

Towards a Psychedelic Topography of Goth Music

Claire Rebecca BANNISTER

Kingston School of Art

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Abstract

It is thought – by musicians, listeners and music theorists alike – that music has the ability to mimic, mirror or reproduce the effects of psychedelic drugs: a concept of immense significance considering the expansive corpus of literature attesting to the therapeutic value of such drugs. This thesis attends to how music can be meaningfully compared to the effects of drugs like mescaline, psilocybin and LSD.

The musicological theories explaining the relationship between the effects of such drugs and music are based almost entirely on prototypes: the complexity of a psychedelic pharmacopeia reduced to LSD, LSD's extraordinary array of effects reduced to three, and the three effects theorised, for the most part, in relation to a particular style of rock that crystallised around San Francisco in the 1960s. This style – acid rock – has been most extensively analysed in relation to the question of how music can be psychedelic, resulting in a list of sounds understood to recreate the effects of such drugs for the listener.

In this thesis I demonstrate the prevalence of these same sounds in Goth, a diverse collection of popular music styles associated not with drugs but rather the Gothic. By demonstrating how the various sub-styles of Goth – which have many analogues in the wider popular music repertoire – are rich in precisely the same sounds understood to reproduce the effects of LSD, I suggest two broad conclusions: either Goth(ic) music is psychedelic, or acid rock is not because the theories that explain the ways it reproduces the effects of such drugs cannot be held to account.

I propose both conclusions are true. Goth is psychedelic by the current academic model, but this model is problematic; in particular its reliance on prototypes has had the unfortunate side-effect of imposing a culturally biased understanding of psychedelic drug experiences upon the repertoire to which the term might refer. Whilst I demonstrate how music analysts might map out a more stylistically inclusive definition of psychedelia in a manner that is mindful of the prototypes involved, I suggest the highest potential for understanding how music is able to reproduce the effects of such drugs lies in a pharmacological concept known as set and setting.

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To Ann and Alexander Shulgin

Introduction: Enter the Labyrinth

This thesis concerns the question of what it means to describe music as psychedelic. As an adjective, the term denotes something “of or causing extreme changes in the conscious mind, as hallucinations, [and] intensification of awareness and sensory perception” [Stafford 2003:VIII]. As a noun it refers to a group of chemicals – some naturally occurring, others synthetic – that reliably cause such extreme changes of consciousness in human subjects, thus “of or associated with psychedelic drugs; specif., simulating the auditory or visual effects of the psychedelic state” [*ibid.*]. Whilst an extensive corpus of literature attests to the therapeutic value of the psychedelics,¹ this thesis attends to how music can be meaningfully compared to the effects of such drugs.

I address this question in relation to the music of the Goth scene, which is to say in relation to a diverse collection of popular music styles associated not with psychedelics but rather with the Gothic (a term pertaining to literature, film and architecture in addition to music and sub-culture). I select a repertoire not typically associated with psychedelic drugs because it is rich in precisely the same sounds underpinning the musicological theories that explain why acid rock of the 1960s is psychedelic. These theories argue that acid rock is psychedelic not only because of its association with the hippie counter-culture and its liberal attitudes towards drug use, but because the music itself is capable of reflecting or reproducing the effects of such drugs. More specifically, they suggest that acid rock mirrors the effects of LSD.

That acid rock and Goth share the same sounds thought to mimic the effects of LSD suggests two broad conclusions: either Goth(ic) music is psychedelic, or acid rock is not because the musicological theories explaining the ways in which it reflects the effects of such drugs cannot be held accountable. This thesis explores the space between these conclusions by examining more closely the philosophy underpinning musicology’s understanding of the relationship between music and psychedelic drugs.

¹ Applications include the treatment of post-traumatic stress disorder, obsessive-compulsive disorder, major depressive disorder and end-of-life psychological distress. For a useful summary see Cahart-Harris, Robin L. and Guy M. Goodwin (2017). ‘The Therapeutic Potential of Psychedelic Drugs: Past, Present and Future’. *Neuropsychopharmacology* (42), pp. 2105–13.

The psychedelics assume a curious position within academic research. Alexander Shulgin sums up effectively the complexity of this position in reference to a naturally-occurring psychedelic compound found throughout nature.

There is a drug (chemistry) and a plant (botany) that produces an effect (pharmacology) in some people out there (anthropology) that might have some healing use (medicine) or some spiritual impact (theology).

Alexander Shulgin [2013:247]

The debate in academia begins with how such chemicals should be named, continues with whether or not specific examples belong to the category once properly defined, and expands into territories of political ideology, religious doctrine and metaphysical philosophy. As Lester Grinspoon and James Bakalar point out, such problems have dramatic impact on public attitudes towards psychedelic chemicals, and the legal consequences faced by their users: “an unsatisfactory situation caused partly by our limited scientific understanding and partly by the angry passions that tend to fill an intellectual void when the issue is drugs” [1997:5].

Three general concepts provide context for what is to follow. Firstly, psychedelic chemicals are endogenous to the human body. Whether one chooses to think of DMT – the compound Shulgin references above – as a dangerous drug or the key to spiritual enlightenment, psychedelic chemicals are found throughout nature, and notably within the human brain. Secondly, a person can have a psychedelic experience without taking a psychedelic drug: such endogenous psychedelics as DMT are theorised to play a role in these. Indeed the classification of the chemicals under discussion is compounded precisely because many human behaviours from meditation, fasting and dreaming to ecstatic dance can result in remarkably similar experiences that have nothing to do with taking drugs. Thirdly, psychedelic experiences are unpredictable. There is no universal, replicable psychedelic experience but rather a plethora of phenomenal possibilities that are largely dependent on the so-called set and setting of the subject: variables peculiar to the individual and to the cultural context of drug use, which in turn informs the degree to which such experiences are compared to those of a mystical or religious variety.

The implications are seemingly that it is not unreasonable to suggest music can reproduce the effects of such drugs. If a person can have a psychedelic experience independent of drug use, and if psychedelic experiences are largely determined and

interpreted according to the peculiarities of specific cultures, then if we understand the musical conventions of those cultures, we should be able to explain how particular musical gestures evoke, mimic or even cause such experiences, assuming we pay enough attention to the set and setting of the listener. Trance, for example, is a learned behaviour expressed differently across cultures; it involves knowing how people behave when in trance, the types of situations in which trance is possible, and beliefs concerning how trance is broken. In cultures for which music plays a role in trance, it is also an altered state of consciousness inseparable from the musical conventions of those cultures.

On the other hand, theories describing how music encrypts, transmits or communicates meaning pertaining to altered states of consciousness are problematic, placing too much emphasis on the intention of the creator and too little on the listener or the fluidity of meaning. Whilst such theories have addressed whether psychedelic music is that created under the influence of drugs, that intended to be heard under the influence of drugs, or that attempting to produce altered states, they have largely presupposed intention of effect. Writing about the term in *Hit Parader* during the Summer of Love (1967), Miranda Ward claims:

'PSYCHEDELIC' is just another label thought up inadvertently by some unassuming little guy somewhere – but the hang-up is that it appears to be taking a great hold on people's imaginations! [...] [I]f any group or entertainment – yes, even BEETHOVEN'S 5TH (if that's your scene) – takes you up and out of yourself and lets you forget about your problems and dig it for a while... then for you it's psychedelic! [*sic.*]

Miranda Ward in Morrison [2000:57]

This thesis explores the ground between these two positions: between the idea on the one hand that given sufficient specificity we can accurately describe music as psychedelic in a meaningful way, and on the other the notion that the term is effectively meaningless in relation to the taxonomy of music because it is too dependent on the artistic interpretation of the listener.

I address this problem by identifying the various sounds understood to reflect the effects of LSD in the musicological literature, and by surveying Goth – a set of styles not typically associated with psychedelics – for the presence of these same sounds. I compare Goth, that is, to the repertoire that has been most extensively theorised in

relation to how music can be likened to the effects of such drugs; comprised mostly of bands associated with the hippie counter-culture and particularly the San Francisco scene, I refer to this repertoire as acid rock throughout.

I perform a comparison to Goth for several reasons. Firstly, Goth provides an expansive repertoire for analysis, comprised of a variety of sub-styles that have analogues in the wider popular music repertoire (for example hellektro as a type of electronic dance music or pagan folk as a type of folk). By addressing numerous sub-styles from gothic metal to darkwave I illustrate how the methodology I employ – based on a way of listening in which sounds associated with the effects of LSD are identified – can be applied to a wider musical repertoire. Secondly, the academic literature on Goth music and the Gothic style more generally have placed particular emphasis on its distortions of time and space, an effect of striking resonance with that of the psychedelics. By highlighting how literature and styles of music not associated with such drugs evoke similar effects, I suggest ways of attending to psychedelic experiences that are mindful of the fact that many types of human behaviour can bring about altered states of consciousness. Finally – and perhaps most importantly – the Gothic style demonstrates a remarkable sensitivity to set and setting: a concept of crucial significance to the psychedelics, and one that has largely been missing from the musicological literature concerning drugs.

In the first half of the chapter that follows I define the essential elements of the thesis – Goth music and psychedelia – and their relationship to one another. In the second half I introduce three conceptual affinities, which are reflected in the broader structure of the thesis as a whole. The first – altered perceptions (chapter 3) – concerns the distortions of time and space that are characteristic of psychedelic experiences and of the literary and sonic Gothic; the second – set and setting (chapter 4) – concerns ways of addressing this pharmacological concept in music, whilst the third – the uncanny (chapter 5) – concerns a quintessentially Gothic phenomenon I suggest is archetypal of psychedelic drug experiences. Chapter 2 addresses the philosophy that ties everything together, the philosophy concerning how music means. Here I attend to matters of perception and patterns of cultural convention, and suggest that music is not a product of semiotic encoding but rather informed by a continual process of perceptual learning that shapes the meanings listeners attribute to sounds both in and outside the world of recorded popular music.

Chapter 1

Hex, Drugs and Rock n' Roll

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Release the Bats

In this chapter I define two key components of the thesis – Goth music and psychedelia – and present three conceptual affinities. I begin by introducing the Goth scene and its relation to the Gothic. I define Goth as an auditory subculture, briefly describe its historical emergence, and outline its resonance with Gothic literature and contemporary media, highlighting its tendencies towards liminal spaces between conceptual oppositions, and a performativity that sees Goths embodying the ghosts that haunt such spaces. Exemplifying such tendencies within the ceremonial context of Goth club nights – events that are crafted to create deeply immersive, multi-sensory experiences – I suggest Goth presents a challenge to the concept of linear time and to the solidity of the living present. Drawing on the idea of Gothic spectrality, I underscore the notion that Goth music enables listeners to experience a time that is out of joint, and concurrently a being that may be infinite, haunted or beyond understanding. With emphasis on the diversity of sub-styles within the scene, from Batcave to Cybergoth, I summarise four fundamental consistencies across the spectrum as established in Isabella van Elferen's [2012] *Gothic Music: The Sounds of the Uncanny*. I argue that whilst a small number of studies attending to the sounds of Goth have highlighted the influence of glam, punk, reggae and dub, they have consistently left one of the most fundamental precursors unexplored: psychedelia.

As this lacuna most likely exists because psychedelia pertains to the realm of phenomena and cultural artefacts associated with psychedelic drugs – a controversial subject spanning numerous disciplines that have witnessed little overlap with musicology – I then establish a foundation for understanding this term. By outlining the etymology of the adjective psychedelic, along with several alternatives including entheogenic and hallucinogenic, I identify various ways of attending to its meaning whilst casting light upon some of the problems surrounding its scholarship. In particular I underline the notion that psychedelia is etymologically reliant on a mechanism of contrast in which conceptual oppositions are paradoxically united. Drawing parallels between the inversion of contemporary cultural conventions evidenced within both the Gothic imagination and the 1960s counter-culture with which psychedelic drugs are readily associated, I outline how the term psychedelic has been subverted by alternative adjectives seeking to establish a certain critical distance from popular culture. In so doing I argue that the distinctions between the varying terms are neither incontrovertible nor without political detachment from ideologies

regarding to whom the psychedelics should be accessible and to what ends. It is on this basis I suggest in order to fully appreciate the relationship between music and drugs the researcher must navigate not only the literature on the psychedelics but that of the entheogens and the hallucinogens. A few concise examples demonstrate how various aspects of the Goth scene and the Gothic resonate with each of the terms introduced.

A brief note concerning drug use within the Goth scene follows, in which I suggest that whilst psychedelic drugs, in and of themselves, are by no means essential components of Goth lifestyle, psychedelia as it pertains to their phenomena and impact on art, philosophy and culture, is. Here I clarify that this thesis attends to the sonic manifestation of psychedelia within the Goth scene and as such neither quantifies nor estimates the prevalence of actual drug use therein, particularly in light of the ethical challenges related to obtaining such data and indeed determining the accuracy of such data once obtained. Instead I demonstrate a range of attitudes towards the use of psychedelic drugs by both musicians and fans within the Goth scene.

I then establish three conceptual affinities between Goth and psychedelia – altered perceptions, set and setting, and the uncanny – which provide a framework for the musical analysis in the chapters that follow. The first conceptual affinity concerns altered perceptions of time and space, which are reported consistently across empirical accounts of psychedelic drug use, and which are afforded by the numerous ways the Goth scene and its music create time-spaces existing outside the mundane and the real. I describe these time-spaces using M. M. Bakhtin's [1981] concept of the chronotope, which refers to the fusion and interconnectedness of the temporal and spatial characteristics establishing the *mise-en-scène* upon which a narrative plays out. After describing how this literary concept has been extended into the musicological domain, I demonstrate how various chronotopic gestures in Goth resonate with various distortions of time and space reported by psychedelic drug subjects. I compare psychedelic phenomena ranging from mystical and transcendental to disturbing and dislocating with temporal and spatial effects in songs by VNV Nation, Specimen, Deine Lakaien, Nick Cave and the Bad Seeds, and Alien Sex Fiend. I also describe how both the music of the Goth scene and the counter-culture are performed within heterotopic spaces, which is to say alternative cultural spaces that contest, reflect and invert aspects of the cultures surrounding them. I suggest such performance practices are integral to the ways in which both types of music might be said to evoke, reflect or afford the effects of psychedelic drugs.

The second conceptual affinity – set and setting – refers to a collection of variables pertaining to a subject’s mind-set and their social/environmental setting, which account for the extraordinary diversity of experiences reported by subjects under the influence of psychedelic drugs. After tracing the development of this concept from the laboratories of psychedelics researchers to the study of American soldiers who had become addicted to heroin during the Vietnam War, I explain how it is more recently proving useful in other fields before arguing for its relevance to the Gothic and the music of the Goth scene. I outline how Gothic literature is characterised by an excess of adjectives describing location, atmosphere and mood (settings) intended to appeal to the reader’s senses, emotions and imagination (set). Further to the fact that Gothic demonstrates a remarkable sensitivity to the variables fundamental to shaping the nature of a psychedelic drug experience, Gothic settings, from crypts and catacombs to abandoned abbeys, are crafted to elicit particularly sensational and emotional responses, which I liken to the heightened sensations and amplified emotional intensity associated with the effects of such drugs. Some brief examples from 1919, *The Marionettes*, *Tones on Tail* and *Love is Colder than Death* suggest how such concepts are operative within Goth music.

Whilst many styles of music afford altered perceptions of time and space, and whilst set and setting is a concept useful in any musical analytical context, the third affinity is entirely specific to Goth, and arises as the zenith of both previous points addressed. It pertains to a particularly strange experiential time-space that has been historically related to the Gothic via the Freudian notion of the uncanny. Freud’s uncanny concerns the return of something once familiar to the psyche but estranged through repression; it is an intense emotional response characterised by a weirdly compelling eeriness. Although Freud’s 1919 essay ‘Das Unheimliche’ (‘The Uncanny’) and his ideas of repetition, return and the double have greatly influenced Gothic literary theory, his work draws upon a less celebrated study by Ernst Jentsch published in 1906: ‘Zur Psychologie des Unheimlichen’ (‘On the Psychology of the Uncanny’). As the Jentschian uncanny, which foregrounds epistemological uncertainty and calls into question the opposition between the known and the unknown, is particularly useful in elucidating the relationship between Goth and psychedelia, I outline the work of both theorists by comparing their readings of E. T. A. Hoffmann’s hallucinatory tale *Der Sandmann* (*The Sandman*), appearing as it does in both essays and representing the strongest point of cohesion between them.

The chapter concludes by a Freudian return to the four fundamental features common to the diverse sub-styles of Goth outlined at the beginning, to review with deeper insight how they constitute the psychedelic sounds of the uncanny. Highlighting themes of spectrality, haunting, excess and liturgy, I underline the distinctive sonic characteristics of Goth before the next chapter offers a methodological framework for how best to analyse the music considering the challenges and peculiarities related to the study of psychedelia identified herein.

Goth Music: a Descent into the Maelström

From the ashes of late 1970s punk arose a curious scene that syphoned impetus and muse from a deep crucible of influences and came to be christened Goth. Goth – as distinct from Gothic – refers to what is perhaps most conveniently dubbed a subculture, although the number and diversity of sub-styles constituting its socio-musical fabric betray the elusiveness of such a designation [Van Elferen 2012:128]. Furthermore the traditional subcultural theory developed by the Chicago School and Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies associates the term with a number of problematic assumptions [Hodkinson 2002:9–33]. Paul Hodkinson, who performs ethnographic research into the British Goth scene from the perspective of a “critical insider”, distinguishes Goth from more transient, ephemeral amalgams of music, style and people by identifying a number of features that “imply a level of cultural *substance*” [2002:6–7, italics original]. These include a relatively consistent adherence to a distinctive array of shared tastes; a strong sense of collective identity; a level of active engagement with the scene played out in attendance at Goth gigs, festivals and club nights; and a relative autonomy of the grouping evidenced by the prevalence of fanzines and independent media channels.

Although the Goth scene partakes in an array of extra-musical happenings, with its festival programmes featuring film screenings and literary readings in addition to live bands and DJ sets, Isabella van Elferen and Jeffrey Weinstock [2016] contend that music is both foundational to and constitutive of Goth social reality. Writing from the stance of “participant observers” and playing on the lyrics of The Sisters of Mercy, they contend that Goth is “first, last, and always what, borrowing from Blesser and Salter, one could refer to as an ‘auditory subculture’” [2]: a social group whose distinctiveness revolves precisely around sound.¹ Goth music, then, is an umbrella term under which a myriad of musical sub-styles prevalent within this scene – or auditory subculture – lurks.

¹ See Blesser, Barry and Linda-Ruth Salter (2007). *Spaces Speak, Are You Listening? Experiencing Audio Architecture*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, p. 7. The lyrical reference is to ‘First and Last and Always’ (1985) from the album of the same title. Merciful Release. MR 337L.

Whilst the Batcave nightclub, which existed for a fleeting period between 1982–1985 in Soho, London, represents both an early and iconic venue in which the scene began to crystallise, Goth is translocal. Casting its shadow across the globe, it finds diverse sonic expression amongst west coast deathrock in the United States, JGoth in Tokyo, and the music of numerous bands spanning Chile, Lebanon, Mexico, Slovakia, Russia and beyond, demonstrating various stylistic leanings from medieval folk to electronic body music. This is not to imply Goth’s numerous sub-styles can be simply differentiated by geographical location: the eclecticism within Germany’s *Schwarze Szene* alone reveals this as a falsity. A consistency across the spectrum, however, is the scene’s resonance with Gothic as pertaining both to style and to the literary tradition that emerged in the eighteenth century and which subsequently influenced a variety of contemporary media from cinema to video games.

An excerpt from the inner gatefold of the vinyl collection *Batcave: Young Limbs and Numb Hymns* (1983), which features a number of bands associated with the formative venue, exemplifies several notions central to Goth and its relation to Gothic.

Ignore the lures of a thousand neon fire-flies, fall deaf to the sighs of street corner sirens — come walk with me between heaven and hell. Here there is a club lost in its own feverish limbo, where sin becomes salvation and only the dark angels tread.

London Records. CAVE 1.

The invitation to tread between heaven and hell reveals an inclination towards the liminal spaces so prevalent within literary Gothic and its screen media brethren: indeed fifteen years after the release of *Young Limbs*, cyborg vocals intoning “not heaven or hell, just the land between” reveal the haunting persistence of such spaces in VNV Nation’s ‘Joy’ (1998). The inversion gesture – “sin becomes salvation” – betrays the transgressive impulse of Gothic rewriting,² whilst the direct address – “come walk with me” – hints at the dissolution within the Goth scene of the boundaries separating audience and performer.

² See Van Elferen, Isabella (ed.) (2007). *Nostalgia or Perversion? Gothic Rewriting from the Eighteenth Century until the Present Day*. Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing.

Goth is performative and embodied: whilst Gothic stories dwell in the liminal spaces between conceptual oppositions like life and death, Goths embody the ghosts that haunt such spaces [Van Elferen 2012:128–38]. The exhibitionism of Goth fashion reflects a performative self that is playful in its overt self-awareness. Van Elferen characterises the Goth club night as “a ceremonial enactment of Gothic heritage that seeks to playfully explore and transgress the limits of self, here and now” [136]. Such events offer “a world outside the day-to-day” [132]: a twilight zone constructed in an inherently multi-sensory way. As Goth DJs craft the sonic locus of the gathering, the smell of incense and taste of absynthe coalesce with a visual spectacle created by an elaborately decorated venue inhabited by individuals in flamboyant attire – often stylistically connoting the past (as in Victorian Goth), constructing a cyborg future (as in Cybergoth) or embodying some peculiar blend thereof (as in steampunk). A deep corporeal immersion in this temporally bizarre world is cultivated through scene-specific practices like wearing clothes and accessories of a particularly tactile nature (PVC, velvet, lace) that exert their own physicality (the sense of restriction felt in a bondage collar or corset). This tactile immersion is synergised by the prominent bass lines of Goth music that throb through the dance floor and resonate within the body. All the while this intensely physical and thoroughly embodied reality “curiously contrasts with the spectral themes that Goth music often relates” [135].

Goth dancing in such twilight zones betrays not only the embodied liminality of the scene but the endless pleasure it derives from playing with perceptions of time. Jeremy Gilbert and Ewan Pearson define dance as a “definitively liminal experience” on account of the way it radically problematises metaphysical distinctions between music as external (emanating from a sound source outside the body) and internal (felt from within) [1999:60]. They assert that physical and affective immersion in dance leads to the “ecstatic dissolution of the self on the dancefloor”: a phenomenon which, for many within dance music subcultures, characterises “a life-changing experience” enabling new ways of conceptualising and experiencing the body whilst representing “one of dance culture’s most concrete sites of political potential” [107]. Although such theory allows parallels to be drawn between Goth and other dancing subcultures such as those revolving around psytrance and acid house, Goth dancing retains its own peculiarities. As Van Elferen reviews a number of Goth dance moves, from stomping the ground in big black boots to twirling the arms delicately as though plucking spider’s webs from the air, she highlights a consistency across the varying styles.

Goths relatively move twice as slowly as disco, house, or trance dancers; rather than accentuating every beat in four-to-the-floor manner, their movements tend to emphasise only the first and third beats of every bar. The result is spectacular: seeing or being part of an entire dance floor heaving in slow-motion has the dislocating effect of a collective slowing down of time.

Isabella van Elferen [2012:35]

Gilbert and Pearson (along with others who have written on dance subcultures including Simon Reynolds) would describe the experience of such immersive communion as Lacanian *jouissance*: an extraordinary sensation derivative of the brief spell in which the human child is unable to differentiate between itself and its mother, a state before the acquisition of (gendered) identity, subjectivity and entry into the symbolic order of language and social relations. *Jouissance* is by definition “a regressive experience, related to a moment in the pre-history of the subject before gendered identity is assumed” [1999:66, italics original]. Although Goth is certainly a scene in which those seeking to eschew gender are readily accommodated, there is something distinctly spectral about Goth dancing, which points to the logic that haunting inexorably collapses linear time.

Gothic stories are haunted by revenants: spectres that return to destabilise the physical and psychological dimensions of the present. Citing Jacques Derrida, whose theory of hauntology resonates with Gothic’s critique of the self-sufficiency and solidity of the living present – via his own reference to Shakespeare (whose influence on early Gothic authors was profound) – Van Elferen states that “Gothic time is always out of joint” [2012:12].³ A quintessentially Gothic tale will witness tyrannies of the past (feudal forms of despotism, an ancient curse) suffocate hopes for the future (the freedom of the heroine trapped inside the mansion, the moral integrity of the church)

³ Derrida’s notion of hauntology is explored in his 1993 *Spectres de Marx: l’état de la dette, le travail du deuil et la nouvelle Internationale*. Paris: Galiléé. A near homophone of ontology in the original French language, it refers to a disjunction in which the presence and origin of being are disrupted by the figure of the ghost, representing as it does a paradox that is both temporal (the ghost is said to return even on its first appearance) and ontological (neither living nor dead). See Derrida, Jacques (2012). *Spectres of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning and the New International*, trans. Peggy Kamuf. New York: Routledge.

within a physically or psychologically claustrophobic space (the dungeon, the catacomb) that is deformed through intolerable stress. Chris Baldick asserts that Gothic is a middle-class tradition betraying an anxiety of historical reversion: a fear that the brutalities buried by the modern age “may prove to be yet undead” [2009:xxi]. Dynastic lineages, inherited power structures, and agencies of archaic authority exert their regimes of oppression within the Gothic tale, instigating a terrifying descent into degeneration that destabilises the ontology of the present as spectres of the past return to transform ordinary spaces like the home into sites of human decay.

In radically conflating pasts, presents and futures, the Gothic undermines both the stability of linear time and the solidity of being. This is reflected in Goth/ic music:

Gothic ghosts persistently confront their audiences with the discomfoting possibility that neither time nor being are more than a conjuration, as real or unreal as their own spectral selves. [...] As a gateway into Gothic spectrality, Gothic music enables listeners to experience a time that is off its hinges, and with that a being that might be haunted, infinite, or simply unknowable.

Isabella van Elferen [2012:10]

Gothic music as described by Van Elferen here refers to the function of music within the context of Gothic narration, as opposed to a distinctive compositional style. As such it denotes sounds like the disembodied voices of ghostly singing children described in Gothic literature, as well as the scores and soundtracks to Gothic films, television series and video games. Neither academia nor popular culture is burdened with an overabundance of literature on Gothic music; Van Elferen’s [2012] *Gothic Music: The Sounds of the Uncanny* represents the only attempt to demystify the subject in both Gothicist and musicological domains. As Goth shares the same four interconnected dimensions of Gothic music as defined in Van Elferen’s work, this brief introduction to the music of the Goth scene concludes with a summary of the features consistent across its varying sub-styles in accordance with the key observations laid out therein.

Van Elferen’s four defining features of Goth/ic music relate to spectrality, haunting, excess and liturgy. Firstly, Goth employs numerous devices to voice the ghosts of the Gothic. Octave doublings, echo effects and various dubbing techniques create audible *doppelgänger* of singing voices. Schizophonia – a concept coined by R. Murray Schafer [1969] to describe the estrangement of a sound from its source through technology – is an operative principle. Hellektro, a style of Goth deriving its name from a 2005 album

by Virtual Embrace, applies such aggressive distortion to the vocal tracks that they no longer appear to originate from a human but sound like ghosts in the machine: “Frankenstein’s monster is not only alive, it also sings” [Van Elferen 2012:169].

Secondly, many Goth sub-styles play on the collision of past, present and future in varying combinations. Latin texts, Celtic mythologies and thirteenth century songs are reimagined with the addition of synthesisers, Wagnerian strings and metal guitar walls. These temporal overlaps constitute a form of Gothic nostalgia: a romanticised longing for another time, and most often one that never existed (as in the case of electro-medieval folk) or one yet to come (as in Cybergoth), betraying the transgressive drive of Gothic rewriting. Intertextual references to other media, from the melancholic poems of Edgar Allan Poe to the kitschy horror of splatter films, serve as reminders that present reality is hauntologically destabilised by the obstinate presence of other times and spaces.⁴ A sonic liminal realm existing between periods, styles and locations, Goth creates an “irrevocably alienated here and now [...] made unhomey by the musical presence of a reality we do not know anymore as well as that of a reality we do not yet know” [170].

Thirdly, Goth music reveals a Gothic writing of excess that is sensational, zealous and melodramatic: an act of intensification that breathes palpable form into nebulous anxieties through the creation of demons. Dr Jekyll’s inability to reconcile his “certain impatient gaiety of disposition” with his desire to “wear a more than commonly grave countenance before the public” results in the birth of the irrepressibly vile monster Mr Hyde, revealing a Gothic obsession with the transgression of those limits demarcating the acceptable and appropriate in the world of social conventions [Stevenson 2006:77].⁵ In similar vein Goth music oozes excess: floods of reverberation, intense vibrato and resonance on vocals, heavy distortion that deforms its input signal beyond recognition. Van Elferen asserts that Goth lyrics “all want to shake up what is known and knowable – ‘This S*it Will Fcuk You Up’ (Combichrist, *Everybody Hates You*, 2005)” [sic.] [2012:170].

⁴ See footnote 3, p. 14.

⁵ Robert Louis Stevenson’s *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* was first published in 1886.

Finally, Goth music is liturgical: it carries the transgressive potential to induce a movement away from the mundane within the ritualistic context of the Goth club night. Via its lyrical exploration of varying types of transgression, its penchant for unusual timbres, and its numerous distortions of time and space to which I return, “Goth music unremittingly presents the listener with the possibility of alternative realities” [171]. Although the same could be said of many types of music, the ritualistic practices associated with Goth festivals such as Wave-Gotik-Treffen in Leipzig, or Goth club nights like Club AntiChrist in London, highlight the importance the scene places on this liturgical potential. Writing on such potential within the music of Nick Cave, Finn Daniels-Yeomans suggests that Gothic’s violation of boundaries “speaks to the desire to transcend the narrow strictures of rational thought and logical possibility”; once the categorical definitions through which we habitually make sense of the world are challenged, listeners are forced to engage with the irrational, the inconsistent, the unpredictable, and to “remain caught in an endless process of interpretation” [2015].⁶

Whilst a small number of studies addressing the sonic characteristics of Goth have identified a number of key influences – notably glam, punk, reggae and dub – they have consistently overlooked perhaps the most fundamental precursor of all: psychedelia.

⁶ See also Van Elferen, Isabella (2013). ‘Nick Cave and Gothic: Ghost Stories, Fucked Organs, Spectral Liturgy’ in John H. Baker (ed.) *The Art of Nick Cave: New Critical Essays*. Bristol: Intellect, pp. 175–88.

Psychedelia: Pertaining to Psychedelic Drugs

Psychedelia as a noun pertains to the realm of phenomena and cultural artefacts associated with psychedelic drugs. The study of psychedelic drugs is a complex and contentious endeavour spanning diverse fields – botany, chemistry, mycology, neuropharmacology and others – few of which have intersected extensively with musicological research. As such there remains a limited comprehension of psychedelia within the academic study of popular music; the fact that the psychedelic dimensions of Goth have been overlooked is symptomatic of this.

The etymology of the adjective psychedelic is instructive in throwing light on some of the issues surrounding the study of such drugs. The term originated in 1956 in correspondence between psychiatrist Humphry Osmond and writer Aldous Huxley, who had been exchanging neologisms to differentiate the effects of mind-altering drugs like mescaline and LSD from other inebriants like alcohol. In particular they wished to dispel the connotations of intoxication (poisoning), and to address a number of Osmond's concerns regarding the existing term – psychotomimetic – which means psychosis-mimicking. Although he conceded these compounds possessed great potential to study and understand psychoses, Osmond argued this was neither their only nor their most important quality [1957:418].

Huxley suggested an alternative term – phanerothyme – and presented it to the psychiatrist in a rhyming couplet revolving around conceptual oppositions: “[t]o make this trivial world sublime, take half a gramme of phanerothyme” [quoted in Stafford 2003:21].⁷ The neologism was crafted from the Greek φανερός (*phaneros*) meaning apparent, manifest or clear, and θύμος (*thymos*) denoting spirit, thus spirit-manifesting. Osmond however deemed the term phanerothyme too enchanting, remaining unconvinced every experience on such mind-altering drugs would be as beautiful as the word proposed to describe them. He responded to Huxley's suggestion with a rhyming couplet of his own, notably preserving the use of antitheses: “[t]o fathom hell or soar angelic, just take a pinch of psychedelic” [*ibid.*].

⁷ Although a number of sources quote, ‘to make this mundane world sublime, take half a gram of phanerothyme’, the inherent conceptual opposition remains.

The term psychedelic derives from the Greek ψυχή (*psyche*) meaning soul, mind or self, and δηλεῖν (*delein*) or δηλοῦν (*deloun*), which mean to make manifest, and to reveal or show respectively. Peter Stafford attests that by implying the actualisation of something ethereal, the resultant “soul-manifesting” – or “mind-revealing” [Grinspoon and Bakalar 1997:8] – thus “belongs to the category of meanings that make sense in terms of contrast” [2003:21].

The term psychedelic then pertains to an expansion or manifestation of consciousness, yet due to the paradoxical tension between the material and immaterial, remains deeply rooted in the notion of oppositions. Osmond’s complaint that the existing descriptor obscured the scientific and humanitarian potential afforded by such compounds indeed included a number of philosophical and ontological questions framed by such oppositions.

If mimicking mental illness were the main characteristic of these agents, ‘psychotomimetics’ would indeed be a suitable generic term. It is true that they do so,⁸ but they do much more. Why are we always preoccupied with the pathological, the negative? Is health only the lack of sickness? Is good merely the absence of evil? [...] Must we ape Freud’s gloomier moods that persuaded him that a happy man is a self-deceiver evading the heartache for which there is no anodyne? Is not a child infinitely potential rather than polymorphously perverse?

Humphry Osmond [1957:429]

The desire to challenge or invert cultural norms evident within this statement is a concept pertinent to both the counter-cultural movement of the 1960s (whose relationship with psychedelic drugs is well documented) but also, if less commonly acknowledged, to the Gothic. Horace Walpole for example offered what would become known as the first Gothic novel – *The Castle of Otranto* (1764) – as an attempt to resurrect the imaginative liberties that medieval romance had once enjoyed against the backdrop of contemporary fictional conventions that spurned the supernatural [Baldick 2009:xvi]. In so doing he challenged the restrictions demarcating the acceptable and tasteful within the literary domain.

⁸ This claim has been complicated by subsequent research indicating that psychedelic drugs stimulate brain activity “entirely different from that apparent with true psychoses” [Schultes 2001:12], and by the influential work of R. D. Laing, who contested the grounds on which mental illnesses and sanity are defined.

Osmond introduced his neologism to the New York Academy of Sciences in 1957, along with a string of rejected candidates that are useful for teasing out the meaning he was attempting to convey:

I have tried to find an appropriate name for the agents under discussion: a name that will include the concepts of enriching the mind and enlarging the vision. Some possibilities are: psychephoric, mind-moving; psychehormic, mind-rousing; and psycheplastic, mind-molding. Psychezymic, mind-fermenting, is indeed appropriate. Psycherhexic, mind bursting forth, though difficult, is memorable. Psychelytic, mind-releasing, is satisfactory. My choice, because it is clear, euphonious, and uncontaminated by other associations, is psychedelic, mind-manifesting. One of these terms should serve.

Humphry Osmond [1957:429]

Osmond's hope that one of these neologisms should suffice did not entirely prove to be the case, somewhat ironically due to the fact that by 1965 the term was in such popular use (with more accessible literature thriving alongside the scientific) that fierce debate began to emerge regarding to whom the psychedelics should be accessible and for what purpose [Masters and Houston 2000:50]. This situation reflects a perpetual challenge within the study of psychedelic drugs. Whilst there exist many hundreds of varieties – both natural and synthetic – and whilst their chemical structures remain diverse, their pharmacological mechanisms little understood, and their effects in human subjects varied, attempts to define and classify the psychedelics have largely delineated the hopes, fears and methodologies of their investigators [Grinspoon and Bakalar 1997:5].

The term psychedelic, “cheapened by overuse” [Stafford 1992:8], fell out of favour, and in 1979 another neologism emerged in a paper arguing that given the connotations of deviance associated with “the pop culture of the 1960s”, “it is incongruous to speak of a shaman's taking a ‘psychedelic’ drug” [Ruck *et al.* 1979:146]. An alternative term was proposed – entheogen – whose meaning is characterised by one of the paper's five authors, ethnomycologist R. Gordon Wasson, as “god generated within” [Wasson *et al.* 1986:30]. The term entheogen is a context-specific definition pertaining to the use of a mind-altering drug to induce spiritual or religious experiences, or states of ecstatic or shamanic possession. The connotations resonate with Huxley's original and rejected neologism phanerothyme, which is significant because it is important to recognise the terms entheogen and psychedelic refer to the same type of drug.

In a strict sense, only those vision-producing drugs that can be shown to have figured in shamanic or religious rites would be designated entheogens, but in a looser sense, the term could also be applied to other drugs, both natural and artificial, that induce alterations of consciousness similar to those documented for ritual ingestion of traditional entheogens.

Carl A. P. Ruck *et al.* [1979:146]

The generation of a new term pertaining to a particular purpose is thus indicative of a perceived need to shed the social stigma associated with hippie counter-culture. The distinction is not however infallible, and raises a plethora of moral and political questions regarding the presumed depravity of social deviance and the presumed triviality of popular culture: an issue that musicologists, grappling with concepts of so-called high and low art, will be all too aware of.⁹

Yet whilst the term entheogen was coined in response to the problematic popularity of the word psychedelic, a loaded and dubious term gained currency precisely because of its widespread use. Richard Schultes, Albert Hofmann and Christian Rätsch consider a broad range of descriptors in their encyclopaedia of entheogens before settling on the term hallucinogen because it is “easily understood and widely used” [2001:13]. Derived from the Latin *alucianari* (to wander mentally, to be absent-minded or to talk nonsensically) and the Greek *aluein* (to wander or to be distraught) the verb hallucinate carries several problematic implications [Blom 2010:219–20]. Historically it has denoted mental illness or a malfunctioning of the senses, and is still widely taken to mean “perceiving imaginary objects as real ones” [Grinspoon and Bakalar 1997:6] as well as “to be deceived or entertain false notions” [Ruck *et al.* 1979:145]. This immediately imposes a value-judgement upon the nature of the altered perceptions. Such connotations are inappropriate for example in relation to a psychedelic drug subject who reports seeing vivid or enhanced colours because such drugs alter photopupillary reflexes and dilate the pupils, allowing more light into the eye even under bright conditions. The term furthermore implies delirium, which is particularly problematic considering deliriant constitute a separate and more deleterious chemical class to the psychedelics. Whilst psychedelics are not physically toxic even in large

⁹ Sheila Whiteley highlights, in one of the only full-length musicological publications addressing psychedelia, how favoured criticisms of the counter-culture rendered it “frivolous” and “irresponsible” [McGrath in Whiteley 1992:64].

overdoses, some deliriant are highly poisonous; this remains an important issue in the cultural battles concerning psychedelics because the designation used in the drug laws of the United States – hallucinogen – encompasses both classes under one clumsy term. In spite of its flaws, the term has prevailed remarkably.

In briefly introducing some of the terms referencing the psychedelics (there are many others), I emphasise the need for a certain methodological flexibility discussed more rigorously in chapter 2. In order to engage with the issues integral to psychedelia, the researcher must look not only towards the literature on psychedelics, but to that of the entheogens and the hallucinogens; it is only through such an approach that the political complexities informing the categorisation of such drugs may be appreciated and consequently understood in relation to any cultural artefact.

The term psychotomimetic, for example, resonates most clearly with Gothic tales reliant on a schizophrenic splitting of the psyche, as in Robert Louis Stevenson's aforementioned novella and self-defined "Gothic gnome", *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* [Brantlinger and Boyle 1988:265]. A monstrous exploration of the consequences resulting from holding certain oppositional forces in tension within a single psyche – "those provinces of good and ill which divide and compound man's dual nature" [Stevenson 2006:77] – this text retains connections with the term psychedelic even in the absence of allusions to mental illness. Dr Jekyll's confessional abounds with concepts that appear perennially in the literature on psychedelics: he muses on "the trembling immateriality, the mistlike transience, of this seemingly so solid body in which we walk attired" [*sic.*]; he worries how the "polar twins" of civility and barbarity can co-exist in the "agonised womb of consciousness" [78]; he speaks of perception, the mystical, the transcendental.

The term entheogenic, on the other hand, rings more harmoniously within the context of what Van Elferen has termed the "non/religious occulture" of the Goth scene [2016:316]. Demystifying Goth's relationship with eclectic symbols and often perverted or inverted religious iconography and practices, Van Elferen highlights the importance of ritual to Goth festivals and club nights, describing its cultural work as an appropriation of the sanctity that grants access to the realm of a mysterious not-here and not-now. "Ceremony and ritual can open a door to this parallel world" [322], she argues, but music is required to enter it: hence Goth music's liturgical potential, "driven by the yearning for a dissolution of borders, including those between the ordinary world and the spiritual world" [316]. In this sense, the various elements of Goth music

associated with the effects of psychedelic drugs on which I elaborate throughout this thesis could be described as entheogenic, given the conditions of a rite or ritual have been granted.

Finally, acknowledging that the term hallucinogenic (however problematic) often acts as a synonym for psychedelic allows further connections with the Gothic to become apparent. The term hallucination first appeared in the English language in 1572 via the translated work of Swiss theologian Ludwig Lavater, who initially used it to connote:

Ghostes and spirites walking by nyght, and strange noyses, crackes, and sundry forwarnynges, whiche commonly happen before the death of menne, great slaughters and alterations of Kyngdomes. [*sic.*]

Ludwig Lavater in Blom [2010:219]

Hallucinations constitute an important narrative device in the Gothic tale. William Indick asserts the fundamental ingredient of a “typical Gothic horror story” is an environment enclosing some form of emotional stressor that triggers “an initial hallucination” [2012:170]. This in turn evokes paranoia, and as the stress and paranoia intensify, so do the hallucinations; the protagonist becomes a prisoner of their own wretched sensory experience, cornered into the realisation that the voices and visions they suffer are either supernatural or psychological in origin.

Having established an epistemological account of psychedelia, the next chapter outlines how the term psychedelic can best be understood in relation to music. Whilst I maintain that sounds associated with the effects of such drugs are in no way exclusive to Goth, I find a particularly strong resonance in this repertoire, which I suggest is betrayed in the antagonisms underlying the etymology of both the terms Gothic and psychedelic. Baldick suggests the term Gothic is best understood as one side of a set of cultural oppositions depicting the founding mythology of European civilisation and its internal tensions: barbarity against civility, medieval against modern, superstition against Reason, Gothic against Graeco-Roman [2009:xii-xiii]. It is via this crude mechanism that an adjective denoting the language and ethnic identity of the Goths – who never erected a single Gothic cathedral nor authored a single Gothic novel, but whose incursions fatally weakened the Roman Empire – came to convey a recognisable meaning in terms of its opposition to the Classical architectural and literary traditions of Greece and Rome.

Whilst the term psychedelic encloses oppositions within its meaning, the term Gothic must rather be understood as itself an antagonist: of the rational, of the classical, of the Age of Enlightenment. In its position as a cultural antagonist then, the term Gothic intimates the paradox arising from the synchronicity of conceptual oppositions within the term psychedelic. Baldick stresses that although a Gothic novel will offend classical tastes and rational values, it will not do so through romanticising the Middle Ages: it will rather, in contrast to medieval revivalism, play upon the tyranny, violence and superstition of this period. In this sense, he asserts, “the most troublesome aspect of the term ‘Gothic’ is, indeed, that literary Gothic is really anti-Gothic” [xiii]. The term is thus – like psychedelic – involved in an etymological device dependent on oppositions, and does not emerge without a certain degree of irony.

Drugs and the Goth Scene

Before this chapter elucidates the relationship between Goth and psychedelia more systematically, some commentary regarding drug use within the Goth scene is necessary. Fundamentally I make no claim that drug use is either pervasive or defining in Goth. The widespread prohibition of psychedelics and the social stigma directed towards those who defy the law present numerous challenges to accurately determining the prevalence of drug use within any social grouping. As clinical psychologist Thomas Johnson [2016] cautioned at the inaugural symposium of Musedelica, a research group studying the relationship between music and psychedelics,¹⁰ a researcher is likely to meet with resistance when asking respondents about their drug use: such questions are perceived as invasive, and it would be unwise to rely upon the sincerity of responses.

Furthermore due to the lack of legitimate outlets there can be no guarantee that data obtained from respondents willing to discuss their drug use openly and honestly will be accurate: the subject who claims to use MDMA (3,4-methylenedioxymethamphetamine) may have been vended MDEA (3,4-methylenedioxy-N-ethylamphetamine), the subject convinced they have taken LSD (d-lysergic acid diethylamide) may have ingested its recently invented analogue 1P-LSD (1-propionyl-lysergic acid diethylamide) and so on. Whilst there are ways of negotiating such problems, this thesis attends to the sonic manifestation of psychedelia within Goth music, and not drug use within the scene itself. As such I make no attempt to quantify or estimate drug prevalence therein. I suggest instead that attitudes towards psychedelics within the Goth scene are variable.

In her popular publication *The Goth Bible: A Compendium for the Darkly Inclined*, which collates data from over two hundred interviews with Goths, Goth bands, publishers of Goth magazines, and other “souls who in some manner like to dance macabre” [*sic.*] [xvi], Nancy Kilpatrick claims “Goth has never been a heavy-use drug culture, regardless of media presentations” [2005:130]. Although data on the author’s website that remains unpublished in the book includes evidence of LSD use within the Goth scene, Kilpatrick implies this is a minority.

¹⁰ With thanks to Gemma Farrell at the University of Sussex for establishing Musedelica.

Ravenheart speaks for many when she says, “I don’t do any [other] drugs anymore, just pot, and rarely.¹¹ I have seen so many lives ruined or lost to drugs. People say they do drugs to escape reality. I say, make your reality so fucking cool you *never* want to escape it”.

Nancy Kilpatrick [2005:130, italics original]

Kilpatrick’s insertion of the qualifier ‘other’ follows nine pages in which inebriants commonly associated with the Goth scene, including absynthe and clove cigarettes, are surveyed. Whilst compounds like LSD and mescaline are not included, the effects of absynthe as described therein hint towards a Goth affinity with the effects of psychedelics – psychedelia – if not the drugs themselves.

Just as psychedelics allow the subject to ‘fathom hell or soar angelic’, Kilpatrick describes absynthe intoxication as “[a] world of dreams and magic, or nightmares and sorcery” [128]. She cites amongst its effects “mental clarity” – cf. Stafford, who describes the “lucidity” afforded by the “revelatory power of psychedelics” [1992:7] – enhanced creativity,¹² and “a kind of dream-state filled with melting images” [126]. This last effect is paralleled in an early account of a psychedelic experience in which the subject describes a similar visual phenomenon, which occurred during “the peculiar interval between the waking state and that of sleep – the ‘prædormitum’ – the time when we are apt to dream half-controlled stories”:

A white spear of grey stone grew up to huge height, and became a tall, richly finished Gothic tower of very elaborate and definite design, with many rather worn statues standing in the doorways or on stone brackets. As I gazed every projecting angle, cornice, and even the face of the stones at their joinings were by degrees covered or hung with clusters of what seemed to be huge precious stones, but uncut, some being more like masses of transparent fruit. [...]

¹¹ Pot is an American term for marijuana. In the foreword to Peter Stafford’s *Psychedelics Encyclopaedia*, Andrew Weil notes: “[c]ertainly, marijuana deserves a place here, both because it is commonly mind expanding for those who first try it or are new to it or who use it only infrequently, and also because it moves in the same circles as the true psychedelics” [1992:III-11].

¹² See Dobkin de Rios, Marlene and Oscar Janiger (2003). *LSD Spirituality and the Creative Process*. Vermont: Park Street Press.

As I looked, and it lasted long, the tower became a fine mouse hue, and everywhere the vast pendant masses of emerald green, ruby reds, and orange began to drip a slow rain of colours.

Silus Weir Mitchell [1896:1626]

Whilst this nineteenth century subject is referring to his experience not with absynthe but the psychedelic mescal button *Anhalonium lewinii*, the similarities are striking.

Psychedelic drugs, in and of themselves, are not essential components of the Goth lifestyle, but their phenomena and impact on art, philosophy and culture (as denoted by the term psychedelia) are. An excerpt from a documentary on the Batcave presented by resident DJ and Sex Beat vocalist h808 (Hamish) illustrates this beautifully. In this short film, oral accounts of the Goth scene as described by its participants are dubbed over Bernard Herrmann's score to *Vertigo* (1958, dir. Alfred Hitchcock) with appropriately excessive amounts of delay. One such account describes Goth as:

sort of like reading science fiction, really: there's a lot of reality thrown in with unreality. It's a sort of psychedelic attitude without the ultimate stimulants (as in drugs). It's more a stimulant in terms of awareness and openness and a readiness to sort of create some sort of theatre inside of the dullness of the cities we live in.

Batcave Special [2007:5'30"]

It would nonetheless be inaccurate to suggest the so-called ultimate stimulants make no appearance on the Goth scene; Mick Mercer's series of self-published books on Goth, featuring gig reviews and interviews with Goth musicians, reveals otherwise. Creaming Jesus – described by Mercer as a band “designed by seamstresses from a psychedelic morgue” – when asked about some of their more obscure lyrics, admit that their 1994 track ‘Shape Shifting and Face Dancing’ was, “being brutally honest... a list of all the drugs that we took at Phoenix last year. Superman, penguin and strawberries, they were all blotters. White Doves was E” [*sic.*] [2009a: no page number].¹³

¹³ The term blotter refers to the tiny squares of blotting paper on which LSD is often distributed (on account of the remarkably low dosage required to produce its effects). E refers to Ecstasy: tablets whose active ingredient is, at least in theory (there are no guarantees with illegally pressed compounds), the psychedelic amphetamine MDMA. It is not uncommon for blotters and Ecstasy tablets to be circulated with distinctive designs (such as strawberries and doves).

Another feature on guitarist Steve 'Abbo' Abbott of UK Decay, originally interviewed for Goth fanzine *Panache*, reveals another perspective:

Abbo: I remember an interview I did in Berlin and, er... this girl said, "You're very manic onstage, what drugs do you do?" and I said, I don't do any drugs, I do it all myself, y'know? And she couldn't understand it, "you must take some drugs!"

Joan: People can't believe that you don't fall in with it?

Abbo: Yeah, in fact it is becoming fashionable to say you don't take drugs.

Joan: Or fashionable just to say you don't when you still do.

Abbo: That's right.

Reprinted in Mercer [2009a: no page number]

Whether drug use is commemorated within lyrics or proudly abstained, numerous other interviews depict some degree of cross-over between Goth and the 1960s counter-culture that plays out on the level of identity, as in this excerpt from a feature on gothic rock band All About Eve:

"We've always been closet hippies", Tim [Bricheno] begins, as my eyes narrow.

"It's the love vibration we've been talking about for so many years", Julianne [Regan] laughs, tongue poking right through her cheek.

Mick Mercer [2009a: no page number]

This cross-over is also recognised on a musical level. When asked whether the lyrics to All About Eve's 1986 single 'In the Clouds' could "accurately be described as hippy shit?", Regan replies, "Yes. I've got no defence for it" [Mercer 2009b:162]. She also describes gothic rock band The Mission – whose Simon Hinkler and Wayne Hussey produced All About Eve's 1987 single 'Our Summer' – as "very hippy, trippy stuff" [Mercer 2009a: no page number]. Similarly, Billy Duffy of The Cult relays how audiences responded to the heavy use of effects pedals in the band's music: "people are going, 'wah-wah pedal? Jimi Hendrix! They're Hippies!'" [*ibid.*:138].

In 'God's Own Medicine: Religion and Parareligion in UK Goth Culture', Anna Powell suggests that some of her respondent's comments indicate an explicit connection between Goth's embrace of marginalised religious practices and "a deliberately chosen counter-cultural identity" [2007:369]. She locates such practices within a scene that

reflects a “bricolage approach to spirituality and belief” [371], an approach that Theodore Roszak similarly ascribes to the counter-culture.

They are the matrix in which an alternative, but still excessively fragile future is taking shape. Granted that alternative comes dressed in a garish motley, its costume borrowed from many and exotic sources – from depth psychiatry, from the mellowed remnants of left-wing ideology, from the oriental religions, from Romantic *Weltschmerz*, from anarchist social theory, from Dada and American Indian lore, and, I suppose, the perennial wisdom.

Theodore Roszak [1971:xiii]

Whilst the three conceptual affinities between Goth and psychedelia that follow are in no way presented as evidence for drug use within the Goth scene, they are indicative of certain resonances between Goth and the hippie counter-culture.

Altered Perceptions

The first key conceptual affinity between Goth music and psychedelia concerns altered perceptions in the domains of time and space. In essence I suggest it is possible to compare a musical experience to a drug experience; I begin by outlining a variety of temporal and spatial distortions reported by subjects under the influence of psychedelics before suggesting how the music of the Goth scene evokes similar effects.

In asserting “the similarity between high-dose psychedelic experiences and mystical experiences” [2001:233], psychopharmacologist Rick Strassman makes some observations which, on account of their relevance to what follows, are worth quoting at length:

The three pillars of self, time, and space all undergo profound transfiguration in a mystical experience. There no longer is any separation between the self and what is not the self. Personal identity and all of existence become one and the same. In fact, there is no ‘personal’ identity because we understand at the most basic level the underlying unity and interdependence of all existence.

Past, present, and future merge together into a timeless moment, the now of eternity. Time stops, inasmuch as it no longer ‘passes’. There is existence, but it is not dependent upon time. Now and then, before and after, all combine into this exact point. On the relative level, short periods of time encompass enormous amounts of experience. As our self and time lose their boundaries, space becomes vast. Like time, space is no longer here or there but everywhere, limitless, without edges. Here and there are the same. It is all here.

In this infinitely vast time and space with no limited self, we hold up to examination all contradictions and paradoxes and see they no longer conflict. We can hold, absorb, and accept everything our mind conjures up: good and evil, suffering and happiness, small and large.

Rick Strassman [2001:234–5]

Such profound transfigurations of self, time and space are widely reported within empirical accounts of psychedelic drug use, as demonstrated in the following testimony of a subject recounting an LSD experience.

My body became the body of bliss, diaphanous to the rhythms of the universe. All around and passing through me was the Light, a trillion atomized crystals shimmering in blinding incandescence. I was carried by this Light to an Ecstasy beyond ecstasy and suddenly I was no longer I but part of the Divine Workings. There was no time, no space, no 'I', no 'You', only – the Becoming of Being.

Unnamed subject in Masters and Houston [2000:307–8]

Whilst psychedelic experiences are not always described in such mystical terms, altered perceptions of time and space are nonetheless extremely prevalent. The following is excerpted from an account by an assistant professor of English literature recalling his ingestion of peyote, a small cactus containing the psychedelic alkaloid mescaline:

So extended was time that once it seemed to me I lighted a cigarette, smoked it for hours, looked down and noticed that the cigarette still had its first ash. A few moments were hours, possibly longer, and any one event seemed to take almost no time at all. I remarked to my wife that, “We are out of time, but that is not to say that time has run out”. What I meant was that, in the moment when I spoke, time’s fingers had ceased their nervous, incessant strumming upon the space that contained us. But that space was – how can one put it? – *irregular*. A space that expanded and contracted and imposed upon us (actually, of course, upon *me*) the arbitrary quickening rhythms of its pulsations. For, as I remarked, this timeless space was a bubble, and would burst.

Unnamed subject in Masters and Houston [2000:9, italics original]

Longing for this space not to burst – “I wanted to remain forever out of time” – this man recounts experiences quite distinct from another subject on the same compound. After struggling through the passing of an “hour that was ten centuries”, the second subject sat on a chair as ectoplasmic grey light oozed disconcertingly out of the walls, and noticed that “the room seemed a kind of cell, its floor space dwindled to perhaps a quarter of its actual size, while the walls towered upward to three times their normal height” [*ibid.*:175]. Although the account of his “surrealist nightmare” is inherently more perturbing than the others – time appeared to drag intolerably and spaces seemed to distort unpleasantly rather than dissipating completely in ecstatic union with the cosmos – the altered perceptions of time and space remain.

Chronotopes

It is in similar vein that Van Elferen and Weinstock assert that a fundamental characteristic of Goth music is that it consistently “dislodges time and dislocates space” [2016:78], albeit to various ends. They turn towards literary scholar M. M. Bakhtin’s notion of the chronotope to map out numerous amalgams of time-space within Goth. A chronotope is the intrinsic fusion and interconnectedness of the temporal and spatial characteristics that establish the ground – the *mise-en-scène* – upon which a narrative unfolds. The concept is apt to the domains of recorded sound, in which studio effects like reverb and echo can evoke particular spaces, and music, in which certain instrumentation and compositional styles (as well as details like samples, themes and lyrics) can conjure associations with particular times and places. Van Elferen and Weinstock demonstrate how the Goth scene’s “musical and lyrical qualities participate in the evocation of particular types of time-spaces that function as the fragile and ephemeral dwelling places” in which its participants listen [2016:78].

They identify five major Goth chronotopes: the intimate past, which draws the listener into the private realm of a time gone by; the expansive past, which – often drawing on film scoring conventions from fantasy genres – conveys a sense of epic history; the intimate future, which encloses the listener within a futuristic soundscape from which they cannot escape; the expansive future, which constructs the impression of a yet-to-come realm of immense proportions; and the dislocated present, a category accounting for songs foregrounding the paradox created when sonic details suggesting past, present and future co-exist. This final category is in fact further sub-divided into the timeless present, which crafts an eternal moment existing outside of historical time that echoes Strassman’s ‘now of eternity’, and the weird present, in which linear time dissipates as mortal and supernatural worlds collide.

Via analysis of twelve songs from the DJ setlists of two contrasting Goth club nights (*Göttertanz* in Leipzig and *Dracula’s Ball* in Philadelphia), Van Elferen and Weinstock demonstrate how each example falls under the remit of one of the five major chronotopes identified. However rather than insisting each example neatly epitomises one of the five major chronotopes, they emphasise the songs instead have “an overall or predominant character created by a cluster of [smaller] chronotopic alignments” [2016:97]. Major chronotopes, which is to say the five over-arching chronotopes that have a degree of typological stability detailed above, are in fact a product of smaller chronotopic relations. As Bakhtin describes [1981:250–51], these are found within

literary images and language, played out at the level of the sentence and the word. This is exemplified in the text printed on the inner gatefold of *Young Limbs and Numb Hymns* (1983) with which I introduced the Goth scene:

For some the Batcave has become an icon but for those that know it is an iconoclast. It is the avenging spirit of nightlife's badlands [—] its shadow looms large over London's demi-monde: It is a challenge to the false Idol.

It Will Endure. [*sic.*]

London Records. CAVE 1.

Here the term *demi-monde*, conveying a distinctly late nineteenth century European flavour, is juxtaposed with a reference to 'the false Idol', alluding to biblical scripture and the ancient history of the Israelites. The result is a drastic anachronism that informs the very definition of Gothic: Baldick asserts the etymological mechanism of cultural oppositions defining the Gothic radically compresses history such that the Ostrogothic warrior of the third century and the learned Parisian monk of the thirteenth become lumped together as remnants of the same unproductive past [2009:xii].

In the same way the inherently anachronistic character of the Gothic is reflected through the juxtaposition of specific words that are culturally and historically charged on the *Young Limbs* gatefold, the music of the Goth scene is similarly crafted from smaller gestures that carry their own chronotopic associations. Van Elferen and Weinstock align VNV Nation's 'Joy' (1998), for example, on account of its futurepop timbres and sonic impression of vastness, with the over-arching chronotope of the expansive future, whilst acknowledging that its lyrics, evocative of classical fantasy of the swords and sorcery variety, insinuate a backwards glance in time [2016:96–7].

Just as psychedelic drug experiences alter perceptions of time and space in a wide array of ways – from the mystical dissolution of here and there to the nightmarish shrinking and stretching of the walls – Goth plays on the effects of multiple chronotopic gestures that may be extremely varied and apparently inconsistent. Indeed the anachronistic world of the Gothic is in no way at odds with psychedelic drug experiences.

Ethnobotanist Daniel Siebert's [2015] empirical account of a highly concentrated extract of *Salvia divinorum*, a flourishing perennial herb found in Mexico with a long history of entheogenic use by Mazatec shamans, relays:

I had the sudden realization that although I had managed to pull myself back into my body I had somehow ended up back in the wrong spot in the timeline of my physical existence. I was convinced that I might be stuck in this situation and would have to continue my life from this point in my past.

Siebert experienced something akin to the false awakenings of the dream state: seven or eight times he lost awareness of the physical world around him, momentarily existed without a body, and regained consciousness in various places he found familiar – the living room of his deceased grandparents, the home of a friend:

In this state, all the points of time in my personal history coexisted. One did not precede the next. Apparently, had I so willed it, I could return to any point in my life and really be there, because it was actually happening right now.

Further to seeing places in which his physical body was not present, Siebert's perception of space was altered in another way:

Then at some point I did indeed find myself back in *my* home. I was standing in the dining room. I wanted to reassure myself that everything was as it should be, so I turned around to see the rest of the room behind me. I kept turning around but there was no 'behind' me. There was only 'in front' of me. I reached around for the back pockets of my jeans but couldn't seem to find them.

Daniel J. Siebert [2015, italics original]

Van Elferen and Weinstock's discussion of Goth chronotopes includes many observations that resonate with these varying psychedelic experiences. Similar to Strassman's account of mystical and psychedelic states of consciousness, 'Kiss Kiss Bang Bang' (1983) by Specimen is "un-temporal and un-spatial" [2016:103].¹⁴

¹⁴ Specimen vocalist Olli Wisdom wore a belt comprising a row of lipsticks instead of bullets in what Van Elferen and Weinstock describe as the Goth answer to the hippie mantra 'make love not war' [*ibid.*].

In Deine Lakaien's 'Slowly Comes My Night' (2005), "geographic space is unsettled and ultimately undone" [98–9]. As the song's acoustic instrumentation subtly morphs into electronic timbres, hinting towards the irregularity described by the first peyote subject, "time is dilated and, as with space, finally dissolved in the song". The melody and timbre of the singer's voice however remain unchanged. "On the one hand, there is human time as signaled by the changing technology of the song. On the other hand, there is the supernatural time of the singer whose day seems to last centuries".

The gothic rock murder ballad 'Red Right Hand' (1994) by Nick Cave and the Bad Seeds shares features with the second peyote subject, who experienced his walls and floor space stretching and shrinking unnervingly. The dry vocals, placed in the forefront of the mix, contrast with the reverb-drenched bells, timpani, guitar, organ and "unearthly oscillator", conveying the "inconsistency of a space that is somehow simultaneously big and small" [101].

And, perhaps like the ethnobotanist who kept spinning around unable to discover the space behind him, Alien Sex Fiend's 'Dead and Buried' (1984), with lyrics deriding the hippie movement – "asthma attack in a purple haze, your cards are numbered and so are my days" – conveys the "sense of being in motion through space but not going anywhere" [102].

Heterotopias

This chapter made earlier reference to the way in which Goth club nights are crafted to be thoroughly immersive, multi-sensory experiences, in which its participants – adorning attire denoting times both real and imagined (from corsets of the Victorian past to cyberpunk gasmasks of a dystopian future) – help to create a twilight zone that is temporally unreal.¹⁵ Such distortions of time find great resonance with psychedelic drug experiences. The Goth party *Gothique Classique IV: The Occult Edition*, held in Amsterdam in June 2015, furthermore demonstrates how the scene plays with perceptions of space through such events.

Here the organisers covered the walls with black sheets onto which pieces of cloth were attached, decorated with symbols inspired by the fiction of H. P. Lovecraft, "meant to evoke the Elder Gods, the Necronomicon and cosmic horror of the Weird" [Van Elferen 2016:317]. Occult-looking symbols were drawn in a chalk circle on the floor,

¹⁵ See pp. 13–14.

upon which Goths danced whilst candles and incense burned. Some of the cloths on the wall were dyed in pig's blood, "to lend them an 'uncomfortable' look and smell, which would create an olfactory clash with the 'inevitably churchly' smell of incense".¹⁶ In short, a great deal of effort was undertaken to ensure that when attendees walked through the doors they would enter a space radically transformed and quite distinct from the student bar ordinarily located at 121 Warmoesstraat.

Van Elferen draws upon Michel Foucault's concept of the heterotopia to describe such spaces: real, physical sites, which, whilst existing within the context of a society, are nonetheless separated from it. These spaces, "which are something like counter-sites", represent, contest, invert, reflect and speak about "all the other real sites that can be found within the culture" [Foucault 1986:24]. The creation of such deviously alternative spaces as exemplified by *Gothique Classique IV* is in such a sense comparable to the hippie creation of love-ins – certainly heterotopic sites by Foucault's definition – whilst other Goth practices, such as smoking clove cigarettes that make the world smell different, find similar resonance within other 1960s counter-cultural practices, for example Jimi Hendrix's use of incense in the recording studio to establish an alternative atmosphere [Lien 1998].

In these differing ways, from the juxtaposition of futurepop timbres with lyrics evocative of swords and sorcery fantasy, to the use of pig's blood to create a strange olfactory clash with incense, the Goth scene and its music consistently evoke times and spaces that exist outside of the realm of the mundane, the everyday and the real. In so doing, Goth echoes the altered perceptions of time and space pertinent to psychedelic drug experiences in their many varieties. Of course just as Van Elferen and Weinstock assert the concept of the chronotope does not belong solely to the domain of Goth but may dwell in the toolkit of musical analysis to theorise the time-space of any piece of music or recording, many other popular music styles play with perceptions of time and space: progressive rock, psytrance and psychedelic folk are three examples amongst many. I therefore proceed to consider a second key conceptual affinity between Goth and psychedelia that helps to throw light on some of the specifics of their little acknowledged relationship.

¹⁶ Van Elferen here quotes one of the event's organisers, Frank Wiersema.

Set and Setting

I take as a point of departure two observations from earlier in this chapter. The first is Humphry Osmond's concern in coining the term psychedelic that the neologism should not be overly (misleadingly) beautiful, and the second – justifying this concern – is the great variety of experiences afforded by psychedelic drugs. Of course there are commonalities to the effects of psychedelics that allow them to be grouped together, in the same way pagan folk and aggrotech are both, although very different, grouped under the term Goth. Nonetheless such variability has given rise to a concept known as set and setting, which, originally operative within the domain of psychopharmacology, is more recently proving useful in other fields. Here I describe the concept in its original context before asserting its applicability to the Gothic and the music of the Goth scene.

I begin with further reflections from our earlier peyote subject (who smoked his cigarette for hours only to find it still had its first ash), as they compile a fairly typical description of a psychedelic experience whilst still accounting for the many variations possible:

Sensations were acute. I heard, saw, felt, smelled and tasted more fully than ever before (or since). A peanut butter sandwich was a delicacy not even a god could deserve. [...] To touch a fabric with one's fingertip was to simultaneously know more about both one's fingertip and the fabric than one had ever known about either. [...]

At the house, when we returned and the effects were much less, it seemed to me that what I had experienced was essentially, and with few exceptions, the usual content of experience but that, of everything, there was MORE. This MORE is what I think must be meant by the 'expansion of consciousness' and I jotted down at that time something of this MORE I had experienced.

The consciousness-expanding drugs, I wrote then, enable one to sense, think and feel MORE. Looking at a thing one sees MORE of its color, MORE of its detail, MORE of its form. [...] One feels, or responds emotionally with MORE intensity, MORE depth, MORE comprehensiveness.

Unnamed subject in Masters and Houston [2000:10–11]

Considering psychedelic effects in terms of this amplification or intensification mechanism (not unlike Gothic excess), Osmond's reason for crafting a neologism that would not cast an unrealistically positive light on the drugs he was attempting to classify is clear. For the subject partial to peanut butter, its taste under the influence of a psychedelic may indeed seem beyond divine, but by the same token an unpleasant taste will be profoundly more disagreeable, a disturbing image profoundly more horrific, an argument profoundly more upsetting.

Andrew Weil compares the variability of his own mescaline experiences – which he describes as “intensifications of preexisting moods” [*sic.*] – and that of around thirty others to the similarly diverse accounts reported in a series of studies by Timothy Leary and Richard Alpert. These studies concern psilocybin, one of the active principles in the so-called magic mushrooms. Weil notes that “no two [experiences] were alike, even in the same person”, and highlights the importance of set and setting in determining the subject's reaction, crediting Leary and Alpert as “the first investigators of the hallucinogens to insist on the importance of these two variables” [1998:28–9].

The set and setting concept appears in a book Leary and Alpert authored with Ralph Metzner: *The Psychedelic Experience: A Manual Based on the Tibetan Book of the Dead*, originally published in 1964.¹⁷ Its authors define a psychedelic experience as “a journey to new realms of consciousness” whose scope and content is limitless but whose nature “depends almost entirely on set and setting” [2008:3]. Set refers to the individual at the time of drug use (attitude, expectations, intentions, mood, motivations, personality, temperament), whilst setting refers to the environment, encompassing a number of conditions that are physical (location, weather), social (atmosphere, feelings of persons present towards one another) and cultural (prevailing values).¹⁸

¹⁷ A mantra from the book – “turn off your mind, relax, float downstream” – is quoted (with a slight paraphrase) in ‘Tomorrow Never Knows’ (1966) by The Beatles.

¹⁸ The concept featured previously in a paper Leary and Metzner wrote with George Litwin describing the “role of various set and setting variables” in a psilocybin study [1963:572]. An earlier paper by Robert Hyde – ‘Psychological and Social Determinants of Drug Action’ [1960] – considered the impact of such variables on LSD subjects. Although it addressed “the mental set or attitude of the subject toward the experimental situation” [298] as well as the “physical setting” [305], the paper did not use the phrase set and setting that would later appear so prominently in psychedelics research.

Of particular importance is “the combined effects of set and setting can easily overshadow the pharmacological effects of a drug”: a consideration of immense significance, “for it argues that the *experience* associated with use of a drug may not be as causally related to the drug as it appears to be” [Weil 1998:29–30, italics original]. This is demonstrated by return to the unsettling account of the second peyote subject, whose walls towered whilst his floor space diminished, with consideration to the surrounding circumstances. The subject ingested the drug in a hotel room whilst waiting for a girl who, by the time the walls were oozing grey light, was three hours late – perhaps explaining why “[s]econds were hours, and minutes were like days” [Masters and Houston 2000:175]. After telephoning her several times he learned she would not be coming, as her mother disapproved of their relationship to such a degree she forbid her daughter to leave the house. Such disappointment and deviation from the subject’s expectations could certainly account for the fact that “[a]ll of the objects in the room seemed totally alien, as if they, too, had abandoned him”. By contrast, the assistant English professor who ingested the same compound and who “cried out with joy at the thought that [he] was now living so much in so short a span of time” was accompanied by both a guide and his wife, whose hand seemed to cause “a great force of love” to flow into his own [10–11].

The concept was expounded in an influential publication by psychiatrist Norman Zinberg – *Drug, Set, and Setting: The Basis for Controlled Intoxicant Use* [1984] – which challenged scientific understanding of addiction by illustrating how human relationships with drugs vary according not only to pharmacology, but crucially, the subject’s mind-set and social setting. Zinberg’s work shared concerns with the counter-culture to the extent it included case histories of soldiers who had become addicted to heroin in response to the “strange and frightening” [x] setting of the Vietnam War, and in so far as it demonstrated how “traditional views about marihuana and the psychedelics” – that they would “turn the brain to jelly” – were “based on misunderstanding and misconception” [viii]. These views, Zinberg argued, were even more inaccurate than those regarding opiates, which he demonstrated were undermining the ability of physicians to relieve suffering by influencing the effect these drugs had on their patients.

Whilst set and setting has extraordinary significance in the pharmacological domain, particularly with regards to harm reduction, the concept is useful in any area of research.

It is commonly recognized that the ways in which reality is perceived depend both on the setting in which it is observed and on the set, or expectations, of the observer. Unfortunately, this is frequently forgotten when one moves from abstract philosophical discussions to studies in health services research. This is a mistake, because the data we use, the methods we apply, and the interpretations we draw from articles are all affected by set and setting.

Harold S. Luft [1997:261]

Harold Luft observes the set, in this case the expectations of clinicians reviewing surgical complications in a carotid endarterectomy study, influenced their assessment of what indications were appropriate to justify the procedure. He argues that more research is needed to account for expectations regarding operative risk in surgical recommendations, and also that a deeper understanding of setting is required to determine whether treatment recommendations vary depending on whether a patient presents at a public clinic, a teaching hospital, and so on.

Gothic Excess

It is in similar spirit I argue for the significance of set and setting to the Gothic. In demonstrating how Gothic style is “excessive, its texture overfilled with metaphors, adjective, mood” – a characteristic of striking resonance with the amplification effects noted by the subject who claimed of his peyote experience, ‘of everything, there was MORE’ – Van Elferen cites an anonymous critic offering a satirical recipe for a typical Gothic story [2012:12].

*Take – An old castle, half of it ruinous.
A long gallery, with a great many doors, some secret ones.
Three murdered bodies, quite fresh.
As many skeletons, in chests and presses.*

[...]

Noises, whispers, and groans, threefold at least.

Mix them together, in the form of three volumes, to be taken at any of the watering-places before going to bed.

PROBATUM EST. [sic.]

Anonymous [1797:229, italics original]

Writing in the late eighteenth century, the critic takes exception to the recent trend in Gothic novels that “make *terror* the *order of the day*, by confining the heroes and heroines in old gloomy castles, full of spectres, apparitions, ghosts, and dead men’s bones” [227, italics original]. She condemns the way in which the “dresses and decorations” – the lavishly crafted settings of Gothic stories – carry the “imagination into such a confusion of terrors, as must be hurtful” [228]. Although somewhat paranoid, the critic is astute in recognising the agency of the reader’s set in contributing to the effects of the Gothic. Indeed a forerunner to the Gothic tale proper, the Gothic fragment, took the form of an incomplete narrative presented as the only surviving remains of a partially destroyed antiquarian manuscript. Mirroring the allure of the crumbling cathedral or abbey ruins, the Gothic fragment invited the reader to engage their imagination in order to reconstruct the lost whole [Baldick 2009:xvii].

Recalling Indick’s assertion that a typical Gothic horror story features an environment containing an emotional stressor that triggers a chain of hallucinations and paranoid reactions,¹⁹ the eighteenth century critic pours scorn upon Gothic settings, which – constructed through evocative appeals to sight, sound and touch – sharpen the senses and intensify the emotions. “Cold hands grasp us in the dark” as we are driven through “long and dangerous galleries, where the light burns blue, the thunder rattles, and the great window at the end presents the hideous visage of a *murdered* man, *uttering* piercing groans” [1797:227–8, italics original]. As Fred Botting notes, “Gothic signified an over-abundance of imaginative frenzy” [2002:3]. Exciting and sensational rather than instructional in the spheres of morality, taste and social etiquette,²⁰ Gothic literature chilled the reader’s blood and invigorated unlicensed passions. In appealing so prominently to the senses and emotions – “the wind whistles louder than one of Handel’s choruses, and the still air is more melancholy than the dead march in Saul” [*ibid.*] – the Gothic demonstrated a tendency towards aesthetics associated primarily with the sublime.

The sublime fundamentally concerns matters of set and setting. In England particularly the concept developed inseparably from musings on the impact of nature upon the imagination. Specifically it spoke to a perplexing mixture of emotions

¹⁹ See p. 23.

²⁰ The anonymous critic writes “what instruction is to be reaped from the distorted ideas of lunatics, I am at a loss to conceive” [*ibid.*].

reported by travellers upon returning from the Alps, who were at once enthralled and appalled by the magnificence of the expansive mountain landscapes. These accounts were characterised by an “extraordinary ambivalence” Marjorie Hope Nicolson highlights in the writing of Thomas Burnet, “who on the one hand condemned mountains as monstrosities, the ‘ruines of a broken World’, and on the other responded to their majesty emotionally as had no English writer before that time” [*sic.*] [1973:333-5].

Burnet’s was not the only account demonstrating such ambivalence. Recalling the extremes of the psychedelics – ‘to fathom hell or soar angelic’ – John Dennis wrote, “[t]he sense of all this produc’d different emotions in me, viz. a delightful Horrour, a terrible Joy, and at the same time, that I was infinitely pleas’d, I trembled” [*sic.*] [*ibid.*]. James Thomson spoke of “rapturous terror” and “pleasing dread”, whilst Joseph Addison – who developed a theory of the psychological effects of greatness upon the imagination – wrote of “an agreeable kind of horror” [*ibid.*] not unlike that in the lyrics of gothic rock song ‘Burning Skies’ (1983) by Tones on Tail. Here the concept lies between a description of a dramatic landscape and a reference to the imagination expressed in terms of conceptual oppositions:

And the air was alive with piercing sound and burning skies
The horror did me good, the magic was on my side
And hot and cold ideas were running onto your eyes, your sinking grey eyes

Situation 2. SIT 21 T.

Gothic style then is excessively descriptive, highly sensitive to matters of set and setting, and characterised by a peculiar blend of terror and wonder associated with the sublime. Mirroring the account of the subject who claimed that peyote made him respond emotionally with ‘MORE intensity, MORE depth’, Edmund Burke wrote that the sublime is “productive of the strongest emotion which the mind is capable of feeling” [1766:49]. In Gothic literature, settings barely able to contain the excess of adjectives describing them appeal evocatively to the senses, emotions, and imagination of the reader. In Goth music, highly atmospheric soundscapes are filled similarly with evocative sounds with which listeners may weave their own fantasy narratives. Whilst its typically excessive reverb tends to suggest the crypts and cathedrals of Gothic fiction, favoured sounds from tolling bells to detuned music boxes – ‘Ave Dementia’ (1990) by The Marionettes and ‘Cry Wolf’ (1983) by 1919 – afford responses informed by cultural conventions like film scoring.

'Very Ill' (1990) by Love is Colder than Death, a band named after a curious film *Liebe ist kälter als der Tod* (1969, dir. Rainer Werner Fassbinder), blends samples of running water with a trembling organ and peculiar electronic whistling timbre whilst an ominous clattering sound rattles away in echoing cascades. Van Elferen and Weinstock's observation of listener agency is particularly relevant here:

The meaning attributed to these [sounds] is nothing but that: a meaning that is arbitrarily attributed to meaningless sounds, and as such it is perhaps more telling of the listener's anxieties than of the composer's intention.

Isabella van Elferen and Jeffrey Andrew Weinstock [2016:62]

Similarly whilst the track features lyrics by William Blake – whose poem 'The Marriage of Heaven and Hell' (1793) inspired the title to *The Doors of Perception* (1954) in which Aldous Huxley recounts his experiences on mescaline – the reverb and slow attack of the layered vocal tracks render the words difficult to distinguish, and entice the imagination of the listener.

Set and setting then is vital in accounting for both the nature of psychedelic drug experiences, and for the effects of the literary and sonic Gothic. The concept is however, like the chronotope, not applicable solely to Goth, but rather a useful (musical analytical) concept more generally. In the next section I explain how Goth's altered perceptions of time and space, constructed through heightened sensitivity to set and setting, lead to a very specific experiential time-space that has been historically related to the Gothic via the idea of the uncanny.

The Uncanny

The Gothic is frequently theorised in relation to Sigmund Freud's notion of the uncanny. Fred Botting observes that "Gothic atmospheres – gloomy and mysterious – have repeatedly signalled the disturbing return of pasts upon presents", arousing a peculiar blend of emotions:

[I]mages of dark power and mystery evoked fear and anxiety, but their absurdity also provoked ridicule and laughter. The emotions most associated with Gothic fiction are similarly ambivalent: objects of terror and horror not only provoke repugnance, disgust and recoil, but also engage readers' interest, fascinating and attracting them.

Fred Botting [2002:1–9]

This disturbing return of pasts upon presents and the peculiarly ambivalent blend of emotions so aroused constitutes the main thrust of the Freudian uncanny, which concerns – as exquisitely summarised by Hugh Haughton – "a particularly intense experience of strangeness" [2003:xlii].

Originally published in 1919, 'Das Unheimliche' ('The Uncanny') is one of Freud's only essays concerned with aesthetic matters. Claiming he was driven by a compulsion to look beyond the beautiful and into the realm of the frightening, Freud sought to isolate the "specific affective nucleus" that allows the uncanny to be distinguished from that which awakens fear in general [2003:123]. Characterising this nucleus as "something that was long familiar to the psyche and was estranged from it only through being repressed" [148], Freud is credited with pioneering the psychoanalytic exploration of "the sublime territory of unfamiliarity itself" [Haughton 2003:xliv], leaving a significant impact on literary theory, particularly in the Gothic domain.

Freud's essay critiques a paper by Ernst Jentsch published in 1906 titled 'Zur Psychologie des Unheimlichen' ('On the Psychology of the Uncanny'). Jentsch describes the uncanny as a disconcerting experience of the indeterminate: a loss of the intellectual conviction that would usually provide psychological shelter in the struggle for survival [1997:15]. He provides several scenarios in which the uncanny might arise, both within everyday life (such as the perception of anthropomorphic forms where there are none as one's eyes adjust to darkness) and within literature (for example through narratives presented as real events which are later revealed to be dream-

states). His study features a reading of E. T. A. Hoffmann's *Der Sandmann* (*The Sandman*), a "vertiginous and hallucinatory story" and "exercise in psychological Gothic" first published in 1816 [Haughton 2003:xlii-iii]. Freud's essay in fact greatly expounds upon this reading, and whilst he dismisses Jentsch's claim that the uncanny is underpinned by a psychical uncertainty or doubtful tension, his own work persistently returns to it, "as if haunted by an uncertainty about the uncertainty principle that he claims to have banished" [*ibid.*].

In this section I use Hoffmann's tale to unpack some of the key ideas behind the uncanny as described by Freud and Jentsch, in order to describe how it resonates with psychedelic drug phenomena, and in order to locate this thesis in terms relative to the wider academic discourse on the Gothic.

A Vertiginous and Hallucinatory Story

Der Sandmann, highlighted in both essays as quintessentially uncanny, is an instructive point of departure. In a typically Gothic conflation of pasts, presents and futures, the story opens with a letter written by the protagonist Nathaniel, who describes nightmarish incidents from his childhood and recent past signalling dark forewarnings of a terrible impending fate. Nathaniel recalls a shocking event whereby he recognised in Giuseppe Coppola, an optician who entered his room to peddle some spectacles, the hideous and repulsive Coppelius, an acquaintance of his father who mysteriously disappeared after an alchemical explosion left his mother widowed. Coppelius would always appear just after the children were sent to bed with an ominous warning – 'the Sandman is coming' – and had once threatened to blind Nathaniel with cinders from a furnace. Nathaniel remembers how his father's intervention had prompted Coppelius to proclaim he would instead examine the mechanism of the boy's extremities, and how his joints cracked as the vile man screwed off his hands and feet before reattaching them. As Freud observes, it is unclear whether we are dealing here with the delirium of a panic-stricken child, or an account of events to be taken as real within the world of the narrative [2003:137].

Later in the story Nathaniel writes another letter describing Olympia, whom he believes is the daughter of a physics professor. He describes a profound feeling of discomfort that he attributes to her eyes, which appear to have no power of sight. It is later revealed Olympia is an automaton, constructed by Professor Spalanzani with eyes gifted by the optician Coppola. It is this element of the story upon which Jentsch focuses, claiming one of the most reliable literary devices for arousing the uncanny is to

leave the reader in doubt as to whether a character is alive or mechanical.

Among all the psychical uncertainties that can become an original cause of the uncanny feeling, there is one in particular that is able to develop a fairly regular, powerful and very general effect: namely, doubt as to whether an apparently living being is animate and, conversely, doubt as to whether a lifeless object may not in fact be animate – and more precisely, when this doubt only makes itself felt obscurely in one's consciousness.

Ernst Jentsch [1997:11]

I describe in chapter 5 how the animation of lifeless objects is one of the perceptual effects of the psychedelics.²¹

The Freudian Uncanny

Whilst Freud concurs the automaton can account for the uncanny effect of Hoffmann's story, he argues it is not the motif to which the effect is principally due, and highlights instead a central theme Jentsch overlooks: that of the Sandman, whom Nathaniel was told tears out the eyes of naughty children who do not go to sleep so he can feed them to his offspring nesting in the crescent moon. Freud argues that fear of losing the eyes indicates a castration complex [2003:139–40]. In a peculiar footnote [159–61], he reconstructs the timeline of events in *Der Sandmann* in their chronological (as opposed to narrated) order, and proceeds to psychoanalyse Nathaniel, concluding his father and Coppelius represent the father-imago divided into two antagonistic parts: one that threatens him with blinding (castration) and another that successfully intervenes for his eyes. The element of the complex most subject to repression – the death wish towards the father – finds expression in the alchemical explosion for which Coppelius is blamed.

Such repression is a crucial factor in Freud's uncanny, as are repetition and return, which occur in Nathaniel's later life in the form of a second father-imago, constructed on the one hand out of Olympia's so-called father, Professor Spalanzani, and on the other the optician Coppola, who is understood as the reappearance of Coppelius and thus the Sandman. Freud claims the strange event in which the boy's limbs were unscrewed not only evidences the castration complex – because the powerfully obscure emotion awakened by the threat of losing the sexual organ is what gives

²¹ See pp. 187–210.

resonance to the idea of losing other organs [140] – but also that it allows us to substitute the mechanical doll for Nathaniel later in the tale. A further element of Freud’s uncanny, the double, is thus integral to Hoffmann’s tale in numerous ways: the replication of the genital symbol, the splitting of the father into antagonistic parts, and the mechanical counterpart to Nathaniel’s organic self. Replacing the Sandman for “the dreaded father, at whose hands castration is expected” and implicating all narrative events as symptoms of this complex, Freud claims the sense of the uncanny attaches directly to the idea of being stripped of one’s eyes, “and that intellectual uncertainty, as Jentsch understands it, has nothing to do with this effect” [138].

The Jentschian Uncanny

Whilst Freud claims uncertainty cannot be the nucleus of the uncanny because it “becomes clear” that Hoffmann wants the reader to “look through the spectacles or the spyglass of the demon optician” [139], Haughton argues that Freud’s re-reading “forces us to see the story through comparably distorting and artificial psychoanalytic eye-glasses” [2003:xlvii]. A slightly nuanced reading of Jentsch helps his ideas to speak. Roy Sellars, who translates the essay into English, claims Jentsch’s uncanny “calls into question the opposition between the unknown and the known” [1997:7]. Jentsch argues: “[t]hat which has long been familiar appears not only as welcome, but also – however remarkable and inexplicable it may be – as straightforwardly self-evident” [8]; it is only when a problem is removed from the usual way of looking at it that the uncanny may arise. Jentsch’s assertion suggests that psychedelic drugs are capable of arousing the most powerful feeling of the uncanny. This is because on a very basic level, psychedelics allow subjects to experience altered states of consciousness, which – recalling Van Elferen’s assertion that Goth lyrics ‘all want to shake up what is known and knowable’ – may challenge or reshape the way they understand themselves and the world around them. They carry potential, in Jentsch’s terms, to remove a problem from the usual way of looking at it.

In his introduction to *The Psilocybin Solution: The Role of Sacred Mushrooms in the Quest for Meaning*, Simon Powell writes:

Imagine, if you will, that all scientists wore identical spectacles and that these spectacles determined the perceptual view of the things being scrutinized by the scientists. All the data amassed by these scientists would be related in some intimate way to the effects of their spectacles, since all their perception will have passed through the self-same lenses. Now, it isn’t pushing credulity too far to

suggest that the scientists would do well at some point [...] to reflect on the characteristics of their shared state of 'bespectacledness'. In other words, it would be quite a breakthrough for these scientists to suddenly cease their traditional research in order to focus on the nature of the factor mediating their research, namely, their glasses.

Simon G. Powell [2011:6]

In this uncannily apt analogy, Powell uses spectacles as a metaphor for non-altered states of consciousness. He argues that if all scientific research is processed through everyday consciousness, it should be recognised that all knowledge thus generated speaks as much to this one, limited type of consciousness, as it does to the data it claims to treat objectively.

Psychedelic drugs, in providing access to altered states of consciousness, highlight that all knowledge previously acquired is not as straightforwardly self-evident as it appears to be, calling into question the opposition between the known and the unknown. Indeed Benny Shanon observes in his study of Ayahuasca – a potentially psychedelic Amazonian brew containing DMT – that:

Ayahuasca (along with other mind-altering substances) expands the horizons of psychology and reveals new, hitherto unknown territories of the mind. Thus, the study of Ayahuasca presents new data pertaining to human consciousness, and thus new issues for investigation, new ways to look at things, new questions, and perhaps even new answers.

Benny Shanon [2002:37]

When Freud dismisses the impact of intellectual uncertainty in Hoffmann's tale, he too discounts the capacity of its complex narrative machinery to generate material of an epistemologically indeterminate status [Haughton 2003:xlviii]. In so doing he displays a similar insensitivity to the aforementioned assumption that reduces hallucination to a deception in which the imaginary and the real are confused.²²

²² See pp. 21–2. Whilst hallucination has historically been understood as a malfunctioning of the senses, Jentsch argues the breakdown of an important sense organ can greatly increase the feeling of the uncanny [1997:10].

The origins of the verb hallucinate – the Latin *alucianari* (to wander mentally or to be absent-minded) and the Greek *aluein* (to wander or to be distraught) – in fact resonate to a considerable degree with an uncanny anecdote Freud recounts, wherein he wanders through the unfamiliar streets of a small Italian town, repeatedly and unintentionally returning to a district about whose character he can remain in little doubt.

Only heavily made-up women were to be seen at the windows of the little houses, and I hastily left the narrow street at the next turning. However, after wandering about for some time without asking the way, I suddenly found myself back in the same street, where my presence began to attract attention. Once more I hurried away, only to return there again by a different route. I was now seized by a feeling that I can only describe as uncanny, and I was glad to find my way back to the piazza that I had recently left and refrain from any further voyages of discovery.

Sigmund Freud [2003:144]

Set, Setting and the Uncanny

Although the Freudian and Jentschian ideas of the uncanny differ, both underscore the importance of set and setting, albeit not using such terminology. Almost echoing the concept as it accounts for varying psychedelic experiences, Jentsch asserts that “the same impression does not necessarily exert an uncanny effect on everybody. Moreover, the same perception on the part of the same individual does not necessarily develop into the ‘uncanny’ every time, or at least not every time in the same way” [1997:8]. One mechanism through which he suggests the uncanny might arise is the tendency of individuals to impose upon inanimate objects human characteristics (as automata are bestowed moving parts to animate them as though alive); he claims the inability to exorcise such projections or “spirits” created from a subject’s mind “easily produces the feeling of being threatened by something unknown and incomprehensible that is just as enigmatic to the individual as his own psyche usually is as well” [14].

Freud suggests one source of the uncanny resides in attaching profound personal significance to coincidental occurrences, such as seeing the number 62 multiple times in fairly rapid succession and concluding it indicates a pre-determined life-span [2003:143–4]. He also relates the uncanny to ancestral memories, instinctual impulses and animistic thought processes, claiming they elicit their intense experience of

strangeness when juxtaposed upon a conversely modern – apparently enlightened – cultural setting. Indeed Botting argues that Gothic settings are dark and foreboding precisely because they hark back to feudal threats of barbarity and superstition, representing sites where fears and anxieties return to haunt and destabilise the present [2002:2–3].

Whilst *Gothic Music: The Sounds of the Uncanny* focuses on the Freudian uncanny, in the conclusion that follows I return, with fresh eyes, to Van Elferen's [2012] observations outlined at the beginning of this chapter, to outline how Goth can be heard as the sounds of the Jentschian as well as Freudian uncanny.

The Psychedelic Sounds of the Uncanny

This chapter has introduced two components of the thesis – Goth music and psychedelia – and three conceptual affinities. I have described how the adjectives psychedelic and Gothic are reliant upon conceptual oppositions: the former via its etymological allusion to the manifestation of the discarnate, and the latter via its definition as a cultural antagonist, and via the way it dwells in liminal spaces like those between life and death, fantasy and reality, secular and sacred. I have exemplified a number of ways in which both Gothic sensibilities and the 1960s counter-culture with which psychedelic drugs are associated contest or invert contemporary cultural conventions, from the resurrection of archaic imaginative liberties within the literary domain to the creation of heterotopic spaces. I have demonstrated how altered perceptions of time and space are found not only within empirical accounts of psychedelic drug use, but also within the fantastic and unreal *mises-en-scène* of Goth, crafted from numerous chronotopic gestures. I have explained how set and setting, a concept accounting for the extraordinary diversity of experiences afforded by psychedelics, is significant to the Gothic style, whose characteristic excess creates literary and sonic settings eliciting particularly sensational, emotional and imaginative responses not unlike those associated with the effects of such drugs. Finally I have suggested how altered perceptions and set and setting are integral to the quintessentially Gothic effect of the uncanny, relating as it does to the haunting return of that which contests the solidity and self-sufficiency of the living present. The uncanny, in so far as it offers a simultaneous experience of the new and the familiar, resonates with the paradoxical blend of conceptual oppositions underlying the definition of psychedelia. Echoing the compulsion to repeat fundamental to Freud's understanding of the concept, I now return to the four key consistencies of Goth music outlined at the beginning of the chapter to review – with deeper insight – how they constitute the psychedelic sounds of the uncanny.

The four fundamental features common to the diverse sub-styles constituting Goth outlined in *Gothic Music: The Sounds of the Uncanny* relate to spectrality, haunting, excess and liturgy. Whilst Van Elferen [2012] approaches Goth from a Freudian perspective, the inclusion of Jentschian theory here helps to elucidate the relationship between Goth and psychedelia more explicitly.

Firstly, Goth is characterised by a spectrality signifying both cultural and personal haunting. Freud observes that for many, “the acme of the uncanny is represented by

anything to do with death, dead bodies, revenants, spirits and ghosts” [2003:148]; the phrase *ein unheimliches Haus* indeed becomes ‘a haunted house’ in the English language. Goth voices the ghosts of the Gothic in numerous ways: echo effects, octave doublings and various dubbing techniques give spectral counterparts to singing voices, resulting in audible *doppelgänger* – doubles – several variations of which we encountered in *Der Sandmann*.²³ Schizophonia transforms vocals into disembodied phantom voices, resonating with Jentsch’s assertion that the psychical uncertainty underpinning the uncanny arises in relation to “processes that for the time being elude explanation or whose conditions of origin are unknown” [1997:10]. Abrasive vocal distortion morphs human voices into bursts of white noise that sound like ghosts in the machine, whilst in ‘Pong’ (2010) by German EBM band Eisenfunk, an 8-bit games console appears to come to life and invite the listener to play. These varying gestures resonate with the effects of psychedelic drugs, which – by radically altering perceptions of time, space and self – allow a subject to experience states of consciousness that destabilise the certainty of knowledge previously acquired: the distinction between life and death, the chronological progression from past into present, the opposition between the unknown and the known.

Secondly, Goth contests the linear unfolding of time, rendering the present haunted, unhomely and destabilised by the persistent presence of other times and spaces. By blending traditional and contemporary timbres, arcane and modern languages, and intermedial citations sourced from Latin texts to splatter horror movies, Goth creates sonic liminal realms existing between periods, styles and locations. These liminal realms are at once strange and alienating, yet – in so far as they play upon an array of decontextualised musical conventions – at the same time weirdly familiar. Whether re-imagining old musical traditions through the addition of anachronistic instrumentation, or constructing dystopian cyborg futures, “[t]he here and now is made unhomely by the musical presence of a reality we do not know anymore as well as that of a reality we do not yet know” [Van Elferen 2012:170]. By sonically disturbing, in Jentsch’s terms, “[t]hat which has long been familiar” [1997:8] – particularly in a manner that plays with the listener’s perception of time – Goth music functions akin to a psychedelic drug that challenges and reshapes the way a subject understands themselves and the world in which they live. In conflating pasts, presents and futures, Goth not only defies the notion of linear time but suggests a way of being beyond time.

²³ See pp. 45–7.

Thirdly, Goth exudes excess. Floods of reverberation wash over lyrics exceeding the boundaries of the mundane, echoing romantic *Weltschmerz*, religious rapture, surrealist nightmare and machinic *jouissance* [Van Elferen 2012:170]. Extreme overdrive and powerful vibrato exemplify an exaggerated stylisation that reflects the amplification or intensification effects of the psychedelics: of everything, there is MORE. Self-aware and often self-deprecating, this style also characterises Goth's performance practices. Ian Curtis of Joy Division was particularly notable in this respect, his "deranged stage behaviour" leading critics to describe him as "a soul turned inside out" and "a twitching, epileptic-type mass of flesh and bone".²⁴ Curtis did in fact suffer from epilepsy and his wife Deborah comments:

Certainly Ian's dancing had become a distressing parody of his off-stage seizures. His arms would flail around, winding an invisible bobbin, and the wooden jerking of his legs was an accurate impression of the involuntary movements he would make.

Deborah Curtis in Jackson [2006:185]

Jentsch writes that epileptic fits arouse the sensation of the uncanny because they stir in the observer vague impressions of automatic (mechanical) processes hidden behind the familiar visage of a living human.

It is not unjustly that epilepsy is [...] spoken of as the *morbus sacer*, as an illness deriving not from the human world but from foreign and enigmatic spheres, for the epileptic attack of spasms reveals the human body to the viewer – the body that under normal conditions is so meaningful, expedient, and unitary, functioning according to the directions of his consciousness – as an immensely complicated and delicate mechanism. This is an important cause of the epileptic fit's ability to produce such a demonic effect on those who see it.²⁵

Ernst Jentsch [1997:14]

²⁴ The quotations are from Mathur, Paul (June 1988). 'Art of Darkness'. *Melody Maker*, 64, pp. 16–17, p. 16, and Middles in Jackson, Kimberley (2006). 'Gothic Music and the Decadent Individual' in Ian Peddie (ed.) *The Resisting Muse: Popular Music and Social Protest*. Surrey: Ashgate, pp. 177–88, p. 185, respectively.

²⁵ See also Jilek-Aall, Louise (1999). 'Morbus Sacer in Africa: Some Religious Aspects of Epilepsy in Traditional Cultures'. *Epilepsia*, 40(3), pp. 382–6.

Indeed Kimberley Jackson writes that Goth musicians “used their bodies to inform their audience that there was something not entirely ‘human’ about the workings of society, the world, the music industry, politics, and so on” [2006:184].

Finally, Goth music is liturgical, carrying the transgressive potential to transport listeners out of the mundane and into the liminal spaces it evokes. Van Elferen illustrates this by citing a fan’s review of *Annwyn, Beneath the Waves* (1996) by Faith and the Muse. Reflecting the potential of the psychedelics, the review claims the songs on the album “will travel you to another dimension, dreamy at times, nightmarish at others” [2012:171]. Via its musical allusions to other times and spaces, lyrics exploring numerous types of transgression, and a penchant for unusual timbres, Goth music offers its listeners glimpses of alternative realities, and – within the ritualistic context of Goth club nights – the opportunity to become immersed in them. This is supported through the crafting of intensely multi-sensory experiences in which participants can hear unreal sounds, feel throbbing bass lines, taste absynthe, smell incense, and see a plethora of perverted and inverted symbols, Victorian corsets and steampunk gasmasks, androgynous figures and android bodies, all dancing to the soundtrack of a pagan past, cyborg future or intensely weird present. Dancing to spectral liturgies, Goths not only playfully explore the limits of self, here and now, but willingly transgress them, demonstrating parallels with Strassman’s assertion that during mystical and psychedelic experiences, “[t]he three pillars of self, time, and space all undergo profound transfiguration” [2001:234].

Although in reviewing altered perceptions, set and setting, and the uncanny I have introduced some conceptual affinities between Goth and psychedelia, it is important to recognise it is not so much the formal parallels that are important here but their methodological implications: the ways in which these parallels open up new ways of listening to music. In the next chapter I address how the music of the Goth scene might appropriately be analysed in light of the challenges and peculiarities associated with the study of psychedelia identified thus far.

Chapter 2

An Acid Approach:

Psychedelic Drugs and Popular Music Analysis

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A Psychedelic Topography of Goth

This chapter addresses the methodology by which I demonstrate how Goth music is psychedelic. Thus far I have schematised the relationship between Goth and psychedelia in terms of certain conceptual affinities. At this point I suggest Goth exhibits an extensive range of characteristics shared with other styles of popular music associated with psychedelics, including acid rock (associated with LSD) and dub (associated with marijuana). The characteristics it shares are furthermore fundamental to those associations: the Goth repertoire, in other words, is rich in musical details that are understood to reflect or evoke the effects of psychedelic drugs. I describe here the philosophy of an approach put into practice across the following three chapters. This approach opens up a way of listening in which specific musical details associated with psychedelics and their phenomena are identified. Essentially I offer a way of listening that attends to the association of particular musical features with psychedelic drug effects, and demonstrate this within the context of a diverse set of styles not previously related to psychedelia (at least within the academic literature): Goth. It is largely the nature of this association I address in this chapter, which is to say I here forward a framework for attending to the relationship between music and psychedelic drugs.

I begin with a review of the most comprehensive and influential literature addressing the relationship between music and psychedelic drugs in the field of (popular) music analysis: Sheila Whiteley's [1992] *The Space Between the Notes: Rock and the Counter-Culture*. I outline my methodology by highlighting how and why I deviate from the author's theory of psychedelic coding through a sustained critique of her text in which I highlight a number of problems in its largely semiotic approach towards music and meaning. In spite of these problems I suggest the text remains worth unpacking here, not only because the author highlights musical characteristics to which I return in subsequent chapters, but because she is so frequently cited in relation to the question of what makes music psychedelic. I use the term psychedelic here and throughout as an adjective, which is to say as pertaining to the effects of psychedelic drugs. To avoid any confusion with a specific style of 1960s rock called psychedelic rock – see Whiteley [1992:119–20] – I refer to this style throughout by its alternative designation, acid rock.

Richard Middleton and John Muncie have highlighted a perennial uncertainty with regards to the musical meaning of the term psychedelic that I wish to address here.

Discussing the musical output of The Beatles in 1967, they state:

it's fairly clear that 'Strawberry Fields' is an 'LSD' song: certainly the lyrics leave no doubt that it concerns hallucination. It is, to use the jargon of the time, psychedelic (having to do with changing consciousness), though whether a psychedelic song is defined as (a) a song *created* under the influence of drugs, (b) a song *representing* or *signifying* aspects of the drugged state, or (c) a song attempting to *produce* an altered state isn't always clear.

Richard Middleton and John Muncie [1981:78, italics original]

I consider all three relevant qualifiers – assuming the drugs referenced under (a) are psychedelics – but add to this several more. I suggest a psychedelic piece of music is also one that synergises the effects of such drugs, or that is experienced or understood to be psychedelic (as pertaining to altered states of consciousness) by the listener. Arguably this is already covered under (b) above, though I wish to explicitly shift emphasis away from those writing, producing or performing the music to those experiencing it. My use of the term psychedelic in this adjectival rather than stylistic sense allows for a degree of flexibility necessitated by the importance of set and setting to psychedelic drug experiences.¹

Indeed the main criticisms I level towards *Space Between the Notes* pertain to its assumption regarding the fixity of musical meaning, and its implication that “the meaning of an artistic expression has become encoded within it, such that the role of a culturally competent [...] listener, is to decode that meaning” [Moore 2012:220]. I present Chris Kennett's [2003] argument that a semiotic investigation of musical meaning insufficiently accounts for listener and listening context variables in terms of the set and setting concept introduced in the previous chapter, and outline instead a more “ecological approach to the perception of musical meaning”; developed by Eric Clarke [2005:4–5], it is an approach characterised as ecological “because it takes as its central principle the relationship between a perceiver and its environment”. I demonstrate the suitability of an ecological approach in which meaning is unfixed to Goth by briefly describing how it resonates with Van Elferen's [2012] notion of musical haunting, and with Van Elferen and Weinstock's model of the Goth scene as a “network of interacting and converging human and non-human actors” [2016:51]. This model, in its attentiveness to processes of interaction between humans and the non-human

¹ See pp. 37–43.

aspects of their environment present in various stages of music-making, is not only ecological but demonstrates the multiplicity of intersections at which meaning may be created, contested and subverted.

After addressing the musicological problems within *Space Between the Notes* I turn to outline the ways it paints a problematic picture of psychedelic drugs. I highlight persistent efforts to relate to musical details notions of confusion, dizziness and disorientation – effects of alcohol intoxication but of no relevance to the psychedelics – and a broad tendency to imply the many varieties of psychedelic drug effects can be captured by reference to a uniform “hallucinogenic experience” [Whiteley 1992:4]. Indeed although musical details are specified clearly throughout Whiteley’s analyses, the correlating drug experiences are not. I argue that due to the use of terms that are ill-defined (like psychedelic release and hallucinogenic escape) it is difficult to understand why the musical details highlighted signify psychedelic experiences. I propose another way of attending to those details that moves away from Whiteley’s tendency to implicate them within a hermeneutic reading in which reality is contrasted with non-reality. I point to a number of ways in which psychedelic states of consciousness throw such dualities into question, and suggest a persistent association between non-reality and psychedelic drug states is problematic because it immediately imposes upon the drug state a judgement that the experience is contrary to reality. I suggest instead how the musical contrasts Whiteley identifies may resonate with psychedelic and mystical states of consciousness in a more general way that need not rely upon a hermeneutic reading of the track at hand.

I thus progress towards an alternative musicological approach to psychedelia informed by Paul Hodkinson’s notion of consistent distinctiveness: a concept coined in reference to the Goth scene that denotes the consistent and distinctive stylistic features of social significance to a particular group, whilst recognising “the inevitability of a degree of internal difference and change over time” [2002:30]. This concept provides context for the three chapters that follow, in which I highlight the consistent and distinctive characteristics of acid rock that are associated with the effects of LSD, and subject them to comparison with examples from the Goth repertoire.²

² In order to avoid recursive comparisons, I am careful not to rely upon my own designation of the examples as either Goth/ic or psychedelic, but to select tracks that have been classified accordingly throughout both fan and academic discourse.

I compare Goth to acid rock because the latter style has been most extensively theorised in relation to the question of what it means to describe music as psychedelic. Echoing Van Elferen's assertion in *Sounds of the Uncanny* that "Goth (musical) style will not be regarded as a semiotically encoded and decipherable language, but as a 'consistently distinctive' representation of Goth subcultural substance" [2012:129], I consider psychedelia in terms of a consistently distinctive set of characteristics that are both experiential and musical. By consistently distinctive experiential characteristics I refer to the variety of effects associated with psychedelic drugs, in contrast to the singular 'hallucinogenic experience' Whiteley implies. By consistently distinctive musical characteristics I refer to features from non-teleological harmonic progressions to effects like phase shifting and delay that occur recurrently in music described as psychedelic. I do not claim such musical characteristics are unequivocally psychedelic – because this would demonstrate insensitivity to set and setting – but rather suggest how they can be delineated as affording meanings related to psychedelic drugs.

I identify the consistently distinctive characteristics of acid rock associated with psychedelics by drawing upon the work of two theorists who approach the association from opposing starting points. Michael Hicks argues: "[t]o understand what makes music stylistically 'psychedelic', one should consider three fundamental effects of LSD" [2000:63]. He begins by identifying these effects before offering a number of sounds common to acid rock he claims reflect them. Craig Morrison on the other hand begins from the music. Tracing the development of acid rock in San Francisco, he surveys an extensive number of 1960s compilations marketed as psychedelic before subjecting the ten most recurrent tracks to analysis yielding a list of psychedelic musical characteristics; these, he claims, are the result of "the attempt to translate into musical terms the effects of hallucinogenic drugs, especially LSD" [2000:1].

In spite of their differences, Hicks and Morrison both draw implicitly upon prototype theory. Pioneered by cognitive psychologist Eleanor Rosch, prototype theory points to the ways in which specifically human capacities to perceive, remember and communicate inform human processes of categorisation. It suggests that rather than being unproblematic containers defined only by the properties all members share, categories – influenced as they are by the particularities of those doing the categorising – tend to have best examples, known as prototypes. This means some members of a category are deemed more representative examples than others, which is reflected in the way Morrison selects the ten most illustrative case studies of the descriptor psychedelic, and in the way Hicks selects three so-called fundamental effects of LSD

from its many varieties. There is a further prototype at work within both approaches: LSD. This is a prototype psychedelic because whether or not a drug is classified accordingly depends on the extent to which its effects and cultural use resemble LSD [Grinspoon and Bakalar 1997:9]. The musical characteristics associated with psychedelic drugs in the work of Hicks and Morrison, then, are more specifically prototypical musical characteristics associated with the prototypical effects of the prototypical psychedelic, LSD.

As I survey the musical characteristics identified by Hicks and Morrison across the next three chapters and compare examples from the acid rock repertoire to examples from the Goth repertoire, I describe my methodology as an acid approach to Goth. In considering the prototypical effects and prototypical musical characteristics associated with the prototypical psychedelic drug, my analysis begins within a central point of a larger territory. This larger territory represents a more comprehensive musicological understanding of psychedelia, and it is here I wish to situate Goth. It is a territory encompassing psychedelics other than LSD and musical styles other than acid rock. Certainly the movement of LSD within the counter-culture and its prominence over other psychedelics within the specific socio-historical context of the music studied by Hicks and Morrison justifies its centrality in their texts. However, in order to make full use of the term psychedelic in an adjectival – and not simply stylistic – sense, a musicological account of psychedelia must recognise the realm of phenomena and cultural artefacts associated with psychedelics beyond LSD.

Opening up listening in this way – which is to say in a way that attends to the relationship between music and psychedelic drugs beyond the acid rock and LSD prototypes – allows the wider psychedelic ecology of popular music to become more readily available. It allows, in other words, access to a broader understanding of psychedelia that recognises for example not just that Goth is heavily influenced by dub [Carpenter 2012], but that dub is strongly associated with the effects of marijuana, or that the “pervasive use of trance beats” exemplified by Goth bands like Apoptygma Berserk are associated with the effects of MDMA [Van Elferen 2012:165]. This broader understanding is careful not to attach fixed meanings to specific musical details, but to recognise the multiplicity of intersections at which meaning may be created, interpreted and contested within the contexts in which music-making takes place. These are not meanings that have been encrypted into the music awaiting a competent listener, but meanings that are influenced by an enormous variety of factors that can be subsumed under the concept of set and setting.

It is within this broader musicological understanding of psychedelia that I locate Goth: in the territory beyond the prototypes.

Music and Meaning

Undoubtedly one of the deepest excursions into the field of psychedelic music analysis is Sheila Whiteley's [1992] *The Space Between the Notes: Rock and the Counter-Culture*. Described by Dave Laing as "the most sustained attempt yet to explore the complexities and paradoxes of psychedelic music and progressive rock" [*ibid.*], the text examines the relationship between various characteristics of the counter-culture and the music of numerous artists associated with it: Cream, The Beatles, Jimi Hendrix, Pink Floyd, the Rolling Stones. Acknowledging the divisions within the counter-culture as outlined by theorists including Richard Neville and Theodor Roszak, Whiteley attempts to find coherence between iconic recordings like *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band* (1967) and *The Dark Side of the Moon* (1973), and the "similarity of sensibility" [2] that united the New Left, hippies and yippies. Her methodology seeks to understand the significance of certain musicians by highlighting how particular approaches towards their music-making resonated with various broadly-defined counter-cultural concerns.

Whiteley's approach is largely semiotic in so far as it treats musical details as signifiers of such extra-musical concerns. A fairly typical example is the connection she draws between the radical sound of progressive rock and Roszak's assertion that the counter-culture operated "beyond ideology to the level of consciousness, seeking to transform our deepest sense of the self" [1971:156].

It is, perhaps, this involvement with the self that has been particularly relevant to the progressive rock musician in that it shifted the emphasis away from the external constraints of the easily accessible, defined here as known styles associated with particular bands, towards a more personalised expression of musical exploration.

Sheila Whiteley [1992:2]

Although support for a homological correspondence between musical and cultural characteristics can be pursued convincingly in some cases,³ it is a problematic notion difficult to sustain in most instances. Dick Hebdige for example has undertaken a

³ See Moore, Allan F. (2001). *Rock: The Primary Text. Developing a Musicology of Rock*, second edition. Aldershot: Ashgate, pp. 192-4, and Hughes, Timothy S. (2003). *Groove and Flow: Six Analytical Essays on the Music of Stevie Wonder*. Doctoral Dissertation. University of Washington.

semiotics of musical style, and claims punk reflects a defiance in which “the forbidden is permitted” [1985:114–15]. Yet whilst he asserts a direct “homological relation between [...] the pogo and amphetamines, the spitting, the vomiting [...] and the ‘soulless’, frantically driven music”, Allan Moore demonstrates that ‘Anarchy in the UK’ (1977) by the Sex Pistols is not built upon the lawlessness punk celebrates, but rather rigidly adheres to the familiar stylistic conventions of rock music. Metrically the track comprises “the most normative organizational pattern in rock”, harmonically it proceeds “exactly as might be expected”, and melodically it consists of a pattern “so basic in its organization that its connotations could not be further from ‘anarchy’” [2001:193–4].⁴

The strength of Whiteley’s approach lies in her meticulous and critical research into the counter-culture, navigating its inconsistencies and contradictions through the work of social theorists like Herbert Marcuse and Norman Brown, as well as underground publications like *The Seed* and *International Times*. A significant weakness is her attempt to “establish the meaning of psychedelic elements through an examination of the musical codes involved” [4]. This approach – which Whiteley terms psychedelic coding – assumes not only that it is possible to pinpoint a precise meaning within music, but that such (presumably fixed) meaning is deliberately encrypted into the music ready to be deciphered by a competent listener. Aside from the significant political problem this implies – namely that there must exist correct and incorrect interpretations of music (and presumably an authority to determine which is in play) – the suitability of such an approach to determining musical meaning has been contested on numerous grounds.

Chris Kennett [2003] for example argues a semiotic investigation of musical meaning is unsound because it insufficiently accounts for the range of meanings listeners ascribe to music, and the experiences informing those interpretations. He also suggests it remains insensitive to the way musical meaning changes over time and in relation to different listening contexts as well as the functions (if any) music is intended to serve in any given situation. To lump all variables together and borrow from the psychopharmacological vocabulary, Kennett argues a semiotic approach towards musical meaning is insensitive to set and setting.

⁴ See also Bennett, Samantha (2015). ‘Never Mind the Bollocks: A Tech-Processual Analysis’. *Popular Music and Society*, 38(4), pp. 466–86.

Moore on the other hand contests the degree to which, in music, the relationship between the signifier and signified is arbitrary – a cornerstone of semiotics – by drawing on an aspect of cognitive science called embodied cognition [2012:215–58]. Embodied cognition contends that human cognitive processes derive from bodily experiences of the world, and that such experiences intimately inform human processes of reasoning, use of language and metaphor, and all abstract thought.⁵ Musical gestures like melodies that ascend in pitch might therefore be associated with elevated emotions not necessarily through an arbitrary pairing that has been cemented in association by practice, but because humans have embodied experiences of phenomena like climbing hills and experiencing a sense of accomplishment or wonder at the summit.⁶

Moore's musicological application of embodied cognition does not assert that every musical gesture signals bodily experience, but rather attempts to suggest a reasonable ground upon which listeners might perceive music to refer outside of itself (that is, to act as a sign of something other than music). He uses it in conjunction with an approach from the field of ecological perception, which considers what invariants in the environment afford the perceiver. Invariants demarcate constants in the environment (such as a body of water or a tree) whilst affordances reference the range of meanings the perceiver might attach to those invariants (such that a body of water might afford drinking or drowning, a tree might afford shelter or climbing, and so on).⁷ In musical terms, invariants operate on numerous levels, but generally represent constants such as a particular instrument, a tonal centre in terms of which harmonic patterns can be

⁵ See Johnson, Mark (1987). *The Body in the Mind. The Bodily Basis of Meaning, Imagination and Reason*. Chicago: Chicago University Press.

⁶ This is an example of cross-domain mapping, a process by which cognitive scientists claim humans structure their understanding of one (often abstract or unfamiliar) domain in terms of another (usually more concrete or familiar). See Zbikowski, Lawrence M. (2002). *Conceptualizing Music: Cognitive Structure, Theory and Analysis*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, p. 13.

⁷ See Moore, Allan F. (2012). *Song Means: Analysing and Interpreting Recorded Popular Song*. Farnham: Ashgate, pp. 243–58. The theory of affordances was established by James Gibson; see Gibson, James J. (1966). *The Senses Considered as Perceptual Systems*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.

traced, or the characteristics that define a song as distinct from a track or performance [see *ibid.*:15–16]. Musical affordances specify the range of meanings a listener might ascribe to such invariants, for example Moore suggests that the “delicacy of the bass line” [249] in ‘Good Vibrations’ (1966) by The Beach Boys affords a comparison to the upper register playing of Paul McCartney.

The use of such theory in a musical analytical context, Moore claims, is that it “necessitates the restraint upon free interpretation” [244]. It strikes a balance, in other words, between what Philip Tagg describes as the “sterile formalism” of traditional music analysis on the one hand, which inadequately accounts for timbre, affect and other parameters pertinent to music yet not easily captured by notation, and the “unscientific guesswork” of “unbridled hermeneutic exegesis” on the other [1982:43–4]. Moore presents varied interpretations of numerous tracks, arguing that whilst some theorists would classify them “unequivocally as semiotic”, they are in fact consistently grounded in how specific sonic details might function “as an aspect of our experience outside the world of these particular tracks” [2012:237].

In similar vein, rather than attempting to decrypt fixed meanings embedded within Goth songs, my approach identifies specific musical invariants that are associated with psychedelic drugs within the context of other styles of popular music. I address the association both from the perspective of embodied cognition – which is to say in terms of how musical details might appear to relate to aspects of human (drug) experiences outside of the tracks in question – and in terms of how prevalent these musical details are throughout compilations described as psychedelic. I do not claim these details are inherently psychedelic, by which I mean capable of producing the effects of psychedelic drugs in an automatic way, but rather suggest how, within such contexts as the ceremonial Goth club night, such musical details afford psychedelic experiences.

A Psychedelic Ecology

Before I proceed to suggest how an ecological approach to the perception of musical meaning might address the problem posed by Middleton and Muncie at the beginning of this chapter in specifically psychedelic terms, I outline two further reasons I find Whiteley’s approach inappropriate – particularly to the repertoire at hand – to provide context.

Firstly, Whiteley’s approach is insensitive to the musical haunting Van Elferen describes [2012:26–8], which accounts for how repeated acts of listening may re-

inscribe or subvert meanings previously attributed to music – meanings, furthermore, which have been structured via a complex web of memories, emotions and connotations associated with previous listening experiences. Citing May Sinclair’s uncanny story ‘If the Dead Knew’ (1923), in which the protagonist’s dead mother appears before him as he plays Mendelssohn’s *Lieder ohne Worte* on the piano, Van Elferen contends:

The story illustrates how musical experience generates an overlap of past and present through the evocation of memories and emotions. Hearing familiar music brings back the circumstances of former listening experiences; even in the case of previously unheard music a melodic curve, a rhythm, or a vocal timbre can work as a *mémoire involontaire* that inescapably evokes connotations.

Isabella van Elferen [2012:26]

Whilst this applies to any type of music, it appears particularly relevant to Goth with its foregrounding of spectrality, its conflation of pasts and presents, and its inter-textual references, which Van Elferen argues “serve as [...] direct indications that known reality is hauntologically destabilised by the presence of other times and spaces” [170].⁸

Secondly, in assuming meaning is deliberately encrypted into the music, psychedelic coding does not appear to recognise the agencies at play within the “network of interacting and converging human and non-human actors” present in various stages of music-making. Again an important consideration to all styles of music, Van Elferen and Weinstock demonstrate its particular relevance to Goth as they consider how music interacts with various extra-musical phenomena including occult symbols and anachronistic attire to create thoroughly immersive experiences at Goth festivals and club nights [2016:51–77]. Their approach entails a sensitivity to the multiplicity of intersections at which meaning can be created (subverted, contested, and so on), and specifically to the non-human elements in play that not only mediate and colour musical experiences (like the powerful sound system at a night club that allows a bass line to throb within the chest cavity) but which are necessary in the recording and reproduction of music (thus rendering a composer, performer or producer-centric account of the creation of musical meaning unsustainable).

⁸ See pp. 11–17.

My movement away from a purely semiotic approach then is necessitated by the particular relevance of an ecological approach to the repertoire at hand, and because the study of psychedelia demands serious and transparent consideration to matters of perception. On this point, I do not perceive music to be separate from myself: I only understand what music is because I have experienced it. I, in turn, am not separate from the world in which I live: my existence is sustained by an entire ecosystem. Indeed my experience of music is dependent upon a network of interacting human and non-human actors including my ears, heart and lungs and the entire ecology that enables them to exist. I recognise in my heartbeat and breathing what in music I describe as rhythms. To separate musical details from myself as a listening subject is not objective: it is a failure to address human perception, a failure to consider the figurative glasses through which I observe my data. Furthermore – a particular problem when addressing music with such strong subcultural associations as Goth – it is a failure to recognise that these musical details are not separate from issues of identity.

Moore opens *Song Means* by suggesting, “[t]he chances are that who you believe yourself to be is partly founded on the music you use, what you listen to, what values it has for you, what meanings you find in it” [2012:1]. I wish to assert this a little more strongly. To paraphrase Alice’s assertion to the Gryphon and the Mock Turtle – that “it’s no use going back to yesterday, because I was a different person then” – I am a different person at the end of a recording or performance than I was at the beginning.⁹ To the extent that a new musical experience has the capacity to make me think or feel or dance, whether it inspires me to protest misogyny on account of its offensive lyrics, experience a rush of endorphins as I move to its rhythms, or feel less alone because it appears to convey emotions I have encountered myself, music influences my understanding of who I am, and the way I interact with my environment.

To develop this point in specifically psychedelic terms, the environment to which I refer is characterised by a remarkable prevalence of DMT, “a simple compound found throughout nature which has profound effects of human consciousness” [Schultz 2010].

⁹ The quotation is from Carroll, Lewis (2010). *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland and Other Stories*. New York: Barnes and Noble, p. 100.

DMT exists in all of our bodies and occurs throughout the plant and animal kingdoms. It is a part of the normal makeup of humans and other mammals; marine animals; grasses and peas; toads and frogs; mushrooms and molds; and barks, flowers, and roots.

Rick Strassman [2001:42]

In the words of psychedelic chemist Alexander Shulgin, DMT is, “most simply, almost everywhere you choose to look” [2013:249].

I highlight the remarkable prevalence of this compound throughout the natural world because its effects in humans are potently psychedelic:

The pharmacology of DMT is similar to that of other well-known psychedelics. It affects receptor sites for serotonin in much the same way that LSD, psilocybin, and mescaline do. These serotonin receptors are widespread throughout the body and can be found in blood vessels, muscle, glands, and skin. [...] However, the brain is where DMT exerts its most interesting effects. There, sites rich in these DMT-sensitive serotonin receptors are involved in mood, perception, and thought.

Rick Strassman [2001:52]

Although the function of DMT is not fully understood, Rick Strassman theorises it plays a role in mystical and religious experiences, states of meditative and sexual transcendence, and the consistencies reported by subjects describing near-death experiences:

As an endogenous psychedelic, DMT may be involved in naturally occurring psychedelic states that have nothing to do with taking drugs, but whose similarities to drug-induced conditions are striking. [...] It may be upon endogenous DMT’s wings that we experience other life-changing states of mind associated with birth, death, and near-death, entity or alien contact experiences, and mystical/spiritual consciousness.

Rick Strassman [2001:55]

This is important with regards to a musicological approach to psychedelia because it opens up ways of attending to psychedelic musical experiences that need not specify a point of drug use. That is to say, it opens up ways of discussing psychedelia that need

not specify whether a particular musical example was created under the influence of psychedelic drugs, whether it represents or signifies aspects of the drugged state, or whether it attempts to produce altered states.¹⁰ This is because it recognises instead the existence of naturally occurring psychedelic states of consciousness that have nothing to do with taking drugs, and the existence of a psychedelic compound endogenous within the human body theorised to play a role in these. Indeed the ecological model I have forwarded which claims I am separate neither from my environment nor from the music I experience recognises the ubiquitous presence of DMT within this ecology. Thus when I recognise in my heartbeat and breathing what in music I describe as rhythms, I recognise also the presence of DMT within the plants that enable me to breathe, and within the body and brain that are fundamental to my ability to recognise, understand or experience music at all.

I tend towards the musicological application of ecological perception because it recognises, in its emphasis on affordances, that not all sounds have the same meaning for every listener, and because it does not attempt to isolate musical details from the broader ecology that enables and influences the meanings attributed to them. As such an approach in relation to psychedelia requires a sound understanding of psychedelic drugs I now shift focus from the broader musicological problems within *Space Between the Notes* to the specific ways it necessitates a revised understanding of such drugs within the academic study of popular music.

¹⁰ I refer to the question posed by Middleton and Muncie [1981:78]; see p. 58.

Beyond the Space Between the Notes

Space Between the Notes paints a problematic picture of psychedelic drugs in several ways. The author's understanding of psychedelics is "[f]ocused by a reading" [1992:3] of a single text: Joel Fort's [1969] *The Pleasure Seekers: The Drug Crisis, Youth and Society*. Written by a physician specialising in public health, social psychiatry and drug abuse, the text predominantly addresses social attitudes towards drugs, particularly in the United States in the 1960s. In so far as it critically scrutinises drug taxonomy, legislation, and the portrayal of various substances in different types of media, it is largely a reflection on drug discourse. It also addresses the effects of such discourse, for example tracing the social demonisation of certain drugs or drug classes to the propagation of inaccurate or insufficiently contextualised information. Although an immensely useful resource for those entering the field of drugs research, *The Pleasure Seekers* is by no means sufficient to gain a comprehensive understanding of the psychedelics and their effects (indeed it makes no attempt to focus on them but rather considers them alongside depressants, narcotics, stimulants and other drug classes). As such, Whiteley's musicological account of psychedelia remains unsatisfactory, and it is necessary to present an alternative. Here I outline the key points from which I deviate.

Throughout *Space Between the Notes*, Whiteley makes numerous connections between musical details and notions of confusion, incoherence, dizziness and disorientation. "The emphasis on noise and the chaotic sound of Hendrix's playing [...] support the idea of confusion" [25], "[t]he endless feedback and distortion move the listener into an equivalent state of incoherence" [135], "[t]he chromaticism in the bass line provides a certain 'dizziness' which again feeds the idea of confusion" [22]. Although these examples are drawn from an analysis of 'Love or Confusion' (1967) by The Jimi Hendrix Experience – and might therefore relate to the confusion in the song's title and lyrics – the analogies persist in other tracks. Whiteley claims, "[i]n conjunction with the feedback and distortion there is a feeling of incoherence" in 'Purple Haze' (taken from the same album), and that in 'Up from the Skies' (1967) – taken from the band's next album – "spoken dialogue [...] coupled with the use of fuzz and distortion and the upward moving figures, suggests flight and disorientation" [27]. Indeed she makes no equivalent attempt to suggest how love is represented in 'Love or Confusion', and furthermore implies a direct link between confusion and the effects of psychedelic drugs: "[t]he words are strongly psychedelic in their association of colour and confusion" [23].

This is highly problematic. I include here an oft-cited definition of psychedelics:

A psychedelic drug is one which, without causing physical addiction, craving, major physiological disturbances, delirium, *disorientation*, or amnesia, more or less reliably produces thought, mood, and perceptual changes otherwise rarely experienced except in dreams, contemplative and religious exaltations, flashes of vivid involuntary memory, and acute psychoses.

Lester Grinspoon and James B. Bakalar [1997:9, italics mine]

Similarly, a widely accepted definition of hallucinogens:

Hallucinogens are then chemicals which in nontoxic doses produce changes in perception, in thought and in mood, *but which seldom produce mental confusion, memory loss or disorientation* for person, place, and time. These latter changes are characteristic of organic brain reactions following intoxications with alcohol, anesthetics, and other toxic drugs.¹¹

Abram Hoffer and Humphry Osmond [1967:v, italics mine]

It is possible Whiteley bases her assumption that psychedelics cause confusion and incoherence on a passage in *The Pleasure Seekers* that suggests on account of their complexity and intensity, psychedelic experiences can be “disorganising and upsetting” [Fort 1969:183]. In its original context, this assertion is made in contrast to a previous claim that psychedelics afford “intense pleasurable or esthetic experiences”, in order to highlight the importance of set and setting.

A similarly recurrent problem – also assisted by greater sensitivity to set and setting – is the tendency to reduce what Masters and Houston term the varieties of psychedelic experience to a singular “psychedelic experience” [4]. With reference to Cream’s ‘I Feel

¹¹ cf. Whiteley’s analysis of ‘Strange Brew’ (1967) by Cream, which identifies “a possible mirroring of psychedelic experience”:

There is a sense of disorganisation [...] and addiction as the stress on physical dependence is pulled into association with the traditional blues alliance of ‘woman trouble’ and satanic imagery: “If you don’t watch out, she’ll stick to you. Strange brew, killing what’s inside of you”.

Sheila Whiteley [1992:75]

Free' (1966) for example, Whiteley claims, the "mood generated is one of a gently floating high" [7], a notion expounded in a footnote: "[i]n the sense of a denotational relationship to the physical experience characteristic of hallucinatory conditions" [121]. The singular here – 'the physical experience' – is problematic because there is no single physical (nor perceptual or affective) experience associated with psychedelics, rather a plethora. Their range is extensive, from heightened tactile sensations to various out-of-body experiences, and "illusory changes in the size, distance, or position of stationary objects within the subject's visual field" such that the subject might feel out of proportion, either in relation to the environment or their own body (e.g. a feeling that the limbs are unusually elongated).¹² The term body load refers to a variety of somatic sensations afforded by psychedelic drugs, including nausea, nystagmus (involuntary eye movement) and muscle tension, but these phenomena will not be experienced by all subjects: body load may be pharmacological or psychosomatic in origin, influenced by a range of factors such as whether the subject has fasted before ingestion or is feeling anxious, and may or may not be perceived as detrimental to the overall experience. In short, psychedelics afford such a range of physical and perceptual effects that the singulars Whiteley regularly employs – for example her reference to "the dangerous ecstasy of the acid experience" [76] – are unhelpful and misleading.¹³

Indeed although musical details are specified clearly throughout *Space Between the Notes*, the correlating drug experiences are not. The notion psychedelic release, for example, recurs several times throughout but is never defined. It is contrasted with lyrics depicting "the realities of everyday life" [56] in 'A Day in the Life' (1967) by The Beatles, and with themes of death and "mechanical domination" [110] in 'Breathe' and 'Time' by Pink Floyd (both 1973). It is apparently conveyed in the third verse of Cream's 'She Walks Like a Bearded Rainbow' (1967), in which the "electronically manipulated timbres with the associations of 'fantastic colours'" resolve the problems established lyrically in the first two verses [9], and yet is contested in the D major ostinato of Pink Floyd's 'Brain Damage' (1973), which indicates that "psychedelic

¹² See 'Alice in Wonderland Syndrome' in Blom, Jan Dirk (2010). *A Dictionary of Hallucinations*. New York: Springer, pp. 13–14. See also p. 126.

¹³ cf. Masters, Robert and Jean Houston (2000). *The Varieties of Psychedelic Experience. The Classic Guide to the Effects of LSD on the Human Psyche*. Vermont: Park Street Press.

release is only temporary and can lead to madness or death” [115]. Although I hazard a guess that Whiteley uses psychedelic release to mean something akin to escapism through drugs, I have never encountered this term. Similar issues occur with the terms hallucinogenic escape, hallucinogenic search, hallucinogenic space exploration and hallucinogenic clowning.

A comparable problem occurs when existing terms whose meanings should be clearly delineated are employed somewhat awkwardly: tripping provides a case in point. Whilst in relation to drugs the colloquial term trip is both a verb meaning to experience the effects of a psychedelic, and a noun denoting a single square of blotting paper impregnated with a psychedelic, Whiteley appears to use it as a synonym for stumbling around:

Preceded by Clapton’s guitar break which starts on a top B₂, the solo focuses on configurations of vibrant bent-up notes and sliding glissandos to effect a sense of ‘tripping’ around the underlying beat. The lyrics then pick up on these connotations by focusing on perceptual changes which appear to reflect psychedelic experience.

Sheila Whiteley [1992:11]

Similarly with reference to ‘Purple Haze’ by The Jimi Hendrix Experience (1967):

The simultaneous underlying pulsating rhythm and the heightened sensation of raw power rip throughout the distorted amplification of the guitar sound with its sinuous *tripping* around the basic notes.

Sheila Whiteley [1992:20, italics original]

The qualifier sinuous certainly implies meandering around, a notion brought to bear on a track by Pink Floyd:

Within ‘Astronomy Dominé’ [...] the sinuous *tripping* of the lead guitar and organ around the basic notes and the incantatory, mesmeric effect of Wright’s voice reflect the state of mind on a hallucinogenic trip. In particular, the dip shapes in the guitar solo create a strong feeling of floating around the beat and this is reinforced by the lazy meandering around the notes, again suggestive of a state of tripping [...].

Sheila Whiteley [1992:33, italics original]

At the same time Whiteley uses the term trip to refer to a specific section of the music as though a verse or chorus – “[t]he movement into the ‘trip’ is accompanied by upward moving figures” [20], “[c]oming out of the trip is coded by the descending deep strings and two bars of unison brass” [57] – although the reasons for this designation remain unclear.

As a result it remains difficult to understand why certain musical details signify psychedelic experiences. One of the “common codes” Whiteley claims conveys “a musical equivalent of hallucinogenic experience” for example is “upward movement (and its comparison with psychedelic flight)” [3–4]. Although psychedelic flight is never explicitly defined, a passage from her analysis of ‘Good Morning, Good Morning’ (1967) by The Beatles suggests it might be “a flight from reality into non-reality as the mundane is gradually transformed into the sensational” [56]. However her consistent identification of upwards gestures as signifiers of psychedelic experience – like “the upward hallucinogenic flight suggested by the instrumental solo” [74] in Pink Floyd’s ‘See Emily Play’ (1967) – is undermined when she suggests the “downward movement” of a “descending chromatic counter-melody” in ‘Strawberry Fields Forever’ (1967) by The Beatles suggests “a musical metaphor for psychedelic experience as the music provides a route downwards into the subconscious” [66]. Presumably then it is contrast that is important: whether signalled by an upwards motion comparable to flight, or a downwards motion representing a descent into the subconscious, Whiteley contends the music indicates a movement between reality and non-reality. However in other passages she implies a sensation of flying characterises psychedelic experiences, for example defining “‘stoned’ = ‘high’, pulling on the effects of LSD, the sensation of floating” [26], when most often it simply means under the influence of marijuana. It therefore remains unclear whether the author contends psychedelic states of consciousness are evoked purely via a semiotic mechanism of contrast, or if the embodied sensation of flying is paramount (and if so why).

A similar problem occurs in an analysis of ‘In Another Land’ (1967) by the Rolling Stones, in which “[t]he contrast between the quiet serenity of the verse and the strident chorus is effective in creating a musical equivalent of non-reality and reality” respectively. Whiteley contends the “hallucinatory state” of the verse is “abruptly broken by a *wide awake* chorus in heavy r&b style” [92–3, italics original]. However she describes the chorus as “jangly with treble sound predominating on the amplified acoustic guitar [...] enhanced by the trebly piano”. This is problematic because she specifies bright trebly sounds as signifiers of psychedelic experience in numerous other

analyses, suggesting they should belong to the verse here rather than the chorus. Whiteley in fact explicitly identifies “bright hallucinatory timbres” as one of the “surface conventions of psychedelic style” [113], relating “bright tinkly sounds” both to the “unnaturally bright colours [...] said to be characteristic of hallucinatory conditions” and to “the Pop Art movement of the early sixties and to underground posters of the period” [43–5]. Again it would suggest a semiotic contrast is the mechanism of importance rather than a synaesthetic representation of bright colours, although this remains unclarified.

Implicating a distinction between reality and non-reality upon these tracks nonetheless appears insensitive to the fact that psychedelic experiences tend to throw such dualities into question. It also remains problematic in so far as the direct and persistent correlation of non-reality with psychedelic drugs suggests the altered states of consciousness afforded by such drugs are characterised by a deception of the senses, immediately imposing upon them a value-judgement.¹⁴ Although I have similarly found contrast to be an integral aspect of much psychedelic music, I contest its significance lies in the representation of reality and non-reality. I suggest the presence of oppositions need not be implicated within a hermeneutic reading of the track at hand but can be related more generally to concepts associated with psychedelic states of consciousness, such as that outlined by Rick Strassman in the previous chapter.¹⁵

In this infinitely vast time and space with no limited self, we hold up to examination all contradictions and paradoxes and see they no longer conflict. We can hold, absorb, and accept everything our mind conjures up: good and evil, suffering and happiness, small and large.

Rick Strassman [2001:234–5]

Another concept enjoying discussion amongst those who study psychedelic and mystical states of consciousness is non-duality, a term derived from the Hindu *Advaita*, which means not two. Non-duality does not contend duality is an illusion, but rather points towards an oneness or common essence that underlies all dualities and is not in conflict with them [Russell 2016]. Whilst still recognising distinctions like mind/body, non-dualist philosophy contends both are of the same essence: consciousness is of the

¹⁴ See pp. 21–2.

¹⁵ See p. 30.

same metaphysical reality as matter, and matter, in turn, is a manifestation of consciousness. In so doing it allows two concepts that may be traditionally opposed to be held in a space where neither contradicts the other, resonating considerably with the sense of oneness afforded by powerful psychedelic experiences.

I exemplify this briefly in relation to Pink Floyd's 'Us and Them' (1973), which Whiteley claims is "effected through two juxtaposed styles, the first gentle and reflective highlighting oppositions:

'Us and Them'
'Me and You'
'Black and Blue'
'Up and Down'
'Down and Out'

and the second, more aggressive, and didactic" [113–14]. She suggests the track reflects an "attack on the oppositions in society": the verses "are simply reflective, identifying the polarities that drive people apart", whilst the choruses illustrate "an alternative approach to life". Although I concur the oppositions within the track are relevant in explaining how the music is psychedelic, I instead point towards a sense that the distinctions within the lyrics are destabilised. That not all couplets above are precise binary oppositions notwithstanding, the nouns are highlighted with a delay effect, which evokes a sense of the infinite as the oppositional words echo into the distance. It is within this context the lyrics resound:

Black and blue
And who knows which is which
And who is who

Up and down
And in the end
It's only round and round and round

Harvest. SHVL 804.

These lyrics not only imply an oneness underlying distinct colours, orientations and persons, but evoke a somewhat mystical sense of self: "who knows [...] who is who" recalls for example another of Strassman's observations that during high-dose psychedelic experiences there is often "no 'personal' identity because we understand at

the most basic level the underlying unity and interdependence of all existence” [2001:234]. Whilst contrast is important to many styles of music, I suggest the mystical ideas detailed here account to at least some degree for the prevalent contrasts evident within music associated with psychedelic drugs.

In similar vein, whilst Whiteley suggests “lurching, oscillating” harmonies are involved in the musical representation of a psychedelic drug experience [1992:4], her analyses tend to implicate these within hermeneutic readings such that in some tracks they represent “the dominance of time, its strength and sense of unity achieved by the strength of the pedantic alternating chords of E major/F minor” and in others, a “sense of timelessness through the simple alternation of the two-chord structure” [108–9]. Whilst I concur that lurching, oscillating harmonies occur recurrently in music associated with psychedelic drugs and are worthy of note, I suggest that because they are able to convey a sense of harmonic motion that is non-teleological, their effect is broadly a sense of travelling without moving: a seemingly paradoxical notion that nonetheless holds kinesis and stasis simultaneously and unproblematically.¹⁶ This is not to suggest such an effect has no impact on the hermeneutic interpretation of a track; I simply intend to shift the focus from fixed notions of what music means to a broader perspective suggesting how it means.

Having specified the ways in which I deviate from *Space Between the Notes* in both a musical sense and in relation to a revised understanding of psychedelic drugs, I proceed to outline the methodology by which I select the musical invariants that afford (rather than encrypt) meaning pertaining to such drugs in the chapters that follow.

¹⁶ The phrase travelling without moving appears in David Lynch’s (1984) screen adaptation of Frank Herbert’s *Dune* (1965), a science fiction novel with considerable counter-cultural appeal [Latham 2015:100]. See also pp. 99–112.

Consistently Distinctive Psychedelic Sounds

I have suggested psychedelic coding is unsound because it remains insensitive to the range of meanings listeners attach to music, as well as the mutability of those meanings. As an alternative methodology, I apply across the three chapters that follow an approach informed by Paul Hodkinson's notion of consistent distinctiveness [2002:30]. Hodkinson coined this term in reference to the Goth scene in order to negotiate several problems in early subcultural studies (emerging from the Chicago School and Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies) and in post-subcultural studies (largely in postmodernist cultural criticism). He levels several critiques which can also be directed towards *Space Between the Notes*. From the Chicago School he points towards an unrealistically simplistic model of homogeneous problem-solving exemplified by Albert Cohen's conception of subcultures as individuals "collectively resolving societal status problems by developing new values which rendered status-worthy the characteristics they shared" [9].¹⁷ At the same time he contends the Birmingham theorists presupposed the existence of "singular, subversive meanings of subcultural styles", and highlights several studies in which semiological interpretations of spectacular styles and the "subcultural norms with which they were deemed to be homologically aligned [...] suggested that, as a whole, they functioned 'magically' to resolve contradictions and symbolically to subvert the dominant meanings of consumer culture" [Hodkinson 2002:9–11].¹⁸

Hodkinson argues in their emphasis on solving status problems on the one hand and on symbolic structural resistance on the other, "both traditions present an overly simplistic opposition between subculture and dominant culture" [*ibid.*]. This is reflected in the way these traditions tend to situate subcultures in an oppositional relationship to media and commerce. The same problems are evident in *Space Between the Notes*, for example as Whiteley argues that Pink Floyd's *Dark Side of the Moon*

¹⁷ See Cohen, Albert (1955). *Delinquent Boys: The Culture of the Gang*. London: Collier-Macmillan.

¹⁸ See for example Cohen, Phil (1972). 'Subcultural Conflict and Working Class Community'. *Working Papers in Cultural Studies*, 2, pp. 5–70, Willis, Paul E. (1978). *Profane Culture*. London: Routledge, and Hebdige, Dick (1985). *Subculture: The Meaning of Style*. London: Methuen.

(1973) reflected a “shift in direction” in which:

The sense of optimism of 1967–8 had passed. Visionary experience and self-discovery had failed to confront the dominant culture, and progressive rock, as part of the counter-culture’s revolutionary strategy had, to some extent, stagnated. ‘Fraternal individualism’ had metamorphosed into elitist exhibitionism [*sic.*]; the thinking behind unpredictable extended forms of music had been turned into LP-length easy listening; psychedelic sound had become isolated from innovative developments in harmony, rhythm and electronics to become fetishised, detached from radical implications.

Sheila Whiteley [1992:104]

Whilst Hodkinson contests the presupposed homogeneity, class awareness and subversion characterising early subcultural theory, he also rejects later postmodern theories, which – in emphasising the rapid proliferation of global economic trends – imply too radical an erosion of identity-constituting boundaries.

It follows [from the proliferation of images in late capitalism] that some identities are liable to become fragmented and malleable, and that certain cultural boundaries, including those related to style, may become less clear and permanent. However, it would be mistaken to [suggest] *all* cultural boundaries are, or will soon be, entirely eroded, or that group belonging, collective identity and cultural meaning are becoming irrelevant.

Paul Hodkinson [2002:18, italics original]

He demonstrates how postmodern attempts to present alternatives to the term subculture have resulted in a plethora of theories emphasising the fluidity and ephemerality of social groupings. Hodkinson demonstrates however that these theories are not reflective of Goth socio-reality, and proposes instead a nuanced revision of the term that attempts to sever problematic elements of the theories with which the term is associated whilst retaining aspects of relevance.

Consistent distinctiveness is one of four indicative criteria Hodkinson proposes for a revised understanding of subculture. It recognises the consistent and distinctive characteristics of Goth (or any social grouping), without attaching to these specific meanings, subversive or otherwise.

In spite of their potential problems, it would be an over-generalization to seek the absolute removal of notions of symbolic resistance, homology and the collective resolving of structural contradictions from the analysis of popular culture. However, none of these features should be regarded as an essential defining characteristic of the term subculture. For the most part, the functions, meanings and symbols of subcultural involvement are liable to vary between participants and to reflect complex processes of cultural choice and coincidence rather than an automatic shared reaction to circumstances. However, this does not mean that there is no distinctiveness or consistency to the styles and values of contemporary groupings, or that, where present, such features are not socially significant. While accepting the inevitability of a degree of internal difference and change over time, then, the first indicator of subcultural substance comprises the existence of a set of shared tastes and values which is distinctive from those of other groups and reasonably consistent, from one participant to the next, one place to the next and one year to the next.

Paul Hodkinson [2002:30]

Consistent distinctiveness, then, refers to the consistent and distinctive stylistic features of significance to a particular social group, whilst recognising internal diversity, overlaps with other cultures, and individual movement between cultures.

In the three chapters that follow I approach psychedelia in terms of a consistently distinctive set of characteristics that are both musical and experiential. By consistently distinctive musical characteristics I refer to invariants that occur recurrently in styles associated with psychedelics, and by consistently distinctive experiential characteristics I refer to a number of different effects afforded by such drugs (as distinct from the uniform 'hallucinogenic experience' that Whiteley implies). In the same way Goth consistently dislodges time and space albeit in a variety of ways, psychedelic drug effects, whilst varied, are nonetheless characterised by a number of distinguishing features that occur recurrently in empirical accounts. If psychedelic music, then, is that pertaining to the effects of psychedelic drugs, then those effects – and the musical characteristics evoking them – should be sufficiently wide-ranging to reflect the varieties of psychedelic experience, whilst remaining sensitive to the consistent distinctiveness that renders the term psychedelic meaningful.

Psychedelic Sounds

To identify the musical characteristics and drug effects comprising this consistently distinctive approach to psychedelia I draw upon the work of two theorists who approach the relationship between music and drugs from opposite sides of the association. Michael Hicks [2000] claims that to understand what makes music psychedelic, “one should consider three fundamental effects of LSD: dechronicization, depersonalization, and dynamization” [2000:63]. He begins by describing these effects before identifying a number of musical features common to acid rock he argues reflect them. His approach is grounded in embodied cognition to the extent it references empirical accounts of drug use to suggest how particular characteristics of the style are associated with varying pharmacological effects.

Craig Morrison [2000], on the other hand, begins from the music. He surveys an extensive number of recordings that “can be considered a canon of 1960s psychedelic music” [63] from which he identifies a “psychedelic top 10” [133]: ten tracks that appear most recurrently in compilations labelled psychedelic, and which he takes as representative case studies. He subjects these tracks to musical analysis, generating a list of prevalent musical characteristics found throughout the wider repertoire. He terms these characteristics (which he takes as indicative of the descriptor psychedelic) matrices, drawing on the work of Peter van der Merwe:

The matrix is “a unit of musical communication” such as a regular beat, a fixed musical note, or an individual chord. They are found grouped together in concrete ways (songs, styles), and conceptual ones (sonata form, or the keynote with its feeling of home base). [...]

A matrix can carry embedded meanings: “The major mode is bright, the minor dark; slow tempos express repose, fast tempos animation”.¹⁹ Each of the following could be called a matrix: a rhythmic figure, time signature, cadence, phrase grouping, improvisation pattern, or song’s tune family.

Craig Morrison [2000:53]

Whilst I reject the notions ‘musical communication’ and ‘embedded meanings’, I attend to the musical characteristics Morrison identifies on account of their prevalence within

¹⁹ Morrison quotes Van der Merwe, Peter (1992). *Origins of the Popular Style. The Antecedents of Twentieth-Century Popular Music*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, pp. 95–6.

the acid rock repertoire, preserving the term matrices throughout my own analyses in order to attribute their identification to Morrison.²⁰

In the following three chapters I describe how the various sounds identified by both theorists manifest in acid rock and Goth via a series of back-to-back comparisons. Each chapter addresses one of the three effects Hicks describes, and each is supplemented with matrices from Morrison's psychedelic top 10. A brief note on selection is necessary. Firstly, it is significant all the examples I subject to comparison have been designated either Goth/ic or psychedelic by others: that is, I only select tracks that have been described in such terms in the fan or academic discourse, as well as on musical compilations that are explicitly titled accordingly. This is not only to avoid a recursive argument but to demonstrate appropriate sensitivity to the fact that issues of identity are at stake in relation to the categorisation of popular music styles.²¹

There are old school Goths, for instance, who claim Joy Division was authentically gloomy proto-Goth, and that you had to be there to really understand them; there are former punks who respond in fury, claiming Joy Division had nothing to do with Goth, but were authentically punk, and so Goth should stay away from them; and there are Cybergoths who roll their eyes and claim that those old people should finally forget about Joy Division because Trent Reznor is the authentic founder of modern Goth. They are all right, of course, as much as they are all wrong, because each of these claims to authenticity reflects the importance of music in personal and collective identification processes.

Isabella van Elferen [2012:139]

²⁰ Morrison terms his matrices animated bass lines, Bo Diddley beat, cartoonish protest, chord oscillation, classical borrowing, cliché quoting, contrapuntal improvisation, drone, drug lyrics, exotic symbolism, fantasy realm lyrics, flower power lyrics, hybrid tonality, hypnotic vamp, idiosyncratic creativity, Indian instruments, internal pedal point, jazz solos, light show imagery (visual), literary references, melodramatic moment, musical mood, odd time signatures, orchestral composition, organ, oscillation, peculiar arrangement, phase shifting, rave-up, revelation, side-slipping, sound effects, subversive symbolism (visual), superlength, supernatural lyrics, text painting, theatrical stage show, tour guide, trip lyrics, trip section, tumbling ostinato, two-bar blues riff and wah-wah.

²¹ See pp. 68–70.

Secondly, Morrison notes that his psychedelic top 10 – assembled from a variety of American and British recordings – includes no examples from Canada, South America, Japan or most European countries, whilst some compilations from which he draws his examples “have been limited by licensing restrictions, a common hurdle in cross-label compilations” [2000:63]. John O’Toole’s (1990) *The Psychedelic Years 1966–1969* for example, which comprises fifty tracks spanning three compact discs, contains no material by Grateful Dead. These issues are not especially problematic in Morrison’s research, focussing as it does on the evolution of acid rock in San Francisco: the author notes his psychedelic top 10 “can serve at least as a rough guide to contextualize the San Francisco scene” [54]. I suggest similarly that as an acid approach to Goth, my methodology is not adversely affected by these limitations, essentially because it draws attention to the ways in which all consistently distinctive examples are informed by prototype theory.

Prototype Theory

Prototype theory represents a deviation from the philosophy of categorisation that was dominant from the time of Aristotle to the later work of Ludwig Wittgenstein, in which categories were assumed to be unproblematic containers “with things either inside or outside” [Lakoff 1987:6]. Cognitive psychologist Eleanor Rosch however contested two implications of this classical theory:

First, if categories are defined only by properties that all members share, then no members should be better examples of the category than any other members.

Second, if categories are defined only by properties inherent in the members, then categories should be independent of the peculiarities of any beings doing the categorizing; that is, they should not involve such matters as human neurophysiology, human body movement, and specific human capacities to perceive, to form mental images, to learn and remember, to organize the things learned, and to communicate effectively.

George Lakoff [1987:7]

Rosch argued instead that categories tend to have best examples – known as prototypes – and that categorisation is in fact thoroughly informed by the specifically human capacities identified above.

In spite of their differences, Hicks and Morrison both draw implicitly on prototype theory. The tracks Morrison identifies as his psychedelic top 10 are prototypes: they represent the best examples of the category psychedelic. In similar vein, Hicks approaches the question of what makes music psychedelic by selecting from a plethora of drug effects the three he considers the most exemplary. Furthermore, whilst there exist hundreds of different psychedelic drugs, he focuses on just one: “[t]o appreciate the importance of this music, one should understand how LSD-25 affected it”:

most rock musicians of the 1960s insisted then and continue to affirm that LSD-25 – commonly known as ‘LSD’ or ‘acid’ – directly shaped their music. Psychedelic music, says one, was meant as “an LSD session without the use of drugs”. Another explains that LSD “opened you up to a whole new set of musical values”.²²

Michael Hicks [2000:58–9]

In similar vein, Morrison aligns his matrices with “the effects of hallucinogenic drugs, especially LSD, which had become available in artistic circles in the early 1960s and was legal until 1966” [2000:1]. This is significant because LSD is a prototype psychedelic.

Lester Grinspoon and James Bakalar claim “the psychedelic drugs have a vague family resemblance rather than an easily described set of common features”:

One useful way to identify the topic of discussion is by reference to a central or prototype drug: d-lysergic acid diethylamide [LSD]. It is the most powerful as well as the most famous (or notorious) psychedelic drug, capable of producing almost all the effects that any of the others produce, and at much smaller doses. Whether a drug should be regarded as psychedelic or not can be said to depend on how closely and in what ways it resembles LSD; the resemblance must be judged by the drug’s cultural role as well as by its range of psychedelic drug effects. From this point of view, the group of psychedelic drugs has a clearly defined center and a vague periphery; the fewer of the family features a drug has,

²² Hicks quotes Graham Nash in Welch, Chris and Bob Dawbarn (22 October 1997). ‘Psychedelic: The New ‘In’ Word’. *Melody Maker*, 41, p. 10, and Mickey Hart in Goldberg, Michael (23 August 1990). ‘The San Francisco Sound’. *Rolling Stone*, 585, p. 96, respectively.

or the less likely it is to be used by the same people or at the same places and times as LSD, the less social and psychopharmacological claim it has to be called psychedelic. Unavoidably, the necessary exclusions and inclusions will be somewhat arbitrary.

Lester Grinspoon and James B. Bakalar [1997:9]

Across the next three chapters then, I more specifically survey the prototypical musical characteristics associated with the prototypical effects of the prototypical psychedelic. It is because the musical characteristics as well as the drug effects with which they are associated are prototypical I find it unproblematic to begin my analysis of Goth in this way, which is to say by comparison to a repertoire that favours acid rock and particularly the San Francisco scene. Whilst ultimately it would be inattentive to dismiss the music and cultures associated with other psychedelics, entheogens and hallucinogens, a comparison with acid rock is appropriate if the descriptor psychedelic is inseparable from LSD and the counter-culture.²³ I suggest however that recognition of the ways in which prototype theory informs our understanding of the relationship between music and psychedelic drugs allows for a more comprehensive approach towards psychedelia in the musicological domain. In demonstrating the extraordinary prevalence of psychedelic sounds amongst its diverse sub-styles, I suggest Goth indicates the existence of a wider territory of musical invariants and drug associations existing beyond the acid centre.

²³ See pp. 18–24.

An Acid Approach to Goth

In considering the prototypical effects and prototypical musical characteristics associated with the prototypical psychedelic across the following three chapters, my analysis begins within a central point of a wider territory. This wider territory represents a broader musicological understanding of psychedelia and it is here I wish to locate Goth. My approach has been necessitated by the problems exemplified within the most comprehensive and frequently cited text on psychedelic music analysis – Sheila Whiteley’s [1992] *The Space Between the Notes* – whose limitations are perfectly understandable considering there is little academic overlap between music and psychopharmacology, and in light of the challenges delineating the psychedelics even for those with a more comprehensive grasp of the chemical literature.²⁴ On this point, Peter Stafford claims with regards to drugs that “[i]f results don’t vary considerably with sets and settings, the compound almost certainly isn’t a ‘psychedelic’” [1992:10]. The approach I employ accordingly demonstrates attentiveness to such variables as the perceptual capacities of the listener and the specifics of the listening environment, and strives to suggest how music pertains to the effects of psychedelic drugs rather than what has been encoded within.

Whilst the following three chapters unearth a consistently distinctive set of musical characteristics associated with psychedelic drugs, I do not suggest these should be removed from the wider social context of the Goth scene – firstly, because such severance would be contrary to the ecological approach I have advocated, and secondly, because grounding within a specific cultural context helps to negotiate some of the challenges associated with the study of chemical compounds. I exemplify this briefly by highlighting an issue raised in the foreword to Stafford’s thoroughly comprehensive *Psychedelics Encyclopaedia*, in which drugs are organised into nine clusters and presented “in the order of importance to regular users” [1992:10], with the prototypical LSD family constituting the first cluster.

Andrew Weil states that “Stafford discusses a number of substances I do not consider to be psychedelics”, citing several examples before conceding that “all of these drugs can be mind-manifesting for some individuals. That is the literal meaning of ‘psychedelic’, and I suppose Peter Stafford has included them for that reason” [III-10–11]. Weil is a medical doctor and his reservations relate to “medical safety only”, which

²⁴ See pp. 18–24.

is to say the most prototypical psychedelics “do not kill, injure or produce any serious physical toxicity even in large overdoses or chronic use over lifetimes”. Weil asserts in his view, “the true psychedelics are the indoles (LSD, psilocybin, the tryptamines, harmaline, etc.) and the phenethylamines (mescaline, MDA, DOM, etc.)”, whilst marijuana for example is “somewhat more irritating than LSD or mescaline, capable of causing respiratory problems in those who smoke it excessively”, and so belongs in a more peripheral cluster. In Stafford’s ordering, however, marijuana belongs in cluster 3, whilst psilocybin belongs in cluster 4, MDA in cluster 5, a variety of short-acting tryptamines in cluster 6, and harmaline in cluster 7.

If Weil’s ordering is informed by medical concerns, Stafford’s is more sensitive to culture. This is an important point because:

it is somewhat misleading to exclude the cultural component that can make all the difference. The alcohol drunk by bacchants in the rites of Dionysus in ancient Greece might be called a psychedelic drug; the alcohol drunk by the American sports enthusiast as he sits in front of his television set watching a football game is not. Tobacco as used by a South American Indian witch doctor may resemble LSD more than it resembles the tobacco consumed by the Marlboro man.

Lester Grinspoon and James B. Bakalar [1997:9]

Some compromise between precision and comprehensiveness is necessary when dealing with the psychedelics, and this is facilitated with reference to a drug’s cultural role in addition to its pharmacological effects. Indeed Weil concedes his own classification system, focused on medical safety only, is problematic in so far as it does not account for the “dangers of psychedelic plants and chemicals having to do with acute psychological toxicity – that is, bad trips” [*ibid.*:III-10]. “These reactions”, he observes, “are more the products of set and setting than of pharmacology”. By factoring in cultural concerns that are subsumed under set and setting then, Stafford’s more inclusive approach is reflective of my own. This is particularly important within a musicological context because it allows for a broader understanding of psychedelia that can begin to extend beyond the acid prototype. Marijuana, for example, can claim both a long history of entheogenic use and an enormous impact on reggae and dub music, whose influence on Goth in terms of both style and production have been well noted [Carpenter 2012].

Stafford claims the drugs addressed in his *Psychedelics Encyclopaedia* “touch a spiritual core in their users”: they “have been used ritualistically, facilitate creative problem-solving and change the sense of time and spatial relationships” [1992:9–10]. As explored to some degree in the previous chapter, this echoes the way music functions within the Goth scene. Citing a participant who claims the scene “involves the idea that life should be a life of the spirit”, Anna Powell states that Goth nightclub experiences are “sacralised by shared rituals of entry, dance, and intoxicant consumption”: indeed she specifies the use of “psychotropic drugs” [2007:358–60]. Supporting Van Elferen’s assertion that Goths create heterotopias – spaces that challenge, reflect and comment upon the larger culture within which they are located – Powell provides several examples of creative problem-solving, highlighting for example the imaginative use of drapes in Goth clubs to elicit the effect of erasing the walls.²⁵ This “apparent erasure of conventional architectural features”, she claims, “heightens the difference between the club interior and the outside world” [*ibid.*]. Within the club interior, smoke machines heat scented oil to olfactory, visual and immersive effect, lending the space “a magical aura as the ceiling seems to fade away to create the illusion of a gateway to another realm”. Strobes, which “help to project another-worldly quality, often described as hypnotic”, along with lasers, lighting and other effects, “enhance the drama”, reflecting DJ Hamish’s claim in the previous chapter that Goths strive to “create some sort of theatre inside of the dullness of the cities”.²⁶

Goth music and the events centred on them appear to reflect precisely the same values Stafford asserts psychedelics hold for their users: Goths use music ritualistically, to facilitate creative problem solving, and – as demonstrated in the chapter that follows – to change the sense of time and spatial relationships. Whilst I emphasise that to classify any isolated musical characteristic as unequivocally psychedelic is to remain insensitive to set and setting, I suggest the musical characteristics identified across the following chapters, within such cultural contexts as the Goth club night, afford psychedelic experiences as well as meanings related to such drugs. Within the thoroughly otherworldly space of a Goth club night, ghosts of a pagan past dance with androids of a dystopian future, challenging the linear progression of time and offering a

²⁵ See pp. 35–6.

²⁶ *Batcave Special* (31 October 1983). Riverside. BBC2. Remastered on iDVD at h808 Studios as “The Batcave: a digital picture by DJ Hamish (h808)” [2007]. Available via YouTube. <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T3UKqdWCKS0>>. See p. 27.

way of being outside the chronology of everyday existence. As the scene conflates pasts, presents and futures – affording a mystical sense of timelessness – the physical and affective immersion in dance allows the “ecstatic dissolution of the self on the dancefloor”, a profoundly psychedelic as well as “definitely liminal experience”.²⁷ Corsets and bondage collars elicit their own physicality, increasing the sense of immersion in the uncanny twilight zone of Goth, whilst tactile sensations effected through velvet dresses, PVC body suits and intensely throbbing bass lines curiously contrast with the spectral themes Goth often relates, allowing the participant to hold, absorb and accept all contradictions and paradoxes and see that they no longer conflict.

²⁷ Gilbert, Jeremy and Ewan Pearson (1999). *Discographies: Dance Music, Culture and the Politics of Sound*. London: Routledge, pp. 107 and 60. See pp. 13–14.

Chapter 3

Altered Perceptions:

Time and Space in Acid Rock and Goth

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Forever Remains

The altered perceptions of time and space that are afforded by both psychedelic drugs and the sonically unreal *mises-en-scène* of Goth are discussed here in terms resonant with the popular music literature introduced in the previous chapter. I address altered perceptions of time in terms of dechronicisation, a psychopharmacological effect of LSD which, in Michael Hicks' words, "permits the drug user to move outside of conventional perceptions of time" [2000:63–5]. Musically it pertains to characteristics including "quasi-hypnotic repetition and the absence of musical goals", "undirected solos and endless ostinatos", and songs that are extended in length or slowed in tempo. Since some of the characteristics Hicks identifies – like "expansive, open-ended forms" – can be explained by influences other than psychedelic drugs (such as the limited repertoire of some acid rock bands comparative to the length of time they were expected to play), I supplement his short list of dechronicisation techniques with five matrices drawn from the work of Craig Morrison [2000]. These include chord oscillation, the internal pedal point, the drone, the hypnotic vamp and the tumbling ostinato. Further to defining each alongside examples from both the acid rock and Goth repertoires, I outline ways in which these matrices afford the psychedelic sense of travelling without moving introduced in the previous chapter.¹ I also underscore how they elicit a quintessentially Gothic temporal disjunction in which past, present and future merge into the timeless now of eternity.

As the ecological perception of time and space are inherently related, I then highlight a number of techniques by which both acid rock and Goth play with distortions of space. I refer in particular to the use of studio effects to disrupt a sense of coherence between the parameters through which listeners usually – by which I mean as a function of their experience outside the world of recorded popular music – identify the physical characteristics of a space from sonic information like reverb and echo.² In addition to suggesting how incoherence between these parameters may correlate with the illusory changes in size, distance or position afforded by psychedelic drugs, I emphasise how Goth's use of studio effects is influenced by a number of styles beyond acid rock. Goth's penchant for echo and delay for example is readily traceable to dub, and some of the scene's most significant recordings have been strongly influenced by

¹ See p. 78.

² See pp. 63–70.

reggae production. Goth, that is, makes extensive use of not only the prototypical musical characteristics associated with the prototypical effects of LSD, but also the spatially hallucinogenic effects of other styles of popular music strongly associated with another psychedelic, marijuana. I thus suggest how permissive attitudes towards drug use integral not only to the 1960s counter-culture but to dub and reggae cultures find resonance in both oral accounts of the Goth scene and in the psychedelic sounds of its music.

I conclude by summarising the consistently distinctive psychedelic musical characteristics in Goth pertaining to altered perceptions of time and space.³ Drawn from the work of two theorists who approach the association between acid rock and LSD from opposite starting points, as well as from analysis that excavates some of Goth's most significant stylistic influences, they are consistently distinctive because they encompass a set of shared effects – namely temporal and spatial dislocation – that occur recurrently across the varying sub-styles of Goth. The effects to which they pertain are also consistently distinctive because they account for a wide variety of psychedelic experiences whilst still being rooted in a consistent and distinctive set of features that relate to altered perceptions of time and space.

I suggest that Goth music affords experiences of time that are non-chronological and non-teleological, and through the mystical and supernatural concepts associated with such experiences, glimpses into other worlds. I also suggest the Goth scene's extensive use of spatial effects affords the perception of alternative realities, and that its creative use of heterotopic performance spaces provides an opportunity for its participants to become immersed in a place and state of being profoundly different to the everyday, along with the occasion to transcend into the spiritual worlds its music evokes.⁴ Through ritual, spectral dancing, and music that is temporally and spatially distorted, “[o]rdinary time and space dissolve in a participatory musical reality that traverses the borders between present and (Gothic) past, secular and sacred, self and other” [Van Elferen 2012:137]. In these ways, Goth transfigures the three pillars of self, time and space that consistently come undone during powerful psychedelic experiences.

³ See pp. 79–86.

⁴ See pp. 11–17 and pp. 35–6.

Spectral Time: Dechronicisation and the Eternal Now

In describing what he considers one of the three fundamental effects of LSD, Michael Hicks references the empirical account of Albert Hofmann, the first chemist to synthesise (in 1938), ingest (in 1943) and describe the effects of the drug.⁵ “It distorted his sense of time; long events seemed to pass in a flash and single moments became eternities” [2000:58]. Note the similarity to the account of the assistant English professor in chapter 1, who claimed under the influence of peyote, “[a] few moments were hours, possibly longer, and any one event seemed to take almost no time at all”.⁶ Hicks labels this effect “dechronicization” [63], a psychopharmacological mechanism that allows the subject to experience time in an unconventional fashion. This effect is reflected in a number of musical characteristics particular to acid rock of the 1960s, he asserts. The first he identifies is the extended length and generally slow tempi of the songs.

On the simplest level, dechronicization lengthens songs and slows them down. Psychedelic groups retarded the beat, a practice easily perceived in cover versions. Vanilla Fudge’s 1967 remake of the Supremes’ ‘You Keep Me Hanging On’ is typical; it converts the Motown tempo of ♩ = 128 to a relatively ponderous ♩ = 85.

Michael Hicks [2000:64]

Type O Negative’s 1994 cover of Black Sabbath’s ‘Paranoid’ (1970) is an apt example from the Goth repertoire. A terse and energetic single from their album of the same title, Black Sabbath’s ‘Paranoid’ drives along at a spirited ♩ = 166 and lasts barely three minutes. Subjected to the dooeful melancholy of the Brooklyn-based gothic metal band, however, the song – played at a plodding ♩ = 105 with some added interludes featuring Black Sabbath’s ‘Iron Man’ riff from the same album – lasts for almost seven and a half minutes. Furthermore whilst the original is in E aeolian with Ozzy Osbourne’s vocal entering on a G4, Type O Negative’s version is shifted down a

⁵ Hofmann’s account can be found in Hofmann, Albert (2013). *LSD My Problem Child and Insights/Outlooks*, ed. Amanda Feilding, trans. Jonathan Ott. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

⁶ Unnamed subject in Masters, Robert and Jean Houston (2000). *The Varieties of Psychedelic Experience. The Classic Guide to the Effects of LSD on the Human Psyche*. Vermont: Park Street Press, p. 9. See p. 31.

perfect fourth to B aeolian with Peter Steele's vocal transposed down a further octave, entering on a D3 (more than 180 Hz lower than Osbourne). The effect afforded to a listener familiar with Black Sabbath's original is something akin to listening to a record played at the wrong speed or a tape slowed by a vari-speed control. With plenty of Black Sabbath tracks for the band looking to record a slow heavy metal cover in excess of six minutes to choose from, it is not without a certain tongue-in-cheek that Type O Negative selected an "[u]ncharacteristically fast and succinct" number to subject to this treatment [Wells 2009:10]. Completely overturning the feel of a track that had been described by Black Sabbath drummer Bill Ward as "a little bit light" [*ibid.*], this evidences a clear inversion gesture typical of the 1960s counter-culture.⁷

At over two and a half times the length of its progenitor, Type O Negative's incredibly slow rendition of 'Paranoid' illustrates how:

That kind of slowing down could in itself dramatically lengthen a song. But psychedelic musicians often went further, attaching long instrumental introductions and codas or inserting long solos or 'jams'. That is, they treated a rock song like a jazz chart, a starting place for a series of improvisations that explored the implications of the basic material.

Michael Hicks [2000:64]

Ritual's 'Questioning the Shadow', released in 1983, follows such a formula. Described by Mick Mercer in the liner notes to his *Gothic Rock 3* compilation (1998) as an "exquisite form of strange prettiness", the entire track consists of an infinitely repeating syncopated bass motif in 7/4 around which piano, saxophone, guitar and drums improvise.⁸ The bass line maintains a stubborn persistency for the entire length of the track – almost six and a half minutes – and it is not until four minutes and twenty seconds into the recording that the vocal enters. Indeed the track is so quasi-hypnotic on account of its repeating bass motif, at times reinforced by the piano playing the same melody with an octave doubling, that the entry of the vocal at this point is

⁷ See p. 19.

⁸ The song exemplifies Craig Morrison's odd time signatures matrix, defined as "time signatures with measures of 5, 7, 9 or 11, etc., that is, ones other than the standard 4/4, ubiquitous in rock and popular music in general, the occasionally used 2/4 or 6/8, or the less common 3/4" [2000:143].

impossible to anticipate, eliciting a certain experience of strangeness upon the entranced listener.⁹ Note the occurrence of similar musical characteristics described by Van Elferen with reference to Joy Division's 'Dead Souls' (1981):

Another important cause for the haunting effect of this song is its use of repetition. The long intro section of the track states the harmonic home [...] over and over again in endless repetitions of a VI-V-I cadence [...]. Working like constantly returning musical revenants, these repetitions are an important contributor to the haunted, uncanny atmosphere of the track. [...] Moreover this musical repetition [...] causes a standstill of time [...]. If spectral time is out of joint, moreover, this is musically underlined through the pervasive use of syncopations [...] which subtly but persistently shift the music's temporal structure from on the beat to beside it, beyond it even.

Isabella van Elferen [2012:141-2]

Mephisto Walz's 1995 gothic rock cover of Jefferson Airplane's 'White Rabbit' (1967) – one of Craig Morrison's psychedelic top 10 – almost doubles the length of the original, not by retarding the beat but by repeating the material.¹⁰ With the exception of huge amounts of delay, abstract guitar sounds attained most likely by processing dampened strings through a generous number of effects pedals, and excessive reverb that causes pitches to sustain and bleed into one another, the Goth version appears to adhere to the original rather faithfully at first. Although the iconic military snare is replaced by a less rhythmically dense pattern on typically Goth-sounding drums (characterised by pounding toms and an extremely reverberant snare), the cover follows the form of its forebear for two minutes and thirty seconds – the entire length of the original – before it deviates. After the reiterated lyric that concludes the original – “feed your head” – Mephisto Walz drop back into the intro before reminding the listener again to remember what the Dormouse said, thus immediately juxtaposing the softest and most rhythmically sparse moment in the song with the loudest and most energetic. At this point, instead of repeating the line that usually follows said reminder – “feed your head” – as a listener familiar with the original might expect, the band returns to an earlier section of the song, (although not one directly following the intro to which they previously returned). This entire process disrupts the comparatively

⁹ I refer here to my own experience.

¹⁰ See pp. 82-4.

linear progression of Jefferson Airplane's original, which gradually builds in dynamic level, tempo and energy whilst the vocal line climbs in pitch until the final line "feed your head" – repeated for emphasis – signals a very clear climax. In Mephisto Walz's version, the haunting return of the intro ushers a reiteration of the more spacious drum pattern that characterises this earlier point in the song, causing the intensity and passage of time in the song to fluctuate in a manner inconsistent with the original.

As with 'Questioning the Shadow' and 'Dead Souls' then, Mephisto Walz's version of 'White Rabbit' affords dechronicisation in a manner entirely different from Type O Negative's 'Paranoid'. These three tracks all exercise varying forms of repetition and all musically disrupt any sense of teleological progression.

In music one experiences the passage of time largely according to the disposition of musical events; quasi-hypnotic repetition and the absence of musical goals change the sense of time-passage dramatically. Many lead guitarists in psychedelic bands improvised in chain-link fashion, repeating ideas immediately, but varying the end of the idea in order to lead into a new idea, and so on. Beneath such non-directional solos, bassists often played ostinatos.

Michael Hicks [2000:64–5]

In similar vein, Ian Shirley notes in his chronicle of the "Godfathers of Goth" Bauhaus that the band would "conduct a few experiments" whilst touring in order to break the monotony of playing the same set every night [1994:86]. In Germany they abandoned their set list entirely to improvise four pieces around the theme of colours.¹¹ In Chicago they attempted something extraordinary. Shirley includes a transcript of an interview with bassist David J:

At one point, I suggested to the others that we take this idea and push it as far as it could go, and the idea was to play this track 'Antonin Artaud' which had a one note break in it. When we reached this point in the song we'd just keep it going. First of all we extended the intro so it was very improvised, then there was a signal to go into the song and then you get the middle section and keep it going for as long as it felt right.

David J in Shirley [1994:87]

¹¹ One of the many perceptual effects afforded by psychedelic drugs is synaesthesia.

Engaging in “a numbing piece of stamina”, the band extended the song – which lasts for around four minutes on the studio album *Burning from the Inside* (1983) – for over half an hour, taking performance “beyond theatrical presentation and into ritualistic confrontation” by maintaining the one-note break for an entire fifteen minutes [*ibid.*].

In the same way David J attributes improvisation, repetition and non-teleological song structures to a desire to banish the tedium of performing the same material every night, Hicks notes there were other “practical reasons” for acid rock bands to slow or lengthen their songs. He quotes The Yardbirds drummer Jim McCarty:

We used to play these all-nighters, sometimes three hours a night and we didn't have that much material. So we used to spread it all out and do these tempo changes and go into long free-form passages just to make the numbers longer.

Jim McCarty in Hicks [2000:64]

Similarly, guitarist Erik Braunn explains that Iron Butterfly kept extending the length of ‘In-A-Gadda-Da-Vida’ (1968) – another of Morrison’s psychedelic top 10 that lasts for over seventeen minutes on the studio album of the same title – because they “didn’t have enough material for a whole set” [*ibid.*]. On the other hand, Jerry Garcia of Grateful Dead asserts: “[w]e played long songs because people wanted to dance. That’s what it was about” [quoted in Sculatti and Seay 1985:73]. Recalling the DIY attitude of punk with which Goth is readily associated, Garcia also maintained that “a lot of the early [acid rock] bands were just a collection of friends, some of whom could play instruments, some of whom couldn’t” [84]. Hicks suggests that such “technical deficiencies” encouraged “expansive, open-ended forms”, quoting Darby Slick of The Great Society, who claimed, “[a]t first all we *could* play was free-form jams” [2000:64, italics original]. In light of this – because several dechronicisation techniques Hicks identifies can readily be attributed to factors other than psychedelic drugs – I proceed to survey Goth for the prevalence of dechronicisation techniques presented in Morrison’s work as matrices.

Chord Oscillation

The first matrix I address is chord oscillation, defined by Morrison as two chords that “do a back and forth motion, typically one bar for each” [2000:80]. He exemplifies the use of two oscillating chord pairs in Iron Butterfly’s ‘In-A-Gadda-Da-Vida’, “(G to E, then A to F#)”. Noting the comparative lack of such oscillating chord pairs in Western classical diatonic harmony, Morrison defines them as “non-functional”, imbuing upon

them a non-teleological quality. Hicks draws attention to the same musical characteristic of the same track in reference to the various ways in which acid rock bands dynamised harmony.¹² Conversely he calls the chords chromatic mediants, although his description similarly betrays the idea of non-teleological motion:

Consider also Iron Butterfly's 'In-A-Gadda-Da-Vida' (1968). The song, in D minor, contains a bridge replete with strong non-functional chromatic mediants: alternating G major and E major chords, then A and F# major chords, and finally a double chromatic mediant – an emphatic B major chord moving directly to a D minor chord.

Michael Hicks [2000:68]

I have included the chord oscillation matrix in this chapter precisely because of this non-teleological quality. In contrast to functional progressions, non-functional chord progressions do not appear to gravitate towards a tonal centre. As Iron Butterfly's track demonstrates, this makes them excellent candidates for endless repetition. On account of practical reasons or not, with no obligation to reach a tonic, oscillating chords may lilt back and forth indefinitely, affording their own hypnotic effect through prolonged reiteration or simply evoking the eternal.

'Hollow Hills' by Bauhaus opens with a haunting solo melody played on a heavily delayed bowed electric guitar that oscillates from left to right in the stereo field as well as down a minor third from E and up a minor third from E through portamento. The entire track – just under five minutes on the studio album *Mask* (1981) – comprises the harmony established by this melody, alternating solemnly from E minor to C major (one bar for each) again and again. E minor never quite establishes itself as the tonic, partly because E is neither the final nor the lowest tone of the melody, and partly because the melody emphasises the triad of C major. On account of its gloomy sound however, the song does not appear to dwell in C major either. The harmony is outlined by David J's fretless bass, which offers a certain imprecision of equal tempered interval in contrast to a fretted instrument. This exacerbates what Hicks describes as the ambiguous quality of acid rock harmony, in which the tonality seems "to float or to gravitate to two different tonal centers" [*ibid.*]. The effect is what might be described by

¹² I address dynamisation in chapter 5 within the context of the uncanny, an aesthetic Morrison also attributes to chord oscillation when he notes, "it is somewhat unsettling in the way that it blurs the tonality" [2000:80]; see pp. 191–9.

Edgar Allan Poe as a certain “*indefinitiveness*”:

Give to music any undue *decision* – imbue it with any very *determinate* tone – and you deprive it, at once, of its ethereal, its ideal, and, I sincerely believe, of its intrinsic and essential character. You dispel its dream-like luxury: – you dissolve the atmosphere of the mystic in which its whole nature is bound up: – you exhaust it of its breath of faëry.¹³

Edgar Allan Poe in Galloway [1967:493, italics original]

Featuring witches, goblins and indeed king of the fairies himself, the lyrics of ‘Hollow Hills’ – alluding to a sanctity “that music hold and Oberon fill” – underline the transgressive potential of music. This transgressive potential is furthermore what Van Elferen asserts has given rise to speculation – of which Poe’s passage above is exemplary – regarding “the possibly supernatural dimensions of music and musical experience” [2012:23].¹⁴ An additional musical characteristic with supernatural connotations is awoken within ‘Hollow Hills’ when Peter Murphy’s lead vocal ascends from E to an F# semibreve that hovers over the C major harmony underneath. The resulting tritone interval – which Van Elferen describes as being “in excess of harmonic rules” [69] on account of its historically developed diabolical connotations – recalls an observation by Sam Andrew of Big Brother and the Holding Company, who noted precisely how non-functional chord progressions allowed acid rock musicians to juxtapose C and F# “without worrying about any kind of transition” [quoted in Hicks 2000:68]. Within the context of a constantly reiterated E minor, a melody stepping from E–F# as Murphy’s does is not unusual. In similar vein the incessant chord oscillation renders the C major underneath unsurprising at this point. However the combination – reached without any kind of complicated transition – offers a hint of the

¹³ See also Van Elferen [2012:24], who claims that “[p]recisely this indefinitiveness underlies the various kinds of music described in Gothic literature”.

¹⁴ The relationship between psychedelic and what may be described as supernatural experiences is addressed in Strassman, Rick (2001). *DMT: The Spirit Molecule. A Doctor’s Revolutionary Research into the Biology of Near-Death and Mystical Experiences*. Vermont: Park Street Press. See also Strassman, Rick, Slawek Wojtowicz, Luis Eduardo Luna and Ede Frecska (2008). *Inner Paths to Outer Space: Journeys to Alien Worlds through Psychedelics and Other Spiritual Technologies*. Vermont: Park Street Press.

supernatural in its radical dislocation from functional harmony.

The floating and aimless tonality of 'Hollow Hills' synergises its ghostly connotations. The chords, oscillating again and again, seemingly in motion but never actually going anywhere, contribute to a sense of what Jonathan Kramer calls "vertical time", an experience of time that is neither linear nor teleological.¹⁵

The result is a single present stretched out into an enormous duration, a potentially infinite 'now' that nonetheless feels like an instant. I call the time sense in such music 'vertical time'.

Jonathan D. Kramer [1981:549]

As well as resonating with the empirical accounts of psychedelic drug use encountered in chapter 1,¹⁶ vertical time is afforded not only through chord oscillation in 'Hollow Hills' but through devices undermining closure in Gothic music more generally. Van Elferen claims it is precisely elements undermining closure that "increase the sense of uncanniness" in Gothic music, resonating as they do with the concept of spectral time in which ghosts may return to render the present unhomely [2012:4]. Hicks describes the use of chord oscillation in 'Light My Fire' by The Doors (1967) in similar terms, with the A minor and F# minor chords in the verse more specifically "seeming to hover somewhere slightly removed from the song's principal key" [2000:68].

Yet whilst the chords in both examples appear to be heading nowhere definitive they nonetheless convey a very clear sense of motion: 'back and forth' in Morrison's words. In this way, they afford the incredibly psychedelic notion of travelling without moving, an ostensibly paradoxical idea that maintains kinesis and stasis simultaneously and unproblematically. All the matrices I address in this chapter synergise this notion of travelling without moving and the dechronicisation afforded by non-functional harmony. The next I attend to is the internal pedal point.

¹⁵ It is, in this sense, an experience of time very much contrary to the dominant tendencies of Western thought: a concept that tends within the discourse of 1960s counter-culture to be attributed to the influence of "Eastern religion" and "Oriental mysticism" – see for example Roszak [1995:82–3] – and within the discourse of Gothic to be given a distinctly spectral or supernatural emphasis; see for example Van Elferen [2012:180–81].

¹⁶ See pp. 30–36.

Internal Pedal Point

A pedal point is a tone that is sustained over a period of time whilst others ascend or descend in pitch “in independent harmony” [Corder 1990:678]. Because the term derives from an organ playing technique wherein the organist holds low notes indefinitely with the foot pedals whilst playing higher notes with the hands, Morrison adds the qualifier internal to differentiate a sustained tone in the bass from one in the middle or upper registers.¹⁷ He exemplifies with ‘Get Me to the World on Time’ by The Electric Prunes (1967), in which a sustained G3 sounds “as a remarkably hovering pedal point that almost pulses with its wide vibrato, through nearly the whole song” [2000:74–5]. This sustained note – a fixed tone in the middle register that persists through chords to which it does not belong (F, B \flat , and D major) as well as chords to which it does (C and G major) – provides a sense of motionlessness concurrent to the voices that move between chords.

In the Goth domain, ‘Last Exit for the Lost’ (1988) by Fields of the Nephilim features a hovering internal pedal point on A3 that also seems to pulse – this time with slow tremolo – for almost the entire song (at least for the first six and a half minutes before the tempo picks up). It enters after a repeated and arpeggiated figure played on a heavily sustained bass appears to establish a D minor tonic. The subsequent entry of a melody that descends from G–D via F \sharp on guitar, however, soon challenges the clear definition of the home key. The effect is an unhomey tonic, which is maintained as the vocal melody in D dorian is answered between phrases by two guitars – also heavily sustained – playing variations of the melody with F \sharp , whilst the bass varies its arpeggiated pattern with both major and minor thirds throughout. As the music seems to wash in and out of both D major and minor – the heavy sustain allowing the thirds to linger and bleed into one another – the A3 internal pedal constantly sounds. This sustained tone in the middle register provides a sense of motionless concurrent to the melodic and harmonic motion of the other voices. ‘Last Exit for the Lost’ is in perpetual

¹⁷ Although not strictly necessary – *Grove Music Online* claims pedal point “generally refers to a low bass note” but “may also be applied to a long-held note elsewhere in the texture” [Walker 2017] – some dictionaries, such as *The Oxford Companion to Music*, offer more restrictive definitions: “[t]he device of holding on a bass note (usually the tonic or dominant) through a passage including some chords of which it does not form a part” [Latham 2011].

motion, but the constant sound of the internal pedal ensures that it never really goes anywhere. Instead of moving teleologically or chronologically it appears to reflect the sentiment of the song's most repeated lyric: "forever remain".

In contrast to chord oscillation, which makes use of non-functional harmonic motion, the internal pedal can lend chords that appear to be travelling teleologically a motionless quality. An internal pedal point in the intro to 'Hang Him Higher' (2000) by Goth electro-industrial act :Wumpscut: provides a sense of stasis against the motion of a harmonic progression that moves from D minor to A major (via Dm/F and G minor). The track opens with an iteration of the progression first traced on solo synth strings and then elaborated in two further iterations with the addition of drums and synthesised harpsichord. Accompanying the start of the fourth iteration is the striking entry of a pan flute sounding an internal pedal point on D3.¹⁸ I describe it as striking primarily on account of its timbre – because it is unusual to hear synthesised harpsichord and pan flute in close succession – but also because it is reiterated rather than sustained on account of the enormous amount of breath required to sustain a tone on pan flute for the length of the progression.

Indeed the fast attack of the instrument is in marked contrast to the relatively slow attack of an accordion-like timbre that also enters at this point. The effect is a subtle temporal displacement – a difficulty in feeling the precise placement of the beat – caused by the discrepancy in attack time of the concurrent instruments. This effect is in fact previously established by the entry of the synthesised harpsichord, which seems to want to hurry the tempo established by the strings, not only because its comparatively fast attack time makes it appear to anticipate the beat, but because it moves at four times the pace. The harpsichord, with its Renaissance and Baroque connotations, later heard in tandem with a thumping four-on-the-floor kick popularised by 1970s disco, plays in simple divisions of the time signature. The hi-hat that accompanies its entry plays in triplet rhythms, resulting in simultaneous divisions of the beat by different integers and multiple ways of feeling the pulse.

There are many such temporally relevant details at play in 'Hang Him Higher' but I shall not expound upon them here. It suffices to note the internal pedal point

¹⁸ The A major is implied through a melodic C# on harpsichord that colours only the second and third iteration of the progression (immediately preceding the entry of the pan flute).

contributes to a sense of inertia against the harmonic motion of the chord progression; indeed after the fourth iteration the harmony remains in D minor for some time, as though drawn there by the pedal. I have described the use of an internal pedal here to suggest how it dispels a sense of harmonic teleology, but is important to recognise it is not the only significant detail in contributing to the temporal strangeness of the track: it is not only the pedal that resists a sense of chronological progression and affords a feeling of remaining in the same place for instance but the repetitions of the harmonic progression itself. These repetitions, like constantly returning musical revenants, ensure the perpetual return of the bleak D minor tonic, and open the door to what Kramer calls the vertical time of non-linear music.

It will become clear that the musical characteristics associated with psychedelics are in most cases simultaneously at work within a single track. In the opening riff to Skeletal Family's Goth classic 'Promised Land' (1985) for example, a persistent G# in the rhythm guitar acts as an internal pedal point for a pair of chords oscillating from C# minor to A major repeatedly. The bass line continues to oscillate from C# to A throughout almost the entire song, even in the absence of the rhythm guitar riff with G# pedal (which only periodically colours the harmony). Indeed it deviates from this oscillating pattern only during the choruses, at which point the gesture is seemingly handed to the guitar, which proceeds to rock between E-D# in punctuated syncopation. Only intensified by the fact that excessive amounts of delay blur the precise placement of the rhythm, this syncopation, in Van Elferen's words, subtly but persistently shifts the music's temporal structure from on the beat to beside it, beyond it even.

Functioning almost as an oscillating internal pedal point,¹⁹ the E-D# gesture has a counterpart in the form of a C#-B gesture, also in the guitar, which oscillates in a syncopated pattern over the bass during an earlier part of the song. On the album version, a formal oscillation furthermore occurs between the opening rhythm guitar riff with G# pedal (which lasts for eight bars) and a phrase of equal length featuring the C#-B syncopated pattern. That is to say: the opening riff featuring the G# internal pedal is followed by a phrase of matching length – the oscillating C#-B pattern – which returns to the G# pedal riff, goes back to the C#-B pattern, and returns once more to the G# pedal. The bass consistently oscillates from C# to A every two bars throughout,

¹⁹ The chorus comprises three basic triads (C# minor, E major and F# major); the E belongs to two of these triads (C# minor and E major) whilst the D# belongs to none.

whilst the C#-B gesture in the guitar rocks back and forth in yet faster harmonic rhythm: oscillations within oscillations. In addition to lending the track what might loosely be described as a fractal pattern – by which I mean a shape made out of parts resembling the whole and exhibiting self-similar, iterated patterns at increasingly smaller scale – the oscillations themselves, as well as their persistent return in various forms, dispel any sense of ending.²⁰ Furthermore, echoing the sentiment of the box-set on which ‘Promised Land’ makes no less than five (re)appearances – *Eternity* (2016) – a typically Gothic temporal disjunction characterises the opening lyrics. These lyrics speak directly to altered perceptions of time: “it felt like we’d been here a thousand years ago when the door broke open and let in the light”.

Drone

As well as synergising the psychedelic sense of travelling without moving afforded by simultaneous motion and stasis, Morrison suggests the internal pedal point functions similarly to the drone in Indian classical music. Traditionally played on the tamboura, the function of the drone is to constantly sound and emphatically repeat what Ravi Shankar describes as “the basic note of the raga” [1968:37]: most often the tonic, sometimes concurrent with the dominant. In the opening to ‘Eight Miles High’ by The Byrds (1966) – one of Morrison’s psychedelic top 10 – the bass line comprises only the dominant and the tonic, which is reiterated in two different octaves. In its flip-side, ‘Why’, the bass sounds a constant rhythmic reiteration of the tonic underneath two solos improvised on twelve-string guitar.

In the Goth repertoire, the bass line of Peter Murphy’s ‘The Ghost of Shokan Lake’ (2014) comprises a constantly reiterated tonic in quavers, which punctuate, in concert with a thumping kick drum, the pulse of a 12/8 time signature. The recording is extensively multi-tracked, and there are other drones in the form of a sustained tonic and dominant on melodica (panned slightly left) and a sustained dominant on violin (panned right). There is also a long swirling synth filter sweep on the tonic that swishes and swooshes over the top of multiple tracks of guitars and multiple tracks of Murphy’s vocals. Everything is excessively reverberant. The bass drone in this quasi-

²⁰ Fractals feature heavily in psychedelic visual art of the 1960s. The relationship between fractal patterns and psychedelics is the subject of many a thread on drug discussion forums, with most users curious to understand the significance of the fractal patterns they perceive under the influence of psychedelic drugs.

hypnotic dirge remains unchanged for the first minute and twenty seconds, whilst the melodica and violin seem to gradually become lost in a shimmering wash of the harmonic series that never strays from the tonic or dominant but nonetheless seems to meander and bend due to the slow increase and decrease of the filter cut-off frequency. Travelling without moving, the music is animated but never goes anywhere.

Etymologically the term drone is tied both to dream and to broader notions of temporal or spatial aimlessness. Both senses combine in a musical context when cultural critics correlate the sense of aimlessness afforded by non-teleological matrices like the drone to altered states of consciousness akin to dreaming, as with Max Nordau: “the formlessness of the endless melody corresponds to the sleeping wandering of the mind” [quoted in Kennaway 2012:278]. Speaking in relation to the work of Richard Wagner, Nordau underlines the power of music to “create hypnosis”. Hypnosis – defined as an artificially induced trance state – derives from the Greek ὕπνος (*hypnos*) meaning sleep, and can indeed be achieved with the help of music.

Conceptually as well as phenomenologically, hypnotic states are related to other states of altered consciousness such as rapture, ecstasy, dissociation, trance and somnambulism. [...] Hypnotic states can be induced in a multitude of ways, including fixation of the subject’s gaze, exposure to movement, colours or sounds, and suggestion.

Jan Dirk Blom [2010:255–6]

In his sitar manual and autobiography *My Music, My Life*, Shankar describes several instances where his listeners “remained lost in a trance-like state” [1968:82].²¹ Whilst it is not the case that non-teleological musical characteristics like drones, internal pedal points and oscillating chords induce trance states in any kind of automatic way, I suggest such musical characteristics afford a hypnotic effect for the listener who is under the appropriate conditions (set and setting). In ‘The Ghost of Shokan Lake’, the emphatic repetition and, in Shankar’s words, “constant sound of the drone notes” [18], dispels any sense of harmonic progression, creating a momentary temporal standstill. Meanwhile the lyrics tell the listener through profoundly strange multi-tracked vocal layering about a ghost that is aimlessly “swimming in the sea, looking for the water”.

²¹ See also *ibid.*, p. 78.

Hypnotic Vamp

Morrison intimates a similar concept in relation to the hypnotic vamp, a “dechronicization technique [...] used extensively in psychedelic music”, often as a foundation for solos [2000:70]. He traces the matrix to an earlier and closely related style – garage music – “especially in songs that border on psychedelic” as in ‘Psychotic Reaction’ by Count Five and ‘Pushin’ Too Hard’ by The Seeds (both 1966). The hypnotic vamp is a variation of the chord oscillation matrix. The key difference is that whilst chord oscillation uses two chords, a hypnotic vamp may repeat a longer sequence of chords. It is also significant in Morrison’s chord oscillation examples that both chords are “of the same quality (major or minor)” and are “a minor third apart”, which is to say he considers their relationship non-functional because “this does not occur in diatonic harmony” [80]. As it appears to be the non-functional behaviour of oscillating chords that is significant to their association with dechronicisation however, I see no reason to restrict the definition to either a specific interval or shared quality, particularly in the realm of popular music in which many common practices – from playing barre chords and writing modally to using distortion that gives rise to overtones – render the classical distinction between major and minor problematic.²² It is because of my appropriation of Morrison’s term however that the examples which follow consist of only two chords.

In ‘Psychotic Reaction’, the verse “uses the hypnotic effect of repeating [...] a one-bar, two-chord (tonic and subtonic) pattern”, F# major to E/C#. In ‘Pushin’ Too Hard’, the chords oscillate similarly from B minor to A major in a one-bar, two-chord progression throughout.

In ‘Baby Turns Blue’, a 1982 single by Virgin Prunes described by Mercer as “one of the first Goth dancefloor favourites” [1995], the harmony likewise comprises a one-bar, two-chord (tonic and subtonic) pattern that oscillates between E minor and D^{maj7}/B. In the second verse – and returning to haunt the repeating chorus in the outro – it is concurrent with a synth line that oscillates from B to E in semibreves every bar. The matrix persists not as a foundation for solos (of which there are none) but as a foundation for the entire track, which does not end but rather fades out.

²² See also pp. 191–9.

The infinite vamping around the same pattern that seems to have harmonic motion yet never actually goes anywhere is underlined by lyrics alluding to unusual experiences of time: “John had a bomb and he lit it in his head, went to bed for seventeen weeks”. A refrain recurring at the end of the first and third verses furthermore underscores a fundamentally Gothic concern with being confined in space: “they put you in a box”. Like the drone and the internal pedal point, the hypnotic vamp contributes to this sense of not actually going anywhere.

The term vamp can be traced to early eighteenth century music hall, where ‘vamp till ready’ indicated that a progression – usually an improvised piano gesture comprised of octaves in the left hand alternating with chords in the right – was “to be repeated indefinitely until a soloist entered” [Gammond 2011]. Judith Becker, who offers a perspective on music and trance in relation to the neurochemistry and neurophysiology of the brain, asserts that:

Trance states [...] inhibit mental flitting about. One of the common characteristics of the trance category is its focus, its intensity: speaking neurologically, one is held within the relative constancy of the continual activation of a particular complex of neuronal groupings, a particular ‘map’.

Judith Becker [1994:46]

It is perhaps the relative harmonic constancy afforded by repeating chord progressions that prompted Morrison to add the qualifier hypnotic to a term that otherwise already suggests repetition *ad infinitum*. Indeed he appears to have highlighted a matrix behaving in a similar way to neurons during a trance state, and labelled it according to the associated change in consciousness. Within this matrix, speaking harmonically, one is held within the relative constancy of the continual sounding of a particular complex of harmonic groupings, a particular ‘progression’. Under the conditions of prolonged repetition through chord oscillation or the hypnotic vamp it becomes easy for the listener to anticipate the harmonic pattern of the music that will follow: most likely it will be the same pattern that has just played, the same pattern that is playing now. To borrow Rick Strassman’s words in reference to both mystical and psychedelic experiences, whilst ‘Baby Turns Blue’ sounds the hypnotic vamp – that never flits about harmonically and never loses focus or intensity – “[p]ast, present, and future merge together into a timeless moment, the now of eternity” [2001:234].

Tumbling Ostinato

The final matrix I address here is the tumbling ostinato, a short motif that descends, often step-wise and in syncopated rhythm, “only to leap back up to start again” [2000:75]. It is a relative of the two-bar blues riff, which Morrison suggests found its way into acid rock via a 1950s r&b matrix that was in turn assimilated from boogie woogie.

Writers on the blues such as Jeff Todd Titon have noted that the tendency of blues melodies is to fall slowly and rise quickly only to fall again. I have already remarked that the rhythm of this matrix is related to the Bo Diddley beat, so the blues connection is present.²³

Craig Morrison [2000:208]

The tumbling ostinato is related to the two-bar blues riff “by its length, hypnotic effect, tendency to be played in unison (guitar and bass), and love of off-beats” [80]. In ‘Paper Sun’ (1967) by Traffic, the matrix is present in the bass line of the introduction, where it is doubled by sitar; in ‘Arbitration’ by the Great Society (1968) it is found in the bass line on the tonic and dominant chords, and in ‘She Has Funny Cars’ (1967) by Jefferson Airplane it is found in the bass, doubled by the vocal melody of the verse.

‘Stigmata Martyr’ (1980) by Bauhaus is built entirely around a tumbling ostinato: a short motif that descends by chromatic step in syncopated rhythm to the tonic before jumping up to the minor third, only to repeat the process again. It is present throughout the entire song (which is almost four minutes long), most prominently in the bass but often doubled by the guitar, whose aggressive strumming of the tonic E minor highlights its anticipation of the beat. This urgent placement of the tonic, concurrent with a melody that never escapes the narrow confines of a minor third, makes the harmonic home unhomey. Acting like a melodic version of the hypnotic vamp, the tumbling ostinato creates a temporal standstill also suggested in the lyrics; the opening line alludes to a type of consciousness associated conceptually and phenomenologically with hypnotic states, and includes a portmanteau amalgamating the terms crucifix and fixation, lending a religious (or sacrilegious) undertone to the nature of the altered experience: “in a crucifixation ecstasy lying cross checked in

²³ The Bo Diddley beat features in Goth in ‘Final Epitaph’ by Play Dead (1981) and ‘Godzilla!’ (2003) by The Creatures.

agony” [*sic.*].²⁴

The constant reiteration of the tumbling ostinato creates a harmonic stasis similar to that Van Elferen highlights in ‘Premature Burial’ (1979) by Siouxsie and the Banshees. This track also features a bass motif that descends by chromatic step to the tonic only to leap back up to start again. There are two variations: one that leaps from the tonic E by tritone interval to B \flat , before descending step-wise to A and then back to the tonic to start again, and another that leaps from the tonic by perfect fifth to B before descending step-wise through both B \flat and A before returning to the tonic to start again. After noting the basic harmony of the track comprises two chords oscillating back and forth, Van Elferen remarks:

The bass guitar meanwhile plays what in classical music is called a *lamento bass*, an ostinato (repeated) theme consisting of a chromatically descending line. This technique is often used in funerary music [...]. Differently than most classical lamento basses, Steven Severin’s Gothic update of the technique moves in eighth rather than quarter or half notes.²⁵

Isabella van Elferen [2012:143]

There are additional bass patterns in ‘Premature Burial’. One is a drone sounding a constant rhythmic reiteration of the tonic E: it can be heard during the intro (following the entry of the drums) and at the close of the song. The other is a basic oscillation, first between E–A, then between E–F, both in syncopated rhythm. During the song’s outro, both oscillations are heard in succession before they are finally replaced by the

²⁴ Sheila Whiteley remarks on the relationship between psychedelic states of consciousness, fixation, and “a feeling of being within a different time scale” in ‘Purple Haze’ (1967) by The Jimi Hendrix Experience, wherein “the use of repetition [...] works towards a mood of obsessiveness and absorption [that] is reflected in the motif which constitutes the total melodic structure of the vocal” [1992:20]. Similarly in ‘Time’ by Pink Floyd (1973), “with the phrases hypnotically repeated to create a mood of fixation” [109] and ‘Strange Brew’ (1967) by Cream, in which “[t]he repetitive line shape and the continuous bass riff work towards a feeling of fixation, of being taken over by the ‘witch in electric blue’” [75].

²⁵ Similar to Severin’s Gothic update of the lamento bass, the tumbling ostinato in ‘Stigmata Martyr’ lasts only one bar.

constant sound of the drone on E, the interval between tones getting smaller, as though the lid of a coffin were being closed and – as suggested by the emphatically repeated drone note – finally nailed shut.

The placement of the bass patterns throughout ‘Premature Burial’ is inconsistent. During the first iteration of the chorus for example the bass plays the tumbling ostinato that leaps by tritone interval from E–B, whilst during the second it plays the drone on E. During the third iteration it plays the tumbling ostinato that leaps from E–B, for the first three lines before swapping to the drone for the final refrain. This means that whenever a seemingly familiar passage returns in the song, it is never quite the same. It is a return but – like the return of the tonic in ‘Stigmata Martyr’ – it is unhomey. Furthermore in spite of these variations, the song, harmonically speaking, never goes anywhere: it only oscillates between A minor and E major (with slight variations) throughout. The basic harmonic structure of the track – the ground in classical terms related to the lamento bass – is the same.

The outro includes a haunting return of the gesture that opened the track: a trembling oscillation between A diminished seventh and E major chords that swell. During the intro each chord lasts two bars and pans slowly from left to right across the stereo field. During the outro each chord lasts only one bar and the direction of the panning is reversed. Yet in spite of these changes, there is no sense of progression, no teleology, no movement towards a goal or forward through time. Coupled with this – like in the Virgin Prunes track – is a quintessentially Gothic fear of being confined in space, here uttered in terms that paradoxically encompass a feeling of being moved by gravity concurrent with a sense of inertia.

This catacomb compels me
Corroding and inert
It weights and tries to pull me
Must I resist or re-assert?

Polydor. POLD 5024.

The tumbling ostinato in this track, as with all matrices in this chapter, contributes to this paradoxical sense of motion and inertia, but it is not the only musical detail eliciting such an effect, and it is not separable from ways of listening related to the paradigm of teleology so prevalent within Western thought.

Musical Dechronicisation and Altered States of Consciousness

I have suggested the musical characteristics pertaining to dechronicisation in the work of Michael Hicks, and the matrices pertaining to acid rock's "attempt to translate into musical terms the effects of hallucinogenic drugs" in the work of Craig Morrison [2000:1], are prevalent in Goth. These include generally slow tempi; lengthy recordings; long introductions, codas and instrumentals; the use of improvisation, non-teleological song structures and non-teleological harmony (chord oscillation, drone, internal pedal point, hypnotic vamp); and the extensive use of repetition and ostinatos, often which fall slowly and rise quickly (the tumbling ostinato). All are associated in the popular music literature with psychedelic drugs, and all are common to Goth.

The choice of tempo in Goth shows a preference for slow (*adagio*) or moderate (*andante*) paces, with the danceable genres of Cybergoth as consistent exceptions. Throughout all Goth subgenres the musical manipulation of time is noteworthy. Repetition, drones and sustained chords slow down time to an almost unbearable nonlinearity. As simultaneous counterpoints to such temporal standstills, fast rhythmical motifs or syncopations create clashes in temporality. In this way Goth music gives an audible and almost tangible version of the out-of-joint temporality that Derrida describes as the main characteristic of spectrality.

Isabella van Elferen [2012:168]

I have relied upon Morrison's extensive amount of listening to identify the matrices that occur recurrently in music described as psychedelic. However in contrast to his approach, which theorises how drones and similar sounds pertain to drugs in a manner little divergent from Sheila Whiteley's psychedelic coding,²⁶ I have outlined how they are associated with altered states of consciousness like trance and hypnosis. By tracing their development from other styles and highlighting the importance of culture, I have demonstrated how these matrices can be heard as non-teleological (appropriating the definition of chord oscillation in so doing). Rather than claiming that psychedelic effects are inherent within the music – encrypted by the creator – I have highlighted a number of sounds associated with such effects in the popular music literature, demonstrated their prevalence in Goth, and suggested how they might pertain to such phenomena in a broad sense rather than decoding their specific meanings within the context of the examples selected.

²⁶ See pp. 63–78.

I do not suggest these sounds are, in and of themselves, inherently psychedelic: the dechronicisation effected by repetition in 'White Rabbit' by Mephisto Walz for example may only be afforded to listeners familiar with the original. I rather suggest that Goth – through its manipulation of time – affords psychedelic experiences, particularly within the ritualistic context of Goth gigs and club nights introduced in chapter 1.²⁷

Such context is of great significance to the relationship between music and altered states of consciousness. In her aforementioned paper on music and trance, Becker includes a transcription of two Gamelan themes that accompany scenes in the Rangda/Barong ritual of Bali. This ritual, invoked to restore balance between the human and spirit worlds, is a staged performance involving music to which dancers enter a state of trance. Although it is interesting to note that both themes include drones, ostinatos and extensive repetition, Becker is clear that the relationship between music and trance "is neither causal nor deterministic" [1994:41]. Whilst she does not use the psychopharmacological vocabulary, she underlines the importance of set and setting to trance states:

Trance is often a learned behaviour and thus nearly always bears the imprint of a particular society's beliefs about it. [...]

Part of being in trance is knowing how one is supposed to act. Balinese trancers act differently than Ghanaian Dagomba or American Pentecostal trancers do. Cultural expectations always play a part in trance behaviour. Anthropological writings about trance have taught us about its cultural components, such as the religious rituals in which trance is often embedded, ways that trancers move when in trance and ways they come out of trance, beliefs concerning the ontology of trance states and the kinds of events in which trance is a possible or appropriate behaviour. [...]

All cultures that I know of have institutionalized musical contexts in which trance is either occasionally, commonly or necessarily a part.

Judith Becker [1994:41–2]

Rather than eliciting the effects of psychedelic drugs in any kind of automatic way then, the musical characteristics at play in both acid rock and Goth afford psychedelic experiences for listeners under the appropriate set and setting. Even the danceable

²⁷ See pp. 11–17.

genres of Cybergoth that Van Elferen highlights as consistent exceptions to Goth's preference for slower tempi afford "the dislocating effect of a collective slowing down of time" when Goth dancers "relatively move twice as slowly as disco, house, or trance dancers". That is, "seeing or being part of an entire dance floor heaving in slow-motion" affords the dechronicising effect Van Elferen references rather than the music *per se* [2012:35], although there would of course be no Goth dancing without Goth music to dance to.²⁸

The fact that altered states of consciousness cannot be invoked automatically by music notwithstanding, listeners describing music as psychedelic may indeed be verbalising changes in the neurophysiological state of their brain.

It seems that the gamelan music has a physiological impact on the men who participate; indeed, networks of groups of neurons seem to be firing synchronously with the gamelan rhythms in the brains and bodies of the trancers. The clanging bronze keys of the gangsas, the booming gongs and the pulsating rhythms of drums and cymbals, all rhythmically synchronized, become one with the rhythmic synchrony experienced throughout the central nervous system of the trancers.

Judith Becker [1994:49]

Recalling that one of the physiological characteristics of trance is the continual activation of a particular complex of neuronal groupings, and also that neuronal firing can be entrained to the rhythms of music, it becomes clearer how specific musical characteristics – particularly repetition and other devices undermining closure – may be associated with altered states of consciousness, even if, as Michael Hicks suggests, bands had reasons for using such devices unrelated to drug use. Members of the Chicago audience who moved their bodies in synchrony with the drums during the one-note-break in Bauhaus' 'ritualistic' performance of 'Antonin Artaud' for example would have experienced rhythmic entrainment, and after immersing themselves in this

²⁸ See pp. 13–14; cf. Van Elferen and Weinstock [2016:2–3], who assert that whilst patrons attending Goth club nights and festivals may have differing reasons for attending – to dress up, to socialise – there are no such events without the bands and DJs that supply the music. "As such, any understanding of goth subculture must be articulated bearing in mind the ways in which the community constitutes itself in relation to the music at its core".

sound and behaviour for fifteen minutes could certainly have found themselves in a trance state, marked by the repetitious activation of a particular complex of neuronal groupings. It is interesting that Shirley describes this performance as ‘a numbing piece of stamina’, as Becker suggests one of the reasons humans seek musical and trance experiences is that they both afford “the production and release of natural opiates”: as well as “resulting in feelings of pleasure or even ecstasy” [50], natural opiates suppress – or numb – pain.

Given the importance of culture in understanding altered states of consciousness, in the classification of drugs,²⁹ and in interpreting music more generally, the musical characteristics associated with psychedelics in the popular music literature are thoroughly and necessarily culturally deterministic. Chord progressions do not contain any inherent teleological properties but have teleological properties bestowed upon them by listeners who have learned – consciously or otherwise – the conventions of Western tonal music. Likewise, neither acid rock nor Goth contains any musical characteristics that will automatically induce altered perceptions of time, but they do share a number of characteristics strongly associated with the dechronicising effects of psychedelic drugs. This does not mean it is impossible for these specific musical characteristics to affect neurophysiological changes consistent with altered states of consciousness, but the significance of culture within this process cannot be overstated.

In the Goth scene, spaces like the night club are deliberately transformed into temporally unreal spaces where ghosts of the Victorian past dance with cyborgs of a dystopian future. These spaces are systematically crafted to create experiences outside the realm of the mundane and the real.

By constituting a temporary way out of, or a parallel universe to, everyday reality which is physically as well as mentally experienced, these nights offer participants a form of secularised ritual.

Isabella van Elferen [2012:132]

The Goth scene then deliberately creates spaces for the purpose of allowing its participants – through ritual – to move outside of conventional perceptions of time. That its music is rich in characteristics associated with the dechronicising effects of psychedelic drugs is not insignificant.

²⁹ See pp. 87–90.

Strange Spaces: Acid on the Floor so She Walks on the Ceiling

In the previous chapter I asserted an ecological approach to the perception of musical meaning is useful in so far it accounts for the perceptual differences across listening subjects, and, crucially, the specifics of the listening environment. In the psychopharmacological vocabulary, it is an approach that is sensitive to set and setting. In Eric Clarke's words, "it places the emphasis on an investigation of the invariants that specify all the phenomena that music is able to afford in relation to the diversity of perceptual capacities of different listeners" [2005:47]. In this section I expound upon some of the invariants in Goth through the lens of the ecological approach which argues that because "organisms are immersed in a continual process of perceptual learning" [22], and because "we listen to the sounds of music with the same perceptual systems that we use for all sound" [4], the perception of meaning in music is related to the perception of meaning in sound more generally, which is to say informed by the meanings we learn to associate with sounds in the environment as an aspect of our experience outside the world of music.³⁰

I attend here specifically to sounds related to notions of space, and begin by outlining how a listener might associate an invariant in recorded music like reverb with concepts like size and distance. I exemplify the use of spatial effects in both acid rock and Goth, using the ecological approach to explain how these might be associated with the altered perceptions of space afforded by psychedelics, as well as the altered perceptions of time addressed in the previous section. I conclude by highlighting how other styles of popular music – specifically reggae and dub, both associated with marijuana – have strongly influenced the use of spatial effects in Goth, suggesting how the relationship between Goth and psychedelic drugs extends beyond the acid prototypes.³¹

According to the ecological approach, it is important to consider how the physical properties of the environment directly determine the stimulus information afforded in different sensory domains.

³⁰ See pp. 63–70.

³¹ See pp. 87–90.

For example, a hollow piece of wood will differentially reflect light of certain wavelengths according to its composition and the manner in which it has been cut and treated, and will vibrate with a certain pattern of frequencies if struck by another object (and as a function of the hardness and mass of that object) according to the degree to which it has been hollowed, and the specific size and shape of the cavity. This information directly specifies properties of the object itself to an organism equipped with an appropriate perceptual system.

Eric F. Clarke [2005:18]

The ecological approach emphasises that the amplitude and frequency distribution of the sounds produced when the hollowed wood is struck is directly related to “the physical properties of the wood itself” – “an ‘imprint’ of its physical structure” [*ibid.*].

What is significant is that our experience and interaction with such physical objects in the natural world is part of the perceptual learning that informs our perception of meaning in music. A listener hearing long reverb tails in recorded music, for instance, might associate the reverb with the acoustic properties of a cathedral. The long reverb tails of sounds produced in a cathedral are directly related to numerous physical characteristics of the structure such as the large size of the building and the use of hard reflective surfaces like marble and granite. The evocation of a cathedral will likely entail further associations for the listener: the recorded music might sound divine, foreboding or transcendent. Whilst all such associations are mutable, the ecological approach to the perception of musical meaning takes as a central premise the lived experiences of the listening subject and the fact that these lived experiences engender associations between sounds of various kinds and the physical properties of the natural world.

The ecological perception of space and time are intrinsically related. I have associated the non-teleological harmony apparent in much acid rock and Goth with Jonathan Kramer’s notion of vertical time: its oscillations and repetitions eliciting “a single present stretched out into enormous duration, a potentially infinite ‘now’ that nonetheless feels like an instant” [1981:459]. Yet I have consistently utilised spatial metaphors in doing so: the oscillating chords in ‘Premature Burial’ not only disrupt a sense of teleological progression but also a sense of movement through space, the hypnotic vamp in ‘Baby Turns Blue’ appears to have harmonic motion yet never actually goes anywhere, and the tumbling ostinato in ‘Stigmata Martyr’ prevents the

harmony from escaping the unhomely tonic.³² Likewise, when the harpsichord timbre sounds over the pounding four-on-the-floor kick drum in 'Hang Him Higher', it suggests not only a chronological disjuncture but a strange space evocative immediately of both an ornate Baroque concert hall and a modern industrial nightclub.

In similar vein, the long reverberation time of a cathedral is directly related to the vast physical size of the building comparative to the listener (as well as the sparsity of furniture, the mass, density and reflectance of objects in the space, and so on). Reverberation is naturally created when a large number of reflections – echoes – build up and decay as sound is gradually absorbed by materials in the listening environment. Reverberation is distinct from echo (which is perceived with an audible delay) but related in so far as it is proportional to the distance of the reflecting surfaces from the sound source. There are few natural environments in which a listener will experience multiple and erratically different reverberation times concurrently. Recall however the gothic rock murder ballad 'Red Right Hand' by Nick Cave and the Bad Seeds encountered in chapter 1.³³

The size of the space conveyed by the qualities of the song [...] is unsettlingly inconsistent. Cave's gritty voice in the forefront of the mix is relatively dry and with the rather subdued character of the vocal delivery creates the sense that the speaker is in close proximity to the listener in a relatively small space. This intimacy, however, contrasts with the deeper reverb on the bell and timpani at the ends of stanzas, as well as on the guitar, organ, and the unearthly oscillator. This inconsistency of space creates an uncanny bifurcated effect [...].

Isabella van Elferen and Jeffrey Andrew Weinstock [2012:100–101]

The effect is uncanny because it evokes a sense of space that is contrary to anything existing in the natural physical world, and because it affords an experience of space that is not typically accessible – except, that is, in altered states of consciousness.

³² These examples cast light upon some of the nuances differentiating acid rock and Goth: whilst psychedelia pertains to a broad range of phenomena related to altered perceptions of space quite generally, the Gothic tends to focus on physically or psychologically claustrophobic spaces, as well as ones that become deformed through intolerable stress; see pp. 14–15.

³³ See p. 35.

Spatial Distortion in Goth

The range of perceptual distortions related to distance and space afforded by psychedelic drugs is extensive, and includes phenomena shared with other altered states of consciousness. Such drugs may cause a range of out-of-body experiences including autoscopy (the phenomenon of seeing one's body from a position external to and disembodied from it) and heautoscopy (the phenomenon of seeing one's body as a double in extra-personal space wherein the subject has difficulty determining whether the self is localised within their physical body or the autoscopic double).³⁴ Autoscopy is associated etiologically with a variety of conditions including dissociative disorder and epilepsy [Blom 2010:54–5], and heautoscopy similarly to depersonalisation [234–5], which is the term Michael Hicks uses in reference to the second fundamental effect of LSD I address in the next chapter. Whilst the terms autoscopy and heautoscopy refer specifically to the visual aspect of the hallucination, both states can be characterised by other perceptual changes related to proprioception and the subject's ability to accurately gauge size, distance or position. As the perception of meaning in sound is inherently related to such parameters (louder sounds tend to correlate with closer proximity to the source and so on) these states can involve distortions in the perception of the relationship between sound and size, sound and distance, sound and position.³⁵

Goth music concerns distortions of space in various ways. At times it references paradoxical experiences of space quite explicitly; the subtitle of this section for example – “acid on the floor so she walks on the ceiling” – derives from the lyrics of ‘Body Electric’ (1984) by The Sisters of Mercy, which also features the refrain: “this place is death with walls”. Similarly in ‘Big Neon Glitter’ (1985) by The Cult, recurring lyrics proclaim, “the walls get taller while you get smaller, while we get smaller; the fear is getting taller”, resonating with the frightening account of the peyote subject in

³⁴ See Blanke, Olaf and Christine Mohr (2005). ‘Out-of-Body Experience, Heautoscopy, and Autoscopic Hallucination of Neurological Origin: Implications for Neurocognitive Mechanisms of Corporeal Awareness and Self Consciousness’. *Brain Research Reviews*, 50, pp. 184–99, p. 187 for a helpful diagram.

³⁵ See also ‘Alice in Wonderland Syndrome’ in Blom, Jan Dirk (2010). *A Dictionary of Hallucinations*. New York: Springer, pp. 13–14.

chapter 1, whose walls seemed to tower upwards to three times their normal height.³⁶

In the “uncanny phantom soundscape” of ‘In Hell’ (2001) by Converter/Asche/Morgenstern, a collection of “disembodied sounds” and “curious samples thematizing confinement” not only create a sense of “sonic dislocatedness”, but refer to a very specific concept associated with the psychedelic compound DMT.³⁷

Okay, I’m a little confused here. I may or may not be dead. This could be heaven or hell. [...]. We’re in a whorehouse. I’m invisible. And mechanical elves run the universe.

Ant-Zen. Act123.

Although this text is sampled from a pornographic film entitled *New Wave Hookers #6*, mechanical elves – also described as DMT elves, fractal elves or self-transforming machine elves – are reported with remarkable prevalence in relation to psychedelic drug experiences (prompting research into the phenomenon at John Hopkins University).³⁸

In the music of Dead Can Dance, Lisa Gerrard sings in an idiosyncratic and indecipherable language evoking an unknown place, a civilisation buried in time, or – because it can sound as though she is speaking in tongues – a realm of the spirit. In ‘God is in the Rain’ (2010) by Suicide Commando, a sample of the word “godlessness” echoes repeatedly from right to left across the stereo field, and bounces from the front of the mix to the rear as it shifts in and out of phase. The effect when listening in headphones is something akin to being circled or enclosed by a voice uttering the same thing over and over: the experience rendered especially disconcerting by the fact the utterances are not separate performances and yet are nonetheless distinct from one

³⁶ See p. 31.

³⁷ See pp. 68–70. I quote here Van Elferen and Weinstock [2016], who describe how “the timbres of telephone, antennae, computer modems, and record players turn C/A/M’s ‘In Hell’ from a regular dance track into a haunted communication from some spectral world beyond life or death, real or virtual” [pp. 43, 61, 74 and 93].

³⁸ The tryptamine-based drug experiences of ethnobotanist Terence McKenna have been fundamental to the discourse surrounding the machine elf phenomenon; see also p. 156.

another on account of the phase shifting (a phenomenon to which I return in chapter 5).³⁹ In 'Serpent's Serenade' (1999) by This Ascension, the reverberation seems to defy the behaviour of sound in the natural physical world. The reverb on Dru Allen's vocal in the verses is particularly uncanny because it is audible approximately one second prior to the entry of the vocal line itself and because it is reversed.

Natural reverb, by which I mean reverb heard as an aspect of our experience outside the world of recorded popular music, is a phenomenon that cannot precede the sound creating it. The reverse effect in 'Serpent's Serenade' has been created by multi-tracking the vocal with a duplicate that has been reversed, processed through heavy reverb, and reversed again (rather than by adding reverb to a reversed copy of the dry vocal track). This means firstly that the reverb tail precedes the beginning of the vocal proper, secondly that the direction of the reverb is at variance to the direction of the vocal itself (which is preserved – the words are not sung backwards), and thirdly that the entire envelope of the reverb – the shape of its attack, decay, sustain and release – is reversed. The effect is highly schizophrenic,⁴⁰ and the separation of sound from its source is not only temporal (the reversed reverb is heard prior to the entry of the vocal that caused it) but spatial, which is to say seemingly estranged from the physical laws of the world in which it is heard.

The doubling and multi-tracking of Allen's voice such that there is audible delay between the beginning of the reverse reverb and the entry of the vocal proper affords the perception of something akin to an autoscopic double, an uncanny duplicate in extra-personal space. Concurrent to the reverse reverb track, which has a high ratio of wet:dry signal that makes the voice appear distant, is the original vocal track, which conversely has a high ratio of dry:wet signal that along with its prominent placement in the mix makes the voice sound close. That the reverse reverb track is not a separate performance but a copy of the same take is significant because it creates the impression not of two separate sounds from sources that sound alike but rather of one sound from a single source traveling in an unusual way. That the effect is applied only to Allen's vocal is also significant because it suggests more specifically there is something unnatural about the singer; not only does her voice reverberate in a manner

³⁹ See pp. 218–22.

⁴⁰ See pp. 15–16. All recorded sound is schizophrenic but Goth/ic music deliberately exploits the uncanny potential of schizophrenia; see p. 52 and pp. 199–210.

entirely different from all other sounds in the recording – making it difficult to localise her in the same space as those other sound sources let alone gauge her proximity to them – but the reverse effect makes her vocal sound like the uncanny echo of something otherworldly.

Indeed the vocal corresponds remarkably with what Van Elferen describes as vampire sound in relation to the literary Gothic:

Firstly, vampire sound is emphatically disembodied. Just like the vampire itself, the sounds it brings forth are echoes of an impossible reality. Secondly, vampire sound forms a spatial as well as temporal displacement [...]. Because it is often an echo it possesses a certain past-ness; but as an announcement of the vampire's arrival it also is a premonition of the future. Vampire sound, therefore, is transgressive in nature, representing supernatural shifts in embodiment, time and space.

Isabella van Elferen [2011:100]

Like in 'Hollow Hills' there are musical details in 'Serpent's Serenade' that support specifically supernatural interpretations, like the tritone range of the heavily sustained bass glissando, and the oscillating chords of the verse, which rock in non-functional motion between E major and E_b major, replacing any clear sense of tonic with an unhomely restlessness.⁴¹ Van Elferen suggests echo is "the perfect sonic signifier of Gothic spectrality" because it represents not only a "temporal unhinging of a sound from its source" but "the sound of a disembodied absent presence" [2012:187]. As the persistence of sound after it is produced, reverberation affords similarly ghostly connotations, signifying as it does the lingering presence of something that has passed. In This Ascension's track, however, the lingering presence of something passed is audible prior to the passing itself.⁴² The reverberation is an uncanny mirror, the lead vocal the echo of an echo, and the lyrics are repeated back to the listener before they are even uttered. Whilst the effect is certainly dechronicising, the temporal effect is only possible because the ecological perception of time and space are so intimately related.

⁴¹ See also side-slipping, pp. 193–4.

⁴² This resonates with Jacques Derrida's notion of the ghost as a temporal paradox, as something that is said to return even on its first appearance; see footnote 3, p. 14.

Stylistic Influences

Acid rock bands made extensive use of spatial effects, exploiting the potential of stereo sound that had been marketed by RCA Victor in the early 1960s as “the exciting new illusion of sound in motion”.⁴³ ‘Hurricane Fighter Plane’ by The Red Crayola uses not only a variety of dechronicising effects – improvisation, non-functional harmony, internal pedal point – but some profoundly dislocating spatial effects. Taken from *The Parable of Arable Land* (1967), the track emerges from the cacophony of one of the album’s many tracks entitled ‘Free Form Freakout’, recorded with the Familiar Ugly. The mix sounds chaotic and muddy – by which I mean lacking clarity, particularly in the mid-upper frequency range – as brass instruments, vocals, keyboards, drums, bass and guitars coalesce with all manner of percussive sounds that rattle, crash and clang with a high level of energy.

The opening lyrics announce that the singer has a Hurricane fighter plane in his pocket. The vocal is relatively dry and not particularly prominent on account of both its modest level and the fact that some of the guitar improvisations occupy a similar frequency range and a similar position in the stereo field. Shortly after the beginning of the second line – “and it takes me where I want to go” – these improvisations drop quite abruptly from the texture, and the effect is a sudden widening of the stereo field; with fewer sounds occupying the same frequency range concurrently, the sudden clarity of the vocal seems to give the mix more space. This clarity coincides with the word “takes”, as though the singer at this point were suddenly transported – taken by his pocket plane – to a more expansive space.

The vocal is processed through a delay such that there is a stereo flam effect: the voice is heard first towards the right then immediately after to the left.⁴⁴ This creates a

⁴³ This and other distinctly spatial metaphors vaunting “a new dimension in recorded sound” as “entire sections of the orchestra appear to move thrillingly back and forth across the room” appear on the sleeve of Various Artists (1961). *Stereo Action Unlimited!* RCA Victor. LSA-2489. Foreshadowing the synaesthetic potential of stereo that acid rock bands would exploit, the album is subtitled *The Sound Your Eyes Can Follow*.

⁴⁴ Whether this effect is present from the entry of the vocal or begins on the word “takes” is difficult to determine on account of the density of the mix.

phase shifting phenomenon. The width of the flam – and the delay between right and left – steadily increases throughout the track, the space between the voices getting larger as the delay time increases. The effect is not only temporally destabilising as the vocal slips further and further out of synchrony with the rest of the band but spatially destabilising. The vocal stands out on account of its strangeness – it mutates and morphs and moves in an inconsistent manner – but not in any way that helps the listener to localise the singer, nor to determine his size in relation to the space in which he sings (although presumably he is small enough to fit inside the fighter plane he keeps in his pocket, and large enough to be able to accommodate the aircraft on his person). This affords a strange listening experience suggesting the illusory changes in size, distance or position afforded by psychedelic drugs. The track evokes, in other words, through invariants like delay related through perceptual learning to extra-musical concepts like distance, a peculiar sense of space that is otherwise only accessible during altered states of consciousness.

Although acid rock certainly influenced Goth – Alien Sex Fiend, a band that formed at the Batcave nightclub, covered ‘Hurricane Fighter Plane’ in 1987 – the influence of dub and reggae is especially significant to its use of spatial effects, particularly within the scene’s formative years in the UK. Alien Sex Fiend’s cover is roughly three minutes longer than the original (dechronicised in Hicks’ terms) and betrays the unmistakable influence of dub. Released as a single along with ‘Hurricane Fighter Dub’, the track was produced by Youth, alias of Martin Glover, bass player of Killing Joke (a band associated with the Goth scene). In an interview with Jeff Hemmings, Youth – who also produced ‘The Ghost of Shokan Lake’ – cites dub and reggae as significant influences on his production, particularly in the mid-1980s with “industrial bands like [...] Alien Sex Fiend”.⁴⁵ Indeed his alias was inspired by Jamaican deejay Big Youth.

My early influences? Lee Perry, of course. [...] The things that really grabbed me were Scientist, King Tubby, Joe Gibbs. Any of those. Prince Jammy. The crazier the better, I thought at the time. Scientist was my favourite. He was just beyond.

Youth in Hemmings [2017]

⁴⁵ The interview also addresses his affinity for psychedelic trance, strongly associated with MDMA. Hemmings notes Youth is “credited with setting up the first psychedelic trance label, Dragonfly Records, which later spawned both the Kamaflage and LSD – Liquid Sound Design – labels” [2017].

Youth defines dub as “a deconstruction of the song or recording, and the reinvention of it through effects”. He highlights the influential work of Lee ‘Scratch’ Perry and King Tubby, whom he describes as among the earliest producers “to use a recording studio as an instrument”, adding that “effects in the studio certainly came in with dub, on the back of *Sgt. Pepper’s* and psychedelia” [*ibid.*].

Alien Sex Fiend’s ‘Hurricane Fighter Plane’ is deconstructed and reinvented through effects. The first two verses of The Red Crayola’s original are merged into one extended verse, whilst the opening lines of its fourth verse are transformed into a dub interlude between the second and third verses. It also features a lengthy instrumental outro and the extensive use of studio effects. Early in the recording, a whooshing sound reminiscent of a plane taking off pans widely from left to right, only to return several seconds later, merging seamlessly into a myriad of sound effects including tyres screeching, glass smashing, objects clattering, and a considerable amount of white noise. A bass drone, synth filter sweep, layers of aggressively distorted guitars, and an industrial dance beat emerge from this texture, and the mix balances a full ensemble of different frequencies. This texture contrasts quite strikingly the dub interlude in the middle of the recording, stripped to only bass and drums, some heavily reverberated and delayed vocals, and various percussion sounds interspersed widely throughout the stereo field. Although similar changes of texture occur in The Red Crayola’s original – the bars between verses are much sparser than the sections they segment for example – the effect is not so dramatic on account of the continuous sound of the internal pedal.

Nik Fiend’s vocal is processed through a stereo delay reminiscent of the original, although this time it flams so it is heard first towards the left and then towards the right. Halfway through the third line, however, the flam effect ceases and the vocal is repositioned in the centre of the stereo field. It sounds low in the mix at this point, as though the singer were further away from the listener than at the beginning of the verse. This discrepancy in volume and spatial positioning becomes especially apparent as Fiend – placed towards the rear centre of the mix – emphasises the word “you”, which immediately bounces towards the front of the mix with a sudden spike in loudness uncommon to most natural echoes. The word “you” bounces back towards the rear of the mix again, and the vocal returns to its previous state of stereo flam. This alteration of the position of the vocalist continues throughout the track, making his distance from the listener and proximity to the other instruments disconcertingly inconsistent. At some moments the vocal sounds rather far away, seemingly buried in the mix by the enormous bass drone that betrays the predilections of the record’s

producer.⁴⁶ At other moments – when the voice flams from left to right – it cuts through the mix on account of the width of the stereo field it occupies, and appears much closer. Similar to ‘Red Right Hand’ which conveys the inconsistency of a space that is somehow simultaneously big and small, these effects convey the inconsistency of a vocalist that is somehow simultaneously big and small within the space in which he sings.

Alexander Carpenter notes similarly the strong influence of dub and reggae on the 1979 recording that is repetitiously hailed by scholars and rock journalists alike as the “first true gothic rock song” [28]:

‘Bela Lugosi’s Dead’ owes the originality of its sound to a juvenile band that did not understand how a recording studio worked and to an engineer and producer who did not understand what the band wanted, and so by default treated them like something they were not, namely a reggae band, and simply recorded them dry off the floor. It is not insignificant that [Derek] Tompkins was an experienced reggae producer, as Bauhaus was, like so many young bands in the UK in the late 1970s, very interested in and influenced by Jamaican music. This strong interest, coupled with Tompkin’s pedigree, adds some nuance to the myth of ‘Bela Lugosi’s Dead’ as *sui generis* gothic anthem; rather, this originary gothic rock song has some deep roots in unlikely soil, namely dub and reggae.

Alexander Carpenter [2012:34]

It has largely been my task throughout this chapter to demonstrate that acid rock also forms part of Goth’s ‘unlikely soil’. ‘Bela Lugosi’s Dead’ certainly has audible dub and reggae influences: the prominently mixed bass and drums, the percussive guitar skank, and the tape-to-tape analogue delay that was applied live during the mixing process during playback of the dry recording.⁴⁷ However it also exhibits many of the characteristics fundamental to acid rock’s association with LSD. It is extended in length (nine minutes and forty seconds), exemplifying what Morrison describes as “[t]he stretching of a composition or rendition” beyond five minutes into a “superlength” recording [2000:80]. Dechronicised by repetition and extended instrumental sections,

⁴⁶ I refer both to the fact that prominently mixed bass frequencies are integral to dub and reggae, and to the fact that Martin Glover is a bassist.

⁴⁷ The effect was performed by Daniel Ash; see Shirley, Ian (1994). *Dark Entries: Bauhaus and Beyond*. Wembley: SAF Publishing, pp. 27–8.

it features improvisation and a quasi tumbling ostinato comprised of descending open-string barre chords on guitar that allow two internal pedals “to ring as drones, creating evocative bimodal harmonies” [35].⁴⁸

I describe the methodology I have employed throughout this chapter as an acid approach because it takes as its point of departure reference to a specific set of features common to a style of popular music associated with the effects of LSD. As these tracks by Alien Sex Fiend and Bauhaus demonstrate however, Goth shares not only the prototypical musical characteristics associated with the prototypical effects of the prototypical psychedelic drug, but also the characteristics of other styles associated with a different psychedelic, namely marijuana. Indeed the altered perceptions of space afforded by marijuana – as described for example by Mezz Mezzrow below – are well documented.

The first thing I noticed was that I began to hear my saxophone as though it was inside my head, but I couldn't hear much of the band in back of me, although I knew they were there. All the other instruments sounded like they were way off in the distance; I got the same sensation you'd get if you stuffed your ears with cotton and talked out loud. Then I began to feel the vibrations of the reed much more pronounced against my lips and my head buzzed like a loudspeaker [...]. I felt I could go on playing for years without running out of ideas and energy. There wasn't any struggle; it was all made to order and suddenly there wasn't a sour note or a discord in the world that could bother me. [*sic.*]

Mezz Mezzrow in Shapiro [2003:44]

What is significant here is firstly the way in which the ecological approach to the perception of musical meaning suggests how such altered perceptions of space are afforded through studio effects like reverb and the placement of sounds within the stereo field, and secondly the way in which permissive attitudes towards marijuana that are fundamental to dub and reggae cultures are reflected in the Goth scene.⁴⁹

⁴⁸ Although the harmonic rhythm is not syncopated there is a very prominent syncopated rim shot pattern, which is not only incessant throughout the recording but vital in contributing to what Carpenter calls the “iconic and instantly recognizable drum part” [2012:34].

⁴⁹ See pp. 25–9.

The Goth scene, like the song Carpenter describes, “has a diverse musical pedigree, with many disparate influences” [2012:25]. That it draws its varied stylistic influences from cultures with permissive attitudes towards psychedelics is important, because it suggests how music – as “the ‘glue’ that holds the goth scene together” [Van Elferen and Weinstock 2016:2] – contributes to Goth’s so-called ‘psychedelic attitude without the drugs’.⁵⁰

⁵⁰ I paraphrase here the account of the scene as described by Sexbeat vocalist and Batcave DJ Hamish on p. 27.

Transgressing Time and Space in Goth

In this chapter I have reviewed a selection of musical characteristics fundamental in the popular music literature to the association of acid rock with psychedelic drugs, specifically in relation to how the style is understood to evoke or reflect the effects of LSD. In particular I have attended to musical characteristics associated with the ability of LSD to distort the subject's perception of time, and have demonstrated their prevalence within the music of the Goth scene. I have explained how Goth affords experiences of time that are neither chronological nor teleological (at least for listeners familiar with Western tonal music) and suggested it offers – via the supernatural, mystical or transcendental concepts associated with such experiences of time – glimpses of the otherworldly. Van Elferen argues that:

Gothic music emphatically exploits the destabilising and violating power that music has over time. Through spectral disjointedness [and] nonlinear motionlessness [...] it renders audible the nontemporal temporality of the supernatural. Its relentless interruptions of the chronological flow of time, moreover, forge openings in the ontological entanglement of being and time. As Gothic music suggests the possibility of beings in spectral time, repetitive time, non-time or beyond-time, it enacts Schopenhauer's conviction that "music is an unconscious exercise in metaphysics in which the mind does not know it is philosophising".⁵¹

Isabella van Elferen [2012:180]

In similar vein I have suggested through the ecological approach to perception that Goth music, with its various methods of spatial distortion, unremittingly presents the listener with the possibility of alternative realities. Whether evoking states of consciousness in which mechanical elves run the universe, contrasting muffled vocals with ones of remarkable clarity, or manipulating studio effects related to notions of size, distance and proportion, these techniques lend the music a transcendent quality, an ability to move the listener into another place or state of being. In the heterotopic spaces of the Goth scene, the extensive effects featured in studio recordings exert an intensely physical impact. In a nightclub, the vampire sound of Dru Allen resonates through a powerful sound system so that her demonic voice can be felt within the body,

⁵¹ Schopenhauer, Arthur (1958). *The World as Will and Representation*, Vol. 1. Indian Hills, Colorado: The Falcon's Wing Press, p. 264.

rendering her otherworldly presence eerily tangible, whilst the “godlessness” sample in Suicide Commando’s aggrotech track no longer circles around the head but is flung dramatically across the room.

Musical immersion can even be so profound that it temporarily occludes the ordinary world and renders musical time, space and being the only reality at hand. Musical experience can literally drag listeners across the limits of time, space and physicality.

Isabella van Elferen [2012:189]

The musical characteristics included in this chapter have been drawn from various sources. Some – lengthy recordings, slow tempos, open-ended forms, improvisation, ostinatos and quasi-hypnotic repetition – have been drawn from the work of Michael Hicks, who argues they pertain to the dechronicising effects of LSD. Others – chord oscillation, internal pedal point, drone, hypnotic vamp and tumbling ostinato – have been drawn from the work of Craig Morrison, who refers to them as matrices and suggests likewise they are fundamental to the way acid rock translates into musical terms the effects of LSD. Others still – the use of studio effects like reverb, echo and delay – have been identified by examining more broadly the stylistic influences of dub and reggae on the music of the Goth scene. Together, these are consistently distinctive musical characteristics of psychedelia.⁵² They are consistently distinctive because – allowing for a degree of internal difference (the tumbling ostinato in ‘Stigmata Martyr’ that lasts for only one bar instead of two) – they comprise a set of shared effects (temporal and spatial dislocation) that are distinctive from other styles of music (the largely teleological harmonies of the classical tradition) and are reasonably consistent from one sub-style to the next. The effects to which these musical characteristics pertain are also consistently distinctive because they allow for the many varieties of psychedelic experience, from the entrancing to the terrifying, whilst still retaining an identifiable set of shared features, namely the altered perceptions of time and space.

In contrast to Sheila Whiteley’s psychedelic coding, which places emphasis upon the intent of the composer in the creation of musical meaning, I have suggested how the perceptual learning characterising the experiences of listeners outside of the world of the tracks in question inform the meanings they attribute to music. I have demonstrated – particularly in relation to Morrison’s matrices – that because

⁵² See pp. 79–86.

perceptual learning is thoroughly informed by culture, the musical characteristics associated with the effects of such drugs are not unrelated to cultural concepts like teleology and corresponding modes of musical interpretation (for example the idea that chords should progress or gravitate towards a tonic). Rather than adopting an essentialist approach claiming these characteristics render the music inherently psychedelic, and outlining several ways in which acid rock musicians explain their manifestation in the style for reasons unrelated to psychedelics, I have suggested how these characteristics might reflect or synergise the effects of such drugs in relation to both the perceptual capacities of the listener, and the contexts in which music-making takes place.

In the case of Goth, a multi-sensory immersion in a temporally and spatially bizarre reality is synergised through scene-specific practices like burning incense, drinking absynthe, and painting a plethora of perverted religious symbols on the floor. That the music of numerous cultures associated with psychedelic drugs from LSD to marijuana find sonic expression in Goth is significant in explaining why its repertoire is so rich in the sounds associated with the altered perceptions of time and space characterising the effects of those drugs.

Chapter 4

Set and Setting:

Acid and Goth Induced Psychedelic Experiences

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Goth, Set and Setting

In chapter 1, I asserted that psychedelic experiences are highly determined by set and setting. This is largely due to the amplification effects of such drugs, which allow subjects to “experience something very intensely”, both emotionally and through “excess of sensation” [Huxley 1963:176]. I likened this intensification mechanism to the way emergent Gothic literature, excessively descriptive, appealed evocatively to the senses, emotions and imagination of the reader. In so doing – in transgressing the limits of the tasteful – Gothic fiction found itself in receipt of criticism not dissimilar to that levelled against psychedelic drugs in the 1960s.

The social significance of hallucinogenic drugs is certainly a fascinating problem, because anything that produces an excess of sensation or experience is by that very fact on the margins of social relevance if not wholly outside it.

Francis Huxley [1963:177]

By exploiting the atmospheres of crypts and catacombs, haunted houses and abandoned abbeys to powerful sensational and emotional effect, the Gothic demonstrated a remarkable sensitivity to the variables fundamental to shaping the nature of a psychedelic drug experience, but operated largely within the context of narrative spaces enclosing stressors that arouse emotions relating to terror, wonder and the sublime.¹

Goth music, with its spine-tingling timbres, excessive reverberation, and hauntological references to Gothic texts, functions likewise. Furthermore, the heterotopias of the Goth scene provide both the space and context for realising what Isabella van Elferen describes as the liturgical potential of such music.² By encouraging deep immersion in a reality outside of the everyday, and via the ritualistic practices they entail, Goth club nights offer participants a form of ceremony.

The soundtrack to a Goth club night, therefore, has a distinctly liturgical function: it is music accompanying the parareligious rituals of ceremonial Goth. Having this function Goth music is the inducer of the Dionysian transcendence that Nietzsche described as part of the sublime musical experience.

Isabella van Elferen [2012:171]

¹ See pp. 37–43.

² See pp. 35–6.

The importance of set and setting to psychedelic experiences – both music and drug induced – is particularly apparent in relation to depersonalisation, the second of Michael Hicks’ three fundamental effects of LSD [2000:65–6]. I begin this chapter by elaborating on the phenomenon before attending to a number of lyrical matrices in the work of Craig Morrison [2000] that concern how music not only evokes but affords such profound experiences. In so doing I demonstrate that the musical characteristics both authors associate with psychedelics manifest not just in acid rock but also in Goth, where they participate in a particularly morbid expression of the Gothic sublime. Furthermore I suggest that a number of these characteristics (such as excessive volume levels and hallucinogenic imagery) are not reducible to abstractions of the music *per se* but relate to the way acid rock was performed and experienced in the 1960s, that is, its listening contexts. I argue that likewise, the Goth scene’s heterotopic listening contexts are vital to understanding how its music pertains to the effects of psychedelic drugs. By crafting events that allow participants to “playfully explore and transgress the limits of self, here and now” [Van Elferen 2012:136], the Goth scene and its music grant access to types of experience described varyingly as religious, mystical or psychedelic.

Depersonalisation – ego death – refers to a phenomenon documented in its distressing and isolating varieties in the psychiatric literature and furthermore in its so-called consciousness-expanding varieties in the psychedelic drug literature. It is characterised by a profound shift in the sense of self.

Many of the somatic changes at the beginning of such an experience imply the casting off of conventional role-playing, as we see from the fact that the conventions of time and space, of subject and object, are then gradually but remorselessly undermined.

Francis Huxley [1963:176]

Hicks claims that acid rock groups depersonalised their music through approaches to ensemble that abandoned traditional roles like lead or accompanimental player, and which fostered textures including free improvisation and counterpoint. Such textures, Allan Moore [2001] notes, combined with elements of fantasy literature in progressive rock to synergise a sense of strangeness, which in combination with dark subject matter realised both lyrically and through album art underscored a nascent Gothic aesthetic in early psychedelic popular music.

Goth, which demonstrates similar approaches to ensemble, draws particularly strongly from fantasy literature, and especially that which engages with unusual boundaries of self, a point I address in the second half of the chapter. In Charles W. Chestnut's post-bellum American Gothic tale 'Po' Sandy' (1899), a conjure woman turns her husband – a slave working on a plantation – into a tree. Her plans to return him to human form so they can be together (after his owner assumes he must have escaped) are thwarted when the tree is taken to a sawmill, wherein the sorceress is bound and forced to watch her husband agonisingly carved into pieces of wood which are used to construct a kitchen that becomes haunted by terrible groaning sounds. Andrew Smith notes how the tale “captures the reality of an experience in which slaves become depersonalised and disposed of at will by their owners” [2013:106].

Though dark and disturbing, the tale engages with aspects of the same phenomenon associated in its other extreme with an ecstatic sense of union with the cosmos.

That the psychedelic drugs can stimulate a breakthrough to an enlarged consciousness of a transfigured world of the Eternal Now is a positive way of saying that the chemicals may bring about the dispossession – in older language, the mortification – of the ego, the old man, *homo normalis*.

R. A. Durr [1970:77]

The key to navigating the realm of depersonalisation phenomena, to which the psychedelics – in their capacity as both psychotomimetics and entheogens – provide access, is set and setting.³

The variety of phenomena to which music provides access – and the degree to which they resemble the effects of psychedelic drugs – is similarly highly determined by set and setting. Acid rock groups performed through huge stacks of amplifiers “at extraordinarily high levels”, causing listeners to feel the vibrations of their instruments in addition to hearing them [2000:65]. The effect, Hicks implies, was a dissolving of boundaries separating performer, instrument, music and listener: something not unlike T. S. Eliot's “you are the music, while the music lasts”.⁴

³ See pp. 18–24.

⁴ The quotation is from ‘The Dry Salvages’ (1941). See Eliot, T. S. (1971). *Four Quartets*. London: Harcourt, p. 44.

I have already remarked upon the significance of huge sound systems to the Goth scene, and how the intense throbbing of music throughout the body – in a psychedelic gesture that holds all paradoxes to see they no longer conflict – contrasts the spectral themes Goth often relates. I have also suggested how Goths, embodying the ghosts of the Gothic, dissolve the boundary between audience and performer, and how their physical and affective immersion in dance allows an “ecstatic dissolution of the self on the dancefloor” [Gilbert and Pearson 1999:107].⁵

Here I assert that parallel listening contexts are vital in the popular music literature to explaining why acid rock is psychedelic, which is to say how music mimics the effects of such drugs more generally. The slide projections and coloured lights that flashed in synaesthetic synchrony with the beat of Nick Mason’s drum, for example, are of great significance to the psychedelic effects attributed to the music of Pink Floyd, whose early performances were often described as otherworldly. In similar vein, strobes, lasers, and smoke machines enhance a sense of the ethereal at Goth nightclubs, whilst the taste of absynthe and smell of incense “increase the sensation of having entered another world” [Van Elferen 2012:8]. I suggest the Goth scene evidences listening contexts particularly conducive to psychedelic experiences because it crafts excessively sensational heterotopias in which participants are encouraged to ceremoniously transgress the limits of space, time and self.

⁵ See pp. 11–17.

Depersonalisation, Drugs and Music

Michael Hicks uses the term depersonalisation to refer to a fundamental effect of LSD, which “allows the user to lose the self and gain an ‘awareness of undifferentiated unity’” [2000:63].⁶ What he appears to be describing – a sense of oneness which accompanies a profound experience of ego dissolution such that there “no longer is any separation between the self and what is not the self” [Strassman 2001:234] – is quite distinct from depersonalisation in the psychiatric sense. Although both comprise a radical shift in the boundaries distinguishing self from not-self, the former constitutes a peak experience, described by psychologist Abraham Maslow, from whom the term derives, as deeply positive and enlightening.⁷ The latter, on the other hand, denotes a condition “which becomes, for those who experience it, a significant source of distress and alienation” [Sierra 2010:1]. Psychedelics provide access to both ends of the spectrum, though there are differences between the psychotomimetic (i.e. distressing and psychedelic drug-induced) and psychiatric varieties of depersonalisation. This is partially because the phenomenon presents numerous classification problems within psychiatry – whether it is an acute or chronic condition, commonplace or rare, an indication of another illness or incapacitating pathology in its own right – and its clinical symptoms are often presented alongside those of dissociation and derealisation such that it remains unclear where one diagnosis ends and another begins.

Such complications necessitate clear and transparent grounding if depersonalisation is to be addressed in any musicologically meaningful way. I elaborate briefly on the mescaline account to which Hicks refers in order to illustrate some phenomena the term encompasses and to underscore the significance of set and setting to shaping the way they are experienced. I outline two divergences from the psychiatric condition to delineate depersonalisation in a specifically psychedelic sense and to suggest how these divergences inform a musical account of the drug effect. I explain how the distortions of size, distance and proportion addressed in the previous

⁶ Hicks quotes Blofeld, John (1966). ‘A High Yogic Experience Achieved with Mescaline’. *Psychedelic Review*, 7, pp. 27–32, p. 29, and directs the reader further to Drake, David (1965). ‘Psychedelic Metaphysics’. *Psychedelic Review*, 5, pp. 56–8.

⁷ Whilst inclusive of mystical and religious experiences, the term recognises the occurrence of such phenomena outside of these contexts. Maslow’s writing for example addresses “music as a path to peak experiences” [1972:176].

chapter relate to a variety of depersonalisation phenomena, from “an awareness of an abnormal distance between the self and what happens in its consciousness” on the one hand to “the experience of an abnormal fusion of subject and object” on the other [Guttman and Maclay 1936:194].⁸ Finally I demonstrate how a number of approaches to ensemble that Hicks associates with depersonalisation manifest within acid rock and Goth, and how both types of music utilise performance contexts particularly constructive to psychedelic experiences.

Symptoms, Set and Setting

The mescaline subject describes an ecstatic experience that is blissful and ineffable. The fundamental point of correspondence with the phenomenon documented in the psychiatric literature is a profound shift in the sense of self.

Thus I found myself (if indeed the words ‘I’ and ‘myself’ have any meaning in such a context) at once the audience, the actors and the play!

John Blofeld [1966:29]

Elaborating upon the phenomenon musically [2000:65–6], Hicks refers to a LSD subject who “suddenly ‘knew’ what it was to be simultaneously a guitar, the sounds, the ear that received them, and the organism that responded”.⁹

During peak psychedelic experiences this perceptual shift is accompanied by a sudden understanding of the interconnectedness of all things: a clarity in which the self is no longer separate from what is not the self but intrinsically part of the “underlying unity and interdependence of all existence”:

Extraordinarily powerful feelings surge through our consciousness. We are ecstatic, and the intensity of this joy is such that our body cannot contain it – it seems to need a temporarily disembodied state. While the bliss is pervasive, there’s also an underlying peace and equanimity that’s not affected by even this incredibly profound happiness.

Rick Strassman [2001:234–5]

⁸ See pp. 117–29.

⁹ See Richardson, Jerry (1970). ‘LSD: Who Am I, and So What if I Am?’ in Bernard Aaronson and Humphry Osmond (eds.) *Psychedelics. The Uses and Implications of Hallucinogenic Drugs*. Cambridge: Schenkman Publishing Company, pp. 50–58, p. 53.

This phenomenon, which resembles the ecstatic dissolution of the self on the dance floor, can be synergised in a subcultural context like Goth by a strong sense of collective identity: the participant is not just a dancer but part of an entire dance floor heaving in slow-motion, the Victorian corset she wears contributing as much to the night's sense of temporal displacement as the repetition in the music to which she dances.¹⁰

Before the onset of such “unutterable bliss” however, the mescaline subject experienced a more disturbing variety of symptoms consistent with psychiatric depersonalisation.

At 10.40, an unpleasant state of mental tension supervened. I found myself involved in a struggle to preserve a hold on my ‘I’, which seemed to be in the process of disintegration. [...] My fear of permanent madness increased and I suffered especially from the feeling of having no inner self or center of consciousness into which to retreat from the tension and take rest. [...] No words can describe the appalling mental torment that continued for well over an hour. All my organs and sensory experiences seemed to be separate units. There was nothing left of me at all, except a sort of disembodied sufferer, conscious of being mad and racked by unprecedented tension.

John Blofeld [1966:27-8]

The trajectory of the mescaline subject's experience illustrates the importance of set and setting to determining drug effects. The peak experience occurred only after the subject retreated to a place of privacy following escalating anxiety on account of the fact that one of the persons present – who knew nothing of his psychedelic ingestion – might think he was going mad: “I dragged myself to my bedroom, shut myself away from everyone like a sick animal, and fell on my bed” [28]. Furthermore it was only after he “made a total surrender” and “ceased to cling – to cling to self, loved ones, sanity, madness, life or death” – that his frightening descent into madness was transformed into an unreservedly pleasurable experience.

Within a flash, my state was utterly transformed. From hellish torment, I was plunged into ecstasy – an ecstasy infinitely exceeding anything describable or anything I had imagined from what the world's accomplished mystics have struggled to describe.

John Blofeld [1966:29]

¹⁰ See pp. 11-17.

Just as the account illustrates how drug experiences are shaped not only by pharmacology but by set and setting, depersonalisation in the context of the dance floor is clearly not attributable only to music but to the entire network of interacting and converging human and non-human actors in which music-making takes place.¹¹

Distinction from Psychiatric Depersonalisation

Psychedelic depersonalisation is distinct from the psychiatric condition (and not only because the latter specifies an absence of “hallucinogen intoxication”).¹² Two divergences illustrate some of the parameters informing a musical account of the drug phenomenon. Firstly, whilst psychiatric depersonalisation is indicated by “emotional and/or physical numbing” (which the World Health Organization describes as “the most frequent” complaint), psychedelic experiences are marked by an intensification effect encountered in chapter 1 whereby:

One feels, or responds emotionally with MORE intensity, MORE depth, MORE comprehensiveness. [...] There is MORE empathy, MORE unity with people and things.

Unnamed subject in Masters and Houston [2000:11]

The intensification is sensational as well as emotional: “[t]o touch a fabric with one’s fingertip was to simultaneously know more about both one’s fingertip and the fabric than one had ever known about either” [*ibid.*]. I have already commented on the resemblance of this effect to Goth’s characteristic excess (its floods of reverberation, intense vibrato and generally exaggerated stylisation). I return shortly to how both acid rock and Goth bands demonstrate approaches – from saturation of the frequency spectrum to vigorous screaming – that result in intense musical textures unlikely to be associated with emotional or sensational numbing.

¹¹ See pp. 67–70.

¹² All quotations in this passage are from ‘Depersonalization-Derealization Syndrome’ in World Health Organization (2018). *The ICD-10 Classification of Mental and Behavioural Disorders. Clinical Descriptions and Diagnostic Guidelines*. F48.1, p. 135, and ‘Depersonalization/Derealization Disorder’ in American Psychiatric Association (2013). *DSM-5. Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*, fifth edition. Washington, DC: American Psychiatric Publishing. 300.6 (F48.1), p. 302; cf. pp. 37–43.

Secondly, whilst a key point of convergence is that depersonalisation “poses a direct challenge to long-held, unquestioned assumptions regarding [...] existence and identity” [Sierra 2010:1], there is a fundamental difference in the way this is experienced. The mescaline subject claims his peak psychedelic loss of self was “coupled with the conviction that this was the *only* real and eternal state of being, all others (including our entire existence in the day-to-day world) being no more than passing dreams” [*ibid.*, italics original]. By contrast, “retention of insight” is crucial to the psychiatric diagnosis of depersonalisation, which is to say that the subject must remain “aware of the unreality of the change”.¹³ The psychiatric subject is thus inclined to fear they are going mad, whereas the mescaline subject recounts a sense of clarity and understanding that transcends reason.

No wonder the mystics of all faiths teach that understanding comes only when logic and intellect are transcended! [...] Logic also boggles at trying to explain how I could at once perceive and yet *be* those colors and those forms, how the *seer*, the *seeing* and the *seen*, the *feeler*, the *feeling* and the *felt* could all be one; but, to me, all this was so clearly self-evident as to suggest the words ‘childishly simple!’

John Blofeld [1966:29, italics original]

Craig Morrison addresses this phenomenon under a lyrical matrix he terms the revelation: “[a] statement of belief with religious overtones brought about by a spiritual or drug induced insight” [2000:77]. Skeletal Family’s lyrics in ‘Promised Land’, encountered in the previous chapter, reflect something of this variety through reference to a door that broke open and “let in the light”.¹⁴ Morrison relates this matrix to another he terms religious organ (of which there is certainly no shortage in Goth), suggesting the keyboard parts in ‘Itchycoo Park’ (1967) by the Small Faces for example “carry connotations of American gospel music, evoking perhaps unconsciously, a sense

¹³ The first quotation is from ‘Depersonalization-Derealization Syndrome’ in World Health Organization (2003). *The ICD-10 Classification of Mental and Behavioural Disorders. Diagnostic Criteria for Research*. F48.1, p. 110. The second is from Sierra, Mauricio (2010). *Depersonalization: A New Look at a Neglected Syndrome*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 1, who quotes from an earlier version of the *ICD-10*, though the criterion remains in subsequent editions.

¹⁴ See pp. 105–6.

of religious import” which supports “the blissful revelation” in the lyrics: “it’s all too beautiful!” [*ibid.*]

Both divergences manifest in the musical characteristics Hicks associates with depersonalisation (though he does not acknowledge them explicitly). His account focuses on approaches to music-making that result in sensational excess as well as big, expansive and impressive sound. Whilst Maslow describes peak experiences as “oceanic” [1962:95], Hicks claims the most profound way in which acid rock musicians depersonalised was by “turning up the volume” and using huge amounts of electronic reverberation, which in surf music had previously connoted “vast, overwhelming oceanic spaces”.

When groups both turned up the volume and added reverberation, they made the music sound both closer and farther away at the same time. Which is precisely the sort of depersonalizing paradox that some Native Americans described in their use of hallucinogens: “That which sounds far away... [also] sounds as if it were very near”.¹⁵

Michael Hicks [2000:65–6]

He classifies this as a depersonalisation effect on account of Gregory Bateson’s remark that during a LSD experience, “the universe is overtly structured in terms of an identification between the perceiver and the thing perceived”:

You hear the music way off down in a cavern, and suddenly it is you who is way down in the cavern. Are you now the music, or is the music now at the mouth of the cavern? Did you change places with it? And so on?

Gregory Bateson in Unger [1964:203–204]

This is precisely the effect I described in Alien Sex Fiend’s ‘Hurricane Fighter Plane’ in the previous chapter, although there I focused on the use of studio effects to elicit illusory distortions in size, distance and space.¹⁶ Such distortions may be associated with a range of perceptual shifts in the sense of self during psychedelic drug

¹⁵ Hicks quotes an informant in Cáceres, Abraham D. (1984). *In Xochitl, In Cuicatl: Hallucinogens and Music in Mesoamerican Amerindian Thought*. Doctoral Dissertation. Indiana University, p. 331.

¹⁶ See pp. 125–7.

experiences. Indeed in his account of the effects of mescaline, psilocybin and LSD, Sanford Unger similarly groups “depersonalization, dissociation, levitation, derealisation, abnormal detachment [and] body image distortion or alteration” together under one of three invariant set of drug reactions [1964:203].¹⁷

Psychedelic Depersonalisation and Musical Textures

As peak depersonalisation experiences are associated with a liberating transcendence of the types of social role-playing that constitute everyday consciousness, Hicks suggests acid rock groups depersonalised their music “by changing their idea of ensemble – which in turn changed the musical texture” [2000:65]. Instead of assuming roles of lead or accompanimental player, part of foreground or background, musicians experimented with playing in a more democratic way, such that no sound was more important than another. The “lack of instrumental competition” inspired by depersonalisation experiences, Hicks claims, “made LSD-oriented groups emulate the textures of free jazz”.

Such an approach is evident in *The Parable of Arable Land* (1967) encountered in the previous chapter, an album that intersperses each track by The Red Crayola with a ‘Free Form Freakout’ performed with the Familiar Ugly, whom one critic describes as “45 friends, acquaintances, and fellow travelers” who generated “all manner of chaotic noise” on various musical instruments and household items:

and though the roiling mass of sound occasionally threatens to cohere into something, within moments it invariably descends back into the sound of several dozen hippies trying to navigate their way out of a trap of their own lysergic imagination.

Mark Deming [2018]

It is this approach – one that does not attempt to organise sounds in such a way as to ensure balanced coverage of the frequency spectrum – that contributes to what I

¹⁷ His two other invariant set of drug reactions pertain to changes in visual perception and “the retrospective impressiveness of the drug experience” [204]. Unger’s description of psychedelic drug experiences as a whole – “beyond or outside the range of the normal, the everyday” [202] – resonates with the way I have described the heterotopias of the Goth scene, which is to say the contexts in which Goth music is performed; see pp. 35–6.

previously described as the density of the mix.¹⁸ The free improvisations of this sizable group result in sporadic areas of saturation: excess levels of sonic information across certain bandwidths that make it harder for the listener to accurately distinguish or trace the movement of individual voices within these ranges but which convey readily (partially through transient distortion) the loudness of the whole.

A similar texture opens and closes 'Raymond' (1984) by Turkey Bones and the Wild Dogs, whose style one listener characterises as "[a]lmost Gothic-Swamp-Rockabilly if you please" [TrashDoll1337 2008]. The track opens quite unceremoniously with a loud cacophony of incoherent rambling, aggressive and wailing guitar gestures, a lurching collection of seemingly random bass notes, and frenetically thrashing drums, which assault the listener for almost an entire minute before the chaos subsides into a moderate tempo ballad. Over the course of eight and a half minutes,¹⁹ a disquieting tale unfurls as the listener is taken on a journey with a disturbed protagonist heading towards institutionalisation and leaving more than a few corpses along the way. Eventually, the perturbing question asked incessantly throughout with increasing agitation – "Raymond, where did you put your knife?" – dissolves into anguished howling, the hypnotic bass line is swallowed by a maelström of heavily processed guitar sounds, and the entire song is dragged, kicking and screaming, into the dense cacophony from whence it came.

As with the 'free form freakouts' on *The Parable of Arable Land*, these are improvisations that disregard traditional musical structures like melody, rhythm and harmony, and dispose of such concerns as the prominence, clarity or audibility of individual parts. The result is a swirling mass of sound, whose seemingly huge proportions (I refer to the level of distortion within as well as the loudness and saturation of the ensemble as a whole) are of the highest importance to Hicks' account of depersonalisation. Indeed he associates quite a different approach to ensemble – one that pays careful attention to balanced coverage of the frequency spectrum – with the same phenomenon. In 1966, he claims, Jerry Slick "described succinctly the new psychedelic ideal of texture".

¹⁸ See p. 124.

¹⁹ The track exemplifies Morrison's superlength matrix, which he describes as a "dechronicization technique" [2000:80].

We've got too many people playing the same notes in the same range with the same rhythm. If we can play more like counterpoint, and in different ranges, our sound'll get a lot bigger.²⁰

Jerry Slick in Hicks [2000:65]

Such an approach is evident in the Goth domain in Lacrimosa's 'Hohelied der Liebe' (2005), which begins with viols playing in slow Renaissance counterpoint style before additional instruments and voices gradually expand the texture into a full symphonic ensemble "whose proportions are clearly meant to stir Wagnerian connotations" [Van Elferen 2012:152]. The track sounds big in numerous ways. A slow and lengthy (dechronicised) composition drenched in reverb,²¹ its orchestration traces four hundred years of classical music history in the first six minutes before the addition of drums and a metal guitar further increases the temporally and spatially extensive nature of the musical texture. By changing their idea of ensemble throughout, using instruments from differing periods as well as a mixture of vocal styles – "a hoarse rock rasp, *Volksmusik* [...] simplicity and an operatic sound generated by larynx pressure" [*ibid.*] – Lacrimosa create an intriguing and constantly evolving musical texture. Replete with expansive choral counterpoint, Romantic orchestra making full use of the frequency spectrum, crescendo swells and fortissimo strings, the track sounds much bigger than what might first be expected from a band comprising only two members.

Profound Sound

The fundamental consistency between these very different approaches to ensemble – free improvisation and counterpoint – appears to be a concern in making the overall sound appear enormous. Indeed Mick Mercer's description of Turkey Bones and the Wild Dogs' track in the liner notes to his *Gothic Rock 3* compilation suggests 'Raymond' affords precisely this effect.

²⁰ Hicks quotes Slick, Darby (1991). *Don't You Want Somebody to Love: Reflections on the San Francisco Sound*. Berkeley: SLG Books, p. 80. See also contrapuntal improvisation in Morrison, Craig (2000). *Psychedelic Music in San Francisco: Style, Context and Evolution*. Doctoral Dissertation. Concordia University, p. 172.

²¹ Michael Hicks argues, "[o]n the simplest level, dechronicization lengthens songs and slows them down" [2000:64]; see pp. 95–9. 'Hohelied der Liebe' lasts almost fifteen minutes and maintains a steady ♩ = 55 throughout (with moderate rubato).

Hello, is that the Police? I'd like to report a murder. Yes, of a song. Oh, they've stopped! The intro is pure carnage, as is the end, and in between an epic unfolds that should have Nick Cave eating his own brains out. A sly, smokey song grabbed and pulled along by impossibly huge vocals. [*sic.*]

Mick Mercer [1998: no page number]

Certainly the approach to ensemble and production at either end of the track expresses a sense of the colossal or impressively great. The distorted vocal timbre conveys the immense physical force required to scream loudly, the lengthy reverb tail suggests a space at least as large as a cathedral, the frenzied drumming betrays the great amounts of energy required to play at speed, and the overdrive on the guitar sounds an excess of signal so powerful the amplifier cannot contain it. Moreover as the liner notes suggest, the middle section evokes the grandiose of the long poetic stories of the literary epic. Lengthy and largely strophic in form, its lyrics denote the antics of a central figure, whilst Mercer's reference – presumably to an album by Nick Cave and the Bad Seeds entitled *Murder Ballads* (1996) – indicate the song's participation in a distinctive tradition.²² Meanwhile the story it conveys, in conjunction with the intense vocalisations at either end of the track, reflect “the scale of the big issues and emotions” that Martin Baker relates to the “moral seriousness” of the epic [2009:380].

This sense of the profound is an important aspect of depersonalisation experiences and their relation to the Gothic.²³ Writing on the convergence of elements of fantasy literature – whose imagery is “not unrelated to the LSD experience” [2001:112] – and the improvisation found here and in *The Parable of Arable Land*, Allan Moore underlines a nascent Gothic aesthetic in the music of progressive rock bands whose lyrics addressed dark and apocalyptic subject matter:

In the work of some bands, the unfamiliarity of free jazz and aspects of fantasy were combined to enhance the sense of strangeness. For both King Crimson and Van der Graaf Generator, the recourse to such imagery is tied to a rather ‘gothic’

²² Catherine Bates argues this is crucial to the definition of an epic [2000:x].

²³ It manifests in ‘Hohelied der Liebe’ in the recitation of Biblical scripture and what Van Elferen describes as a “more profane meditation on the power of love” [2012:151].

sense of impending doom [...].²⁴

Allan F. Moore [2001:112–13]

Moore outlines “this rather intoxicating sense of foreboding” through various characteristics that are indeed integral to Goth, including the lyrical despondency of tracks like ‘Epitaph’ – “when every man is torn apart with nightmares and with dreams, will no-one lay the laurel wreath when silence drowns the screams?” – and the oscillating chords that deny it closure.²⁵ An approach to ensemble that Hicks relates to depersonalisation is central to the aesthetic he describes.

This sense of despair seems heightened by the use of free jazz: ‘Lemmings’ breaks into a central improvised section [...] with the piano resorting to clusters up and down the keyboard, beneath unattached saxophone lines and frenetic drumming. It is these lines, almost unrelated to each other, that are the key [...].

Allan F. Moore [2001:113]

The fact that the lines are almost unrelated is important. In ‘Raymond’ for example there is melodic, harmonic and rhythmic freedom during the improvised sections, but these sections are ordered in so far as they are structured to bookend the track, seemingly pre-determined in length, and dynamically synchronised (that is, the intensity of performance is relatively consistent across all musicians). It is not that the lines during these sections are entirely unrelated but rather that traditional instrumental roles are abandoned: the bass no longer establishes the harmonic ground, the drums no longer provide the metric structure, and the vocalist no longer sings. The absence of traditional roles and the unfamiliarity of the resultant texture allow the individual voices to dissolve into the more readily perceivable sound of the ensemble as a whole. In this case the sound is ‘pure carnage’, characterised by an emotional and sensational excess that prompts Mercer to describe ‘Raymond’ not as a song about

²⁴ The disconcerting absence of the knife informs precisely such a sense of impending doom in ‘Raymond’. Concerning the Gothic in popular music, Dave Thompson notes likewise the “twisted liturgy” of Van der Graaf Generator vocalist Peter Hammill, and how the “sublimely textured” debut King Crimson album “arrived bearing an on-sleeve comparison to shards of light in a Gothic cathedral and [...] actually lived up to that billing” [2002:13].

²⁵ See chord oscillation, pp. 99–102.

murder but one that sounds as though it is being murdered. Presumably then the song murders itself, dissolving the distinction between murderer and thing murdered in a gesture reflecting depersonalisation *par excellence*.

'You are the Music, While the Music Lasts'

In similar vein, Hicks claims that acid rock bands dissolved boundaries between performer, instrument, music and listener by causing audiences to experience the vibrations of their instruments and loudspeakers in a manner that was not only aural but intensely physical. He remarks on how powerful volume levels were particularly striking to folk-oriented listeners, "who scarcely had heard music through amplifiers at all before" [65]. In Jeremy Gilbert and Ewan Pearson's terms, experiencing the vibrations of a sound source independent of the body radically problematises key metaphysical distinctions between internal and external: that is, because music emanates from a sound source external to the body and yet is felt from within, it is capable of destabilising the distinction between "the individual and the world of others" [1999:58].²⁶ "For the listener", claims Sheila Whiteley similarly, "the sheer volume of noise works towards the drowning of personal consciousness" [1992:20].

This effect – which is not reducible to music *per se* but rather relates to its setting – is thus marked by both a sensational excess (of volume) and a dissolving of boundaries. It is not only psychedelic but furthermore Gothic. Indeed the bite of the vampire Lestat in Anne Rice's *Interview with the Vampire* (1976) brings on a sensation characterised by precisely the same sonic phenomena that Hicks associates with depersonalisation.

A dull roar at first and then a pounding like the pounding of a drum, growing louder and louder, as if some enormous creature were coming up on one slowly through a dark and alien forest, pounding as he came, a huge drum. And then there came the pounding of another drum, as if another giant were coming yards behind him, and each giant, intent on his own drum, gave no notice to the rhythm of the other. The sound grew louder and louder until it seemed to fill not just my hearing but all my senses, to be throbbing in my lips and fingers, in the flesh of my temples, in my veins.

Anne Rice [2008:22]

²⁶ Gilbert and Pearson draw upon the work of Shepherd, John (1993). 'Music as Cultural Text' in John Paynter, Tim Howell, Richard Orton and Peter Seymour (eds.) *Companion to Contemporary Musical Thought*. London: Routledge, pp. 128–55.

The pounding drums here are revealed to be heartbeats: “I realized that the drum was my heart, and the second drum had been his” [*ibid.*]. The recipient of Lestat’s bite thus describes an experience of intense sensational excess in which his entire universe becomes overtly structured in terms of an identification between perceiver and thing perceived. That is, he at once hears and is the sound he hears: simultaneously the hearer, the hearing and the heard.

The parallels with psychedelic drug effects are remarkable, and manifest further in the way the vampire’s bite causes changes in visual perception, which result in a transfixion that Whiteley has related to repetition in the music of Cream, Pink Floyd and The Jimi Hendrix Experience.²⁷

Lestat was standing again at the foot of the stairs, and I saw him as I could not possibly have seen him before. [...] And then I saw that not only Lestat had changed, but all things had changed. It was as if I had only just been able to see colors and shapes for the first time. I was so enthralled with the buttons on Lestat’s black coat that I looked at nothing else for a long time.

Anne Rice [2008:23]

Such transfixion – a result of the profound changes in perception afforded by psychedelic drugs – may indeed account for many of the dechronicisation techniques in acid rock and Goth addressed in the previous chapter.²⁸

Music and Transgression

Just as the vampire’s bite is transgressive – the recipient crosses from life into another state of being – so are depersonalisation experiences (in both their psychedelic and psychiatric varieties). The World Health Organization notes the similarity of depersonalisation symptoms to “the so-called ‘near-death experiences’ associated with moments of extreme danger to life” [2018:135], whilst Maslow claims peak experiences “can often meaningfully be called a ‘little death’ and a rebirth in various senses” [1976:xv].²⁹ Indeed anthropologists have claimed that on account of the

²⁷ See p. 111.

²⁸ See pp. 95–116.

²⁹ Rick Strassman theorises that transcendent states of consciousness associated with birth, death and near-death are instigated by a spontaneous release of DMT; see pp. 68–70.

intensity of such experiences, music in the traditional ceremonies of many drug-using societies across the globe acts “as a vital link in bridging separate realities induced by the ingestion of a plant hallucinogen” [Dobkin de Rios and Katz 1975:65]. It is, in other words, not tangential to the psychedelic experience:

Rather, given the way in which hallucinogens cause dissolution of ego boundaries and the concomitant biochemical effects of generation of extreme anxiety – music replaces with its own implicit structure a set of banisters and pathways through which the drug user [...] negotiates his way.

Marlene Dobkin de Rios and Fred Katz [1975:65]

Significantly this theory suggests that music – in conjunction with other characteristics common to ceremonial drug-use, like dancing, vivid body paint, and bird feathers of bright hue – synergises the “sensory overload” of the psychedelics [71].³⁰ Marlene Dobkin de Rios and Fred Katz associate this overload with a synaesthetic excess that, like Lestat’s bite, causes sensations to spill from one domain into another, and argue that “most traditional drug-using societies not only recognize this scrambling of sensory modalities, but actually programme their rituals so as to heighten all sensory modalities” [*ibid.*].

In chapter 1 I described the way the Goth scene constructs intensely multi-sensory listening environments (exemplified by *Gothique Classique IV*, wherein sheets dyed with pig’s blood not only decorated the walls but created an olfactory clash with the sacred smell of incense, helping to transform a student bar into a distinctly more otherworldly space).³¹ I suggest here that similar performance practices were integral to the counter-culture, and furthermore are essential in accounting for the psychedelic effects attributed to its music.

Chet Helms notes the importance of the settings in which acid rock bands of the San Francisco scene performed, claiming that audiences “came for the ambience, and the bands were a part of it” [quoted in Echols 1999:146]. Liquid light shows, clouds of marijuana smoke and the opportunity to dance on sprung ballroom dance floors combined with the music of bands like Big Brother and the Holding Company to offer a

³⁰ This sensory overload is encompassed by what I have described as the amplification or intensification effects of the psychedelics.

³¹ See pp. 35–6.

“transformative and empowering experience” [*ibid.*]. The same was claimed across the Atlantic: a patron describes entering London’s counter-cultural UFO Club (at which bands like Pink Floyd would perform during the 1960s) as “like descending into a subterranean world of dreams”.³²

Furthermore just as churchly incense might synergise the religious connotations of Lacrimosa’s ‘Hohelied der Liebe’, atmospheric effects in counter-cultural performance contexts interacted with the music in a synaesthetic way.

The Pink Floyd, psychedelic pop group, did weird things to the feel of the event with their scary feedback sounds, slide projections playing on their skin (drops of paint run riot on the slides to produce outer-space/prehistoric textures on the skin), spotlights flashing on them in time with a drum beat...

Uncredited writer in *International Times* [1966]

Such practices were in fact so significant to the counter-culture that Peter Smith [2016] has argued that bands such as Grateful Dead and Quicksilver Messenger Service did not so much play music that was psychedelic as perform within the context of a scene that could be described as such on account of its multi-media (album art, gig flyers, light shows) and its approach to community, characterising a defining element of the San Francisco scene as the blurred boundary between audience and performer. This element is particularly evident within the Goth scene, as the ghosts of Gothic fiction are brought to life through participants who dress varyingly as Byronic heroes, medieval courtesans, vampires, cyborgs and imps of the perverse.

Van Elferen argues that during Goth club nights, “the twilight zones of Gothic become corpo-real” [2012:8]. That is, whilst Gothic literature, cinema and video games create liminal realms by destabilising boundaries between past and present, self and other, “Goths physically partake of this world and complete the Gothic trajectory across boundaries”. Music, furthermore, is fundamental to this transgression. Just as anthropologists have suggested that music in the context of psychedelic drug rituals guides the subject’s transition from “normal waking consciousness” into alternative realities induced by the ingestion of hallucinogenic plants [Dobkin de Rios and Katz 1975:66], Van Elferen argues the music of a Goth club night serves a distinctly transgressive function.

³² Jenny Fabian quoted in Blake, Mark (2008). *Comfortably Numb. The Inside Story of Pink Floyd*. Cambridge: Da Capo Press, p. 69.

Music sets the transgressions of Gothic in motion: [...] the listener [...] gets dragged along into the musical movement from the mundane to the divine or the occult. [...] Listening to music, in certain ways, means becoming part of the music, and Gothic exploits this deep immersion in musicality to its full and transgressive extent.

Isabella van Elferen [2012:30]

In the section that follows I address the ways such transgressive experiences are described in terms of profound spiritual journeys, along with the musical characteristics associated with such journeys in the work of Craig Morrison. In so doing I draw upon the experience of a Fields of the Nephilim fan to illustrate how several performance practices and a sense of community in the Goth scene contribute in various ways to the Gothic and psychedelic dissolution of boundaries separating performer, music and listener she describes.

Psychedelic Trips and Gothic Journeys

Psychedelic experiences are frequently described as journeys for which – on account of their intensity and strangeness – the traveller would be wise to have a guide. Roberts Masters and Jean Houston draw an analogy with the *Divine Comedy*, wherein Dante, lost in the dark woods and haunted by peculiar sounds and shapes, is met by the figure of the poet Virgil. Virgil offers to lead Dante through an eternal place, and, with time suspended, guides him through the cosmogonies, mythologies and ethics of the medieval universe, replete with symbols, patterns and orders of celestial, social and psychological significance.

It is thus with the psychedelic experience. Once the threshold of altered consciousness has been crossed, we are flooded with a kaleidoscopic vision of extended perceptual fields and psychological insights; a visionary torrent of cultures and contexts, myths and symbols, remnants of what may seem to be racial or transpersonal memory – that near-infinity of components that appears to constitute our being. Like Dante in the dark woods we can easily lose our way in the labyrinth of strange byways and unknown paths: an all-too frequent episode of the unguided psychedelic experience.³³

The role of the guide is to lead the subject through the “newly exposed terrain” of psychedelic consciousness.

It should be one of the chief tasks of the guide to assume the role of Virgil in this chemically-induced *Divine Comedy* and to help the subject select out of the wealth of phenomena among which he finds himself some of the more promising opportunities for heightened insight, awareness and integral understanding that the guide knows to be available in the psychedelic experience.

Robert Masters and Jean Houston [2000:130–31]

In some cultures, the guide manifests as a spirit of the drug, as with the fly agaric mushroom (*Amanita muscaria*) used by various tribal groups among the Siberian reindeer herders for purposes including healing, divination and communication with the supernatural.

³³ In chapter 1 I described the experiences of two peyote subjects – one who ‘wanted to remain forever out of time’ and another whose ‘surrealist nightmare’ could not end soon enough. The former had a guide; the latter did not. See p. 31 and p. 39.

Groups like the Chukchee believed that during intoxication, men personifying the mushroom appeared to the user, numbered according to the total plants consumed. These creatures, small in size, took a person under his arm and accompanied him on a voyage. They followed intricate paths and visited places where the dead resided [...].

Marlene Dobkin de Rios and Fred Katz [1975:69]

This exemplifies what anthropologists have termed “the cultural patterning of hallucinatory experience” [*ibid.*], which refers to how pharmacological effects – heavily determined by set and setting – are structured by cultural variables including “beliefs, attitudes, expectations and values” [66].³⁴

Such variables are of equal significance to what some writers call the Gothic journey: a narrative device marked by “the deviation of the story from ordinary circumstances” to suggest “the existence of radical alternatives to known relations” [Wesley 1999:38]. Conventionally expressed as “a traveler’s transposition from a familiar home to its alternative represented as a mysterious dwelling”, the Gothic journey destabilises familiar roles (particularly those that are gendered), creating what Marilyn Wesley terms an “imaginative alienation” [*ibid.*]. Like the psychedelic journey, the Gothic journey is particularly sensitive to matters of set and setting. Specifically it destabilises the meaning of the home as a safe and familiar space by transforming it into an uncanny place of danger and imprisonment; sets and settings become inexorably entwined.

In terms of more specifically psychological processes, the Gothic journey and the projection of internal significance onto an external landscape might be read as various forms of representation and resolution [...]. In this mode of signification, landscape elements such as the sea, the sublime mountains, various forms of waste land, the dual-entry house, and so on, assume heavily-overdetermined meanings tied to the complexities of deep psychological processes.

Robbie Goh [2018]

In some senses the Gothic journey is a psychedelic journey without a guide: it is a profound psychological journey in which, haunted by peculiar sounds and shapes, we become lost in the labyrinth of strange byways and unknown paths.

³⁴ The machine elf phenomenon encountered in the previous chapter exemplifies the cultural patterning of hallucinatory experience; see p. 121.

In this section I attend to matrices in the work of Craig Morrison that relate to expeditions of both the psychedelic and Gothic varieties. The more colloquial term for a psychedelic journey is trip (which also refers to the small squares of blotting paper upon which such drugs may be absorbed for oral ingestion). I begin by addressing three related matrices termed trip lyrics, drug lyrics and the tour guide, defining each before elaborating on a Goth example that exhibits all three. As an abundant intersection of numerous psychedelic musical characteristics, 'Belladonna & Aconite' (1993) by Inkubus Sukkubus demonstrates particularly well the extensive correspondence between many of Morrison's matrices, as well as the importance of the listener's set – including their opinions, values and beliefs – in determining musical meaning.

I attend particularly attentively to lyrics here on account of Simon Frith's observation that, "most people if asked what a song 'means' refer to the words" [1996:158]. In expounding more extensively upon the significance of literature, mythology and ritual to the Goth scene, I suggest not only how its opulently evocative lyrics afford different meanings, but how specific interpretations – in combination with elements of performance practice like those encountered in the previous section – afford particularly powerful experiences for some listeners. I conclude by asserting that set and setting is just as relevant to music-induced psychedelic experiences as it is to determining the nature of psychedelic drug phenomena themselves.

Trip Lyrics

According to Morrison, trip lyrics "speak of various kinds of mental voyages, especially through drugs, in metaphorical terms" [2000:68–9]. Several tracks encountered in the previous chapter feature trip lyrics. 'Hurricane Fighter Plane' – described in the liner notes to *The Psychedelic Journey: A Mind Blowing Trip through the Best of the Psychedelic Era* as "a true journey of sound" [Montolivo 2012] – includes the words, "and after our ride through the sky it won't be the same; it will never be the same".³⁵ 'Light My Fire' by The Doors includes the phrase, "girl, we couldn't get much higher", but conversely makes no mention of aircraft. 'Get Me to the World on Time' by The Electric Prunes is similar in this regard, featuring a comparable declaration that is

³⁵ See pp. 124–7. On *The Arable of Parable Land* the track is sub-titled 'When the Ride is Over You Can Go to Sleep'. Due to the beckoning lyrics – "come fly with me anytime and anywhere" – the song also exemplifies the tour guide matrix.

repeated several times throughout – “here I go, higher, higher!” – although in this case, the peculiar sentiment of the song’s title (which is also sung throughout the choruses) evokes space travel.³⁶ The latter example also references a “chemical reaction” and several phenomena (including “wild sensations”) that may be associated with drug use, but which are seemingly attributed, within the context of the lyrics, to love, sex and hormones. On the song, Morrison writes:

Couching space travel as the result of a wild, sensuous but frustrating love affair was but one way for songwriters, in this case two professionals, both female, to write about tripping and get away with it.

Craig Morrison [2000:74]

‘Eight Miles High’ demonstrates effectively the extent to which lyrics are subject to interpretation.³⁷ The Byrds had established themselves through their cover of Bob Dylan’s ‘Mr Tambourine Man’ (both 1965), of which Morrison notes, “Dylan wrote four verses but the Byrds used only one: ‘take me on a trip upon your magic swirling ship, [...] I’m ready to go anywhere’”. Although similarly containing no explicit drug references, ‘Eight Miles High’ (released the following year) features a sentiment that caused the *Gavin Report* – a San Francisco-based trade publication used by over a thousand radio stations to inform their selection of music – to classify it as a drug song. Many stations refused to play it on account of its opening lyrics: “eight miles high, and when you touch down you’ll find that it’s stranger than known”.

Morrison claims that in the mid-1960s words like trip and high proved detrimental to the radio air-time of songs that were assumed by censors to proselytise drug use, even when song-writers claimed otherwise. He relays how Jim McGuinn protested that the lyrics of ‘Eight Miles High’ were in fact about travelling by plane to London.

They may have been: transatlantic aircraft do fly at altitudes of around 42,000 feet, the lyrics make a reference easily interpreted to mean London (“rain gray town known for its sound”), and mention a London band, the Small Faces, by name. [*sic.*]

Craig Morrison [2000:69]

³⁶ See pp. 102–3.

³⁷ See p. 106.

In the Goth domain, 'Shining Silver Skies' (2006) by Ashram features no explicit drug references but nonetheless distinctly synaesthetic trip lyrics.

And I fly so high
Blind in shining silver skies
Smell of light inside

MGM Records. SE-4518.

'Psychonaut' (1989) by Fields of the Nephilim on the other hand references what appears to be a sacrament, although within the context of lyrics that, rather than drug use, are perhaps more likely to recall – particularly in light of similar examples in the band's repertoire – the writing of H. P. Lovecraft.

Let it spill
From my mouth
Sweet nectar
For a thousand young

Situation Two. SIT 57 T.

I refer here to the "Black Goat of the Woods with a Thousand Young" [Lovecraft 2016:61], Shub-Niggurath, who first appeared in *The Whisper in Darkness* (1931). The song – whose lyrics include "we're falling from ecstasy" and "time stalls" – illustrates particularly well the liturgical potential of Goth music outlined in the previous section, as well as how numerous extra-musical details shape the transgressive and psychedelic listening experiences that fans associate with it.³⁸

'Psychonaut' derives its title from the Greek ψυχή (*psykhe*) – soul, mind or spirit – and ναύτης (*naútēs*) – sailor [Blom 2010:434]. Evoking a sailor of the mind or navigator of the psyche, the term psychonaut colloquially references individuals who explore their mind by intentionally inducing altered states of consciousness, for purposes ranging from spiritual (as in mysticism and shamanism) to scientific (as in the studies of Ann and Alexander Shulgin, who documented the effects of various

³⁸ See for example Selzer, Jonathan (5 February 2018). 'Fields of the Nephilim at The Forum, London – Live Review'. Louder. Future Publishing. <<https://www.loudersound.com/reviews/fields-of-the-nephilim-at-the-forum-london-live-review>>.

phenethylamines and tryptamines). Whilst it thus often denotes psychedelic drug subjects, the term also encompasses those who achieve altered states of consciousness through alternative means such as prayer, meditation, or, as suggested by Fields of the Nephilim's track (and the band's performance practices more generally) chaos magick. 'Psychonaut' indeed shares its title with that of an occult book on the subject by Peter Carroll.³⁹

'Psychonaut' is a superlength track,⁴⁰ which opens with a very prominent organ that sustains a single note for around thirty seconds before Carl McCoy's heavily reverberated vocal proclaims – through a delay effect – “pray now!”. The “ten-minute headtrip” [*sic.*] was “allegedly recorded in ritual-like circumstances by candlelight and accompanied by incense”.⁴¹ The lyrics draw upon various mythologies and ancient beliefs, from the changelings of folklore (faery children that are left as uncanny replacements for stolen human children who have been taken into the spirit world), to the monster Leviathan, who is mentioned, along with the Nephilim after whom the band is named, in the Book of Enoch. Leviathan's appearance in the Book of Enoch is associated with a sublime trembling and quaking of the heavens evoked by McCoy's spoken line – “may the mountains shake you to the core” – situated in between two incantations to which I shall return. Another spoken line in the song – “let us witness the Reincarnation of the Sun” – is printed on the back of single's vinyl gatefold, along with an inscription from William Blake's *Behemoth and Leviathan* (1825) strongly reminiscent of two Biblical verses in Job (41:34 and 40:19).

³⁹ Carroll's occult *Liber Null* (1978) and *Psychonaut: Manual of the Theory and Practice of Magic* (no date, circa 1982) became more widely available when they were published as one volume entitled *Liber Null and Psychonaut* in 1987.

⁴⁰ There are several studio versions; I refer here to 'Psychonaut (Lib. III)', which is nine minutes and fifteen seconds long. A twenty minute version of this “epic” that “languishes in uncommercial glory in some vault” is referenced in a fanzine article by Paula O'Keefe [1999].

⁴¹ The first quotation is from an article on the band in *Pop Matters* [Winegarner 2013]. The reference to candlelight and incense in the second – from Harvey and Wallis [2016:90] – may derive from O'Keefe [1999], which is reproduced on a Fields of the Nephilim discussion forum.

The song's numerous intertextual references illustrate how Fields of the Nephilim approach music-making in a way that resonates with chaos magick. Chaos magick – which emphasises the importance of ritual – draws liberally upon diverse belief systems on account of its central principle that belief is a tool. It stresses the notion that belief instilled upon objects or symbols through intent can be more useful to the individual than any traditional meanings associated with them: a concept used particularly for exploration of the psyche. A ritual for calling upon “darker entities” – of which Leviathan is offered as an example – to act as a spiritual guide into darker aspects of the psyche can be found, for instance, in a book on chaos magick that recommends the sacramental use of mugwort – which “has the ability to open up spiritual centers” – and wormwood, a “mild psychedelic” [Vitmus 2009:89].⁴²

‘Psychonaut’ resembles a spell, specifically a ritual incantation to invoke spirits by focussing intent on the power of ancient Sumerian words. The richly evocative lyrics afford numerous interpretations. My transcriptions have benefited from listening to multiple live versions, extra-musical details of which illustrate how fans, in Van Elferen’s terms, “physically partake” of the worlds evoked in Goth music to “complete the Gothic trajectory across boundaries” [2012:8]. One recording is available on the album *Earth Inferno* (1991), which shares its title with a 1905 book by occultist and artist Austin Osman Spere, whose magico-religious philosophy known as *Zos Kia Cultus* – combined with elements of Aleister Crowley’s magick of Thelema seemingly evident in Field of the Nephilim’s ‘Love Under Will’ (1988) – informs Peter Carroll’s writing. Others are readily available online, and offer glimpses of how some of the occult practices explored in such texts manifest in the band’s performance practices.⁴³

During a 2008 performance at Shepherds Bush Empire in London, for example, McCoy stands on a large seven-pointed star, and, as lights flash in synaesthetic synchrony with the kick drum, utters: “let us gather hallucinations from our private minds”. Smoke machines flood the stage with an otherworldly atmosphere (an effect that was particularly striking during a performance I attended in Kentish Town on the

⁴² See Vitmus, Andrieh (2009). *Hands On Chaos Magic: Reality Manipulation through the Ovayki Current*. Minnesota: Llewellyn Publications, p. 88–94.

⁴³ See for example ‘Fields of the Nephilim: Psychonaut’ from *Ceromonies: Ad Mortem Ad Vitam* (2012) on YouTube. <<https://youtu.be/dWpaq4onye8>>. Accessed 29 May 2018.

2017 winter solstice),⁴⁴ and McCoy begins to incant names of significance to numerous spiritual traditions, such as Inanna, an ancient Sumerian goddess revered in some modern Wiccan practices. After a brief interlude featuring the line “may the mountains shake you to the core” – an appropriately visceral description of the power of sound given the high volume level of the performance – he begins to chant another invocation whose terms were central to Chaldean sorcery.

Some of the words comprising the second incantation can be found in the *Necronomicon Spellbook*, a 1977 text authored by ‘Simon’ that establishes links between H. P. Lovecraft’s Cthulhu mythos and Sumerian mythology via the monstrous Tiamat, symbol of primordial chaos.⁴⁵ They nonetheless date back further. The words are ancient Sumerian, and according to François Lenormant’s translations and analyses of cuneiform texts, denote various classes of spirits (*Zi*).⁴⁶ The words are described in the *Necronomicon Spellbook* as “words of power”, which is to say, “a word that contains power in itself; in its very pronunciation, in the sounds that comprise it” [Simon 1998:10]. These Sumerian words of power are assembled, in the *Necronomicon Spellbook*, into an “urgent prayer” [13] that suggests the text’s significance to ‘Psychonaut’, which repeats the phrase “pray now!” throughout as though a mantra.

Writing for fanzine *KIA* in October 1991, Paula O’Keefe describes her experience of these words of power in terms that resonate remarkably with aspects of depersonalisation encountered in the previous section.

‘Psychonaut’ [...] is a spell and we’re all part of it. You’ve heard it, you know the words, it’s vibrated through your mind and used your brain’s lifeforce to be sung; you’re in the loop and so am I[;] we’ve all joined our voices, we’ve shared power in a sound no one voice could make, we have been part of a calling to the gods.

⁴⁴ The timing of the concert betrays the importance of ritual to the band’s performances; the date was announced on the summer solstice, and the previous year the band performed at the same venue on both the summer and winter solstices.

⁴⁵ See also Stableford, Brian (2009). *Gothic Grotesques. Essays on Fantastic Literature*. Wildside Press, pp. 40–42.

⁴⁶ See Lenormant, François (1877). *Chaldean Magic: Its Origin and Development, translated from the French with considerable additions by the author and notes by the editor William Ricketts Cooper*. London: Samuel Bagster and Sons, pp. 143–76.

“We dilate our throats and resonate the ancient names... we convoke the Nephilim and they come to us [...]”. [sic.]

Paula O’Keefe [1999]

The quotation at the end of the passage references an inscription on the back of *Earth Inferno*, in turn cited as an extract from the testimony of the temple scribe Ishuz Ninku entitled ‘The Coming of the Watchers’ from Mesopotamia, circa 4000 BC.

For this fan, it is by dissolving boundaries separating performer, music and listener that both the Sumerian mythology and the magic evoked through the song’s lyrics become real. By joining voices with others and chanting the ancient words, ‘Psychonaut’ becomes for her not just a song but a ritual invocation. She not only shares power in a sound that no one voice could make but contributes to it, exemplifying admirably the notion: ‘you are the music, while the music lasts’. ‘Psychonaut’ then not only resembles a spell, but – in so far as it draws upon numerous belief systems and in so far as both its recordings and live performances include elements of ritual – offers an opportunity for fans to practice chaos magick. It not only evokes a mental journey through its title and trip lyrics, but offers, via its intriguing collection of intertextual references and ritualistic performance contexts, sounds and symbols allowing the listener to embark upon that very process. O’Keefe’s testimony demonstrates precisely how fans may ‘physically partake’ of the sacred, occult or spirit worlds evoked through Goth, and how they may exploit the liturgical potential of the scene’s music to its ‘full and transgressive extent’.

Drug Lyrics

‘White Rabbit’ by Jefferson Airplane exemplifies a similar but distinct matrix, which Morrison terms drug lyrics. Drug lyrics are more explicit than trip lyrics on account of their direct reference to drugs. There are several examples in Jefferson Airplane’s song: a hookah-smoking caterpillar, “some kind of mushroom” that makes your mind move, pills that make you ten feet tall and pills that make you small. Its references to distortions of logic and proportion indeed bare remarkable resemblance to the effects of psychedelic drugs.⁴⁷

⁴⁷ The lyrics reference *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland* (1865) by Lewis Carroll, whose use of drugs including laudanum, mescaline and the fly agaric mushroom is the subject of scholarly debate. See pp. 97–8.

A Goth example encountered in chapter 1 is 'Shape Shifting and Face Dancing' by Creaming Jesus, which intersperses a refrain listing various psychedelic drugs with one that repeats: "you can't kill a spirit".⁴⁸

There is of course much cross over. The lyrics of 'Bass Strings' (1967) by Country Joe and the Fish for example open with, "hey partner, won't you pass that reefer round?" and close simply with the word "LSD", which is whispered twice before the track fades out. However they also describe a mental voyage in metaphorical terms: "I believe I'll go out to the seashore, let the waves wash my mind; open up my head now just to see what I can find"; "yes, I'll go out to the desert just to try and find my past; truth lives all around me but it's just beyond my grasp".

Indeed the interpretability of lyrics is just as relevant to this category as the previous. Although the lyrics of 'Shape Shifting and Face Dancing' for example overtly denote numerous psychedelics in terms of the designs printed on the blotters, the drug references are unlikely to be discernible to anyone unaware what "penguins" and "strawberries" are. In similar vein, whilst 'Bela Lugosi's Dead' by Bauhaus is unlikely to be classified as a drug song, it opens with the lyrics: "white on white translucent black shapes back on the rack". Although the opening three words – if referencing anything – are more likely to allude to a 1918 painting of the same name by Kazimir Malevich, white on white is an underground term for blotters that (unlike "penguins" and "strawberries") do not have artwork printed on them.⁴⁹

Tour Guide

The tour guide is "[a] common matrix in psychedelic music which is related to the recommendation that a novice user of LSD be accompanied by an experienced one" for guidance [Morrison 2000:73]. The lyrics of The Beatles provide several examples. I have already mentioned the opening line of 'Tomorrow Never Knows',⁵⁰ which paraphrases the final sentence of this lengthier excerpt from *The Psychedelic*

⁴⁸ See p. 27.

⁴⁹ Bauhaus' gig flyers were similar in style to works by Malevich and his mentee El Lissitzky, whose work greatly influenced the German art school after which the band is named; see pp. 127–9.

⁵⁰ See p. 38.

Experience: A Manual Based on the Tibetan Book of the Dead, a guide book first published in 1964 for journeys into “new realms of consciousness”:

You must remember that throughout human history, millions have made this voyage. [...] Whether you experience heaven or hell, remember that it is your mind which creates them. Avoid grasping the one or fleeing the other. [...]

Whenever in doubt, turn off your mind, relax, float downstream.

Timothy Leary, Ralph Metzner and Richard Alpert [2008:3–6]

Morrison offers more theatrical examples.

“Roll up for the Magical Mystery Tour, step right this way” calls the barker in the Beatles’ song, and the first voice heard on their *Sgt. Pepper’s* [album] is the master of ceremonies: “may I introduce to you the act you’ve known for all these years”.

Craig Morrison [2000:73–4]

‘In-A-Gadda-Da-Vida’ by Iron Butterfly includes the lyrics, “oh, won’t you come with me and take my hand; oh, won’t you come with me and walk this land; please take my hand”.⁵¹ ‘The Prophet’ (1971) by Azitis – which appears on the acid rock compilation *The Psychedelic Journey* (2012) – features more overtly Biblical lyrics than Iron Butterfly’s apparently “slurred corruption of ‘in a garden of Eden” [81], as well as a significantly more didactic guide, who offers both advice and grave warnings of things to come: “beware my friend, for they’ll lead you astray and block out the light of the sun”. The track also features a very prominent organ and a repeated proclamation – “behold he who will feed them wormwood and make them drink water of gall” – evoking various bitter plant species associated with absynthe, opium and witchcraft (a subject to which I return).⁵²

A particularly Gothic example from the acid rock repertoire is ‘(Ballad of the) Hip Death Goddess’ (1968) by Ultimate Spinach. It opens with bells chiming over a drone E1 on piano, and the heavily reverberated words of a man who intones, with a delay

⁵¹ See pp. 99–100.

⁵² The term wormwood may refer to mugwort, and gall – in some translations of the Bible – to hemlock, both of which are associated with witchcraft.

that allows his words to resound:

See the glazed eyes
Touch the dead skin
Feel the cold lips
And know the warmth of the Hip Death Goddess

He is not heard from again. The remaining lyrics are delivered by a voice that sounds female yet not entirely human.⁵³ She sings:

Touch my hand and you will grow old
Touch my hand; your heart will go cold
Come, let me take you in my arms
I will keep you safe from all harm

MGM Records. SE-4518.

It is almost as though there are two guides here: the man who introduces the listener to the supernatural being who will continue the performance thereafter, and the “Hip Death Goddess of your dreams” who can show you that “life isn’t all that it seems”. ‘White Rabbit’ is similar in this respect: the singer both offers advice – “if you go chasing rabbits and you know you’re going to fall, tell ‘em a hookah-smoking caterpillar has given you a call” – and indicates where additional help is at hand: “go ask Alice; I think she’ll know”. She also reminds the listener to “remember what the Dormouse said”, resembling the *Manual Based on the Tibetan Book of the Dead’s* advice to recite words of wisdom and to “keep the memory of a trusted friend [...] whose name can serve as a guide and protection” during moments of difficulty [Leary *et al.* 2008:6]. These ideas – recitation, protection and the installation of meaning upon words through intent – are also common to chaos magick.

The words printed on the vinyl gatefold of *Batcave: Young Limbs and Numb Hymns* (1983) with which I introduced the Goth scene in chapter 1 exemplify the tour guide admirably.⁵⁴

⁵³ There is a phase shifting effect applied to the vocal (pp. 218–22); cf. vampire sound (p. 123).

⁵⁴ See p. 12.

Ignore the lures of a thousand neon fire-flies, fall deaf to the sighs of street corner sirens — come walk with me between heaven and hell.

London Records. CAVE 1.

On another compilation, *The Goth Anthology* (2006), 'Walk into the Sun' by The March Violets (originally 1984) includes a similar phrase: "walk with me now". This is uttered in syncopated rhythm during the last bar of a middle eight that features a descending and repeated motif – played by two saxophones a major third apart – resembling a tumbling ostinato.⁵⁵ The guide however features most prominently in the song's final verse, where the lyrics evoke a classic counter-cultural inversion gesture.⁵⁶

East is west and west is east
Follow me into the garden
Find your future in the crystal
Leave your friendship in the hall
Follow me now; this is the way
This is a dance for everyone

Rebirth. VRB 2412.

The phrase "follow me now" is highlighted with octave doubling here.

Some listeners may also discern trip lyrics in The March Violets' track. The chorus comprises a repeated phrase – "walk into the sun" – which suggests an unusual type of journey. The word "walk" is processed with delay so that it repeats every other crotchet beat, fading in level each time (that is: the word "walk" appears to walk into the distance). In the verses, the phrase "born again" suggests (with religious overtones) a profound experience, whilst the "statues moving in the ballroom", the "smoke-filled room" and the dance floor where "all is bright" evoke (though do not explicitly describe) psychedelic drug experiences. "Dust is fine so she breathes it in" could easily be a drug reference (although insufflation is not a typical method of ingestion for the psychedelics). "Turn the sundial back again" appears to be a Gothic anachronism on the

⁵⁵ The motif mostly comprises quaver notes but the harmonic rhythm is syncopated. Van Elferen claims "syncopations create clashes in temporality" [2012:168]. See pp. 110–12.

⁵⁶ See p. 19.

already dechronicising gesture of turning back the clock, and the words are again expressed with octave doubling. Whilst Van Elferen asserts that octave doublings create Gothic *doppelgänger* of singing voices [2012:169], Jim LeBlanc has suggested that “as an aspect of psychedelic musical rhetoric”, they may also serve as “a kind of auditory parallel to double vision, which adds to one’s altered sense of space, especially when treated with echo and multi-tracking”.⁵⁷

In Peter Murphy’s ‘Hang Up’ – which opens the album *Lion* (2014) – the lyrics commence with a beckoning gesture similar to those encountered in the previous two examples (as well as ‘Magical Mystery Tour’, ‘In-A-Gadda-Da-Vida’ and ‘(Ballad of the) Hip Death Goddess’). This is followed by two highly evocative lines that appear to establish the scene upon which the song’s narrative will unfold.

Come on over
Said the tripper to the Gauth
Ul-Azam was the Gauth

Within this context, the lyrics here act like an invitation – and guide – into not just ‘Hang Up’, but the album beyond.⁵⁸

The final three words of the above excerpt are subject to delay, an effect that is also present but more prominent in the second verse, where the lyrics evoke a profoundly depersonalising dissolution of barriers separating self and other. These lyrics appear to crystallise the religious overtones of the chorus, comprised only of the phrase “Hagia Sophia” – meaning Holy Wisdom – which is uttered four times in total.

And you are the Ahmad too
And you are The Jesus, The Moses, The Ahmad too
‘Yeah’ says the Gauth

The repetition of the word “Gauth” is particularly prominent here, and – like the word “walk” in The March Violets’ track – it fades into the distance. Concurrently another lyric on a different vocal track, where Murphy’s voice sounds filtered and distorted,

⁵⁷ Email correspondence to author, 5 March 2018.

⁵⁸ I have transcribed the lyrics as they appear on the vinyl gatefold. Murphy, Peter (2014). *Lion*. Nettwerk. 067003100717. The album was produced by Youth.

replies: “‘True’ says the Hu”.⁵⁹

By the third and final verse, the level of delay is increased further, and the reverberated words bleed into one another as they describe an intensely sensational phenomenon.

If the truth be told
What the tripper saw
His lessons was to meet
To withdraw the devils gun there
“You’ve been dragging yourself through a thorn bush with no clothes on –
Through a thorn bush with no clothes on”
[sic.]

Netzwerk. 067003100717.

The Gothic doubling of the lyrics produced by the prominent delay effect here is synergised by the fact that the last clause is also repeated.

As the final verse demonstrates particularly well, ‘Hang Up’ oozes Gothic excess. Murphy’s vocal is extensively multi-tracked, particularly during the bridges, where a phase shifting effect ensures his voice does not sound entirely natural. This is synaesthetically mirrored on *Lion*’s album cover, where an image of the singer’s full face is blended with two in which his head is turned slightly towards the left and right respectively, an effect that makes his eyes – the point where all three portraits meet – appear particularly uncanny.⁶⁰ The vocal multi-tracking is especially effective during the choruses, where it lends a befittingly large (chorused) sound to the phrase “Hagia Sophia”, which refers both to a concept in Christian theology embraced by the Gnostics, and to the huge building of the same name in Istanbul (the city in which Murphy lives). The listener is nonetheless eased into this somewhat ‘visionary torrent of cultures and contexts, myths and symbols’ not only by the tour guide lyrics, but because of the way in which the level of studio effects are gradually increased throughout the recording.

⁵⁹ This can be heard particularly clearly in the dub version – ‘Hang Up (Youth Remix)’ – taken from the album *Remixes from Lion* (2015). Netzwerk. 067003107822.

⁶⁰ See pp. 44–50.

'Hang Up' also features chord oscillation and a bass drone. Whilst such matrices – along with the beckoning tour guide, the term “tripper”, and the vividly tactile imagery of “dragging yourself through a thorn bush with no clothes on” – may suggest a psychedelic journey, the song also connotes experiences that are religious or mystical in nature.

The lyrics in the second verse not only describe a profound transcendence of self but at the same time evoke – like the Hagia Sophia itself, which served as a church and a mosque before it was transformed into a museum during the 1930s – both Christian and Islamic traditions. The word “Hu” furthermore evokes the profound sound that Sufis recognise “as the tone of the universe” [Inayat Khan 1994:119]. Similar to the Sumerian words of power in 'Psychonaut' – and similar to the way Sophia is conceptualised in some Gnostic traditions as a divine frequency – *Hu* is a word whose very sound is significant to spiritual journeys in the mystical practice of Sufism:

The sound *Hu* is most sacred. The mystics of all ages call it *Ism-e Azam*, the name of the Most High, for it is the origin and end of every sound as well as the background of each word.

The word *Hu* is the spirit of all sounds and of all words, and is hidden under them all, as the spirit in the body. [...]

The mystery of *Hu* is revealed to the Sufi who journeys through the path of initiation.

Inayat Khan [2004:74–5]

On the other hand, phrases in Murphy's track like “hang up the phone and come on over” – particularly the variant processed through a band-pass filter to sound as though heard over a telephone – recall rather more commonplace scenarios (like receiving a phone call from a friend). This conflation of timeless mysticism and the everyday – conveyed not just through the lyrics but in the track's extensive use of drones on the one hand coupled with the contemporary sound of its production on the other – affords a sense of temporal displacement. This temporal displacement is both Gothic and evocative of the distortions of time associated with the effects of psychedelic drugs.⁶¹

⁶¹ See pp. 30–36 and 95–116.

Journeys into Darkness: Acid Matrices in Goth

There is much correspondence between the various musical characteristics associated with psychedelic drugs, a point I elaborate on here through reference to a Goth track that exhibits all three matrices encountered in this chapter so far. 'Belladonna & Aconite' (1993) by pagan band Inkubus Sikkubus features not only trip lyrics, drug lyrics and the tour guide, but organ, hypnotic vamp, and, in the second half of the track, a heavily distorted internal pedal point on guitar.⁶² It furthermore exemplifies a Goth variant on a matrix that Morrison terms flower power lyrics [2000:75–6], largely because the song concerns a number of flowering plant species, which, during the “heyday of the use of the hallucinogens in Europe”, were used “almost exclusively in witchcraft and divination” [Schultes *et al.* 2001:26]. Ironically it is not so much the flowers in the Inkubus Sikkubus song but the notion of love and sisterhood in the face of persecution that accounts for its similarity to Morrison’s matrix, although in this particular case, flowers, drugs and mental journeys described in metaphorical terms are intimately linked.

The two species comprising the song’s title are steeped in mythology whose appeal to the Goth scene is exemplary. Belladonna (also known as deadly nightshade) and aconite (whose names include monkshood, devil’s helmet and wolf’s bane) were dedicated to Hecate, goddess of magic, sorcery and witchcraft.⁶³ The genus of the first plant is named according to the same ancient Greek mythology – specifically after Atropos, whose origin is sometimes attributed to Erebus and Nyx, primordial deities associated with darkness and night respectively.

Controlling the birth, life and death of men and women were the three Fates: Clotho, who held the distaff, Lachesis, who spun the thread of life, and Atropos, who cut the thread when life ended. It was after the cruel Atropos that deadly nightshade, *Atropa belladonna*, was named.

Lesley Gordon [1977:36]

The second plant in the song’s title is said to derive from the saliva of Cerberus, the giant three-headed dog that guards the gates of Hades.

⁶² See pp. 103–9.

⁶³ See Gordon, Lesley (1977). *Green Magic. Flowers, Plants and Herbs in Lore and Legend*. New York: The Viking Press, pp. 36–40.

There is a hidden cave that leads to a dark chasm with a steep downward path, and up this path Hercules dragged Cerberus on a steel chain, the monstrous dog resisting all the way [...], enraged, filling the air with barking from all three mouths at once, and spattering the green fields with drops of foamy saliva. The saliva hardened, people think, and, fed by the rich and fertile soil, became a lethal poison. And because it was formed and grows on hard stones, farmers call it 'aconite'.

Ovid trans. Simpson [2001:118]

The same plant is also frequently associated in Gothic literature and cinema with protection against vampires.

Belladonna and aconite are not the only chemically potent flowering plants referenced in the Inkubus Sukkubus song. "The devil's apple" makes an appearance in the second verse, evoking the fruit of *Datura stramonium*, also known as devil's snare, devil's trumpet and thornapple. This last term in fact features in the song's outro, along with seven other plant species that are all associated with witchcraft.⁶⁴

Hemlock, henbane, aconite, belladonna

Opium, thorn apple, cinquefoil, mandragora

As though to underscore the significance of these plants, the outro in which they are referenced – a hypnotic vamp – is repeated until fade-out, and the lyrics here are heard four times in total.

The association of these varying plants with witchcraft is extensive. Hemlock, an ingredient of the "death-drink of the Greeks" [Gordon 1977:100], has been used by witches for centuries in concoctions described varyingly as brews, ointments, oils, philtres, potions, salves and unguents. Henbane, from a different plant family, was associated in ancient Greece with the ability to evoke prophecies, and in the Middle Ages with the conjuration of demons by necromancers.⁶⁵ Mandragora, the Latin term

⁶⁴ I have transcribed the lyrics – by Candia Ridley and Tony McCormack – as they appear in the booklet accompanying the album of the same title from which the song is taken.

⁶⁵ See Lewin, Louis (1998). *Phantastica. A Classic Survey on the Use and Abuse of Mind Altering Plants*. Vermont: Park Street Press, pp. 108–9.

for mandrake, has long been associated with witchcraft and magic, to some extent on account of the uncanny resemblance the mandrake root bears to the human body.

Most notable of the psychoactive effects associated with the witches' ointments, certainly within the context of the Inkubus Sukkubus song, are visions and dreams of flying. Indeed the trope of witches riding broomsticks to orgies at the Sabbat – a term denoting a festive gathering of witches and demons that appears in the second verse – is not unrelated to the fact that such ointments are most effectively absorbed through mucous membranes: anointing and mounting a staff thus allows efficient absorption through the vaginal mucosa.

It is because of the flying phenomena associated with the plants in the song that 'Belladonna & Aconite' evidences not only trip lyrics – “in a dream across the sky, a hundred million miles high, take me ever onwards in the night” – but drug lyrics too. Indeed the opening lines make it quite clear that the metaphorical journey and the magic plants are related:

Belladonna and aconite
Give to me the gift of flight
Take me up, airborne in the night

The chorus of the song is comprised entirely of tour guide lyrics, which include a first person beckoning gesture, and, as with 'White Rabbit', the name of another who appears to offer protection.

Dark sisters, join my night flight
See how far you can climb
Holt's with us on this bright night
Ride with him 'cross the sky

“Holt” in this context evokes John Holt, an English lawyer recognised for his role in ending the prosecution of witches in the late seventeenth to early eighteenth centuries.

It is on account of the lyrics in the chorus especially that a comparison with Morrison's flower power lyrics matrix is merited. *Flower Power* is the title of a photograph taken by Bernie Boston on 21 October 1967, which captured the moment a demonstrator of the National Mobilization Committee to End the War in Vietnam placed a carnation into the barrel of a rifle held towards his face by a military police officer. In similar vein, Morrison claims that flower power lyrics are concerned with the

notion of love in the face of violence. The lyrics of the example he provides – ‘San Franciscan Nights’ by Eric Burdon and the Animals – indeed make no mention of flowers, but rather, like the *Flower Power* photograph and others like it, juxtapose the imagery of a “cop’s face [...] filled with hate” with “the children [who] are cool”. The allusion to John Holt in the lyrics of ‘Belladonna & Aconite’, in combination with the phrase “dark sisters”, evokes similarly a scene of peace and love in the face of persecution.

Due to lyrics like “on a warm San Franciscan night, old child young child feel alright”, Morrison claims the Eric Burdon and the Animals song “presents a heavenly vision, if only for one night” [2000:76]. Although ‘heavenly’ might not be such an appropriate term for the Inkubus Sukkubus song – considering its references to the “demon steed”, “a screaming horde” and all manner of the Devil’s plants – it presents not dissimilarly the vision of a joyous and festive gathering of sisters in witchcraft. In addition to arrival by broomstick, the Sabbat is associated with arrival by beast, and the image of the demon steed is synergised effectively through the typically metal galloping rhythm of the guitar, bodhráns and drum kit. Of course the sacraments referenced in the lyrics suggest that the experience of “this bright night” will, much like an LSD trip, appear much longer than it lasts.

Across the astral plane we race
The Universe my fingers trace
And I am lost forever in my mind

Nightbreed. Night CD 003.

In addition to trip, drug, flower power and tour guide lyrics, ‘Belladonna & Aconite’ demonstrates another matrix Morrison terms supernatural lyrics. Supernatural lyrics – which feature also in ‘Psychonaut’ and ‘Hang Up’ – express “[t]he counterculture’s explorations of alternate spiritual paths such as meditation, mysticism, or black magic” [152]. The alternate spiritual paths of paganism and witchcraft in this particular case are reflected in the illustrations of the album’s lyric booklet.

The Inkubus Sukkubus song also demonstrates (along with others including ‘Shining Silver Skies’ and ‘Walk into the Sun’) another matrix Morrison terms fantasy realm lyrics, identified “when an imaginary world, whether idyllic or horrific, is invoked”.

Lyrics that concern a fantasy land of one kind or another are common in psychedelic music, whether inspired by hallucinations, the make-believe worlds of children's literature, mythology, legends, or science fiction.

Craig Morrison [2000:71–2]

Although the lyrics may certainly evoke mythology and legend in the way I have demonstrated, I use the term fantasy realm with caution because too readily associating hallucinatory experiences with fantasy may reduce powerful and often entheogenic (spiritual) experiences to a deception of the senses.⁶⁶

Indeed the perceived reality of drug experiences appears particularly relevant in a case like 'Belladonna & Aconite'. Robert Masters (who has documented his own experiments smoking the seeds and leaves of thornapple) and Jean Houston have suggested for example that the hallucinations experienced by subjects under the influence of henbane and belladonna in the Middle Ages "were so vivid that the individuals later believed them actually to have occurred – so confessing to the Inquisitors only what they thought to be a fact" [2000:39].⁶⁷ Certainly attitudes, opinions and beliefs regarding such controversial subjects as witchcraft and drugs will exert a strong influence on the way a listener perceives the lyrics here. Whether "Holt" or the names of the flowers in the Inkubus Sukkubus song mean anything to the listener will determine strongly the degree to which they perceive a flower power sentiment, just as their opinions regarding the plants in the outro will inform whether the song exhibits to them blasphemy, reverence or something else entirely.

The classification of lyrics is indeed, for all examples in this chapter, as strongly subject to interpretation as their meaning. Morrison for instance claims, "we have no doubt that LSD is involved" in 'San Franciscan Nights' on account of the drug lyrics in the "opening couplet": "strobe light's beam creates dreams, walls move, minds do too" [2000:76]. He refers to the first lyrics that are sung. I would contend rather that the trip lyrics contain no explicit drug references, and that the spoken words which open

⁶⁶ See pp. 18–24.

⁶⁷ A book on the expansion of human consciousness by the same authors – *Mind Games* (1972) – is referenced in the title track to John Lennon's album of the same title, released the following year. The book is subtitled *The Guide to Inner Space*. See Blaney, John (2005). *John Lennon. Listen to This Book*. Paper Jukebox, p. 126.

the track lend context meaning the same lines Morrison references could easily pertain to the mind-expanding experiences associated with travel. (They could, furthermore, be just as readily accused of proselytising tourism to the United States as ‘Eight Miles High’ of proselytising illegal drugs).

This is a very personal song, so if the viewer cannot understand it – particularly those of you who are European residents – save up all your bread and fly TransLove Airways to San Francisco, USA. [...] It will be worth it, if not for the sake of this song but for the sake of your own peace of mind.

Reprise Records. R 6248.

In similar vein, for some listeners, ‘Psychonaut’ – comprised of supernatural lyrics that betray the band’s interest in chaos magick – is a spell. For others, it simply exemplifies Morrison’s literary references matrix,⁶⁸ “borrowing characters, situations, or passages from books” [2000:70], and affords no special magic of its own. I emphasise these differences because psychedelic experiences afforded by music are just as informed by a subject’s set – their beliefs, values, opinions and expectations – as the setting in which the music is performed. Whether belladonna is a sacred entheogen, dangerous poison or obscure reference to a listener can exert just as strong an influence as the technology through which the music is mediated. In the same way that experiencing music through huge stacks of amplifiers can synergise an ecstatic dissolution of boundaries separating performer, music and listener, a joyous union of fellow Goths, pagans or dark sisters of witchcraft singing the chorus of ‘Belladonna & Aconite’ can afford for an Inkubus Sukkubus fan precisely the same phenomenon. Indeed the song’s status as a “Goth-club favourite” suggests that for many listeners, it does [Pitzl-Waters 2014:81].

⁶⁸ ‘White Rabbit’ exemplifies the literary references matrix.

Goth and the Death of the Ego

In this chapter I have addressed the relationship between music and psychedelic drugs by attending to depersonalisation – a fundamental effect of LSD marked by a profound shift in the sense of self – whose symptoms I have demonstrated vary considerably according to set and setting. In the first half of the chapter I examined approaches to ensemble and their resultant musical textures. I suggested how peak depersonalisation experiences, marked by a liberating and epiphanic understanding of the interconnectedness of all things, have been related in the work of Michael Hicks to free improvisation and counterpoint. I outlined how the psychedelic experiences of acid rock musicians informed such approaches to ensemble, which abandoned traditional roles like lead or accompanimental player, along with their implicit hierarchical structures of foreground and background. I furthermore explained how these approaches, along with a number of matrices in the work of Craig Morrison – religious organ and the revelation – and various performance practices (like using huge stacks of amplifiers to achieve incredibly high volume levels) contributed to music that sounded expansive, deep or impressive.

I have also demonstrated that the same approaches to ensemble – along with similar notions of the epic or profound – are present in the Goth repertoire. I outlined, through songs featuring murderous frenzied screaming to the recitation of Biblical scripture, how such notions of the profound manifest in relation to both the sacred and the profane. From the liberal application of reverb to connote ‘vast, overwhelming oceanic spaces’, through saturation of the frequency spectrum to the use of full symphonic orchestra, I outlined various ways in which both acid rock and Goth evoke the enormous and impressive, which I related not only to the distortions of size, distance and proportion associated with psychedelic drugs addressed in the previous chapter, but to the profundity associated with depersonalisation experiences in particular, and with mystical, religious and psychedelic experiences more generally.

In the second half of the chapter I addressed how such profound experiences are frequently described in terms of metaphorical journeys, along with a number of matrices pertaining to the nature and portrayal of such journeys through lyrics. Attending particularly to trip lyrics, drug lyrics and the tour guide, I suggested also the prevalence of supernatural lyrics, fantasy realm lyrics and literary references in acid rock and Goth, and identified how a number of characteristics – such as the beckoning

gesture, the notion of protection, and the repetition of a phrase as though a mantra – feature in both repertoires.

Focusing on the interpretability of lyrics, and in contrast to Sheila Whiteley's psychedelic coding, I demonstrated how one listener's drug song may evoke for another a spiritual journey having nothing to do with drugs but rather one travelled through mysticism, meditation or chaos magick. I also suggested that variations in the way listeners interpret meaning in song are reflected in the way they classify and experience those songs. For one Fields of the Nephilim fan, the song 'Psychonaut' – much like its title, which evokes a sailor of the mind – is a "headtrip" [*sic.*] [Winegarner 2013]. For another, it is a ritual act of invocation in which resonating the names of ancient spirits results in a profound dissolution of barriers separating performer, music and listener.

In outlining the consistently distinctive ways in which music both evokes and grants access to types of experience described as mystical, religious or psychedelic, I have emphasised that set and setting are just as determinant in shaping the phenomena associated with musical experiences as they are in shaping the phenomena associated with drug experiences.⁶⁹ In the same way the presence or absence of others strongly influenced the depersonalisation phenomena of the mescaline subject encountered at the beginning of the chapter, the presence of others joining voices to chant ancient words and 'convoke the Nephilim' was integral to the depersonalisation experience of the fan encountered towards the end. This underscores Andrew Weil's notion that "the *experience* associated with use of a drug may not be as causally related to the drug as it appears to be" [1998:29–30, italics original]. Rather, the effects of the psychedelics can be more thoroughly comprehended by recognition of their tendency to increase both sensational and emotional sensitivity to matters of set and setting: a mechanism I have suggested is equally integral to the effects of the literary and sonic Gothic.⁷⁰

In describing the sensational and emotional intensity afforded by Goth performance, I have drawn parallels between the heterotopias of the Goth scene and the otherworldly performance spaces of the counter-culture. I have suggested that on account of their sonic excess, as well as features like strobe lights, smoke and incense

⁶⁹ See pp. 79–86.

⁷⁰ See pp. 37–43.

that “heighten all sensory modalities”, both exhibit a tendency to synergise the “sensory overload” of the psychedelics, which has been related in the work of Marlene Dobkin de Rios and Fred Katz to a synaesthetic excess that – like the bite of the vampire Lestat in Anne Rice’s *Interview with the Vampire* – causes sensations to spill from one domain into another [1975:71]. I have suggested that through their synaesthetic effects like lights that flash in synchrony with a drum beat, their blurring of boundaries separating audience and performer, and their high volume levels particularly (eliciting for some listeners a profound dissolving of boundaries constituting self), both Goth and counter-cultural listening contexts are particularly conducive to psychedelic experiences, encouraging, as they do, a ceremonial transgression of space, time and self.

The consistently distinctive characteristics I have outlined in this chapter encompass not only musical abstractions like lyrics and texture, but the broader context in which music-making takes place: an approach necessary in order to demonstrate the appropriate sensitivity to set and setting that the study of both psychedelic drugs and the Gothic demands.

Chapter 5

The Uncanny:

Acid and the Living Dead Sounds of Goth

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Statues Slowly Click Their Fingers

Albert Hofmann, the first chemist to synthesise and ingest LSD, characterised the effects of the drug as “unfathomably uncanny” [2013:46].¹ In this chapter I describe how one fundamental drug effect in particular resonates with Ernst Jentsch’s theory of the uncanny as outlined in his 1906 essay ‘Zur Psychologie des Unheimlichen’ (‘On the Psychology of the Uncanny’). The Jentschian uncanny is concerned with “a particular feeling of uncertainty” aroused by something that calls into question the opposition between the known and the unknown [1997:9]. Unlike Sigmund Freud, who sought to isolate the “specific affective nucleus” of the uncanny [2003:123] – and defined it as the return of the repressed – Jentsch did not attempt to define the essence of the uncanny.² Rather, pointing towards the importance of context and individual differences – the set and setting variables – he outlined a number of scenarios in which “the affective excitement of the uncanny” might arise, suggesting it was often associated with circumstances in which “a correlation to ‘new/foreign/hostile’ corresponds to the psychical association of ‘old/known/familiar’” [1997:8–9]. One scenario central to the Jentschian uncanny, and one upon which Freud similarly expounded, was “doubt as to whether an apparently living being is animate and, conversely, doubt as to whether a lifeless object may not in fact be animate” [*ibid.*:11].³

The drug effect I attend to in this chapter is one that Michael Hicks terms dynamisation, referring to a fluid-like animation of everything in the visual field such that:

Familiar forms dissolve into moving, dancing structures. Thousands of images swirl through consciousness each second. Objects which our learned perceptions had persuaded us were solid and fixed begin to vibrate and oscillate. [...] Looking at yourself in the mirror your own face flicks through a hundred changes, infant, child, adult, aged man with beard.

Timothy Leary [1966a:80]

¹ In the original German language: “unheimlichen Tiefenwirkung” [2008:61].

² Jentsch’s essay is translated from the original German by Roy Sellars, Freud’s (originally published in 1919) likewise by David McLintock.

³ See pp. 44–50.

Dynamisation not only poses a challenge to learned perceptions in the manner Timothy Leary describes here – calling into question the opposition between the known and the unknown – but, through its profound transformation of familiar structures, it renders the home unhomely. Hofmann’s own account of the effect illustrates this particularly clearly:

My surroundings had now transformed themselves in a most terrifying manner. Everything in the room spun around, and familiar objects and pieces of furniture assumed grotesque, threatening forms. They were in continuous motion, animated, as if driven by an inner restlessness.

Albert Hofmann [2013:20]

The ghostly connotations of this final clause – which illustrates how the German phrase *ein unheimliches Haus* becomes ‘a haunted house’ in the English language – return in Hofmann’s later accounts. Regarding an experiment involving psilocybin some nineteen years later for example he wrote that: “[w]ith the increasing depth of inebriation, everything became yet stranger. I even felt strange to myself. [...] Emptied of all meaning, the environment also seemed spectral to me” [122].⁴ Whilst the unusual (thus terrifying) phenomenon of seeing familiar objects and pieces of furniture animated – full of life, full of spirit – is certainly uncanny in a Jentschian sense, disturbing the “straightforwardly self-evident” concept that household items do not move by themselves, Jentsch remarked only briefly on “the stirrings of the uncanny and the danger of seeing spirits or ghosts” [1997:8–13].

Freud attended more extensively to the spectral, claiming that to many people, “the acme of the uncanny is represented by anything to do with death, dead bodies, revenants, spirits and ghosts” [2003:148]. Aspects of the Freudian uncanny are integral to the dynamisation effect described in other accounts of psychedelic drug use, for example in the endless repetition of duplicated, self-similar patterns. In the earliest empirical account of an LSD experience published by a psychiatrist, for instance, Werner Stoll describes seeing a constant flux of moving images, including a “succession of towering, Gothic vaults” and an “endless choir”. He remarks:

⁴ The term spectral is translated from “gespenstisch” [2008:168], also meaning eerie, spooky.

It was significant that all the images consisted of countless repetitions of the same elements: many sparks, many circles, many arches, many windows, many fires, etc. I never saw isolated images, but always duplications of the same image, endlessly repeated. [...] I felt myself one with all romanticists and dreamers, thought of E. T. A. Hoffmann, saw the maëlstrom of Poe (even though, at the time I had read Poe, his description seemed exaggerated).⁵

Werner Stoll in Hofmann [2013:35]

Similarly recalling the excess of the Gothic but speaking in relation to acid rock, Hicks claims that “the restlessness of psychedelic music was that of a quasi-Baroque embellishment of every parameter” [2000:73]. That is, acid rock musicians dynamised everything from harmony and form to timbre, articulation and spatial deployment, so as to transform “musical parameters previously stable in rock” [66] into liquid, moving structures. I have already addressed some of the methods Hicks describes in previous chapters, such as the creative use of panning, which dynamised recordings spatially by making sound glide between left and right speakers, and the use of reverse reverb effects, which dynamised articulation by transforming attacks into decays.⁶ Others feature to dramatic effect in tracks already encountered, such as the use of feedback “to dynamize both tone and pitch” [71] in ‘Kiss Kiss Bang Bang’ by Specimen,⁷ which ends with a sustained note on electric guitar that continuously alters timbre for around thirty seconds as the strings of the instrument resonate in sympathetic vibration with the amplifier. ‘Walk into the Sun’ by The March Violets opens in similar vein with a shimmering wash of the harmonic series played on an overdriven guitar sustaining semibreves in octaves,⁸ the dynamised sound remarkably similar to that which opens ‘Hot Smoke and Sassafras’ (1969) by Bubble Puppy from the acid rock repertoire.

⁵ Stoll’s ‘Lysergsäure-diäthylamid, ein Phantastikum aus der Mutterkorngruppe’ (‘Lysergic Acid Diethylamide, a Phantasticum from the Ergot Group’) was first published in the *Schweizer Archiv für Neurologie und Psychiatrie* (*Swiss Archives of Neurology and Psychiatry*) in 1947.

⁶ See pp. 117–29. Hicks refers to the process of reversing audio as backtracking. He claims the “attacks of backtracked music seemed more like coagulations” and describes their sound as “dripping” [71].

⁷ See p. 34.

⁸ The title of this section derives from the lyrics of this song; see pp. 167–8.

In this chapter I attend to further ways in which acid rock and Goth animate familiar musical forms into shapes that oscillate and swirl as though driven by an inner restlessness. I begin by focusing on harmonic devices that appear to make the tonic unhomely, before describing the use in both repertoires of hallucinogenic sounds that are similar but not identical to those produced by living creatures. Further to suggesting how such sounds resonate with Jentsch's uncanny – which is aroused by “processes that for the time being elude explanation or whose conditions of origin are unknown” [1997:9–10] – I attend to numerous ways Goth vocals are dynamised so as to no longer sound human, referencing particularly the Cybergoth repertoire, which exploits extensively the uncanny potential of schizophonia to render the precise origin of sound obscure.

In the second half of the chapter I outline how two Goth tracks bring the dynamised sounds of acid rock into the lyrical context of the home, addressing a number of Craig Morrison's matrices including phase shifting and the trip section. As Jentsch's uncanny is sensitive to matters of set and setting, I suggest how isolation, paranoia and existential angst described in relation to the home find particularly hallucinogenic expression in Goth, and how its characteristic effects like delay and double-tracking – which create ghostly echoes and eerie *doppelgänger* of singing voices – have been related in the work of Isabella van Elferen to the Freudian uncanny. I conclude by asserting that acid rock and Goth share the same dynamised sounds associated with psychedelic drugs, but in so far as it is inclined towards the likes of automata, eidolons, haunted houses and the undead, Goth employs these musical characteristics towards particularly disconcerting ends.

Dynamisation: a Ghost Dance

The third fundamental effect of LSD that Michael Hicks describes – dynamisation, whereby familiar forms undulate, ripple and pulse; and objects “become liquid, ‘dripping, steaming, with white-hot light or electricity’, as though the ‘substance and form’ of the world were ‘still molten’” [2000:64] – has been described since the earliest reports as uncanny.⁹ In a report on the effects of psilocybin-containing mushrooms first published in 1914, a subject identified as Mr W recounts:

After entering the house, I noticed that the irregular figures on the wall-paper seemed to have creepy and crawling motions, contracting and expanding continually, though not changing their forms; finally they began to project from the wall and grew out toward me from it with uncanny motions.

Mr W in Verrill [2011]

Whilst the transformation of the familiar space of the home into a creepy space of disconcerting motion is certainly *unheimlich* in its literal sense of unhomely, the account is also uncanny in the Jentschian sense of being concerned with whether or not something is “animate in the same way” as a human [1997:13].

A subject in a more recent report detailing a powerful psychedelic experience under the influence of changa describes dynamisation in distinctly Jentschian terms.¹⁰

At this point, I was attacked by the most uncanny feeling yet – this ‘plastic’ [...] was forming and reforming on its own. It was not just expanding and contracting... it was breathing. The ‘plastic’ was ALIVE! [*sic*]

Slipdisco [2011]

Uncertainty regarding the nature, cause or origin of motion is central to the Jentschian uncanny, and it is underscored by the question of whether or not something is alive: “[a]s long as the doubt as to the nature of the perceived movement lasts, and with it the obscurity of its cause, a feeling of terror persists in the person concerned” [1997:11].

⁹ Hicks quotes a psychedelic drug subject in Leary, Timothy (1964). ‘The Religious Experience: Its Production and Interpretation’. *Psychedelic Review*, 1(3), pp. 324–46, p. 332.

¹⁰ Changa is a psychedelic smoking mixture containing DMT; see pp. 68–70.

In this section I describe various methods of musical dynamisation, and I relate these to the uncanny in not only its sense of the unhomely but in more distinctly spectral and anthropomorphic terms. I begin by outlining several ways in which acid rock bands made music with unstable tonal centres, from the use of chromatic mediants and multiple tonics, to what Hicks describes as the removal of chords from their diatonic or pentatonic base. The terminology for some techniques derives from classical music, such as the double-tonic complex, an idea developed by Robert Bailey in relation to pieces including Mahler's *Das Lied von der Erde* and Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde*. The terminology for others derives from jazz: side-slipping, for example – also known as outside playing – refers to an improvisation technique wherein the soloist deliberately plays “out-of-the-key’ for the sake of creating tension” [Coker 1991:83].¹¹ Metaphors of space and gravitational pull are employed in both vocabularies, and I suggest how these various techniques make the familiar tonal function of diatonic harmony strange by destabilising the conceptual home of the scale. Further to explaining how such devices evoke the sensation of drifting, floating or anti-gravity that numerous music theorists describe in relation to psychedelia, I demonstrate how Goth employs the same techniques to create soundscapes with particularly alienating, ghostly and ethereal connotations. I also exemplify the use, in both repertoires, of glissandi and chromatic neighbour or passing chords that make the harmony “seem to slide”, and explain how Hicks relates the sinuous, undulating shapes they trace to the “mind-bending’ experience of LSD” [2000:67–8].

I then address what I describe as zoomorphic and pareidolic sounds. By zoomorphic I refer to sounds that suggest animal form, such as sustained notes on electric guitar that slide up and down in pitch and call to mind the howling of a wolf, or the use of white noise to evoke breath. These sounds may be timbral, melodic, rhythmic, and so forth: the ways and extent to which they are animal-like being largely dependent on the listener. By pareidolic I refer to the illusory nature of the sound evoked: to the fact that the glissando sounds similar but not identical to a howling wolf, and to the fact that the synthesiser generating the white noise does not in fact breathe. Although these are not concepts Hicks addresses, pareidolic hallucinations – particularly of a zoomorphic nature – are typical of the way in which psychedelic drugs dissolve familiar forms into moving, dancing structures. Jean-Paul Sartre for example recounts:

¹¹ Craig Morrison similarly describes two matrices in acid rock entitled jazz solos and classical borrowing, the latter of which is particularly present in Goth.

My first contact with mescaline took place in a partially-lighted room in which all objects changed shape according to real perspective [...] [t]here was an umbrella hanging on a coat rack, and I had the impression it was a vulture. The cloth part of the umbrella became the wings, and then there was a neck and a kind of beak. It was seen like that.

Jean-Paul Sartre [1978:37–8]

In similar vein a painter describes how under the influence of LSD familiar structures not only assumed animal form but appeared to move with intent like living animals:

The objects in the room became animated to caricatures; everything on all sides sneered scornfully. I saw Eva's yellow-black striped shoes, which I had previously found so stimulating, appearing to be two large, evil wasps crawling on the floor. The water-pipes above the washbasin transformed into a dragon's head, whose eyes, the two water-taps, observed me malevolently.

Indeed he describes auditory phenomena in similar terms:

Loudly I heard the electrical meter ticking weirdly outside of the door, as if it wished to make a most important, evil, devastating announcement to me at any moment. Disdain, derision, and malignity again whispered from every nook and cranny. [...] Yet soon it became silent again, [...] and only the threatening ticking and humming of the electrical meter buzzed 'round us like an invisible, malevolent insect.

Painter in Hofmann [2013:70]

As well as typifying the effects of psychedelic drugs, both accounts are decidedly uncanny. In the original German language of the latter, the ticking of the electrical meter is described not as weird but rather *unheimlich*. The account evidences what Jentsch would describe as an important factor in the origin of the uncanny, namely, “the natural tendency of man to infer, in a kind of naïve analogy with his own animatedness, that things in the external world are also animate, or, perhaps more correctly, are animate in the same way” [1997:17]. Freud offers some support for this notion in recounting an “extraordinarily uncanny” piece of fiction wherein a young couple move into a flat furnished with “a curiously shaped table with crocodiles carved into the wood”.

Towards evening the flat is regularly pervaded by an unbearable and highly characteristic smell, and in the dark the tenants stumble over things and fancy they see something undefinable gliding over the stairs. In short, one is led to surmise that, owing to the presence of this table, the house is haunted by ghostly crocodiles or that the wooden monsters come to life in the dark, or something of the sort.

Sigmund Freud [2003:151]

There is a further sense of the uncanny in the painter's account in so far as his friend Eva "had become a stranger" such that he "scarcely recognized her any longer" [*ibid.*].

Whilst Hicks is unconcerned with the uncanny, I outline how various methods of musical dynamisation he describes in acid rock contribute to the uncanny sounds of Goth, and particularly how Goth employs vocal dynamisation to create hallucinatory voices that emanate from unknown sources. I explain how non-human sounds from drums to creaking doors are brought to life, and conversely how vocals are transformed so as to sound distinctly demonic, electronic or mechanical in origin. Some methods I describe – like the use of spectral glides to slowly blend one vowel sound into another, and the modulation of syllables to make familiar words sound strange – are (relatively) independent of technology.¹² Others, such as those haunting the Cybergoth scene, rely on it almost entirely for a "foregrounding and intensification of schizophonia" that exploits "the machinic timbres and dense textures of the phantom voice" [Van Elferen 2012:167].¹³ I conclude by suggesting that acid rock and Goth share the same dynamised sounds – associated with the way LSD dissolves familiar forms into strange rippling structures – because psychedelic drug experiences, calling into question the opposition between the known and the unknown, and typified by pareidolic hallucinations of a zoomorphic nature, are in a Jentschian sense thoroughly uncanny.

¹² Grace Slick and other acid rock vocalists combined such techniques with turning the head from side to side in front of the microphone: a technique used also by jazz vocalists.

¹³ See pp. 15–16 and p. 52.

An Unhomely Tonic

Hicks describes a certain spectral quality in the way that acid rock musicians dynamised harmony through chromatic mediant, which made the tonality “either seem to float or to gravitate to two different tonal centers” [2000:68]. Chromatic mediant are generally defined as altered mediant and submediant chords, but because Hicks claims that “psychedelic musicians removed [...] chords from their diatonic or pentatonic base”, he rather uses the term in reference to pairs of triads of the same (major or minor) mode separated by an interval of a third. I have described the harmony in the examples he provides (‘Light My Fire’ by The Doors and ‘In-A-Gadda-Da-Vida’ by Iron Butterfly) in comparison to Craig Morrison’s chord oscillation matrix in chapter 3.¹⁴

In addition to a sense of restlessness afforded by such harmony – particularly when employed in the oscillating motion Morrison describes – there is also a certain undermining of the tonic, which is to say an undermining of the conceptual home of the diatonic scale.¹⁵ Sheila Whiteley remarks upon a similar effect (although her example contains no chromatic mediant) in relation to ‘Sunshine Superman’ (1966) by Donovan, which she describes as based almost entirely upon a slow alternation between D⁷ and G.

As both chords are stressed equally neither has the reassuringly supportive effect of the tonic, and so a different tonal space is caused. Both chords have an equal pull on the melody line and create an effect of anti-gravity, drifting and timelessness: you only know where you are because of where you started.¹⁶

Sheila Whiteley [1992:68]

¹⁴ See pp. 99–102 and p. 108.

¹⁵ See also Van Elferen, Isabella (2013). ‘Globalgoth? Unlocatedness in the Musical Home’ in Glennis Byron (ed.) *Globalgothic*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, pp. 91–104.

¹⁶ I rather hear the harmony as a variation of the twelve-bar blues progression, with the dominant A⁷ in the refrain in particular asserting D⁷ as the clear tonic, although concede it is not a classically stable tonic on account of the flattened seventh and the rocking gesture in the guitar part (which oscillates between a D on the fifth string and a lower A on the sixth).

This sense of anti-gravity, drifting and timelessness is precisely what I described in relation to 'Hollow Hills' by Bauhaus, which exemplifies what Hicks, referencing the work of Robert Bailey, calls the double-tonic complex. Underscoring Bailey's double-tonic complex is the idea that a piece of music can have two distinct tonal centres, neither of which is functionally dominant over the other, although one key is given priority at any given moment.¹⁷ Chords related by an interval of a third are particularly conducive to Bailey's double-tonic complex because they allow for the highest number of common tones between the two tonics, allowing the voice-leading to afford a sense of what I previously described as travelling without moving.¹⁸ 'Hollow Hills' – which oscillates between E minor and C major throughout – has a conservative double-tonic comprised of four notes (C, E, G and B) derived from a pair of triads separated by a third. In chapter 3 I outlined how the harmony, through its relentless oscillating motion, affords a sense of Jonathan Kramer's vertical time. I also suggested how in undermining a sense of closure, the chords, in Isabella van Elferen's terms, "increase the sense of uncanniness in sonic liminality" [2012:4].¹⁹ In language resonant with Hicks' notion of harmonic dynamisation, the chords form a double-tonic, which is prolonged throughout the entire track.²⁰ Yet in spite of their endless reiteration, and in spite of the idea that the double-tonic demonstrates "irreducible balance, a yin/yang relationship where neither key challenges, disrupts, or overtakes the other" [BaileyShea 2007:193], the motion between the two distinct tonal centres means that neither one feels particularly stable. In Whiteley's terms, instead of the 'reassuringly supportive effect of the tonic', there is a 'different tonal space' – one that is characterised by motion, and one that does not entirely feel like home.

¹⁷ For a useful summary of the double-tonic complex see BaileyShea, Matt (2007). 'The Hexatonic and the Double Tonic: Wolf's *Christmas Rose*'. *Journal of Music Theory*, 51(2), pp. 187–210, pp. 192–5. See also Nobile, Drew (2017). 'Double-Tonic Complexes in Rock Music'. *Society for Music Theory Fortieth Annual Meeting*. 2–5 November. Arlington, Virginia.

¹⁸ See p. 78 and pp. 99–112.

¹⁹ See pp. 100–102.

²⁰ Bruce Benward and Marilyn Saker describe the classical function of chromatic mediants in similar terms: chromatic mediants "provide unusual color and interest while prolonging the tonic harmony" [2009:202].

Whilst 'Hollow Hills' demonstrates one type of double-tonic complex, 'White Rabbit' by Jefferson Airplane exemplifies another.²¹ Although the song "dwells extensively" in F# major [Hicks 2000:69], oscillating up by chromatic step to G major and back several times in the intro and throughout the verses, the first mention of Alice is marked by a transition to A major: a chord which is subsequently tonicised through a plagal cadence at the end of the line, before returning to F# major at the start of the next verse.

The motion from the bridge to the final verse strongly reinforces the song's sense of dual tonality: the bridge, completely diatonic to A major, ends with an A chord, jarringly followed by six measures of an F# major chord.

Michael Hicks [2000:69]

'White Rabbit' then conveys a sense of two tonics, both major, whose roots are separated by an interval of a third; in Hicks' terms the song has a double-tonic comprised of chromatic mediant. Whilst 'Hollow Hills' features a restless unhomely tonic with one chord persistently returning to another in endless unsettled repetition, 'White Rabbit', comprised of two tonal centres with a diatonically unconventional relationship to one another, affords more of a doubtful tension regarding the gravitational pull of the chords. This is particularly the case for Mephisto Walz's gothic rock cover, whose profuse amounts of reverb and delay ensure that the sonorities from one key linger, resound and bleed into the other.

The oscillation between F# major and G major in the verses of 'White Rabbit' further exemplifies what Hicks describes as a dynamisation of harmony through the addition of chromatic neighbour, appoggiatura or passing chords.

Several groups embellished the tonic chord of a song with the Neapolitan chord (bII) as an upper neighbour, adapting the jazz technique called 'side-slipping' (sliding the 'real' harmony up or down a half step and back).

Michael Hicks [2000:67]

Describing side-slipping as a way to "unnerve the harmony with simple half-step inflections", Hicks claims a prototypical example of the technique lies in 'The Witch' (1964) by The Sonics, which dynamises each chord of the twelve-bar blues progression with a chromatic upper neighbour during the second half of the bar, "in order to create

²¹ See pp. 97–8.

a deviant, ‘occult’ sound” [139]. Confirming the suspicious nature of the tonic in ‘White Rabbit’, Morrison similarly offers the Jefferson Airplane song as an example of his side-slipping matrix, but comments that he hears the motion between F \sharp major and G major not as I– \flat II but VI– \flat VII. The matrix, which Morrison describes as “producing an odd, shifting sense” [2000:72], is given particularly unhomely connotations in ‘The House at Pooneil Corners’ (1968) – also by Jefferson Airplane – which features a striking oscillation between E minor (i) and F major (\flat II) voiced partially through a trembling organ.²²

From the Goth repertoire, ‘Dreamland’ (2013) by Sopor Æternus & the Ensemble of Shadows prolongs a double-tonic comprised of F minor and its lower chromatic neighbour E minor in a slow oscillating motion for almost fifteen minutes.²³ The lyrics – from the 1844 poem of the same name by Edgar Allan Poe – are a return to the same text the band had set to ‘Die Bruderschaft des Schmerzes’ on their 1995 album *Todeswunsch (Sous Le Soleil de Saturne)*. The words describe the journey, “by a route obscure and lonely”, of a traveller who arrives in a distant land, “out of SPACE and out of TIME”.²⁴ This mysterious landscape, “where dwell the Ghouls”, is alive with liquid, moving structures, as though the substance and form of the world were still molten:

With forms that no man can discover
For the tears that drip all over;
Mountains toppling evermore
Into seas without a shore;
Seas that restlessly aspire,
Surging, unto skies of fire;
Lakes that endlessly outspread,
Their lone waters — lone and dead, —

Edgar Allan Poe [2006:66]

²² See pp. 143–4.

²³ In the key of E minor the progression side-slips between \flat ii–i; in the key of F minor it side-slips between i– \sharp vii. The tonic may be both or neither. Van Elferen describes the song as bitonal, adding that bitonality is “not unusual” in Goth [2017:34].

²⁴ I quote here the lyrics as sung on the recording; the words space and time are capitalised in both Poe’s poem and the printed lyrics accompanying Sopor Æternus & the Ensemble of Shadows (2013). *Poetica*. Apocalyptic Vision. AV-030-LP.

The track could be described as uncanny in numerous ways: there is the eerie, suspenseful creak of a door yawning open; a harpsichord, sounding the return of an antiquated musical instrument through the clarity of modern recording technology; the detuned notes of a “sick-sounding piano” moving in persistent quaver motion like the mechanical ticking of a clock [Van Elferen 2017:34]; and the low hum of sampled voices that do not sound entirely human. The lyrics in the first verse reference “an Eidolon named NIGHT”, which is to say something non-human personified, and something inseparable from the concept of the double. Exemplified by something reflected in a mirror or surface of a pond, and also by an effigy or portrait, the Greek term εἶδωλον (*eidôlon*) refers to something that is seen but also denotes the perception of what is seen, conveying a double characteristic of the image.

Eidolon signifies image-simulacrum, designating the image as it is materialized in reality. [...] *Eidolon* is also derived from *eikon* (resemblance), which means that we can see the image as something similar to reality – something that is redoubled like a ghost. [...] In ancient Greek, only the soul can perceive the impression of visions and dreams. [...] The soul alone can put objects before our eyes and transpose them into signs and images. In this sense, the etymology of *eidolon* is inseparable from the imagination and from memory.

Ellen Chow [2011:156]

At some moments during ‘Dreamland’ there is a disconcerting doubling of the vocal track, and the ‘Eidolon named NIGHT’ – much like “the double characteristic of the image” the term evokes [*ibid.*] – makes a Freudian return in the final verse.²⁵

The harmonic oscillation between F minor and E minor that comprises the majority of the track is particularly uncanny. It affords a similar sense of unhomeliness as ‘Hollow Hills’, but here the chords share no common tones, are diatonically foreign to one another, and move via an odd, shifting gesture to unnerve the harmony in simple half-step inflections. The oscillation extends for eight bars beyond the conclusion of the

²⁵ Freud recounts a personally uncanny experience in ‘Das Unheimliche’ wherein he was startled by a man entering his sleeping compartment on a train, only to realise the intruder was his own image reflected in the mirror of the connecting door. In so far as Freud momentarily perceives the eidolon (his reflection) to be alive, his experience is underscored by a Jentschian doubt as to whether a lifeless object (the mirror) may not in fact be animate ‘in the same way’ as a human.

first verse, into what Anna-Varney Cantodea of Sopor Æternus & the Ensemble of Shadows describes as “a reoccurring instrumental phrase that has the same function as a chorus in a pop song” [2013a].²⁶ Following this is a short interlude in which the harmony shifts briefly into G minor for one bar before falling – via a D minor (major seven) lasting for one bar with long fermata – back to F minor at the commencement of the second verse. The relationship between these chords is curious. The E minor and G minor (juxtaposed at the beginning of the interlude) have a chromatic mediant relationship to one another, as do the D minor and F minor (juxtaposed at the end). Describing the song as an “empty timespace in which antique instruments reverberate bitonally, through which cold winds sweep, and where unearthly doors creak”, Van Elferen characterises the main repetitive sequence of the verses as “an echo of an echo, driven by absence and allusion” [2017:33]. Whilst she refers to the instrumentation – expressed “without the piano left hand and the harpsichord right hand” – and to the melodic shapes (particularly to “an inversion of the semiquaver piano motif”), her observation applies equally to the harmony: as though an echo of an echo, driven by absence and allusion, G minor is the parallel minor of E minor’s relative major, and F minor is the parallel minor of D minor’s relative major.

The instrumental ‘chorus’ is intensely dynamised by a variety of sweeping glissandi that trace sinuous curves as they rise and fall in pitch. These are voiced predominantly on a trembling theremin but also on a heavily reverberated guitar, creaking door, and “windy noise, which [...] blows endlessly from F to E and back” [*ibid.*]. Hicks observes a number of such “tone-bending” techniques in acid rock [2000:67–8], mostly in relation to guitar playing, like the bending of strings with the fretting hand, and the use of a vibrato arm allowing the player to rapidly flatten and sharpen the pitch by altering the tension of the strings with the strumming hand.²⁷ He claims that:

In the aesthetic of surf music, [...] small glissandi evoked the sound of the Hawaiian guitar and also suggested the undulation of ocean waves. Psychedelic

²⁶ The quotation is from an interview recorded for *Obsküre* magazine, available to listen to on bandcamp.com or to read on soporaeternus.de; see Cantodea, Anna-Varney and Vincent Tassy [2013a/b].

²⁷ Both techniques feature in ‘Raymond’ by Turkey Bones and the Wild Dogs encountered in the previous chapter; see pp. 146–50.

musicians realized that the same technique could suggest the ‘mind-bending’ experience of LSD.²⁸

Michael Hicks [2000:68]

Van Elferen argues “the glissando is a forceful destabilisation that takes away all tonal grounding”, which accounts for the “alienating connotations” it has acquired in science fiction scoring [2010:253]. Referencing the Doppler shift – a psychoacoustic phenomenon whereby a sound appears to rise or fall in pitch as the source and listener move towards or away from one another – and also the fact that the pitch of a motor rises in correlation with its rotations per minute, she explains how the glissando connotes both movement through space and altering speed. Certainly suggesting its appeal in a song concerned with being ‘out of SPACE and out of TIME’, the glissando, Van Elferen asserts, through its continuous transgressions of melodic, harmonic and rhythmic boundaries, dislocates the listener’s perception of a piece’s tonal grounding by moving as though “an endless glide towards unknown (and perhaps unknowable) destinations” [258].²⁹

Operating in synergy with the gliding glissandi, ‘Dreamland’ features “chromatic passing chords to make the harmony seem to slide” [Hicks 2000:67]. In ‘Astronomy Dominé’ (1967) by Pink Floyd, the harmonic transition between verses consists entirely of major triads “sliding in half steps from IV down to \flat VII” [*ibid.*]. In the track by Sopor Æternus & the Ensemble of Shadows, a transposed oscillation between G minor and F \sharp minor interspersing the third and fourth verses returns to the unhomely motion between F minor and E minor previously established, resulting in a progression that descends by chromatic step from G minor through F \sharp minor and F minor to E minor. This is accompanied by a dramatic glissando on theremin, which falls from its melodic zenith of C \sharp 6 for several octaves – affording an illusory decrease in speed – until it is swallowed by an F3 sung by the synthesised voices establishing the harmony of the next verse (creating in the process a tritone interval of epic proportions).

²⁸ cf. “psycephoric, mind-moving; psychehormic, mind-rousing; psycheplastic, mind-molding [and] psycherhexic, mind bursting forth” [Osmond 1957:429], all terms describing the effects of psychedelic drugs; see p. 20.

²⁹ ‘Hollow Hills’ opens with a series of glissandi, as does ‘Hang Up’ by Peter Murphy; see pp. 168–70.

The effect is not dissimilar to that Hicks describes in relation to the guitar playing of Jimi Hendrix:

Hendrix used the vibrato arm to turn single notes or chords into chains of glissandi whose speed and width varied continually. The effect became not so much a changing harmony as the dynamic refraction of a single note or chord through a fluid lens.

Michael Hicks [2000:68]

Another track from the Goth domain, 'Phoenix' (1985) by The Cult, comprises entirely of the harmony formed from a repeated descent from G by chromatic step to E. The motif is first outlined over an E pedal by a double-tracked guitar that is heavily dynamised through a wah-wah effect to which I shall return. It then passes to the bass, where it is subsequently doubled by rhythm guitar, and finally harmonised by voices that trace the descent chromatically from B through A# to A, and then down a whole tone to G.³⁰ Contrary to the perpetual step-wise descent within the ||: Em – Em/G | F#7 – Fmaj7 :|| progression, in an arrangement bearing resemblance to one of M. C. Escher's staircases, are various musical gestures suggesting ascending motion. Ian Asbury transposes the vocal melody of the verses (comprised mostly of a chromatic oscillation between B–A#) up a minor sixth during their second iteration, for example, and that of the refrain – which features a striking tritone interval – up an entire octave, whilst the lyrics contain several allusions to increasing ascent: "like the heat from a thousand suns that burns on, rising ever higher"; "circling ever higher, a servant of desire".³¹ Indeed the lyrical allusions to increasing intensity – "the pleasure's getting wilder" – are supported by the progressive elaboration of the musical texture, and by the increased ornamentation and presence of Billy Duffy's guitar.³²

³⁰ The harmonic rhythm is syncopated. See also tumbling ostinato, pp. 110–12.

³¹ See also trip lyrics (pp. 157–63) and fantasy realm lyrics (pp. 174–5). The track opens with the distinctly hippie phrase, "dig this"; cf. Hendrix, Jimi (1992). 'Fire'. *The Ultimate Experience*. Polydor. 517 235-1.

³² Duffy describes the track in the liner notes to *Love: Omnibus Edition* as "a cross between Hendrix, the Stooges and the Crazy World of Arthur Brown" [2009:30], whose 'Fire' (1968) – one of Morrison's psychedelic top 10 – features a series of "swirling, tumbling runs" on organ [2000:79].

Nonetheless the cyclical nature of the song's form – the first verse returns as the third verse, the second returns as the fourth, the final verse is also the first – combined with its paradoxically ascending whilst descending motion, ensures that it never really goes anywhere. Instead there is endless movement towards something never quite reached, and the phrase “my eternal desire” that concludes the final verse is repeated three times.

Zoomorphic and Pareidolic Sounds

In Greek mythology the phoenix is a creature that lives an extraordinarily long life before it bursts into flames and is reborn from the ashes. In some ways, ‘Phoenix’ by The Cult evokes the life cycle of the phoenix in song form. Aside from the lyrics underscored by the tritone interval during the refrain (“I’m on fire”), the verses are repeated in cyclical fashion, and the harmonic resolution of the chromatic descent – a motif whose short (two-bar) length allows for many reiterations throughout the song – occurs only when the progression begins again. Perhaps a more strikingly zoomorphic quality to the track, however, is afforded through the extensive use of wah-wah on the guitar. I use the term zoomorphic here not in Laurence Libin’s [2018] sense of pertaining to the imitation or representation of animal form in instrument design, but rather in reference to sounds that evoke animal form.

Wah-wah is an onomatopoeic term for an effect that causes rapid alterations to the timbre of a sound. Hicks describes it as a way to “dynamize the tone of an instrument” [2000:70]. In ‘Phoenix’ it is achieved by processing the guitar signal through a tone control circuit operated by a foot pedal. Trumpeters can alternatively achieve the effect by moving a mute to and from the bell of the instrument. Whilst the resultant sound certainly conveys motion – in Jimi Hendrix’s words, as though “something is reaching out” [*ibid.*] – it also affords what Craig Morrison describes as “a quasi-vocal quality” [2000:80].³³

Morrison is not the only writer to comment on this quasi-vocal quality. Robert Erickson, speaking mostly in reference to brass playing, classifies the wah-wah as a spectral glide, in turn a “modification of the vowel quality of a tone” [1975:72]. Trevor

³³ The wah-wah effect is also one of Morrison’s matrices, present in Iron Butterfly’s ‘In-A-Gadda-Da-Vida’. The Hendrix quote is from Werner, Jann and Baron Wolman (9 March 1968). ‘It’s Jimi Hendrix’. *Rolling Stone*, 1, p. 19.

Wishart describes the spectral glide – “essentially the evolution of spectral characteristics over a sustained pitch” – as “a special sub-category of sounds with dynamic morphology” and compares it similarly to a transition between vowel sounds:

the most striking feature of the duck call and the only real feature which is paralleled in the word ‘quack’ is the spectral glide characteristic as the formant structure moves from a stressing of the lower formants to a stressing of the higher formants (caused in the human, and presumably also in the duck, by the gradual but rapid opening of the vocal cavity).

Trevor Wishart [1996:94–6]

I describe the multi-tracked guitar in ‘Phoenix’ as zoomorphic then, not in reference to the way the instrument itself imitates animal form, but rather to the way the dynamised changes in tone colour it produces through the wah-wah pedal are frequently likened to the sounds produced by animal vocal cavities.³⁴

The perception of vowel sounds in Billy Duffy’s guitar playing is an example of auditory pareidolia, which refers to “the discernment of patterns or connections in random or otherwise meaningless data” [Blom 2010:389]. The term pareidolia derives from the Greek παρά (*pará*) – beside, near, beyond – and εἶδος (*eidos*) – referring to that which is seen (form, shape, appearance) but also the virtue by which something is what it is and not something else (essence, type, species).³⁵ Originally used in the nineteenth century – along with its German equivalent *Nebenbildwahrnehmung* (additional image perception) – by psychiatrist Victor Kandinsky in reference to a visual hallucination wherein a person’s face is “literally and consistently perceived as someone else’s” [*ibid.*], pareidolia now more generally denotes the perception of

³⁴ Libin notes briefly “the propensity to view instruments as living beings” [2018] but rather in reference to the way performers speak about their instruments as though they were human. This is somewhat notorious in Goth: ‘Doktor Avalanche’, the drum machine of The Sisters of Mercy, for example, is credited by name on the band’s album covers, has a cult following, and is contactable via the ‘Dear Doktor’ section of the band’s website.

³⁵ The term eidolon derives from *eidos*, as do android (“*andras* man + *eidos* form”) and kaleidoscope (“*kalos* beautiful + *eidos* shape + *scopein* to see”) [Beaven 2013:137–8].

meaningful patterns in random data. Common examples in the visual domain include the phenomena of seeing a face in the clouds or the shape of an animal in a stain on the wall. Auditory pareidolia – also known as Rorschach audio and auditory peripheral hallucination – refers likewise to “the neurological phenomenon of perceiving a pattern in random noise [...] where in reality there is no such pattern” [Bauman 2015]. It is exemplified similarly by the perception of voices singing in an air conditioning unit, or the discernment of intelligible speech in white noise or reversed audio. I describe wah-wah as pareidolic because although the effect may certainly sound as though an instrument is saying ‘wah wah wah wah’ or ‘wow wow wow wow’ or some variant, the words the instrument speaks are as illusory as the face in the clouds.

In so far as the terms I have introduced relate to each other: the perception of words or vowels in a wah-wah guitar is an example of zoomorphic (and specifically anthropomorphic) pareidolia because it concerns the perception of sounds produced by animal (and specifically human) vocal cavities in the randomness of data operated by an electric tone control circuit. Jentsch claims that perceptions of this nature are particularly conducive to arousing the effect of the uncanny, which:

can easily be achieved when one undertakes to reinterpret some kind of lifeless thing as a part of an organic creature, especially in anthropomorphic terms, in a poetic or fantastic way. In the dark, a rafter covered with nails thus becomes the jaw of a fabulous animal, a lonely lake becomes the gigantic eye of a monster, and the outline of a cloud or shadow becomes a threatening Satanic face.

Ernst Jentsch [1997:13]

The illusion of a speaking guitar is afforded readily in ‘Phoenix’ because the instrument is multi-tracked with layered backing vocals that harmonise the chromatically descending motif it plays by sustaining long “aah” sounds. Human-vocalised vowel sounds, in other words, are blended with the pareidolic vowel sounds of the wah-wah guitar. Similar techniques are found in acid rock: ‘Fire Engine’ (1966) by The 13th Floor Elevators for example opens with a series of glissandi that evoke wailing sirens before resounding as a musical motif throughout the recording; they are voiced both on guitar and through the amplified sound of Tommy Hall vocalising into the mouth of a jug. The pareidolic sound of a fire engine siren is brought to life, so to speak, through the hallucinogenic blending of human and non-human sounds.

Other writers have noted the presence of zoomorphic and pareidolic sounds in Goth(ic) music. Describing Alice Cooper's 'Ballad of Dwight Fry' (1971), whose title evokes the actor notorious for his roles in films like *Dracula*, *Frankenstein* (both 1931) and *The Vampire Bat* (1933), and "whose name is misspelled in the title", Philip Auslander observes:

The song's instrumental arrangement and style evoke the atmosphere of gothic melodrama that pervades the films in which Frye appeared. Furnier screams, "Let me out of here"; an electric guitar replicates a wolf's howl; the drummer imitates the sound of a ticking clock to indicate both the protagonist's status as a time bomb about to go insane [...] and his whiling away the hours while incarcerated [...].³⁶

Philip Auslander [2009:36]

In similar vein, describing a Bauhaus concert for an article in *Melody Maker* entitled 'Strange Daze' (1980), Gill Smith recounts:

I was dimly aware of the stick-like figure on stage dancing like a speeding ostrich, limbs flailing in the air uncontrollably, while fragments of guitar alternately howled like a trapped wolf or splintered like plate glass.

Gill Smith in Jackson [2006:186]

Van Elferen describes the creaking door in 'Dreamland' in similar terms. On the one hand she observes:

A door creaks. Its reverberating sound rises up in a slow, minimal, suspenseful glissando that pans from the left front to the middle rear. This door has not been opened for a long time, or it would not creak so much. The space to which this door leads must be very large, made of stone, and empty, or the reverberation would not be so tangible.

³⁶ Auslander also describes a kind of doubling in the performances of Vince Furnier, who "always represented himself as an actor portraying a frenzied persona – Alice Cooper – who, in turn, portrayed a number of violent and mad characters in various songs". He suggests that although the title in this case "makes it clear that the song is the ballad of someone who habitually *plays* a madman, not necessarily someone who is mad himself", the song is "probably based on Furnier's experience while being treated in an addiction rehabilitation facility" [35–6, italics original].

On the other hand, as the door creaks again and again, gliding widely across the stereo field whilst the texture fills out with many curious sounds including chiming tubular bells, old and “sick-sounding” instruments but no footsteps, it begins to assume a more sinister quality:

Is this empty space a crypt of some sort? Was that creaking caused by a door in the first place? The acoustic displacement makes it sound rather like the screeching of an unworldly animal. Where is this space?

Isabella van Elferen [2017:32–3]

The displacement Van Elferen references is comprised of acoustic saturation in some areas of the sound-box but not others,³⁷ reverberation times that differ from one sound to another, and the movement of sound sources within the stereo field. She claims this “enlarges the musical ambiguity of the track’s bitonality” [34], a notion supported by the fact that I hear the sound she describes as white noise, far in the background, which “pans through all corners like midnight wind”, as the unfathomably large reverb of the creaking door itself. Indeed the sound that sweeps from left to right and back in combination with the rising pitch of the creaking door is not dissimilar to the spectral glide of a slowly opening vocal cavity as air is inhaled; with a high ratio of noise, it conveys an organic filter sweep that moves continuously from a stressing of the lower formants to a stressing of the higher formants.

Another distinctly zoomorphic sound in the track – and one common to ‘Hollow Hills’ – is the thud of a deep and highly reverberated drum pounding in the distinctive rhythm of a heartbeat. During the instrumental chorus of ‘Dreamland’, sounding underneath the slowly creaking door, the mechanical quaver motion of a toy piano, and the automatic sound of a music box, the drum almost makes tangible the beating of the hideous heart in Poe’s 1843 story ‘The Tell-Tale Heart’.³⁸ Aside from the fact that this story features the slow creaking of a lantern being opened as a disturbed individual

³⁷ The sound-box is Allan Moore’s term for a “virtual textural space’, envisaged as an empty cube of finite dimensions, changing with respect to real time” [2001:121]. Although similar to the concept used by producers to balance sounds in a recording, the term sound-box (as opposed to mix) emphasises the listening (rather than the production) process.

³⁸ All tracks on the album *Poetica* are based on the poems of Edgar Allan Poe.

lurks in the chamber door of an old man he intends to suffocate, the same “low, dull, quick sound, such as a watch makes when enveloped in cotton” is evoked by the fact the tempo of the song is only slightly above ♩ = 60 beats per minute [Poe 2006:500].

The heart in Poe’s tale – and in the track by Sopor Æternus & the Ensemble of Shadows – is thoroughly uncanny. It is uncanny in a Jentschian sense because even after it has long been silent, still, and removed from the corpse of the old man, it begins to beat again when hidden underneath the floor boards of his chamber. The heart evoked by the drum in ‘Dreamland’, which likewise beats only intermittently (during the instrumental choruses) is furthermore – like the ‘breath’ in the reverb of the creaking door – uncanny in a Freudian sense because it is disembodied.

Severed limbs, a severed head, a hand detached from the arm (as in a fairy tale by Hauff), feet that dance by themselves [...] – all of these have something highly uncanny about them, especially when they are credited, as in the last instance, with independent activity. [...] Some would award the crown of the uncanny to the idea of being buried alive, only apparently dead.³⁹

Sigmund Freud [2003:150]

A disembodied eye plays a similarly uncanny function in ‘The Spy in the Cab’ (1980) by Bauhaus, whose lyrics concern an “unseen mechanised eye”, “hidden in the dashboard” of a vehicle, “coldly observing” and “callously reserving a driver’s time”. The hidden condition of the eye resonates with Freud’s uncanny, which is to say as “something that should have remained hidden and has come into the open” [148]. Whilst its computerised nature is underscored through its “twenty four hour unblinking watch”, the disconcerting agency of the eye’s “automated autonomy” is at times undermined – “the road is full of cat’s eyes” adds a touch of paranoia to the mix – and at others seemingly emphasised. This is particularly the case during the track’s outro, comprised of a looping phrase that plays upon the shared sound of the word “eye” and another word that presupposes consciousness: “I spy with my little eye spy with my little I spy with my little eye [...]”. The phrase, semi-spoken, is double-tracked as the same vocalist performs in dramatically different styles: a lower voice with pronounced chest resonance and an upper voice with pronounced nasal resonance.

³⁹ For Freud, “this species of the uncanny stems from its proximity to the castration complex” [2003:150]. See also ‘Premature Burial’ by Siouxsie and the Banshees; pp. 111–12.

Uncanny Voices

The Bauhaus track also features a very pronounced spectral glide from the ‘eye’ sound of the word “spy” as it transitions to the word “in” during the lyric “spy in the cab”, which occurs recurrently throughout. Hicks describes this as one of the ways in which acid rock singers dynamised their voices:

Using vocal techniques borrowed from jazz, Grace Slick often modulated from one vowel sound to another or merged vowels with consonants – as in the word “be” in the first line of ‘Somebody to Love’ (1967), which she sings across a glissando and gradually melds into the ‘L’ of the following word, “lies”.

Michael Hicks [2000:70]

Goth vocalists dynamise their voices in similar fashion. In Type O Negative’s dechronicised cover of Black Sabbath’s ‘Paranoid’, the first verse is extended through an elongation of the phrase “all the time”, which is repeated twice: on the first repetition, Peter Steele pronounces ‘time’ as “tye-eee-ime”, and on the second he dynamises the same word more dramatically by oscillating between an ‘eee’ and an ‘eye’ sound: “all the tye-eee-eye-eee-eye-eee-eye-eee-eye-eee-eye-eee-ime”.⁴⁰ In Alien Sex Fiend’s ‘Hurricane Fighter Plane’, Nik Fiend sings likewise: “takes me through the sky all the time; all the time; all the tye-my-my-my Hurricane”.⁴¹

Goth makes extensive use of electronic effects to dynamise vocals. Whilst certainly not uncommon in acid rock – John Lennon’s vocal in ‘Tomorrow Never Knows’ is distinctively processed through a rotating Leslie speaker originally developed for Hammond organ, creating what Hicks describes as a “dynamic whooshing sound” [71] that was reproduced in subsequent records by The Beatles, Family, Grateful Dead and others – Goth employs effects that render voices particularly uncanny. This is especially the case for Cybergoth, which Van Elferen describes as a collection of styles that “explore the borderland between human and Frankensteinian musicality”:

Cybergoth music originates from a close collaboration between humans and nonhumans – it is the tune sung by the golem come to life and enjoying its technocultural origin [...].

Isabella van Elferen [2012:161]

⁴⁰ See pp. 95–6. The word “unreal” is subjected to similar treatment.

⁴¹ See pp. 125–7.

Aside from heavily processed voices, sounds common to Cybergoth include distinctly electronic and synthesised timbres, liberal amounts of white noise, disembodied vocal samples, and the assemblage of recorded material as in *musique concrète*.

In 'Copy of a' (2013) by Nine Inch Nails, Trent Reznor's sung vocal – "I am little pieces" – is chopped up into a sample that interrupts itself by beginning again twice before the completion of the phrase. The resultant lyric – almost "I am little pieces little pieces little pieces" but with the first two "pieces" missing their final 's' – is similar to earlier lyrics in the song: "I am just a shadow of a shadow of a shadow", "assembled into something into something into something". However unlike the earlier phrases, in which no words are truncated, the missing sibilance here caused by the interruption of the word "pieces" affords doubt regarding the precise nature of the previous vocals: was the opening phrase performed by a human singing "I am just a copy of a copy of a copy" or was it performed by a sequencer splicing and repeating fragments of a sample comprised only of the lyrics "I am just a copy of a copy" in order to extend it and create a new melodic shape? Virgil Moorefield has suggested Reznor's record production blends "the illusion of reality", which is to say the impression that the music was "played by real people in a real setting", and the "reality of illusion", which is to say the impression that what is heard "doesn't exist in the real world" [2005:74].⁴²

Comprising what one critic describes as "overlapping vocals and smeared tendrils of fuzzy noise" [Hogan 2013], 'Copy of a' features numerous effects on the vocal tracks. Reznor's voice is tinged with the metallic quality of a plate reverb, the phrase "I'm not the only one" is double-tracked, and there is octave as well as lyrical doubling of the refrain "copy of a copy of a". An echo that lends a certain humour to lyrics like "always trying to catch up with myself" and "everything I say has come before" almost appears to speak because it sounds the repetition of the phrase "I am just an echo of an echo of an echo": a phrase that could similarly be uttered by the sentence itself (comprised as it is of a series of repetitions). Further to seemingly self-aware lyrics and electronic effects, a disembodied digit – "I am just a finger on a trigger" – appears to deride the lack of autonomy of human soldiers through a sentence that finishes "doing everything I'm told to do". The military connotations bleed into the subsequent phrase, which deviates slightly from the triple repetition format – "always my intention my intention

⁴² See also Van Elferen, Isabella and Jeffrey Andrew Weinstock (2016). *Goth Music: From Sound to Subculture*. New York: Routledge, p. 57.

your attention” – and following the conclusion of the verse is a two-bar break featuring only a drum machine whose rigid kick–snare–kick–snare pattern almost seems to say ‘hup–two–three–four’ in punctuated crotchets.

The drums in ‘Christfuck’ (2001) by :Wumpscut: do in fact speak, which is to say the track features a sample of the word “Christ” that assumes the function of a snare beating on the second and fourth beats of the bar. The purpose of the voice here is not to sing but to repetitiously reproduce a sound of rapid attack with the mechanical precision of clockwork.⁴³ Indeed although the voice sounds relatively human, the performance does not: every utterance is identical. The track’s breakdown includes dialogue sampled from the movie *Fight Club* (1999, dir. David Fincher) – based on the 1996 novel by Chuck Palahniuk – specifically from a scene in which the troubled protagonist argues with his alter ego (“you’re a voice in my head”; “you’re a voice in mine”; “you’re a fucking hallucination”).⁴⁴ The sampled dialogue decreases in pitch as it gradually slows, and the words that follow – “you’ve had your time to live” – are pitch-shifted to such a degree they sound almost inhumanly low.

Another voice, also only vaguely human, sings the lyrics of ‘Wreath of Barbs’ from the same album, but its timbre is so distorted – like the jagged sound of a sawtooth wave – that every sibilance causes it to buzz and sizzle. Furthermore any inhalation preceding the words is inaudible. The sound is almost a Raudive voice, a term which – along with Electronic Voice Phenomenon – denotes the perception of meaningful speech in white noise or radio static, and which is varyingly considered a pareidolic hallucination, or associated with ghosts and spirits.⁴⁵ In digital audio editing programs such as Celemony’s *Melodyne*, tools that remove natural pitch modulation from a voice, tune phonemes to precise diatonic intervals, and alter the pitch of formants independently of the pitch of the voice, allow human vocals to sound distinctly computerised and disembodied. The voice in ‘Wreath of Barbs’, like a ghost in the

⁴³ This function is often assumed in dance music by a hand clap sample. Again the tempo of the track affords the comparison to a second hand ticking.

⁴⁴ I quote here dialogue from the film.

⁴⁵ The former term is named after Konstantin Raudive, who researched the phenomenon. See Blom, Jan Dirk (2010). *A Dictionary of Hallucinations*. New York: Springer, p. 171.

machine, has some of these qualities, its monotonous sound synergised by the melody of the verses, limited almost to a single note. One listener, writing in *Pop Matters*, describes the “Roger Troutman vocoder effects” [Desrosiers 2001] – referring to the funk musician who used a device called a talk box, which allows a human to filter the frequency content of a musical instrument by changing the shape of the mouth – whilst another, writing on a digital audio-plugins discussion forum, claims the sound was achieved using a Virus (synthesiser).

The music of *Wumpscut* makes extensive use of voices whose precise origin is obfuscated. ‘Just a Tenderness’ (2004) samples the voice of the demon Pazuzu from *The Exorcist* (1973, dir. William Friedkin), which in turn fully exploits the uncanny potential of acousmatic sound. Named after the sect who listened to the teachings of Pythagoras “while he was hidden behind a curtain”, acousmatic sound is Pierre Schaeffer’s term for sound “that one hears without seeing what caused it” [2004:76–7]. Pazuzu is an “invisible voice” [*ibid.*] in *The Exorcist* because the viewer never sees the demon, only the tormented body of the young girl it possesses. Pazuzu’s voice was created largely through the extraordinary performance of Mercedes McCambridge, who emphasised the “heavy breathing, rasping and deep” of the demon in William Blatty’s (1971) novel – like “the sound of sleep in a hospital respirator” [2011:259] – by reproducing the wheezing sound of her bronchitis.⁴⁶ Her performance, recorded into both a microphone and speaker, variously replaces and is blended with the voice of Linda Blair, who plays the possessed young girl on screen, and whose voice is subject to heavy electronic distortion. The resultant sound, synchronised to the image of a source that did not (entirely) produce it, appears disturbingly unnatural, prompting Michel Chion to suggest that because *The Exorcist* rendered explicit the illusory nature of the cinematic voice, audiences “could stop thinking of the voice as a ‘natural’ element oozing from the body on its own” [1994:164].⁴⁷

⁴⁶ McCambridge demonstrates her vocal technique for the film in Lemoyre, David (2016). ‘The Exorcist: Mercedes McCambridge (Voice of the Demon)’. YouTube. <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AUocyJRbl5M>>.

⁴⁷ See also Beck, Jay (2016). *Designing Sound: Audiovisual Aesthetics in 1970s American Cinema*. New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, pp. 179–91, from whence the technical information in this paragraph derives.

In 'Just a Tenderness', the demonic voice of Pazuzu is joined further with what one listener describes as the "Teutonic rasp" of Rudy Ratzinger [Gould 2016]. An assemblage of disembodied vocal samples from the film – not just of the demon but of the priests trying to exorcise it – are variously spliced, repeated and subjected to echo treatment. For a listener unfamiliar with the film, the words of the opening samples set the scene:

Be gone! In the name of the Father and of the Son [...]; by this sign of the Holy Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with the Father and the Holy Spirit.

Beton Kopf Media. BKM Etah 27.

The dialogue here (and elsewhere in the track) is not sampled directly from the film but rather edited; the film dialogue includes the extra words "and of the Holy Spirit" where I have inserted brackets above. Indeed it is edited such that Father Merrin speaks more or less in time with the underlying pulse of the track, at this point outlined by the quavers of a synthesiser, and by the rhythm of Pazuzu shouting – "fuck me!" – in crotchet beats: a sample, which, repeated as an echo that is pitch-shifted but not slowed, anticipates the pulse of the drum machine that follows.

For a listener familiar with the film, the samples afford a sense of acousmatic doubling; not only is the already acousmatic voice of the demon seemingly further removed from the visual domain – here not even the vessel through which it speaks is visible – but furthermore the priests too have become acousmatic voices, just as disembodied as Pazuzu. Indeed the track blurs the distinction between priest and demon just as effectively as it blurs that between voices sampled from the film and vocal effects within the music. Although the film makes occasional use of pitch-shifted audio, resulting in a discrepancy between the depth of the voice and the size of the young girl from which it emanates, the track by :Wumpscut: applies the same process to dialogue from the film that was not originally pitch-shifted. In similar vein, whilst Father Karras implores Pazuzu – "take me!" – twice in close succession during the climax of the film, the track by :Wumpscut: samples the first utterance twice, edits them together in even closer succession, and features the same words in a refrain sung by Ratzinger. On account of his 'Teutonic rasp' however, the voice that sings – "take me!" – sounds distinctly more like Pazuzu than Father Karras. This effect is afforded through other lyrics in the song. "I gave you just a tenderness" recalls the "tender hand" of the priest in Blatty's novel [2011:367], but the words are sung with an aggressive

vocal rasp processed – like the voice of Linda Blair – through electronic distortion. “The day we met I faithfully bless” similarly sounds like something a priest might say, but the high ratio of noise in the vocal evokes Pazuzu’s “breathing from an alien shore” [291] more than the man who exclaimed twice in urgent succession earlier in the recording.

The voices in all these examples are uncanny because their precise nature and origin are obscure, undermining, in Jentsch’s terms, the “certainty [that] provides psychical shelter in the struggle for existence” [1997:15]. These voices all play upon doubt as to whether an apparently living musical performer is animate and, conversely, doubt as to whether a lifeless musical instrument may not in fact be animate. Human utterances are mechanised, computers sing, and demons speak in crotchet beats. In so far as Cybergoth lends human vocal qualities to synthesisers, drum machines and bursts of white noise, its sounds are both uncanny in the sense of anthropomorphising the inanimate, and remarkably hallucinogenic. Uncanny voices have haunted Goth since its earliest days – “through the cables and the underground”, sings Andrew Eldritch in ‘Body Electric’ (1984) by The Sisters of Mercy, “the faceless, breathless calls” – but in Cybergoth, the ghost in the machine actually sings. In Van Elferen’s words:

Cybergoth music [...] confronts the ghosts of techno-culture in general and those of music technology in specific. [...] The musical man-machine sings with the multiple voices of schizophonia; and its sustained sound is as perpetual as its own lifeless existence.

Isabella van Elferen [2012:167]

The effects afforded by Goth are indeed as uncanny as the effects of psychedelic drugs, which render familiar faces and structures strange by transforming them into molten, dancing shapes, and which call into question the opposition between the known and the unknown. Just as the painter described how LSD transformed a pair of yellow–black striped shoes into wasps that crawled on the floor independently whilst “objects in the room [...] sneered scornfully” and an electrical meter ticked “weirdly [...] as if it wished to make a most important, evil, devastating announcement” [Hofmann 2013:70], Goth is haunted by guitars that transform into wolves, snares that yell “Christ”, and drum machines that sneer at soldiers. I suggest acid rock makes use of the same dynamisation techniques found so extensively in Goth because, in so far as it is typified by hallucinations of a pareidolic – and particularly zoomorphic – nature, the psychedelic experience is, as Albert Hofmann suggested, unfathomably uncanny.

Bringing It All Back Home

In the previous section I outlined how various harmonic devices in acid rock and Goth render the familiar function of tonal harmony strange by undermining the conceptual home of the scale, and how Goth in particular makes use of emphatically disembodied voices and the sounds of inanimate objects coming to life. The latter sounds are not foreign to music associated with psychedelic drugs. In 'I, the Hand Grenade' (2014) by Norwegian pop band Highasakite – whose music Jim LeBlanc has analysed under a “revised and expanded notion of musical psychedelia” – the uncanny agency of a “personified hand grenade” is brought into the home.⁴⁸ The lyrics, sung in the first person, describe the antics of a grenade – “I bash into the table and burst” – whilst the melody of the refrain dynamises the phrase “right here in suburbia” with a long “ooh” that seems to trace, in skipping, syncopated rhythm, the descent of a grenade as a pair of quavers fall by a perfect fourth before bouncing up a semitone and falling another minor third. In this section I describe how two acid rock matrices Craig Morrison describes – the first a dynamisation of form, the second a dynamisation of timbre – are used specifically in Goth to transform the familiar space of the home into a claustrophobic space of paranoia and terror.

I describe the first matrix – the trip section – in relation to the idea of the Gothic journey outlined in the previous chapter,⁴⁹ of which Marilyn Wesley writes:

The imaginative alienation created by the motif of the gothic journey is related to projects of estrangement effected by the characteristic devices of the traditional gothic genre: the doubling of settings or characters, which suggests the existence of radical alternatives to known relations, and the use of narrative frames, which accentuate the deviation of the story from ordinary circumstances.

Marilyn C. Wesley [1999:38]

I suggest how vocal doubling and dramatic changes in instrumental texture that accentuate the deviation of the story in the lyrics from ordinary circumstances express such imaginative alienation in a mournful love-song to an inflatable doll. Written by

⁴⁸ LeBlanc, Jim. 'Psychedelic Affordances and the Music of Highasakite' (forthcoming).

⁴⁹ See p. 156.

Bryan Ferry and originally released by Roxy Music in 1973, 'In Every Dream Home a Heartache' has been covered by numerous musicians associated with the Goth scene, perhaps unsurprisingly considering the narrative it recounts. As lyrics lamenting a beautiful home betray the existential angst and loneliness the environment encloses, the uncanny agency of an "immortal and life-size" inflatable doll compels increasingly more obsessive behaviour until it finally instigates what Sheila Whiteley might term a "flight from reality" [1992:56]. In its quite literal address of matters of setting (the dream home) and set (the heartache), the song demonstrates a remarkably Gothic sensitivity to the variables fundamental to shaping the nature of a psychedelic drug experience.⁵⁰

I describe the second matrix – phase shifting – in relation to a Play Dead track called 'The Tenant' (1983) based on the 1964 novel of the same (English) title by Roland Topor. The title in the original French language (*Le Locataire chimérique*), with an additional word describing the tenant as chimeric, betrays the uncanny nature of the story the song replicates. Referring to a monstrous fusion in Greek mythology – a single creature comprised of various species – and, in genetics, to an organism comprising multiple distinct sets of DNA,⁵¹ the word chimera was used interchangeably in old English with phantom, defined accordingly as "a spectre; also a chimera, an idle conceit, a vain apparition which we imagine we see, tho' it exists no where but in our disturbed imagination" [*sic.*] [Bailey 1736]. Indeed the term chimeric is used to reference not only the fusion of distinct creatures into a whole but to denote something that is imaginary or unreal. Phase shifting refers to the "swirling, spacey sounds" resulting from a number of techniques I outline below, all of which involve a fusion of distinct audio signals into a composite that is frequently compared to the sound of aircraft in motion [Keen 1999]. Such comparisons are afforded because of the similarity of the sound (as with the glissando) to the Doppler shift; Julius Smith for example likens it to "the sound of a jet passing overhead, in which the direct signal and ground reflection arrive at a

⁵⁰ See pp. 37–43. 'In Every Dream Home a Heartache' has also been covered by space rock band Bardo Pond, whose fourth studio album is titled *Set and Setting* (1999).

⁵¹ In so far as the DNA derives from two or more zygotes, chimera are distinct from hybrids or crossbreeds (organisms from parents of differing DNA types). In Greek mythology, Chimera is the sibling of Cerberus, the giant three-headed dog whose saliva is said to be the origin of aconite; see pp. 171–2.

varying relative delay” [2010].⁵² In the words of Jimi Hendrix, phase shifting creates “a sound like planes going through your membranes and chromosomes”, and it features extensively in ‘Sky Pilot’ (1968) by Eric Burdon and the Animals, creating in conjunction with the song’s trip lyrics what Michael Hicks describes as a “general hallucinatory impression” [2000:72].⁵³ I suggest here how phase shifting in the Play Dead track – evoking not just the metaphor of flight but once again the Gothic journey in Wesley’s sense of “a traveler’s transposition from a familiar home to its alternative represented as a mysterious dwelling” [*ibid.*] – underscores both the spectral and hallucinatory aspects of the story after which it is named.

Trip Section

Craig Morrison defines the trip section as “a contrasting musical passage that simulates a mental journey, a metaphorical or actual drug trip”; it is a “musical depiction of a new reality” [2000:69–70]. Whilst the concept exemplifies some of the problems I described in relation to Whiteley’s psychedelic coding in chapter 2,⁵⁴ particularly a tendency to assume a poetic effect perceived by the listener has been intentionally embedded within the music by its creators, the example he provides is persuasive within the context of the song’s lyrics.

The trip section in ‘Psychotic Reaction’ by Count Five assumes the form of a rave-up, another matrix defined by Michael Hicks (who addresses it more extensively) as a “pseudo-double time section with a corresponding intensification of dynamics” [2000:31].⁵⁵ After referencing the psychotic reaction of the song’s title, vocalist John Byrne shouts – “and it feels like this!” – at which point the rhythmic intensity of the track increases as drummer Craig Atkinson plays a series of semi-quavers leading into the rave-up: a twenty-four bar passage in which he plays the snare four times per bar on the off-beat rather than two times per bar on the backbeat, and also a much higher

⁵² He refers specifically to flanging, to which I return. See also Bode, Harald (1984). ‘History of Electronic Sound Modification’. *Journal of the Audio Engineering Society*, 32(10), pp. 730–39.

⁵³ The Hendrix quotation [in *ibid.*] is from an interview with Jay Ruby originally published in *Jazz & Pop* magazine and reprinted in *Guitar World* (1991), 12, p. 45.

⁵⁴ See especially pp. 75–8.

⁵⁵ See p. 108.

density of fills – previously every eight bars, now at the end of every bar. The emphatic change in groove caused particularly by the snare’s movement from a solid and steady backbeat to a skank at twice the rate is highlighted further by a change in texture: now featuring no vocals but more prominent harmonica, a guitar solo, and the increased rhythmic density of a twelve-string guitar, previously outlining the rhythm of the walking bass, now strumming deadened strings to sound scratchy harmonics. On account of the exclamation in the lyrics particularly, this contrasting musical passage certainly appears to function like a trip section depicting the inner turmoil of the song’s protagonist.

‘In Every Dream Home a Heartache’ by Roxy Music also features a contrasting musical passage announced by the vocalist in what Morrison might term a “melodramatic moment” [79].⁵⁶ Marked by a sudden emptying of the instrumental texture and an abrupt change in Bryan Ferry’s vocal style, highlighted by a double-tracking of the voice, the transition is striking particularly because it interrupts the continuous cycling of a hypnotic vamp,⁵⁷ which has been sounding for over three minutes on a trembling organ whilst a saxophone, VCS3 synthesiser and guitar embellish the texture with melodic flourishes, filter sweeps and wobbling vibrato. During the course of these three minutes, the singer appears to have developed a rather unhealthy attachment to his “mail-order” companion whose “skin is like vinyl”. Indeed his abrupt change in vocal style – and the dramatic repositioning of the voice from centre to extreme left and right – occurs right in the midst of a lengthy serenade to his “disposable darling”, making it all the more unexpected. “Inflatable doll”, he sings, “lover ungrateful; I blew up your body”, and then – after all instruments abruptly silence – in almost exaggerated deadpan and with an evenly-spaced mechanical articulation of every syllable, he half-speaks: “but you blew my mind”.

At this point, the texture explodes just as suddenly as it emptied into a heavy rock instrumental featuring most notably the addition of drums, which play, as in the track by Count Five, with great energy and with a high density of fills. Aside from the deadpan vocals, which transition not just from one formal section to another but also

⁵⁶ Resembling the so-called Mickey Mousing technique of film scoring wherein musical gestures are synchronised emphatically to actions on screen, this matrix concerns a synergising of music and lyrics to melodramatic effect.

⁵⁷ See pp. 108–9.

from the imagery of air inside a blow-up doll to the distinctly hippie expression of a mind-blowing experience, the instrumental sounds like a trip section because of the use of phase shifting and because it is formally dynamised through a false ending; the track appears to end on account of a lengthy fade-out that commences shortly after the introduction of the phase shifting effect, but after roughly two seconds of silence fades back in and the heavily phased instrumental continues for another minute. The fade-out, in other words, is doubled.⁵⁸

In the “slow-motion cover” by Rozz Williams and Gitane Demone (who have collectively performed with Christian Death, Shadow Project, Premature Ejaculation and Dreadful Shadows), the haunting return of the instrumental is imagined not through a double fade-out, but rather as a reprise that returns at the end of the album [Fasolino *et al.* 2007]. The two tracks in fact open, close and title the album *Dream Home Heartache* (1995), which also features a cover of a song by The Jimi Hendrix Experience. ‘In Every Dream Home a Heartache’ is dechronicised here – slower and lengthier than the original – and features considerably more vocal doubling. Rather than using both vocalists (or a chorus effect), the doubling is achieved through the multi-tracking of two separate performances by the same vocalist (Williams). The much slower tempo, around ♩ = 58 rather than ♩ = 102 beats per minute, allows for a large degree of rubato in the phrasing of the lyrics, and consequently a noticeable variation in the performances: an effect that is occasionally accentuated, for example when the double-tracked voice whispers – rather than sings – “my plain wrapper baby” (omitting the first word), and likewise when it echoes “I can’t throw you away now”, also in a whisper (and here omitting the last word). These variations, coupled with the fact that the voice is not always doubled, appear to draw attention to selected lyrics, mostly entire phrases – “my breath is inside you” – but sometimes fewer words still: only the final words – “death sighs” – are doubled in the phrase “I’ll keep you ‘til death sighs”.⁵⁹ Other lyrics are highlighted through alternative means, as if to indicate some

⁵⁸ The trip section is not strictly an instrumental on account of the vocal that vamps – “oh those heartaches, dream home heartaches” – just before the false ending; nonetheless the voice here, no longer prominently foregrounded but rather blended into the instrumental texture, is soon swallowed into the first fade-out, and does not return.

⁵⁹ The personification of death here and the concept of human breath inside a body that resembles but is not human are both distinctly uncanny.

unfathomable significance: the double-tracked word “better” has a distinctly longer reverb tail than others in the phrase “better pray there”; the word “pretty” is doubled and subjected to echo treatment, resulting in a cascade of ‘t’ sounds; and the phrase “home, oh sweet home” is doubled, echoed and underscored by a wordless vocal glissando sung by Gitane Demone, who is placed distantly in the sound-box.

Tuned a semitone higher, the Goth cover still features organ, but it plays here in more sustained and legato phrases, comprised mostly of minims rather than quavers as in the original. Indeed the texture appears sparser than the Roxy Music recording not only because of the spacing of the organ notes but because the pulsing synth filter sweeps and flourishing melodic improvisations on saxophone have been replaced by the mournful gestures of an incredibly reverberant guitar, which yawns, growls, moans and sighs in a manner not dissimilar to the creaking door in ‘Dreamland’, sliding up and down in a series of slow glissandi that resound with a high level of noise on the reverb tail, evoking vaguely the sound of human breath (an illusion synergised by the sound of air passing through the pipes of the organ). Here the multiple voices of Rozz Williams – which have a much longer reverb tail than Bryan Ferry’s voice – resonate in a particularly eerie soundscape that seems to suggest the emptiness of affluence the singer describes. In between phrases the voice of Gitane Demone sounds, in a higher register, wordless melodies that trace undulating shapes.

Whilst the transitional phrase – “but you blew my mind” – roughly segments the Roxy Music recording in half, it occurs much closer to the end of the track that opens *Dream Home Heartache*. Here it is differentiated not by double-tracking or an abrupt emptying of the instrumental texture but rather through a distinct urgency of phrasing: Williams sings for the first time in semi-quavers, as though in a sudden hurry to complete the sentence before the end of the bar. Indeed no sooner as he does, Demone, who had previously sustained ethereal vowel sounds in meandering swirls around the lead vocals, begins to sing much more dramatically – louder, with stronger breath support – and for the first time with words. It is almost as though the ghost who haunted the spaces between the phrases comes to life here. Furthermore the timbres of organ and guitar are replaced by synthesiser, strings, and as in the Roxy Music track, the addition of drums to the instrumental texture (although in place of a heavy rock kit is an extremely reverberant bass drum that appears to rumble in the distance like rolling thunder).

This contrasting musical passage fades after around two minutes, and does not return until some half hour later as 'Dream Home Heartache (Reprise)', which creeps in through a lengthy fade and features the return of the extremely reverberant guitar, here sounding along with the strings and drums, as well as a high amount of noise that pans rapidly from left to right and back. The voice of Williams is, unlike before, heavily distorted, whilst the voice of Demone is, for the first time, doubled. A particularly dramatic spatial effect closes the recording, as the entire stereo image is panned from extreme left to right, again and again, as the track fades.

Van Elferen claims that through precisely the kinds of vocal techniques exemplified here – from dubbing to distortion and echo effects – “Goth music directly voices the ghosts of Gothic” [2012:169]. As it is impossible for a single human to achieve in real-time two simultaneous performances of the same melody with slight variations in phrasing, and because both lead vocal tracks, recorded with such clarity and placed so prominently in the mix, sound unmistakably like the same performer, the track foregrounds the schizophonic sound of recording technology, evoking the “doubling, mirroring quality of the revenant” [27]. The clarity of the vocal – which is to say the fact that minute details from glottal stops to the slightest trembles in delivery are audible in spite of the fact that Williams sings so softly – is to an extent illusory; although such detail certainly conveys a quality often described in the music industry as fidelity – that is, as relaying accuracy or faithfulness to the original sound – this quality is deceptive. There is no intake of breath preceding the phrases, for example, and the double-tracking of the same vocalist – particularly when there are evidently two available – “turns musical space [...] into schizophonic space” lending Goth vocals “the disembodied quality of phantom voices” [169]. For the imaginative listener it suggests that time, for the vocalist, is out of joint.⁶⁰

The splitting of the song into an opening track and its reprise exemplifies what Michael Hicks describes as a dynamisation of form, which is to say a form deviating significantly from the “well-established forms” of rock n’ roll; “most commonly twelve-bar blues or thirty-two-bar song form (i.e., two verses = 16, bridge = 8, return of verse = 8)” [2000:66–7]. Furthermore within the context of the song’s narrative, the widely contrasting trip section works to structure “an alternative vision of the operation and power of domestic restriction” that Marilyn Wesley describes in relation to the Gothic journey [1999:45]. It disrupts the unrelenting return of the hypnotic vamp, which

⁶⁰ See pp. 14–15.

underscores lyrics lending a progressively more disquieting tone to the monotonies of everyday life – “inflatable doll, my role is to serve you” – with a suddenly contrasting instrumental texture that seems to simulate a mental journey: a musical depiction of a new reality.

Phase Shifting

Whilst this metaphor is sustained through a play of imagery that appears to question – particularly by emphasising the breath inside the doll – where the living human ends, the protagonist of *The Tenant* by Roland Topor poses a similar question through a series of disembodiment scenarios. I quote below the more concise dialogue from the film version by Roman Polanski, which predates the Play Dead track by two years.

Tell me: at what precise moment does an individual stop being who he thinks he is? Cut off my arm, right? I say, “me and my arm”. You cut off my other arm; I say, “me and my two arms”. Take out my stomach, my kidneys – assuming that were possible – I say, “me and my intestines”. [...] And now, if you cut off my head, what would I say: “me and my head” or “me and my body”? What right has my head to call itself me?

Roman Polanski [1976:54’10”]

The philosophy is inspired by the protagonist’s discovery of a tooth hidden inside the wall of the gloomy apartment he moves into, previously inhabited by a woman who threw herself from the window, and in which he slowly becomes terrified his neighbours are attempting to drive him to suicide. Further to the recurring imagery of headless bodies and disembodied heads, the story plays upon the agency of the home itself, particularly its agency to compel the behaviour of its tenants towards the same unpleasant end, subsuming their identities in the process as every new occupant becomes an uncanny copy of the last.

Whilst the narrative is sustained through the interference of neighbours (who make the tenant particularly paranoid about making noise) it is supported also through the structure of the building itself, such that the apartment is visible from the window of the communal toilet and vice versa; an especially uncanny moment occurs when the tenant sees himself spying on himself through the toilet window. The apartment is unhomely not only because it fails to prevent sound travelling and allows the private actions of residents – ‘something that should have remained hidden’ – to be seen, but

also because it is haunted by the possessions of the previous occupant, provoking the tenant to read her books, open her mail, and try on her nail polish. In the words of the Play Dead song: “the tenant views a mind to let”.

There is an uncanny doubling of events – the tenant wakes up to find his own tooth has been removed and stuffed into the wall – and of settings; the balconies of the apartments double as theatre balconies during the climax of the story when the tenant “reluctantly [...] plays his part” [*ibid.*], performing an act that makes the metaphor of flight afforded by the use of phase shifting in the Play Dead track appear particularly relevant.⁶¹ The idea that the tenant’s life is somehow not his own but rather a perverse play in which he is merely an actor – “act complete as he hits the floor” [*ibid.*] – is termed in the psychiatric literature depersonalisation,⁶² and the narrative plays upon a doubtful tension regarding the extent to which the protagonist is paranoid; he lies in bed awake at night anxious as hands reach at him through the walls, and he sees the previous tenant in the apartment in spite of the fact that she is dead. The hallucinatory nature of the story is underscored in the Play Dead track by the ‘swirling, spacey sounds’ of phase shifting, present in the bass guitar – the instrument providing the harmonic foundation of the song – and also in one of the guitars during the 32-bar instrumental (particularly prominently during the first eight, when it is accompanied only by a scattering of hi hats and cymbals).

The phase of a sound wave refers to its temporal position relative to a defined starting point – or, for the purposes of recording technology, its position relative to other sound waves, which is to say phase differences between sound waves are of more concern than the phase of individual signals, mostly because certain types of phase difference cause radical changes in amplitude. When two sound waves of identical frequency are perfectly in phase (lacking phase difference), they vibrate at precisely the same moment, resulting in a composite wave whose amplitude equals the sum of the amplitudes of the individual signals. When two waves of identical frequency are out of phase (with maximum phase difference), one reaches its highest amplitude at precisely the moment the other reaches its lowest, resulting in what is termed

⁶¹ The fifteenth chapter of Topor’s novel is named ‘Flight’, used in this context as a metaphor for escape. The balcony doubling I reference here is specific to Polanski’s film.

⁶² See pp. 139–54.

cancellation, a principle used in noise-cancellation technology. Phase shifting, which Morrison describes as a “swooping or whoosing sound” [2000:77], is an effect caused by a series of cancellations of some frequencies in the audio bandwidth whilst others are reinforced as their amplitudes combine; significantly, the bands of frequencies subject to cancellation and reinforcement continuously shift up and down the audio spectrum in a motion often described as sweeping. The sound is present extensively through ‘Psychotic Reaction’ by Count Five – particularly in the higher frequency range occupied by the hi hats and cymbals – although was not intentional but rather the result of an attempt to achieve stereo sound by double-tracking a mono mix.⁶³

The sound is variably termed phasing, flanging or ADT (automatic/artificial double tracking) depending on its method of production, although all methods involve blending an original signal with a slightly modified copy. The first term implies the use of electronic units comprising a small number of phase shifting circuits that determine – based on the frequency of the input signal – whether the original signal or a copy of inverse phase pass through a series of capacitor/resistor junctions; because capacitors cause a slight delay during the phase shifting process, the result is a frequency-dependent time delay wherein the narrow bands of frequencies subject to cancellation – notches – are non-uniformly spaced. The second term references the flange component of the tape reel: placing a finger lightly on this component reduces the speed the tape moves between the two reels of a tape recorder; recording an identical signal through two tape recorders – whilst providing variable resistance to the flange component of one – onto a third results in a “hollow, swirling sound” on account of the slight discrepancy in arrival time of each signal at the master record head [Martinelli and Bucciarelli 2013:66]. ADT on the other hand refers to the use of technology to achieve a double-tracked sound – rather than recording separate performances – and involves superimposing an original signal and a copy that is slightly out of sync: the synchronicity controlled either by a tape delay unit or by altering the speed of one of the tape machines through a vari-speed control (modulating the delay time or speed of the machine respectively produces the ‘whooshing’ effect). I use the term phase

⁶³ See Ellner in Ostrov, Devorah (17 January 2018). ‘Count Five: The Story Behind the One-Hit Wonder Garage Rock Band from San Jose Who Created ‘Psychotic Reaction’’. <<http://devorahostrov.blogspot.com/2018/01/count-five-story-behind-one-hit-wonder.html>>. The phase shifting sound is also present in ‘Itchycoo Park’ by the Small Faces; see pp. 143–4.

shifting here to reference the sound achieved through these various techniques, as well as through similar technologies like phaser and flanger pedals for guitar (which differ in so far as the latter modulates a larger series of notches that are uniformly spaced at even harmonic integers).⁶⁴

Regardless of their method of production, phase shifted sounds all involve doubles: essentially identical yet almost imperceptibly different signals, combining to form a composite that seems to twist and turn in continuous motion. In the Play Dead track, the bass has a ‘hollow, swirling sound’ that seems to whirl around and around much like the hallucinatory story conveyed by the lyrics, which open with:

Two eyes meet, the pull is very strong
The person’s dream, it’s running on and on

These lyrics evoke the uncanny moment the tenant in Topor’s story meets the eye of the previous occupant, lying paralysed in a hospital bed, just before she dies:

He could not tell whether the woman had noticed him, because the eye did not blink, and she was so heavily bandaged that he could see nothing of the expression on her face. [...] The eye remained steadily fixed, contemplating some invisible point on the ceiling. Trelkovsky wondered if she might not be dead, but just then a moaning sound came from the mouth, stifled at first, then swelling to an unbearable scream.

Roland Topor [1966:20–21]

As he lies similarly paralysed in a hospital bed at the end of the novel, a “moaning sound” comes from the mouth of the tenant, “stifled at first, then swelling to an unbearable scream” [189]. The scream is especially uncanny because it is triggered, in both cases, by the arrival of the same girl: the girl the protagonist meets at the beginning of the story, and who calls him here by the name of the previous tenant. Underneath the swirling bass, the lyrics that close the final verse of the Play Dead track feature, in similar vein, a haunting return.

The darkness breaks but still the pull is very strong
Two eyes meet; the person’s dream runs on and on

Jungle Records. FREUD 3.

⁶⁴ See Kefauver, Alan P. (2001). *The Audio Recording Handbook*. Middleton, Wisconsin: A-R Editions, Inc., pp. 202–3.

The reason the tenant is described as chimeric in Topor's original title is perhaps now clearer. It is almost as though the tenant is a composite of two distinct people: one already dead and the other, slightly behind, waiting to die. Although some characteristics of the two tenants are inverted – the first is female, the second male; one is alive, the other dead – such distinctions are increasingly blurred (as when the new tenant begins to wear the clothes and make-up of the previous, or when he sees her removing her bandages in his apartment after she has died), and the haunting return to the hospital bed appears to have the tenant caught in an infinite loop. The chimeric tenant has a chimeric counterpart in the Play Dead track: a composite sound of two distinct signals – one slightly behind the other, sometimes in phase and sometimes inverse in phase – blended into a whole that swirls around in continuous motion as though perpetually returning in an infinite loop. The phase shifting is an overlap of almost identical signals differentiated by time, creating a general hallucinatory impression not unlike the uncanny overlaps of past and present in the story itself, as when the discovery of the tooth in the wall instigates a flashback – a return – to the time the tenant saw the mangled body of the previous occupant in the hospital bed, with “a breach in the rampart of teeth, through which death had entered” [Topor 1966:61].

For a listener unfamiliar with the literary references,⁶⁵ the hallucinatory sounds of the bass and of the guitar in the instrumental are synergised by the song's trip lyrics (which reference an “altered state” in addition to the concept of a never-ending dream and a “mind to let”). This is a distinctly Gothic journey: one in which, haunted by peculiar sounds and shapes, we become lost in the labyrinth of strange byways and unknown paths. “The tenant's lost in his new undertaking” evokes not only a person lost in their mind but resonates remarkably with the Gothic imagery of Emily Dickson, whose poems, as observed by Emily August, “refer to coffins as houses and dead bodies as ‘tenants’ of the grave” [2014:173]. As a composite, the track by Play Dead is both undeniably Gothic and unmistakably psychedelic.

⁶⁵ See p. 176.

Goth: Unfathomably Uncanny Music

In this chapter I have described how psychedelic drugs transform familiar objects into moving, dancing structures, and I have related this phenomenon to Ernst Jentsch's theory of the uncanny. In particular I have suggested the drug effect – dynamisation – is uncanny because of the way it makes lifeless objects appear, in Albert Hofmann's words, "animated, as if driven by an inner restlessness" [2013:20], underscoring for some subjects an uncertainty regarding the precise distinction between that which is alive and that which is not. In Jentschian terms the drug effect not only makes the familiar appear strange but radically calls into question the opposition between the known and the unknown by undermining concepts taken for granted during everyday consciousness, for example that walls and pieces of furniture do not expand and contract in continuous motion like human lungs, or that severed limbs and dead bodies do not move by themselves. Referencing the accounts of subjects under the influence of LSD, mescaline and DMT, I have conveyed how psychedelic drugs afford hallucinations that are pareidolic in nature, characterised by the perception of patterns – particularly zoomorphic patterns – where previously there were none: the equation of two taps at the sink to two eyes, the function of the pipe as a throat, and so on. Because pareidolic forms perceived under the influence of such drugs are dynamised – in constant motion, as though the substance and form of the world were still molten – lifeless objects are transformed into creatures that appear to move of their own accord: a scenario archetypal of the Jentschian uncanny, for which obscurity regarding the precise nature, cause or origin of motion is exemplary.

I have furthermore outlined numerous ways in which music evokes the dynamisation effect. Although the musical characteristics I have described are remarkably prevalent in Goth, they are associated in the popular music literature primarily with acid rock, specifically as demonstrative of ways in which the style "dynamized musical parameters previously stable in rock" [Hicks 2000:66]. They comprise harmonic devices like side-slipping that make the tonic appear restless and unhomely; melodic devices like glissandi that make the tonality appear to slide towards unknown destinations; rhythmic devices like juxtaposed drum patterns that appear to make the tempo increase dramatically when in fact it remains static; timbral devices like flanging that make sounds appear to twist and twirl; and formal devices like false endings, reprises and trip sections that transform familiar song forms into concept albums or epic journeys. The majority of these musical characteristics – wah-wah,

phase shifting, the rave-up, and so on – are addressed by both Michael Hicks and Craig Morrison, and collectively they form a consistently distinctive set of sounds associated with psychedelic drugs.⁶⁶ Both writers argue that the unstable, molten sounds of acid rock reflect the “shifting shapes” perceived by subjects under the influence of LSD [*ibid.*], and whilst neither is particularly concerned with the uncanny, I have suggested how precisely the same musical characteristics are used in Goth to create eerie soundscapes haunted by unsettling forms and illusory voices.

In highlighting Goth’s extensive use of technology to “effectively liquefy many sonic parameters” [Hicks 2000:70], I have suggested Goth exploits the uncanny potential of acousmatic sound in the curious ways it blends organic and inorganic sounds – through vowels sung by guitars as well as humans, and pipe organs that breathe whilst the singer does not – particularly within the context of lyrics that question where the living human ends. Hicks refers to the technology exploited comparably by acid rock musicians as “energy transforming machines” after Timothy Leary, who suggested that psychedelics allow subjects to perceive “a kaleidoscopic flow of direct energy – swirling patterns of capillary coiling”, and who proposed a form of “hallucinatory art” requiring “energy transforming machines which duplicate the capillary flow” [1966b:10–11]. Tape machines, phasers, flangers and the like, Hicks suggests, came to assume that very purpose:

Psychedelic groups consistently pushed their music through a host of ‘energy transforming machines’ that began with no drug connotations but came to acquire them. One LSD user remarked that the drug made phenomena seem as if they were “programmed to go through synapses that make patterns on everything”.⁶⁷ In dynamizing their raw sonorities psychedelic groups symbolically sent their music through electronic synapses that made patterns everywhere.

Michael Hicks [1966:73]

⁶⁶ See pp. 79–86.

⁶⁷ The quotation is from Wolf, Leonard (1968). *Voices from the Love Generation*. Boston: Little, Brown & Co., p. 196.

Of particular intrigue concerning the patterns frequently described by psychedelic drug subjects is that they “bear an uncanny resemblance” to fractals [Stafford 1992:III-49]. Central to the mathematics underlying chaos theory, fractals – complex and infinitely repeating patterns that are self-similar across multiple scales – have been found to accurately represent many structures and processes in nature (from coastal to cloud formations), and the perception of fractals has consequently tended to “confirm the intuition of many psychedelic users that they’re not ‘hallucinating’, but observing something significant and *real*” [*ibid.*, italics original].⁶⁸ I have suggested that Goth in particular unsettles the distinction between the hallucinatory and the real, especially in relation to concepts like ghosts, disembodied organs and machines: the automatic timbre of a music box evokes an instrument that plays itself, an unseen mechanised eye callously plays the spy in the cab, and in Cybergoth the singer is just a copy of a copy of a copy and may not even be human. Many of these sounds are the result of Goth’s relentless return to “making the familiar strange by playing with sound” [Carpenter 2012:40].⁶⁹ In Isabella van Elferen’s words, “goth music opens the door to an exploration of the timbral labyrinth” [2017:38]. It also suggests that something unfathomably uncanny lurks just beyond the door.

⁶⁸ Stafford quotes an unnamed attendee at *Bridge Conference* (1991), 2–3 February, Stanford University. See also p. 106.

⁶⁹ Alexander Carpenter refers specifically to the production of ‘Bela Lugosi’s Dead’ by Bauhaus; see pp. 127–9.

Conclusion: What Lies Beyond

In this thesis I have considered how music can be meaningfully compared to the effects of psychedelic drugs. The most extensive attempts to answer this question in musicological terms lie within the popular music literature and concern specifically the idea – professed by musicians and listeners alike – that acid rock has the ability to mimic or mirror the effects of LSD. I have surveyed the musical characteristics of acid rock fundamental to the theories in support of this idea and I have demonstrated these same characteristics are prevalent in the music of the Goth scene. I have suggested how both Goth music and psychedelic drugs can alter perceptions of time and space, increase sensitivity to matters of set and setting, and elicit a sensation described as uncanny, specifically in a Jentschian sense of calling into question the opposition between the known and the unknown. These affinities, along with the fact that Goth resounds with the same musical characteristics associated in popular music literature with the effects of LSD, seem to suggest that Goth(ic) music is psychedelic – pertaining, that is, to the effects of psychedelic drugs.

On the other hand, by demonstrating how the various sounds thought to reproduce the effects of LSD are present in the diverse sub-styles of Goth (and by implication a wider repertoire beyond), I have highlighted some problems of the philosophies that theorise the relationship between music and drugs. The musicological understanding of psychedelia, for one, is fairly limited to prototypes: the complexity of a psychedelic pharmacopeia reduced to LSD, LSD's extensive array of effects reduced to three, and the three effects paradigmatically theorised in relation to a specific style of popular music from San Francisco in the 1960s. Whilst certainly a sensible starting point given the prototypical classification of the drugs themselves, we would be wise not to infer that music can only be truly psychedelic in the presence of certain sounds like wah-wah, non-functional harmony and flange. By this model, all types of music can be psychedelic, but some are more psychedelic than others: problematic only in so far as it is culturally biased to suggest that acid rock is more consciousness-expanding than any another type of music.

The musical characteristics identified via the theories I have reviewed in this thesis are not, however, insignificant. Psychedelic drugs alter a subject's perception of time and space, and regardless of whether teleological concepts exist within music, it remains true that many listeners familiar with Western tonal conventions understand harmony in a fundamentally teleological way (even if not consciously). The theories

identifying psychedelic musical characteristics like chord oscillation and chromatic mediants are able to account for how certain listeners attach meaning concerning time and space to musical details like harmony (regardless of how 'true' that meaning is), and have addressed some of the problems of the semiotic approach exemplified by Sheila Whiteley's [1992] *Space Between the Notes*. This approach placed great emphasis on the intention of the creator, awarded little attention to the agency of the listener, and identified in acid rock, largely through artistic interpretation, "common codes which convey a musical equivalent of hallucinogenic experience" [3-4].

Although the alternative theories I have reviewed throughout this thesis address some problems of the psychedelic coding approach, they are not without their own shortcomings. In spite of the fact that Michael Hicks approaches the association between music and psychedelics in terms particular to specific drug phenomena – in terms closer to embodied cognition than arbitrary signifier and signified – he awards great import to his own culturally-specific interpretation of psychedelic experiences, which is imposed upon the musical findings. Speaking in relation to the phenomena he terms dechronicisation, depersonalisation and dynamisation, he claims: "[m]usic that is truly 'psychedelic' mimics these three effects" [2000:64]. The implications are not only that some types of music are more psychedelic than others but that some types of psychedelic experience are more valid than others: those wherein molten landscapes drip as the ego dissolves in an ecstatic sense of union with the cosmos are more valid than encounters with local demons who have placed curses upon sick individuals, as characteristic of the mescaline experiences of the Mazatec for example [Evans 2018].

In similar vein, although Craig Morrison's approach to repertoire aims to reduce dependence on artistic interpretation in the identification of musical characteristics of significance, he ultimately falls back to ideas of translation and creator intention. The term matrix he employs, for example, arose in response to theories that attempted to model the way musical styles change in terms of evolution: through a survival of the fittest analogy where, in popular music, "the fittest aspects, artists, or productions survive on popularity and influence" whilst others decline in subsequent styles [2000:51]. The term matrix emerged as a way of referring to an abstract musical thing – a chord pattern, a time signature – in a way that does not impose upon the thing a value judgement (as does the evolutionary model) but rather recognises the importance of listener variables in such matters. To understand what makes music psychedelic, Morrison adopts an approach that appears similarly unbiased: he listens to a repertoire repeatedly described as such, takes note of the matrices that appear

recurrently, and reports his findings. In practice, however, there is not a particularly rigorous distinction between Morrison's matrices and Whiteley's codes; whilst he selects the matrices according to their prevalence, and whilst their prevalence seems to evidence their significance to the descriptor, Morrison remains insistent these matrices are the result of an "attempt to translate into musical terms the effects of hallucinogenic drugs, especially LSD" [1]. Although we have wandered, we have strayed not far from the territory of psychedelic coding.

There is nonetheless a distinction to be made between claiming that acid rock and Goth share certain codes, and that acid rock and Goth share certain matrices. The shared matrices are interesting, but what should we make of them? If, on the one hand, we understand them as pertaining to the effects of psychedelic drugs, we can conclude Goth is psychedelic because it is rich in precisely those same matrices. If acid rock is psychedelic on account of its superlength recordings, its use of phase shifting, side-slipping, tumbling ostinatos, hypnotic vamps, organs and drones, and its fantasy, trip, drug and supernatural lyrics, then Goth is psychedelic for precisely the same reasons. If, on the other hand, such matrices (along with others like literary references and the internal pedal point) are prevalent not only in acid rock and Goth but many musical styles beyond, then perhaps they are not so psychedelic after all.

Goth is certainly psychedelic by the standards of the current model – which has moved from encryption to affordances, and from what music means to how it pertains to drug phenomena – but that model is not entirely refined. Whilst there are certainly strong cases to be made for concepts suggesting for example that drones are hypnotic (or singing children are creepy) these concepts are very culturally specific. Accuracy serves well in a field as thorny as that of the psychedelics, but it should not impose a culturally restrictive definition upon the types of music to which the term might refer. Psychedelic music cannot be defined, in other words, purely by delineating stylistic characteristics but by paying unrelenting attention to matters of set and setting. Indeed both musical and drug experiences are subject to these same influences. The concept that anthropologists have termed "the cultural patterning of hallucinatory experience" [Dobkin de Rios and Katz 1975:69] has a musical analogue: just as psychedelic experiences are informed by cultural conventions including what a subject expects to happen under the influence of a drug, musical experiences are informed by similar conventions – many Western listeners, for example, expect chords to gravitate towards a tonal centre.

In this thesis I have drawn upon the work of Paul Hodgkinson [2002] to suggest how we might map out the consistently distinctive sounds of psychedelia in a manner that is mindful of the prototypes involved.¹ Given sufficient specificity, I propose we can meaningfully describe music – any music – as psychedelic: not in a stylistic sense, but rather in a sense of being able to reproduce the effects of such drugs for certain listeners. Indeed the examples in this thesis have demonstrated that Goth (a diverse collection of styles with many kindred in the wider popular music repertoire) affords similar distortions of time and space, similar excesses of sensation, and similar pareidolic phenomena to the effects of the psychedelics. This is important because the ability of music to mirror, synergise or recreate the effects of psychedelic drugs may be crucial to unlocking the healing potential not only of psychedelic experiences but of musical experiences more generally.

Referencing the importance of music to the therapeutic potential of psychedelic drugs that has been observed since the 1960s, neuroscientist Mendel Kaelen remarks “it’s not the drug itself that provides a therapeutic effect; it’s the experience that the drug is able to produce in interaction with the therapist, with the environment, that has potential” [Turk 2016]. As he points out, researchers in fields like psychotherapy and neuropsychopharmacology appear to know intuitively that music has potential to aid psychedelic drug-based therapeutic treatment, yet there is little understanding within these fields of how, precisely, to realise this potential. Speaking with regards to the so-called psychedelic renaissance, a recent renewal of research into the therapeutic applications of psychedelic drugs after a hiatus spanning circa 40 years, he observes:

If you look at these clinical trials right now, all of them, without any exception, use music as part of the therapy model [...]. If music plays such an important role in the therapeutic method, we need to ask a lot of important scientific questions related to that in order to really move the field forward – to really make sure that we have an empirical understanding of the role of music within therapeutic work.

Mendel Kaelen in Turk [2016]

It occurs to me that musicologists have great potential to contribute to this area of research, but the field must first move beyond a paradigmatic way of looking at the problem, which is to say from a perspective which favours a specific repertoire.

¹ See pp. 79–86.

Following in the footsteps of Helen Bonny, a music therapist who developed the Guided Imagery and Music method in the 1970s to help patients explore altered states of consciousness, Kaelen is taking great care in designing playlists for modern psychedelic drug-based clinical trials. Reflecting on the process for a trial that involved administering psilocybin to subjects with treatment-resistant depression, he notes:

The selection of songs was actually incredibly difficult, because every single song I considered, I asked myself the question, “do I think this song works for the patient because it works for *me*, or does the song work for the patient because I think it carries with it a message that is universal, that is intrinsic to the music itself?

Mendel Kaelen in Turk [2016, italics original]

These are the kinds of questions musicologists have been debating for some time and for which theoretical frameworks are available, and I suggest greater cross-disciplinary dialogue in this area would offer potential to design musical experiences that are both individually and socially healing.

That musical and psychedelic experiences share similar healing potential is supported by the fact both are being applied – with notable success – to the same therapeutic ends. The U. S. Department of Veterans Affairs [2014] reported for example that a music therapy program wherein veterans learned to play guitar was effective in relieving symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), a condition characterised by chronic psychological and biological changes in brain function following a traumatic event; clinical trials have similarly found the psychedelic amphetamine MDMA in combination with psychotherapy “effective and well tolerated in reducing PTSD symptoms in veterans and first responders” [Mithoefer *et al.* 2018].

Of course however similar the experiences may appear, listening to music is clearly not the same as ingesting a drug: the former cannot reliably reproduce the same neurochemical changes as a quantified dose of a psychedelic chemical. Nonetheless given it is not the drug that provides therapeutic effect but the experience the drug grants access to, the ability of music to grant access to similar types of experience is extremely relevant (as is the importance of set and setting in unlocking this potential). Indeed the fact that music does not reliably reproduce the same neurochemical changes as a quantified dose of a psychedelic chemical may prove to be advantageous.

One of the most promising properties of the psychedelic chemicals for the treatment of conditions like PTSD, addiction and depression is that unlike other medications, psychedelics do not require regular redosing. It is theorised that subjects are able to maintain long-term behavioural changes without regular reintroduction of the drug essentially because psychedelic experiences can be so profound that they cause a fundamental shift in perception, the effects of which are not acute. If and when reintroduction of the drug is necessary, elapsed time ensures a subject's tolerance to the drug has not increased: the dose required remains low and the drug's safety profile high. Addiction psychologist Michael Bogenschutz has compared psilocybin treatment to "something like the opposite of PTSD – an experience so powerfully positive it can actually make a lasting impact on one's psyche and brain" [Colwell 2015].

The intensity of powerful musical experiences is something I suspect has drawn many musicologists to their own area of study, and perhaps the field has something to offer. Musicologists have long observed how hearing familiar music brings back the circumstances of former listening experiences;² could the soundtrack to a subject's psychedelic drug-based treatment session help them to recall healing aspects of their initial experience? Could playback of a soundtrack associated with a profound psychological breakthrough help the subject to recall the insightful shift in perception fundamental to their recovery, particularly if the context – setting – of that playback was designed to synergise the effects of psychedelic drugs? Could this help to support the success of subsequent treatment sessions or decrease further the need to redose?

A recent study has demonstrated for the first time the validity of a long-held assumption that psychedelic drugs enhance emotional responsiveness to music, a hypothesis that had not been previously tested in a modern placebo-controlled study [Kaelen *et al.* 2015]. Although encouraging in its "tentative and indirect support for the notion that this effect can be harnessed in the context of psychedelic-assisted psychotherapy" [3607], no studies to my knowledge have investigated the validity of a hypothesis I suspect holds equally true by the same merit: that music enhances emotional sensitivity to psychedelic drugs.

That music affects psychedelic experiences on a neurological level has already been confirmed via another recent study which demonstrated that music increases functional connectivity and information flow between the parahippocampal cortex

² See pp. 66–7.

(related to memory) and visual cortex for subjects under the influence of LSD [Kaelen, Roseman *et al.* 2017]. The results of this study indicate that music affects the types of closed-eye visual hallucinations that psychedelic drug subjects experience by rendering mental imagery more autobiographical in nature. If the relationship between music and psychedelics is one of synergy as I propose, the repertoire selection in these clinical trials becomes particularly ethically sensitive.

I suggest musicology has much to learn from neuropsychopharmacology but also much to offer in return. Recent neuroscientific research has singled out timbre as an important aspect of the psychedelic musical experience [Kaelen, Lorenz *et al.* 2017]. In this study, subjects under the influence of LSD demonstrated increased brain activity in response to timbre: activity localised within regions central to processing emotion and attributing meaning to sound, and which correlated with an increase in music-evoked feelings of wonder and transcendence, “both of which have been identified as therapeutically valuable components of the ‘peak experiences’ produced by psychedelics” [Kaelen in Taub 2017]. Throughout this thesis I have outlined numerous ways in which Goth (a collection of styles not previously associated with such drugs) grants access to musical experiences that may be described as mystical, transcendental or psychedelic. Beyond this lies a plethora of different styles with similar potential.

Beyond this lies a psychedelic potential within all kinds of music.

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