creative ways to do and share their research. Rather than deny or separate the researcher from the research and the personal from the relational, cultural, and political, qualitative researchers embraced methods that *recognised* and *used* personal-cultural entanglements. (Adams, Ellis and Jones, 2015: p. 22)

By reflexively documenting their own experiences, autoethnographers tend to foreground the issues of their own context, role and voice, as representational problems through which to approach cultural knowledge. Autoethnography has developed as a kind of pursuit of embodied knowledge through the performed de-centring of researcher identities, processes and outcomes. As a methodology for understanding culture through experience, autoethnography explores selfhood as a processual becoming, by reflecting on personal experience through layered writing practices and interwoven self-narratives, which necessarily implicate subsequent readers in the exchange. Like Connor’s ‘auditory self’, autoethnographers begin their research ‘in the midst of the world’, and as such, autoethnographic texts ‘might wander, twist and turn, changing direction unexpectedly...’, or ‘...might jump from one thought/feeling/memory or experience up or down or backwards, forwards or sideways to another...’ (Grant, Short and Turner, 2013: p. 2).

The composition portfolio presented here explores the proposition that autoethnographic practice and sound art practice can be usefully combined to investigate relations between contemporary listening and selfhood. Although there are instances of writing (text), and visual documentation in the works under discussion, sound recording is employed here as the primary means of ‘writing’ these stories of self.

## I: postface

receiver  
 freedom  
 baby  
 respect  
 ya  
 fixing  
 hey  
 hi

subject  
 the  
 right  
 menu  
 play  
 mirror-  
 ticket...

(text from *postface*)

'postface' is a record release / public installation which consists of a double CD collection of sound recording and editing experiments. These draw on everyday listening encounters to produce a kind of fragmentary, mundane audio diary. As this work was developed at the outset of my doctoral study, the creative process was consciously experimental in the sense that I began by trying a variety of approaches with no pre-intended outcome in mind.

only way to break the inexorable down spiral of ugly uglier ugliest recording and playback is with counter recording and playback the first step is to isolate and cut association lines of the control machine carry a tape recorder with you and record all the ugliest stupid things (Burroughs, 2009: p. 340)

For approximately nine months I habitually carried a variety of portable sound recorders - digital stereo recorder, mobile phone, cassette recorder - making short recordings several times each day. This recording activity functioned as a kind of secret diarising of my auditory experiences and encounters. I collected hundreds of short recordings while at home, at work in a nearby music venue, or travelling between the two, initially with no clear idea as to how these recordings would be used. Carrying and using the recorders led to me develop an increased awareness of these sound worlds and my listening activity. Pressing 'record' and 'stop' functioned as a Cagean framing of my experiences, which led me to listen more intently, critically and self-consciously. I never used

headphones to monitor my recordings while making them, but rather carried the recorders with me as extra ‘attendant ears’.

During this recording activity I became especially aware of the recorded music I was encountering in everyday environments. Having previously been a practising songwriter and recording vocalist/instrumentalist, I became interested in the idea of making an ‘album’, which substituted the expressive, cohesive, musical and narrative content common to a pop/rock record, with recorded fragments of the recordist’s everyday mundanity, including fragments of existing recorded music (songs which I heard or which came to mind while working on the album). The resulting album can be understood as a series of documents of a person trying to make sense of their listening experiences and activities.

The first track, ‘with out’, is a recording of the chronological skipping through of the Alicia Keys track ‘Try Sleeping With A Broken Heart’ (Keys, 2009) on an iPod, by holding down the ‘fast-forward’ button. A familiar pop readymade is subjected to my intervention, scrambling its sound, meaning and effect. The track and approach has obvious similarities with some of John Oswald’s ‘Plunderphonic’ pieces, such as ‘Pretender’ (Oswald, 1998 / 2008), on which Chris Cutler writes:

The grain of the song is opened up and the ear, seduced by detail, lets a throng of surprising associations and ideas fall in behind it. (Cutler, 2009: p. 139)

When I (re)hear ‘with out’ I realise that the newly skipping vocal rearranges the song’s original lyric with the effect of intensifying its apparent yearning and self-doubt, while adding a new degree of subject-object ambiguity:

‘...feel you | me | way to make it, without you | you wore the crown | make it | make me | take me | oh tonight, I’m gonna find a way to make it, without | right from the start its going to fall apart...’

While Oswald does his ‘pretending’ by intervening in and manipulating a Dolly Parton record, ‘with out’ is a recording of me simply skipping through a track. What we hear in what is presented is the sound of somebody engaging with a technical function of everyday music use - fast-forward. In this way the track has similarities with the compositional techniques and audio aesthetic of Christian Marclay’s ‘Record Without a Cover’ (Marclay, 1985), which documents and re-presents Marclay’s interactions with vinyl records and playback media. On ‘Record Without A Cover’, vinyl records

are played back, looped and layered, effectively foregrounding the materiality and sonic properties of the format, and proposing these both as musical material and as the trace of a user's interaction with machines. This focus on user interaction in the record's content ultimately draws attention to the listener's own engagement with the record at hand, and this is reinforced by its unusual presentation, to which I will return later.

'with out' appears as the first track on CD2 of 'postface', in part because I understand it to be a kind of statement of aims in relation to the rest of the album. While making 'postface' I had begun to think of the effort as being to make an 'album' which resists or defers narrative continuity and coherence, to make 'it' without 'you' - without presenting a stable artist identity for a listener to relate to. The tracks throughout 'postface' vary significantly in content and length, however, most of them consist of what sound like fissured or partial recordings. Immediately following 'with out' is the seven-second track 'customisation', on which a voice (my voice) can be heard saying, '*...dgets and customisation and shit, an' I just, em... I suppose I...*' The questioning and inconclusiveness of the words and speech mirror characteristics of the sound recording - as a seemingly arbitrary recorded slice of conversation (truncated at the start and end), audibly disrupted by mobile phone signal. As this recording has been chosen and presented as a complete, named track, its content invites interpretation, especially in its apparent contrast with the preceding 'with out'. Despite their apparent differences in content however, both tracks ('with out' and 'customisation') share key characteristics. Both present seemingly partial recordings in which a first-person narrator can be heard expressing their desire in self-doubting language. The consistency of the subject/narrator is in pieces.

Most of the materials used in the penultimate track on the album, 'postface (track)', are short recordings which capture a wide range of everyday activities and encounters. These include: digital stereo recordings made at home while watching television, preparing food, eating, and using social media; mono cassette recordings made in various locations while playing a piano, talking to others about trying to make the piece, mixing live music in a venue where I worked at the time (from behind a sound desk), using the toilet, vomiting (due to a sickness bug), and; mono mobile phone recordings of various conversations, and journeys to and from home. Also included are sections of the audio track 'The First Time Ever I Saw Your Face' (Lewis, 2009) - the 2009 version sung by Leona Lewis - chosen partly due to its repeated references to 'your face'. I thought that this song

and lyric might introduce some tensions with the other content, and add a new representational layer to the otherwise self-recorded audio.

While working on 'postface (track)', an editing/redacting technique was developed which is used in subsequent pieces throughout the portfolio. What follows is a detailed description of this method, which will be referred to more briefly in later chapters, in relation to other portfolio pieces.

After deciding on a variety of recorded materials to use on a particular piece or track, these are added to the same project in a software sequencer (DAW), by creating a new channel for each recording and dragging and dropping them one-at-a-time in a random place on the project time-line. The mute button for each channel is 'record-enabled', ready to be automated and for the automation to be recorded/written in real-time. The editing process consists primarily of a repeated process of playing back the entire project with all channels sounding simultaneously, while monitoring the playback into the mixing room (a tiny office / cupboard in my flat) via studio monitors. During repeated playbacks I 'play' the mute on/off buttons of any combination of channels while listening back in real time. All muting activity performed during each pass is 'written' as automation for the emerging edit. With each new pass I can hear the automated muting from previous passes and respond to this as I perform yet more mute-automation. By recording the muting activity in this way I am effectively redacting the audio in each channel by chopping out sections of audio as the time-line progresses. As this process is repeated again and again, the cumulative effect is increasingly destructive (more and more audio is being cut from the edit) and the combination of materials in the emerging edit sounds increasingly chaotic (more so than if I was using subtle fade-in/outs). The editing begins to produce some relationships (harmonic, narrative, cause-effect) between the recorded sounds, and a formal shape begins to emerge. This process can be understood as a kind of improvised real-time redaction, which, similarly to the iPod-skipping for 'with out', mimics processes of everyday music use. I simply choose which sounds to turn on and off as the chaotic combination of sources plays out repeatedly.

This process has some similarities with methods used on 'Solo Buttons for Joe Meek', the first track on the 2006 record 'The Rose Has Teeth in the Mouth of a Beast' by electronic music duo Matmos (Matmos, 2006). I was not aware of this track at the time of composing 'postface (track)'. On 'Solo Buttons...', as the track title might suggest, the composers 'play' the solo buttons of each track on the multichannel mix of an existing Joe Meek production in a similar way to my playing of the

mute controls, as the starting point for developing a turbulent cut-up. While the Matmos track produces a comparably fragmentary outcome to 'postface (track)', it proceeds by effectively isolating particular materials and recorded perspectives in relation to an absent 'whole' ensemble production. By contrast, 'postface (track)' uses the mute controls to chip away at an unsorted mass of material in order to uncover and explore hidden resonances. While 'Solo Buttons...' deconstructs record production through track isolation, 'postface' redacts layers of documented listening to present schizophrenic aural consumption.

During this process, sections of digital silence begin to emerge in the increasingly disintegrated edit. These cause my listening attention to be diverted away from the edit which is emanating from the studio monitors, and into auditory ambience of the room I am mixing in. The more 'silent' passages there are in the emerging edit, the more aware I become of my immediate auditory environment and my sounding within it as I edit - the sounds of my typing on a computer keyboard, mouse-clicking, occasional sighing, shifting in my seat etc. Using a range of recording equipment I make new sound recordings of myself engaged in the editing activity, documenting my typing, clicking, sighing, shifting sounds, and adding these new recordings to the project as I go. This new content adds additional layers of self-narrativisation to the edit. It also produces a disorientating effect where I begin to regularly mistake sounds coming from the studio monitors for sounds I am making in the room, and vice versa. I can't distinguish between the recorded sounds playing back and the ones I am making, as the recorded representations and real ambience blur. This is an uncanny and sometimes exhilarating experience which calls to mind Salome Voegelin's 'intersubjective "I"', which, through listening, 'produces certainty of itself and its environment, the life-world, through continuous production in uncertainty' (2010: p. 193). Surprisingly, I feel especially mobilised during these instances of sensory disorientation, as my position in relation to what I hear is momentarily scrambled.

This notion of 'continuous production in uncertainty' could also be applied more generally to the editing activity outlined above, which is practiced as a reactive response to hearing the unexpected consequences of the edits I have made during previous passes. As a consequence of this approach, deciding when an edit is 'finished' becomes a difficult task, and the edit for 'postface (track)' (and others on 'postface') is eventually 'abandoned' rather than 'completed'. These abandoned edits contribute to a general sense of partiality or lack of resolution across the album. Single tracks often appear either truncated - the seconds-long 'customisation' - or overlong - the ponderous,

disintegrative ending of 'postface'. Consequently track sequencing and naming is carefully considered and is intended to some provide balance and flow to the record as a whole. The track titles combine to suggest a complete statement - '*with out customisation galaxy The Golden Boy eats the message i recorded as Complete Vision postface pop n roll*'. The album's closing track, 'pop n roll' consists of a recorded snapshot of music playing back on the office radio in my place of work at the time, looped and repeated over approximately five and a half minutes. The seemingly arbitrary nature of this recording of everyday music reception, and its presentation as a repeating and unchanging loop, serve as a fittingly unresolved ending to the collection.

'postface' combines fragmentary recordings and collages of my everyday auditory experience and activity, with appropriated found recordings and documented experiments with music playback. The collection is connected by continual references to listening, music, everyday mundanity, and the recording and compositional process itself. CD 1 of consists of one seventy-minute long edit of recordings made in my home and while out walking, taking breaks from making the contents of CD 2. CD 2 consists of eight shorter tracks, including 'with out', 'customisation' and 'postface (track)' - totalling approximately 34 minutes. The collection was 'released' as a 2 x CD package, with CD 1 (placed towards the front of the package) smeared with vaseline, over time rendering it unplayable. The package also includes a number of additional items intended to obstruct a listener's encounter with, and usage of, its contents. These include an enclosed scale colour photograph of a CD, and a sealed and typed letter composed of edited text notes written while making the album. Twenty of these packages were installed (without consent) in the rock/pop sections of record shops across Glasgow City (filed under the letter 'T') on Saturday April 21st 2012 - Record Store Day, left to be used or discarded by anyone who found them.

The decision to present CD 1 smeared with vaseline further echoes Marclay's 'Record Without a Cover' (Marclay, 1985), which similarly presents an object which degrades over time. As the name might suggest, 'Record Without a Cover' was originally sold with no protective record sleeve. The absence of a cover heightens the user/listener's responsibility for taking care of the vinyl, and their actions have consequences for the form/composition of the audio content that they will eventually hear. With 'postface' CD 1, the user is similarly implicated in the care for the CD object and can only attempt to play the contents of CD 1 after first dealing with and making direct contact with the transparent petroleum jelly. The user's interaction with the physical record has direct consequences for what they hear (or don't hear), while the release literally leaves its mark on them. Both the

content of 'postface (album)', and the form of its release, have resonances with the culture-jamming of Negativland, in particular the 1989 album *Helter Stupid* (1989), on which found sound materials are combined with the group's recorded interventions in disjointed collages which reflect on music reception and music culture, blurring lines between music producer and listener. The inclusion of 'Toilet piece / untitled' on Yoko Ono's album 'Fly' (1971) is also a useful comparison with some of the choices of material and approach to track-order found on 'postface'. On 'Fly', 'Toilet piece / untitled', which consists entirely of the recorded sound of a toilet being flushed, follows immediately after a relatively conventional, if eccentric, rock song ('Hirake'). This content, and incongruity of its place on the album encourages the listener to consider relations between artist, recording, and the representation of self.



## II: In Posterface: 1

Find a group of friends  
to capture the idea of people

(lyrics from 'Physical Things', on 'In Posterface: 1')

'In Posterface: 1' is a record release and public installation which existed across physical and virtual locations, and was released/installed in late 2013. The piece consists of an eight track CD album of music, and a music video, additional artwork and visual documentation, which are included on an accompanying webpage. The CD album was distributed in public places across Glasgow City, and was marked with a web-URL which directed those who found the CD to the webpage. Through a variety of recording and compositional strategies, the album uses a band and album format as the basis for exploring relationships between auditory experience, recorded songs, and selfhood. 'In Posterface' is the name given to the band, while '1' is the name given to the album. This enquiry builds upon a number of methods developed while making 'postface (album)', such as the practice of everyday sound recording, the inclusion of pop readymades, the editing/redacting technique, and the performative release strategy. On '1', these methods are filtered through a self-reflexive songwriting and production practice.

The combining of reflexive songwriting and sound collage practices has many precedents on pop/rock albums from the nineteen-sixties onwards. Some interesting examples include The Beatles (1967), The Mothers of Invention (1968), This Heat (1981), Portishead (2008), and Death Grips (2012). On the album 'We're Only In It For The Money', composer and producer Frank Zappa displays considerable narrative reflexivity as many of the songs are written from a range of (fictional) perspectives which frequently reference music and music culture. These perspectives include those of music fans and band members, as on the song 'Flower Punk', which addresses a fictional music fan who is on their way to San Francisco to join a band:

Hey punk, where you goin' with that flower in your hand?  
Well, I'm goin' up to frisco to join a psychedelic band.  
Hey punk, where you goin' with that button on your shirt?  
I'm goin' to the love-in to sit and play my bongos in the dirt.  
(The Mothers of Invention, 1968)

Through these songs Zappa and the band explore and articulate abiding concerns relating to music culture and reception in the late 1960s. As songwriter and producer, Zappa's early work can be understood as explicitly ethnographic. As music critic and Zappa biographer Ben Watson observes,

Zappa's songs are possibilities for feeling, not statements. He is a ringmaster, not a singer-songwriter. This explains his readiness to use other singers, part of his strategy in achieving an ambivalent resonance for so-called self-expression (Watson, 1995: p. 117)

On 'We're Only In It For The Money' (The Mothers of Invention, 1968) highly self-conscious rock songs are often placed side by side with abstract sound collages in the track-listing, which mangle together a diverse range of recorded content, contributing a diversity of representational layers to the album as a whole. This material includes recorded vocal performances, documentary recordings of band members, sampled rude noises, and bursts of instrumental playing, often manipulated with tape-delays and changes to playback speed, as on 'The Chrome-Plated Megaphone of Destiny', 'Are You Hung Up?', and 'Nasal Retentive Calliope Music' (The Mothers of Invention, 1968). Zappa and the Mothers' practice of song / sound collage can be understood to relate to, but differ from, the emergence of scratching and sampling in hip-hop in the mid-1970s and later popularised by groups including N. W. A. and Public Enemy, by their turntablist Terminator X. With Zappa and the Mothers, collage can be understood as a disruptive and detached editing technique applied to recorded material in the service of a heterogeneous and abstract work. This contrasts with the recorded but often real-time scratching and sample playback performances on Public Enemy tracks, which bring textural, representational and dimensional depths to an accompaniment of mobilising beats (often themselves amputated and appropriated) and vocals, on, for example, 'It Takes a Nation of Millions to Hold Us Back' (Public Enemy, 1988).

Comparably with 'We're Only In It For The Money', the songs on '1' begin as recorded instrumental and vocal performances, which are subsequently combined with documentary recordings, found audio, additional recorded voices, and sections of existing contemporary pop tracks. The vocal performances are based on texts which combine automatic writing, overheard conversations and lyric quotations with notes and observations on self and identity, and on the writing process itself. The documentary recordings are collected in a similar way to those which appear on 'postface', and document a variety of my everyday experiences, such as going to the bank, walking through the city-centre to work, and playing with my son at home (who was, at the time, aged '1'). The pop

music readymades which feature on the album are mostly UK number one singles from the period during which the album was being made.

This collection of material is edited using a similar real-time editing/muting method to that which was discussed in relation to 'postface'. As before, sound recordings were made which document this editing and monitoring process and these new recordings were added to the emerging edits.

Additionally, other aspects of the process and activity of recording are self-consciously referred to in the tracks themselves, through the inclusion of sonic artefacts of the recording processes (the sound of tape machines engaging, mic hiss, digital clicks, and the sound of tape rewinding) and through direct, spoken references to the recording process, such as the introduction to 'Physical Things', which begins with the spoken exchange - 'Ok whenever you wanna start / eh... i think we're on the...'

The repeated references to sound recording methods and processes in the recorded materials themselves has some notable precedents. On 'Paintwork' from UK post-punk band The Fall's 1985 album 'This Nation's Saving Grace' (The Fall, 1985), the constructed, synthesised mix of the studio-recorded song is frequently sabotaged by the singer's introduction of noisy mono dictaphone recordings - the master mix is literally taped over. In what stands up as a notably *autoethnographic* recorded song, the singer-narrator (Mark E. Smith) alludes to these disruptive interventions in the song's lyrics - 'Sometimes people say "Hey mark, you're messing up the paintwork" '. According to lyric in 'Paintwork', *other people* judge that the singer is disrupting the smooth operation of record production. The song is a fittingly performative iteration of, and comment on, Smith's socially and sonically disruptive record production practice. Japanese experimental rock collective Boredoms similarly deals with the final mix as manipulable material throughout the album 'Super æ' (Boredoms, 1998). On 'Super You' we can hear the master mix of what sounds like a live ensemble recording (drums, guitars etc.) being frequently and unexpectedly stretched and smeared with time-stretching and re-pitching effects (perhaps through guitar pedals). This reshaping of the master mix highlights the illusory nature of all studio mixes of 'live' performances i.e. 'Super You' reminds us that the sonic space of the final mix is always a fake, and amounts to just one more material for studio experimentation.

What emerges as the finished tracks on '1' can be understood as layered assemblages of recorded content, jarring combinations of mediated 'music', or as fragmentary self-narratives. As a listener,

the abrupt juxtaposition of different ontologies of sound recording which comprises each track (e.g. mono mobile-phone recordings, studio-recorded improvisations, number one pop singles) seems to me to result in tracks which elicit a variety of conflicting subject-positions simultaneously. My use of the term subject-position relates to Allan Clarke's definition in relation to recorded music, as 'the way in which characteristics of the musical material shape the general character of the listener's response or engagement' (Clarke, 2005: p. 91-92), but also draws on Roshanak Kheshti's notion of 'aural positionality', meaning the 'aural 'point of view', the physical position that a researcher identifies with in aural ethnography' (Kheshti, 2009: p. 15). For my purposes, 'subject-position' is used to refer both to the character of the listener's engagement in relation to the music, and the listener's sense of physical proximity and situatedness in relation to, or their spatial relationship with, the music.

Throughout '1', recorded contents are explicitly and abruptly 'grafted' onto each other in disorientating collages, which mirror the disorientation expressed, albeit inconsistently, by the singer/narrator. As Jacques Derrida writes on collage practice,

Each cited element breaks the continuity or linearity of the discourse and leads necessarily to a double-reading: that of the fragment perceived in relation to its context of origin; that of the same fragment as incorporated into a new whole, a different totality. The trick of collage consists also of never entirely suppressing the alterity of these elements reunited in a temporary composition. Thus the art of collage proves to be one of the most effective strategies in the putting into question of all the illusions of representation.' (Group Mu, 1978: p. 34-35)

In the case of '1', by redacting and scrambling the different types of recorded material, as *subject-positioning* elements, it is arguably *the listener's position in relation to the music* which is being 'collaged'. The tracks on the album, by scrambling musical, narrative, and spatial information, can be understood to deconstruct the possibility of a stable subject-position for the listener.

.ou ....t .....

.. .... ..

.ou t....

... ..

..yle of a person

open gut bed in sew

grow without the knowing

hostage in the cavity of the body...

(from lyrics to 'You Vomit Blood', from 'In Posterface: 1')

The track 'You Vomit Blood' was developed by mapping vocal and instrumental performances, documentary recordings of the editing process (typing, computer noise etc.), and a well-known pop / R&B track - Ne-Yo's UK number one single 'Let Me Love You' (2012) - over the core element of a recorded instrumental improvisation, which was captured on a portable stereo recorder. Throughout the track, the editing / muting technique (see 'postface') generates ambiguity between the recorded sounds and spaces, with the 'original' recorded rehearsal only being revealed ('unmuted') after four-and-a-half minutes. Recordings of typing, mouse-clicking and computer printing recorded during the editing process are dropped in and out as percussive elements, and allude to the repetitive recording process, musical arrangement, and recurring lyrical refrain.

Towards the end of 'You Vomit Blood', the stereo master of Ne-Yo's 'Let Me Love You' (2012) loudly enters the mix after a quick fade-in, and persists for a full forty-six seconds. 'Let Me Love You' battles with the established song arrangement, before being abruptly dropped out. This entry effects a sudden change to 'You Vomit Blood', destabilising the rhythm of the track, and intervening in the established (albeit ambiguous and layered) vocal narrative by adding another contrasting one.

Girl let me love you  
 And I will love you  
 Until you learn to love yourself  
 Girl let me love you  
 A heart of numbness, gets brought to life  
 I'll take you there  
 (Ne-Yo, 2012)

At 5:13, as the (my) established vocal sings 'out, out, out', Ne-Yo's appropriated vocal intervenes - 'Let me love you / and I will love you / until you learn / to love yourself' (Ne-Yo, 2012). The contrast between both vocal narratives is analogous to the contrast between the fragmentary, unstable, pre-established arrangement and vocal, and the vivid, linear arrangement of the Ne-Yo song. 'Let Me Love You' is illustrative of Ben Watson's observation that '(I)n many ways the love-song symbolises the singer's relationship to his audience: in romancing the loved one the singer expresses an attitude towards the consumer' (1995: p. 122). In the song Ne-Yo's vocal appeals

directly and pleadingly to the listener, to submit to his (controlling) advances, for their own good. The inclusion of the 'Let Me Love You' in 'You Vomit Blood' effects an intervention into the existing narrative and arrangement of the song, and also disrupts the listener's auditory activity, as they are forced to reconcile what seem to be two different recorded songs playing simultaneously. The listener is actively involved and implicated in reconciling the pre-established arrangement of 'You Vomit Blood' with the new inclusion of 'Let Me Love You'. Reflection and contemplation are momentarily obstructed, as 'Let Me Love You' neutralises critical distance with pleading vocals and vivid R&B production. This moment is an example of the dual function of '1' as both an album of songs, and a body of work through which the meaning and function of disparate recorded materials is presented for consideration and critique.

The process of recording, editing and mixing '1' had begun to foreground the notion of subject-position, and had caused me to explore and question spatial relationships between recording and listening environments in more depth. These considerations helped to form my thinking on an appropriate release strategy for the album. The release format of '1' consists of a packaged CD and an accompanying webpage. One hundred copies of the CD were burned, stamped with the URL 'inpf.net', and housed in cardboard CD sleeves which were each then wrapped and sealed in brown packing tape. The 'release' method consisted of leaving each packaged copy of the CD in a different public location across Glasgow City - in public parks, toilets, shops, cafes, train stations. Each copy was photographed in its location, and these photographs were added as a slideshow to the webpage, which also incorporated streamable links to each track, an embedded music video (collaged from filmed band footage and existing pop videos by Callum Beith) and a large digital image of the band with the word 'MUSIC' superimposed over it. In the image the 'band' are wearing wigs, heavy make-up and garish clothing, with the colours of the photo digitally enhanced to accentuate the high contrast image content. Each band member's eyes are redacted with a manually mouse-drawn black strip. The visual language of much of these materials can be understood to relate to ambiguous and ambivalent expressions of self identity found throughout the tracks on the record. The 'trash-wrapped' CD, similarly to the CDr package for 'postface', is unmarked, and therefore withholds information on its origin, identity and function. This packaging helps to present the CD as a conspicuous, 'faceless' object. By contrast, the band photo and imagery (in the video) presented on the accompanying website shows the band as visually *over-determined* - dressed in busy, vibrant and garish clothing and covered in fake-tan and make up. Their visual identity is 'too much', while

their function - MUSIC - is overstated, placed front and centre of the webpage. This contrast and interplay between the identity-retentive and the over-determined mirrors the themes of ambivalent identity and self-expression found on the album tracks.

The approach to the record release of '1' has some parallels with instances of parody and appropriation in early internet art, as well as with recent multi-media releases by composer/performers Boards of Canada and Death Grips. The website which hosts the content of 'In Posterface: 1' is designed to visually mimic a Google search page, using the same fonts, colours and layout, as well as incorporating code, which reads the user's IP address in order to change the displayed date information referring to when the site was 'last visited'. This date changes with each visit to the site. This mimicking of a familiar search engine webpage is another means of complicating the listener/user's sense of situatedness during their own inter-media journey through the release content. Additionally, it continues the appropriation and culture-jamming which are common to the audio tracks. Like internet artist Vuk Cosic's clone of the 'Documenta X' art exhibition website in his 1997 piece 'Documenta Done', the 'In Posterface: 1' website, in its mimicking of the Google search page, 'articulates the technical capabilities of reproduction and raises questions about authorship' in a way which seems to 'denigrate the original' (Greene, 2004).

Both Boards of Canada and Death Grips have used the internet to explore the record release as a creative spatial practice. In 2013, the year that '1' was released, electronic music producers Boards of Canada issued six separate codes through various means, which could be combined in order to access a website containing information on the forthcoming vinyl release of the album 'Tomorrow's Harvest'. The previous year experimental rock/hip-hop group Death Grips were dropped from the record label Epic Records for using their Facebook page to release the album 'No Love Deep Web' (and accompanying videos) instantaneously to listeners, before the planned release date. This is an example of the band's use of social media as both a socio-political strategy for disseminating their music, and an aesthetic strategy, which extends the fragmentary, spatially saturated content of the recordings. The release format and method for '1' refers to and extends the range of spatial representations and layered self-narratives on the album, while involving the listener in their own performance-journey through a variety of real and virtual spaces. Again the listener is required to try and reconcile disparate spatial representations and to negotiate their own relative position. Subject-position is proposed as a kind of problem for the listener, as the record can be understood to challenge listeners to find a stable relationship with the materials. These methods and examples

draw on precedents in internet art and more generally on the inter-connectedness of Web 2.0 usage and culture, while building upon earlier correspondence art practices - from Ray Johnson's Fluxus-era mail-art, to the transgressive mail-art practices of COUM Transmissions/Throbbing Gristle, and the elaborate, conceptual releases of later noise artists such as Merzbow. Correspondence art persists in the post-internet, inter-media forms of many contemporary record releases.



## III: Somewhere in

you feel like a room

(text from 'Somewhere in')

In each of the first two portfolio pieces, mobile phones (alongside other recording devices) were used as sound recorders to document everyday (auditory) experience. The choice of the mobile phone as a recorder is both practical - it is light, simple to use, and I carry one in my pocket every day - and aesthetic. The rugged omni-directional microphone and auto-compression built in to the phone's 'Voice Recorder' app results in noisy recordings which sacrifice environmental clarity for a focus on specific sound events (e.g. conversations). Like the sound of a phone call, the recordings generated on my mobile phone sound covert, and embedded within ongoing activity/life. As a portable object the mobile phone is designed to neatly fit the hand and pocket. Carried each day, pressed against the body or held in the hand, it fits well with Marshall McLuhan's notion of a media device through which 'our nervous system is technologically extended' (McLuhan, 1964: p. 4). Caroline Bassett has highlighted the mobile phone as media which plays a significant role in determining relations between everyday spaces and subjectivity. According to Bassett,

The spatial economy of mobile telephony is complex. To explore it demands the consideration of the dynamics not only of virtual space (the bubble into which we speak when we make a connection), but also of physical space as it comes to be penetrated by virtual space... Mobiles play a part in the production of contemporary space. They also play a part in the production of contemporary subjectivity because to ask how the connections mobiles make are produced, maintained, reproduced, and understood is also to ask how this kind of technology might allow the negotiation of new forms of subjectivity. (Bassett, 2003: p. 344)

While Bassett's observation refers to mobile phone technology and usage in 2003, the development of mobile internet access and smartphones has changed mobiles into audiovisual web interfaces, transforming their role in and influence on everyday communication and (spatial) experience. The ubiquity of smartphones as recording devices and in particular as social media devices has resulted in their being used in daily communications in highly individualised and creative ways, as users communicate instantaneously through a variety of representational forms such as editable and sharable text(s), viral self-shot videos, appropriated and self-captioned images, and links to cultural content. As multi-media recording devices and pocket-held web interfaces, smartphones circulate often multi-layered representations of space and self-identity. Consequently, the influence of mobile

phone technology on the *spatial complexity* of everyday communication and experience has intensified since Bassett's essay.

As the process of making the previous piece, 'In Posterface: 1', had resulted in my increasing interest in spatial considerations relating to recording, listening and releasing (circulating), I decided to explore my smartphone further as a potential means of developing this enquiry. I wanted to investigate smartphones as a means through which subjects produce the spaces of their lives, and as dominant means of generating and circulating everyday self-narratives through, for example, social media use. 'Somewhere in' explores the smartphone as a means for both producing and consuming selfhood.

One relatively recent format of smartphone communication is the self-looping 'vine' video, which accompanies the social media platform 'twitter'. 'Vines' function as a way of recording and circulating short audio-visual clips which are easily digestible by smartphone users. With their six-second auto-looping format, vine videos communicate *situations* audio-visually, repeating them ad infinitum for the viewer-listener. This automatic looping transforms the digital video material from documentary snapshot, to recurring micro-narrative, presenting a fragment of content repeatedly for ongoing re-interpretation. As a next step for my research, and starting point for the next piece, I set out to explore the 'vine' as a format for documenting everyday (spatial) experience. This focus on investigating selfhood through (mediated) everyday spatiality resonates with Tami Spry's definition of autoethnography as 'a self-narrative that critiques the situatedness of self and others in social contexts' (Spry, 2001: p. 710).

I began by making and collecting 'vine' videos (short edited loops) of myself walking in Glasgow city centre during breaks in my working days throughout December of 2013. This recording activity had the effect of increasing my self-awareness and critical (auditory and visual) engagement with my surroundings. I found myself walking through the busy retail centres in the city centre at the height of the christmas shopping period, on a kind of inverted detournment through the busiest sites of consumer activity. Many of the vines I collected were shot with the smartphone camera facing the ground, looking down at the passing floor as I walk, which was often marked by a grid of floor tiles or paving stones. The sounds captured vary from noisy bursts of passing traffic and fleeting fragments of conversations to glimpses of chart pop songs playing in shop spaces.

'Somewhere in', is composed using a selection of the self-shot vine videos recorded during these walks, and the audio and promotional video content of two specific pop songs, which regularly permeated the retail spaces of the city at the time. These are 'Somewhere Only We Know' (Allen, 2013), sung by Lily Allen, and 'Skyscraper' (Bailey, 2013), sung by Sam Bailey. Both of these tracks and videos use first-person narratives to tell stories of identity-affirmation. Notably, both also use spatial metaphors to convey the longed-for stability, or situatedness of the subject/singer. In the video for Lily Allen's 2013 version of 'Somewhere Only We Know', a stop-motion animated film tells the story of a bear who wants to avoid christmas by hibernating, but is persuaded to participate in celebrations with friends, eventually taking pleasure in the confirming nostalgia of returning to 'somewhere only we know' (John Lewis, 2013). The video of the 2013 Sam Bailey version of 'Skyscraper' (Bailey, 2013 2) features a collage of television footage from the singer's appearance on and eventual winning of 'reality' singing competition The X Factor (UK). This footage chronologically presents and dramatises the transformation of Bailey into a professional singer and media star during the television series. This content accompanies the song, which serves as a statement of resilience and situatedness by the narrator, who imagines themselves 'rising from the ground like a skyscraper'.

My intention with the edit was to explore the contrasts between the different types of recorded audio-visual content, and the identity-narratives that they each conveyed. The music-video content was manipulated (reversed and time-stretched) and edited together with the self-shot vine videos, using the editing/muting technique developed while making 'postface', but this time applied to both audio and video using video editing software, while monitoring audio and video content simultaneously on my computer screen and monitoring speakers. Similar to the juxtaposition of different types of recorded content on '1' (see 'You Vomit Blood'), the self-shot vines offset the signified aesthetic and narrative 'stability' of the pop videos with content which captures busy, transitory spaces, through the mediated gaze of the subject. The vines give POV glimpses into the liminal, contested spaces of an urban centre, with their regular looping accentuating a seeming over-familiarity and repeatability. The time-stretching and reversal of the audio and video content for 'Somewhere Only We Know' creates a soporific, ambient and melancholic frame for other content. This contrasts with the regular looping for the vines, and the anxious, dramatic content of 'Skyscraper'.

As with previous pieces, I made recordings of the editing process of the work, this time by using a smartphone and hand-held 'flip-cam' to make digital videos of the computer screen and editing environment while monitoring and editing the video content. The inclusion of these new recordings in the emerging edit adds extra layers of spatial representation, and further re-frames my activity of 'looking through' the phone and computer screen at representations of my experiences. Also added were short sections of text, consisting mostly of quotes from the lyrics to the two pop songs, appearing in a stylised 'handwriting' font. The appearance of the isolated phrases from the lyrics in the 'handwritten' font - "like I'm made of glass", "you feel like a room", "an empty land" - emphasises the fragmentary self-narratives in the emerging video-collage.

As an audio-visual autoethnography, the piece can be approached and understood primarily in terms of a pop-video collage, which combines AV narrative content to present a new layered narrative of spatial anxiety and identity flux. The manipulated pop video animations also combine with written lyric-captions to suggest ambiguous and often abject readings of the familiar video content. The combining of audio-visual narratives in 'Somewhere in' is at times reminiscent of the video collages of Vicki Bennett/People Like Us, which often combine familiar AV content from two or more pop culture sources (often feature films) to explore resonances between them. A striking example of this can be found in 'The Sound of the End of Music' in which the iconic film sequence which accompanies the song 'The Sound of Music' is blended with footage from the feature film 'Apocalypse Now' in which Vietnam War bombings are recreated and soundtracked hauntingly by The Doors' song 'The End' (People Like Us, 2010). The contrast and combination of pristine country landscapes of 'The Sound of Music' and the flaming, scorched and bombed spaces of 'Apocalypse Now' injects horror and pathos into Julie Andrews' optimistic, utopian song. Andrews' celebrated present is shown to be in flames. In 'Somewhere in', the collaged pop video content is combined with the self-shot vine loops, and the video of editing and playback shot while making the piece, both of which introduce different AV ontologies. Rather than being coherent AV narratives as per the pop videos, the vines are snapshots of 'situations', short lo-res loops of documented experience which puncture the cohesion and order of the pop content, blowing holes in its smooth surfaces with glimpses of lived, atomised space. Both the vine loops and the flip-cam footage of my computer screen intervene in the pop video content and its operation 'as an interplay of structurally congruent media' (Cook, 1998, p. 159). The 'I' of the pop videos is problematised -

first through their combination, then through its disruption via the atomised vines, and further through the frequent reframing of viewing (and listening) perspectives.

Having developed a multi-media record release/installation as a means of further exploring relations between sound, space and subject-position on 'In Posterface: 1', I was keen to investigate this further with the release format of 'Somewhere in'. Various ideas were explored, including creating a fake social media persona to disseminate the video, and releasing all the vines and then the eventual AV piece using my own social media accounts. Neither of these methods felt satisfactory and I had difficulty devising a form for the release which would extend the enquiry developed through making the video. Eventually, my ideas returned to focus on the object which had been the starting point for the piece - the smartphone.

As much of the video content was created using a smartphone and phone-related recording format (vine), I decided to explore ways of presenting the video to the viewer/listener on their own phone. I thought that this reception context would resonate with the smartphone-generated content. I had the idea of using a printed QR code to disseminate a smartphone-readable link through which the listener/viewer could access the video piece. As a continuation of previous experimentation with the form of the record 'release', the QR code would form part of the artwork of a 'disc-less' 12" record, which could be stocked alongside vinyl records in record shops. For the 12" artwork I took digital photographs of the video playing back on my computer in the editing environment, and used these to create front and back cover art. These were printed on either side of a piece of card, and inserted into a transparent 12" vinyl sleeve, giving the package the appearance of a vinyl release. Also included in the 12" package is a clear acetate print, which is transparent other than the black printed QR code, release information, and instructions on how to play the material (symbols which indicate instructions for playback - scan the code and watch on 'full screen' using headphones). This release was installed in record stores (with permission) and with a marked sale price of £0, and was promoted as a new release by Glasgow online label Instructional Media, with information and short clips of the work being shared online via their social media networks for a limited period.

As a development from the release format of 'In Posterface: 1', the release format and process of 'Somewhere in' extends the spatial language of the video content, implicating the listener/viewer in a journey through physical and virtual spaces, as they look 'through the eyes' of the composer. The

release exists as a kind of performance/journey *between* digital and physical spaces, and as a story of everyday spatial anxiety, which explores both self-documentation and song as self-narrative forms.

The audio aesthetic of 'Somewhere in' has similarities with some tendencies in recent 'vaporwave' releases, including Oneohtrix Point Never's *Replica* (Oneohtrix Point Never, 2011), and Macintosh Plus's *Floral Shoppe* (Macintosh Plus, 2011). In both, pop readymades are treated, looped and layered in order to produce collages which reflect on music reception and pop nostalgia. Samples are often time-stretched, repeated and treated with reverb/delay, resulting in a certain abject melancholia. Similar techniques can also be identified in the music of 'Burial' (Burial, 2006), which Mark Fisher characterises as 'hauntological', suggestive of 'a city haunted not only by the past but by lost futures.' (Fisher, 2014) During the period of making 'Somewhere in' I was listening regularly to the Oneohtrix Point Never album 'Replica', and this release influenced some of the aesthetic choices on 'Somewhere in'. 'Replica' draws primarily on readymade content, subjecting it to looping and time-stretching, while introducing additional sounds recorded by the composer. I had not seen the promotional video for the title track 'Replica' until writing this commentary over two years after completing 'Somewhere in', and was surprised to discover that the video for 'Replica' consists entirely of appropriated, time-stretched and collaged animations.

#### IV: The Closing Ceremony

...we must remember that there are spaces in which the individual feels himself to be a spectator without paying much attention to the spectacle. As if the position of the spectator were the essence of the spectacle, as if the spectator in the position of the spectator were his own spectacle.' (Augé, 2008: p. 70)

And did I forget to mention that I found a new direction, and it leads back to me? (Minogue, 2000)

After finishing making 'Somewhere in', I felt I wanted to narrow the focus of the types of recorded material I was using, and the types of situation and experience I was documenting. Rather than using recording devices to document everyday life and experience sporadically, I thought it would be an interesting challenge to concentrate on a particular aspect of, or event in, my lived experience. This could be a way of simplifying the compositional practice, and of further developing the research aspect of the work - generating a more clearly identifiable 'case-study' of sound and listening relations than in the previous pieces. I decided to explore the idea of making a sound piece based on some aspect of the Commonwealth Games, which were due to take place in Glasgow in July and August of 2014. I expected that life in the city would be significantly altered during the period of the games, partly because their effect was already palpable in the months preceding them, through new building projects and the gentrification of areas of the city, games-related cultural projects, and the ongoing marketing of the games. The piece which emerged subsequently, 'The Closing Ceremony', is a two-part 5.1 soundscape composition, which uses field-recording, found recordings and spatial editing and mixing strategies to reflect on the closing concert of the 2014 Commonwealth Games, and on related issues of the urban soundscape, mediation, and audience/spectatorship.

##### Part 1. The Closing Ceremony:

The closing concert/ceremony of the 2014 Commonwealth Games, from which this piece takes its name, took place approximately two miles from my home on the evening of 3rd August 2014. In the early stages of the concert, I became aware of its effect on my auditory environment. I could hear the concert from inside my own home, and while standing outside on the street. When I opened my living room window, the low rumble and echo of amplified speech, music performance and

applause could be heard reverberating across the sky, merging with the sound of circling helicopters. When I turned on my television to see and hear the event being broadcast live, the same concert was rendered close, crisp and clear - noiseless - and subject to an official narrative designed to directly address me as a TV audience-member (Minogue, 2014). My attention was caught by the contrast between these two sonic manifestations of the closing concert.

I quickly decided to record both manifestations of the closing concert, the official television broadcast playing into my home, and the open-air concert playing out across the city sky. After setting up a stereo recorder and leaving it recording the television broadcast, I set out on a sound walk towards the stadium where the event was taking place, listening attentively and making field-recordings on the way and while standing outside the event, using in-ear binaural microphones. In the days after the concert took place, I was able to find more recordings of the same event by searching on Youtube and finding digital videos which had been shot on smartphones by audience members situated inside the stadium (McFall, 2014; Pearson, 2014; Reid, 2014; TheKraig, 2014). I was also able to download these videos and rip the audio content from them. This combination of recorded material - the home recording of broadcast footage, the binaural recordings made on the streets surrounding the stadium, and the ripped audio from uploaded audience footage of the concert - form the basis of part one of 'The Closing Ceremony'. Each recording functions both as documentation of the event, and as an index of a different (mediated) subject-position in relation to it.

My intention with the piece was to use these materials to make a soundscape composition. As the recordings offer different mediated audience perspectives on the same concert, I thought that I could combine and mix between these materials to explore relationships between different audience perspectives. By experimenting with editing and mixing these POV 'audience' recordings using an immersive 5.1 setup, I explored the idea that the piece might be understood to perform the virtual (re-)positioning of an audience, the audience to 'The Closing Ceremony', in relation to a past concert situation, the closing concert of the commonwealth games. The edit for the piece was developed by lining up this diverse set of recordings in a sequencer (as these recordings document the same event, I chose to synchronise them, rather than dropping each of them randomly on the time-line as with previous pieces) and approaching the edit as I had done for the previous pieces, as a process of erasure. By 'writing' edit automation by abruptly muting and unmuting these different channels, I was able to cut between and juxtapose different perspectives.



In the article 'Soundscape composition: the convergence of ethnography and acousmatic music' John Levack Drever proposes soundscape composition as being essentially ethnographic in its concern for 'the making and presenting of representations of environmental sound...' (2002: p. 21).

In the brief conclusion, Drever adds,

A lot of what has been proposed in the paper vis-a`-vis soundscape composition and ethnography is theoretical. It is only through praxis (i.e. the marriage of theory and praxis) that we will realise pertinent means of addressing such propositions as framing 'the framer as he or she frames the other' (Drever, 2002: p. 26)

This question of how to frame 'the framer as he or she frames the other' , or rather, how to account for and confront *in practice* the problem of the researcher's own representation within their work, is perhaps the central methodological question that autoethnographers contend with. This explains the apparent complexity of many autoethnographic texts, in which '(F)ractions of an experience link to other fractions of another experience... lacking specificity and defined authenticity... as the author authors and re-authors their writing...' (Grant, Short and Turner, 2013: p. 2). It also serves as a useful observation as regards my own practice of recording and layering the sound of my own editing and monitoring activities while making work.

As with each previous piece, during the editing of 'The Closing Ceremony', I became preoccupied with the sound of the editing environment and the editing and monitoring process. The sound of my computer fan, mouse clicking and passing traffic became increasingly imposing as my destructive editing generated sections of digital silence. My domestic environment began providing new harmonic, temporal, timbral and representational frames for the recorded sounds I was in the process of editing. As with previous pieces, I set up microphones within this space, recorded my editing and monitoring activity, and began the work of folding these new recordings into the edit.

Reflecting on the practice of field-recording, Hildegard Westerkamp comments,

In a soundscape composition we walk a complex and fine line, attempting to find a balance between the voice of the recorded environment and that of the composer, all of this in the interest of understanding, highlighting and questioning our relationship to our sound environment, our listening and sound making. (Carlyle and Lane, 2013: p. 116)

In part one of 'The Closing Ceremony', there is an intentional conflation of multiple recording and listening environments, as there is of multiple recording and listening perspectives. Here my questioning concerns the constructedness of auditory environment through listening, and the impact that a culture of mediation and self-documentation has on this. Just as I had been recording my own experiences in order to better understand them, large numbers of audience-members had been recording their experiences of the closing concert and uploading them to be viewed. In agreement with Marc Augé, for whom contemporary spectatorship can be understood to function 'as if the spectator in the position of the spectator were his own spectacle' (Augé, 2008: p. 70), I think that such everyday recording activity functions as much as a performance of spectatorship, as it does as the documenting of an event. A 'selfie' is both an image of the photographer, and an image of the photographer spectating on an image of themselves spectating (in the camera viewfinder). Understood as a collage/montage of 'aural selfies', The Closing Ceremony part one reflects on the recording and listening activities of a concert audience, which includes myself. These activities are presented via a 5.1 sound system for consideration by a subsequent concert audience, creating the space for an audience to consider relations between sound, mediation and spectatorship, while participating in such relations.

At times the audience to 'The Closing Ceremony part one' is effectively listening to me listening to me listening to me listening to the commonwealth games closing concert. Towards the end of the piece, the sound of various recordings of Kylie Minogue's performance of 'Spinning Around' can be heard being edited, being 'clicked away' in real time. The audience is eventually face to face, or ear to ear, with the mores of the composer, whose sluggish, pitched-down contributions reflect the eventual, actual boredom of the composer going about their work, moving in and out of attentiveness over long periods and repeated procedures. Presented in this way, the relative inactivity of the composer can be compared and contrasted with the listener's as sit waiting for the next 'thing' to happen - to locate themselves with/in the audio. The piece's excessive re-framing of 'the framer' gives the composer's listening and editing activity an ominous presence in the composition. The sense in which the composer is 'too close' to the listener is compounded by the immersive capacities of the 5.1 setup and the high relative volumes of these 'aural selfies' towards the end of the piece.

Part 2. Eternal Gratitude:

Part two of 'The Closing Ceremony' also uses the 5.1 format to reflect on audience/spectatorship through the presentation of an immersive, reflexive listening experience. Similarly to part one, the sound recordings used to make 'Eternal Gratitude' were all captured in Glasgow during the 2014 Commonwealth Games. In contrast to part one, the recordings used in 'Eternal Gratitude' (with the exception of a brief introduction which uses audio from part one) all capture instances of audience applause during commonwealth games events, and at a local rock gig which I attended during the same period. Using editing techniques of looping, time-stretching and fading in / out, these 'applause' recordings are combined in order to immerse the listener in ongoing applause, which shifts gradually from being perceptively close to increasingly distant. As with part one, I made recordings of my editing and monitoring activity and my working environment, and these are folded into the emerging edit. 'Eternal Gratitude' functions as a kind of extended coda to part one, an exaggerated, stretched-out period of applause in response to part one's re-presentation of the closing concert. 'Eternal Gratitude' has clear links with Maria Chavez's piece 'The Rain of Applause' (Chavez, 2014) in which the composer presented multiple recordings of audience applause as a surround sound installation. However, while Chavez's 24-hour installation invites the coming and going of listeners, proposing the question 'can a sound piece still exist when one leaves the room?', 'Eternal Gratitude', by contrast deliberately subjects an audience to listening to the prolonged sounds of applause, while they are seated and relatively motionless. The experience of being immersed/trapped within ongoing applause while not contributing to it is intentionally alienating, and raises the problem of how to respond to the piece when it eventually finishes. Given that so much applause has already been heard, audience members can be forgiven for hesitating to produce any more.

There are some resonances between 'The Closing Ceremony' and the approaches and work of a range of field-recordists/composers including Hildegard Westerkamp, Cathy Lane, Christopher DeLaurenti and Marc Baron. Each of these artists uses documentary field-recordings in a different way to reflect on aspects of and relationships between environment, auditory experience, recordist, and listener. In Westerkamp's well-known piece *Kits Beach Soundwalk* (Westerkamp, 1989), field recordings are combined with the composer's spoken reflections on the environmental sounds heard and recorded. As the piece progresses we can hear Westerkamp allude to her own compositional interventions in the sound material as they unfold in the edit. The constructed and idealised nature of the composed, virtual sound environment is made explicit. Cathy Lane's 'On the Machair' (Lane,

2007) similarly combines field recordings and speech, this time in the form of monologues and on-site interviews, to construct a layered aural and oral history of an area of the Outer Hebrides. In this explicitly ethnographic piece the composer emerges frequently in a researcher's role, her voice situated within and relating to the researched field. In various works by phonographer and sound activist Christopher DeLaurenti we hear the field recordist's presence inscribed in the work, again often through their voice. In the various cycles of DeLaurenti's 'protest symphonies', which include the piece 'Live at Occupy' (DeLaurenti, 2012), we hear the recordist/composer's voice captured during the activity of recording, at times referring to their recording activities, at others to their general situation and to other people. In contrast to Westerkamp's reflections on 'Kits Beach Soundwalk', the voice of DeLaurenti can be heard fleetingly in a series of recordings which capture his activities and movements in a variety of situations and social settings. These recordings document the recordist's shifting role and perspective from within large groups, tracking group discussions and journeys as DeLaurenti's listening role oscillates between that of documentarian to active participant in collective organising. While making specific allusions to his role as recordist through the inclusion of spoken references and through the recorded sounds of handling microphones, operating equipment etc., pieces such as 'Live at Occupy' foreground DeLaurenti's changing agency in a variety of situations - the recordist is embedded within the changing sonic and social environment around them. The episodic and often disjointed forms of these pieces can be understood as analogous to the perpetually shifting subject-positions of a person engaged in the sense-making processes common to everyday (auditory) perception and experience. As the press release for another 'protest symphony' piece - Wallingford Foodbank - has it, 'DeLaurenti listens by way of a subjectivity composed on behalf of the microphone.' (Public Record, 2008). Finally Marc Baron's recent release 'Hidden Tapes' (Baron, 2014) combines abstract analogue textures and drones with field recordings which frequently allude to the recording and playback activities of the recordist. On the track '1991-2005' we hear abstract electroacoustic textures punctuated by what sounds like a recording device being operated, before an abrupt change of sound environment followed by the sound of a cassette tape being ejected and handled. This sudden change in soundscape followed by the cassette handling noise has the effect of suggesting that it is the listener who has ejected and is now handling the tape - the effect is one of 'waking' from the 'virtual' and into the auditory 'real'. Composer and listener roles are switched while the materiality and tactility of the recording and playback media is foregrounded, with the effect of bringing the recordist's physical actions together with the listener's cognitive / interpretative process. The subject-position of the composer is caused to momentarily merge with that of the listener.

The portfolio pieces ‘postface’, ‘In Posterface: 1’, and ‘Somewhere in’, can all be understood as both experimental forms of record release, and as site-specific installations. The decision to present ‘The Closing Ceremony’ in 5.1 audio was a departure from some of the release strategies and methods which were developed through these previous portfolio pieces. At this stage in the research project I decided I wanted to (temporarily) put the visual and release aspects of the enquiry to one side in order to focus specifically on matters of sound and space. ‘The Closing Ceremony’ can be understood as a compositional study in this regard. However, there are some resonances between the reflexive release methods of the previous pieces and the mode of presentation of ‘The Closing Ceremony’, as well as there being some conceptual consistency in choosing the 5.1 surround format for this particular recording project and this audio material. The piece constitutes an attempt to engage with and deal with a particular instance of immersive, oppressive sound. Given that the Commonwealth Games closing concert was dominant and omnipresent across areas of Glasgow City while it took place, the surround format chosen was a way of re-presenting and critiquing this degree of aural dominance. The notion of enforced spectatorship was prevalent throughout the Commonwealth Games and the marketing campaign which accompanied them, and both the surround format, and the electroacoustic concert situation serve as means for achieving a comparable type of (auditory) subjection. The piece is ultimately ‘about’ concerts and concert audiences and the 5.1 format was appropriate and useful for creating the conditions through which to place an audience (of more than one person) in a ‘concert within a concert’. While I may use stereo reductions of this piece as compositional material for a future piece, the work presented here is specifically intended for the immersive 5.1. format and concert situation, despite the seeming break from more accessible and autonomous forms of presentation.

## V: Born On (Walking Version)

I used to bite my tongue and hold my breath  
 drown  
 a sea of people  
 in folding words  
 I was circling  
 I was calling them to me  
 they were the me  
 I was born on  
 the circuit  
 I was born on...

(lyrics from 'Born On (Walking Version)')

The next piece, 'Born On (Walking Version)' combines songwriting and music production with everyday listening and recording to explore relations between recorded song, self-narrative, and personal listening practices. The piece documents repeated train commutes as I travel to work each day, listening on headphones to a track I had written and produced specifically for the piece. Making 'Born On (Walking Version)' was a consciously layered and at times disorientating process, where music production and field-recording practices are combined and interwoven, as each one is used to explore aspects of the other. The resulting work uses field recording to capture and explore everyday personal listening, and to reframe an already reflexive self-narrative - a recorded song. The piece is intended to be encountered on headphones while listening 'on the move', and was released (under the group artist name 'In Posterface') as a series of podcasts and social media shares over the course of a week in November 2015.

In the interests of clarity, I will discuss each stage of the process of making Born On (Walking Version) in turn, starting with the writing and producing of a song/track, called 'Born On'.

I wrote and produced the track 'Born On', which was performed by the musicians who contributed to 'In Posterface: 1', and recorded by Paul Gallagher in Glasgow, in January 2014. My idea for the song was to map 'original' musical and lyrical ideas on to the instrumentation and arrangement ideas of an existing and well-known contemporary pop song, as a way of practising record production as reflexive self-narrativisation. 'Born On' borrows extensively from the arrangement and production ideas of the single 'Roar' by Katy Perry (Perry, 2013), which reached number one in

the UK and USA singles charts and won a Grammy Award for 'Song of the Year' in 2013, the year of its release.

'Roar' is a mid-paced pop track, which uses rock and pop instrumentation and arrangement tropes as accompaniment for a rousing and motivational first-person identity-narrative. 'Roar' quotes directly from another affirmative first-person narrative - the track 'Eye of the Tiger' - as well as referencing well-known quotations and clichés which convey self-affirmation and determination ('I float like a butterfly, sting like a bee' etc.). As a reflexive songwriting strategy, I devised my own relatively generic chord structure, lyric and vocal line, and combined these with arrangement and instrumentation ideas consciously borrowed from 'Roar', in order to generate a new song, and to extend and critique the production aesthetic and identity-narrative of 'Roar'. The repeating verse chord structure G-C-Em-D was chosen as a progression which I found to be generic, familiar and quite satisfying to play and hear. The pacing of the song (128 bpm) along with repeated 4/4 ('chug-chug-chug-chug') acoustic guitar chords is reminiscent of some of the indie-rock songs which I enjoyed in my early teens when I started to become interested in music and records. In this way, the song can be understood to combine some of the tropes of the indie music of my youth (Pixies, Nirvana) with the content and structures of a present-day pop song. Alternative lyrics were generated by editing together direct lyric quotes from 'Roar' and text-based reflections on listening and selfhood. Through a cut-up approach to the editing together of the texts, the lyrics emerge as repetitive and cyclical, in ways which compound the metaphor of being 'born on': '...growth one me / you did this / feedback / and untitled vine toilet place / the list / I was born on / the circuit / I was born on...'

'Born On' borrows its song structure and many instrumentation and arrangement ideas from the verses and choruses of 'Roar', as well as aspects of the arrangement's dramatic development during the course of the track, and arrangement and instrumentation ideas from the dense, climactic, final chorus. The arrangement and production of lead and backing vocals on 'Born On' is also reminiscent of 'Roar', however the lead vocal(s) on 'Born On' song is altered through being obviously pitched down, and through aspects of the spatial arrangement and mix. The new song ('Born On') functions as a kind of reflexive extension of the Katy Perry song, exaggerating the self-narrative already existent in the original.

As a second stage of making 'Born On (Walking Version)', I used multiple portable sound recorders simultaneously to document my auditory experience and environment while listening to the track 'Born On' on headphones repeatedly during daily train commutes to and from work, over the course of a month. A digital stereo recorder was carried and used to record the sound of my environment as I travelled, while my smartphone, recording in my pocket, captured environmental sounds and the sound of my body's movements. Additionally, a pair of 'in-ear' binaural microphones was used with a second stereo recorder, enabling further detailed documentation of my auditory experience during the journeys on the train and while walking to and from the station. Crucially, these in-ear microphones enabled the recording of my listening to 'Born On' on headphones while I travelled, as the recorded music was transmitted through a pair of headphones which were placed over my ears and thus over the in-ear binaural microphones. The binaural recordings capture the sound of my headphone listening as one of the partial, not total, masking of the wider auditory environment by the headphones and music. By combining all of the recordings made simultaneously during my repeated commutes, I was able to compare them and listen back in detail to relationships between the sound of my environment, the song I was listening to, and my body's movements through space.

By synchronising all of these recordings of the same event in a software sequencer, and adding the stereo master of 'Born On' (in addition to version of it which was recorded as it played through the headphones and into the in-ear microphones), I was able to achieve complete separation between diverse sonic representations of several aspects of the auditory experience of personal listening while commuting - the aural wider environment, the song as it sounds while listening on headphones with the wider environment bleeding in, the recorded song in isolation, and the sound of my body moving through space. The edit of this piece uses a similar technique to the muting/redacting practised in previous pieces, but in this instance all channels are grouped together, and the muting is used to introduce a series of abrupt 'drop-outs' - muting all audio so that no audio can be heard playing back at all. These dropouts had the effect of splitting the remaining recorded content into short sections, which were then rearranged so that the chronology and linear coherence of the journeys is scrambled. The final edit emerges as a series of out-of-sequence snapshots of my daily commutes, and as a fragmentary, non-linear representation of my listening as I negotiate relationships between real and virtual auditory spaces.

'Born On (Walking Version)' is intended to be encountered on headphones while walking, with the listener's experience of the piece designed to overlay that of their immediate auditory environment.



In this way, the piece works as a kind of ‘second order’ listening experience. The listener’s auditory experience is masked by a representation of mine. The piece was presented as a series of daily ‘shares’ from the social media accounts of the Glasgow online label Winning Sperm Party, timed with commuter travel (9-10pm, 4-5pm) from Monday to Friday during one week in November 2015. Each share of the audio was accompanied with instructions for listening and production credits:

SHOCK HORROR FUCKING POPPIN HELL IN POSTERFACE HAVE RELEASED BORN ON (WALKING VERSION) WHICH IS FOR LISTENING TO ON HEADPHONES WHEN YOU ARE ON THE TRAIN INTO CENTRAL OR OTHERWISE WALKING OUTSIDE DREAMING OF THE END OF THE BEGINNING OR SOMETHING LIKE THAT. THIS IS A WALKING VERSION OF BORN ON COMPLETE WITH DROPOUTS MADE BY AND PLAYED BY I T C & A (RW) VISUAL BY JR MCNEILL MIC HELP BY GAL GROVER MORAL SUPPORT FROM ROB STICKS!!!

There are some parallels here with Viv Corringham’s ‘Shadow-walks’ (Corringham, 2012), in which the composer walks with a single participant on a route which is significant to them, recording the journey as they go. Corringham then retraces the journey herself, singing and recording as she travels, before combining the recordings to produce an audio piece and present it in the original space. This process can be understood as an attempt to explore space and place through the doubling and blurring of repeated journeys through it - the composer places herself in the shoes of another, before placing the listener in hers. Similarly ‘Born On’, like ‘Somewhere in’, is intended to place the listener ‘in the shoes’ of a previous listener as they walk, and to conflate listening positions and perspectives. The ‘dropouts’ frequently force the listener’s attention back onto their immediate auditory environment, before quickly interrupting it with more representations of my commuter listening. Listening to the piece is intended to be a disorientating process, which plays with listening as an activity of self-locating. ‘Self’ is both elusive *and* overdetermined - in the exaggerated, circular self-narrative of the track, and in its scrambled re-presentation through the documented commuter listening.

VI: *\_omiting in the changing room*

This is all I want from you  
yours to give and mine to lose...

(Lyrics from *All I Want* (Moses, 2015))

*'\_omiting in the changing room'* is the final piece of this portfolio, and takes the form of a stereo recording and public installation. In a similar way to *'Born On (Walking Version)'*, the piece uses multiple portable recording devices to document the recordist's activity while 'on the move' through an urban environment. In this instance the sound recorders are used to document the auditory environment of a men's clothing shop, and the sound of my activity in this space, which includes forcing a pair of small microphones down my throat while they are recording. These multiple recordings are mixed together, and book-ended by short sections of recorded music, included at the start and end of the piece. This piece was 'released' by leaving removable vinyl stickers on mirrors in the changing rooms of a number of men's clothes shops where I occasionally buy clothes. The artwork on each sticker includes the name of the piece and a QR code which links to the audio and which can be scanned using a smartphone.

Music sociologist Tia DeNora, referencing Jonathan Sterne, writes of music as a 'sonic "framing" device, one that helps mall management to define and differentiate and link together mall spaces through manipulations of the auditory environment' (2000: p. 133). According to DeNora, music is also 'one of a range of devices by which forms of affective agency can be understood to be placed on offer to shoppers who not only try on and try out goods, , but who use the retail space to try on and try out new subject-positions, identities and stances' (2000: p. 133). The suggestion here is that music programming in retail environments often has the dual function of connecting different retail spaces together, and providing cultural information and identity-narratives for consumers who are actively shopping for changes to their self-image.

Reflecting on my own experiences, clothes shops seem to be particularly obvious examples of retail spaces where music programming is used to shape consumer identity and behaviour. As places where people come to make changes to their appearance and self-image, the use of recorded music serves to reinforce particular identities and demographics. When I go shopping for clothes I often

experience feelings of guilt and indecision, as well as motivation and anticipation. I am both participating in, and resisting, the production of my consumer identity. The feelings of conflict I experience in such spaces often lead to me critically engaging with the aesthetics of the environment, in a kind of performed distancing of 'self' from the cultural information intended to aid my identification with the space and its function. I find myself negatively judging the music and identity-narratives which permeate the space, rounding on the 'me in the music' which is transmitted via the shop's soundtrack. Through my critical listening, I try to 'spit myself out' (Kristeva, 1982: p. 3).

In making the final portfolio piece I wanted to explore ways of capturing the conflicted relationship between auditory experience, music reception, and (my) self-identity that I regularly experience in such spaces. As a starting point I made numerous field recordings inside men's clothes shops in Glasgow's city centre, using two stereo recorders and a smartphone, and reviewed the results. I found that the contents of these recordings were generally quite similar from one to the next, and that they struck me as rather uneventful and unexciting. None of them captured or reminded me of the conflict I had experienced while in those spaces. A few days after making these recordings, a conversation with a friend about hydrophones led to his suggestion that I could perhaps swallow a microphone while it was recording, as an experiment. This was initially suggested as a joke, but the idea stuck with me as it has some resonance with other recording strategies I had developed previously, e.g. using smartphones as contact microphones to capture body movement, and using in-ear microphones to capture the sound of headphone listening. I wondered what the result of such a recording might be - whether swallowing the mikes would screen out the auditory environment of the shop completely in the recordings they generated.

Excited by this idea, I decided to go back to the various clothes shops and make some recordings, and while doing so I would try to ingest a pair of small microphones while in the privacy of each changing room. I made a small number of recordings of my journeys through three different clothes shops all on the same high street, all of which I have bought clothes from in the past. For this I used two portable digital stereo recorders, and a mobile phone. Into one of the portable stereo recorders was plugged a pair of in-ear microphones, which, while in a changing cubicle in each shop, I placed inside a condom and attempted to ingest. I found the results surprising and revealing.

Firstly, the experience of doing this was both alienating and exhilarating. Rather than being able to ingest the microphones completely, I had to repeatedly try to push them down my throat as my gagging reflex would engage and reject them. The process of trying to force them down, against my gagging reflex, was sensorially overwhelming, and I found that I was momentarily unable to hear my environment as my stomach's contractions caused my body to convulse. This relatively short process (lasting between ten and twenty seconds each time) also caused a rush of adrenaline, before a feeling of acute self-consciousness as I became reorientated with my surroundings. On leaving the changing room each time I felt changed by the process and experience - alienated, drained, exhilarated, and with heightened self-awareness.

On listening back to the recordings I realised that each sound recorder generated quite a different representation of the auditory environment. The first stereo pair captures the spatial dimensions and ambience of the shop quite well, situating the shop's music soundtrack within a large, open area. The (mono) smartphone recordings captured the close sounds of my movements, including my shoes as I walk, the opening of doors, and my fumbling with microphones and coat hangers. The pair which I ingest captures agitated movement as the two microphones are handled before being pushed down my throat, then pulled out, removed from inside the condom, and finally held in my hand as I leave the shop, functioning as a stereo pair which records my exit.

As with previous pieces, the different recording devices and positions captured the same situation from diverse perspectives, which could each be combined and juxtaposed in an edit. On reviewing the material I quickly focused on one set of recordings, documenting one journey through a single retail environment and including one microphone-vomiting action. In this instance, the whole journey/process is soundtracked by a single pop song as it reverberates around the shop and frames my visit. The pop track's looped beats and accompaniment, and the vocal performance, share a sense of muted urgency which struck me as an appropriately ominous soundtrack for my abject activity. The lyrics to the song seem to chime with the identity-conflict explored through the recording process, suggesting a rejection, perhaps a desire to break free from a controlling influence.

This is all I want from you,  
Yours to give and mine to lose,  
This is all I want from you...  
Time to change and time to choose,

This is all I want from you... (Moses, 2015)

My intention with the edit was to let the recording process speak - the journey through the shop begins and ends as each recorder is turned on, and later, off. I decided to line-up and mix the recordings together, with each recording contributing a different perspective on the space and activity. The stereo recorder and smartphone are edited out during the section when the other microphones are ingested, leaving the recordings of the ingested microphones to present the sound of the shop ambience and music being (momentarily) closed out by my body. For a moment, as the act of vomiting effectively closes my ears, it also closes the 'ears' of the microphones as my body is mobilised in physical rejection. As an alternative to the 'subject-positions, identities and stances' which might be provided by the shop and its soundtrack, this brief 'omitting' of hearing and the heard effects a different shift of self, flooding the body with adrenaline and forcing it into spasm.

To these field recordings I added two short sections of recorded music at the start and end of the piece. The first loud blast/cacophony alerts the listener to the piece and draws them in to the content before they are dropped into the (quieter) field recordings which follow. The drum loop that can heard at the close is so incongruously quiet that the listener's attention is forced back out of the recorded environment of the piece, and back into the 'real' auditory environment in which they are listening. While the audio track produced here does not necessarily directly present or communicate the action which it documents in a way which is understandable to the listener (specifically the microphone-vomiting), I think it does draw the listener into an engagement with and interrogation of the sound of a particular type of public/commercial space, to the retail soundtrack, and to the recordist's position within. As with much of this portfolio, and with autoethnographic practice in general, this work oscillates between documentary and aesthetic/evocative priorities, and so it is not always necessary for the listener grasp the recording situation and activity entirely in order to 'read' the piece. As well as being an audio document of my action as a recordist/consumer, the audio serves to engage the listener more generally with a range of listening perspectives in relation to recorded music and retail spaces, and to provide some visceral, gestural shocks along the way.

The audio for 'omitting in the changing room' was made available by uploading the track to an anonymous soundcloud account, and using the link for this to generate a mobile-readable QR code. This was printed on a series of removable stickers along with the title of the piece, and these were

placed on the mirrors of men's clothing shops, including the shops in which the recordings were made. I am not aware of whether the people who found them practised their 'omitting' by following the links and listening to the track, or simply by removing the sticker. When I went back to each site a few days later to check, they had all gone.

## Ends

Writing this commentary has been (is) the active process of recalling and recording key methods through which the portfolio was generated. I remain aware of, and where possible vigilant to, the pitfalls of writing a retrospective account of a practice which has been pursuing disordering and disintegrative strategies, and which has sought to develop fragmentary, plural and non-linear narrative forms through which to explore listening relations. However, while writing and thinking, I have been able to identify some recurring tendencies and developing logics at work across the portfolio, which I think can be articulated and understood as generalisable methods and insights, linked to particular outcomes. Among these I would include the following:

Combining field recording, soundscape composition and music production methods can enable relations between recorded songs and their reception to be presented and critiqued through a unified practice (e.g. 'Somewhere in', 'Born On', 'omiting in the changing room').

Conceiving types of documentary sound recording as indexes of subject-position has led to the development of unusual miking strategies in the pieces. By deploying microphones as extensions of listening capacity and/or bodily activity, they can be used to bring about recordings and combinations of recordings which document subjective experiences in unique ways (e.g. 'The Closing Ceremony', 'Born On', 'omiting in the changing room').

The practice of extensive and layered self-documentation through sound recording and editing can precipitate a de-centring of relations between recordist/composer and listener. This is demonstrated in each of the portfolio pieces. Additionally, the release and installation/performance strategies of each piece serve to further conflate recording and listening roles, problematising each work's reception.

Exploring aspects of music reception conventions - perhaps most notably, record release formats - has embedded the inquiry within everyday music habits and cultures, and within a broader range of art practices. This aspect of the research has been pursued not merely as promotional strategy, but as intervention into such everyday contexts, which invites critical engagement with the work in the wider context of everyday music reception.

Throughout this project I been developing creative strategies to reflect on and interrogate my auditory experiences. Rather than following a solipsistic interest in the detail of my own life, this has been a conscious strategy in exploring a contemporary, consumer-capitalist culture which 'gives increasing prominence and encouragement to narcissistic traits' (Lasch, 1979: p. xvii). I have been using listening and composing to graph a culture which has 'self' at the centre of it. This has been an at times complicated, confusing, tangled, disorientating activity. Perhaps the biggest challenge has been to develop an increasing degree of rigour (methodological, technical, theoretical) while still allowing the creative practice to be layered, emotional and/or neurotic.

I have found the relationship between this work and autoethnographic method to be immensely useful and richly rewarding, and the writing of many autoethnographers has encouraged me to develop what I felt were some of the most interesting, unusual and illuminating aspects of the work I was making. These include pursuing extremes of self-reference, attending to the situational aspects of the work, exploring narrative forms, and working across creative disciplines and media. As the project has progressed, I have come to think of it as *sonic autoethnography*, that is, as embodied research which uses autoethnographic methods to engage in the study of the researcher's personal auditory culture, while reflexively engaging with problems around their own (postmodern) subjectivity, and position as both author and audience. This has been my way of exploring, thinking about, embodying, extending, critiquing, living my everyday auditory experience, and attempting to circulate the outcomes in ways which leave the enquiry open for subsequent listeners. As someone who has always been obsessed with recorded music, this has become my way of making records.



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