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**The Occultural Orpheus:
Exploring Creative Seekership through
Analytic Autoethnography**

Volume 1.

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Thesis submitted in partial fulfilment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

Supervisors:

Prof. Karl Spracklen

Dr. Conrad Russell

March 2024

Abstract

This thesis explores the theme of 'creative seekership' within contemporary esotericism. Creative seekership, as presented here, deals with the ways in which artistic practices are employed in the pursuit of esoteric knowledge and experience. Such practices are often attributed magical or esoteric significance by artists, ritualising their cultural productions, and emphasising the already-blurred boundaries between art and magic. The concept of creative seekership is developed over the course of this research to construct a holistic theoretical model that demonstrates the embedding of creative practices in the subjectivities of experience, the interpretive and discursive frameworks of knowledge, and the broader horizon of 'occulture' and its cultural milieus.

This work is unusual in that creative seekership is studied through the application of autoethnographic research methods. This autoethnographic research concentrates on examining creative seekership through accounts of my own music-making from the late 1990s to early 2000s. While scholars engaged in ethnographic work in contemporary esotericism studies have become increasingly visible in their own research, the implications of 'insider scholar' or 'complete member researcher' identities in autoethnographic research have been under-explored – primarily as a consequence of the academic boundary work with which the field was engaged until the 2010s.

This thesis, therefore, takes the opportunity to explore the possibilities of developing a form of 'analytic autoethnography' in accord with the scholarly and interdisciplinary perspectives that have been established in esotericism studies over the last three decades. Here, the practice of autobiographical writing is approached from a 'grounded' perspective, allowing theoretical models to emerge from hybrid compositional and analytical processes. The outcome of this process presents scholars not only with a theoretical framework for analysing creative seekership in contemporary esotericism, but also demonstrates how autoethnography may contribute to the field of esotericism studies as a plausible methodology for future researchers.

Candidate's Declaration

I declare that this thesis has been composed solely by myself, and that it has not been submitted, either in whole or in part, in any previous application for a degree.

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Introduction

I sat down on a rock at the edge of the wood, took out my recording equipment, my tin whistle and Asian flutes, set the tape running and waited. I lay my folded hands over the whistle on my lap, and started to still my thoughts. I have always felt that there is an appropriate time to begin playing, and when this came, I lifted the instrument to my lips and began to improvise. [...] I alternated long intakes and expulsions, as well as using over-breathing and hyperventilation in my playing. I began to feel a change of consciousness: a disassociation from the body, and a sense that my mind was somehow 'sinking': being drawn downward, or, perhaps, inward... (Legard 2018)

This thesis explores the theme of 'creative seekership' within contemporary esotericism. It focuses not only on the creative and 'esoteric' practices which an artistic 'seeker' of esoteric or occult knowledge may explore through their cultural productions, but also attempts to situate such practices in a holistic theoretical model that demonstrates their embedding in the subjectivities of experience, within interpretive and discursive frameworks of knowledge, and in relation to broader cultural influences such as Partridge's 'occulture' (Partridge 2004, 2005, 2013a, 2014) and the milieus and cultural artefacts found therein.

The particular area of artistic practice which this study investigates is music-making: primarily my own musical practices between 2001 and 2013 – a flavour of which was given at the start of this introduction. Such forms of self-study, often involving autoethnographic approaches, necessitate the development of methodologies that are novel to the field of esotericism studies – the academic field in which this research situates itself*. To this end, an approach to self-study in the spirit of 'analytic autoethnography' (Anderson 2006) will be presented as a research method which is, I argue, congruent with the scholarly perspectives and expectations within the field.

* It should be noted that throughout this thesis the convention 'esotericism studies' is employed to refer to the academic field often described as 'Western Esoteric Studies'. This is a consequence of recent debates within the field regarding the scholarly potentials for dismantling the 'essentialised polarity' of the East-West binary, and turning toward an examination of 'global esotericism' (Roukema and Kilner-Johnson 2018; Zander 2021; Bakker and Roukema 2022). While 'Western Esotericism' remains a useful construction, especially when examining areas in which an orientalist 'other' is present, references to 'the west' in the context of this thesis are usually qualified as 'Western Europe and North America'. The exception is when referring to Hanegraaff's historical descriptions of the field of esotericism studies as having undergone a succession of 'software updates', which he describes as Western Esoterism 1.0, 2.0, and 3.0 (see Hanegraaff 2012b): in these instances, the term 'Western Esotericism' will be retained.

To put aside the *auto-* for a moment, and turn to the broader field of ethnography, there have, over the last 30 years, been many examples of ethnographic research both within, and adjacent to, the field of esotericism studies (e.g. Luhmann 1989; Harris 2001; Woodman 2003; Redwood 2003; Granholm 2005, 2014). Following insights derived from ethnography's 'crisis of representation' during the 1980s, the researchers themselves are to some degree visible in these studies. However, despite such self-visibility, ethnographic researchers continue to position themselves as participant-observers at best: conducting research on subjects as 'others', rather than conducting work from the perspective that Anderson (2006) describes as the 'complete member researcher', which is to say: as scholars who are both themselves a part of the population under study, and who are able to interpret their own experiences through the requisite scholarly frameworks.

There may, understandably, be some hesitancy amongst scholars to a proposal for approaching the study of contemporary esotericism from the 'complete member researcher' perspective: from the 1990s to the early 2010s, the field of esotericism studies was still deeply involved in disciplinary boundary work, most readily demonstrated via Hanegraaff's positioning esotericism studies as primarily a historiographic practice: a response to prior scholarship which he identifies as being overly influenced by the perennialist and religionist assumptions of an earlier generation of scholars (Hanegraaff 2012b, 2016a). Hanegraaff has subsequently defined the present iteration of esotericism studies as 'Western Esotericism 3.0': the most salient features of which he describes a grounding in sound historiography, the possession of an open and interdisciplinary nature, and an avoidance of the reproduction of 'esotericist agendas' (2012b: 122-3). It is this final point that highlights the potential for conflict between the complete member researcher and the scholarly motivations of the wider discipline, particularly if their work involves traditional forms of evocative autoethnography.

With this in mind, this thesis proposes the development of a form of 'analytic' autoethnography, which not only follows the guidelines proposed by Hanegraaff's 'Western Esotericism 3.0', but also responds to recent interdisciplinary innovations in the field: particularly the exploration of the theoretical and explanatory potential suggested by sociological and cognitive approaches to the study of esotericism, as found in the works of Granholm and Asprem (e.g. Granholm 2008, 2013a, 2015a; Asprem 2016, 2017; Taves & Asprem 2016a, 2016b).

It is against this scholarly background that the thesis pursues the suggestion by Pace (2012) that a 'grounded' attitude – drawing upon concepts from 'grounded theory' (e.g. Charmaz 2006) – may be a fruitful way to pursue such forms of analytic autoethnography. Grounded theory approaches are notable for their emphasis not only on the reflexivity, or in this case self-reflexivity, of the researcher, but also for the importance placed on the concept of emergence (Charmaz 2006, 2010): here, preconceptions regarding a particular 'problem' or research question are minimised, and theoretical insights, hypotheses, and models are encouraged to emerge from processes surrounding the collection and analysis of the data (Charmaz 2010: 155-7).

The pursuit of such a reflexive, 'grounded' approach – here focused on developing theoretical insights from qualitative data sources such as autobiographical descriptions and my own archive of writing and music – led to the development of a theoretical model that describes the processes of 'creative seekership' as enacted through the forms of post-secular religiosity that the contemporary cultural climate of 'occulture' readily accommodates (Granholm 2008; Partridge 2004, 2005). In many respects, the grounded approach undertaken here dictated the structure of the thesis, and the rather exploratory nature of the substantive chapters. In this respect, a summary of the structure of the thesis will be helpful to illustrate the purposes and motivations informing each chapter.

The first two chapters broadly constitute literature reviews, covering the fields of esotericism studies and the autoethnography respectively. Charmaz (2010) has highlighted the, at times contradictory or contested, place of a researcher's knowledge of pre-existent theoretical perspectives in grounded approaches: Glaser and Strauss emphasised that researchers should 'conduct their research without preconceptions from earlier theory and research' (:158) – although their assumption was that researchers following their method had already undertaken broad readings in their fields of inquiry, and were thus possessed of a 'theoretical sensitivity' (ibid.). It was, therefore, necessary to develop my own theoretical sensitivity by examining both the literature and the theoretical and methodological approaches common to both fields. The second chapter concludes with a proposal for integrating analytic autoethnography into esotericism studies as a method of research in accordance to the scholarly expectations established in the field over the last three decades.

Having established a sense of theoretical sensitivity, as well as a proposed method for conducting my research, I then focused on the composition of an autobiographical narrative, which was written between June 2018 and May 2020, constituting the second volume of the thesis. The process of composing and analysing the autobiographical narrative becomes the chief focus of chapter 3. This chapter touches on some vital methodological ground, particularly concerning the complete member researcher's ability to mediate between their 'emic reconstruction' of past events, beliefs and practices, and the etic stance from which such data may be developed into theoretical perspectives. The consequence of such etic work is the first emergence of a model for creative seekership, identifying the key entities and processes involved in seeking esoteric knowledge and experience through creative practice.

In grounded theory, emergent theories are subject to subsequent 'theoretical sampling', in which the data is examined – and new data collected – to refine the tentative categories that have emerged during the initial analysis. The established intent of such theoretical sampling is usually to bring the emergent categories and theories to a state of 'theoretical saturation', often acknowledged by the repetition of themes arising in the data (Charmaz 2006: 99-115; Charmaz 2010: 166-7). Chapters 4-7 of this thesis work through the processes of sampling and saturation with the aim of refining the model of creative seekership, as presented in the conclusion. They are written in a fairly exploratory style, focusing on exploring one or two interconnected elements of the seekership model from a variety of perspectives and examining additional sources, such as accounts written by other practitioners, as part of the 'sampling' process. Given the wide-ranging scope of the original autobiographical source from which the model emerged, this subsequent research is guided by a philosophy of theoretical sensitivity and methodological pragmatism: examining, where appropriate, theories and methods which might deepen – or saturate – the analysis of the emerging seekership model.

Chapter 4 examines the relationship between identity formation and social spaces in the context of occulturally-situated seekership. In the spirit of methodological pragmatism, I employ the method of discourse tracing (LeGreco & Tracy 2009) to examine the different identities constructed around moments of discursive rupture and discursive drift. This enables me to gather further insights into the entwined relationship between discursive identities, the milieus of occulture – particularly those

situated online – and their relationship to the development of my own musical practices.

Chapter 5 turns to the relationship between affect, experience, and the appraisal of experience in the development of creative ‘paths of practice’. Although it is possible to approach analyses of experience solely through the lens of discourse, the proposed creative seekership model also attempts to leverage theoretical sensitivity to provide a more holistic view of contemporary creative seekership. This chapter applies attributive theories of religious experience (Taves 2016a, Taves & Asprem 2016) to analyse my early ‘ritual music’ practices, as well the development of a mature creative practice as a consequence of an experience at the ancient monument of Men-an-Tol, which comes to be framed as an ‘Originary Event’: a dramatic experience which frames subsequent emic narratives about my own creative practice.

Spirits, genii, or other intermediary beings became distinct presences in the forms of musical seekership that developed from the Men-an-Tol event, as well as being pronounced presences in my formative ‘magical’ experiences. The sixth chapter examines influence of intermediary beings on the development of creative paths of practice from the perspectives of mediumship and spirit communication. It describes the ways in which an attitude of porosity enables artefacts to be produced in which spirits may be discursively present via presentations in text, imaginatively present via ritualised engagements which treat the musical surface as a ‘visionary script’ (Newman 2005), and phenomenologically present as social actors (Glaser-Hille 2019). In this latter case, engagement with spirits exerting influence not only on my creative practices, but also on my social relations.

Chapter 7 may perhaps be viewed as a companion to the fourth chapter. While the earlier chapter on identity and musical practices examined my formative social networks and experiences, this final analytical chapter examines the occultural milieus in which my more mature musical productions were situated. The chapter commences with a survey of an influential West Yorkshire occultural milieu whose activities preceded my own arrival in Leeds, as well as examining a global milieu associated with the ‘Free Folk’ – and later ‘Wyrd Folk’ – to whom I would present my own creative work. By approaching these studies from the perspective of networked milieus (Webb 2007), unexpected connections between these groups are highlighted, as are the ways in which I utilised aesthetics, discursive identities, and discursive

positioning to present my work within the aesthetic and discursive spaces associated with them.

Finally, the concluding chapter revisits the model for creative seekership originally proposed in chapter 3, incorporating additional theoretical insights drawn from the preceding chapters. Given that the particular creative focus of this study is music-making, I also summarise perspectives on the musicology of esotericism and the theoretical insights into musical creativity and seekership which emerged from the creative seekership model. This includes a discussion of the creative processes with which occulturally-situated musicians may find themselves engaged, and the potential for forms of musical analysis based on spectromorphological (Smalley 1997) and affective-representative approaches (Weinel 2018) in complement to the traditionally textually-focused analyses of esotericism studies. Following a reflection on both the merits, and disadvantages, of employing analytic autoethnography as a method for approaching esotericism studies, I conclude with an autobiographical coda, reflecting on the development of my own seekership in relation to my scholarly work as a 'complete member researcher' during the period in which this thesis was composed.

Chapter 1.

From Perennial Philosophy to Discourse Analysis, and Beyond: Contexts and Apparatus for the Study of Contemporary Esotericism

Introduction

This chapter outlines the scholarly field of esotericism studies. The motivation for doing so is threefold: first, to survey the development of esotericism studies to introduce the field to readers may be unfamiliar with its particular approaches and methods. Second, is that in doing so, I will also tighten my own grasp of the theories, philosophies, and methods used in the field, with which I may develop my own sense of theoretical sensitivity as the analytic work develops. Third, that by paying particular attention to interdisciplinary developments in the field, such as the turns toward discursive and sociological approaches, I can establish a perspective on esotericism studies which is complementary to the broadly constructivist epistemologies which inform of the sort of 'grounded' perspective that will be proposed as a promising approach to realising an analytic autoethnographic practice (see chapter 2).

While this chapter necessarily touches on some of the earliest phases in the development of esotericism studies as a scholarly field, it will particularly focus on the scholarly discourses which have developed over the last 25-30 years. This period has seen the field transformed: moving from the 'religionist' assumptions of earlier scholars, to the development of empirical-historiographic methods, notably stimulated by the work of Wouter Hanegraaff. These developments have subsequently provided a stable foundation for more recent interdisciplinary projects, such as the aforementioned approach to esotericism from the perspectives of sociological theory (e.g. Hammer 2004; von Stuckrad 2005, 2010, 2013a, 2015; Granholm 2008, 2013a, 2014, 2015a; Partridge 2004, 2005, 2014). The theoretical positions of these aforementioned scholars, along with the proposals of art historian Nina Kokkinen regarding the use of Partridge's concept of *occulture* as an analytic tool (Kokkinen 2013) will be examined in detail in order to identify contexts and theoretical apparatus which may be useful when approaching the confluence of esotericism and artistic creativity with which the autoethnographic element of this research is concerned.

As a preliminary to discussing the development of the field of esotericism studies itself, it is perhaps apt to first turn our attention to the terms *esoteric* and *esotericism*.

Hanegraaff (2006a) notes that the term 'esoteric' is associated with secrecy by the 2nd century theologian Clement of Alexandria. Hanegraaff cites Clement's *Stromata*, which states:

[T]he disciples of Aristotle say that some of their treatises are *esoteric*, and others common and *exoteric*. Further, those who instituted the mysteries, being philosophers, buried their doctrines in myths, so as not to be obvious to all. (Hanegraaff 2006a: 336, emphasis added)

According to Hanegraaff, both Hypolite of Rome and Iamblichus similarly apply this duality to the pupils of Pythagoras, cementing the notion of the 'esoteric' as 'referring to secret teachings reserved for a mystic elite' (ibid.). It is also worth noting Hanegraaff's opening observation that, while Aristotle *did* use the term *exoteric*, he actually employed it in opposition to the term *acroamatic*, which refers to oral instruction (ibid.). However, whether we call it *esoteric* or *acroamatic*, this form of privileged knowledge transmission becomes a defining motif for the concept of esotericism as it is often understood: pertaining to knowledge transmitted orally (or through some other privileged mode of communication – including revelation by divine or spiritual entities) to members of an initiated, elite, or otherwise 'inner' circle. The familiar term *esotericism*, however, as a substantive, does not occur until the 19th century, when French theological historian Jacques Matter coined the neologism to describe the syncretic beliefs and practices of 2nd-century Gnosticism (ibid.: 337; see also Asprem 2011). As noted by Hanegraaff (ibid.), the term may have stayed an obscure technical term amongst scholars of religion, were it not popularised during 19th-century occult revival by influential French occultist Eliphas Levi, and introduced into English via theosophist A. D. Sinnett's 1883 work *Esoteric Buddhism*. It should also be noted that Levi's *Dogme et Rituel de la Haute Magie* (1856) was also published in an English translation by Arthur Edward Waite in 1896. Waite's work consequently brought the term into common parlance both with his associates in the ritual magic group The Golden Dawn, which he had joined in 1891, and the wider London-based occult milieu familiar with the book's publisher: the book-dealer George Redway who both sold and published a significant number of what would become considered works of 'esotericism' – encompassing magic, divination, occult philosophy, and Freemasonry, all of which suggest access to forms of secret, revealed, or privileged knowledge (on Redway, see Hamill & Gilbert 2009: 1-3).

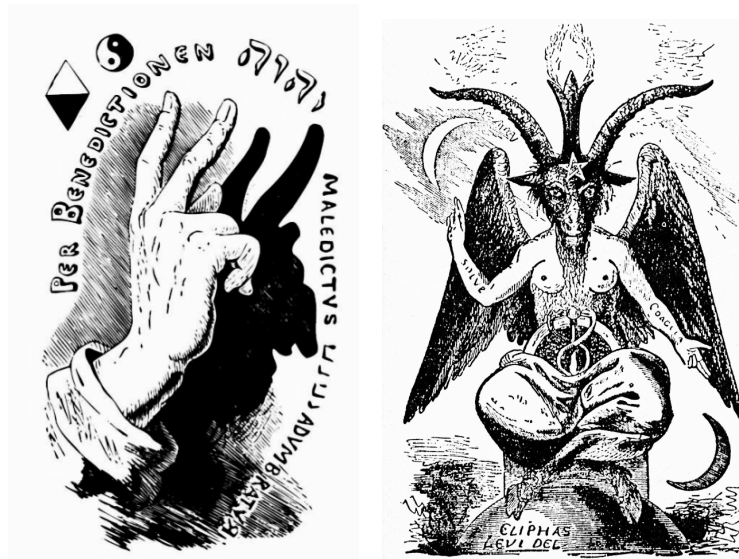


Figure 1. Illustrations from Levi's *Dogme et Rituel*, depicting the 'sign of sacerdotal esotericism', and the 'Sabbatic Goat' – described by the author as 'a pantheistic and magical figure of the Absolute', whose hands make the same gesture (Levi 1896: xxi-xxii).

Appertaining to secrets, elite knowledge, or privileged initiatory teachings, the technical usage of the term 'esoteric' became bonded to the similarly elite and privileged world of the initiatory magical orders existing on the fringes of Freemasonry (such as aforementioned Golden Dawn), and their own 'intiatic' teachings. As Hanegraaff notes, however, the wider, historical notion of esotericism has subsequently been understood to encompass a diversity of pursuits and philosophies often associated with either the transmission or instrumentalisation of secret knowledge, for example: the Renaissance revival of Neoplatonism, alchemy, magic, astrology, kabbalah, Illuminism, Theosophy, the New Age, and so on (Hanegraaff 2006a:337). Given this diversity, scholars have, since the early 20th century, grappled with the question of how to accurately define 'esotericism' itself. I will begin by surveying the historical positions assumed by earlier scholars of esotericism studies, before turning to contemporary perspectives with the intention of establishing a theoretical foundation for the understanding of 'esotericism' within this thesis.

From Perennial Philosophy to Polemical Construction: The Academic Study of Esotericism

Histories and methodological critiques of the development of esotericism as a field of academic study have been rehearsed in a number of books, papers, and doctoral theses published over the last two decades (e.g. Hanegraaff 2001, 2006a, 2012a, 2012b, 2013a, 2013b; Asprem & Granholm 2013a; Granholm 2014: 9-39; Giudice

2016: 36-40). Nevertheless, it will be useful here to summarise the key paradigms for the study of esotericism in order to illustrate how the field moved away from its early 'religionist' assumptions, and toward more nuanced, objective, and empirical approaches. Since what follows is a broad overview, I will use Hanegraaff's analogy of the development of 'Western Esoteric' studies in terms of three successive 'software upgrades' (Hanegraaff 2012b, 2013b). For a more nuanced discussion on the variety of competing theoretical approaches, see Hanegraaff's *Esotericism Theorised* (2016a). Before continuing, it should also be acknowledged that scholars such as Asprem and Strube have argued that the prefix 'Western' may be considered deprecated in the context of contemporary scholarly undertakings, since it displays 'a tendency toward internalism and isolation from bigger debates in the humanities at large' and demonstrates tacit biases and cultural essentialism (Asprem & Strube 2021). While I will generally use the term 'esotericism studies' in this research, I will maintain the formulation 'Western Esotericism' when referring to Hanegraaff's historical perspectives on the development of the field.

Hanegraaff's 'Western Esotericism 1.0' was characterised by a fairly long period spanning around 1930 to 1992, typified by what have been described as the 'religionist' perspectives of scholars associated with the Eranos Foundation (Switzerland), and with the Warburg Institute (Hamburg/London).

Established at Ascona, Switzerland in 1933, Eranos became an intellectual roundtable devoted to the study of mysticism, patronised by many influential figures in 20th-century religious studies. Notable associates of the foundation included psychoanalyst Carl Gustav Jung, the foundational researcher on shamanism Mircea Eliade, influential scholar of Islamic mysticism Henry Corbin, historian of Judaic mysticism Gershom Scholem, and Antoine Faivre: a historian who would himself become the foundational scholar of 'Western Esotericism' (Hanegraaff 2001: 7-13; 2016a: 156-9; Granholm 2005: 63-4; Giudice 2016: 36; Hanegraaff, Brach & Pasi 2022). The stance taken by the Eranos scholars, which also provided the foundation for Faivre's early work, was one that has subsequently been criticised as 'religionist', insofar as they sought to articulate a 'perennial' wisdom within a diversity of global mystical texts and traditions (Hanegraaff 2001: 7-14; 2013a: 178; Granholm 2005: 64).

Perennialism is a recurrent motif in what we will later come to identify as 'esoteric discourse', and posits that there is a 'hidden, but living truth [...] always present

underneath the surface of any historical period' (Asprem & Granholm 2013b: 34). This is itself an idea with a significant historical lineage: for example, Asprem and Granholm (ibid.) cite the concept of perennialism as important to early church fathers as a way to legitimise Christianity by emphasising that the new religion was in fact a manifestation of ancient wisdom, while Hanegraaff points out the revival of *philosophia perennis* as an important thread in the philosophies of 16th-century Hermeticists such as Ficino and Steuco (Hanegraaff 2012a, cited in Asprem and Granholm 2013b: 34). As a core tenet for scholarship, however, the perennialist perspective is problematic and relies on a number of questionable assumptions, as Giudice notes: 'Many times the [Eranos] scholars did not distance themselves from the subject of their writings, resulting, at times, in open polemics against the dangers of historical reductionism' (2016:36).

Hanegraaff *et al.* cite the research of Warburg scholar Frances Yates as the next significant step in the academicisation of esotericism (e.g. Hanegraaff 2001: 13-18; Granholm 2005: 34; Giudice 2016: 37). In her books, starting with *Giordano Bruno and the Hermetic Tradition* (1964), Yates proposed that the Renaissance and Early Modern world was shaped by a hidden tradition 'dominated by magic, personal religious experience, and the powers of imagination' (Yates 1964, quoted in Giudice 2016: 37). While Yates' work remains influential and helped to legitimise the study of historical esotericism, subsequent academic reappraisals have concluded that the 'Yates thesis' is over-simplistic. The supposition in her work, of a single, self-contained 'Hermetic Tradition', suggests a form of monolithic tradition (analogous to the perennialist outlook of the Eranos scholars), rather than reflecting the plurality of thought that shaped intellectual culture and interpretations of the Hermetic literature during the period in question (Granholm 2014:12-13).

It is worth noting that many early theses associated with the formative field of esotericism studies, such as Eliade's construction of shamanism as a universal 'archaic technique of ecstasy', Jung's archetypes, and Yates' 'Hermetic Tradition' remain profoundly influential amongst both practitioners who identify as 'esotericists' and within wider cultural notions of esotericism. Within the academy, however, Hanegraaff identifies the movement toward a more historically-grounded 'empirical' approach to the study of esotericism – Western Esotericism 2.0 – as developing in the early 1990s, with the publication of Antoine Faivre's *L'Ésotérisme* (1992), which 'marked both the end of Faivre's religionist period and the beginning of the study of Western esotericism as an academic field of research [...] written deliberately from a

perspective of descriptive neutrality’ (Hanegraaff 2013a:179). One of Faivre’s fundamental theoretical contributions was his definition of esotericism as a ‘form of thought’, incorporating four intrinsic characteristics, summarised here by Granholm:

The idea that everything in existence is linked through a series of invisible *correspondences*;

the notion of a *living nature* imbued by divine forces, which can be read for meaning just as other holy scriptures;

a focus on the faculty of *imagination* – perceived as an ‘organ of the soul’ – and the agency of intermediary beings in the pursuit of higher knowledge;

and the experience of *transmutation*, where the practitioner actively uses the knowledge gained to perfect his/her essence or soul.

(Granholm 2014: 15, emphasis added)

In addition, Faivre considers two secondary characteristics as common, but not intrinsic, components of his ‘esotericism’: the practice of *concordance*, involving attempts to establish a common inner kernel of truth between one or more philosophical or religious ‘traditions’ (as in the notion of a *philosophia perennis*); and a reliance on proper forms and channels of *transmission*, often through a succession of initiations (harking back to the Clement’s usage of esotericism as a form of initiated knowledge).

Subsequently the idea of esotericism as a ‘form of thought’ defined by Faivre’s characteristics has been revised. As Hanegraaff has pointed out, ‘Faivre’s definition remains essentially a theoretical generalisation about *Christian* traditions’ – albeit often heterodox ones – which ‘attained full flower in the Renaissance period’ (Hanegraaff 1998: 46-7; see also von Stuckrad 2010: 49; Granholm 2014: 15-7).

Hanegraaff’s subsequent research has been instrumental in providing a theoretical foundation for the project of Western Esotericism 3.0. He has described his approach as one of ‘empirical historiography’. Key to this perspective is the rejection of a monolithic ‘esotericism’ as a single object of study in favour of a pluralistic conception of the field. Hanegraaff’s most influential contribution in this area describes how historical processes – particularly religionist apologetic and anti-religionist polemical

discourses during the Enlightenment – came to construct the category of ‘esotericism’ in terms of ‘rejected knowledge’ (Hanegraaff 2012a; Asprem & Granholm 2013a: 23). Thus, distinctions regarding what is, and is not, considered ‘esoteric’ have developed from a historical process, which he describes as a consequence of a ‘grand polemical narrative’ (Hammer & von Stuckrad 2007: xi, 51).

Hanegraaff proposes that, since 2012, esotericism studies has entered its ‘3.0’ stage, which is ‘marked by increasing interdisciplinary debate across the boundaries of the humanities and the social sciences’ (2016: 168). As part of this ‘upgrade’ to ‘Western Esotericism 3.0’, Hanegraaff suggests that contemporary scholarship should possess ‘at least the following characteristics’:

- 1) It must be up-to-date and in line with advanced contemporary research in the various relevant domains.
- 2) Its agenda must not be esoteric (or crypto-esoteric) but scholarly throughout.
- 3) It must have a solid grounding in detailed historiography.
- 4) It must be based on a reasonably clear consensus about what Western Esotericism is all about.
- 5) It must be open and interdisciplinary.
- 6) It must be of high quality. (2012b: 122-3)

The fifth point, regarding interdisciplinarity, potentially suggests a greatly expanded field of study than the primarily historiographic work that characterised much of the Western Esotericism 2.0 scholarship. Two recent developments relating to the expanded scope of Western Esotericism 3.0 have been the application of sociological perspectives to esotericism studies, and the exploration of cognitive and neuroscientific approaches to enable a naturalistic description of the experiential dimensions of esoteric practice – both approached within a sound historiographic framework (for example Granholm 2014, Asprem 2017). It is with the former of these approaches that the present discussion is primarily concerned - although elements of esotericism studies’ ‘cognitive turn’ would also prove useful later in this research (see chapters 5 and 6): suggesting useful perspectives for integrating the analysis of esoteric experience and altered consciousness into a broader discursive, social constructivist framework.

Sociological and Discursive Approaches to Esotericism Studies

The development of what might be called a 'sociological' thread within the field of esotericism studies has been stimulated by the work of Olav Hammer, notably his *Claiming Knowledge: Strategies of Epistemology from Theosophy to the New Age* (2004), which interprets developments in esotericism during the 19th and 20th centuries in terms of discourse theory, drawing particular attention to the epistemic strategies that practitioners use to legitimise their beliefs against a background globalising and secularising processes which are – from an emic perspective – perceived to reject them (cp. Hanegraaff's formulation of 'esotericism' as 'rejected knowledge'). Two scholars who have furthered similar approaches within the field are Kocku von Stuckrad and Kennet Granholm. Since the publication of his *Western Esotericism* in 2005, von Stuckrad has been particularly prolific in refining an approach to Western Esotericism (and Western religiosity in general) in terms of discourse-theoretical approaches, complementing the foundations established by Hammer.

Von Stuckrad's approach begins with a rejection of 'the very notion of Western Esotericism as an objectively identifiable "tradition" or coherent "system of thought and doctrine" that can be studied as a separate topic' (von Stuckrad 2010: x-xi; Hanegraaff 2013a: 180). Rather, 'the esoteric is construed to focus on discourses concerned with the "secretive dialectics of concealment and revelation" and "perfect knowledge"' (von Stuckrad 2010: 54-64; Asprem & Granholm 2013a: 23). To summarise what constitutes 'esoteric discourse', we may turn to the introduction of *Western Esotericism* (2005):

This element of discourse can be identified as follows: the pivotal point of all esoteric traditions are claims to 'real' or absolute knowledge and the means of making this knowledge available. This might be through an individual ascent as in Gnostic or Neo-Platonic texts, or through an initiatory event as in secret societies of the modern period, or through communication with spiritual beings, as in the 'channelling' of the twentieth century. [...] The means, through which a discourse of absolute knowledge unfolds, relates to the dialectic of the hidden and revealed, thus with 'secrecy', but not in the sense that esoteric truth is accessible only to initiates. What makes a discourse esoteric is the rhetoric of a hidden truth, which can be unveiled in a specific

way and established contrary to other interpretations of the universe and history – often that of the institutionalised majority. (von Stuckrad 2005: 10)

As can be seen above, von Stuckrad's emphasis on esoteric discourse as a 'dialectic of secrecy and revelation' has an echo of the historical formation of the 'esoteric' as forms of hidden or initiated knowledge. However, von Stuckrad's definition of hidden or secret knowledge is more catholic: it is that which is found in places and revealed in ways that are apart from the *status quo* of social, religious or governmental institutions. Von Stuckrad's reading of discourse theory can thus be related to the ideas of Michel Foucault on discursive 'power', although it is also distanced from modernism's radical and polemical tradition of 'negative critique', so as to more closely accord with the attitude of academic neutrality within esotericism studies. Such discourse-theoretical approaches subsequently formed the theoretical foundation of von Stuckrad's monograph *Locations of Knowledge in Medieval and Early Modern Europe* (2010).

Hanegraaff has criticised von Stuckrad's approach on account of it having too loose a definition of what constitutes esotericism, stating that 'von Stuckrad's working definition [of esotericism] is based on a simple but ultimately arbitrary decision to bestow the label "esotericism" on those dimensions in the history of European religion that happen to interest him most' (Hanegraaff 2013a: 181). Elsewhere, Hanegraaff comments that the use of discourse theory yields 'an exclusivist and reductionist subtext that automatically devalues "contents and ideas" in favour of "structures", [which] makes history subservient to theory, and ends up promoting discursive approaches as the *only* valid methodology in the study of religion, esoteric or otherwise' (Hanegraaff 2012a: 365; quoted in Otto 2013: 234). In response, von Stuckrad has suggested that Hanegraaff's favoured description of esotericism as a form of 'rejected knowledge' which was polemically constructed by an 'othering' process during the last 200-300 years is in fact 'a discursive formation, i.e. the concretization of discourses in institutions, such as the university and its specific research programs' (von Stuckrad 2010: 53-54). Hanegraaff himself has also described the key elements of what we consider esoteric (e.g. occult sciences and Platonic/Hermetic philosophy) as 'the "other" of mainstream Western religion, science and philosophy' (Hanegraaff 2011: 156).

Despite proceeding from different methodological stances (to wit, discourse theory in von Stuckrad, and a 'methodologically agnostic' historiographic method in

Hanegraaff), the two approaches are not necessarily mutually exclusive. Asprem and Granholm describe both perspectives as ways in which we may 'shine light on the complexities of European cultural and religious history which have typically remained veiled in earlier approaches' (Asprem & Granholm 2013a: 23). Bernd-Christian Otto (2013: 233) has suggested that Hanegraaff is in fact 'a discourse theorist *par excellence*, even without acknowledging it', particularly considering his focus on power and polemics, given that 'von Stuckrad's *Locations of Knowledge* mainly discusses "emic" sources traditionally associated with "Western Esotericism" [...] whereas Hanegraaff's *Esotericism and the Academy* puts much more emphasis on the discursive opponents of "esoteric" currents to the extent of even neglecting important "emic" protagonists' (Otto 2013: 235).

While seeking to introduce sociological perspectives into esotericism studies, Granholm noted a similar tendency toward the 'othering' of esoteric forms of thought in earlier sociological work focusing on the 'esoteric' and occult: for example, the work of Edward Tiryakian and Marcello Truzzi, which pathologises esotericism and occultism as forms of 'deviance' from mainstream norms. Granholm identifies this as a discursive position which serves to estrange or marginalise such 'othered' beliefs and practices in relation to 'more established categories of religion, science, philosophy and culture' (Granholm 2015a: 721; also 2014: 20-21). Noting that the occult and esoteric has, by historical standards, now become mainstream in contemporary culture, Granholm elects to complement von Stuckrad's discursive conception of esotericism with the work of Christopher Partridge, who focuses on 'contemporary processes of cultural and religious change', and particularly the presence of what may be considered 'esoteric' (- e.g. forms of knowledge variously considered to be heterodox, secretive, or otherwise rejected by the hegemony of Enlightenment materialism -) as a contributing element to these processes (Asprem & Granholm 2013a: 23). Partridge's assertion that 'deviant alternatives' have become mainstream is embedded in social scientific theory, and his work focuses on the construction of beliefs, practices and identities as they are mediated through culture – particularly popular culture. Central to this thesis is the theorisation of 'occulture', which:

... identifies the everyday processes by which rejected and marginalized ideas, the weird and the frightening, shape everyday imaginations and, indeed, contribute to the construction of lifeworlds and of milieux, as well as to the elasticity of plausibility structures. Occulture is that shadow side of culture

fascinated by that which hegemonic religion, culture, and science marginalizes or rejects, but which is, nevertheless, ubiquitous, perennial, and important for the enchantment of the everyday. (Asprem & Grahnolm 2013a: 135)

It is in a statement such as the above that the complementarity between what Granholm has called the Hanegraaff, von Stuckrad, and Partridge approaches to esotericism become apparent (Granholm 2014: 24-29). In defining occulture as the 'shadow side' of hegemonic culture, Partridge's position resonates with both Hanegraaff's 'grand polemical narrative' of the esoteric as forms of knowledge rejected by the institutions of the Reformation and Enlightenment, and von Stuckrad's discursive conception of the plurality of esoteric knowledge claims *contra* acculturated and institutionalised forms of knowledge. As with the conception of 'esotericism' in the work of post-Faivreian scholars, the concept of occulture does not delineate a single object of study, but is rather a theoretical tool for scholarship, encompassing a variety of perspectives on a complex phenomenon. Partridge's work also situates religion and esotericism in the contemporary social sphere, rather than the historical, which suggests an effective bridge between the emic lifeworlds of the sociology of religion and the etic vistas of historical esotericism studies. For Partridge, the 'shadow' culture is a vital component of a contemporary shift away from institutionalised religion and toward individualistic 'spiritualities'. Consequently, Partridge has described 'Western' culture as not becoming *less religious*, but rather becoming *differently religious* – and forms of thought deemed 'esoteric' or alternative in contrast to institutionalised religion are integral to this process (Partridge 2014: 116; Kokkinen 2013: 8).

What is vital with regard to Partridge's stance is that it moves the study of the 'esoteric', 'occult' and 'spiritual' away from conceptions of historical deviance or otherness, and into the contemporary and every-day. Occulture consequently 'becomes a significant area of inquiry as an agent of contemporary reenchantment' (Partridge 2014: 116). It is worth quoting Partridge further on the relationship between *culture* and *occulture*:

Of course, while "culture" might be interpreted in any number of ways, as a composite part of the compound "occulture", it broadly follows Raymond Williams's thesis that "culture is ordinary". Hence, while the use of the term "occult" in "occulture" suggests the hidden, the exotic and the elite (which, of

course, is a large part of the bookish, secretive, gnostic appeal of much Western esotericism), the addition of the term “culture” opens up a very different perspective, signifying that which is everyday. It is this latter cultural dimension that is the key to understanding contemporary occulture. *This is, again, not to deny that there is, within occulture, that which is occult, esoteric, oppositional, or countercultural*, but rather that occulture per se is largely ordinary and everyday. (ibid.: 119, emphasis added)

The final statement above is particularly relevant to my research: that while Partridge’s use of occulture indicates a mainstream fascination with ‘rejected’, esoteric ideas in popular culture and attendant subcultures – be it the *X-Files*, *Sixth Sense*, the *Da Vinci Code*, Harry Potter, conspiracy podcasts, teenage vampires, or black metal music – there may be also the presence of that which is not necessarily contrived for mass consumption (such as personal ritual practices informing a black metal artist’s work), which nevertheless potentially become commercialised artefacts as a consequence of mediatisation (Granholm 2014: 192-6).

With regard to the ‘von Stuckrad’ and ‘Partridge’ approaches, Kennet Granholm’s sociological and ethnographic research into the Swedish occult group known as the Dragon Rouge may be positioned as project which anticipated many facets of Hanegraaff’s Western Esotericism 3.0 paradigm. Granholm sets out to construct an appropriately ‘historiographically-informed’ position embedded within many of the approaches to esotericism studies summarised above (see Granholm 2005, 2014; Asprem & Granholm 2013a, 2013b). Granholm’s approach entailed treating individual esoteric movements (or ‘currents’) as ‘discursive complexes’ (2013a; 2014: 36-9), often comprised of both ‘othered’, esoteric discourses and non-esoteric, ‘ancillary’ discourses: broad examples may include Satanic antinomianism for the former, and feminism for the latter. Granholm complements this theory of discursive complexes with analytic approaches drawn from discursive psychology, in which discourse is viewed as ‘not partially constitutive, but thoroughly constitutive’ with regard to any action made by an agent (2014: 34).

Granholm applies these theoretical positions to qualitatively analyse his work on the Dragon Rouge via a historical and contextual overview, interviews with members, and ethnographic observations carried out from a position of active participation within the group. Granholm contextualises the group within the contemporary mediascape of the world wide web, and – in the case of the Dragon Rouge’s close

association to the symphonic metal band Therion – popular music. Partridge's approach is useful for such work, given that he often highlights the relationship between mediatised culture and the construction of individual lifeworlds – a term that Partridge uses in the Habermasian sense, writing that:

In short, there appears to be an influential culture of enchantment, which encompasses the marginal and the mainstream, the deviant and the conventional, and which circulates ideas, creates religio-cultural synergies, and forms new trajectories, all of which are driven by wider cultural forces. [...] Although 'officially' rejected as profane, ridiculed and marginalized by society's religious and intellectual gatekeepers, such discourses are actually deceptively significant in the construction of 'lifeworlds'—those latent, taken-for granted core values, beliefs, and understandings about who we are, how we relate to others, what the world is like, and how we fit into it. This is occulture. (Partridge 2015: 510).

Despite utilising many aspects of Partridge's occultural theory, Granholm tends to concentrate on the institutional aspects of the group, and the influences of discourses, esoteric and ancillary, on the group's identity and membership as a whole, rather than examining in detail individual, experiential accounts of the actual group workings, esoteric experiences, and the ways in which involvement with the Order influenced the lifeworlds and daily lives of the members. This is by methodological choice, however: it enables Granholm to present the discursive constitution of the group as a whole. However, it is to these areas of individual experience that this research project seeks to turn, by exploring the possibilities for analysing reflective and autoethnographic work via a theoretical foundation drawn from the discursive perspectives of von Stuckrad, Partridge and Granholm. This theoretical foundation will also be complemented by Nina Kokkinen's proposition of occulture as an analytic tool for studying the relationship of creative practitioners and the cultures in which they produce work (Kokkinen 2013).

The Discursive Field of Occultural Seekership

Approaching esotericism as a discursive construction has hitherto been sketched out with reference to the work of von Stuckrad and Granholm. A relationship to Partridge's formulation of occulture has also been emphasised, underlined by von Stuckrad's conception of discourse as a socio-historic process, focused on the

'concrete societal impact of ideas & texts and the communication of agents who make and use them' (von Stuckrad 2010: 59, emphasis added). Discourse is, therefore, not simply a theoretical abstraction, but, as other, more traditionally Foucauldian discourse theorists have stated, constitutes a 'material-semantic knot, in which subjective experiences and objects of knowledge are inscribed' (Bühmann *et al.* 2007: 2). As is typical of the nuanced perspectives of Western Esotericism 3.0, a discourse analytic approach does not treat 'the esoteric' as a clearly definable object of study (as in in the typology of Anton Faivre), but, as succinctly described by Kokkinen, 'shifts from religious traditions and their doctrines to the fields of discourses by means of which people transfer meanings, negotiate values and construct traditions and identities' (2013: 17).

As previously noted, von Stuckrad suggests that what makes a discourse 'esoteric' is the presence of a 'rhetoric of a hidden truth, which can be unveiled in a specific way and established contrary to other interpretations of the universe and history' (von Stuckrad 2005: 10). Within the field of discourse delineated by such claims to truth or knowledge, von Stuckrad also proposes a number of 'themes' or 'motifs' which *may* be present as part of esoteric forms of discourse, many which echo the more rigid, 'intrinsic' definitions of Faivrean esotericism (*ibid.*: 11). It should be emphasised that, although concepts like correspondences between levels of reality, or the notion of a *prisca theologia* or *philosophia perennis*, may be present in certain discursive formations within the field of esotericism, they do not all have to be present for a discourse to be considered esoteric, as they were in Faivre's typology. Von Stuckrad sees this as advantageous with regard to presenting a less anachronistic interpretation of the intellectual and religious complexities of European history, 'without playing off religion against science, Christianity against Paganism, or reason against superstition' (*ibid.*). This is not to downplay the relevance of polemics and apologias relating to esoteric knowledge claims, which are necessary to any historical discussion and are, as we have noted, discursive by their nature. However, being written prior to Hanegraaff's groundbreaking work on the polemical construction of esotericism, von Stuckrad can be seen as here making the first-step toward how we may, for example, reassess characters such as John Dee not as a superstitious dupe, a charlatan, or eccentric scientist, but instead judge them in terms of the discourses and dialectics that shaped the intellectual climate of their own age.

Von Stuckrad deepened his conception of esoteric discourse in his 2010 monograph *Locations of Knowledge in Medieval and Early Modern Europe*, and it will be useful to

summarise some of his key points, since it is here that he develops the notion of discursive motifs into that of macroforms and microforms, drawing on the work of religious scholar Peter Schäfer (von Stuckrad 2010: 77-9). A macroform can be considered an idealised concept - for example: divinisation, which expresses the concept that, through a certain procedure or experience, a practitioner may become more like God. These macroforms find their expressions in concrete manifestations, or microforms, such as written texts. Von Stuckrad cites the Gnostic *Gospel of Thomas* as a religious expression of the divinisation motif: 'Jesus said, "He who will drink from my mouth will become like me. *I myself shall become he*, and the things that are hidden will be revealed to him."' (ibid. 78, emphasis added), but many other examples of this divinisation microform could also be cited, such as the narrative of the Hermetic *Poimandres*, Iamblichus' *De Mysteriis*, the Gnostic *Discourse on the Eighth and Ninth*, Lazarelli's *Crater Hermetis*, or New Age manifestations such as Chris Griscom's Seth teachings (Hanegraaff 1996: 149-50).

Von Stuckrad concentrates on a number of such motifs in his work, amongst them the reception of perfect knowledge through experiential processes, such as divine illumination or out-of-body experience (2010: 71-88); the conception of a cosmic *textility*, by which the world can be 'read', as in kabbalah and the ontologisation of mathematics in Pythagorean/Neoplatonic mysticism (:89-114); and the esoteric conception of the future as knowable via the practice of astrology (:115-134). These motifs consequently not only manifest in concrete microforms (e.g. texts), but are, I would also suggest, part of the construction of esoteric lifeworlds: the motif of perfect knowledge attained via divine illumination, for example, privileges the importance of personal, inner experience, and assists the construction of an identity as a seeker after spiritual knowledge, or even a privileged recipient of gnosis.

Such motifs enter the field of polemicism and apologism when they are concretised not just as texts for esoteric practice, but as the products of a dialectic contesting what von Stuckrad might call 'locations of knowledge'. As an example of this, we might turn to von Stuckrad's discussion of the tensions between Aristotelian rationalism and Platonic intuitive knowledge: the latter being rejected by Maimonides and his followers, but embraced by Kabbalists (:97). However, it is acknowledged that this is a simplification and that sources *pro*- and *contra*- such positions often invoked both Platonic and Aristotelian concepts at the service of particular religious, social or esoteric agendas or discursive positions (:22). One such example might be Suhrawardi's attempted synthesis of the Aristotelian rationalism and divine

illumination in order to present a model of knowledge in which divine knowledge maintains a privilege. Here, Aristotelian demonstration is seen as a way to understand the physical world, and divine illumination as a way to know the spiritual world (:84-5). Another example can be found in the recent work of Egil Asprem on the esoteric imagination, which concludes that the core model of the mind favoured in much esoteric theory is actually Aristotelian, although Platonised to varying degrees to allow for the possibility of divine illumination and reception of knowledge from beyond the self (Asprem 2016). Turning to this dialectic on the locations of both divine and earthly knowledge in the present, Granholm has suggested that what he calls ‘post-secular esotericism’ – a modern form of religiosity analogous to the new religious sensibility which lies at the heart of Partridges’ occulture – is engaged in a similar form of apologetic dialogue with scientific rationalism, which:

is not traditionalist in character, or seeking to re-embodiment pre-Enlightenment esotericism, and it does make use of the faculties of rationality, scientific findings, and the offerings of contemporary society. The central idea is that when it comes to magic and esoteric practice, rationality is simply not the right tool for the job, and when scientific or pseudo-scientific discourse is used, care is taken not to overstress the importance of it. (Granholm 2008: 63).



Figure 2. Robert Fludd's 1621 model of the mind, and its capacity for divine illumination: a Neoplatonisation of 'high scholastic' (e.g. medieval Aristotelian) theories of the mind (see Asprem 2017: 26-8).

The role of 'scientification' as a strand of post-secular esotericism indicates how ancillary discourses shape the formation of esoteric discourses. In the wider European religious sphere, von Stuckrad has suggested that scientification is one

particular driver of discursive change. That, ‘in the wake of this new episteme [of positivist Enlightenment rationality], religious practitioners are forced to turn to scientific models of explanation in order to prove the truth of their claims’ (von Stuckrad 2013c: 233). Hammer also counts the scientisation of esoteric discourse as one of the core epistemic strategies employed by adherents to New Age religions, alongside the appeal to tradition (e.g. *philosophia perennis*), and the appeal to experience (2004: 41-6). Appeals to science are evident in many forms of contemporary esotericism, although the amount of emphasis thereon is dependent on the particular discursive complex being studied.

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“THE METHOD OF SCIENCE—THE AIM OF RELIGION”

Figure 3. A portion of the title page from Aleister Crowley’s journal *The Equinox* (1909), whose maxim ‘*The Method of Science - The Aim of Religion*’ is typical of the forms of scientisation influencing esotericism since the 19th century.

The other drivers for discursive change within the wider religious landscape suggested by von Stuckrad are *communitarianisation* (the formation of new communities, especially on the internet, and especially comprised of those who identify as ‘spiritual but not religious’ [2013c: 230-2]); *aestheticisation* (an increased awareness of the importance of the material, embodied and sensory, and how these migrate into secular culture [cf. occulture; :234-6]); and *public activation* (that new forms of religion possess an other, and often politicised public presence, different from traditional state religions [:236-8]).

The relationship between ancillary discourses (such as scientisation) and ‘esoteric’ discourses helps to illustrate the complexities of analysing that which is deemed ‘esoteric’: that the constituent motifs, dialectics, and concretisations involved in various movements, philosophies or practices deemed esoteric comprise what may be called a discursive knot, formation or complex (Granholm 2013a; von Stuckrad 2015: 434). These discursive complexes are often emically described as ‘currents’, to

describe particular interweavings of discursive threads. To use an example from Granholm's work (:57), he typifies 'left-hand path' esotericism as a form of self-deification (the macroform that we encountered previously as 'divinisation'), but one that is influenced by discourses of individual power and – most importantly – an antinomian attitude, which sees the individual as beyond morality (hence the importance of Nietzschean ideals to many constructions of Satanism). The discursive complexes associated with a group also reflect those of the individuals who constitute the group. Occulture's focus on eclectic personal religiosity as the 'mood' of contemporary religion also emphasises the mechanisms and cultural contexts through which elements of religious interest or practice (discursive or otherwise) are encountered and adopted by those who seek their own spiritual paths:

[W]ithin occulture, it is not Buddhism *per se* that people are interested in, but rather the *principles* or *elements* of Buddhism - and as such 'Buddhism' becomes a fungible, detraditionalized concept. That is to say, some participants in occulture are not particularly interested in becoming devout Buddhists, but rather want simply to acquaint themselves with elements of Buddhist belief and practice, which can then be merged with elements from other systems in the service of the self. It is not the whole Buddhist dish that people want, but rather some tasty ingredients which can then be stirred into the occultural stew with other appetizing ingredients, the aim being to create one's own occultic dish according to one's own occultic tastes. This accounts for the enormous plurality within occulture, in which continuities can exist between profoundly discontinuous belief systems. The left-wing, peace-loving environmentalist may share certain basic beliefs with neo-Nazi Satanists. (Partridge 2004: 70-1)

Partridge's last sentence particularly relates to the interweaving of esoteric and ancillary discourses. For example, Granholm (2014: 129-172) described the discursive composition of the Order of the Dragon Rouge in the following terms:

Left-hand path themes

Individualist ideology
Self-Deification
Antinomianism

Broader esoteric themes

The Primacy of Nature
The Dark Feminine Divine

Ancillary themes

'Non-hierarchical hierarchy'

Vegetarianism, Animal Rights & Environmentalism

Feminism

Although the Dragon Rouge distances itself from fascism – as pointed out by Granholm in a footnote regarding the manner in which the order appropriated Julius Evola's work on Tantra (:87) – with the (possible) exception of vegetarianism and animal rights, all of the above discursive elements can also be discerned in the discursive composition of a group such as the Order of Nine Angles (ONA) which has often been associated with extreme right-wing esoteric discourses (e.g. Senholt 2013; Sieg 2015: 632). Bogdan has also criticised Granholm's work on similar grounds, insofar as somewhat generic discursive themes, such as those highlighted above, do not go far enough to demonstrate what makes the Dragon Rouge *distinct* (Bogdan 2006). One of the clearest distinctions between the two groups under discussion is the fact that the Dragon Rouge appears to have no overarching 'mission' beyond the personal empowerment of its initiates, whereas the ONA is concerned with the destruction of modern, democratic, 'Magian' (e.g. Judeo-Christian) culture and the instatement of a Satanic imperium led by 'Vindex' – an individual who embodies 'The Law of the New Aeon' (Myatt n.d.). This indicates that, although the discursive constitutions of both groups are such that they run counter to commonly held notions of post-Enlightenment rationality, the Dragon Rouge and ONA also possess further discursive threads relating respectively to egalitarian/libertarian, and fascistic ideals. As Partridge observed above, both groups share many 'basic beliefs', and in the wider field of esoteric discourse, the common ground is such that many esoteric and occultural currents are open to exploitation for political ends owing to counter-hegemonic values that are broadly anti-materialistic, and can therefore – to varying degrees – be placed in opposition to the notion of a materialistic and disenchanted modernity – and, by extension, in opposition to the liberal democratic discourses which have defined modernity since World War II, such as multiculturalism, welfare, universal suffrage, and so on.

Von Stuckrad also suggests that many forms of esoteric discourse are typified by the presence of a 'dialectic of concealment and revelation', and relates this dialectic to Bourdieu's concept of *capital* (Von Stuckrad 2010: 57-9). One implication of this is that when an individual is perceived as party to a hidden or 'perfect knowledge', or as

a revealer of the same, this perception can be used to increase their capital, of which there are four forms:

(1) economic capital; (2) social capital (i.e. various kinds of valued relations with others); (3) cultural capital (i.e. primarily legitimate knowledge of some kind or another); (4) symbolic capital (i.e. prestige and social honour). (ibid.: 58)

Bourdieu notes that social, cultural and symbolic capitals can all be turned into economic capital (ibid.), although studies of esotericism usually concentrate on the implications of social, cultural and symbolic capitals. However, occulture is embedded in the social, cultural and economic structures of modernity draws our attention to the connection between discourses on hidden, or perfect, knowledge and their potential for commercial exploitation. Von Stuckrad observes that ‘the disclosure of hidden knowledge becomes a contested object of desire [...] the existence of such a contested arena creates and nurtures the desirability of participating in the disclosed knowledge’ (:59). In terms of assessing the allure of the esoteric and occultural, particularly after the turn of the millennium, this observation is worth keeping in mind, especially when we come to consider Kokkinen’s description of artistic occulture as a ‘discursive field of seekers’ (Kokkinen 2013: 28), who also produce artefacts which are potentially entangled with varied forms of capital.

Although we have mentioned the discursive constitution of two late 20th-century esoteric orders (the Dragon Rouge and Order of Nine Angles, also see Granholm 2013a), many of the discursive themes and practices found in the types of ‘post-secular religion’ associated with occulture manifest as forms of personal religiosity within individual lifeworlds who do not contribute to broader groups or orders – although these individuals are still embedded within broader social, political and economic discourses and contexts. In occultural religiosity, individuals concoct their own ‘stew’, as Partridge put it. However, it should be emphasised that this is not simply eclecticism-for-eclecticism’s-sake. Historically, such ‘eclecticism’ can often be interpreted as a way of acknowledging what is felt to be a more widely encompassing esoteric motif of perennialism, in which diverse practices, traditions, and epochs are in fact held to participate in an underlying ‘truth’. Hale, for example, has noted in the context of earlier institutions such as the Golden Dawn and Theosophy, whose diversity of iconography (notably drawing on Egyptian and Hindu sources) evidences their belief in ‘a genuine, universal and enduring “Tradition”’ (Hale 2016: 132).

However, such a diverse mixing of cultures and epochs may also be rejected some esotericists in favour of more 'authentic', historical expressions of tradition (e.g. for example, the resurgence of interest in the ritual magic of the medieval and Renaissance grimoires which will be discussed in terms of a 'purist' turn in chapter 4). This may also be seen as an attempt to establish a discursive claim to tradition, albeit one in which a 'true' manifestation of a practice is located within specific cultures or historical periods, rather than in the trans-historicism and trans-culturalism of perennialism. Practitioners have also made attempts to synthesise both perennial and historically specific expressions of tradition, as in Jake Stratton-Kent's three-volume series *Encyclopaedia Goetica* (2009-14) which attempts to trace a history of 'goetic' magic (e.g. the ritual conjuration of spirits) from the antique world, through the medieval and Renaissance grimoires, and into African, Brazilian and Haitian traditions such as Quimbanda. Although the historical threads of Stratton-Kent's work have been criticised (e.g. Harms 2009, 2011a, 2011b, 2014), what is important is that, from the practitioner's point of view, it expresses a coherent narrative – and uses both the historical and global stage to invoke the legitimising strategies of an appeal to authority (through the use of historical and academic texts to describe authentic practices), and the appeal to broader, hidden tradition. The particular intention is to recover or reconstruct the 'goetic tradition', which functions in a similar way to the discursive motif of the *prisca theologia* (or, in this case, a *prisca magia*?) – an objective which the author has himself acknowledged functions in 'mythic' terms (Harms 2011a, 2011b).

This weaving together of – and appeal to – traditions, in a manner that appears convincing and legitimate to practitioners can be seen not only as a strategy in individualistic, 'post-secular' religion, but also one that occurs in earlier esoteric discourse, for example: Ficino's attempts to legitimise Hermes Trismegistus as a pre-Christian *priscus theologus*, the use of both Eastern and Western concepts in Theosophy and the Golden Dawn, and the construction of a highly syncretic take on tradition in the work of Stratton-Kent, to touch on three examples we have already cited.

What, then, might we ask, makes 'occulture' a distinctly modern container for such esoteric discourses? Partridge has suggested that the –culture of occulture represents that which is 'ordinary' or everyday. In this respect we may see the esoteric and 'occult' most visibly culturally mediated to large audiences through the process of aestheticisation (von Stuckrad 2013a: 7-8) and in the willingness of artists

in the modern (or at least, post-Enlightenment) world to overtly express what are considered heterodox, oppositional and esoteric ideas in their work. This attitude is present from the Romantic and Gothic painters and poets, to the Symbolists and Decadents of the *fin de siècle*, and onward. It may be argued that many of the 'esoteric' discourses present within modern art were 'written out' of mainstream critical and scholarly discourse in the mid-20th century in response to esotericism being tinged by the same forms of irrationality and barbarism that enabled Nazism (e.g. Hanegraaff 2012b: 312-3). The intellectual climate of the mid-20th century may be evidenced by the scandal that Sixten Ringbom's 1966 publication on Kandinsky's Theosophy and its relevance to the genesis of modern abstract art caused (Introigne 2015). However, in the 21st century occulture is *ordinary*, and mainstream institutions representing the visual arts have embraced the long-standing interests in the esoteric and occult evinced in the work of many modern artists, for example: Tate Modern's *The Black Monarch: Magic and Modernity in British Art* (2009); *Vodou: Sacred Powers of Haiti* at the Field Museum, Chicago (2010); The inclusion of a number of occult artists in Massimiliano Gioni's curation of the 2013 Venice Biennale; Fulgur's *I:MAGE* exhibition at Store Street Galley, London (2013); *Magica Sexualis* at the Stephen Romano Gallery (2015); *The Cabinet of the Solar Plexus* at Dublin's Gallery X (2016); The Rubin Museum's *Try to Altar Everything* (2016); *Language of the Birds: Occult and Art* at New York University's 80WSE Gallery (2016); the Irish Museum of Modern Art's *As Above So Below* (2017); the Guggenheim's *Mystical Symbolism: The Salon de la Rose + Croix in Paris, 1892-1897* (2017) to name only a few. Such exhibitions bring together artists whose lifeworlds are typified by engagements with the esoteric and occult. Notable amongst those that have been exhibited are Aleister Crowley and Austin Osman Spare, both important occultists in their own right; artists such as William Blake, Leonora Carrington, Remedios Varo, and Cecil Collins for whom the imagination was an organ of perception; and contemporary artists such as Elijah Burgher whose work often explores the occult implications of magical sigils, geometry and abstraction, and multimedia artist Barry Hale whose work is often published by the British esoteric imprint Fulgur Press. The exhibition of such work has now become a palatable option for curators, seeking the footfall of a gallery-going public who have grown up acculturated to an occultural mediascape and its implied possibilities for 'post-secular' religious expression (see chapter 3).

As producers of cultural artefacts, artists actively contribute to the mediatised environment that enables a wider audience to participate in occulture – although this

is not a solely 20th and 21st-century phenomenon. We have noted above that Romanticism and Gothic sensibilities were precursors to contemporary occulture, although these expressions of artistic counterculture existed in environments uncharacterised by the forms of mass media and global commerce which have enabled contemporary occulture to become so thoroughly 'ordinary'.

Theoretical observations concerning the relationship between occulture, art, and earlier forms of personal religiosity have been made by Nina Kokkinen, who has suggested that occulture may be employed as an analytical tool for the study of art history, and has applied it to her own study of 19th and early-20th century artists (Kokkinen 2013). Kokkinen summarises her re-definition of occulture as a 'discursive and social field of seekers', which indicates a complementary nature to the work of Hammer, von Stuckrad and Granholm, dealing as it does not only with the discursive constitution of esoteric 'currents' and individual lifeworlds, but also with the wider social and discursive implications discerned in, for example, von Stuckrad's use of Bourdieu's forms of capital (2010: 5). The social nature of Kokkinen's occulture also emphasises that artists personal spiritual or esoteric perspectives physically manifest in publicly visible artefacts, such as painting, music, poetry, film and theatre, rather than being exclusively a form of 'private religion' (Kokkinen 2013: 9). Her position effectively relates individuals and communities of 'seekers' to the wider cultural processes (e.g. communitarianisation, scientification, aestheticisation and public activation, *vide* von Stuckrad 2013a: 230) which also shaped late modern spiritualities. The three chief components of Kokkinen's re-definition of occulture as an analytic tool may be summarised as follows, and fuses Partridge's occultural theory with the discursive strategies suggested by Hammer (2004: 41-45), and the sociological concept of 'seekership' originally proposed by Lofland and Stark (1965):

- 1) Kokkinen associates occulture with a form of 'popular religioneering': 'a form of practice [...] that is done and performed by actors with their own agency (rather than being subsumed by their religions)' (Nye 2000, quoted in Kokkinen 2013: 24) – a theory that 'draws attention to the ways in which people produce identities, power relations and understandings of themselves and others through different strategies and practices' (*ibid.*).
- 2) Kokkinen also describes occulture as a 'discursive field' consisting of a variety of themes and strategies, amongst them: i) a close relationship to the construction of an individualistic modern self that might attain 'a higher spiritual wisdom without any external authorities'; ii) an appeal to 'personal,

immediate experience as the most important source of spiritual knowledge' (ibid.); iii) an appeal to tradition or precursors; iv) an appeal to science or innovation (:28-29).

- 3) Kokkinen's occulture is also a field maintained and produced by seekers, characterised by an inquisitive attitude in which participants do 'not necessarily cease seeking when a revealed truth is offered to them, nor do they necessarily stop looking in other directions when one path is indicated as *the path to truth*' (Campbell 2002, quoted in Kokkinen 2013: 29-30).

Kokkinen's formulation of occulture as a social and discursive field potentially provides a series of perspectives on the production of esoteric art in terms of individual identity construction, the discursive constitution of esoteric lifeworlds and their relation to broader social and political discourses, and the socially constituted field of milieus and loosely connected 'communities' of seekers whose work both maintains and contributes to occulture. Of course, what exactly constitutes 'occulture' in terms of Kokkinen's framework is highly dependent on the particular artist or period under study, although the key discursive themes (e.g. the supposition of a secret or 'higher wisdom'; the discursive appeals to experience, tradition, and innovation) may be located in many historical instances.

Kokkinen's article originally appeared in a special edition of the journal *Aries* dedicated to the topic of art and occulture (Baudin & Kokkinen 2013), which also includes a response from Partridge to the papers published therein (Partridge 2013a). Partridge emphasises that, although his work has focused on the contemporary West, the concept of occulture is transferrable and that 'while Christianity shaped medieval society and culture, its ideas were always part of a rich mixture of discourses more widely available in society' (:132), a statement that suggests a compatibility between Partridge's approach and that of von Stuckrad, particularly owing to the latter's emphasis on religious and intellectual pluralism, and discursive and interreligious transfers (e.g. von Stuckrad 2010: 7-23, 43-64). Partridge highlights his own position that emphasises occulture as:

much more everyday and ubiquitous. However it is disseminated, it is both the culture *of* and the culture *available to* ordinary people (who may or may not be actually "seeking"), which facilitates, wittingly or unwittingly, the construction of meanings that may be at odds with the hegemonic meanings

imposed by the all-pervasive forces of commerce, politics, religion and culture. (Partridge 2013a: 134)

In this respect, he emphasises that occulture cannot be seen *solely* as a form of 'religioning' nor as *solely* a field sustained by seekers, 'although such individuals and groups are often important for the construction and maintenance of its discourses' (ibid.). With this in mind, it should therefore be stressed that Kokkinen's approach particularly focuses on the importance of 'avant-garde' milieus, who draw upon 'that which is occult, esoteric, oppositional, or countercultural' (Partridge 2014: 119) in their cultures in order to produce artefacts that are accessible within the public sphere. Such artefacts may also potentially contribute to and maintain the broader occulture that so often fascinates and overlaps with the mainstream.

Conclusion: Materialising Seekership

This chapter has outlined the theoretical positions and analytic perspectives that have emerged as a consequence of the development of esotericism studies as a field of scholarly enquiry – particularly emphasising the sociological and discursive turn undertaken by a number of contemporary scholars. It has outlined a number of theoretical concepts, such as discursive motifs and strategies, cultural capital, and occultural seekership which may provide potentially useful ways to engage with the research subject at hand, *viz* helping to describe the roles of esotericism, occulture, and seekership in the practice of what will be described 'esoteric musicianship'. The constitution of this 'esoteric musicianship' itself will be analysed from chapter 4 onward through an analysis of the autoethnographic and archival sources which inform this project (see chapter 3, Appendix A, and volume 2 of this thesis). Suffice to say, however, that the dialogue between Partridge and Kokkinen draws attention to an important area on which the study should focus, namely the relationships between the esoteric-artistic practice (e.g. manifested in 'personal religioning' and seekership), the production of cultural artefacts, and the influence of popular occulture on artists and esoteric milieus, as well these artists' and milieus' own contributions to occulture. In this respect, both discourse analysis and occulture (in both Partridge's and Kokkinen's formulations) potentially provide frameworks that allow us to focus on the symbiotic relationship between esoteric creativity and the cultural, social, commercial, and political spheres in which an artist is situated.

Although Partridge has acknowledged that the concept of occulture may be applied to earlier historical periods, it may be observed – as Partridge has at length (e.g. 2004, 2005, 2013b) – that it is most readily associated with the aestheticised and mediatised domain of contemporary culture, notably film, television, music, and online media. Since occulture involves an engagement with culture, and since esotericism could describe those practices of seekership which fall outside mainstream religion – either being emically designated ‘esoteric’, or else being polemically cast as such – there is no institution (such as an overarching church) that controls the occultural discourse. Therefore, we may see the contemporary mediascape itself as occulture’s *dispositif*, or ‘apparatus’, providing the material structures that acknowledge esoteric discourses and propagate occultural artefacts, aesthetics, narratives, and religiosity.

To demonstrate the relationship between esotericism, media and occulture, we may – to take only one example – turn to the legacy of Aleister Crowley. The occult order with which Crowley is most readily associated – the Ordo Templi Orientis (OTO) – continues to exist in many forms, and beyond the OTO itself there are many other solitary followers of his magical practices and his philosophy of Thelema. From the 1960s, however, Crowley became a major countercultural figure, appearing on the cover of the Beatle’s *Sgt. Pepper* album, having a palpable presence in Hammer Film’s 1968 adaption of Dennis Wheatley’s *The Devil Rides Out* (originally written in 1934; Partridge 2005: 241), influencing the Rolling Stones via their association with underground film-maker Kenneth Anger (:242-4), and deeply influencing Led Zeppelin’s Jimmy Page (:244). Taking these aestheticised, publicly activated presentations of Crowley and occultism into account, one would have to concede to the observation of Granholm that ‘TV-series such as *Charmed* and Heavy Metal bands such as Black Sabbath have, while perhaps not being as intellectually complex, been more influential in raising people’s interest in the esoteric than the writings of Marsilio Ficino’ (2014: 39). Although one should also acknowledge that Anger and Page may be seen as what may be called the ‘avant-garde’ of occulture: as ‘seekers’ with strong personal convictions, whose work both aligned with and helped define the aesthetic, commercial, and (sub-)cultural aspects of occulture during the late 1960s and early 1970s.

Aside from film, music, and the Internet, it should be noted that books remain an important form of apparatus within contemporary esoteric and occultural discourses. It is notable that, in a period of increasing textual digitisation, the production of

desirable ‘talismanic editions’ of esoteric and occult works has become *de rigueur* for many publishers such as Three Hands Press, Scarlet Imprint, Theion, Ixaxaar, The Society of Esoteric Endeavour, Troy Books, Ouroboros Press, Aeon Sophia, and so on. Arguably this trend began (or was revived) in the 1992, with the founding of esoteric publisher Fulgur Press by Robert Ansell, Gavin W. Semple, and Hayley Tong. Fulgur explicitly used the term ‘talismanic’ in relation to their book designs, having taken inspiration an essay by Timothy d’Arch Smith, who described Aleister Crowley’s books as talismans whose ‘every part right down to colour, dimension, and price was symbolic’ (d’Arch Smith 1987; Ansell 2017). The proliferation of collectable ‘talismanic’ editions of esoteric works since the turn of the millennium may also be paralleled with the revival of vinyl LP sales, particularly with regard to the performativity, *iconicity*, and authenticity that might be associated with such mediums (Bartmanski & Woodward 2015). In an over-saturated mediascape in which anyone can create and distribute digital media, talismanic books provide an aesthetic indicator both of authenticity and quality.

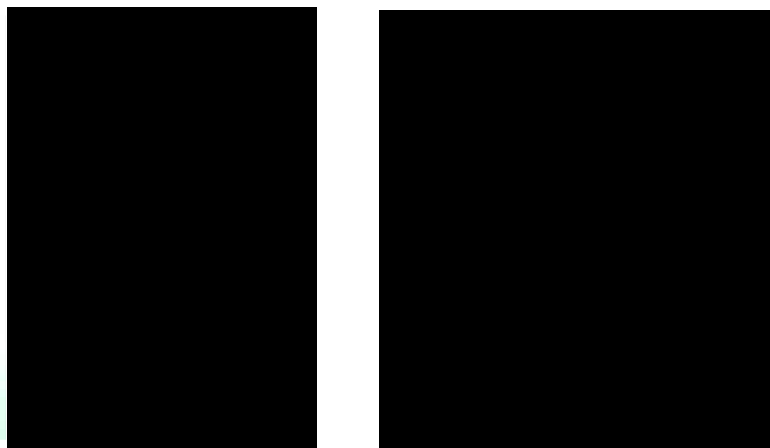


Figure 4. *Talismanic books: two editions of Chumley's ONE: Grimoire of the Golden Toad (2000). Three copies of the 'initiatric' edition of calfskin with inset toad's head are extant, while 77 copies of the standard edition exist. These are accompanied with a hand-sigilised envelope containing a blackthorn spike and a talisman made of toad skin. (Photographs from items offered for sale by Caduceus Books and eBay user reix718 respectively.)*

Although Partridge has described occulture as the contemporary religious atmosphere, the discursive perspective developed here also emphasises the close relationship between the occulture and material culture and the role of ‘seekers’ in materially contributing to its maintenance.

To conclude: the theoretical perspectives which have been developed here emphasise the role of the artist as ‘occultural seeker’: as a practitioner of the forms of idiosyncratic personal religiosity which have become discursively classed as

'esotericism'. Such seekers both contribute to – and are influenced by – wider cultural and occultural discourses, as well being influenced by their immediate milieus and their own experiential encounters with secret or revealed knowledge. This position helps to further define the relationship of Kokkinen's occultural seekership with Partridge's conception of occulture as a pervasive contemporary cultural atmosphere intimately entwined with the mediatised *dispositifs* of modernity.

Kokkinen's definition should also be further supplemented by the recognition that the occultural seeker often consciously presents their artwork as expressions of authentic occult practice or experience. Whether these are talismanic books, visual arts that attempt to capture or evoke otherworldly powers, or 'ritual' performances (e.g. Granholm 2013b), such works are *rarely* presented purely as entertainment or simply as the aesthetic expression of a contemporary *zeitgeist*, but rather attempt to embody a variety of rhetorical appeals to legitimacy, and/or expressions of esoteric discourse. Furthermore, seekers may – as we shall see – have an ambivalent relationship with mainstream expressions of occulture, particularly as they relate to questions of their own identities, and the perceived authenticity of their own practices and experiences (see chapters 3 & 4).

Chapter 2.

Towards Esoteric Autoethnography: Scholarly Identity, Analytic Autoethnography, and Esotericism Studies

Introduction

An awareness of contemporary approaches to the study of esotericism and occulture is useful insofar as it contributes to developing a theoretical sensitivity to perspectives and approaches which may be relevant to autoethnographic analysis. A discursive perspective, for example, enables us to focus on the 'material-semantic knots' implicit in textual, musical, and visual artefacts, and draws attention to the processes by which such artefacts enact and concretise both esoteric and ancillary discourses. As mentioned in the preceding chapter, Hanegraaff criticised discursive methods for their potential to emphasise discourse as a totalising approach to studying esotericism (Hanegraaff 2012a: 365; quoted in Otto 2013: 234). However, Hanegraaff also independently, through what he describes as a 'methodologically agnostic' approach, reached conclusions that articulated similar discursive processes in terms of a historiographic narrative (von Stuckrad 2010: 53-54). With Hanegraaff's criticism in mind, discourse-theoretical perspectives, and the varied qualitative methods associated with such analyses need not be a totalising theoretical straightjacket, but rather offer particular perspectives for the study of esotericism when employed in a spirit of theoretical sensitivity and methodological pragmatism. The relationship between discourse theory and perspectives drawn from social constructionism and constructivism also ensures that such work conducted cannot easily proceed along an esoteric or crypto-esoteric agenda, and – debates about the ideological bias of discourse theory aside, given that it is presented in a 'de-radicalised', academically neutral perspective in the works of von Stuckrad and Granholm – accords with the positions of scholarly distance and neutrality that have been described as characteristic of Western Esotericisms 2.0 and 3.0 (*vide* Hanegraaff 2012b: 122-3).

Of course, since esoteric practices also involve an emphasis on the experiential, questions about how discourse may potentially shape experience, and how experience influences discourse, are never far away. The question of what approaches to the analysis of experience are also methodologically appropriate – particularly when situated in the field of autoethnography – is also pertinent. Although

Granholm, for example, participated in rituals (2014: 100-128) and interviewed a variety of subjects (: 129-172) for his work on the Order of the Dragon Rouge, the purpose of the interviews and participant observation was not to construct detailed emic representations of individual lifeworlds, but to explore the presence of various esoteric and ancillary discourses across the group's membership: the role of personal experience necessarily lying beyond the scope of Granholm's project to identify the broader discursive constitution of the Dragon Rouge.

The tendency to keep questions of a researcher's own lived experience at arm's length is understandable, given both the criticism of earlier 'religionist' approaches by many of the foremost Continental scholars of esotericism, and Hanegraaff's opposition to 'crypto-esoteric' agendas in the scholarship of Western Esotericism 3.0. Consequently, the area of experience – particularly when the experiences are those of the primary researcher or chief investigator, presented in an academic or pseudo-academic context – is still subject to a certain amount of circumspection. On the other hand, however, there are also contemporary 'religionist' scholars, such as Arthur Versluis and Angela Voss, who argue that the academic study of esotericism has become too reductive: the problematic implication being that there may indeed be a perennial 'truth' at the heart of esoteric practice, which is deprecated by both the theoretical and historiographic approaches of contemporary scholarship.

Within the methodological and epistemological pluralism proposed by Western Esotericism 3.0, the intertwined issues surrounding the role of personal experience and the visibility of the scholar within their own research are evidently ripe for reassessment. Although a return to the religionist perspective is untenable, a variety of approaches to integrating the experiential into research are presenting themselves to scholars within the field. This chapter begins by exploring the tensions surrounding the figure of the 'insider scholar' or 'scholar-practitioner' in esotericism studies, particularly those stemming from the ontological assumptions implied by the ways contemporary religionist scholars have posited themselves with regard to the 'problem' of experience.

From here we will turn to a consideration of the methodology which will inform the present research project, which, drawing upon my own autobiographical narrative, personal archive, and records of practice, seeks to explore the confluence of esoteric experience and musical practice through autoethnographic methods. A methodology for constructing an analytic autoethnography with the flexibility for incorporating a

diversity of approaches within its 'heuristic toolbox' is suggested as a way forward that accords with the theoretical, methodological and ethical standards of contemporary esotericism studies, as well as the flexibility and theoretical sensitivity necessary to approach such work from an analytically 'grounded' perspective.

Experience, Religionism, and the 'Insider Scholar'

While outlining his vision for Western Esotericism 3.0, Hanegraaff notes that historically 'too many scholars seem to be either incapable or unwilling to make a clear distinction between *personal and scholarly engagement* [with esotericism]' (2012b: 120). While conceding that a scholar's other, esoteric, interests do not discredit their engagement with the academic field of esotericism studies, he stresses that 'one cannot and should not try to wear the esoteric and the scholarly hat simultaneously' (ibid.). By stating this, Hanegraaff is not just continuing his critique of 'religionist' scholarship, but is also hinting at the enduring issue of the 'insider/outsider problem' within esotericism studies.

As we have seen, esotericism often involves claims to secret knowledge, as well as experiential claims to the attainment of such knowledge (e.g. through magical ritual, visionary techniques and so on). Given this, it is unsurprising that the 'insider/outsider' problem has been antagonistic among scholars in the field. How can a scholar without personal experience of a particular form of esoteric practice write with any authority on the topic? Conversely, how neutral are the academic writings of a practitioner, given that they may have the underlying motive of making claims to the legitimacy of their practices through an appeal to scholarly authority?

Historically speaking, practitioner-, or insider-, scholars have been typified by the schools that Hanegraaff earlier identified as 'religionist', such as the Eranos Foundation, whose scholarly writings also supported their perennialist persuasions. In the present, tensions between scholars and practitioners in the field of esotericism still occur within the academy, with a number of contemporary scholars – mostly situated outside continental Europe – continuing in the 'religionist' tradition. Most prominent amongst this school are the American scholar Arthur Versluis, and the British scholar Angela Voss. These scholars object to what they see as the reductive methodologies of the critical-naturalist programme for esotericism studies: arguing that since 'gnosis' – the experience of spiritually revealed knowledge – is at the heart of esoteric practice, an appreciation of this experiential dimension is integral to any

study of esotericism. In 'What is Esoteric? Methods in the Study of Western Esotericism' (2002), Versluis suggests that empirical-historical approaches to esotericism studies must negotiate a spectrum, spanning the

"internal," meaning writing from within the perspective of the tradition itself, to "empiricist," meaning a more or less neutral approach, to "reductionist," meaning an effort to reduce a given religious subject to non-religious constituent parts—i.e., power relationships, social constructs, and so forth. (: 5)

Versluis is highly critical of what he sees as the reductionism of Hanegraaff's positing of esotericism as a polemically constructed category, and furthermore views constructivism-at-large (and by implication, discursive and sociological theories) as 'ideologically charged' and incapable of answering 'how a given figure understood and conveyed his or her own esoteric perspective' (:6). Versluis argues in favour of a 'sympathetic empiricism', representing 'a middle ground between historiographic objectification on the one hand, and phenomenological subjectification on the other', and involving – at a minimum – a process of 'imaginative participation' (Versluis 2003: 30).

Versluis' describes his approach as one that draws on the anthropological practice 'of balancing etic and emic approaches, of on the one hand entering into a culture in order to understand it while on the other hand retaining the status of observer and analyst. If the vice of a too emic position is that of becoming an apologist, the vice of a too etic position is if anything greater: a failure to understand and accurately convey what one is studying' (2002: 4). It may be said, however, that Versluis often veers too much toward the 'sympathetic' or 'internal' side of the spectrum, and although the internal perspective works well for individual case-studies in which the scholar imaginatively and sympathetically attempts to reconstruct the emic perspectives of the subject, in terms of trying to draw together a wider historiographic narrative, or for developing useful theories and methodologies to discuss a broader phenomenon, the approach is less suitable and limits the potential scope and insights of the field. Hanegraaff himself takes Versluis' own textbook on Western Esotericism to task in this regard, pointing out that – owing to a lack of coherent theoretical and methodological underpinning – 'the reader will be left with little more than a general impression of chaotic masses of "magical and mystical" ideas, out of

which only a few currents [...] emerge with some degree of clarity and coherence' (Hanegraaff 2013a: 189).

Although Versluis' article was written during the formative phase of esotericism studies, which Hanegraaff identifies as Western Esotericism 2.0, arguments *pro* and *contra* religionist approaches continue. Scholars such as Voss have also taken up criticisms of what they perceive to be reductive positions within academic approaches to esotericism. Voss' work is indebted to both Versluis' position of sympathetic esotericism and the post-Jungian Neoplatonic psychology of James Hillman. Hillman himself owes much to the theory of 'the imaginal world', derived from the Eranos scholar Henri Corbin: at its heart, is the idea that the imagination acts as an organ for the cognition of spiritual knowledge. As an example of this in practice, Voss – both an academic and practicing astrologer – has proposed that a 'methodology of imagination' would be useful to adopt as part of a scholarly toolkit: although the problematic relationship between such a methodology and the empirical programme of esoteric scholarship quickly becomes evident.

Voss refers to her research as 'transpersonal', insofar as it incorporates 'spiritual experience into research' (2009: 6). She suggests using a hierarchy of four forms of 'enquiry' arranged as a series of modalities for engagement with an object of study. This 'method' is a re-imagining of traditional scriptural hermeneutics, which includes both a 'tropological' mode of interpretation ('the point at which "facts" in the text or image under study are "realised" to be of direct relevance and import for the reader/viewer' [:12]) and a final 'anagogic' mode, possibly involving a 'mystical unity of the individual soul with the ground of its being' (ibid.). The conflict with the empirical programme of Continental esotericism studies should be apparent, although in the interdisciplinary spirit suggested by Western Esotericism 3.0, it would be remiss to exclude participatory methods when studying contemporary esoteric practices from an anthropological angle. In this regard, the acceptance of the work of Granholm (2014) and Luhrmann (1989) amongst Continental scholars of esotericism demonstrates that there is little animosity toward participatory approaches when appropriately integrated into a programme of research (e.g. Hanegraaff 2011). However, participation is arguably less useful for the type of explorations into historical magical practice which Voss often favours: especially when interpreted anachronistically through such religionist frameworks of depth- and transpersonal psychology, and the language of 'souls' and 'mystical unity'.

Voss' own approach is focused on propelling scholars 'into a world where the symbols of magic or divinatory ritual, of dreams and visions, do indeed "work", here and now, as perhaps the most effective and powerful tools of all with which to unlock the imaginative powers of the mind – indeed one only has to turn to depth and transpersonal psychology to see this in action' (2017: 118). Such comments demonstrate that Voss' work itself lies more in the theoretical and methodological domain of 'sacred psychology', rather than to the empirical (although still decidedly hermeneutic) attitude which esotericism studies (and religious studies at large) have broadly adopted. Although Voss invokes theories of reflexivity and participation, we might question how these outputs fit into an empirical programme of study, being inscrutable by their nature as subjective experiences unless we accept the religionist perspective that there is some form of archetypal forces or pattern behind these experiences. Alternatively, a more sophisticated approach to such patterns of experience may arguably be found in cognitive psychology and its assumption of baseline cognitive functions that – unlike culture – maintain a certain stability across intervening centuries. Although from the 'religionist' perspective this may be taken as the ultimate de-sacralising of experience, Frank Klaassen has recently contributed some modest, but convincing speculations drawn from the inclusion of practical magical experiments in his syllabus (2012a), and the reduction to 'mere psychology' does not necessarily divest an experience of its power, significance, or sense of mystery.

Hanegraaff has responded to the ontological and epistemological concerns of religionist scholars – *vis-à-vis* the importance of experience, and the place of the transcendent or transpersonal within scholarly investigation – with his own thoughts on the role of esoteric experience in pedagogy (2011). He acknowledges that extraordinary experiences are central to many esoteric narratives, and uses the concept of altered states of consciousness (ASCs) to inform his conceptual framework which,

means accepting the possibility that, in many cases, their authors are not just using "mystery language" as a conventional literary genre or rhetorical trope, but are doing exactly what they claim to do: trying to describe impressive and life-changing experiences that have either (in first-person narratives) happened to themselves, or (in third-person narratives) are believed to have happened to others, or (in idealized fictional narratives) are believed to be possible for those who are blessed with success in the quest for gnosis.

Furthermore, in studying sources from this perspective, one must accept that the authors were faced with the delicate paradox of using discursive language for describing experiences that are typically said to resist verbalization; in short, they are trying to say what they say they cannot say. (:159)

Although scholars such as Voss have criticised what they see as esotericism studies' overly reductive research programme, Hanegraaff does not discount the academic insight which practice and participation may bring to a scholar's work. Referring to Luhrmann's seminal *Persuasions of a Witch's Craft* (1989), in which the author participated in the curriculum and practices of ritual magic, he describes how:

magicians went through an elaborate curriculum, which typically took years, through which they learned elaborate symbolic systems and systematically trained themselves in developing specific mental faculties such as visualization. Luhrmann discovered that by diligently doing the exercises, learning the techniques, and practicing the ritual prescriptions, her own ability to visualize (among other things) developed to an extent that she had not considered possible before. (:167)

Hanegraaff acknowledges that many scholars, presumably such as himself, have developed their own mental training in areas that are contrary to esoteric practice – 'verbal rather than imaginal, analytic rather than meditative, rational rather than poetic' (:167) – but he does not declare insights through practice off-limits, provided they are analysed and presented through appropriate scholarly frameworks.

To conclude this section on tensions between experience and scholarship, it would also be useful to turn to a consideration of how these issues also arise in pagan studies which, along with the academic study of contemporary esotericism, also delineates a field of research dealing with what might be described as an 'occultural' form of religion. While there have been many important contributions made by pagan studies – particularly relating to the understanding and legitimisation of neo-pagan religions in western Europe and North America – the field was also the target of methodological critiques by both scholars of esotericism studies and religious studies. Hale (2013) draws attention to Kocku von Stuckrad's keynote lecture at the 2012 International Conference on Contemporary Esotericism, in which von Stuckrad cites Markus Davidsen's 'What is Wrong with Pagan Studies?' (2012) in order 'to highlight methodological shortcomings that should not be reproduced in the field of

Esoteric Studies' (Hale 2013: 151). Davidsen's article reviews the *Handbook of Contemporary Paganism*, edited by Murphy Pizza and James R. Lewis (2009) to support his argument that the field of Pagan Studies is dominated by scholars writing from 'explicitly pagan and insider point[s] of view', with only seven of the handbook's twenty-four contributors writing from a neutral, critical-naturalist viewpoint (Davidsen 2012: 184). Davidsen judges many of the articles by such 'insider scholars' as 'incommensurable with the critical-naturalist program and hence useful for scientific scholars of paganism mostly as source material' (: 186-7). In response, Hale (2013) situates Pagan Studies as a form of 'area study' (akin to Gay Studies, Women's Studies, African Studies etc.), in which it is understandable that many pagan scholars are involved with advocacy and identity construction – although both Davidsen and Hale acknowledge that this is problematic when less favourable presentations of paganism (such as fascist heathenry) are excluded from what must, from a scholarly perspective, be a pluralistic and academically neutral representation of the field (Davidsen 2012: 187-8; Hale 2013: 153-4).

It is worth drawing attention to these critiques of Pagan Studies, given that it is a field dominated by 'insider scholars', and an area of religious belief and practice that conspicuously overlaps with 'esotericism' and occulture. The methodological criticisms directed at Pagan Studies by von Stuckrad and Davidsen demonstrate the tensions between an 'insider'-led field and the empirical stances developed over the last 25 years in both esotericism studies and religious studies, highlight some of the criticisms and methodological omissions that must be negotiated when working from the position of an 'insider scholar'.

Autoethnography and Esotericism Studies

Having highlighted some of the implications of the question of experience and the status of the insider scholar, and having explored the broad theoretical foundations of esotericism studies, we may now turn to the methodological considerations for the present research project.

The primary focus of this project is the study of my own occulturally-situated music-making between 2001 and 2013. This period of practice was approached through the construction of an autobiographical narrative, and supported by an archive of media such as texts, music recordings, and diaries from the period under study (see Appendix A). Approaching this research through autobiographical writing is an

unusual approach within esotericism studies, since the subject of study is not a group, historic individual, or broader esoteric 'current', but rather my own work, practices, and experiences. This also contrasts with the approaches of Luhmann and Granholm, who – although they may have participated in the rituals of the groups they studied – project the identity of unequivocally 'outsider' scholars. It will therefore be necessary to develop approaches that will effectively mediate my own dual identity as a creative practitioner invested in the 'esoteric', and as a scholar interested in the wider cultural and religious impact of esotericism and occulture. The methods of autoethnography suggest one approach to positioning 'insider' narratives in scholarly contexts, although given the reputation of autoethnography to be a subjective and often critically inscrutable method, the addition of a robust analytic framework is necessary to effectively integrate autoethnography into the interdisciplinary toolbox suggested by Western Esotericism 3.0.

Autoethnography describes a wide range of descriptive and reflective methodologies in which personal narrative is of central importance. The term was coined in 1975 by Karl Heider, who asked fifty Indonesian schoolchildren the question 'what do people do?' (Heider 1975: 3). This approach was described as 'auto-ethnography', since it yielded a set of data that was both autochthonous (being the children's own account of 'what people do'), and 'automatic, since it is the simplest routine-eliciting technique imaginable.' (ibid.)

However, toward the end of the 1970s boundaries between researchers and their objects of study become contested, and questions regarding the objectivity and validity of a positivistic description of cultures, as well as the value of researchers' own personal experiences, became central to what has become known as the 'crisis of representation' in anthropology during the 80s (Bakan 2014: 23-25). This crisis yielded a 'reflexive turn' in both anthropology and sociology, which has subsequently influenced many other areas of the humanities – and it also helped to advance the development of autoethnography as a research method that explicitly embraces personal experience, autobiographical writing, and other manifestations of the researcher's visibility and reflexivity in its methods of inquiry (Adams *et al.* 2014: 17).

The most well-known manifestation of this approach is perhaps what has been termed the *evocative autoethnography*: a subjective, autobiographical account which aims to 'invok[e] the epistemology of emotion, moving the reader to feel the feelings of the other' (Denzin 1997, quoted in Anderson 2006: 377). Often, this form of

autoethnography is presented via a 'narrative text [which] refuses to abstract and explain' (Bochner & Ellis 2001, quoted in Anderson 2006: 377). Autoethnography is evidently a powerful tool for expressing, for example, experiences of marginalisation, grief, illness, violence, and so on through an 'authentic' voice, and suggests a form of experientially focused practice that would also complement the transpersonal, 'transformative learning' approaches of Voss. However, it is evident that the conception of an inscrutable, subjective autobiographical narrative is not necessarily congruent with the empirical, discursive, cognitive-psychological, sociological, and historiographic approaches that have been explored by Continental scholars of esotericism studies over the last two decades.

Before turning to some suggestions of how autoethnography and autobiographical writing can be conducted and analysed in complement with the diverse approaches of esotericism studies, it would be useful to briefly examine two doctoral theses which make notable use of autobiographical content, although they are not necessarily grounded in the perspectives of Western Esotericism 3.0 from which this present research precedes.

William Redwood's thesis *Spiral Bound: Spaces, Selves and Cosmologies of Contemporary Magick* (2003) opens with a striking first chapter written in a descriptive, autoethnographic style, which the author describes as a stream of consciousness, phenomenological account (: 4). These autobiographical narratives cover three events: a recollection of encountering a work colleague 'clearing up negative energy' while on break from a call centre job (: 8), the author's morning routine, including the performance of a magical banishing ritual and a description of his flat and housemates, and an impressionistic wander through the streets of Brixton (: 9-25). Finally, Redwood describes the occult geography of London via an evening at the *Talking Stick* moot, and a magical ritual inspired by the Cthulhu mythos of H.P. Lovecraft undertaken with a group calling themselves the Haunters of the Dark (: 26-42; this group were also subjects in Justin Woodman's anthropological study of chaos magick published the same year [Woodman 2003]).

While Redwood keeps a scholarly distance, not explicitly identifying as a 'complete member researcher' (e.g. Anderson 2006: 378), he nevertheless describes that he has been socialised into the magical subculture (Redwood 2003: 271) and presents his autoethnographic narrative an opportunity to give the reader an 'introduction to the magickal scene' (: 4), articulated through his own experiences of his location,

milieu, subjective impressions, personal judgments, and emotions. Redwood's 'native narrative' could also be considered successful as a document of Versluis' 'sympathetic empiricism', since it deeply engages with the lifeworlds of his subjects, with whom he is both in direct communication with, and who are his contemporaries, effectively avoiding the tendency toward either anachronism or religionism which may arise when applying such an approach to historical studies.

Redwood's socialisation and participation in the practices of London's magical subculture are evocative of Luhrmann's participation in the magical rituals of English pagans and witches (1989), whose presence is also marked through a variety of first-person narratives within her research – although these often lack Redwood's phenomenological candidness. Like Luhrmann, however, Redwood's socialisation enabled him to develop a number of theoretical positions developing from an awareness of the cognitive, experiential, and social dimensions of magical practice. This enables him to focus on the discourses employed by magical practitioners, particularly in terms of opposition to a nebulous 'mainstream', which Redwood suggests magical practitioners have a problematic social relationship with – the author's research did, of course, take place in the wake of the 'Satanic Panic'. Consequently, rather than focusing on the wider scope of what we may now describe as 'occulture', Redwood articulates many of the emic discursive positions of his subjects *vis-à-vis* the religious and cultural 'mainstream' (: 267-8). Redwood also focuses on the social identities assumed by magical practitioners, and their relation in particular to the subject's physical location, cosmologies, and magical practices (ibid., :145-174). Finally, and more theoretically, Redwood also touches on the cognitive dimension of spatiality in magic, including conceptions of outer- and inner-worlds (: 175-189). While not a thoroughly autoethnographic project, Redwood's first chapter used his personal experience to effectively frame many of the analytic *loci* with which his broader thesis was concerned.

A less analytically successful, but more thoroughly autoethnographic approach to the theme of creativity within esotericism is undertaken in a thesis written by John O'Rourke (2010). O'Rourke is primarily a sculptor, although his catalogue also includes painting and photography. He is also a Catholic, Theosophist, and self-identified 'Esoteric Practitioner' (: 8), and uses his autobiographical writing to describe the relationship between artistic creativity and the lived experience of religion and esotericism. Primarily he structures his autobiographical writing around a description of his artistic catalogue: from his most formative works, to works specifically

produced for his doctoral exhibition *East-West Occult*. From a perspective of evocative autoethnography, O'Rourke's work, is an excellent form of 'thick description', relating many autobiographical details to the production of his artwork over a period stretching back to his adolescence.

However, O'Rourke's work is fundamentally a record of praxis situated within the field of creative arts. As such, more methodological analysis is broadly lacking. O'Rourke does conclude with a reflective chapter, although as an esoteric practitioner presenting his work in an artistic context, the conclusions he arrives at are firmly situated in religionist perspectives on the presence of esotericism in artistic practice (:267-82). Insofar as engagement with esoteric scholarship is concerned, O'Rourke's reflections are structured around Faivre's typology, which as we have previously mentioned is biased toward forms of Christian theosophy (Hanegraaff 1998: 46-7), although this is also where O'Rourke's own beliefs and practices broadly lie. O'Rourke also includes firmly esoteric statements in his reflection, such as 'people tend to identify themselves with finite idiosyncrasies of personality, residing in the lower quaternary, oblivious to the higher Self' (: 274). While lacking sound analytic perspectives, O'Rourke's autobiographical *catalogue raisonné* does present a valuable data source for researchers interested in artistic creativity and esotericism, as well as the subject of creative seekership, and the writing narrates O'Rourke's varied engagements with Alcoholics Anonymous, the Divine Light Mission, the Bahai faith, Theosophy, and Catholicism – and their reflections in his own creative practice – in detail (e.g.: 59-97).

With this assessment of O'Rourke's work in mind, it is evident that, to align itself with the scholarly agenda set out in Hanegraaff's proposal of a Western Esotericism 3.0 (2012b: 122-3), and to avoid suspicions of an esoteric or crypto-esoteric agenda on the researcher's part, it is necessary to develop an autoethnographic approach that is congruent with a naturalist – rather than religionist – hermeneutic that is qualitative, historically-informed, and ideologically neutral.

Leon Anderson has suggested that the term *analytic autoethnography* may be used to describe autoethnographic approaches that are consistent with 'qualitative inquiry rooted in traditional symbolic interactionism' (2006: 374). Anderson states that the autoethnography was implicit in the qualitative sociological research of the first and second wave of the Chicago school, since many of these researchers *were* culturally embedded in their areas of research. However, he highlights that the prevailing

scholarly approaches of the time tended to 'downplay or obscure the researcher as a social actor in the settings of groups under study', due to a lack of a 'language of qualitative method that assigned no particular merit to self-observation' (:376). In many ways the situation of sociology between the late 1940s and early 1970s resembles that of esotericism studies between the 1990s and early 2010s, insofar as the necessity to pursue disciplinary boundary work, and the establishment of empirical theoretical and methodological grounds for scholarship glossed over researchers' own culturally-embedded experiences and insights. Conversely, the critique of the experientially sympathetic 'religionist' scholars discussed above has often been that they lack coherent theoretical or methodological positions. It is therefore necessary to explore a form of autoethnography in which the experiences and insights of the researcher are visible, while also supporting appropriate forms of analysis that move the autoethnographic narrative beyond the simply evocative. In addressing the shortcomings of traditional 'evocative' ethnography, Anderson proposes five features of analytic autoethnography, which may perhaps also go some way to bridging the divide between the problematic nature of the 'insider' scholar and the strictures of scholarly rigour demanded by contemporary scholarship. Anderson proposes that any analytic autoethnography must include: '(1) complete member researcher (CMR) status, (2) analytic reflexivity, (3) narrative visibility of the researcher's self, (4) Dialogue with informants beyond the self, (5) Commitment to theoretical analysis' (:378).

Although Anderson describes himself as a 'friend of evocative autoethnography', his original proposals were subsequently criticised by prominent researchers in the area, such as Carolyn Ellis, Arthur Bochner, and Norman Denzin, although welcomed by others such as Kathy Charmaz, Paul Atkinson and Kevin Vryan, all of whom submitted responses to Anderson's original article (see Pace 2012 for a summary). However, regardless of respondents' views *pro* or *contra* the analytic approach, they all questioned what an analytic autoethnography would actually 'look like'.

It is evident that Anderson's proposal implies what we might term a blend of 'first-order and second-order' approaches' (Anderson 2006: 381), which provide ways of mediating between the emic and etic perspectives that autoethnographic researchers are ideally suited to articulating, owing to their dual identities. In this respect, it is worth highlighting Otto's observation that scholars of esotericism have often misrepresented the original sense of emic/etic, often reducing the terms to shorthand for 'insider/outsider' accounts (as in Versluis 2003). Otto highlights that the terms

emic and etic are the:

exclusive preserve of scholarly analysis and should not be conflated with the practitioner's perspective (in other words: an 'emic' approach may reconstruct and re-narrate the ideas, practices and perspectives of practitioners of 'learned magic', but 'insider' sources should not themselves be called 'emic') (2016: 182)

Since this project commences with an examination of the influence of occulture on my own music-making, Otto's note on the analytic reconstruction and representation of emic perspectives is useful. It is a particularly apposite distinction given that I will be working primarily from my own archival materials and autobiographical narrative, which will support the reconstruction of the emic perspectives that will inform any subsequent analysis.

Analytic Autoethnography – A Grounded Proposal

To respond to the question 'what would an analytic autoethnography look like?', I will now make a proposal for conducting such work within the field of esotericism studies. Having surveyed a wide range of theoretical and methodological approaches to 'esotericism', this proposal will follow the social constructivist and constructionist attitudes that underlie both Anderson's formulation of an analytic autoethnography and the discursive and sociological approaches to the study of esotericism which we have encountered in the last chapter. Taking such an approach to the autoethnographic material and its analysis does necessarily entail reducing research to a theoretical 'straightjacket': rather it seeks to begin from an established epistemological perspective which may effectively help to delimit and focus the scope of autobiographical content under analysis, as well as stimulating potential methods for its analysis.

At this point, it may be useful to summarise Granholm's theoretical basis to demonstrate how more conventionally ethnographic approaches have successfully been incorporated into a study of esotericism. Granholm's own work begins from a broadly constructivist perspective, which can be described as one that 'specifically emphasises the role of language and communication as the means through which social reality, relationships, identities etc. are constructed' (Granholm 2014: 30). Granholm also applies Gergen's definition of 'social constructionism', which follows

four tenets: 1) 'A critical stance toward taken-for-granted knowledge', 2) 'Historical and cultural specificity', 3) a position that 'knowledge is sustained by social processes', and also that 4) 'knowledge and action go hand in hand' (:30-31). These tenets naturally complement Granholm's development of von Stuckrad's discourse-orientated approach to the study of esotericism and are further complemented by theories drawn from discursive psychology (after Potter and Wetherell), which frame discourse as a 'not partially constitutive, but thoroughly constitutive' field, in which the actions of agents are themselves discursive acts (:34-36). Furthermore, discursive psychology emphasises the place of individual actors within fields of discourse, making it a suitable ethnographic (and possibly analytic autoethnographic) bridge to the 'grand-scale' social perspective of traditional discourse analysis (:35).

Building on these constructivist and discourse-psychological positions, we can turn to the work of Steven Pace, who has provided his own perspective on the debate surrounding approaches to analytic autoethnography (Pace 2012). He suggests that grounded theory may provide a number of methods suitable for analytic ethnographic ends, and quotes Charmaz' position on a 'constructivist approach to grounded theory' (:8) by which:

We can reclaim these tools from their positivist underpinnings to form a revised, more open-ended practice of grounded theory that stresses its emergent constructivist elements. We can use grounded theory methods as flexible, heuristic strategies rather than as formulaic procedures. (Charmaz 2000: 510; quoted in Pace 2012: 10)

Grounded theory describes a qualitative research method, emerging from the work of Glaser and Strauss, who developed the approach during their study of death and palliative care with nurse Jeanne Quint Benoliel (published as *Awareness of Dying* [1965]). Their later formulation of the method as *grounded theory* explored the way in which qualitative data can become the ground for more general theory development, when analysed in a systematic fashion. Unusually, grounded theory used an inductive model of research, with no solidly defined research question, allowing theories and hypotheses to emerge over multiple iterations of the analytic work. Subsequently, Charmaz has emphasised the importance of acknowledging the two prime epistemological stances undertaken by grounded theorist. Firstly, Glaser is described as emphasising the objectivist stance, effectively erasing 'the social context from which the data emerge, the influence of the researcher, and often the

interactions between grounded theorists and their research participants,' (Charmaz 2006: 131) in favour of theories that operate on the assumption that the 'data represent objective facts about the world' (ibid.). As may be anticipated, a constructivist approach to grounded theory instead emphasises '*how* – and sometimes *why* – participants construct meanings and actions in specific situations' (2006: 130), consequently emphasising the specificity and locality of emergent theory over the production of generalised theories. It should be acknowledged, however, that these stances are not necessarily exclusive; rather, constructivist and constructionist interpretations may also prepare the ground for the more generic statements favoured by objectivist theorists (Charmaz 2008: 398).

Whether the theorist works from a constructivist (emphasising social relations), constructionist (emphasising discourse), or objectivist perspective, the integral method of grounded theory is one of 'constant comparison' from which concepts and theories emerge from the data (e.g. self-narratives in Pace's case). Having amassed their initial data sources (traditionally through intensive interviewing processes), grounded theorists submit the data to the core analytic process of coding, memoing and theorising.

Grounded theory method is fundamentally concerned with the coding of narratives. A 'code' identifies 'concepts or abstractions of incidents in the data' (Pace 2012:10), ultimately leading the researcher to a condensed, abstract view of a complex set of written accounts. Coding is often presented as a three-stage process: first, the initial 'open coding' of concepts deemed significant; 'theoretical coding' then seeks to determine how the emergent concepts relate to one another; finally, 'selective coding' concentrates on isolating the particular elements that are integral to the core concept or 'main theme' that has emerged: it is here that a theoretical structure is established, and the way pointed to further areas of data collection and analysis (:12). Running parallel with these activities, however, is the critical process of 'memoing', in which ideas about codes/concepts and their relationships are noted in order to capture the variety of fleeting insights that occur during the research process (:10-11).

As previously mentioned, Charmaz has suggested that the methods of grounded theory may be applicable to a range of disciplines as 'flexible, heuristic strategies' (Charmaz 2000: 510; quoted in Pace 2012: 10). Furthermore, being situated as a broadly constructivist approach – and owing to the roots of the grounded theory in the field of symbolic interactionism – Charmaz' own approaches to grounded theory

can also be seen as complementary to discourse-analytic perspectives: Charmaz' observations, such as her assertion that texts such as a corporate report or US census data 'reflect shared definitions concerning each topic and the power to enforce these definitions' (:37), indicate the presence of discourse-theoretical assumptions against which her own approaches to grounded theorisation are enacted.

Grounded theory, particularly of Charmaz' constructivist variety, emphasises the place of action and meaning-making in the lives of those studied (Charmaz 2006: 11, 21), which often yield theoretical constructions that take gerund forms: *awareness of dying*, *supernormalising*, and so on (Bryant 2018). Closer to the subjects of underground music and occulture with which this research is concerned, the doctoral work of Harris (2001) applied grounded approaches to ethnographic work with the extreme metal scenes of Sweden, Israel and the UK (:59-66), yielding theoretical concepts such as 'reflexive anti-reflexivity' (:167-185). Situated against a backdrop of constructivist and constructionist perspectives on esotericism studies, it is proposed that a methodological stance of 'groundedness' with regard to data analysis will help to expose the connections between the occulturally-situated lifeworld, esoteric discourses, creative practice, 'esoteric' experience, and the production of both meaning and (oc)cultural artefacts.

Conclusion: Analytic Autoethnography and the Limits of Discourse

These initial chapters have sought to establish a theoretical and methodological grounding for the practice of analytic autoethnography within the context of esotericism studies. We have seen that Charmaz' constructivist approach to grounded theory suggests a possible approach to Anderson and Pace's positions on applying analytic awareness to autoethnographic work. Furthermore, these positions are complementary with the constructivist and discourse-theoretical perspectives on esotericism formulated by von Stuckrad, Granholm, *et al.* Grounding an approach to autoethnography in an awareness of these theoretical and methodological approaches enables the construction of a heuristic toolbox founded on empirical, rather than religious, attitudes, while also providing the scope for both theoretical emergence and the application of theoretical sensitivity and methodological pragmatism where appropriate.

As an autoethnography, the role of experience – particularly extraordinary or ‘esoteric’ experience – is also an important consideration. Prior to undertaking the writing of the autobiographical narrative, discussed in the next chapter, it was anticipated that much attention would likely be directed to the relationship between experience and both the discursive composition of the lifeworld, and the creative and magical actions undertaken to produce such an experience, work, or artefact. While both Hammer and Kokkinen have recognised the ‘appeal to experience’ as a core discursive strategy used by followers of the ‘esoteric’ to legitimise their beliefs and practices, it should also be acknowledged that terms like ‘legitimise’ can be read pejoratively by practitioners – perhaps giving the veiled impression that their beliefs are of doubtful veracity. However, contemporary scholarship, even of the most resolutely critical-naturalist perspective acknowledges that such experiences are powerful, deep and meaningful to those who have them, and are worthy of being treated as such (*vide* Hanegraaff 2011: 159). Nevertheless, it should also be noted that such experiences are not monolithic and unchangeable: although powerful and life-changing, their subsequent recounting may change to reflect revisions within the experiencers’ own worldview, or attempts to tailor their experience to a given situation or audience. Therefore, when examining experiential accounts in my autobiographical and archival sources, it may also be useful to add some form of awareness of such narrative appraisals to the project’s range of hermeneutic methods. Although we have concentrated our discussion of sociological (e.g. constructivist and discourse theoretical) perspectives on esotericism, it should also be acknowledged that the contemporary esotericism studies have also begun to explore the possibilities for a ‘cognitive turn’, which may also provide some potential ways to examine the data produced by the autobiographical writing process.

Drawing upon their work in the cognitive science of religion and esotericism, the use of ‘event narrative’ appraisals has been proposed by Asprem and Taves as a way to provide:

tools for refining the analysis of event narratives and, where sufficient sources are available, to assess the plausibility of different historical interpretations of the subject’s interpretation of an experience event over time. (Asprem & Taves n.d.)

Essentially, event narrative analysis approaches entail the collation of all a subject's accounts of a given experience, and methodically comparing the representations of the experience in the following terms:

Intended behaviour event (what he/she did)

Reason explanation (why he/she/someone else did it)

Unintended experience event (what happened)

Cause explanation (why it happened)

(Abstracted from Taves 2016 and Asprem 2014)

Asprem and Taves have explored the use of this form of analysis to examine 'the social and cognitive processes through which certain personal experiences have been crafted into "religious experiences"' (n.d.), consequently applying it to the visions of Mormon prophet Joseph Smith, Alcoholics Anonymous founder Bill Wilson, and occultist Aleister Crowley. It is proposed that such approaches may provide a suitable methodical and analytic approach to interpreting the presentation of experience within this research project. Debatably the event analysis framework detailed above *could* also be incorporated into the general coding of the data-set, although the advantage of constructing separate appraisal charts is that they firmly delimit the focus of analysis to a particular experience, and guard against the temptation to introduce too many *a priori* assumptions into a grounded process, which should primarily be allowed to develop from the coding, memoing, and theorisation of the data itself. Complementing a grounded approach to autobiographical writing with event narrative analysis may, however, support further analysis by summarising the contexts surrounding the presentation and representation of an event, lending structure and clarity to any theories emerging from the data analysis, and assisting in the development of theoretical approaches that describe the relationship between experience and discourse.

Chapter 3.

Emic Reconstruction, Etic Analysis:

Grounding Autobiography and Establishing Theoretical Locations

Introduction

The preceding examination of autoethnography in the context of esotericism studies concluded with a proposal to explore Pace's suggested methodology for an analytic autoethnography which embraces a broadly 'grounded' perspective. This chapter examines how these proposals were employed in the practice of writing and analysing the 'Occultural Memoir' which constitutes the second volume of this thesis. This document served as an initial data source for a grounded approach to autoethnographic analysis, as well as providing an organisational structure in which other associated data sources – such as music, visual artwork, texts, interviews – could be contextualised.

This chapter begins with an examination of the practicalities and processes involved in writing an autobiographical document that also incorporated a synchronous thread of first-order analytic data in the form of memoing and open coding. Such an interleaved writing-research process enables clear distinctions to be made between the subjective and autobiographical content that will assist the construction of both an emic model, and the material that will inform broader etic perspectives and theoretical interpretations.

The second-order analysis of the data points derived from a grounded writing process (e.g. theoretical memos, thematic codes, and keywords) are then examined with particular attention to how these enable researchers to isolate a variety of locations for further study and analysis, with which the subsequent chapters of this thesis are concerned. In the spirit of the grounded approach that underlies this work, the initial theoretical model of 'creative seekership' arising from these processes is presented in this chapter: although this model will be re-examined at the end of the thesis in the light of the conclusions drawn from the deeper analysis of the analytic *loci* which the initial model identified, and with which the subsequent chapters are concerned.

This chapter concludes with a reflection on some of the social and cultural contexts highlighted in the formative sections of the 'Occultural Memoir', which although not explicitly constituting any of the 'theoretical categories' expressed in the model of creative seekership, nevertheless informed many of the emic interpretations, practices, and positions that I would later engage with.

Emic Reconstruction: Grounding an Esoteric Autobiography

The primary analytic subject of this thesis is the development of my own musical practices between 2001-2013 and their situation in the field of contemporary esotericism – and, by extension, occulture. Given that the period in question ended three years before the commencement of work on this thesis in 2016, it was necessary that the autoethnographic component of this research was developed through a process of *post hoc* autobiographical narrative composition.

The methodology that informs this project develops from the suggestion by Pace (2012) that analytic strategies borrowed from grounded theory may potentially 'benefit artist-researchers who identify themselves as autoethnographers, but who want to use analytic reflexivity to improve theoretical understandings of their creative practice' (:1). The constructivist assumptions of grounded theory also complement trends that have been established by the sociological study of esotericism, and while the methodology employed here does not exhaustively follow the process outlined by Charmaz (2006, 2008), it leverages the potential of the grounded approach to qualitative analysis as a method to gain analytic focus on – and derive theoretical models from – a wide-ranging and complex data source, rather than analysing that source in terms fixed *a priori* goals, research questions, or *foci* (Charmaz 2006: 180). The deployment of grounded processes in the composition of the autobiographical document will be detailed later in this section. However, it will first be necessary to describe the practical and methodological considerations surrounding the composition of the autobiographical document itself.

It was considered necessary to mitigate the obvious drawbacks that the process of autobiographical reminiscence presents as a method for gathering autoethnographic data. While such a retrospective approach may be considered appropriate for forms of evocative autoethnography, the subjectivity of this method – along with the constructed nature of memory itself – frames the memoir as a description of lived experience, but one inevitably prone to inaccuracies, distortions, and *post hoc*

reinterpretations. Of course, all autobiographical writing is thoroughly constructive itself: it develops a narrative with the intention of 're-creating a sense of self, [and] re-visiting the past in order to render renewed versions of experience' (Leggo 2005: 122). However, it was considered important in terms of ensuring a 'non-esoteric agenda' and complementing a historiographic underpinning to the project, to first gather a comprehensive personal archive, the extents of which are summarised in Appendix A. Since my immediate focus was on the period 2001-13, the archive that I initially assembled included all my recorded music (released and unreleased), my diary (2002-3), written works, reviews, interviews, archives of websites I had created, and miscellaneous files from computer backups.

This archive served two key purposes: first it provided a way of verifying the timeline presented in the autobiography while its composition was in progress. Questions of when a text was written, what order albums were released in, or where I was on a given date could easily be verified through such sources. Secondly, and most importantly for an analytic approach to autoethnography, this archive provided both an insight into my own emic perspectives during the period in question, and formed a corpus of material suitable for the methods of discursive and textual analysis which became necessary approaches for interrogating the theoretical *loci* and themes described by the model of creative seekership that emerged from the grounded methodology.

It was initially considered that this archive would enable me to establish an autobiographical narrative by engaging in a process of reminiscence about each published item of music or text produced between 2001-13. While this provided an interesting way to reconnect with the circumstances surrounding each album, it also highlighted the omission of vital contextual information: chiefly concerning the formative experiences that were important in terms of shaping my lifeworld beyond those presented in music and text, and the presence of discursive dispositions and emic interpretations which were not fully captured by the extents of the archive.

I therefore considered it necessary to widen the scope of both the archive and autobiographical narrative to include a range of earlier material. While the second part of the resulting autobiographical narrative retained a structure based on the idea of a *catalogue raisonné*, I undertook, like O'Rourke (2010) before me, to compose a preliminary section of the memoir, focusing on formative engagements with occulture. Database filmographies and bibliographies were employed to help

structure the accounts of my early years, while my teenage years left a significant publicly-accessible digital footprint in the form of websites, Usenet posts, and mailing list discussions (see chapter 4). The reconstruction of this digital footprint through the examination of online artefacts and the accrual of historical digital artefacts highlights the importance of the methods of web archiving and web philology in the study of contemporary esotericism, already attested by Plaisance (2016).

The autobiographical narrative was composed between 25 June 2018 and 25 May 2020, comprising 57,668 words in its unredacted form. During the composition process the emphasis was on realising a descriptive text, in which any tendency toward adopting explicit hermeneutic or analytic positions were set aside in favour of capturing the particular biographical qualities of each entry: these might be impressions about my own social situation at the time, reflections on place and geography, selections from literature and music that influenced me, or reflections on how particular experiences related to the development of my magical and creative practices. Many of these entries were also initiated by the chronological examination of the digital and physical objects that comprised my personal archive. For example, my old websites (preserved at archive.org) and old Usenet posts (archived by groups.google.com) provided both structuring and prompting materials for section 1.3 of the memoir, covering my teenage engagements with online occultural milieus and my early magical experiences. At this point it should be mentioned that the retrospective nature of this writing of course meant that informed consent was not possible in many cases – necessitating the anonymisation or redaction of most names and instances of third-party personal information in the text (see volume 2: 2-3 for more detail on the ethical principles informing the memoir). This does not necessarily create an issue for the present work, however, since much of the practice focused on here was on an individual basis as a ‘solo practitioner’, and did not involve my immediate, local, social connections: although it did draw inspiration from – and contribute to – the work of a wider occultural milieu, as detailed in chapter 7.

In the spirit of a grounded approach to autoethnography, the relatively free-written responses to my archival materials are also subject to memoing and open coding processes, which ran synchronously with the composition of the text. When a point of interest arose in the composition of the text, or during a re-reading of what had been produced after a writing session, a memo was appended to the document in the form of a footnote, which captured potential points of interest and theoretical insight as they arose. Each memo was also coded on a spreadsheet, to classify which

particular themes or categories had arisen therein. Such an approach could be described as a form of incident-by-incident coding (Charmaz 2006:53). Here, an ‘incident’ signifies a moment significant enough to prompt attendant memoing and coding. This is in contrast to the standard line-by-line coding approaches often employed in grounded analyses, which *could* be appropriate for analysis of a completed autobiographical document, but would significantly hinder immersion in the compositional process if carried out synchronously with writing. Line-by-line codings in NVivo were, however, employed later in this research while reading archival texts, in which choices of language, for example, explicitly signalled emic attitudes. The resulting categories produced by this initial incident-by-incident ‘open coding’ process, captured broad, emerging themes in the research, such as:

Childhood & Youth	Enchantment	Music
Transformation/Alchemy	Imagination	Internet/Technology
Practice	Landscape/Nature	Tradition
Experience	Listening	Morality/Politics
Occulture	Seekership	Elitism/Otherness
Dreams	Paganism	Identity
H.P. Lovecraft	Spirits	Kenneth Grant

Table 1. Initial open codes applied to autobiographical memos (author’s work).

1.3.36.1

I was half way through the first conjuration when I felt the spirit. This time the atmosphere felt quite oppressive and dangerous. The spirit was responsive to my calls for it to manifest and appeared as a giant cat like thing, which was enveloped in an “octarine” mist. (Legard 1998)³⁶

³⁶ 21/09/18 – Memo – The mention of ‘octarine’ is interesting. I had got the term from z(cluster) correspondence where it was used to refer to either an undefinable colour of magic, or to one’s own personal colour used to visualize magical forces. It entered chaos magick parlance through the writings of Peter Corroll, who mentions it in his 1992 book *Liber Kaos*. The term likely originated in Terry Pratchett’s fantasy novel *The Colour of Magic* (1983) – another instance of the occultural transference between fiction and practice/theory.

Figure 5. An entry from the memoir, with corresponding memo. Coded as: practice, experience, occulture, spirits (author’s work).

Note that some of these thematic codes are necessarily broad. ‘Practice’, for example, describes practices some of which could be explicitly viewed as either musical (e.g. ‘improvisation’) or magical (e.g. ‘scrying’). However, most instances of ‘musical’ practice in my autobiography are also dependent on the discourses and ontological or epistemological assumptions associated with esotericism. Kokkinen

(2021) has also noted that this is typical of 'artistic seekership', in which an artist's esoteric interests and artistic practices become entangled in a 'heterodox collage' (:23).

The autobiographical narrative remained a fluid, working document until its conclusion, which reflects on the album *Three Spirits* (2013), the final release of the Xenis Emputae Travelling Band project, which was my primary mode of musical expression during the period from 2001 to 2013. Each session of writing undertaken on the document was date-stamped in superscript, and the completed document was numbered by section, subsection, paragraph and sub-paragraph for ease of citation. For example, the citation (A1.2.3) indicates autobiography section 1 (juvenilia), subsection 2 (secondary education), paragraph 3.

The grounded approach to writing, memoing, and coding developed into what might be termed an 'emic reconstruction' of my creative and occultural lifeworld. This highlights Otto's emphasis on the methodological distinction between 'emic' and 'etic' (Otto 2016: 182): I was not writing as a practitioner in the present, with the attendant discursive and legitimising strategies that potentially involves, but rather using both my lived experience and archival resources to assist in the reconstruction and narration my own experiences, practices, and perspectives. Such an approach to autoethnography is not necessarily evocative, but rather seeks to establish data which contributes toward what Anderson has described as a 'commitment to an analytic agenda' (2006: 386-388): the ambition of analytic autoethnography being described as 'not only truthfully rendering the social world under investigation [as in evocative autobiography] but also transcending that world through broader generalization' (:388).

Such a 'grounded' approach to the composition of an autoethnographic memoir also addresses three other features of Anderson's proposal for analytic autoethnography, namely those of complete member researcher status, analytic reflexivity, and the narrative visibility of the self (Anderson 2006). More difficult to address in the process autoethnographic memoir writing is Anderson's category of 'dialogue with informants beyond the self'. This facet of analytic autoethnography intends to address the obvious methodological problem that, as Anderson puts it, 'no ethnographic work—not even autoethnography—is a warrant to generalise from an "N of one"' (:386). The problem of 'N of one' and the relationship between my own 'emic reconstruction' and its potential to scale into a more generalisable analytic and theoretical territory is an

underlying concern in subsequent chapters of this thesis, in which the initial theoretical *foci* are brought into dialogue with texts, artefacts and other objects created by other ‘insiders’, as well as drawing on extant academic work to develop broader, etically-orientated perspectives. Of course, as Pace observes (2012: 8-9), it is not necessarily the task of grounded theory to propose some level of generalisable ‘truth’ – rather, as applied to (auto)ethnography, it presents an interpretation of ‘a reality’ (:8) – although these interpretations and the theories which they produce may be also transferrable beyond the immediate subject of study.

This approach – of developing theories and interpretations from an emic reconstruction of a single subject’s lifeworld as a starting-point – is, of course, not without precedent. Ginzburg’s classic ‘microhistory’, *The Cheese and the Worms* (1980), may be taken as a salient example of such an approach, which sought to extend the historical concept of the individual away from ‘the great deeds of kings’ (:i), to the lower classes (:xx). Although the lifeworld of Ginzburg’s lower-class individual – Menocchio, “the miller of the Friuli” – had to be predominantly reconstructed from legal and inquisitorial writings, Ginzburg was nevertheless able to reconstruct and ‘intellectual, moral, and fantastical world’ of his subject (Ginzburg 1993: 23). While microhistory also examines subjects other than the individual (such as local histories [:12,32]), it has – owing to Ginzburg’s prominence amongst the Italian microhistorians – become identified as a way to produce historical work describing the lifeworlds of those who variously do not belong to the dominant culture, who are marginal in some way, or those whose beliefs and practices otherwise place them outside of the perceived ‘mainstream’. Indeed, considering the often idiosyncratic, heterodox, antinomian or countercultural discourses associated with esotericism and, latterly, occulture, such reconstructions present themselves as particularly viable starting-points for study, regardless of whether the we wish to produce ‘narrative history’ or – as in the present case – develop an analytic corpus for theoretical insight.

Coding and Theorising: From Data Source to Theoretical Proposal

The memoing and coding process that ran synchronously with the composition of the memoir yielded 103 memorandums, coded with 207 instances of the initial open coding categories. The representation of these categories across the corpus of memorandums is tabulated below:

Code	Memos Coded	Code	Memos Coded
Experience	37	Enchantment	5
Practice	28	Landscape/Nature	5
Occulture	19	Listening	5
Imagination	16	Internet/Technology	5
Spirits	14	Morality/Politics	5
Seekership	13	Dreams	4
Music	12	Paganism	4
Identity	10	Transformation/Alchemy	2
Tradition	7	Kenneth Grant	2
Childhood	7	Elitism/Otherness	2
H. P. Lovecraft	5		

Table 2. Open coded categories sorted by number of representations in memos (author's work).

Before proceeding to the process of theoretical coding, the content of the memos was also analysed, resulting in the classification of each memo as one or more of the following categories:

- Observations on discourse
- Methodological proposals
- Theoretical proposals
- Action proposals

This enabled the theoretical memos to be collated alongside the initial series of open codes and the autobiographical text itself in order to initiate the process of theoretical coding, which involves 'detecting relationships between two or more categories' (Hernandez 2009), and considering 'how emergent concepts relate to one another' (Pace 2012: 7, 12).

The open codes developed during the composition of the autobiography, along with their attendant memos, were examined and normalised by identifying which codes represented key 'integrating categories', and which codes were of secondary importance. For example, the most common open code, 'Experience', potentially comprises a collection of codes, integrating not just 'experience' (e.g. events occurring in a musical or magical context), but also other significant codes such as 'imagination', 'music' and 'listening' (relating to early experiences of powerful musically-evoked imagery), 'spirits' (experiences involving or attributed to the influence of spirits), and so on. Five of the most commonly represented theoretical codes were identified as integrating categories, and their potential for developing

theoretical and analytical focus was explored through processes of diagramming (Charmaz 2006: 61, 117-121).

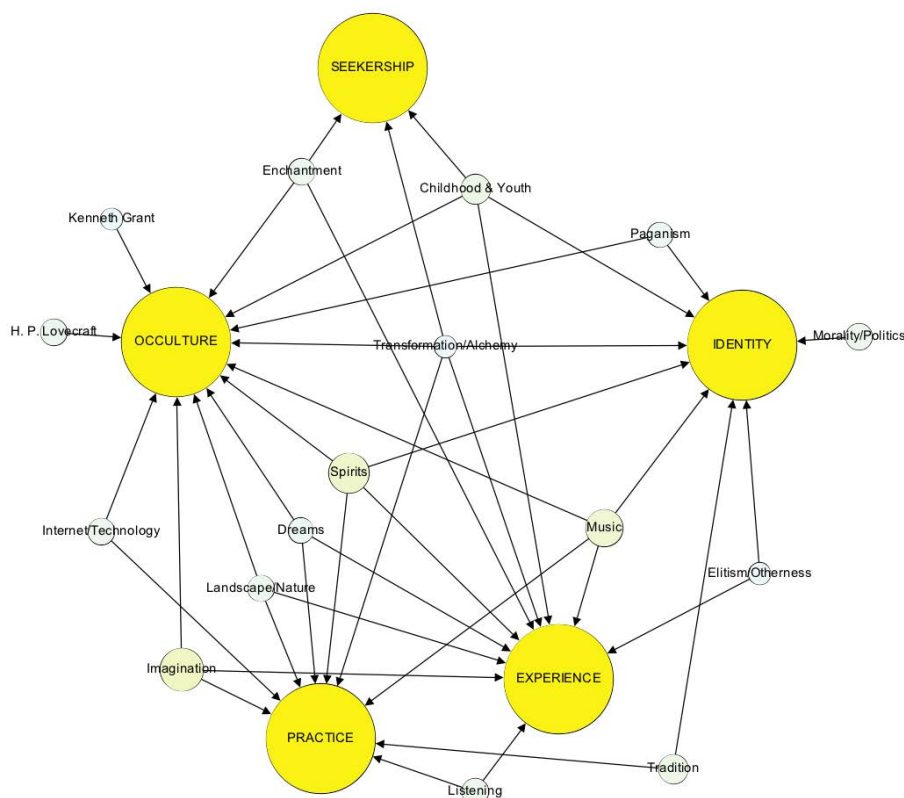


Figure 6. *Initial theoretical diagram relating open codes to integrative categories (author's work).*

From examination of the autobiographical text, memos, and codes, the category of 'seekership' suggested itself as the substantive code, effectively delimiting the theoretical possibilities to a particular process or area of study (Charmaz 2006: 8). Seekership was considered substantive not because it necessarily had the most connected nodes in the initial theoretical diagram, above – it did not. Rather, like many grounded theoretical insights, *seekership* is a gerund form: it is an activity into which the other categories may be integrated to constitute a set of processes which support the overarching act of seekership. The other integrative categories, with the exception of occulture which has already been dealt with at length, could be summarised as follows:

'Identity' as an emergent theme reflects the process of identity construction (see chapter 4), with links to events in childhood and youth, experiences of 'otherness', and engagement with discourses on tradition and intermediary beings and their subsequent expression in terms of identity (e.g. assuming identities such as 'occult experimentalist', 'magical purist', or 'chaos magician').

'Experience' could be described as a process in terms of Ann Taves' constructivist-cognitivist paradigm of religious experience (Taves 2009, 2016a; see chapter 5) to describe the process of encountering or inducing experiences deemed significant or 'esoteric', as well as the construction of appraisals relating to them (e.g. attributing them to transpersonal sources, spirits).

'Practice' describes not just the process of 'doing' of magic or music, but also the process of reflecting on practice, appraising it in the light of experience – and most importantly, elaborating upon it, and developing artefacts which present that practice to an audience (see chapters 6 and 7).

These suggested processes of identity construction, appraisal of experience, and elaborative practice can therefore be positioned *within* a broader process of occulturally-situated seekership: it is the seeking of a particular experience deemed special or 'esoteric' which necessitates the development of certain practices; it is also the process of seeking which yields the construction of congruent identities that engage with the field in which an actor's seekership is focused (e.g. 'chaos magick', 'magical purism', etc.). This process of seekership (and thus identity construction, elaborative practice, experience induction, and experience appraisal) is embedded within occulture as it describes a cultural field encompassing film, music, television, publishing, the internet, and other forms of media. These not only express an enduring fascination with the 'occult' in the industrialised 'West', but also provide a means by which those whose fascination extends into the actual practice and creative expressions of the magical and occult can present artefacts and perform identities – for example the 'seer', 'witch', 'adept', 'initiate', etc. – to a receptive audience of occultural consumers.

Creative Seekership: A Theoretical and Analytic Proposal

The process of theoretical diagramming was once again explored in an attempt describe the relationships between occulture and the processes identified as comprising a form of creative seekership. This enabled the five theoretical categories identified above to be related to one another in such a way that a proposal for an initial model of creative seekership may be suggested:

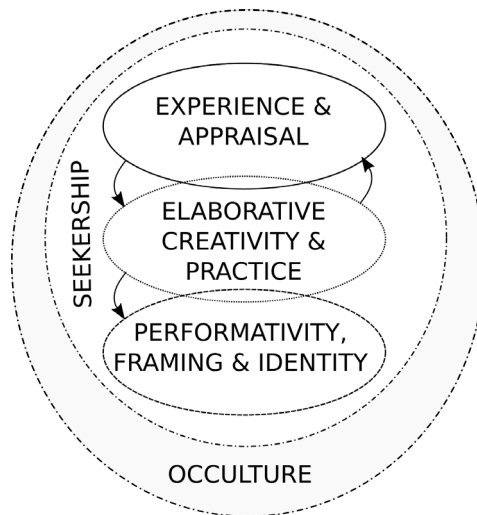


Figure 7. *Theoretical diagram developed from a consideration of integrative categories as processes (author's work).*

This proposed initial model, developed from the earlier diagramming process, theorises how an artist, or creative seeker, enacts processes of experiential engagement, elaborative practice, and identity performance, as part of the act of seekership within the broader field of occulture:

(1) **Experiences** of revelation, spiritual contact, and visions of inner landscapes are appraised and ascribed meaning through concurrent processes of discursive positioning and narrative elaboration (e.g. through recording the experience as well as re-telling and re-interpreting it).

(2) These experiences and associated elaborative creativity yield **practices** that attempt to deepen, re-engage, or evoke the original experiences. Such practices may also yield further experiences, creating a 'feedback loop' as they are enacted and elaborated on.

(3) Situated within the context of occulture these practices also yield artefacts that are bound to a performative sensibility in which **identities** are constructed and presented to an audience of fellow seekers. This is often coupled with legitimating strategies to emphasise various forms of cultural capital (such as the artist's occult experience, knowledge, or authenticity), which are potentially valued by wider occultural and esoteric milieus.

(4) These experiences and practices, and their performed and material expressions are enacted against the broader backdrop of the artist's own **seekership** and usually reflect, to some degree, the particular discourses and

preoccupations both connected to their seekership and drawn from occulture-at-large. The artistic seeker has a two-way relationship with occulture: both drawing from it, and contributing to its construction (cp. Kokkinen 2021: 11, 14).

It is necessary to understand that the above model constitutes only a theoretical proposal drawn from the analysis of the autobiographical document, its supporting memoranda, and coding. In conventional grounded theory approaches, the results of such theoretical coding (e.g. connecting themes and categories) and diagramming processes are then subject to further ‘theoretical sampling’, which seeks to bring the analysis toward a stage of ‘theoretical saturation’, from which conclusive and substantive statements of theory can be articulated (Charmaz 2006: 99-115). In a conventional grounded ethnography, in which primary data sources might be constituted by interview transcripts (for example), emergent themes identified by open and theoretical coding often necessitate the gathering of further data to bring them to saturation (e.g. re-interviewing participants, see Charmaz 2006: 103-4).

In the current study, however, the theoretical categories that comprise the model of seekership presented here (e.g. experience, practice, identity, and the seeker’s relationship to occulture and its associated milieus) are ‘saturated’ through more focused exploration and analysis in the subsequent chapters. The process of theoretical sampling is served through the examination of supporting data sources both drawn from my own archives, and gathered from the wider field of occulture itself – in particular, attention is also paid to other contemporary emic accounts in order to satisfy Anderson’s criterion that analytic autoethnography should reach beyond the self to incorporate voices from other informants (: 385-6).

In the chapters which follow, theoretical sampling and saturation are supported by the employment of appropriate theoretical and analytic methods drawn from the scholarly literature on sociology, cognitive science, musicology, and religious and esotericism studies. Following the constructivist assumptions of grounded theory, discursive approaches (Hammer 2004; Von Stuckrad 2010, 2013a, 2015; Granholm 2014) seemed to provide a great deal of potential for analysing the four theoretical locations outlined above (e.g. identity, experience, practice, and occultural situation). However, while discursive analysis can also be used to approach the question of ‘experience’ – at least insofar as developing insight into the discursive constructions surrounding an event, informing its emic interpretation, and influencing its modes of

presentation to a wider milieu – autoethnography also provides an opportunity to closely examine the experiential dimensions of esotericism. In this regard, approaches deemed congruent to constructivist paradigms are also integrated into the analyses that follow: although, in the spirit of theoretical sensitivity and methodological pragmatism, their employment was not pre-meditated, but arose according to analytic and theoretical need.

Pop Culture and Plausibility: Formative Occultural Engagement in the Autobiographical Narrative

As indicated above, the autobiographical narrative became the primary site for investigation in terms of a methodological attitude of ‘groundedness’. As a consequence, the autobiographical narrative also provides much of the context for the discussions and analyses in the chapters that follow. At this point it would, therefore, be useful to summarise some of the contents of the autobiography, in order to inform the reader of the subjects covered therein, to provide an outline of the narrative itself, and to present some analysis of the sections of the autobiography which deal with early occultural encounters that would inform many of the subsequent practices and experiences with which following chapters of this study are concerned.

The greater part of the autobiography is concerned with my own music-making from the turn of the millennium onwards – primarily through a description of my musical ‘project’ Xenis Emputae Travelling Band (XETB), whose music drew upon landscape, magical practices, psychedelia, and notions of tradition – particularly traditions constructed around British folklore and folk music. The sections of the autobiographical narrative concerned with XETB are structured loosely around a catalogue of musical recordings and texts published between 2001-2013. This enabled me to describe what might – in the light of analysis – be categorised as the social, discursive, experiential and phenomenological contexts that informed each item of recorded music or text under discussion, as well as providing opportunities to evidence the way in which such contexts influenced emic constructions regarding what was considered authentically ‘esoteric’, and the practices that developed from the pursuit of the ‘esoteric’, and from experiential events arising from such practices. The process of seekership, in which an agent moves through the practices and discursive fields of occulture over a period of months or years is also intimately entwined with identity – even more so when such seekership is also performed on a

public stage through the production of (oc)culturally-embedded artefacts. In this respect, the portion of the autobiography associated with the work of XETB also traces the path of seekership and its expression through associated occultural identities: primarily moving from musical identification as an 'occult experimentalist', to the identity of 'Orphic troubadour', and latterly becoming a conduit for 'psychogeographical aether folk' (see chapters 4 and 5).

It became apparent during the composition of the autobiographical document that occulture was not simply something I engaged with and contributed to from 2001, when I began the XETB project. Rather, many of the discourses I reproduced, the practices I adopted or developed for myself, and the types of media I consumed (primarily music and books) prior to 2001 were adjacent to, or deeply embedded in, occulture, and provided the formative ground for that which followed. It was therefore deemed necessary to extend the scope of the autobiographical narrative, gathering supplementary sources where available, to develop an outline of the earlier occultural influences and engagements that would lead to the development of my own personal forms of musical and esoteric practice.

Therefore, before proceeding to a detailed examination of the period immediately preceding the start of the XETB project (chapter 4) and the subsequent development of the both the project and my own journey of creative seekership (chapters 5-7), I will here provide a provisional discussion of my earlier, formative influences.

As stated in A1.1.1, my childhood and teens were spent in Harrogate, an affluent and broadly middle-class spa town in North Yorkshire. Both parents were employed – my mother a school bursar, and my father an antique dealer specializing in silver. As a consequence, I grew up in a fairly middle-class environment: we would often visit stately homes at weekends, and all holidays were taken in the UK in Norfolk, Suffolk, or Whitby, which usually involved more visits to stately homes, antique shops, and historical sites. I was given pocket money throughout my childhood and teens, so did not have to get a job to support myself, giving me the privilege of both the money and free time to indulge my hobbies and interests as I grew up: particularly roleplaying games in my early teens, and magical books, occult paraphernalia, and psychedelic music in my later teens.

Moving to cultural – or occultural – contexts, the proximity of self-identified practicing occultists or magicians to the production and consumption of occulture, as well as to

adjacent fields such as fantasy fiction and roleplaying games is one feature which presents itself early in the autobiographical narrative.

With respect to popular occultural fiction, Grant Morrison and Alan Moore, who saturated the stories and scripts of their comic books with visionary imagery and the motifs of occult discourse from the mid-1980s to the present are well-recognised and celebrated as cultural figures who publicly discuss their interest in esotericism and identify, or are often identified as, magical practitioners (Hanegraaff 2016b; Granholm 2015: 500, 503-5; Redwood 2003: 101). Morrison and Moore evidently influenced those who I would later come into contact with. For example, the archives of the Z(Cluster) mailing list, which served an online chaos magick group that I was involved with in the late 1990s (see chapter 4), contains many discussions of Grant, Moore, and Neil Gaiman by self-identified occultists who had been influenced by their work. However, during my childhood I was rather more unwittingly influenced by the presence of occult practitioners via the occulturally-adjacent field of fantasy fiction: particularly Bob Stewart's spellbinding psalter music, which featured prominently in a spoken-word adaptation of Tolkien's *The Hobbit*, narrated by Nicol Williamson and originally released by Argo in 1974. Aged ten, I listened to this recording nightly on tape (A1.1.9), allowing the music and narration to evoke vivid mental imagery. However, I would not discover that Bob – *alias* R. J. – Stewart was a musician invested in ceremonial magic and Celtic paganism until I found a copy of his *Music and the Elemental Psyche*, while developing my own theories of esoteric music in my mid-20s. Similarly situated in the realms of fantastical fiction, J. H. Brennan's *Barmy Jeffers and the Quasimodo Walk* (1988) provided me with some early practical magical guidance in mantra and visualisation (A1.1.5), and I also later played Brennan's roleplaying gamebook series, *Grailquest*. I was, once more, unaware until my 20s that J. H. 'Herbie' Brennan was also a prominent member of Dolores Ashcroft-Nowicki's Servants of the Light, and an author on occult and magical subjects.

The fantastic, or 'weird' fiction of H. P. Lovecraft was also an enduring influence and gateway to occultural religiosity, an engagement with which flowed into what I would consider my first 'serious' period of magical practice. This begins in my late teens as a consequence of encountering Phil Hine's *Pseudonomicon*: a chaos magick text describing magical approaches to Lovecraft's 'Cthulhu Mythos' (A1.2.3, 1.3.10-15). I developed a romanticised idea of Hine as a dark, gothic, liminal figure practicing the 'punk rock', urban magick of the 'chaos current', and flirting with insanity by calling

upon Lovecraft's cosmic deities. This idealised image may have been revised if I had been aware that he was also involved in roleplaying games and had contributed to Games Workshop's *White Dwarf* magazine in 1983 and 1984 (Hine 2011): although perhaps I was dimly aware of such connections from his references to using role-playing to invoke a fictional character in *Oven-Ready Chaos* (1997b: 38-9) or the use of 'small figurines as used in fantasy roleplaying' as the material base for magical servitors in *Aspects of Evocation* (1998: 17).

The perceived connection between roleplaying games and occult practices had been the subject of moral panic since the 1977 disappearance of American student James "Dallas" Egbert (Laycock 2019, Peterson 2021), stoked by the connections that William Dear, a private investigator hired by Egbert's parents, made in the national press between their son's disappearance and the 'cult-like' game of Dungeons and Dragons. Five years later, the mother of student Irving Pulling, who committed suicide in 1982, formed the pressure group Bothered About Dungeons and Dragons (B.A.D.D.), which swiftly allied with conservative Christian leaders (Laycock 2019) and, along with heavy metal, became incorporated into the developing narratives of the 'Satanic Panic' of the 80s and early 90s (ibid.). While the conservative Christian discourse on roleplaying games – that they endangered the souls of players, instructed them on witchcraft, and involved mental encounters with real demons (Laycock 2015 cited in Laycock 2019) – would be ridiculed by many players, whether occultists or not, there are undoubtedly aspects of roleplaying games which appeal to those also prone to engage with esoteric practices or occultural religiosity. Jones' ethnographic study of British neopaganism notes the 'significant overlap' between practitioners of neopaganism and roleplaying gamers, with eight out of his eleven interviewees describing Dungeons and Dragons as piquing their initial interest in pagan deities, paganism, or shamanism (Jones 2003: 118-119). This is, of course, not the case for all players of role-playing games, but Laycock has proposed that such games - and the broader area of fantasy-fiction as highlighted in this connection by Ramstedt (2007: 5-7, and Jones 2003: 182) – give their consumers 'a mental space to think about magical ideas and assess which ones are more plausible' (Laycock 2019: 6).

Ramstedt connects the practice of role-playing games (in which situations are described to players by a referee or 'dungeon master') and the practice of pathworking used in guided meditations and magical rituals to the exercise of Jungian active imagination (called 'deep imagination' by Ramstedt [:10]), since they

also involve processes akin to ‘free association’ wherein the players and referee improvise, while a visualisation in a pagan or magical context is similarly developed to ‘reveal’ something to the practitioner – opening the door for the practitioner to engage in imaginative improvisation (:9). However, Ramstedt also clouds matters by attempting to distinguish between ‘mythology’ proper and ‘literary fiction’, as well as ‘metaphorical interpretation and literal belief’ (:1), suggesting that in neopaganism these distinctions have ‘collapsed into one’ (:12). Perhaps this is to some extent true in contemporary esotericism and occulture, where beliefs are constructed as a matter of personal choice within a popular culture that readily provides alternative ‘substantive’ mythologies in the work of Tolkien, Star Trek, Star Wars and so on (Jones 2003: 140-142; Ramstedt 2007: 1-2). It could also be argued that, from an emic position, systems such as planetary archetypes or the Tree of Life also provide frameworks in which any work of either established myth or literary fiction may be considered expressions of – or ways to engage with – transcendent powers of which fictional characters are but one possible manifestation (e.g. Hine 1997b: 35-7). However, contemporary occultists and neopagans are also extremely perceptive about the qualitative or phenomenological differences between the modes of imagination employed in reading fantasy novels or playing Dungeons & Dragons and those involved in performing a magical, religious, or divinatory ritual. Jones (2003) observed that engaging with role-playing games was not seen as a magical process *per se*, but one informant described the imaginative process of role-playing as a *complement* to magical practice: ‘an interesting adjunct to astral work and meditation, as it is an imagined landscape and the group dynamics are similar to magical workings’ (:142).

While the process of roleplaying or engagement with fantasy fiction may not necessarily be viewed as a magical act, my autobiographical reflection highlights gray areas, intertextual transfers, and the role of intent in such engagements with the imagination. Juvenile attempts to vividly imagine myself visiting He-Man’s Realm of Eternia (A1.1.2), or to lucidly imagine the narrative of Tolkien’s *The Hobbit* (A1.1.9) were not considered magical: they were not held to reflect a deeper, transpersonal reality, nor did they provide means to attain any form of esoteric knowledge or gnosis, nor to affect a change in my material circumstance. The same also applied to the imaginative exercises involved in my roleplaying and engagements with fantasy fiction, which overlapped with a developing awareness of esoteric practice. Returning to Laycock’s proposition about roleplaying games allowing players to assess which magical ideas are plausible (2019: 6), my own vivid, imaginative engagements with

fantasy fiction and roleplaying games (A1.1.8, 1.1.2, 1.1.9, 1.2.1) *did* emphasise the experiential power of the imagination, and, coupled with other sources in popular (oc)culture, emphasised the plausibility of the imagination as something which was not ‘mere fantasy’, but rather possessed some form of reality. This is a common discursive motif in esoteric forms of thought and, latterly, occulture, wherein the imagination is viewed as an organ for the cognition of the spiritual world or a vehicle for the soul, present in the Neoplatonism and Aristotelianism informing medieval scholasticism (Asprem 2016, 2017; van den Doel & Hanegraaff 2006: 606-610), and later in the works of Ficino, Pico della Mirandola (ibid.: 610-12) and Paracelsus (:613-14), and Fludd (Josten 1964b). Both Agrippa (Lehrich 2003: 61-2) and Bruno saw the imagination as an active magical force, while Romantics such as Wordsworth and Coleridge would also theorise a distinction between imagination and ‘fancy’. Discourses deriving from Corbin’s *mundus imaginalis* (Corbin 1964) have further emphasised the discursive position that there is a qualitative aspect to what may be described from an emic perspective as ‘true’ imagination, distinct from ‘fantasy’.

Such a discourse, which describes a sense of porosity between the real and the imaginary, and the power of the imagination to both perceive the spiritual realm and perhaps influence the mundane one, finds many expressions in popular culture, particularly in children’s fiction such as Alan Garner’s *Elidor* (1965) in which a number of seemingly-mundane items are powerful artefacts in a parallel world, or Diana Wynn Jones’ *The Lives of Christopher Chant* (1988), where injuries sustained in the different dreamworlds visited by the protagonist are subsequently sustained by accidents occurring in the waking world. Within the popular culture that I was exposed to, the idea of dreams possessing a certain reality and relation to the waking world prevailed in this respect, reflected in early encounters with *A Nightmare on Elm Street* (1984) (A1.1.2), and later H. P. Lovecraft’s *Dream Quest of Unknown Kadath* (1943), which provided inspiration for the first imaginative explorations that I explicitly framed as ‘magical’, undertaken after acquiring Hine’s *Pseudonomicon* (1997a) (A1.3.13). Michael Jackson’s *Thriller* (1982), which I watched at a birthday party in the mid-80s, had also prompted me to play with the boundary between imagination and reality: imagining I was a werewolf as I lay in bed, then claiming a thick hair found by a friend in the school hall the following day was evidence of my having been there in the night in lycanthropic form (A1.1.3).

Partridge has argued that in contemporary Europe and North America, popular culture (which includes of the occultural, fantasy-fiction, and role-playing games)

contributes to both the formation of world-views and the formation of individual plausibility structures (e.g. Partridge 2002: 243-6; 2004: 15, 53, 126; 2013a: 135). During the 1980s, my consumption of media and culture that was situated in, or adjacent to, occulture was not limited to fantasy fiction, role-playing, and horror films (A1.1.7), but also incorporated encounters with urban legends such as 'Bloody Mary' (A1.1.4), and reading books such as Usborne's *All about Ghosts and Hauntings* (A1.1.6) which presented the topic of ghosts from a perspective of scientific agnosticism (with sections both providing mundane explanations for hauntings, and others presenting 'as yet unexplained' cases; A1.1.6).

The consumption of such varied, yet occulturally-situated or occulturally-adjacent forms of media did, of course, provide an environment in which different supernatural plausibilities could be explored, such as the aforementioned transformation into a creature of the night (A1.1.3), trying to mimic the magical spells found in J. H. Brennan's *Barmy Jeffers* books (A1.1.5), being convinced I heard a ghost (A1.1.4), and experiencing the imaginative potential of a concentrated mental involvement with fantasy fiction (A1.1.9). The influence of film and print media on constructing such spaces for the exploration of magical or supernatural plausibility has been noted, but these experiences were also unfolding against the social and cultural background of the 'Satanic Panic': particularly the wide-spread reporting on the radio and in the press concerning the Rochdale 'satanic ritual abuse' (SRA) case in the Autumn of 1990. Layock (2013: 90) has highlighted the SRA scares of the 80s and early 90s as a demonstration of 'the incredible power of popular media to affect plausibility structures and to shape popular ideas about the religious other' (:91). While this may more readily apply to the American landscape of 24-hour news, Talk Radio, and conservative Christian media outlets, than to the restrained reporting in British media, the presence of SRA discourse in the media did at least provoke questions which tested the bounds of plausibility: are there Satanists in my town? Even near my primary school? (A.1.1.7).

As I matured, between the ages of 12 and 15 I inhabited a lifeworld that was to some extent less influenced by supernatural and Satanic plausibilities. I still enjoyed horror films and roleplaying games for a couple of years, but was chiefly interested in computer gaming (including computer roleplaying games) and programming. However, my tendency to engage in imaginative practices also persisted: particularly in my imaginatively-engaged listening to heavy metal music (A1.2.2, see chapter 4), and attempts to write a computer programme that would induce a trance, then lead

the user through a narrated experience (A1.2.4). In my later teens, an encounter with the music of Gong would lead to a more intentionally ritualised relationship between music and imaginative listening, described in the next chapter, as well as stimulating an interest in neopaganism as a religious choice (A1.3.3-4, A1.3.6). At this time, I also became dimly aware of chaos magick through a review of Phil Hine's *Pseudonomicon* in a 1994 issue of *Fortean Times*, and a profile of a chaos magick group on Channel 4's *Desperately Seeking Something* in 1996 (A1.3.5). My interest in the music of Gong also developed into a wider interest in psychedelic music and a fascination with the mystique of psychedelic drugs – perhaps owing to their possibility of making the imagined, or *imaginal*, more vivid (A1.3.7).

The popular culture of the 1990s also encompassed a multitude of expressions of the occultural: the mainstream popularity of *The X-Files* (1993-2002), debuting on UK screens in 1994, presented UFOs, supernatural creatures, and conspiracy theory to a global audience of millions. Elsewhere, *An Interview with the Vampire* (1994), *The Craft* (1996), *Charmed* (1996-2006), *Sabrina the Teenage Witch* (1996-2003), *Practical Magic* (1998), and the television adaptation of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* (1997-2003) maintained not only a cultural fascination with the 'monstrous' (Hjelm 2009: 105), but also presented role models in the form of misunderstood modern vampires and witches that appealed to teenage identity construction and personal religioneering practices (Partridge 2002: 246; Ramstedt 2007: 5; Berger & Ezzy 2007: 38-42), further exemplified in books like Silver Ravenwolf's *TeenWitch!: Wicca for a New Generation* (1998, *ibid.*).

Although the above mainstream representations of the occultural during the 1990s do not feature in my own biographical narrative, they warrant a mention since they emphasise occulture as a persistent facet of popular culture, one functioning as a gateway for curious seekers, and highlighting conspicuous elements that provide the cultural backdrop to individual religious engagements with the other niche, subcultural, 'cultic' formations that may also be located within occulture. Although a casual watcher of the first two seasons of *X-Files*, I was dismissive of the abovementioned representations of witchcraft, the supernatural, and the occult which constituted mainstream occulture in the mid- to late-90s. By the end of the decade, the focus of my seekership had moved from neopaganism to chaos magick and then toward a 'purist' position in which I sought a form of magic whose authenticity lay in manuscripts and other historical primary sources, rather than in what were perceived to be mainstream and consumer-orientated representations of the occult (see

chapter 4). Dyrendal (2008) has cited the hypothesis of Possamai (2005) that the New Age (and, I would argue, occultural religiosity in general) presents a hyper-consumerist form of religion, in which individual choice reigns (Dyrendal 2008: 80-1), and my own turn toward 'purism' may seem to present a turning against such hyper-consumerism – as it could certainly viewed from an emic perspective – toward what Possamai describes as the hypo-consumerism of traditional, fundamentalist, or religious orthodoxy. However, the subject of such a turn remains the individual: still involving variously the ongoing processes of self-directed seekership, the individualistic construction of personal identity in opposition to a perceived mainstream, the pursuit of personal power and knowledge, and the freedom to pick from sources deemed 'authentic' as a matter of personal judgment.

The autobiographical narrative serves to demonstrate a number of ways in which, as Partridge has put it, 'occulture is ordinary' (Partridge 2014). We have noted that occulture is a prevalent and sustained aspect of popular culture, although it has subsequently become a journalistic *cliché* to begin an article on the occultural with the observation that there has been a *recent* surge in some area such as witchcraft, astrology, or crystal healing, which is then usually associated with social or political upheavals or uncertainty (e.g. Griffin 2022; Ingram 2022). Hale (2022) has described such popular journalism on esoteric 'fads' as counter to evidence that interest in such topics has been fairly consistent at least since the 1950s, while Genovese additionally suggests that levels of interest in astrology remained stable between 1800 and 2000 (Genovese 2015) – and indeed, newspaper horoscopes remain a mainstay of everyday occulture. What such popular press articles do demonstrate, however, is which facets of occulture are most visible in popular culture at a given moment, be it witchcraft, magic, and the monstrous (from *Sabrina*, *Charmed*, *Hocus Pocus*, *Harry Potter*, *Buffy*, *Twilight*, or the contemporary presence of 'WitchTok' influencers), UFOs (from 50s b-movies, to *Close Encounters of a Third Kind* [1977] and *X-Files*), conspiracy theory (from Robert Anton Wilson's *Illuminatus!* trilogy [1975], to Dan Brown's *Da Vinci Code* [2003]), or the romance and fear of that which is deemed cultic (e.g. The Church of Satan's prominence in mainstream media from the 1960s to the 1990s, the media response to the Satanic Ritual Abuse scare, or the 'folk horror' of films such as *The Wicker Man* [1973] and *Midsommar* [2019]).

Evidently not all of those who consume popular occulture do so in order to construct personal religious identities. Levels of engagement with the forms of enchanted plausibility offered by occulture vary, from the casual reader of horoscopes, to the

deeply immersed seeker who might dismiss many mainstream occultural representations as shallow or *ersatz*, while also maintaining their own relationships to less mainstream occultural or esoteric milieus, and contributing to and maintaining the micro-economies and subcultures with which they are associated (see chapter 7).

The autobiographical narrative also highlights occulture as 'ordinary' in the sense that the beliefs and practices I had constructed from my engagements with occultural artefacts and their associated esoteric discourses also existed alongside the quotidian details of daily life, for example: spending the summer holiday before going to university in the practice of conjuring Goetic demons (A1.3.26-37), or attempting to achieve divine knowledge through the magic of Arbatel while living above a Leeds takeaway and doing general office work during the day (A2.3.12-26). In many respects, occultural religiosity and the practices which are constructed around it are as 'ordinary' as mainstream religiosity, in that, although within occulture religious authority is placed on the judgment of the self, the 'enchanted' lifeworld inhabited by a seeker nevertheless persists alongside participation in a wider culture: albeit one which is often perceived from an emic perspective as disenchanting, materialistic and secular.

Conclusion: Analytic Autobiography and Locations of Theory

Exploring the composition of an autobiographical narrative through the use of archival materials, while maintaining a thematic focus on occulture and occultural religiosity enabled me to construct an emic model of the self as it related to occulture, esotericism, creative practice, and the production of (oc)cultural artefacts. The broadly 'grounded' methodological paradigm, complementing the construction of an autobiographical narrative with theoretical memoing and coding also stimulated the research process, enabling the formulation of a provisional theoretical model of creative seekership which both focuses on-, and develops from-, the ground of 'lived experience'. Additionally, the resulting autobiographical document presented as the second volume of this thesis not only constitutes a data source, but also structures and contextualises the corpus of texts and artefacts that supported its composition.

The resulting theoretical model for creative seekership, suggests both a set of processes involved in such seekership and a number of areas for further exploration and theorization. The chapters which follow, presenting detailed analyses of identity, experience, and the development of esoteric-creative practices within the context of

both the occultural memoir and the broader media and milieus of occulture, serve to develop each component of the theoretical model toward a point of saturation which will allow the final model to be refined.

The initial model can also be situated as an emically-focused complement to Hammer's more etically-orientated levels of analysis (e.g. social and cultural contexts, morphology, and emic interpretation [2004: 34 -35]). So situated, it emphasises a number of chiefly emic concerns: in the social and cultural context it highlights a particular concern with personal identity, both constructed from occulture and performed within occulture (e.g. performed through the production of artefacts intended for occulturally-situated milieus). In the domain of emic interpretation, the appraisal of experience, and judgments on the value of techniques and 'currents' (such as their efficacy or authenticity) also become important *foci*.

While the etic focus of Hammer's domains of interpretation makes them particularly suitable for analysis of the wider discursive strategies and motifs associated with esoteric religion, a turn toward an emic perspective describes how these strategies and motifs are manifest in the dynamic and finely-grained context of individual seekership. Although discursive analyses inform much that follows, describing the complexes of discursive motifs through which experience was interpreted and developed into practices, and the discursive strategies of legitimisation involved in the presentation of the creative artefacts such practices yielded, it has also been noted that it will be necessary to expand the interdisciplinary scope of the research to reflect the bottom-up, individually-situated nature of the autoethnographic approach. This will invite us to consider how factors such as experience are not only situated within, for example, discursive fields and emic interpretations, but also their relationship to cognition, phenomenology, and the affective spaces in which selfhood, music, esoteric/occultural religiosity – and, in this study, creative practice – overlap (Partridge 2014: 37-38).

We will begin examining this expanded picture of artistic creativity and occultural seekership in the next chapter, with an analysis of the constructions of identity that both inform and emerge from the process of seekership. This analysis continues from the previous section of this chapter, which chiefly drew attention to the cultural contexts for engagement with occulture during my childhood and youth. Social contexts were limited, as were considerations of any sort of 'form' or morphology relating to either emic ontologies or epistemologies. Similarly, any experiences I had

during this time were not generally subject to any significant effort of emic interpretation. The next chapter demonstrates how expanded social and (oc)cultural engagements – chiefly mediated by the then-new technology of the Internet – supported the development of the seekership process, including the construction of identities and practices related to distinct forms of esoteric discourse.

Chapter 4.

The Contours of Seekership: Discourse Tracing and Discursive Identities

Introduction

How do processes of seekership shape identity? This chapter explores the relationship between occultural seekership, esoteric discourse, and the formation – and presentation of – identity over a period spanning 1998 to 2001. We may describe occultural seekership in the context of artistic creativity as a form of popular or ‘post-secular’ religioneering, which bridges both private experience and public performance due to its near-unavoidable participation in a capital- and media-orientated (oc)culture. Within occulture the plausibilities of alternative ontological and epistemological claims are no longer contested through polemics and apologies, but presented variously as objects of fascination, entertainment, and potential material for the syncretic construction of belief and identity.

During the process of memoing and analysing the autobiographical narrative, it became apparent that I had assumed and presented several identities, which hinted at alignments with distinct discursive positions. To approach an analysis of these identities, I decided to draw upon LeGreco and Tracy’s method of *discourse tracing* (2009). LeGreco and Tracy suggest this is a useful method for the study of ‘any issue, case, data text, or process that transforms over time’ (:1517) – the issue in this case being the construction and presentation of identities and their relationship to occulture’s potential as a discursive field of seekership.

LeGreco and Tracy’s method usually begins from the isolation of a distinct moment of discursive rupture (:1524), and concentrates on the gathering of chronologically-ordered texts to contribute to micro-, meso-, and macro-levels of analysis (:1526-28). While grounded theory and discourse tracing both seek to develop theoretical outputs as part of their evaluation stages, the data analysis stage of discourse tracing focuses on developing structured questions to guide the analysis (:1532). Arguably such an approach is useful in cases where a relatively cohesive theoretical outline has already been established: in the present case constituted by the proposed framework for creative seekership derived from a grounded analysis, and the theoretical awareness and methodological pragmatism which suggest

complementary, theoretical perspectives and methods for developing deeper theoretical insight. In the next section, we will survey a body of theoretical literature on identity construction with the intention of developing the theoretical sensitivity to discern exactly what questions may be asked of the data.

It should be noted that, in the context of seekership – in this case spanning a period of several years – delimiting identity formation to a single distinct rupture may be problematic. Kokkinen draws on Campbell's assertion that 'seekers' are engaged in an ongoing process, and 'do not necessarily cease seeking when a revealed truth is offered to them, nor do they necessarily stop looking in other directions when one path is indicated as *the* path to the truth' (Campbell, quoted in Kokkinen 2013: 30). The fluidity of seekership suggests a similar fluidity of identity, which was confirmed by an initial survey of both my autobiographical writing and the chronologically ordered texts from my own archive.

Analysing the autobiographical statements and text from the period under discussion (1998-2001), three distinct identities emerged – each one indicating a suggesting a distinct discursive positionings. However, whether these may be resolved to particular moments of rupture, or whether they are in fact the consequence of more fluid processes of discursive drift will be examined as the analyses of this chapter develop:

- 1) Fluid and composite identities during my formative engagement with neopaganism, chaos magick, and online forums (ca. 1998-99);
- 2) Identification as a Purist, or 'Scholar-Magician', following a deepening engagement with ritual magic (ca. 1999-2001);
- 3) Musical identities contemporary with the above, identified here as 'Occult Experimentalist' and 'Orphic Troubadour'.

While many of the texts produced during the period 1998-2001 can be read in terms of the micro- level of discourse analysis (e.g. as containers of discourse), much of my analysis will concentrate on how these are presented in terms of a meso- level of discourse, that is, how they express and legitimate what might be called a 'discursive identity' in the social and cultural contexts that they were produced (e.g. on internet forums, or through the production of websites, interviews, and musical artefacts). Insights developed from these micro- and meso- level analyses also have related

macro- level implications relating to wider contexts surrounding of identity, occulture, and modernity.

Modernity, Reflexivity, and Self-Identity in Esotericism Studies

Within the field of esotericism studies, von Stuckrad (2009, 2010) and Granholm (2014) both identify a close relationship between discourse and the construction and negotiation of identity. For von Stuckrad, the core of modern 'Western' identity – that which is enlightened, rational, and immune from its "pagan past" (2009: 53) – is an expression of Enlightenment and post-Enlightenment discourses, against which the irrational, mystical and esoteric are constructed as a necessary 'other' (von Stuckrad 2010: 143). For Granholm, identity formation is a continuous process, involving the construction of meaningful narratives "based on his/her experiences, [and] revised in relation to other people and new experiences and information" (2014: 35). Granholm's assertion here also echoes Kokkinen's conceptualisation of seekership as an ongoing, discursively-embedded process.

The importance of Anthony Giddens' work on the reflexive self and modernity has often been noted by scholars when discussing the relationships between modernity, esoteric discourses, and identity (e.g. Hammer 2004: 10-14; Partridge 2005: 6-7; Granholm 2014: 35-6, 173-4). For Giddens, modern self-identity is considered a '*reflexive project*' (Giddens 1991: 75), in that it is not imposed upon its subjects by external structures (as in pre-modern feudal society), but has become a question of personal choice, often tied to aspirations regarding who one *wants* to be (:75-76). For Giddens, this 'reflexive self' emerges from the conditions which have developed around modernity and in particular contemporary 'late modernity'. Giddens' asserts that modernity is a 'post-traditional' form of society, in which agents do not have a single identity, but engage in a plurality of segmented social situations. The apparent prominence of Enlightenment values in modernity also places a particular emphasis on the contingency of knowledge and 'radical doubt' as guiding factors for identity formation (:3) – in opposition to faith in the 'natural' or traditional order of things. Finally, modernity is highly mediatised, and often uses mass media's global reach to affect processes of disembedding – wherein beliefs and cultures are no longer rooted in locality but freely circulate through global markets and dissemination structures (Bagguley 2003: 138-140).

As with Campbell's cultic milieu and Kokkinen's occultal seekers, Giddens' formulation of the modern search for the self is a continuous process, aimed at building a 'coherent and rewarding sense of identity' (Giddens 1991: 75) and the ultimate process of 'self-actualisation' (:77-79) – the discovery of the *authentic* self. Giddens explored self-help literature in order to illuminate this 'secular spiritual' quest (:70-80), while Hammer also noted that 'esoteric literature abounds in descriptions of how to transform oneself in various ways in order to become a healthier, happier and more spiritual person' (2004: 14). In occulture and contemporary esotericism this is most evident in the overlap between self-help and New Age literature, although the discursive motif that we might associate with this reflexive search for self-authenticity is prefigured by religious ideas about the incompleteness or fallen nature of humankind, and the possibility of its redemptive rebirth. As Walliss (2001) points out, 'individuals have sought security and existential security in, for example, religious traditions throughout time and that, whilst late modernity may have made this search more urgent, the search itself is nothing new' (:87).

However, such an emphasis on self-, rather than institutional-, authority often necessitates the discursive negotiation of modernity's inherited Enlightenment bias, invoking the use of epistemic strategies relating to scientisation (and, by extension, psychologisation) to legitimise esoteric discourse. Within a mainstream of seekers who do not fully reject modernity, the location of such knowledge necessarily shifts: from the transcendent, to the self – or else to a conspicuously intermediate ground. One example of this tendency is Hammer's identification of the 'modern psycho-religions' of New Thought, Jungianism, and humanistic and transpersonal psychologies [2004: 67-68], which are at once couched in rational, scientific, psychological terms and theories, and focused on 'self-actualisation', while also appealing to realities and forms of knowing which go beyond the individual.

While Giddens' work has become the cornerstone for many scholars engaging with theories of modern identity, there are a number of critiques of which work that are of particular interest when considering its applicability to the domain of esotericism studies. Prominent amongst general criticisms is that the emphasis on selfhood and reflexivity reflects neoliberal discourses, and – in bracketing questions regarding the structures in which that self moves – often omits potential for a sociological critique of power (Baggely: 145-6). However, we may objectively suggest that the successive enactments of industrialist, capitalist, and neoliberal discourses have shaped the construction of late modernity in Western Europe and North America, so it is not

unexpected that the search for selfhood often operates within their confines. Asprey and Crockford have also noted these ideological implications of esoteric and New Age narratives regarding selfhood: 'Emphasising self-reliance is a way of naturalising a political economic project [e.g. neoliberalism] — removing the social safety nets of the welfare state. 'Self-help' and 'self-care' are not neutral discourse; they encourage acceptance of particular political and economic projects through the sacralisation of individuality and by attributing responsibility solely to the self' (2018: 18-19).

Giddens' own historicisation of self- and institutional reflexivity as that which separates modern and 'traditional' societies also necessitates a critical evaluation. Walliss has referred to this monolithic construction of two opposing forms of society — one rigid and traditional, with profoundly limited reflexivity, and other highly reflexive — as the 'modernist myth' (Walliss 2001: 84). A number of ways to address the shortcomings of this traditional-modern binary have been suggested by scholars. It is worthy of note that Giddens describes traditions that have adapted to modernity's doctrine of 'radical doubt' — for example by engaging in what Hammer might describe as discursive strategies such as the appeal to science (Hammer 2004: 44-45) — as 'tradition in sham clothing [as it] receives its identity only from the reflexivity of the modern' (Giddens, in Walliss 2001: 84). Mellor (1993) and Walliss have suggested that 'reflexive traditions' is a more accurate way of describing the inventions, re-inventions, and adaptations that 'traditions' undergo. Mellor draws attention to Martin Luther's interpretation of 'the Calling' (:118-19), while Walliss asserts:

no 'traditional society' was wholly dominated by tradition and there is widespread evidence to show that people not only rejected traditions in the past but also reinvented them. The examples of the medieval saints and heretical movements, such as the Cathars and the Anabaptists are a case in point, as are the variety of millenarian movements that sprung up over Europe, often as a form of criticism against the dominant Christian tradition. (Walliss: 86-87)

In terms of contemporary esoteric/occultal seekership, the traditions of particular interest are not monolithic institutions, but exactly the sort of 'reflexive traditions' that Giddens identified as 'sham', since they often justify themselves through legitimising strategies (e.g. the appeal to science), or — at the other extreme — through the outright rejection of modernity itself (e.g. the Traditionalism of Julius Evola), which is itself a discursive and reflexive position. Such justifications, themselves deeply

embedded in the aforementioned 'modernist myth', demonstrate the emic adoption of a discourse that situates 'tradition' as the Enlightenment's 'other'. Giddens described 'tradition' as the 'shadow side of modernity' (Wallis 2001: 84) – but if we extend our definition of tradition to embrace Giddens' 'sham traditions' and acknowledge that traditions do indeed change and adapt (*vide* Walliss *et al.*) – we may find in 'tradition' an echo of Asprem & Granholm's description of occulture as 'the shadow side of culture fascinated by that which hegemonic religion, culture, and science marginalises or rejects' (Asprem & Granholm 2013a: 135). If we are to posit occulture in Kokkinen's terms, the discursive field in which seekership is embedded is constituted at least in part by a loose assortment of 'reflexive traditions'. With this in mind, the reflexivity of traditions is an important complement to the reflexive project of the self insofar as these traditions present themselves to the seeker with a variety of discursive claims, as well as identities, that can be incorporated into the seekers' own narratives of selfhood.

Having highlighted criticisms Giddens' theoretical position, and the problematics of tradition-versus-modernity, we must also briefly address Giddens' cognitivist and social biases. While Giddens emphasises that the core of modern identity is focused on the construction of autobiographical narratives, Granholm draws attention to criticism by Lövheim (2003) and Hall (1996), who suggest that Giddens places too much emphasis on conscious decision-making in identity formation (Granholm 2005: 119). Such a criticism is also echoed by Lash (1994), who describes Giddens rational agents as biased toward a 'cognitive model' of reflexivity, to the neglect of aesthetic, hermeneutic, and emotive dimensions (see Bagguley 2003: 141-42) – the key distinction being between that of an agent involved in Giddensian risk-aware self-monitoring (and consequent reflexive actions) and one involved more subjective modes of self-*interpretation*. This distinction is particularly relevant in terms of esotericism, where the unpredicted and subjective are sought through experiences of revelation and altered-states of consciousness – actions that behave not as stepping-stones to a rationalised objective, but as interventions that prompt the agent to provide an interpretive narrative. Therefore, formation of identity may not be presented as solely the cognisant *choice* of the agent, but as developing from a hermeneutic reflex – although there may conversely be rationalised decisions with regard to how these interpretations are presented (e.g. to increase cultural capital amongst fellow seekers by presenting oneself as having undergone a profound mystical experience). Jones underlined this hermeneutic tendency with regard to modern pagan magic in his observation that: 'Pagans might not see their magical

affiliations and proclivities as being *entirely* a matter of individual choice. Rather, they seem to reaffirm the impression that a person's relationship with magical 'realities' is regarded, to a significant extent, as *being beyond her control*' (Jones 2003: 145, emphasis added).

Given that this research concerns not only occultural identities, but musical ones, it would also be useful to note that Partridge has drawn attention to dimensions of identity formation in religious and musical contexts which can also be brought into this discussion of Giddensian identity. Via DeNora's conceptualisation of 'music as a device for the constitution of emotive action in and across a range of social settings' (DeNora 2010, quoted in Partridge 2014: 37), Partridge emphasises the connection between music and the construction of "affective space". The affective spaces with which he is concerned being those that evoke 'moods' of the sacred and/or profane – and, although he says ways in which these also shape identity are 'to some extent close' to Giddens' reflexive self', it is evident that Partridge is suggesting that it not simply a case of cognisant, rationalised choice, but also an engagement with the emotive and aesthetic qualities of musical and religious affective space that are vital to the process of identity formation (:37-38). It will be useful to consider the idea of affective space – those emotional, subjective spaces evoked by either music or religion – from some of the perspectives explored by Wetherell (2012). Primarily is the concept that an affect goes beyond the induction of a feeling or emotion, but rather that affect is both deeply embodied and discursive – what Wetherell describes as 'embodied meaning-making' (:1, 4, 19-21, 51-76). As will be seen throughout this research, the use of music to create an 'affective space' for ritual or esoteric practice goes beyond simply evoking mood, but *affects* the subject in many other ways: beyond emotive and physiological responses to the music, it also provides the space to enact ritual actions, and evoke experiences, which in turn enable the subject to construct meanings and identities.

To touch on one final criticism of Giddens' work: critics have highlighted, and Giddens himself conceded, that the work of the reflexive self is contingent on a wide range of resources – financial, social, emotional, and physical – which are not evenly distributed amongst the agents of late modernity. However, disability research scholar Tom Shakespeare (1996) has also argued that modernity provides opportunities for positive identity work amongst hitherto negatively socialised identities. Esotericism and occulture has also provided avenues for expressions of such identities, owing to its association with 'othered' and marginal figures such as

the witch (old, disabled, female), heterodox religious and mystical ideas, and the sexually permissive approaches to self-knowledge practiced by occultists such as Aleister Crowley. This has constructed a mode of culture which can be particularly receptive to a variety of non-normative identities – the most prominent of these being sexual identities (Urban 2004). Contemporary occulture has further provided an arena for occultists and pagans for whom disabled and non-European heritage are particularly important aspects of their identity and self-presentation, such as Ian ‘Cat’ Vincent who describes himself as ‘Magician [...] Queer, kinky crip’ (Vincent n.d.), Craig ‘Vi’ Slee – ‘Bearded Frothing Madman. Cripple [...] Would-be sorcerer’ (Slee n.d.), or Angie Speaks, black ‘post-left’ YouTuber and witch (Graham 2019).

It is also evident that such modern identities are not monolithic, but multi-faceted and relational. Giddens described the self as moving within a variety of ‘lifestyle sectors’, each made ‘internally cohesive by distinctive forms of elected behavior across time-space’ (1991: 83). Granholm briefly mentions the work of James Paul Gee, which emphasises the interaction between micro-social discourse and identity in relational contexts (e.g. Granholm 2005: 256; 2014:36). Gee’s own work concerning ‘identity domains’ also describes the domain of ‘discursive identity’, which encompasses how ‘people can construct and sustain identities through discourse and dialogue [...] without the overt sanction and support of "official" institutions that come, in some sense, to "own" those identities’ (Gee 2001: 103). It should be emphasised that Gee’s discursive identity emphasises that identity is relationally constructed: it is dependent on both how a subject self-presents through discourse and language, and how they are perceived by others as a consequence. The identities explored in the context of this research were often played out in public and semi-public forums (e.g. on the Internet, or via underground music networks), and presented through a variety of mediums and aesthetics. In this respect, Gee’s discursive identity takes on a special significance, since it can be used to articulate the self-presenting and dialogic nature of identity construction, in which the use of esoteric motifs to construct identities that lay claim to certain areas of knowledge are knowingly presented to an audience in terms of appeals to authenticity and legitimacy.

A critical assessment of discourses surrounding the ‘reflexive-self’ and its relation to the construction of identities enables us to consider more closely the types of questions which may arise when discourse tracing the construction of identities in my own autobiography. The first question asks how identity coalesces around a particular moment of either discursive rupture or drift, and to what extent the

identities stemming from these are either cognitively or hermeneutically constructed. Secondly, given that modern and esoteric identity as outlined here is connected with ongoing processes of seekership, it may be asked: what does a particular identity formation *seek*? Where is the object of seekership located, and how is it sought? This object could, for example, be either knowledge in the transcendent and spiritual domain, or authentic self-knowledge. These questions of the ‘what?’, ‘why?’ and ‘where?’ of seekership also emphasise relationships between reflexive identity formation and wider ontological and epistemological discourses. Finally, how is the identity discursively positioned within a (semi-)public sphere, and what intentions are served by the performance or presentation of identity in this meso-social domain? We will revisit these questions in the conclusion of this chapter, while also bearing them in mind in the analyses that now follow.

Cybermagick 1998 AD: Usenet, The Magic Code, and Formative Identity

Scholars studying the formation of identity among young people have often pointed to cultural and subcultural formations such as popular and rock music as providing forms of ‘transitional space’ in which adolescents can establish a sense of community, identity, and autonomy beyond adult control (e.g. Fornäs 1990, cited in Lövheim 2005:3). It was rock music – particularly psychedelia and the music of the progressive jazz-fusion group Gong (A1.3.2) – which was fundamental to forming my identity during my mid-to-late teens, and I reflected this identity aesthetically – in my choice of clothing (floral blouses, flares) and disinclination to cut my hair. However, I did not have any particular clique who shared my interests, beyond occasional contacts with local band The Paisley Masque and their circle. Rather, Gong foremost presented me with an *imagined community*, supported by its fan club (GAS – The Gong Appreciation Society) who also promoted the practice of ‘telepot contact’. This was the suggestion that fans of the band meditate at 9PM GMT and ‘join your brothers and sisters on the telepathic airways’ (Planet Gong n.d.). For me this entailed an engagement with the music as a ritualised, affective space: playing Gong as a background to meditation and visualisation provided an affective space conveying moods of spirituality, trance and ecstasy as I engaged with this imagined community (A1.3.4).

My autobiography highlighted that, as well as music and its imagined communities, online virtual communities also provided particularly important arenas for identity formation. In the summer of 1997, I had created *A Very English Trip*, a website about

psychedelic music (concentrating on the UK in the 1960s), which brought me into contact with other enthusiasts from around the world, as well as former members of the bands that so fascinated me (A1.3.7). Alongside developing online contacts through my website, I also engaged with Usenet newsgroups: a set of distributed discussion boards that served as precursors to online forums and social media. Primarily I posted in the Usenet group alt.music.psychedelc to discuss my favourite bands.

Around this time, I had also acquired my first occult books: David Conway's *Magic: An Occult Primer* (1988) and Phil Hine's *Pseudonomicon* (1994/1997) (A1.3.8-9, 11-12), and began to engage with a variety of occult Usenet communities, starting with alt.necronomicon in July 1997 (A1.3.10). I moved most of my activities to alt.magick in February 1998 – and I also 'lurked' (e.g. read but rarely posted) on alt.pagan. The composition of alt.magick was varied in terms of ideology and practice, and amongst the milieu posting there in the late 1990s were Tzimon Yliaster (chaos magician), Catherine Yronwode (herbalist and hoodoo practitioner), her partner Tyagi Nagasiva (Satanist), Aaron Leitch (pagan ceremonial magician), Carroll 'Poke' Runyon (ceremonial magician), Nick Farrell (Golden Dawn), Jake Stratton Kent (Thelemite), Joseph Peterson (Avesta practitioner and grimoire editor), Daniel Harms (Lovecraft researcher and grimoire editor), The KAOS Project - Kat and Wulf (London-based chaos magicians), and Joshua Geller – original creator of alt.magick and the group's *de facto* moderator.

From the perspective of identity formation, I should note that both humour and music figured prominently in my early alt.magick posts. My early posts would often parody the seriousness of occult groups and their related milieus, and were sprinkled with the absurd humour of Gong, as when I signed a message:

Phil
X=X^2
Keeper Of The Estonian Gnome
O'.O'.P'.S [Order of Psychedelic Sorcerers]
(Posted to Alt.magick, Apr 24, 1998)

I discerned a similar style of absurd humour amongst a number of chaos magick practitioners – both on alt.magick (via posts by The KAOS Project) and in the work of Phil Hine, who had published his book *Oven-Ready Chaos* online in 1997, in which

he included a Rocky Horror Show Tree of Life (Hine 1997b: 35-7; A1.3.16), and an account of invoking Star Trek's Mr. Spock as a 'god-form' to acquire skills in computer programming (:38-9). An experience of profound changes in consciousness through listening to Gong's music in a ritualised, meditative setting (A1.3.4) seemed to confirm chaos magick's dogma that 'nothing is true, everything is permitted': belief and intent are the instrumental drivers for ritual, and provided one temporarily believed and acted in such a way as to engage the correct form of 'gnostic' consciousness, it did not matter whether one was invoking the powers of God, Nature, Star Trek's Mr. Spock, Rocky Horror's Frankenfurter, or Gong's Octave Doctors.

My developing awareness of the place of music in the affective space of ritual is also evidenced in a Usenet post made two days after the previously quoted post, in a response I wrote to a request for members of alt.magick to recommend music for ritual use:

Gee, I guess it depends on the type of ritual. Gong's Magick Mother Invocation is quite good for Pagan, I guess, but you'll have to loop it because it's only a couple of minutes long. Nine Inch Nails did some scary backing music to the game Quake, which could be cool for 'darker' things (also check out tracks like A Warm Place). There's a nice atmospheric track on the start of Wah Wah, by James and Eno. Saucerful Of Secrets by Pink Floyd, A (sic) home-made cut-up of pieces from Thomas The Rhymer and Saucy Sailor by Steeleye Span, Ozric Tentacles... in the end it's down to personal taste - it's probably best to have none. But if you have to, I would advise against anything with lyrics.

(Posted to Alt.magick, Apr 26, 1998)

It is evident here that I had – if not been producing my own forms of magical music – at least been considering the moods they evoked. The affective space of Gong's music provided an atmosphere which *affected* my engagement with meditation and mental imagery production, and although this mode of imaginative listening had already been established in my own autobiography (e.g. attempting to vividly visualise an audiobook of *The Hobbit* circa 1990 [A1.1.9], or engaging with flows of imagery while listening to heavy metal music with my eyes closed in 1992 [A1.2.2]), Practicing Gong's 'telepot contact' technique ritualised the process. Furthermore, the artists I cited above as suitable ritual music often skewed toward occultural spaces:

Gong's paganism, the dark industrial music of Nine Inch Nails, Ozric Tentacles' expansive trance-influenced psychedelia, Pink Floyd's unnerving instrumental which seemed to conjure lonely and alien spaces, and I had even suggested that the archaic 'mood' could be lifted out of songs by cutting up music by the folk-rock band Steeleye Span, who I had been introduced to via my parents' record collection. Although I did not explicitly identify as a musician at that time, I had begun to experiment with sound editing and tape recordings, and was aware that sound and music were potentially important aspects of magical practice.

If I did not yet identify either privately or publicly as a musician, how did I identify on Usenet? An earlier post I made on alt.necronomicon on 21st October 1997 presented some of my thoughts on working magic in terms of Lovecraft's 'Cthulhu mythos' and is evidently deeply influenced by Phil Hine's *Pseudonomicon*, chaos magick, and the aesthetics of Lovecraft's fiction. Although this is some of my earliest writing on the topic of 'Lovecraftian Magick', what is notable with regard to online identity formation is that the post ends with the following sequence of letters and signs:

MWI/PA/CH S* W++ N+ POT++ Dd Dr A- a+ C@ G QH+ 666(--) Y++

(A1.3.20)

This is an example of the 'Magic Code', developed by Shawn C. Knight in 1997, which enabled Usenet posters to succinctly broadcast their occult interests and aspirations. It consists of a series of descriptors, such as '666' for an interest in Aleister Crowley, each followed by a modifier to express how an individual relates to that descriptor. In the above example the parentheses indicate that I felt myself fluctuating between a neutral opinion and a more negative opinion the 'Great Beast'.

Knight's Magic Code was developed in imitation of the popular 'Geek Code', written by Robert A. Hayden in 1993, and described by McArthur (2009) as one of the 'definitive documents [to] provide a self-described identity for geeks' (:62), and acted as a particular subcultural identity marker (e.g. identifying the author as 'a geek'). The Geek Code itself was inspired by other subcultural codes, the earliest of which was Bob Donahue's Natural Bears Classification System (1991, see Donahue & Stoner 1996), designed to help gay men identifying with the 'bear' subculture describe themselves (e.g. amount of hair, bodyweight etc). Hayden ceased to update the Geek Code in 1996, by which time he stated that the web had diversified and was no longer the sole domain of 'geeks' (Hayden 1996). Furthermore, the code could only

handle so many descriptors before bloat was inevitable as ‘Geek culture’ became a catch-all term encompassing anything from computer science to *X-Files* fandom, as reflected in the numerous supplements to the Geek Code (Blasinghim 2005: 4-5). However, derivative codes, specific to the subcultural and special-interest domains of Usenet and early Internet communities proliferated, such as the Goth Code, Cat Code, and the Magic Code.

The Magic Code is itself a useful historical document, providing a concise summary of practices and beliefs considered by the consensus of the Usenet community to constitute the domain of magic. Instances of code usage on Usenet posts also enable us to see how the ‘netizens’ of the period self-identified and presented their interests and aspirations to their fellow users.

The first section of a Magic Code uses the prefix ‘M’ followed by a number of flags to describe a range of magical orientations:

MAL Alchemy	MQB Qabalah (w/o Hermeticism)
MAS Astrology	MRU Runes/Asatru
MCH Chaos magic	MSH Shamanism
MDE Demonology/Goetia	MSX Sex magic/Tantra
MEN Enochian	MTA Tarot pathworker/meditation
MGD Golden Dawn	MTH Thelema (Crowleyan)
MHE Hermeticism	MVO Voodoo/voudoun/Santeria
MHY Hypnotism/fascinations	MWI Wicca
MMU Music/Pythagoreanism	MYO Yoga
MNE Necromancy	MPA (Neo-)Paganism (non-Wiccan)
MO Other	(from Knight 1997)

My own ‘code block’ began with the orientation MWI/PA/CH – indicating that I identified variously as Wiccan, Pagan, and a Chaos Magician. My early encounters in 1996 with the music of Gong, and consequent acquisition of Vivian Crowley’s *Principles of Paganism* (1996, A1.3.3) led to a loose pagan identity – but I was more interested in an explicitly magical paganism, hinted at by the ceremonialism of Wicca (although I was not an initiate of any group or coven). My reading of Phil Hine’s *Pseudonomicon* (1997a) and *Oven-Ready Chaos* (1997b) had also led me to identify as a chaos magician (A1.3.12-16). Phil Hine’s presentation of H.P. Lovecraft’s Old Ones as cosmic forces of nature suggested an appealing dark-side to paganism’s

more benevolent romanticisation of nature and helped to define this composite identity, for example:

The Old Gods are everywhere. Their features outlined in the rock beneath our feet. Their signatures scrawled in the fractal twisting of coastlines. Their thoughts echoing through time, each lightning storm an eruption of neural flashes [...] Real magic is wild. I can feel the near-presence of the Great Old Ones at night. When the wind rattles the window-panes. When I hear the growl of thunder. When I walk up a hillside and ponder on the age of that place. To feel them near me, all I would have to do is stay there until night fell. Stay away from the habitations of men. Away from our fragile order and rationality and into the wildness of nature, where even the eyes of a sheep can look weird in the moonlight. Outside, you don't need to "call things up" – they're only a breath away. (Hine 1997a: 5-7)

Scholars commenting on chaos magick have often drawn critical attention to what is perceived as its philosophy of instrumentality and relativism. Seminal authors on chaos magick such as Peter Carroll used appeals to science (via magical theorems derived from quantum physics) to situate chaos magick as a form of magical technology, drawing the ire of scholar-practitioners such as Neville Drury 'as a self-gratifying "trivialisation" of the consciousness-raising aspects of magic' (Drury, cited in Woodman 2003: 17), and Greenwood, who described chaos magick's instrumentalism in terms of a patriarchal domination of nature, in contrast with the practices of eco-paganism and feminist witchcraft (Woodman: 17-18). For the aspiring practitioner, however, the instrumentality of chaos magick also presents a great strength: describing a variety of techniques (such as sigil magic, pathworking, and the induction of altered-consciousness through the attainment of 'gnostic' states) which could be practically applied to whatever ends the practitioner desired. Vital to chaos magick is the widespread adoption of the maxim 'nothing is true, everything is permitted', originally attributed to the Order of Assassins in Nietzsche's *On the Genealogy of Morals* (1887), and popularised amongst the counterculture by William S. Burroughs (Woodman 2003: 82). This gave practitioners license to freely mix 'fact' and 'fiction' – be it Lovecraft, Star Trek, or the Rocky Horror Show – and enabled me to simultaneously explore paganism, 'Lovecraftian' magic, and even the mythos surrounding the music of Gong simultaneously.

The assumption of a magical identity aligned with Wicca/witchcraft, (neo-)paganism and chaos magick is, therefore, not as contradictory as it may first appear when viewed from the relativistic perspective of chaos magick itself. Furthermore, manifestations of 'dark paganism' such as Lovecraft's monstrous and uncanny presentation of the natural world were also considered congruent with my own personal construction of 'paganism'. I was not alone: the archives of the alt.magick Usenet group also demonstrate a variety of instances of users invoking MCH as the primary component of their stated orientations, for example:

User name	Magic Code Orientation	Meaning
Crane48012	MCH/TH	Chaos magic / Thelema
Nakedboy	MCH/SH	Chaos magic / shamanism
Fr. Mastinem Puralorom	MCH/WI	Chaos magic / Wicca
Zos Xavius	MCH/DE/TH	Chaos magic / demonology / Thelema
Nyrath the Nearly Wise	MCH/PA	Chaos magic / paganism
SpellDew the Thorn	MCH/MSX/MPA	Chaos magic / sex magic / paganism
Max	MCH/YO/O	Chaos magic / yoga / other
The Heretic Heathen (Skorpion (Z) Node)	MCH/LV	Chaos magic / Unknown code

Table 3. *A sample of magic codes prefixed with MCH extant amongst alt.magick users (author's work).*

The above sampling of magic codes illustrates that users primarily identifying as chaos magicians often did so in conjunction with other magical orientations – either orientations that romanticised nature and traditional wisdom (Wicca, neo-paganism, shamanism) or else combined chaos magical practices with the practice of Thelema (Aleister Crowley's magical religion). This suggests that chaos magick at this time did not necessarily exist as a purely instrumental, practical magic, divorced from the concept of tradition, but rather had a more complex relationship with pre-existing occult and esoteric beliefs and practices.

The connection between chaos magick, Thelema, and even neopaganism can be traced to the reception of the magical practices of the artist Austin Osman Spare (1886-1956) as presented in the work of Kenneth Grant (1924-2011). Although Spare and Crowley had been briefly acquainted, it was their mutual acquaintance, Grant, who introduced the UK's magical milieu of the 1970s and 80s to an idiosyncratic fusion of their respective magical practices and philosophies. Grant can himself be considered as a product of the occulture of the early/mid-20th century: his work

combines the magic of Crowley and Spare with H.P. Lovecraft's cosmic horror, Arthur Machen's ancient terrors with the sinister orientalism of Sax Rohmer (although Grant's fascination with the exotic is usually unambiguously xenophilic in character –), and the UFO subculture with references to the decadent works of Voltaire and Rimbaud, and the surrealism of Dali (Bogdan 2015: 328). Grant's works are notoriously dense and difficult to comprehend, fluidly mixing the occult work of Crowley and Spare with fictional sources, and engaging in lengthy numerological proofs to connect disparate ideas. On the purpose of his books, Grant commented that they exist 'to provide concepts that are essentially strange, so that the faculty of intuitive insight may be awakened and aligned with such alien concepts' (Grant 1990, quoted in Bogdan 2015: 328).

Grant not only brought Lovecraft's work into the consciousness of the wider occult milieu, but also popularised the work of his friend Austin Osman Spare, who would become identified by many authors as the forefather of chaos magick, primarily based on his practice of reducing a magical intention to a pictorial figure, or sigil, which was activated by an altered state of consciousness, later identified as sexual 'gnosis' (Duggan 2015: 409). Although Baker (2015: 303; 306) has demonstrated that much of what Grant wrote about his friend is mythologisation, Grant became the most prominent interpreter of Spare's work during the 1970s and 80s, emphasising an art-as-magic discourse by presenting Spare as a powerful artist, magician, and initiate into witchcraft (Duggan 2015: 408).

It is therefore unsurprising, considering subsequent interpretations of Spare's work by chaos magicians, that the practices of chaos magick and Thelema were also considered complementary – and the construction of 'chaos magick' itself was intimately related to the British Thelemic scene of the late 1970s (see chapter 7). We find reflections of this Chaos-Thelemic overlap in the self-identifications of the magic code during the 1990s, as well as in the texts of groups active in the 1980s and early 90s, such as the Grant-influenced Cult of the Hidden God (Lange 2015), and in the fusion of Crowleyan sex magic and Spare-influenced sigil magic practiced by the Temple of Psychic Youth and related milieus surrounding the band Psychic TV.

One of Grant's best-known mythologisations of Spare concerns his status as an initiated witch, allegedly learning the 'craft' as a boy from one Yelga Paterson (Baker 2011: 239-241). Within the late 1970s and early 1980s occult milieu, Spare's magical techniques – as related by Grant – found a range of interpreters within the neo-

pagan, Wiccan, and witchcraft communities. For example, Spare is the key aesthetic influence on the 'Sabbatic Craft' work of Andrew Chumley (Doyle White 2019: 204). Furthermore, a number of 'first generation' texts associated with chaos magick bear distinctly neo-pagan traits – such as the *Apogeton* of Alawyn Tickhill (1985), which mixes Wiccan magic with Timothy Leary's 'Eight Neural Circuits', and the *Cardinal Rites of Chaos* (1984), attributed to 'Paula Pagani' (Ray Sherwin) which presents chaos magic interpretations of solstice and equinox rites, variously invoking Pan, Baphomet/Choronzon, Eris, and Thelemic goddess Babalon.

Considering the overlaps between neo-paganism/Wicca, Thelema, and chaos magick, it is surprising that scholars studying magic and paganism have often been dismissive of chaos magicians themselves. Luhrmann – while acknowledging the presence of ideas regarding the role of 'chaos' in mainstream neopagan discourse – described chaos magick itself as 'the Crowley-orientated magic of heavy metal music and adolescent boys [...] The indubitable logic of the philosophy presses the role of violence, murder, sexual degradation' – despite following this assertion with a quote from seminal chaos magician Peter Carroll which states 'You are free to do anything no matter how extreme *so long as it will not restrict your own or somebody else's future freedom*' (Luhrmann 1989: 96 – 97, italics added for emphasis). As mentioned earlier, Greenwood had also constructed chaos magick as a patriarchal and instrumentalised tool to dominate nature, in contrast with what has been constructed as the 'feminine', nature-respecting approach of neopaganism (Woodman 2003: 17-18). Considering the abovementioned relationship between both chaos magick and neopaganism during the early 1980s, this indicates that, while these gendered discourses are evident in the corpuses of neopaganism and chaos magick, they are not mutually exclusive to one another, and often travelled together. This suggests that any opposition between the two is over-emphasised, in this case as a consequence of the need to establish boundaries and legitimacy in the developing field of academic pagan studies during the period (Woodman 2003: 17). Additionally, Woodman describes many of the subjects of his own study of chaos magicians in the UK as having 'participated in other forms of magical practice formerly identified as falling within the purview of white middle-class professionals – witchcraft in most cases – prior to their involvement in Chaos Magick.' (: 20).

A similar pattern of engagement can also be discerned in the work of Richard Moul, who formerly used the pseudonym Christos Beast while an associate of the Order of Nine Angles. Moul warrants mention here as a peer who was also embedded in the

'Wyrd folk' scene of the early 2000s (see chapter 7), and his pseudonymous autobiography describes first receiving instruction from an Alexandrian witch in Wigan (Moult 2011: 4), before joining the Illuminates of Thanateros: then the most visible chaos magick group in the UK (:5, 7-9). Moult declares himself dissatisfied with the lack of numinous encounter in the IOT's rituals, seeing this aspect of ritual affect as being dissipated by the use of humour by the group. This precipitates his turn to the 'Sinister Tradition' of the Order of Nine Angles, in search of what he perceives to be an authentic encounter with a numinosity located in nature and landscape. This tendency for seekers exploring chaos magic to come from neopaganism, then subsequently turn by varying degrees toward 'tradition' and constructions of authenticity will be explored later in this chapter.

The interstitial period under discussion in this section documents my development into a seeker who was engaged with online communities, and beginning to develop their own occultural identity, alongside constructing more nuanced ontological and epistemological positions regarding the plausibility and validity of magical practice. To a large extent this developmental process depended on the intertwining of both cognisant direction and hermeneutic reflection: the occultural influences of my childhood (see prior chapter), alongside affective encounters with nature (A1.1.10) and music made me reflect that there must be 'something' in these practices, while the intentional pursuit these interests online – as opposed to seeking out groups and representatives of occult traditions – can be seen as a cognisant decision. The sense that there may be 'something' to the occult that would allow me to explore or explain the altered states of consciousness and intuitive moments that I had hitherto experienced recalls Giddens' position that identity formation usually occurs against the background of an implicitly secular discourse of 'radical doubt'. Here, fringe practices such as chaos magick, which often use psychological and scientific explanations and emphasise an instrumental 'results'-based approach as a proof of their magical efficacy, could provide a seeker with an explanatory framework that did not necessarily depend on faith or tradition. For myself at the time, such 'results' were largely focused on the possibilities of producing altered states of consciousness and the search for a hazily-defined 'knowledge' through encounters with dreamlands (A1.3.13), the astral Necronomicon (A1.3.16), and the meditative environments encountered through ritualised listening to music. However, a sense of a distinct discursive identity had not yet emerged: although I had identified with Wicca, neopaganism, and chaos magick, I still used my real name on Usenet. I joked and rarely took anything too seriously, and did not feel the need to become an authority

or respected figure within those groups – although this is a tendency that would develop, notably with a later turn toward magical ‘Purism’.

Z(Cluster): Chaos Magick, Group Identity, and Discursive Identity

My discovery of chaos magick via Phil Hine’s *Pseudonomicon*, as well as the presence of alt.magick.chaos in the Usenet newsgroup hierarchy, led me to becoming more deeply involved in chaos magick as both an empowering, exploratory practice, and as a mode of identity expression. This section reflects on both my engagement with-, and the demographic and discursive composition of-, an online chaos magick community known as Z(Cluster), and its influence on my own developing occultural identity.

During the late 1990s two popular repositories of chaos magick texts existed on the Internet, namely Fenwick Rysen’s *Chaos Matrix* and Tzimon Yliaster’s *Tools of Chaos*. Both Rysen and Yliaster were members of a primarily online community known as Z(Cluster), as were Kat and Wulf of The KAOS Project, whose irreverent posts on alt.magick had previously appealed to me.

Z(Cluster) was instigated by New Orleans jeweler Mark Debrates, alias Marik (b.1950-d.2016). The foundational document of group was Marik’s *Questions and Answers on the Z(Cluster)*, which provide the reader with several questions – each with multiple possible answers. This unwillingness to be pinned down to a single answer or definition of the group reflects an ethos owing much to the amorphous nature the earlier countercultures, such as Discordianism (Duggan 2013: 95-96), the ‘ontological anarchism’ of Hakim Bey (Woodman 2003: 136-7), and the paranoid-style satire of Robert Anton Wilson, all of which informed many members of the chaos magickal milieu during the 1980s and 1990s. A flavour of Z(Cluster)’s discursive style can be given by quoting the first of Marik’s *Questions and Answers*:

1. What is the Z(Cluster)?
 - a) The Z(Cluster) is an association of chaos magicians
 - b) The Z(Cluster) is a chaos infection, spreading through the internet, and lodging in the damaged neocortexes (*sic*) of chaos magicians foolish enough to believe that magick can be performed through the recycled electrons of the world wide data web.

- c) The Z(Cluster) is a group of IOT wannabees whose only purpose in life is to whine about/wimpily attack the standup real chaos magicians of that venerable association.
- d) The Z(Cluster) is a figment of the editor's imagination.
- e) The Z(Cluster) is a figment of your imagination. If you had not committed the original sin of dualistic thinking you would realize there is no such phenomenam (*sic*) as the Z(Cluster).

(Marik 1995a)

The Z(Cluster) comprised a series of loosely associated groups known as *nodes*, often consisting of only one or two persons. In the anarchic spirit of the group, anyone could join Z(Cluster) simply by declaring themselves a member and establishing a node – although to become part of the wider Z(Cluster) community and interact with ‘Zees’ from around the world, membership would have to be declared to Marik via email, who would add new members to the group’s electronic mailing list. My own node, announced in the spring of 1998 was called Psorceree(Z), indicating a continuation of my inclination toward psychedelia and language-play.

The surviving textual legacy of the Z(Cluster) mailing list is the *Zeequinox*: an archive of 1,611 daily digest posts, spanning the period 1996-2001. It was originally posted in 2014 to the /zcluster Reddit community by Fenwick Rysen, using the alias kaidevis. Material within the Z(Cluster) digests will be cited in this chapter using the convention ZD[year].[digest number] – for example ZD96.18 for the 18th digest in 1996.

A sense of the demographics comprising the Z(Cluster) can be inferred from the *Z(Cluster) Snail Mail Address List* (ZD99.60), which includes full contact information for 89 members of the group. Generally, membership was predominantly North American (68 members), followed by Northern European (six UK members, and single members in the Netherlands, Sweden, Norway, Finland and Iceland). Canadian membership comprised four members, with the remainder in Denmark, Austria, Australia, South Africa, and Singapore. Of members whose gender identification is suggested from their names, 58 are assumed male and 12 female. At least nine members were university students, as identified by either their email or postal addresses.

As a first-point of contact between Marik and potential Z(Cluster) members, the *Questions and Answers* document can be viewed as an expression of the intended

discursive composition of the group. As a self-described 'chaos infection', welcoming all members and not expecting 'squat' in return, Marik's text is critical of the hierarchical organisation of both the Illuminates of Thanateros (then the most prominent chaos magick organisation) and traditional occult groups such as the OTO and Golden Dawn, which derive their organisational structures from Freemasonry. This rejection of hierarchy, in favour of a rhizomatic structure also lowers the bar for participation: all members may participate in group workings, engage in experiments of magic, or produce texts without undergoing any form of probationership or initiation. Furthermore, this opposition to hierarchical forms is inherently modernistic: partaking in processes of democratisation and subjectivisation, which – being situated against the hierarchical structures of conventional magical groups – relates to the wider iconoclastic discourses that Duggan (2013) identifies as common to the field of chaos magick as a whole.

Duggan's analysis posits chaos magick's iconoclasm as constituting a dialectical relationship with esoteric discourses on perennialism and tradition. He suggests that, while a chaos magician may be intent on such radical or countercultural pursuits as 'smashing the idols' by deprogramming themselves to escape societal bonds and belief structures, and so on, these positions more-often-than-not also seek legitimacy through appeals to perennialism by invoking figures such as the Eliade's transhistorical shaman as precursors to the modern chaos magician (e.g. Duggan 2013: 100, 103-5). The figure of the shaman can be read in both a perennial and iconoclastic sense because shamanic methods are viewed by chaos magicians as a 'return to the source' (e.g. Carroll 1987: 9, 169-171), while also stripping away the trappings of 19th-century ritual magic: a form of magic often emically held to be the product of an elitist obscurantism.

While chaos magick presents itself as a streamlined and practical approach to magic, there are further appeals to tradition that warrant mention. First, the common use of the term 'gnosis' to describe altered, or 'magical', consciousness is suggestive of a link between chaos magick and the historical sects identified by religious scholars as Gnostic. This connection further emphasised by the use of vowel sounds (- often associated with Gnostic magic -) in Carroll's *Gnostic Pentagram* ritual (1992: 181-185), cementing associations between chaos magick and historic – non-Golden Dawn – sources of magical power and knowledge.

The most deeply embedded reflection of this ambivalent appeal to tradition within chaos magick, however, concerns eschatology. Historically, the Christian West has been dominated by eschatological epistemologies, particularly during the early modern period, which saw 'repeated outbursts of millenarian anticipations' concerning the close proximity of the end times (von Stuckrad 2010: 152-155). This period also provides many explicit examples of eschatological discourse within the heterodox fields subsequently associated with esotericism, such as the angelic visions of John Dee (ibid.), and the prophecies of Jacob Boehme. In the later modern context, esoteric discourses emphasise the role of subjectivity in relation to the eschaton: it is no longer part of an inescapable divine plan, rather the eschaton is a conscious and individual choice to magically transform one's own world, which may also involve preparing oneself to survive a material apocalypse in the form of global war, climate collapse, or societal breakdown. In other words, the modern magician often undertakes a heroic role with an apocalyptic-eschatological narrative, preparing for the potentially violent shift into a new age, or aeon, as did Crowley, Parsons, and Grant, and consciously involving themselves in the task of 'immanentising the eschaton': a popular phrase amongst the chaos magick community, which was popularised in the countercultural streams from which chaos magick developed through the *Principia Discordia* and the works of Robert Anton Wilson (Davis 2015: 332-3). Carroll's eschatology describes an incoming 'Chaos age' that will result in a 'truce between magic and science' (Carroll 1992: 69). He justifies this prediction via his own scientisation of aeonic theory, based on sinusoidal cycles of materialist, magical, and transcendent influence, which appear to be somewhat influenced by Wilhelm Fleiss' 19th-century theory of physical, emotional, and intellectual biorhythms (Carroll 1992: 61-63). However, the most frequent expression of apocalyptic-eschatological discourse between Z(Cluster) members was via the concept of Kali Yuga, which refers to a final epoch of strife and destruction, before the cycle of creation begins again with a new golden age. Borrowed from Hinduism, discourse on the Kali Yuga entered occulture via the countercultural writings of Robert Anton Wilson and earlier Traditionalist polemics of Julius Evola: the latter equating Kali Yuga with the Spengler-esque civilizational decline presented by the decadence of modernity. Marik further suggested that 'civilization is a disease' and that the work of chaos magicians involved 'bringing about the destruction of the consensual belief structure, *and hence the end of the world*' (1995a, emphasis added).

Amongst some members of the group, omens of apocalypse and Kali Yuga could be discerned in climate change and the European Union (ZD00.92), in New Age

discourse surrounding the 'end' of the Mayan calendar (ZD97.32), and dominance of scientific materialism as 'the basis for reality' (ZD97.335). How serious these observations may have been is questionable, but it is evident that the idea that chaos magicians were operating as an eschatological avant-garde was an important aspect of the group's identity.

The intimation of privileged knowledge concerning eschatological events also influenced the identity of the group via othering and self-othering processes. Along with role-playing games and heavy metal, paganism and occultism had become subjects of moral outrage throughout the 1980s and into the early 1990s, often in close proximity to allegations of Satanic Ritual Abuse (SRA) leveled at members of these subcultures by Mormons, Evangelicals, and fundamentalist Protestants (Introvigne 2016: 372-456). Since membership of the Z(Cluster) was predominantly North American, the figure of the 'xtian fundie' (Christian fundamentalist) became a particular target for the ire of many group members – particularly when members perceived Christians as either being small-minded threats to libertarianism and self-expression, or hypocritical about their own use of magic for example, describing prayer as 'petty sorcery' (ZD00.21), or confrontational preaching as a method of 'psychic vampirism' (ZD00.108). A more general othering was preserved for those outside the chaos magick subculture, described variously as 'sheep' and 'greyfaces', while the New Age in general was consistently rendered 'newage' to rhyme with 'sewage' (e.g. ZD96.37, 97.182). Chaos magick's attitude of extreme relativity – that beliefs are all 'paradigms' or 'memeplexes' – often encouraged members to see themselves as enjoying a privileged status: above societal and religious frameworks and alert to the potential to exploit these memes to their own ends (e.g. by producing their own 'memetic infections').

Given that the group was generally composed of geographically disparate practitioners (even amongst the North American membership), technology provided a variety of ways for the members to work together toward shared magical ends. This included the creation of a text-based environment known as the Damascus MUSH (Multi-User Shared Hallucination), which also had an associated 'Servitor' called NETGYMIT: a software program running on the server, which also functioned as a way for Zees to access the Damascus MUSH when offline, via 'a state of gnosis or in dreams' (A1.4.28).

Other group projects included a 1998 magical attack on Church of Scientology, and a 1999 attack on Serbian warlord Arkan (A1.4.28). I had participated in these projects: developing an 'astral temple' on Damascus and even participating in a text-based ritual (accompanied by hyper-ventilation in front of the computer to reach the desired 'gnostic' state). Members would also see the efficacy of their magic confirmed by news reports detailing legal troubles for the Church of Scientology (ZD98.41, 98.43), or the eventual demise of Arkan (- almost a year after the group did its working, ZD00.26).

My own period of engagement with the Z(Cluster) between Spring 1998 and December 1999 initiated a period of cognisant identity formation. Now self-identifying primarily as a chaos magician, being a member of Z(Cluster) was also part of that identity. I had, of course, established my node, and often used the pseudonym ZOSimos, which both references Zos – the magical name of Austin Osman Spare – and the Greek alchemist Zosimos, whose name I had encountered in Robert Turner's attempt to re-create H.P. Lovecraft's *Necronomicon*. I would also use the name 'Frater Kaymog', primarily when writing texts involving 'Lovecraftian' magic – although my earliest rituals posted to Z(Cluster) are also written under this *alias*. The use of the title *frater* (or *soror*) is a common trope amongst magical practitioners, and even though many adopters do not belong to fraternal or hierarchical magical orders, it serves a variety of discursive purposes: it is suggestive of authority and tradition (e.g. evoking the early 20th-century milieu of Frater Perdurabo [Aleister Crowley], Frater Achad [Charles Stansfield Jones] etc.), and also aligns the adopter with a wider imagined community of magical practitioners.

My clothing and musical interests turned away from the psychedelic, and towards the gothic and post-industrial via an interest in chaos magick-adjacent musical groups such as Psychic TV and Coil, who I discovered through posts on the Z(Cluster) mailing list. Consequently, I became attracted to the well-established goth scene in Leeds, particularly the nights hosted at the club Le Phonographique. Leeds was also historically associated with the first wave of chaos magick in the 1970s and 80s (see chapter 7), which also became part of my gothic, urban identity – not unlike that of the leather and velvet-wearing chaos magicians encountered by Woodman, whose 'mode of dress was, it seemed, an exteriorisation of their self-defined marginal status' (Woodman 2003: 82).

While I was never fully convinced by chaos magick's discourse surrounding eschatology, I did more deeply embrace its relativistic discourse, providing as it did a legitimisation for believing and practicing whatever I wished: particularly magic related to H.P. Lovecraft's Cthulhu mythos. This also stimulated my production of texts, which I often shared with the group and which codify a number of formative magical experiences.

While chaos magick has been maligned for its instrumental bias and lack of discipline (Woodman: 17-18), it also provides a liberating arena for self-expression and self-discovery, with a no bar to engagement. Within the context of seekership and modernism's radical doubt, chaos magick allowed me to discover what I sought: experiences that would prove in some way the value of magic, either through the induction of altered states of consciousness, the revelation of transpersonal knowledge (via encounters with dreamlands, or astral visits to a Lovecraftian pre-history), or even in the form of what I perceived as concrete results (via experiments with servitors or participation in the Z(Cluster)'s rituals such as their actions against the Church of Scientology and Arkan).

The aesthetic and affective bias of chaos magick toward the dark and demonic (- whether the magician personally *decides* to believe in the existence of spirits or not -) would also give me the confidence to experiment with more explicitly demonic magic: although this would consequently lead to an abandonment of my identity as a chaos magician and the adoption of another discursive occultural identity.

Order From Chaos: A Discursive Drift towards Ritual Magic

Although I primarily identified as a chaos magician in 1998, owing to my participation in Z(Cluster), my movement toward a deeper immersion in ritual magic and Renaissance esotericism over the next three years was not a case of a sudden discursive rupture, but one of discursive drift throughout my period of engagement with the group.

Having become acculturated to the theories of chaos magick, I accepted that magicians could create magical entities known as 'thought forms' and 'servitors'. Using my Lovecraftian alias 'Frater Kaymog Azrhm', I posted two servitor creation rituals to the Z(List), which I had used in my own practice. In the *Lightning Servitor*, I traced inspiration for the ritual to Idres Shah's *The Secret Lore of Magic* (1957),

which was one of the few accessible overviews of grimoire magic available to me at the time (- my other key source being Fred Gettings' *A Dictionary of Demons* [1988]). I wrote that:

The ritual was pretty much created on the spot to take advantage of the first proper storm of the year. It was inspired by Idres Shah's tales of El-Arab, an Arab magus who had the power to trap lightning in clay jars. He would then tell the lightning what he wanted it to do (usually a task like prediction) and open the jar. The lightning would perform it's (*sic*) task (as quick as lightning) and return to the jar (as quick as lightning!).

(Legard 1998a)

My interest in servitors overlapped with a developing interest in the idea of interacting with spirits. The works of Shah and Gettings introduced me to lists of demons, their names, signs, and powers, which fascinated me. The dire warnings of David Conway – my earliest magical authority – against consorting with demons also gave them a dangerously powerful allure, contrary to the author's intention (Conway 1988: 199-205).

During the summer of 1998, I discovered Lon Milo DuQuette's *Aleister Crowley's Illustrated Goetia* (1992) and Phil Hine's *Aspects of Evocation* (1998): the latter a compilation of essays on working with spirits written from the perspective of chaos magick, and assembled at the behest of Z(Cluster)'s Arawyn con Thanatos (Hine 1998: 2). This pair of books seemed to make the fearsome task of evoking demons seem manageable. I also had discovered a source for historical magical works about conjuring spirits and demons through the *Twilit Grotto* website, established by Joseph Peterson in 1997, which hosted his own transcriptions and translations of late medieval and early modern works of magic, commencing with his transcription of the *Arbatel of Magick* (ca. 1575).

Such conditions provided an atmosphere in which I could practice chaos magick, while also gathering information on ritual magic practices. Hine even mentioned a 'Goetic' conjuration that he undertook in Leeds in 1989 (1998: 25-26), suggesting to me that chaos magick's relativistic, paradigm-shifting attitude did not preclude its practitioners from engaging in more disciplined and traditional forms of magical practice.

My earliest work dealing with working with spirits outside of the chaos magick paradigm was entitled *An Approach To The Operation Of The Arbatel Of Magic* (Legard 1998b). This work is essentially a synopsis of the third chapter, or 'septenary', of the *Arbatel* as it was presented on Peterson's *Twilit Grotto* website. The *Arbatel* itself presents a treatise on the acquisition of divine knowledge and magical power primarily through processes of prayer. Despite being a work focused on engagement with spirits (in this case usually presented as celestial or angelic), The *Arbatel* actually embodies Protestant, Paracelsan, and Theosophic discourses on magic – most evident in its simplicity and dependence on prayer, faith, and the moral rectitude of the operator. In this spirit, the *Arbatel* also strips away almost all of the dubiously Catholic trappings of ritual magic (magical circles, ceremonial regalia, Latin invocations) to suggest a form of practice that owes more to *Ars Notoria* (the medieval system of magical revelation through prayer), than it does to the ceremonial theatrics of the *Goetia* or the other early modern ritual magic texts which the *Goetia*, itself an early 17th-century composition, drew upon.

It was this apparent simplicity that appealed to me, and my work – presenting the *Arbatel's* magical prayer to invoke the seven planetary rulers – was written from a relativistic perspective: as a form of practice that could also exist alongside the paradigm-shifting worldview of chaos magick. This relativism could be viewed as an extension of chaos magick's instrumentalist approach to extant material, and an example of chaos magick as a form of occultural religiosity, in which practices may be freely chosen from a range of religious or esoteric sources: here, I am borrowing a ritual for its seeming simplicity and efficacy, while disembedding it from the religious and pietic practices that informed its original composition. Elsewhere in my writings on chaos magick, I often 'borrowed' from established systems, for example using loosely 'Cabalistic' methods derived from the Golden Dawn to add flavour to my rituals, as in my ritual for 'water-birthing' a servitor, or magical servant, which along with the *Lightning Servitor* is an example of the earliest rituals that I presented to the Z(Cluster):

1. The purpose of the servitor was noted down, along with a keyword. The purpose of mine was "To create a situation in which I may meet a certain person" and the keyword was 'Attract'. Next I created a barbarous name similar to those in the *Goetia*. The name was made up from the keyword and any other letters which appealed to me during the creation process. The final name was 'Tratactebuz'. A seal was also created in a circle with the name

around the edge. As with all sigil operations, it it (sic) my opinion that one should spend a maximum amount of time drawing and refining the sigil. The appearance was also decided, being that of a flying fish with "Predetor" [sic] style cloaking abilities.

2. I created a 'magic word'. I decided that Jupiter corresponded best with the servitor's task. Jupiter corresponds to Hesed on the Tree of Life, so I traced from Hesed to Malkuth to create the magic word of Yod-Nun-Tzadde-Resh-Shin, which I rendered as INTSRESH. I also created a magic square of YNTzRSh using the 'Grand Square' method outlined by Josh Geller in his "Construction & Use of Alphabetical Magick Squares" essay.

(Legard 1998b)

There is, however, a pronounced difference in the presentation of my work on the *Arbatel*, when compared to my earlier textual productions – and one that anticipates a discursive drift away from the formative influences of chaos magick. It is evident that the language used in my works on chaos magick often attempted to convey spontaneity and irreverence, befitting the performance of the identity of 'chaos magician', for example:

6. Started doing *free-form-whatever-came-to-mind stuff* - chanting, calling, spinning and gesticulating. Suddenly I likened the sigil to the egg and the water of the mirror to a womb. I started to chant the magick word into an excited state of glossolalia (all being echoed by the nearby microphone). Then suddenly broke it with a scream of "TRATACTEBUZ! I GIVE YOU LIFE!". I was very disorientated and was seeing strange dots before my eyes. I tried to focus on the mirror to bring the image of the servitor.

7. Saw a fleeting image, like a gray fish swimming [sic] about in the mirror. Then I said "*Tratactebuz, the word that shall be used to summon you is... uh.... um....*" <think Phil, think!> "*****!" <stupid magic word omitted>

(Legard 1998b, emphasis added)

However, my work on the *Arbatel*, which marks the end of my period of producing chaos magick-related texts, opens with a more consciously 'scholarly' tone, for example, referencing A.E. Waite's earlier presentation of the work in his *Book of Black Magic* (1898):

The "Arbatel of Magic" appeared at Basle, Switzerland in 1575 in Latin and is one of the lesser known [sic] works of the 'grimoire' tradition. Waite writes that it has the quality of true transcendental literature, being free from 'dangerous instruction which makes for open Black Magic.' While it may be going a little to [sic] far to praise it as having transcendental quality, it can be considered more aligned with 'white magic' (whatever that may be) than most other books of the grimoire tradition. (1998c)

The shift in linguistic tone also reflects the beginnings of a rhetorical and discursive shift. While my earlier texts made an appeal to experience – attempting to convey something of the spontaneity, excitement, and self-empowerment of chaos magick – my *Arbatel* text attempts a more serious tone: a tentative appeal to tradition and the value of the work as a link to a historical past, while at the same time positing the *Arbatel* as a form of lean, no-nonsense magical technology.

The long summer holiday between the end of college and the start of university gave me plenty of time alone to explore my interest in communicating with spirits and to begin experimenting with more elaborate forms of magical ritual than found in the *Arbatel* – in particular, putting into practice the methods of conjuration laid out by Lon Milo DuQuette in *Aleister Crowley's Illustrated Goetia* (1992; see A1.3.24-40). This period produced two texts: *Goetia Made Easy!* (Legard 1998f) and *Examples of Evocation* (Legard 1998g).

As a text very much of this interstitial period between identifying as a chaos magician and later 'scholar-magician' or 'purist', *Goetia Made Easy!* adopts a language which is fairly informal, although less-so than my servitor rituals, situating it more as a practitioner's text than a scholarly production. Akin to my *Arbatel* essay, the article attempts to present the historical magical system of the *Goetia* as an 'easy, no-nonsense instruction in the technique of evocation' (Legard 1998f). It continues: 'the essay will be geared more toward the eclectic magicians out there, who want to use the techniques of Goetia, which are relatively simple and quite dynamic, within their own magic' (ibid). Therefore, the results-orientated, streamlined discourse of chaos magick still underlies these statements as I attempt to present a workable, 'bare-bones' of a complex ritual system. This text also uses appeals to experience as an attempt to establish myself as an authority, for example: 'Note [...] that before performing a Goetic working you should have decent abilities in invocation and

visualisation/scrying. To some extents, evocation is a skill. Some people would seem to have a knack for the art, while others may work at it for years without success. From personal experience, I would say that the keys to evocation (and to almost every discipline) are practice and experimentation.' (ibid.)

The use of the term 'eclectic magicians' emphasises the syncretism of my magical practice at this point, which is also underlined by a passage which emphasises that, although the *Goetia* describes the spirits as 'demons', many of them in fact 'derive from the gods or angels of other cultures, for example, citing the name Astaroth as a bastardised form of Astarte, and speculating that Amon was derived from the Egyptian Amoun (- a connection also made earlier by the demonologist Jacques Collin de Plancy [1863: 28]). Therefore, I emphasise that it should not be 'thought that all the spirits are 'evil', rather that they are a varied and mixed bunch of gods, spirits, Nephilim, angels and demons' (ibid.) It seems highly likely that I drew the phrase 'eclectic magicians' from a Z(Cluster) thread concerning how to define chaos magick, which was being discussed the same week that I wrote and uploaded my *Goetia Made Easy!* essay (ZD98.8, 11, 16), although the term also reflects the wider discourse on 'eclecticism' that constitutes Partridge's conception of *occulture*.

My *Goetia* essay also expresses ambivalence about the ontological and epistemic status of spirits:

I think it is naïve to say that the spirits of The Goetia and the actions they produce are solely products of ones [sic] mind. But it is similarly naïve to say that the spirits are really independent entities who, with their legions, run about making things happen. I have come to the conclusion that the truth lies somewhere in between the two, but should not try to be explained - basically, Goetia works. In many ways and on many levels. (Legard 1998f)

There is a reluctance to fully subscribe to the psychological model of magic, which I perceived as a form of extreme reductionism, despite my model of psychological magic being derived from Israel Regardie, himself a magical interpreter of Jung's decidedly esoteric approach to psychology. Rather, I attempted to establish my own authority by describing both psychological and 'spirit' models of magic as 'naïve' while coming to my own conclusion that the 'truth' constituted a form of mystery, which 'should not try to be explained'. This position would also affect my turn toward magical 'purism' as a way to encounter the 'mystery' of the nature of spirits.

Seeking Authenticity: *Prisca Magia* and the Purist Turn

While Woodman observed that the majority of his subjects had come to chaos magick after previous involvement in neo-paganism or Wicca (2003: 29,32; 44-45), it is also notable that many chaos magicians subsequently seem to turn toward some form of tradition once they have reached the perceived limits of chaos magick. This may be in part due to the eclecticism of chaos magick: since it allows practitioners to experiment with a variety of techniques and materials drawn from a wide range of cultures and practices, some may hold more attraction as avenues for seekership than others. Members of the Z(Cluster) who turned toward more established spiritual practices often used perennialist discourse to describe their relation to such practices in terms of transcendence and divine union, as well as invoking discursive claims to the legitimacy of experience. For example, on his turn toward Tantric practice, Tzimon Yliaster writes:

In Western religion, the experience of “union with God” is assigned so low a role as to be tantamount to heresy... the prophets of Western religions may *see* God from time to time, but there's nothing in their scriptures which indicates any union with the divine [...] In chaos magick (and in Tantra, and perhaps in Dzog Chen, too.. I can't really say about that one) the most important experience of all is that very union with the divine (or infinite). Those particular "paths" are experiential. (ZD98.40)

Tzimon – at that point chiefly practicing Tantric *pujas* to the goddess Kali – wrote the above in response to Marik, who identifies himself in the thread as a ‘Dzog Chen Buddhist Sorcerer’ (ZD98.39) and similarly sees little conflict with Dzog Chen Buddhism and chaos magick. This dialogue between Tzimon and Marik indicates one way in which members of the Z(Cluster) performed discursive transfers between chaos magick, Buddhism, and Tantra. The presence of nondual epistemologies in Dzog Chen and Tantric Shaktism – presented by Tzimon in terms of the ‘divine (or infinite)’ particularly suit the sort of iconoclastic-perennial discourse which Duggan identified as allowing Chaos Magicians to situate themselves in a historical continuum of magical practice related to some sort of ‘eternal truth’ (Duggan 2013: 99), while also enabling innovation and the incorporation of new practices and philosophies.

As Tzimon's Tantric practice became more serious in early 1999, he suggested establishing a mailing list called TheWork, in which membership was contingent on participants sharing their magical diaries each week. Given that many of my magical interests had come to concern spirits or entities of some sort (be they self-created servitors, or spirits and angels with ambiguous ontological status), I saw this as an opportunity to deepen my own practice in the area of evocatory magic. This would lead not to the incorporation of an older system into chaos magick's underlying perennial-innovative discourse, but would initiate a rejection of chaos magick's iconoclasm and relativism in favour of a 'purist' approach, which sought a perceived historical authenticity. From my personal perspective the relationship between chaos magicians and the 'divine' seemed conspicuously indebted to Eastern philosophies, but this was not the form of divinity that I perceived in the God of the grimoires – the particular form of magical text that I had become increasingly fascinated with. Within the grimoires, God is personally appealed to as a source of power and authority – an authority which is then borrowed by the magician to help them conjure and command spirits. It was a conviction that the Judeo-Christian God of the grimoires possessed different qualities to a more hazily defined 'divine', or 'One', and it was an engagement with these powers which was to prompt my turn to purism.

In his study of contemporary Enochian magic, Asprem identifies what he calls a 'Purist Turn' amongst a number of modern practitioners, which he describes as a discursive 'reaction against the eclecticism of occulture' that 'advocate[s] a return to the source materials and a radical break with the Golden Dawn occultist heritage' (Asprem 2012: 7). Asprem particularly focuses on Enochian magic, which derives from the magical séances conducted by John Dee and Edward Kelly (ca. 1582-89) and – during the 19th-century occult revival – became incorporated into the rituals of the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn. Asprem observes that the Golden Dawn disconnected Enochian magic from its roots in the work of Dee and Kelly, resulting in a form of 'source amnesia' that presented the Enochiana as a *sui generis* and even perennial element of their rituals. This discourse of perennial eclecticism is, therefore, not exclusive to chaos magick or contemporary occulture, but can also be seen as a recurrent motif in earlier occultural manifestations.

Asprem associates the purist turn in Enochian magic with the publication of the original source material by contemporary, self-styled 'scholar-magicians' such as Stephen Skinner and Robert Turner, who appealed to the legitimacy of Enochian magic not by positioning it as a *sui generis* element of magical practice, but through

the presentation of 'diligent research into the particulars of the "original" Enochian system' (Asprem 2012: 126-132). Within the purist turn, as embodied in the work of Turner and Skinner, we find a discursive appeal to tradition in the form of an appeal to source authenticity: that earlier historical sources present us with 'real magic', as it was practiced before the eclectic, and by inference *less potent*, syntheses of the Golden Dawn.

As with the Enochian purists, my own encounter with transcriptions of medieval and Renaissance magical material via Joseph Peterson's website, as well as my acquisition of Richard Kieckhefer's *Forbidden Rites* (a scholarly commentary and transcription of a 15th-century manual of necromancy) suggested to me that powerful, 'authentic' magic was only to be found in texts and practices that preceded the 19th-century magical revival. As indicated in the prior section, my writing on subjects like the *Arbatel* and *Goetia* had begun to incorporate elements imitative of an academic tone, and these scholarly glosses are most evident in the account of a ritual of spirit evocation that marked the start of my own purist turn, and which I presented as my first submission to TheWork mailing list.

I began the account with language that invokes academic scepticism and attempts to demonstrate an awareness of the historical context and possible comparative readings of the *Heptameron* – a grimoire which details the conjuration of seven planetary angels and their servants, who rule over the seven days of the week:

This document is my account of the evocation of the spirit Raphael by following, as closely as possible, the ritual laid down in the *Heptameron* of pseudo-Abano. The "Heptameron", or "Magical Elements", was allegedly first published in Venice in 1496 and is featured in the collection of magical writings ascribed to Agrippa, known as the "Fourth Book of Occult Philosophy".

The Heptameron claims the spurious authorship of Peter d'Abano, a famous physician of the thirteenth century. There are several known pseudo-Abano works pertaining to magical arts, of which the oldest is probably "De Veneris" (Sloane ms 168).

The Heptameron, as included in "The Fourth Book", may have been one of the sources which the makers of the later 'infernal' grimoires (such as The

Grimoire of Pope Honorius and the Grimoirium (*sic*) Verum) may have consulted--the version of Solomon's Hexagram given in the Heptameron occurs in both of these and in other works of magic, including some Key of Solomon style mss., such as the Gollancz manuscript.

(Legard: 1999)

My shift toward writing in this style marks the formation of a discursive identity, established and performed in relation to my peers (e.g. members of TheWork list) in order to portray myself as serious and authoritative. This also marks a significant partitioning between my identities at the time: as a magician, and as a student, engaged, as I was, in the second semester of a Computing degree (A1.4.19-23).

My intention was to perform the *Heptameron* ritual as closely to the text as I possibly could in order to prove to myself that it *worked* in some sense, and to ensure that I had spiritual guidance from the archangel Raphael to assist my developing interest in 'philosophical alchemy'. In many ways, the condition of the purist turn can be related to the Giddensian concept of radical doubt in the form of a conspicuously modern compulsion to test the materialist conclusions of Enlightenment thinking by proving the efficacy and validity of historical magical practices. In short, to restore an authentic *prisca magia* and correct the errors that had amassed as a consequence of the 19th-century magical revival.

I had – as part of my earlier experiments with ritual magic and demons – incorporated several commonly-used modern magical rituals into my practical ritual framework. Foremost of these was the Lesser Banishing Ritual of the Pentagram (LBRP), described by Wheeler (2020) as 'the best known of all the rituals that have emerged from the modern esoteric revival' (:5). Devised by MacGregor Mathers for the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn in the late 19th century, the ritual was intended for daily practice (morning and evening), but it best known as an act of cleansing or purification before a magical ritual begins (:8-9). Despite the discursive claims of magical purism as a reaction to the 19th-century occult revival, this mixture of modern rituals bookending older, more 'authentic' sets of operations, is actually fairly common amongst the sorts of purists also identified by Asprem. Robert Turner's *Order of the Cubic Stone*, for example, despite positing its members as being on the forefront of a scholarly, practical, and authentic investigation into historical magical practices ran prospective members ('Probationers') through a 12-month programme which was heavily indebted to the Golden Dawn – featuring practices such as the

assumption of god-forms, the LBRP, and the use of Hindu Tattva symbols (see: Order of the Wardens O.C.S. 1976; Order of the Cubic Stone 1976). The notion that the LBRP was useful to cleanse the space and operator prior to performing a ritual, and also to banish harmful thoughts and energies at the end of the operation seems to persist even amongst purists (Wheeler 2020: 8-9).

As previously mentioned, my ability to affect a purist turn was enhanced by the availability of historical magical texts via Joseph Peterson's Twilit Grotto website and the Magic in History series published by Penn State University. Most important for the five years that followed, however, was my acquisition of Donald Tyson's 1993 edition of Henry Cornelius Agrippa's *Three Books of Occult Philosophy*. Tyson introduces this work in a scholarly style, with a historical biography of Agrippa and an account of the composition of the work, as well as adding numerous footnotes regarding the sources that Agrippa himself drew upon.

Agrippa was the major influence on the next significant text that I produced, loftily named *Liber Coelum Stellarum Fixarum: A Discourse on the Fifteen Stars* (Legard 2000). Styling myself Ζοσίμος Ποτε Ζ – Zosimos, once Zee – to make my break with chaos magick and the Z(Cluster) evident, the writing is more pronouncedly academic in tone, incorporating footnotes, citations from books and manuscripts, and appendices to suggest a seriously researched and informed article. The actual practical advice on working magic with the stars, their talismans, and spirits, is almost an afterthought and limited to the final page of the document. This is an important document with regard to my own purist turn, since it emphasises a discursive and ontological shift: decisively moving away from the relativism of chaos magick, and toward a conception of the universe in terms of Agrippa's 'three worlds': an ordered cosmos consisting of mundane, celestial, and divine worlds, populated by spirits of increasing rarefaction, and suggesting the possibility of communication and influence occurring between earthly, celestial, and divine realms.

Purism, Purity, and Penis Amputation: Sacred Magic and Profane Noise

It seems extremely incongruous that, at a time that I was attempting to carry out evocations of angels using a medieval magical text and turning my thoughts toward the heavens in meditations on the 'fixed stars', I was also beginning to create experimental electronic music under the *alias* Penis Amputee (A1.4.16-17).

One perspective on this collision of the sacred and profane could be suggested through Giddens' notion of 'lifestyle sectors' (Giddens 1991: 83) – by which we situationally present different appearances and behaviours to different milieus (e.g. a plurality of discursive identities). However, this would ignore the wider context of discourses on both the esoteric and the abject that characterise 'industrial culture': a subcultural movement that profoundly influenced the occultural formations surrounding chaos magick (as well as Thelema) from the early 1980s onward, and in which my music-making of the time was also embedded.

'Industrial culture' describes the aesthetic fascinations and discourses that developed from the industrial music movement of the late 1970s, the term 'industrial' being coined by the genre's pioneers, Throbbing Gristle (1975-81; see Partridge 2013b: 84-5). The industrial subculture was contemporaneous with punk, often with overlapping milieus, shifting into its 'post-industrial' phase in the early 1980s with the dissolution of Throbbing Gristle (TG) and the formation of Psychic TV (PTV) by former TG members Genesis P-Orridge and Peter 'Sleazy' Christopherson. As a conceptual project, PTV was part band, part cult and self-actualisation programme. PTV's fanclub-cum-magickal-organisation, Thee Temple ov Psychick Youth, was also to have a symbiotic relationship with the wider chaos magick milieu of the 1980s and 1990s.

Partridge describes industrial and post-industrial culture in terms of both transgression and Romanticism. Regarding transgression, he suggests that industrial music's penchant for invoking the profane is a Bataille-esque strategy of 'sovereignty' against a toothless modernity, and an approach that consequently throws the 'sacred' into sharp contrast (ibid.: 86-7). We may also view this urge in terms of occulture's bias toward pop-psychological self-actualisation: the idea that an immersion in the profane, the abject, and sado-masochistic is a form of Jungian 'shadow work', that must be engaged with in order to become a fully-realised person. Such ideas concerning the spiritual value of the profane and unclean arguably entered European occulture through Crowley (e.g. Urban 2003: 296-7), but came to further fruition in the work of Kenneth Grant, who suggests that ideas which have been historically represented as demonic and taboo are necessary for the magician to encounter. As noted earlier, Grant had a profound influence on both the overlapping milieus of the chaos magick and early post-industrial music scenes: his works being the primary source of information for both parties on the magical

practices of Austin Osman Spare (popularly perceived as the 'father of chaos magick').

My own encounters with discussion on the Z(Cluster) list, the work on Phil Hine, and encounters with post-industrial noise music (A1.3.41) had given me some insight into the way in which chaos magick intersected with other subcultures surrounding (post-) industrial culture, sexual orientation, and fetish (see also Woodman 2003: 45-6). With regard to the influence of these ideas on my own music-making, I noted in the autobiography that I 'had become angry at myself and the way my own sexual drive had twisted [my first serious] relationship. With this in mind, I named [my noise] project Penis Amputee' (A1.4.16). My chosen moniker evidently presented itself as blatantly transgressive, owing much to the industrial group SPK, who presented themselves as 'Surgical Penis Klinik' on their 1980 noise album *Meat Processing Section*.

While I would later reflect that the immersion in making noise was cathartic – arguing for the affective power of music-making in my conception of music as a magico-therapeutic art – it can be suggested that the discursive orientation of the Penis Amputee project fell uncomfortably between transgressive excess and self-mortifying asceticism. Whereas the relativism of chaos magick and Grant's interpretation of Thelema leant toward a non-dualistic outlook, in which sacred and profane were two sides of the same coin, the early modern ritual magic that I was developing an interest in emphasised the avoidance of taboo and pursuit of purity – both being necessary if the magician is to prove themselves worthy of divine assistance. A discursive drift – from a spirituality in which excess and transgression were possible paths to transcendence, and toward a 'purist' and traditionally moralistic spirituality – culminated in a rupture recorded in my diary of the *Heptameron* working:

Even after a short time of abstinence and purity I have started to notice certain things about modern society. Until today I hadn't noticed how much we are constantly exposed to images of sex and violence. It seems that one of the only possible ways to stay pure as possible will behave as little contact with the outside world as I can manage. The TV, computer and radio have all been unplugged and my plans for the next week have been put on hold. (Legard 1999).

As a musical project running concurrently with this ritual work, Penis Amputee can be seen as both an expression of industrial culture's performative transgression, *and* as an act of asceticism and contrition situated within magical purism: I felt shame at my inability to control my teenage sexual drive, which destroyed a relationship (A1.3.39), as well as seeing it as a potential obstacle to the spiritual purity necessary to pursue my magical interests. I would also feel an urge to explain the reason behind the name to anyone I told about the project: lending any discussion of my music an air of confession and disclosure. Retrospectively, it appears that the formation of a dual-identity as both magical purist and ascetically self-flagellating 'noise artist' were reactions to the common rite of passage of a failed relationship. From the angle of seekership, this turn away from chaos magick's relativism and individualism allowed me to take recourse in the structures – and strictures – of purism, as well as finding an idiosyncratic musical expression that complemented its moral dimension. Effectively I was able to *détourn* industrial culture's oppositional discourse on the sacred and profane toward an expression of a purist identity.

From Occult Experimentalist to Orphic Troubadour

The importance of a connection between magical purism and moral purity would be foregrounded and backgrounded in turn over the subsequent development of my magical and discursive identities. During the period between the summers of 2000 and 2001, my output was primarily musical. Work (both a gap year, and a final academic year at university), as well as a new relationship precluded my ability to engage with the time-consuming forms of ritual magic practice that had previously brought issues of morality and purity to the forefront of my magical discourse.

Having found a new long-term relationship in the summer of 2000, I became embarrassed about the self-conscious, self-flagellating nature of my musical output. The title of my project changed from Penis Amputee to 'Xenis Emputae'. The subject-matter of my musical releases under this alias was fairly diverse, but – following my production of *Liber Stellarum Fixarum* – generally exhibited a fascination with the celestial world. In the tripartite cosmology of Cornelius Agrippa, who had become my primary source for 'authentic' magical practice, the celestial world represented an intermediary between the mundane world of matter and decay, and the transcendent and angelic world beyond. While my Penis Amputee split tape with Jason Campbell had included tracks with abrasive titles, my next self-release – *El-ov-Eh* – included titles like 'Solar Plasma' and 'Waterways to Venus'. A lingering influence of chaos

magick and industrial culture was also evident in the title (using 'ov' instead of 'of', as favoured by members of TOPY) and references to Kenneth Grant ('Atavistic Resurgence') and H.P. Lovecraft ('Surface of Yuggoth'). Many of these titles were drawn from the imaginative and affective spaces that the music seemed to evoke: a theme examined further in the next chapter.

Although my magical practice was not on such a grand-scale as it had been, I attempted to use a crystal and hand-drawn pentacles to contact celestial spirits, and began to relate my music-making to concepts discovered in the works of Agrippa, Ficino and other Renaissance sources. One relevant example is the album *Ing Na Astrum*, which I recorded in 2000 under the alias Sigilla Vur (a nod to the post-industrial occult music of the Italian band Sigillum S). This tape was my first explicitly occult musical production. The photocopied insert was produced at the college where I was doing my university work experience, and used images from a grimoire called *Libellus Veneris Nigro Sacer* (which had been published on Peterson's *Twilit Grotto* website), as well as a panel of sigils from Richard Kieckhefer's *Forbidden Rites*. This was the first release on my micro-label Stella Maris, and I described the first track as 'channelled by a Lunary spirit called Vale, the 56th angel under Remasiel' (Legard 2000c). Tellingly, in terms of my purist orientation, I also thank 'the One True God' at the end of the sleeve note.

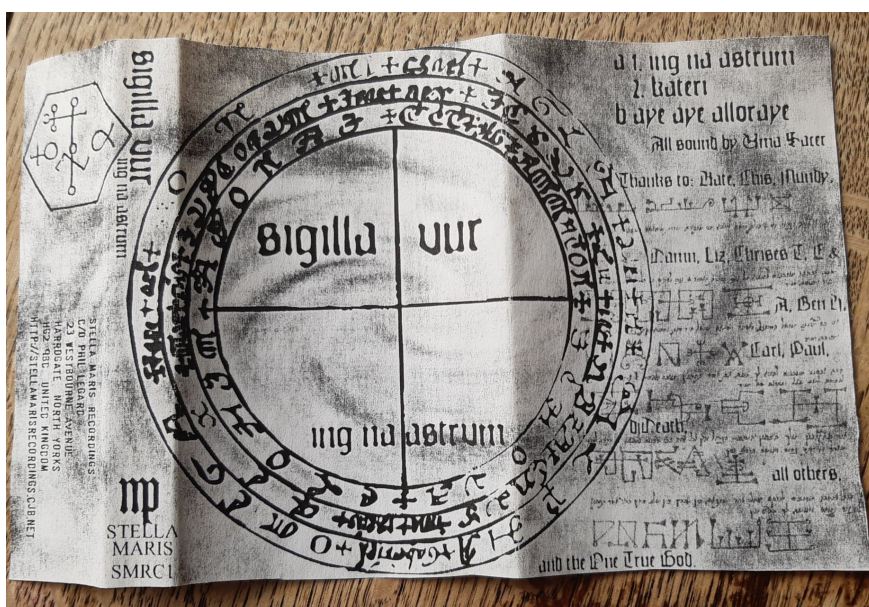


Figure 8. Cassette insert for *Ing Na Astrum* (2000, author's work).

While *Ing Na Astrum* presented an idea of magical music through an improvised and ‘channelled’ approach, *Star Synthesis* – also produced in the same year – demonstrated a more methodical approach, inspired by the systems of magical correspondence found in Agrippa’s *Three Books of Occult Philosophy*, and Crowley’s *Liber 777*. This album attempted to sonify astrological data using a combination of ideas from Renaissance occultism’s interest in harmonics and astrology, and digital sound synthesis:

Data for various stars, such as the magnitude, degrees along the zodiacal equator and the ruling planets were collected for significant stars. The magnitude of the star effects (*sic*) the volume and length of the tone. The first ruling planet effects (*sic*) the note according to the Pythagorean monochord and shape of the tone is decided by the second ruling planet, thus:

Planet	Note	Shape
Saturn	C	Noise
Jupiter	B	=Sin
Mars	A	Saw
Sol	G	Sin
Venus	F	Triangle
Mercury	E	Square
Luna	D	Sin

Finally if the star is of a generally unfortunate influence it moves from right to left across the speakers, and if it is fortunate then it moves left to right. (Legard 2000b)

Although these approaches of ‘channelling’ and ‘sonification’ are rather different, they are both discursively embedded in the purist approach to magic variously through their appeals to ‘The One True God’, an expression of the literal belief in spirits that exist in designated orders and can be communed with, and an emphasis on the role of astrological powers in terms of Agrippa’s ‘Three Worlds’. However, it should also be pointed out that these motifs are not unique to the purist orientation: the belief that astrological powers have a chain of influence is a common motif in the general form of ‘relational ontology’ that typifies many forms of esoteric discourse from the at least the Medieval and Early Modern periods onward. However, the presence of these motifs within the purist discourse presents them as literal truths in the framework of a

steadfastly vertical hierarchy, whereas in a discourse of chaos magick they may be presented as paradigms, 'memeplexes', social constructions, or *possible* truths in a non-hierarchical web of meaning and belief.

The drift to the production of more explicitly occult or esoteric artefacts via *Sigilla Vur* and *Star Synthesis* culminated in the production of *Ananak* (2000). This was the first release that I described as 'ritual music'. I described the tracks on my website in the following terms, positioning myself as a 'practitioner' of ritual music to my potential listeners:

1. *Saint Toad*: Music for a pathworking through the ancient cathedral of St. Toad as described in HP Lovecraft's sonnet cycle "The Fungi From Yuggoth".
2. *Hall of KThVL*: Music for a pathworking to R'Lyeh - noise created with washed up metal collected from a beach and concrete.
3. *Sustasis to Helios*: The "Sustasis To Helios" or "Encounter With Helios" was a Greek formula for magical initiation. This is initiatory music inspired by several Graeco-Egyptian initiation rituals.
4. *Nigredo*: Music composed for an alchemically themed ritual.

(Legard 2000d)

Many of these tracks were in fact composed for, or inspired by, the affective spaces of magical rituals that I had either previously performed (tracks 2, 4) or read about (track 3), or moods and imaginative imagery suggested by the sounds themselves (track 1). The theme of affective space and creativity is explored further in the next chapter, but what is most pertinent to the current discussion of identity and seekership is that the turn toward identifying myself as Xenis Emputae, and producing explicitly esoteric music either informed by the systematic use of correspondences (e.g. between stars, frequencies and waveforms) or by the affective space of sound itself, cemented a cognisant identification of myself as an 'occult experimentalist'. In other words, I began producing experimental music that was aesthetically, thematically, symbolically, or affectively invested in the 'occult' and occultural.

While the first two tracks on *Ananak* referenced work with Lovecraftian magic, as pursued before my purist turn, the latter tracks reflected an interest and engagement with older forms of magic: namely the Graeco-Egyptian Magical Papyri and alchemy. I considered these, along with Renaissance occultism (Agrippa, Ficino, *et al.*), to be

sources wherein the authentic *prisca magia* may be found – thus acting as a form of discursive appeal to tradition (e.g. Hammer 2004: 44). Both Agrippa's 'Threefold Worlds' and the Manichaean doctrines of Gnosticism reflected my sense of asceticism by situating the material world as something to be transcended. This form of transcendent doctrine was reflected in my interest in the celestial world (*Liber Stellarum Fixarum*, *Star Synthesis*), and on album and track titles (e.g. *Aeonix Trespassing* [2000]).

My musical and personal identity would undertake a further turn in the spring of 2001: the creative, experiential, discursive, and social implications of which are the subject of the subsequent chapters of this thesis. I will note here, however, that the core discursive and epistemic implications of this latter turn were the product of an experience of altered consciousness on Penwith Moor, Cornwall. As a consequence of this experience, the anti-mundane discursive motifs (e.g. asceticism, self-mortification, and a transcendent-focus) that had previously informed my discursive relation to the 'mundane', material world were tempered by a more holistic outlook in which spiritual experience could be sought through participation in the world, rather than beyond it. It did, however, seem vital that my new practices were also authenticated through a variety of discursive strategies, primarily forms of appeal to tradition via folklore, local history, historical esotericism (Agrippa, Ficino), and respected cultural movements (e.g. Romanticism) – parallels with shamanism (evoking chaos magick's transhistorical shaman) and alchemy would also be commonly invoked in my interviews and texts (see chapters 6 & 7). The discursive appeal to experience also looms large as I emphasised the power of music for facilitating communication with the spirits of place, or for opening doors to holistic experiences of nature and spirituality. In this respect, the 'occult experimentalist' identity would eventually give way to the 'Orphic Troubadour': an idealised conception of myself wandering the moorland, seeking revelations from the earth and its spirits through musical means.

Purist concerns and the search for a *prisca magia* still continued alongside this new identity. However, the focus shifted from magical ritual to magical prayer: the secrets to communing with spirits not necessarily being found in forgotten manuscript sources, but were dependent on faith and revelation enacted through authentic practices. As a consequence, I began to study *The Arbatel of Magick* more seriously circa 2002. Although I was to keep my magical music and magical prayer practices somewhat separate, they both depended on the entering an affective space of

visionary expectation, and use of the imagination as the medium by which revelations from the spirits might be relayed. This dual identity of 'Orphic Troubadour' and 'Part-Time Purist' would broadly persist over the subsequent decade of work as Xenis Emputae Travelling Band, providing a more stable magical and occultural identity into adulthood.

Conclusion: Emerging Adulthood, Ambivalent Modernity, and Self-Identity

This chapter chiefly focused on the analysis of the discursive intertwining of identity formation, seekership, and esoteric practices – both musical and magical – in my own autobiography between the ages of 18 and 21. This period is of relevance not only because it produced a significant accompanying data-set to support analysis (e.g. Usenet and mailing list posts, self-produced websites, writings, and recorded artefacts), but because it also partially spans the period that Arnett (2000) has identified as 'emerging adulthood'.

Arnett emphasises that emerging adulthood, corresponding roughly the years 18-25, is concerned with role experimentation and finding a niche (:469-71). Arnett cites Erikson's discussion of the *psychosocial moratorium* of prolonged adolescence in industrialised European and North American societies, to stress that, during emerging adulthood, 'the role of experimentation that began in adolescence [...] *in fact intensifies*' (Arnett 2000: 470, italics for emphasis), and one vital aspect of this experimentation is the exploration of worldviews as a part of identity formation. In my autobiographical narrative, my *occulturation*, or exposure to the aesthetics and discourses of esotericism, primarily came via mainstream occulture during childhood (horror films, books on the supernatural, H.P. Lovecraft), before developing even more intensely within niche areas of occultural practice (chaos magick, ritual magic) during emerging adulthood. Here, a rapid series of changes in worldview and identity were facilitated primarily by engaging with Internet forums as a form of 'transitional space' (Lövheim 2005). Lövheim also states that her findings on the use of the Internet for defining individual religious autobiographies affirmed that young people 'on the one hand, seek ways to establish an identity independent of religious institutions and the rules [while] on the other hand, [they] seek ways to establish coherence and ontological trust in order to handle the complexity and ambiguity they encounter in late modern society' (Lövheim 2005:17).

Lövheim cites a failure to handle such ambiguities as one factor in her subjects' disengagement from the online community she studied – and I may propose a similar function informing my purist turn, which embraced the need for a form of ontological security which chaos magick could not provide (Giddens 1991: 35-55). The purist position, embedded in Judeo-Christian Theology and Neo-Platonic influences perceives the cosmos as part of a divine plan from genesis to eschaton, and sets forth an ordered conception of the cosmos (e.g. Agrippa's threefold worlds). The three worlds and the correspondences between them become a form of dogma in the purist mindset, and the power-relations are resolutely fixed and top-down (God in the supra-celestial world, supplicated and prayed to by the magician dwelling in the sub-lunar world).

There are, nevertheless, discursive similarities between both purism and chaos magick – most evident in their rejection of the 19th-century occult revival. To the chaos magician, materials such as tables of planetary correspondences from historical sources associated with purism are still useable, but are not necessarily truths: their subjective and constructed nature is readily acknowledged in an embrace of 'ontological anarchism' (Woodman 2003: 293). The chief iconoclastic position of chaos magick is the inversion of the power hierarchy in terms of a radical individualism where magical potency is concentrated in the individual, rather than being bestowed from outside. It was ultimately this position that I came to regard as hubristic as I turned to the ontological security of purism: of being not a lone individual, but a subject with a relation to a paternalistic divinity.

The chaos magician also encounters ontological insecurity, but responds not with explicit appeals to tradition, but with the invocation of scientific discourses from quantum theory to impose certainty and sense of control (ibid.: 302-307). Beyond chaos magick, the use of what Hammer describes as *quantum metaphysics* to legitimate magical practice and a variety of religious and New Age beliefs has become commonplace in the last 50 years, notably through the reception of Fritjof Capra's 1975 *The Tao of Physics* (Hammer 2004: 271-303). Although it was common for Z(Cluster) members to be dismissive of the New Age, many of the discursive appeals to science in chaos magick communities and texts are similar. This proximity to the New Age, which to me seemed to disenchant magic, rather than enchanting science, was another motivation for rejecting chaos magick's scientific syntheses in favour of the 'real' magic of purism. Whereas the ontological security of purism followed the linear course of Christian eschatology, chaos magicians also invoked

the concept of the eschaton, although in a non-linear, often cyclic manner: the eschaton for chaos magicians could indicate a state of being brought about by nuclear apocalypse, or a variety of occultural concepts such as the resolution of the Kali Yuga, or the commencement of a new aeon – all of which were proposed to present opportunities for survival and flourishing by those with appropriate knowledge or insight.

My interactions with – and ultimate rejection of – the chaos magick community brings us back to the first question posed earlier in this chapter, concerning how identity coalesces around particular moments of discursive rupture or drift, and to what extent these identities are either cognitively or hermeneutically constructed. Since the Internet formed the primary medium for my magical explorations, my expressions of identity were predominantly relationally and discursively constructed. What I described as my ‘interstitial’ identity, expressed through the use of a Magick Code that described a wide range of interests and aspirations became a more deliberate, cognisantly constructed identity when I entered a social relationship with Z(Cluster), becoming not Phil Legard, but ZOSimos of the Psorceree(Z) node.

The turn toward a purist orientation had earlier been implied by the way I partitioned my developing work in ritual magic from my chaos and Lovecraftian magic writings. Rather than writing as ZOSimos (chaos magick) or Frater Kaymog (Lovecraftian magic), I would return to my own name for writings on forums such as TheWork, using it as a signifier of my own authenticity. While I had swiftly developed my attraction to chaos magick’s servitors and egregores into an interest in the spirit evocations of ritual magic, I still primarily identified as a chaos magician until making a definitive break with Z(Cluster) and publishing *Liber Stellarum Fixarum*. Although aspects of the purist identity were cognisantly constructed to demonstrate my knowledge of an ‘authentic’ historical magic, there were also hermeneutic aspects stemming from experience of the particular affective space of historical ritual magic that would also correspond to shifts in self-identity (e.g. developing a puritan aversion to depictions of sex and nudity while undertaking the Heptameron working). The shift in epistemic and discursive focus also cemented the purist notion of the magus not self-sufficient, but dependent on a transcendent power.

Mayer (2009) engaged in biographical interviews with eleven magical practitioners in an attempt to define the personality and psychological types of those who identified as magicians. Consequently, he defined five personality types, namely: artist, social

utopian, scientist, 'fully functioning person', and seeker of knowledge – although he stressed that these are not absolute (: 202-203). It is notable that the purist or 'scholar-magician' personality is not represented amongst them. I argue that the purist does represent a specific type not easily encompassed by Mayer's preliminary definitions. This oversight likely owing to the subjects of his interviews: members of Western mystery schools, Thelemites, chaos magicians and Satanists – all movements with their roots either in the 19th-century occult revival or 20th-century counterculture.

Mayer acknowledges that conceptions of magic amongst practitioners are heterogenous and highly individualistic, but he does define three common general goals which practitioners often used to validate their practices: 1) to find out whether magic 'works'; 2) self-development and accessing untapped human potential; 3) knowledge of transcendence. A consideration of these goals has direct bearing on the second question that asked earlier in this chapter concerning seekership: what does a particular identity formation seek? Where is this object of seekership to be found?

Certainly, finding out whether magic 'works' was a key motivator for my seekership, spanning interstitial, chaos magick, and purist identities – although during later 'Orphic Troubadour/Part-Time Purist' identity, the focus would shift to attempting 'prove' not the existence of magic, but rather to 'prove' that magic is a valid route to creativity (see chapter 6).

We may initially discern something distinctly modern about the contemporary magician's need for 'proof': it evokes Giddens' radical doubt, or suggests an Enlightened, scientific approach to the subject (cp. Crowley's maxim 'The Aim of Religion, the Method of Science', see also Josephson-Storm 2017:169-175). However, discourses concerning proof for the efficacy of magic can arguably be traced back to the 13th century and the dynamic relationship between Platonism and Aristotelianism in the wake of St. Aquinas and medieval scholasticism (von Stuckrad 2010: 22), which coincided with the influx of Arabic scientific and philosophical works into Europe. Magical texts from the late Middle Ages onward often describe their rituals as *experimenta* (e.g. Kieckhefer 1997: 212), and are regularly annotated by the author or scribe as *probatum* (proven), or described as 'true' or 'proven' to distinguish the procedures of ritual magic from those of baseless or dangerous superstition. Sophie Page points out that 'secret' and 'experiment' are often used

interchangeably in these contexts, although 'secret' discursively denotes hidden traditions or knowledge, whereas 'experiment' depends on *experientia* – experience or proof (Page 2000: 44).

This considered, it is not surprising that the discursive strategies used by practitioners to legitimise magical and esoteric practices are often reflections of their own motivations or objects of seekership. That is to say, the goal of seeking 'proof' of magic can be served by appeals to both experience and/or to science. The related search for an authentic *prisca magia* depends on an appeal to tradition, rather than science, by way of the curation of texts that the practitioner appraises as authentic examples of a tradition, as well as the possibility of experientially 'proving' the validity of a text through the enactment of the procedures therein.

The final question that was posited in this analysis asked how identity is discursively positioned within a (semi-)public sphere, and what intentions are served by the performance or presentation of identity in the meso-social domain. Given that this chapter has primarily concerned itself with a digital philology of identity, the semi-public and meso-social domains of relevance are primarily Internet forums. Groups such as alt.pagan, alt.magick, and alt.magick.chaos informed me on their respective norms of identity, amongst them the adoption of pseudonyms that evinced an alignment with discourses on both enchantment and tradition (e.g. use of overtly pagan aliases such as 'SpellDew', the use of the 'Frater' prefix etc). These groups, along with material published online by Phil Hine, also gave me a conception of what a chaos magician 'was' (e.g. irreverent and psychedelic, dark and gothic). Online encounters with figures like Aaron Leitch (alas Frater Khephra, self-identified as 'a scholar, practitioner, and teacher of Western Hermeticism, the Solomonic grimoire tradition, and Enochian magick') and Carroll 'Poke' Runyon (also a Solomonic grimoire magician who boasts an MA in Cultural Anthropology) also informed my conceptions of what a scholar-magician or purist might be. My own assumption of identities functioned either as a method of identifying with a group (e.g. ZOSimos when contributing to Z(Cluster)), or as a way to emphasise the authenticity and learned nature of my purist/magician-scholar productions by associating them with my own undisguised and 'authentic' name.

Much of the identity formation discussed above occurs in an overarching discourse of what Nicholas Halmi has described as 'ambivalent modernity' (Halmi 2019). It is a sense of ambivalence to modernity that can encompass definitions of esoteric

thought as 'rejected knowledge', while also explaining the enduring appeal of occulture as both a source of entertainment and as a reservoir for practice and belief. Woodman has emphasised that the discourses of chaos magick mirror an ambivalent experience of modernity which often rejects rationalism and capitalism through thoroughly modern discourses of self-empowerment and individualism, supported by secular, scientific, and psychological techniques (Woodman 2003: 110-111). Similarly, purism cannot be divorced from the modernity in which it is situated and attempts to reject. Purism's attempt to restore an authentic magical practice, or to correct the errors and syntheses of the 19th- and 20th-century occult revivals can be seen as an explicit statement of the emic historiography implied by Weber's disenchantment narrative: that 'real' magic and the proximity to gods, spirits and fairies vanished in the face of religion and science (Josephson-Storm 2017: 170). Purism also suggests that an authentic practical tradition *could* be restored – in this case through a return to primary sources. Although appeals to science and psychology are part of the enchantment narratives of modern magic and the New Age, a purist perspective sees these appeals as subservient to modernity, instead attempting to (anachronistically) adopt what is perceived as being an earlier magical episteme focusing on the literal existence of spirits and occult influences.

Beyond magical and pagan subcultures, the industrial and post-industrial subcultures with which they often intersect can also be interpreted as manifestations of a similar ambivalent modernity. While industrial culture did not explicitly reject modernity in favour of enchantment, it *did* engage in an explicitly ambivalent commentary on modernity: presenting harrowing tableaux of death, murder, destruction, genocide, and torture, while lionising figures like Charles Manson and Aleister Crowley as Nietzschean, self-actualising heroes. It is unsurprising then that the milieu that coalesced around Psychic TV became explicitly occultural as the tropes of industrial culture were retired in favour of a libertarian and magically-orientated outlook indebted to Crowley, and which Partridge has also identified with Halmi's arch mode of ambivalent modernity: Romanticism (Partridge 2013b: 160-168).

Chapter 5.

Experience and Affective Space: Events, Appraisals, and Paths of Practice

Introduction

The previous chapters have highlighted that occultural identity formation occurs in a complex ecology not only of technology, culture, subculture, and their attendant artefacts and discourses, but also emerges from encounters with the affective spaces evoked by musical, ritual, and magic practices, and responds to experiences arising from them. This chapter primarily focuses the phenomenology and hermeneutics of experience in more detail, culminating in the analysis of a particular experience that led to the formation of the identity that I have described as the 'Orphic Troubadour'. It describes how this experience developed into not only a new identity, but also a body of practice and a collection of narratives which sought to articulate or re-engage the experience and its affective space.

The theoretical approach for the analysis of 'experience' in this chapter draws upon Ann Taves' ascriptive approach to studying religious experience, which itself develops from ideas proposed by Spilka *et al.* toward a 'General Attribution Theory' for the psychology of religion (1985, reproduced in Taves 2009: 169-171). Taves' resulting 'building-block approach' concentrated on treating complex cultural concepts (CCCs) as data sets, which are then 'reverse engineered' into more generalisable 'building-blocks' (Taves & Asprem 2016b: 2-3). For example, unstable, polysemous descriptors such as 'religious experience' can be analysed as building-blocks concerning events (the experience itself), representations (beliefs and ascriptions), and actions (intentional or unintentional). This building-block approach could be described as occupying the boundary between evolutionary cognitive psychology and social construction – implicitly embedding constructionism into its naturalist framework (Taves & Asprem 2016a: 5). Taves is interested in the implication of these building-blocks in terms of the cognitive science of religion (CSR) and the development of experimental approaches to studying religious experience as part of a new comparativism. She has, however, also applied these ideas to the modelling of events, representations, and actions in complex individual case studies and explored their role in subsequent meaning-making, explanation, and emergent practices (e.g. Taves 2016a, 2016b). It is in this spirit that I will use Taves' ascriptive

theory, along with her methodology of event narrative analysis, to examine how my magical and musical experiences were related to transpersonal agencies, and what the implications of my appraisals were in terms of their explanatory frameworks and discursive situation. I will also demonstrate how such experiences, their interpretations, and ascriptions influenced my emergent worldviews and musical-magical practices.

Events, Narratives, Ascription, and Paths

Taves translates religious experience from the domain of the *sui generis* into that of social construction and psychology by adopting an ascriptive model, which focuses on the processes by which an agent assigns a particular quality or characteristic to a thing (Taves 2009: 19). In this model, particular experiences (or events) are ascribed a religious quality by the experiencer, which Taves relates to a general ascription of 'specialness' which, akin to Durkheim's concept of the sacred, describes things set apart from ordinary things (:28-46). General types of special things may include experiences of anomalous agency (spiritual beings, deities), experiences of things deemed ideal (Beauty, Truth, Transcendence), or other experiences, events, places, or objects without attendant agency but inviting the ascription of mystical, religious, or special (:45).

While an experience may remain a simple ascription: that which is deemed special, although its plausibility may be doubted by others (:53) – it may also be developed into a 'path', or composite ascription: a process by which the thing or event is re-created 'through practices deemed efficacious' (ibid.). Naturally this also implies a discursive appeal to experience as evidence for efficacy (and by extension also implies the ontological status of the thing or experience in question).

A particular focus of Taves' work – and her collaborations with Asprem – has been the analysis of event narratives (e.g. Taves 2016a, Taves & Asprem 2016b). Over the course of a development of a path (e.g. a set of practices), a particular narrative surrounding an Originary Event (OE) may be presented – and re-presented – in subsequent *post hoc* accounts. From the perspective of CSR the analysis of event narratives suggests ways to 'reverse engineer' an experience and propose the original sensory cues and cognitive appraisals that informed it (Taves & Asprem 2016b: 8-10; Taves 2016: 303-305). Taves' own detailed case studies of OE narratives also encompass a multi-level analysis that also accounts for the social,

behavioural, and discursive contexts surrounding meaning-making and the development of new religious paths (Taves 2016a).

Regardless of the analytic level being pursued, event narrative analysis entails the collation of multiple accounts of an event, its division into possible sub-events, and their respective appraisals - e.g. what the narrator claims happened, and/or why they claim it happened (Taves 2016a: 303-5; Taves & Asprem 2016b: 10-11). Taves and Asprem both note that the re-presentation of narratives may also serve as 'identity events', by which individuals and groups constitute themselves as *special* (Taves & Asprem 2016b: 11).

In the section that follows I will examine a variety of experience narratives from my archival sources that concern themselves with appraisals related to the affective space of ritualised music use. I define these as precursory paths: not fully realised composite ascriptions, but indicative of certain persuasions in terms of cognitive, practical, and explanatory frameworks. I then engage in a more complete event narrative analysis, concerning the event that defined my identity as 'Orphic Troubadour' and led to a fully developed path of occulturally-situated artistic practice.

Precursory Paths: Affect, Experience, Ascription, and the Construction of Ritual Music

In my autobiographical statement I recall an episode that occurred as a teenage heavy metal fan. This small narrative describes the way in which the affective space of music served not simply to evoke a 'mood', but also to *affect* a response in the form of stimulating mental visual imagery:

D began giving me tapes, and it was Megadeth's *Countdown to Extinction* (1992) that really drew me in. Although my fascination with the possibilities of the occult had faded away – magic safely confined to the imaginative worlds of role playing – I still enjoyed listening closed-eyed to music and tapes and either trying to create imagery, or attempting to explore the flow of emergent images. The Megadeth album was a particular favourite, conjuring apocalyptic road-warrior and bio-horror style imagery. (A1.2.2.)

This was not my earliest engagement with using recorded media to evoke mental visual imagery. I had possibly primed myself for this type of engagement earlier by

intently listening to my tapes of *The Hobbit* as a child (A1.1.9, see previous chapter). While most people will be able to relate to vividly imagining an image while listening to a story, such as one read to us as children by our parents, the almost ritualistic – that is, repeated and private – listenings to *The Hobbit*, and the particular use of music therein deepened my sense of imaginative immersion: Bob Stewart's psaltery soundtrack effectively conjuring landscapes of misty mountains and elven kingdoms.

As acknowledged by Taruffi and Küssner (2019), the field of music-evoked mental imagery has been historically under-studied, although anecdotal evidence linking the two is persistent. Studies by Küssner and colleagues report 77-80% of their participants as having experienced mental visual imagery while listening to evocative music (2019: 64). Drawing upon the work of Juslin and Västfjäll (2008), Taruffi and Küssner emphasise that mental visual imagery is closely intertwined with musical emotion evocation, as well as the phenomenon of spontaneous thought described as 'mind-wandering' (:65-66).

As Taruffi and Küssner indicate, such experiences are relatively commonplace. I would seek them out with regularity, and they are still vividly recalled 30 years later. However, while they were engrossing and emphasised a strong link between sound and lucid mental imagery, it is important to note that they were not ascribed a quality of 'specialness': unaccompanied by a sense of transpersonal encounter or numinous power (Otto 1936, Nörenberg 2017), I acknowledged them as enjoyable phenomena located solely in the mind.

The earliest musical encounter that I describe using the vocabulary of 'specialness' (e.g. 'illuminated', 'vivid', 'glowing') occurred during the earlier-mentioned practice of meditating to the music of Gong as part of their 'telepot contact' ritual in late 1996:

[...] I saw a *brightly illuminated* scene: the *colours were vivid*, and it appeared to be a sunny day. Daevid, Gilli, and their small children were standing on a pier and *the air glowed* around them. Something about the glowing quality and *extreme lucidity* of this image, in contrast to the more phantasmagorical involuntary images, has stuck with me. (A.1.3.4, emphasis added)

The music I was listening to during this experience was the second side of Gong's *You* album (1974). While the implications of instrumentation, timbre, and the general musical 'surface' will be explored in chapter 6, the hypnotic jazz-fusion bass line,

along with the use of shimmering glissando guitar, reverb-drenched vocals, and synthesisers combine to produce a musical representation of Gong's cosmic mythos *and* ethos. As Partridge describes popular music as conjuring the affective space of religion ('religion as mood or emotion'), Gong's composition conjures an affective space aligned with the spirituality of the psychedelic counterculture, and moves from a languid groove, to an ecstatic climax. This is relevant, since, both Martarelli *et al.* (2016) and Taruffi *et al.* (2017) associated increased vividness of imagery with positively-valenced, happy and energetic music (Taruffi and Küssner 2019: 69-70).

In his anthropological and phenomenological study of modern ritual magicians, Lycourinos has described the passage of a magician involved in a ritual as a movement between the status of *reader* and *author* (2014: 3). In his context of ritual and grimoire magic this analogy posits the magician begins as 'the notional reader intended by the [original] author', establishing ritual *habitus* through the text of a ritual, before becoming an *author* themselves by enacting the ritual and consequently producing subjective experiences (Lycourinos 2014: 3, 5-6). While the 'telepot contact' instructions produced by GAS were in no way as complex as a grimoire ritual, a similar process may be proposed. In this instance, the written instructions were not the sole text, rather music and listening serve in place of text and reading, producing not only affective space, but also supporting enactive engagement through concentrated listening and modulated breathing, rather than gesture and utterance as in Lycourinos. This leads the listener to the subjective, authorial space (– an induced phenomenological field in Lycourinos' terminology –) in which *something happens*. The *something* in this instance being the production of musically evoked mental image of such luminescence that it was ascribed a quality of specialness: not 'mere' daydream, but something beautiful and possessed of another – more vibrant – reality.

Lycourinos' analogy regarding 'reader' and 'author' is also pertinent to Taves' concept of paths, by which an individual (or group) attempts to perpetuate a special thing or event 'by re-creating it through practices they deem efficacious' (Taves 2009: 53), usually by writing or otherwise setting down practices which elaborate on the initial experience. In this instance a definitive path of 'Gong music meditation' was not elaborated on beyond the original 'telepot contact' instructions – however, it did emphasise the powerfully affective qualities of sound, and consequently references to music appear frequently in my earliest magical writings as supplements to the

paths of esoterically-situated practice that I was developing, culminating in the presentation of what I described as 'ritual music'.

The earliest mentions of music in my magical writings present it in a fairly pragmatic manner, generally situated in the practices of chaos magick. For example, I suggested playing music as an offering to a newly-created 'lightning servitor' (Legard 1998a), used a drum to begin a mental-journeying ritual that I called the *Primordial Earthwalk* (Legard 1998e), and suggested that magical intentions could be encoded into drum beats as part of a ritual working:

Basically a short (i.e. easily remembered) version of the sigil is created by converting the intent into binary. Thus CASH becomes: 00010 00000 10001 00111. Where 0 is a hit to the centre of the drum and 1 is a hit to the outside (i'm using a djembe). A tape of a drum loop can be made for backing to a rite. If you have access to some groovy software like Cool [E]dit, the drum loop can be distorted, echoed etc. to suit the rite and then recorded onto tape. (Legard 1998d)

The above approach was likely inspired by similar threads on the Z(Cluster) list, some of which develop discourses from post-industrial culture on the psychological and magical power of music. For example, Z(Cluster) member Neal Alexander described the possible magical instrumentalisation of music the previous year:

The original intent of my bringing up the subject of art and magick was in fact to talk about the idea which I'm sure many of you are familiar with, of using art as a "carrier wave" for magick. Imagine the scope for mass enchantment if works of art were instilled with magickal intentions. I am sure that many people already create musical sigils particularly (*sic*) in dance musick where the magickian can take advantage of the "receptive" state of mind of the clubbers and "put ideas into their heads". Think of what They could be doing by sending glamour through the airwaves into our television sets (although do They really need to use magick when they already have advertising techniques?). (ZD97.74)

I also suggested that music could complement the practice of Goetic magic, to enhance what we have now identified as the mood or construction of appropriate affective space during the ritual (1998f). However, beyond propositions about the use

of music in magical ritual, and small experiments with creating sigilised loops, I had not yet fully incorporated the idea of ritual into my own experimental music-making.

A practice which I would explicitly define as 'ritual music' began to develop following my ritual with the *Heptameron*, I began to explore alchemical meditations and would assemble a very rough musical composition for the Nigredo Rite one year later (April 14 1999), recorded onto a Sony Minidisc and appearing in an edited version on the *Ananak* album (2000). While 'Nigredo' was composed using loops of crows and ravens and intended for use in ritual meditation, my other musical practices between 1998 and 2000 were broadly improvisatory. I was working with whatever I had to hand: microphones, a guitar, amplifier, computer, tape recorders, and mini-discs, and would use whatever imagery the music brought to mind as the themes or titles of the pieces, rather than having a premeditated idea of what a piece was 'about'. Of course, the titles and themes usually reflect my occultural preoccupations, most evident on tracks such as 'Surface of Yuggoth' or 'Waterways to Venus' (on 1999's *El-ov-Eh*), the music of which strongly evoked mental images of landscapes on distant planets (A1.4.30).

The most explicitly 'magical' releases in my early discography coincide with the peak of my purism which was encapsulated in my publication of *Liber Stellarum Fixarum* in 2000. Amongst the music I published that year, Sigilla Vur's *Ing Na Astrum* emphasised a literal belief in God, spirits, and the possibility of channelling them musically, while *Star Synthesis* attempted to methodically symbolise astrological data in sonic terms. However, it was 2000's *Ananak* which I explicitly identified as 'ritual music', with the following text on my website:

By ritual music I mean:

Music that alters perception - to be used as part of a magical ritual,

and

Music with a 'magical will' encoded into it or making an element of the track.

My ritual compositions usually last between fifty minutes to just under two and a half hours (they are usually recorded onto a minidisc in mono). I have been creating mixes of around seven minutes in length to release to the public. (Legard 2000e)

Kennet Granholm has described the term 'ritual' as being employed as a performative epithet by which artists can situate themselves in a particular relationship to the occult (Granholm 2013b), and there is also a performative use of the von Stuckrad's dialectic of secrecy and revelation at work the above description – suggesting that the longer versions of the music are for a private or initiatory use, while the seven-minute ones are suitable for 'public' consumption. While this is relevant to the performative and presentational aspects of occultural identity, here we will consider the implication of 'ritual' on musical practice in terms of Taves' theory of path production.

The contemporary genre of 'ritual music' emerged from the wider post-industrial subculture of the early 1980s. An influential group in this genre was Psychic TV, whose instrumental album *Themes*, originally packaged as a bonus disc with their *Force the Hand of Chance* LP (1982), emphasised that music was a powerful tool for entering altered states – and by implication magically potent. The sleeve note for *Themes* declares that the music is for use:

by initiates of the Temple Ov Psychick Youth [TOPY] in their *rituals as Functional music intended only to aid in the process of making things happen*. It is a practical tool [...] we have found even on its own, *its effects are considerable. Strange things happen*. [...] Almost all the instruments used were acoustic, but many of them have specifically *ritual or Psychic (sic) properties*' (Psychic TV 1982, emphasis added).

Here we can discern not only the instrumental thrust of chaos magick ('a practical tool') and discursive appeals to experience (e.g. 'strange things happen') but also a language of specialness: that many of the instruments have 'ritual or Psychic properties' that implicitly enable those 'strange' – magical or otherwise unusual – things to happen. The sleeve-notes sketch a composite ascription, or path: a formation that Taves defines as possessing the components of practice-goal-special (2009: 51). In the case of Psychic TV's *Themes*, the *practice* is musical listening, the *goal* is to make 'strange things' happen, and the *specialness* is found in the 'Psychic' qualities ascribed to the instruments.

There is a particular exoticism which evidently influences Psychic TV's ascriptions of specialness to their *instrumentarium*, which includes Tibetan thighbone trumpets, a New Guinea 'headhunters' pipe', 'African initiation drum', animal tusk horn, and

‘various temple bells’. This signals not just the exotic and *outré* (e.g. instruments made of human bone, or associated with dismemberment), but also suggests attempts to connect the aesthetic of their music to extant traditions and perennial concerns. For example, the track ‘23 Tibetan Human Thighbones’ is loosely imitative of Tibetan ritual music, as well as acoustically referencing Brian Jones’ influential recording of the Master Musicians of Jajouka (1971), which, along with the music of the Velvet Underground, was one of Genesis P-Orridge’s musical touchstones (P-Orridge 2010: 22-3, 311).

Themes helped to precipitate the wider genre of ‘ritual ambient’, which had a pronounced presence in the 1980s post-industrial musical landscape (Legard 2021a). While I had not heard *Themes* when I was formulating my own notions of ‘ritual music’, I was aware of *How to Destroy Angels*, a 1984 release by Coil – a group comprised of two former Psychic TV associates, Peter Christopherson and Jhonn Balance. Although I would not actually hear this piece until a year later, it had been mentioned many times during discussions of magical music on Z(Cluster) (ZD97.54, 97.469, 497.71, 00.212), and I had read its sleeve-note on Coil’s website/archive, which had been hosted by Brainwashed.com since 1997.

Subtitled ‘ritual music for the accumulation of male sexual energy’, Coil’s 17-minute piece comprises an ambient palette of sounds related to the planet Mars and masculinity: predominantly ‘clashing swords, gongs, and bullroarers’ (Jorgensen 2011: 27). The sleeve note suggests that ‘for maximum potency it should only be played in circumstances that are exclusively male and/or onanistic in nature’ (Coil 1984). The group also set ‘ritual music’ apart from ‘popular’ music, by suggesting that popular forms ‘tend to overlook [music’s] more fundamental and ancient use as a tool for affecting man’s body and spirit’, an appeal to tradition, suggesting a form of *prisca musica* whose knowledge has been obscured by modernity. Like Psychic TV, Coil emphasise that their ritual music eschews religious dogmas in favour of producing ‘sound which has a *real, practical and beneficial* power in the modern Era (sic)’ (ibid., italics for emphasis). The path suggested by Coil’s album is one in which the *practice* is musical listening (in optional onanistic circumstances), the *goal* is the ‘accumulation of male sexual energy’, and the *special* ascription is implied by the piece having a ‘magickal and numerological, rather than conventionally musical form’ (ibid.).

It is evident that my own formulation of ritual music owes much to Coil insofar as *How to Destroy Angels* does not simply evoke a certain mood or affective space, but also intentionally incorporates ‘magickal and numerological’ aspects into its form, which are ascribed a special status by the composer: setting the music apart from popular, non-ritual, non-magical, non-symbolic forms. In terms of a practice-goal-special structure, my ritual music could be described in the following terms:

Practice	Musical composition / listening as part of a magical ritual
Goal	Altering perception / entering magical consciousness
Special	A ‘will’ or intention encoded into the track, or other symbolic elements in the track are ascribed the quality of specialness, either as expressions of magical intent, or expressions of archetypal symbols.

Table 4. Ritual music considered as a composite path ascription (author’s work).

My definition of ritual music, quoted earlier, concluded by noting that my productions are long in duration, but ‘I have been creating mixes of around seven minutes in length to release to the public’ – as were presented on *Ananak* (2000), where each track has a seven-minute duration. I considered that the lengthy loops and textures that I had created were not, in fact, interesting enough to be listened to as music for entertainment when divorced from the ritual context. This decision also addressed my unease that such music – when composed for personal rituals – might be too elliptical and introverted for broader consumption, although as purely functional music, ritual music has the potential to be produced by insiders for a small audience of fellow insiders – or even for no audience. For example, Jorgensen suggests of *How to Destroy Angels* that ‘it is tempting to dismiss the insider meanings altogether, to proclaim that every listener is an outsider, and that the only listeners who could be inside the circle would be Coil themselves’ (2011: 27). My solution was, therefore, to edit and re-work my ritual music into shorter compositions suggestive of the affective spaces that I was attempting to evoke, sustaining interest and aligning it with the experimental noise genre which I was involved in by adding additional abrasive noise, made by forcing the computer to play digital images (e.g. of sigils or symbols related to the ritual) as though they were audio files: a practice which has been described as ‘data bending’ and comprises a key technique of the ‘glitch’ aesthetic in electronic music (Peña, Dobson & Juárez 2014; see also chapter 6).

Arguably this concern for engaging an audience and sustaining their attention actually undermines the potential for evoking the affective spaces originally intended

by the music. Conversely, an uncompromisingly sparse, long-form work like *Star Synthesis* (2000) provides more space for the listener to engage in mind-wandering behaviours. Counter to Jorgensen's criticism, an effective ritual ambient production may even thrive on its insularity: at once evoking an inscrutable, personal space, while – as ritual ambient producers Arktau Eos put it – offering 'assistance to those desirous of setting their foot where we have been' (Arktau Eos 2006).

Experience, Appraisal, and Identity: Analysing an Orinary Event

An Orinary Event (OE) is defined by Taves as a particular event or experience that is not only deemed 'special' (e.g. sacred, or possessed of religious or spiritual significance), but also results in the constitution of a path 'for re-creating the OE in the present' (2009: 156-160). One particular facet of the OE is that the narrative constructed around it is often re-told and adapted in relation to the path, or paths, of practice that are claimed to originate from it. The recording and re-telling of the event also frames it hierarchically in relation to other events in the life of the narrator (Taves & Asprem 2016b: 7), and serves as an 'identity event', casting those persons with relations to the event as themselves 'special' (Taves & Asprem 2016b: 11).

In this section, I will analyse an event from my autobiography which can be identified as an OE, being re-told in various forms over a fifteen-year period, and being presented as the originating source of the path of esoteric/musical practice that was central to the 'Orphic Troubadour' identity. To analyse this experience, I use Taves' appraisal chart approach, which itself draws upon Bertam E. Malle's attributive approach to modelling behaviour explanations in social psychology (Malle 2004, cited in Taves & Asprem 2016b: 5-6, 10-11). One of Taves' and Asprem's aims is to use appraisal charts in the context of 'event model analysis': to attempt to reconstruct the 'real-time' conditions of a given experience (and thus to bridge analysis between high-level cultural and lower-level cognitive appraisals). However, Taves' key work exploring these approaches, *Revelatory Events* (Taves 2016a), focuses more explicitly on the historical, social, and social psychological relationships between the events she analyses and the paths and milieus which develop around them. One of the strengths of Taves' approach to analysis is that it clearly separates events, their appraisals, and the behaviours that occurred as a result, enabling more explicit connections to be made between the development of paths of practice and appraisals of experience. This approach further enables clear distinctions to be made between emic presentations of narrative, discursive and cognitive factors when the

event is presented and re-presented, but also suggests the possibility of formulating a naturalistic interpretation of the events that led to such appraisals. While Taves and Asprem are concerned with the last of these, here we will bracket the type of naturalistic explanations which lie beyond the scope of the current thesis, and concentrate on reading the narratives surrounding the OE from the perspectives of discursive, social, and (sub)cultural analysis which we have already established.

The OE under consideration is the 'Men-an-Tol Experience', which occurred in the summer of 2001 and became the genesis narrative for my musical project Xenis Emputae Travelling Band (2001-2013). As a form of identity narrative, this experience was frequently recounted in interviews and writings to position myself as the recipient of a particular 'gnosis', or 'special' experience, and to situate my creative practice in relation to that experience and broader traditions – both esoteric and folkloric. The sources with accounts of the Men-an-Tol experience are as follows:

- 2004 Interview with Brad Rose for Foxy Digitalis website
- 2006 Interview with Odile Strik for the Evening of Light website
- 2007a Phil Legard: *Psychogeographia Ruralis* chapbook
- 2007b Interview with Kevin Moist for Deep Water Acres website
- 2009 Interview with Dan Hunt for Zero Tolerance magazine

There are also four later sources. Two are conference contributions in which I presented my creative work to an academic audience, and the third re-presents some of this academic material for a general audience. The final account is the narrative as presented in the autobiographical statement produced for this research project:

- 2013 Phil Legard: *Music, Magic, Metaxy* (Uncanny Landscapes symposium, Royal Holloway University)
- 2015 Phil Legard: *The Many Coloured Earth* (The Alchemical Landscape symposium, Cambridge University Counterculture Research Group)
- 2018 Phil Legard: 'Grotto Grove and Shrine: Recollections on Music-Making and Numinous Experience in Nature' (published in *Folk Horror Revival: Harvest Hymns*, vol. 2, Wyrd Harvest Press)
- 2019 Phil Legard: *An Occultural Memoir* (A2.1.1 – A2.1.4)

It is notable that all accounts are also *communicative* explanations (Asprem 2014: 1-2), and no *private* explanation (e.g. diary entry) is extant. They are therefore subject to certain constraints of behaviour management (Malle 2004: 101-102, cited in Asprem 2014: 1-2) – enacted through what has previously been described in terms of discursive identities, viz. the identity of ‘Orphic Troubadour’ presented to interviewers during the course of the musical project, as well as a subsequent identity as a more objectively-situated creative practitioner in the accounts presented in academic symposia.

The experience in question concerns the 2001 visit to prehistoric sites at Penwith Moor, Cornwall. The version presented in *An Occultural Memoir* provides a summary of the core events of the experience (– see Appendix C for collated event narratives):

In the June of 2001, while still working at the college, I encountered a pivotal experience in my creative life. We had been taken by [my partner] P’s parents to stay in Newlyn, Cornwall. I found a book of Cornish walks on the shelves of the cottage and was fascinated by the walk across Penwith Moor, taking in Men-an-Tol, Nine Maidens (Boskednan), Bodrifty Settlement, and Mulfra Quoit. I persuaded P and her brother to do this walk, and then to press onward to Penzance for tea. We were dropped at the Men-an-Tol Studio, and walked across a short stretch of moor to the Men-an-Tol standing stones.

At the stones we joked around a bit, and I read the passage from the guidebook, which alluded to the use of the holed stone in ‘gypsy’ baptism rites. We teased one another to crawl through the stone. I went through, head first, and stood, surveying the countryside: the undulating, brush-strewn landscape, with the austere, imposing ruined engine house of an old mine in the distance. I was elated, I felt an intense inner-glow, and a connection with the landscape and my surroundings. An ecstatic feeling, which deepened as we set off across the moor.

In retrospect, this experience was an ontological shift. I had been deeply involved in a very intellectual world: calculating Cabalistic numerology, speculating on astrological influences and the imagery of the heavens. Being in a natural scene, encircled by the horizon was a profound shock. I had never been particularly interested in ‘earth energies’ or stone circles, but I became convinced that ‘something’ had happened here.

I revisited the moor the next day, with a handheld Dictaphone and minidisc recorder, to make musical recordings. However, I found that revisiting the places and trying to engage with them musically did not yield the same, overwhelming ‘extrovertive’ mystical experience. What it did yield, however, was something more imaginatively involved: an inner-meeting with the landscape and its presences. The recordings would be self-released a few weeks after I returned, under the new moniker *Xenis Emputae Travelling Band*. (A2.1.1-4)

The events shared between all accounts can be summarised as follows:

- 1) In summer 2001 I visited Men-an-Tol
- 2) I crawled through the stone
- 3) A special event happened
- 4) I later made some recordings in the area
- 5) These recordings initiated new musical direction

Although the above represents the stable structure of the narrative, each retelling reflects shifting inferences and explanations, often related to identity performance and discursive positioning.

All interview sources that recount the story begin with a *post hoc* inference that frames the accounts as narratives of an Originary Event:

I can vividly recall *the birth of XETB* in 2001...
(2004, emphasis added)

XETB *came into being* at Men-an-Tol...
(2006, emphasis added)

I was never really serious about music until 2001 when I began XETB...
(2007b, emphasis added)

I consider the band *beginning at the moment I crawled through the ancient stone known as Men-an-Tol*... (2009, emphasis added)

The earliest account (2004) notes the presence of my partner, reference to whom is excluded from subsequent retellings with the exception of that presented in the 2019 *Occultural Memoir*, which was intended to be a descriptive and discursively neutral account of the events. What is immediately apparent from analysis is that most presentations of this narrative position me as a lone narrator: emphasising the sort of identity I wished to construct as an 'Orphic Troubadour'.

Since this particular identity formation has not been discussed in detail yet, it would be useful to provide outline before returning to the analysis of the Men-an-Tol narrative. My identification with Orpheus in this context can be traced to the work of Angela Voss, whose thesis and other works on the Renaissance Hermeticist Marsilio Ficino had immediately presented themselves when I began to search the Internet for writing on occult and magical music in the late 1990s and early 2000s (e.g. Voss 1992). Voss presents Ficino as a second Orpheus – *Orpheus Redivivus* – adapting the newly rediscovered 'Orphic Hymns' of the Antique world to his own form of musical practice, grounded in astrological medicine and talismanic magic. This connection between music and what I perceived to be the 'true' *prisca magia*, rediscovered in the Renaissance, enabled me to incorporate my purist tendencies into this developing musical identity.

By 2003, the identity would also incorporate some explicitly Celtic identifications after I discovered a translation of the *Black Book of Carmarthen*: a series of medieval Welsh texts, several of which are attributed to the poet Myrddin Wyllt (Pennar 1989; A2.6.1). This semi-mythical figure, who would later become synonymous with Merlin to many commentators, was supposed to have lost his reason after the Battle of Arfderydd, retiring into solitary existence amongst the animals of the woods and composing prophetic verses (Pennar 1989: 17-31). I had written about a moment of explicit identification with Myrddin in the notes accompanying 2003's *Lords of the Green Grass*:

['Thoughts of Maytime'] was recorded sitting by a stream, during which time I felt isolated and alone in the wood – at that moment I felt a kinship with the early Welsh poet Myrddin. According to the autobiographical poetry of [T]he *Black Book of Carmarthen*, after losing his mind in battle Myrddin became a hermit in the Caledonian Forest, seeking truth and sanity, and making prophecies. The poems preserved in the *Black Book* are some of the most beautiful and inspiring works I have read, with an amazing, profound Christian

spirituality. I was moved to *ad-lib* part of one of my favourite poems, *Maytime Thoughts*. (Legard 2003)

The romantic figure of the solitary Myrddin, poet and singer, prophet and madman, and lonely wanderer combined with my interests in Ficino's 'Orphic' music to define the identity that I have described as the 'Orphic Troubadour'. I also went to pains to distinguish my music and identity from that of mainstream neopaganism, while still maintaining a connection with place and folkloric traditions:

Please note that rather than being an advocate of the current *neopagan trend*, I consider myself as a Neoplatonist in the mould of the Renaissance magi (Agrippa and Ficino being profound influences), with a deep interest in local custom and tradition. (ibid., emphasis added)

Returning to analysis of the 2001 experience that would lead to this identity formation, I possessed prior knowledge from a guidebook that Men-an-Tol was accorded special significance amongst the stones on the moor. In the 2004 interview I drew attention to the connection between the stone and folkloric rituals:

There is an ancient tradition that the stone had some kind of healing properties if people crawled through it, and some families still pass their newborn through it three times. (Legard 2004)

This paraphrasing indicates an intentional discursive strategy: in the same interview I described the experience subsequent to passing through the hole as 'a sort of *birth* into a new world' (ibid., emphasis added). The suggestion here is that my 're-birth' was validated by a connection to the folkloric function of the Men-an-Tol stones.

Although the act of passing through the holed stone was – as recounted in the 2019 narrative – a consequence of playfulness between my partner, her brother, and myself, it was presented as an active decision in the 2004 narrative. Subsequent narratives seem to downplay the act as a cognisant decision, simply referring to 'passing through the ancient ruined tomb of Men-an-Tol' (2007b), or in a later narrative being '*taken* by the playful *impulse* to crawl through the hole' (2018, emphasis added) – almost making the suggestion that I was *not fully* in control.

My interpretations of what happened once I had passed through the hole, and appraisals of what the event signified depend upon forms of language that emphasise ascriptions of specialness – italicised in the following quotes:

I think that is the moment in which the project began - *a sort of birth into a new world*. (2004)

Within a moment *the landscape had been transfigured*... an experience I *can't quite put into words*. [...] In that moment *everything made some kind of sense*. (2007b)

It was at that moment that *I found what I'd been searching for* in my music: the genius of places. (2009)

Things changed profoundly: almost immediately, *the landscape and my relationship with it became inexplicably unified*. (2018)

This language used here alludes to classical motifs of mystical experience, which are often described in terms of unity, ineffability, rebirth, transfiguration, and revelation. These are of course motifs that have entered the popular domain through theorisations of religious experience in the influential works of William James (e.g. mystical experiences being typified by ineffability, noetic quality, transiency, and passivity [Marshall 2005: 50]) and Otto (wholeness, paradoxical identity, eternal now, transfiguration, unification [Marshall 2005: 52-54]). While a naturalistic investigation of the conditions and mechanisms that yielded this experience is beyond the scope of this thesis, the particular ascriptions made to these events, and their relation to the popular language of religious experience enabled me to situate my narrative within a perennial context: as a Classical form of religious experience corresponding to certain cultural expectations. Not least amongst these being a profound change in the experiencer. In this respect I describe the experience not just in terms of being the origin of my subsequent musical project, Xenis Emputae Travelling Band, but also describe it as making me 'serious' about music (2007b) and connected to a process of seekership in which I finally '*found what I'd been searching for*' (2009).

Attempts to ascribe a cause to the Men-an-Tol event are, however, visibly lacking from my writing on the subject. However, in *Psychogeographia Ruralis* (2007), a monograph I wrote about the paths and practices that developed from the event, I

attempted to appraise the incident in terms of the mode of heightened psychic awareness which Colin Wilson (1971) called 'Faculty X':

There are Wilson's examples: Proust's Madeleine, Arnold Toynbee's experience of being at one with the flow of history while walking near Victoria Station, which correlated with my own experience after passing through the holed stone at Men-an-Tol. (Legard 2007a)

Rather than seeking to identify a particular spiritual or psychological cause for the experience, most effort was invested in the process of translating the experience into a form of practice. Although I would develop and elaborate on the path over the years that followed, the actions taken as an immediate consequence of the experience – as well as related events not accorded the same Originary status as the Men-an-Tol event in the narratives presented in interviews – would be vital in terms of translating what could have been a transitory experience into a sustained set of creative practices and accompanying esoteric ascriptions.

The first of the abovementioned related events is mentioned only in the 2004, 2018 and 2019 narratives. In the 2004 narrative, it was presented in response to a further question from the interviewer, Brad Rose:

Brad Rose: What's the one place you've recorded that stands out most to you? Why?

Phil Legard: It would have to be Mulfra Quoit, which I visited during the birth of the project. It's the remains of a megalithic tomb. As I arrived a storm was gathering, so I took shelter inside the tomb. The atmosphere was really tangible - *it really felt as if something were beginning to manifest itself*. It felt very much like some kind of MR James story - I was half expecting the spirit on an ancient tribal lord to materialize! (Legard 2004, italics for emphasis)

This event recounts an experience of what Cheyne (2012) has described as a 'sensed presence' – the feeling that there is something which, despite having "in itself, no sensory components [...] is more than an internal feeling state, being perceptually projected into extrapersonal space [...] often within precise and reliable coordinates" (:219). Explanations for this phenomenon vary – Cheyne cites two neuropsychological models based on either events at the temporoparietal junction

leading to a sense of the body being reduplicated at some other location (:220), or as a consequence of an evolutionarily developed “sense of the other” (:221), ‘suggesting that experiences of unseen agents such as spirits and gods simply reflect our hypersensitive agent detectors’ (:229). On the border between academia and occulture, Michael Persinger’s research into the use of transcranial stimulation in the 1990s suggested that sensed presences could be induced by the manipulation of magnetic fields, seemingly validating similar propositions by parapsychologists and receiving widespread media coverage (Granqvist *et al.* 2005: 1). However, as Granqvist *et al.* convincingly argue, sensed presence and mystical experiences in this context are closely correlated to personality traits related to suggestibility, an insight based on self-reported tendencies toward absorption (Tellegen absorption scale), signs of abnormal temporal lobe activity (Temporal Lobe Signs Inventory), and “new age”-life-style orientation (New Age Orientation Scale) (:1-4).

While the connection between experiences of absorption and sensed presence is explored in the conclusion to this chapter, it should also be noted that I had recorded episodes of sensed presence at several prior junctures, which I ascribed to a variety of supernatural agencies. For example: my juvenile account of sensing breathing behind a door while alone with a friend (A.1.1.4) was attributed to a ghost, a threatening presence was attributed to a demon I had summoned in my late teens (A.1.3.37), and while conducting an experiment with the *Heptameron*, I sensed that the spirit had manifested behind me (Legard 1999). The precedent was therefore established to make a similar ascription of specialness to the sensed presence at Mulfra Quoit: that it was a spirit associated with the landscape, a representative of the *genius loci*.

A further related event is notable – although mention of it is absent from the written narratives from the above period. It concerns an experience during the same holiday, when I made some recordings on Newlyn beach. Having read in a book of Cornish Folklore about offerings of fish made to the local spirit of Bucca Dhu, I recorded material for a track called ‘Feast of Bwcca-Dw’. The sleeve-note for the resulting album pithily describes this inspiration:

The Bucca is an ancient (demi)god, whose centre of worship is apparently Newlyn, in Cornwall. The legends and customs surrounding the Bucca are very similar to those which concern Dagon, the god of the Philistines - such as offerings of corn and fish.

There is an appeal to tradition in this statement: attempting to connect the offerings to the Bucca with the ancient figure of Dagon, by way of Lovecraft's depiction of Dagon as a fish-god, influenced by erroneous medieval etymologies of the name (Singer 1992: 433). In the autobiographical account, I provided a more detailed description of recording material for this track:

Sitting on the beach at Newlyn in the late evening, I found myself drawn into an imagining of a ritual: a fire festival, in which offerings were carried by the village into the sea for Bucca Dhu. The resultant track was a primitive attempt to evoke this imagined space musically, using Dictaphone recordings from the beach, overdubbed with hand-drum (djembe) recordings made later at home. Despite the primitive nature of the musical production, re-listening to the music vividly recalls the imaginative scene: I can see the faces of the fishermen and villagers in the orange light of their torches; the sound of sand and shingles; the hubbub of voices; and the playing of drums to summon the Bucca Dhu... (A2.1.7)

This imaginative scene is an example of the type of mental visual imagery that I had begun engaging with in my earlier music-making practices. However, they vitally differ in context. Previous mental imagery was formed as a reaction to an abstract musical surface, interpreted through an occultural framework. While the occultural (and folkloric) framework is present in this case, the imagery was also associated with the experience of being physically present in a particular location. Subsequent music production sessions revisiting the recordings, reworking and overdubbing them, become opportunities not only to re-engage with the mental imagery I associated with them, but would also become a surrogate for revisiting the place itself (see chapter 6).

The above analysis of what tended to be presented as a narrative of a single Originary Event demonstrates how a 'special' experience becomes translated into areas of identity, discourse, and – given its status as a communicative narrative – performativity. That is to say, it provided a narrative that enabled me to situate myself as someone who had a *particular* experience, and whose subsequent music was formed by that experience, knowingly invoking the mythical and Romantic trope of the divinely inspired musician or artist.

This analysis emphasises that what was often presented as a single experience in fact was used as shorthand for three experiences ascribed a sense of specialness:

- 1) The extrovertive experience at Men-an-Tol
- 2) The sensed presence at Mulfra Quoit
- 3) The experience of mental imagery at Newlyn beach

The first of these attained status as *the* Originary Event in terms of self-presentation and identity construction, while the second two are arguably more important with regards to developing a path of practice that attempted to connect sensed presences in the landscape, music-making, mental imagery, and 'special' experiences.

Psychogeographic Ether Folk: The Emergent Path

One consequence of path formation is the establishment of authorial control or authority over what was previously an unintended event (cp. Lycourinos' authorial theory of ritual practice, mentioned earlier). Although the dramatic Men-an-Tol event became foregrounded in my publicly presented experience narratives, the path that emerged was actually more concerned with recreating related events: recapturing a sense of an otherworldly presence (as at Mulfra Quoit, A2.1.5), and engaging with mental imagery drawn from recording and music-making at a place (as at Newlyn beach, A2.1.6-7).

It is apparent that the path which emerged from the Men-an-Tol experience actually developed upon my already established practices – although this is not the impression that publicly presented narratives of the Originary Event portray. I had previously related to music-listening and music-making from the perspective of mental visual imagery (A.1.3.4, A1.4.30), altering consciousness (as in my 'ritual music'), and a year earlier I had also attributed one track to inspiration from the spirit Remasiel. The Cornish events, however, enabled me to develop these disconnected approaches into a more cohesive path of practice. While the unintended event at Men-an-Tol could not be so easily recreated, my established practices provided some way to incorporate elements from the other Cornish events (e.g. experience of place and sensed presences) into a form of esoteric musical practice.

This path would find its first expression as 'Ether Folk', or 'Psychogeographic Aether Folk', a term coined during the recording of *Under a Soular Moon* (late 2001,

released early 2002). It is from this point that the term 'psychogeography' enters my musical discourse, following the discovery of Mount Vernon Arts Lab's *Séance at Hobbs Lane* (2001) in the autumn of 2001 (A2.2.8).

While originally described by Debord (1955) a 'charmingly vague' term associated with the urban critiques and artistic practices of the Situationists, psychogeography engaged in an explicitly occultural turn in the 1990s and early 2000s owing to associations with authors like Iain Sinclair and Alan Moore, both of whom frequently invoke William Blake and Nicholas Hawksmoor as totems of urban esotericism (for example, Alan Moore & Tim Perkins' *Angel Passage* [2001]). The result of this has been to re-orient psychogeography as a form of engagement with an enchanted environment, as opposed to the materialistic, psycho-social orientation favoured by Situationist practitioners. Mount Vernon's Drew Mulholland described his own psychogeographic music in terms of 'occult energy' and music-evoked associations in an interview with *Fortean Times* published in 2001:

There was a real current of what some might call *occult energy* with this record. Two examples from *Séance*...would be The Vauxhall Labyrinth, *which reminded me of Sherlock Holmes and Fu Manchu*, and While London Sleeps, which was an article about the postal railway that runs between Paddington and Whitechapel. This subterranean railway carries no passengers and is for the transportation of passengers (sic) and mail only. *To me something like that is so romantic and evocative.* (Pilkington 2001a, emphasis added)

The presence of Coil's Peter Christopherson on *Séance at Hobbs Lane* also emphasised for me a connection between psychogeography and the occult. This connection was also deepened by my discovery of the work of Gyrus Cope, who had produced (under the further *alias* G. T. Oakley) a chapbook entitled *Verbeia: The Goddess of Wharfedale*: goddesses being connected in my mind to pagan spirituality – and, by extension, witchcraft and magic (A2.2.7).

This accounts for the presence of 'psychogeography', but what of 'aether folk'? In the *Foxy Digitalis* interview, I describe the recording of *Full Moon June* (2001) in terms of the 'ether', positing myself as a somewhat passive receiver of its influence – the implications of which will be explored further in the next chapter:

In the initial recordings I saw my role as a receiver, picking up memories, emotions and sounds which had been crystallized in some kind of spiritual ether which surrounded the place at which I was recording. (Legard 2004)

I had originally described Xenis Emputae Travelling Band as 'a mainly acoustic "space music" project' on my website. However, the term 'folk' was now discursively applied, suggesting varied notions of tradition, place, locality, and national identity, and reflecting my new deepening interest in the psychedelic folk music I was downloading and sharing on Soulseek (A2.2.6, see chapter 7).

The recording of *Under a Soular Moon* during the autumn/winter of 2001 enabled the path to develop further. The place most associated with this album is Ilkley Moor, particularly the Twelve Apostles stone circle, and the north-east side of the moor around Backstone Beck. One track is also called *Verbeia*, in reference to Gyrus' work and the role that it played in enhancing my perception of Wharfedale as an 'enchanted' landscape. I reflected on this period in my autobiographical account:

Many of the track titles are inspired by aesthetic and sensory phenomena which I encountered during my wanderings: the moonlight on boggy waterlogged moorland, for example (*The Moon Bog* – the title also a Lovecraft reference), as well as an affective sense of the numinosity of earth, water, and the moon (*Black Moon Mother*, *Verbeia*; *Black Moon Mother* ends with a whispered version of 'Gorgo, Mormo, Thousand-Faced Moon' – another Lovecraft reference). There are also references to paganism in titles such as *The Spiral Path*, and to other esoteric readings such as *Adocentyn*. *However, the more engaged imaginative tableaux and internal navigations are generally not the focus, so much as reacting to environmental stimulus and the development of an aesthetic were. It was also the start of a wider process of seeking a form of belonging in the local landscape through a process of dwelling and ritual re-visiting (e.g. to draw closer to the landscape or its gods/daemons).* (A2.2.10, emphasis added)

The process of recording *Under a Soular Moon* can be seen in terms of path-production as an attempt to recapture something of the Originary Event by intentionally 're-enchanting' the landscape through engagement with Gyrus' pagan and neo-antiquarian work on the 'Goddess of the Wharf', *Verbeia*. The path, then, emphasises an affective engagement with a landscape in which ancient gods are

perceived to endure into the present. The landscape itself, and the recordings made therein yielded the – often quite lucid – mental visual imagery that informed the tracks, although I had yet to consider such imagery explicitly as communications from the *genius loci* or engage in more sustained imaginative work with the music as a medium of spiritual communication, as I would when the path further developed in a more ‘mediumistic’ direction (see chapter 6). At this stage, it would be useful to compare the path that developed during 2001 as Ether Folk to that of my previous ritual music:

	Ritual Music	Ether Folk
Practice	Musical composition / listening as part of a magical ritual.	Recording material in an ‘enchanted’ landscape / listening to re-engage.
Goal	Altering perception / entering magical consciousness.	Encounter with a sense of numinosity, vivid mental imagery, or meaningful affect / develop a sense of ‘belonging’.
Special	A ‘will’ or intention encoded into the track, or other symbolic elements in the track, are ascribed the quality of specialness, either as expressions of magical intent, or expressions of archetypal symbols.	Engagement with a ‘spiritual ether’, conveying knowledge and emotions relating to the history, and deities within the landscape.

Table 5. Ritual music and ether folk considered as path constructions (author’s work).

The most important difference is that the production of Ether Folk does not occur solely at the computer, or at home with electronic equipment: the practice took music-making out of the context of a formal magical ritual, and incorporated it into a practice embedded in the landscape: in Ether Folk, the sense of specialness is not imparted in terms of a symbolic magical intent deliberately encoded into a composition, but arose from an affective encounter with the landscape itself.

This is not to say that the computer and electronic equipment are absent, rather that – in many cases – the musical piece developed from a recording made on location that coincided with, or provoked, an event (e.g. a mood or feeling, meaningful sensory observation, mental visual image, sense of presence, or sense of numinosity). The computer was then necessary for further working on the music, providing a similar dialogue with mental imagery to that which I explored in my earlier improvisational electronic music. It is also notable that in many of the preceding analyses, the computer has often served as a locus for magical practice and experience, from the online rituals of Z(Cluster), to engagement with mental visual imagery as part of musical practice.

These modes of computer-mediated engagement can be described through the enactive phenomenological scheme employed by Lycourinos (2018), which attempts to account for a ‘practitioner’s experience of transitioning modes of embodiment and cognition’ (:100). This can be expressed as sets of data that record the practitioner’s external gesture (e.g. breathing deeply), combined with their internal gestures (e.g. prayer, visualisation). The scheme also records the resultant metaexperience (:102), such as a vision, the production of which also marks a transition from the state of a *reader* (following a text or set practice) into that of an *author*, producing new knowledge (cf. Lycourinos 2014: 3, 5-6). The following table presents three computer-mediated practices from my biography that also yielded moments of specialness:

Practice	External Gesture	Internal Gesture	Metaexperience
Z(Cluster) Online Ritual (against Serbian warlord Arkan, A.1.4.28)	Kneeling in front of the computer, breathing deeply at first. Increasing rapidity until hyper-ventilating.	Repeating a mantra based on an encoded statement of intent.	Culmination in a state of vacuity identified as ‘gnosis’.
Improvisatory electronic music production (ca. 1998-2000)	Sitting in front of the computer with headphones. Eyes either closed and listening, or manipulating equipment/playing instruments while recording.	Intense listening to the musical surface.	Mental visual imagery – emergent from the musical surface, but often ascribed to transpersonal source.
Ether Folk production (ca. 2001)	Sitting in front of the computer with headphones. Eyes either closed and listening, or manipulating equipment/playing instruments while recording.	Intense listening to the musical surface.	Vivid recall of the landscape and/or associated mental visual imagery and other affective event(s).

Table 6. Modes of computer-mediated music production considered as enactive phenomenologies (author’s work).

The enactive phenomenological approach to connecting embodied practice with the production of metaexperience provides one way to prepare the ‘practice’ element of Taves’ tripartite practice-goal-special schema for analysis. In my ritual music production, improvisatory electronic music practice, and production of albums in the Ether Folk genre, listening is the key component of practice. It is the production of

metaexperience – e.g. the vivid, imagined re-engagement with landscape – that enables the practice to serve the goal (e.g. drawing closer to the spiritual ‘ether’ surrounding the landscape, seeking a sense of belonging, or unearthing a forgotten past).

As with the varied presentations of the Originary Event, the development of a path also helps to describe and maintain identity. In this case, the practices were foregrounded as ‘psychogeographic aether folk’ or ‘amusical drone folk’ interpretations of astral and geographical *spiritus locii* (both phrases used to promote *Under a Soular Moon*), reflexively positioning the musician as a conduit for ‘*spiritus locii*’ or ‘aetheric’ impulses. This also serves discursive strategy, appealing to both experience and tradition via Romanticism, paganism, British mythology, and the concept of an ancient and historic rural landscape wherein old gods still dwell.

In the analysis of what became framed as an Originary Event, it was highlighted that the emphasis on the Men-an-Tol experience obscured the other meaningful events that actually enabled the path of practice and recorded music to develop as they did. The same applies to the discursive and reflexive manner in which the developing path was presented: while many of the track titles and musical visual imagery that emerged during the recording of *Under a Soular Moon* developed from affective encounters with Ilkley Moor in winter, reflected through the writings of Gyrus, Andrew Chumbley, and Kenneth Grant (A.2.2.3, A2.2.13), not every track began life on the moor, nor does every track incorporate material recorded there. *Adocentyn*, for example, is built around an algorithmic synthesis application that I was writing for my final undergraduate project in Computing, while *Crystal Sun Orpheus* derived from a graphic score based on the constellation Taurus (A.2.2.11). Such overtly technical and compositional approaches were excised from my early commentaries in order to give the impression of a less technically-mediated practice thoroughly constituted by intuition.

I would not overtly discuss the presence of algorithmic and pre-composed material in my music until 2007, by which time my attempt to create an ‘authentic’ (e.g. purist) theory of magical music was fully flourishing. This had developed from an interest in the music of the spheres and its relation to historical tuning systems, beginning in 2002 as a consequence of encountering Joscelyn Godwin’s *Harmonies of Heaven and Earth* (1987) while attempting to restore an authentic form of ‘magical music’ along the lines of Marsilio Ficino’s ‘Orphic’ practices (A.2.5.7-8). 2002 also coincides

with my study of the *Arbatel of Magick*, a 16th-century text on revelation through spirits influenced by early Protestant Theosophy. Within the general dynamic of seekership discussed in the last chapter, this marks a period of loose, organic, and non-traditional creative practice ('Psychogeographic aether-folk') co-existing with what I describe as a 'part-time purist' identity (practicing the work of the *Arbatel*). Over time, however, aspects of my musical practice would become more discursively aligned with Purism and tradition in various forms – such as folk tradition, and the poetic Traditionalism of Kathleen Raine (see chapter 7), yielding a resurgent concern for presenting an image of a historically-grounded magical authenticity in my work (see chapter 6).

Conclusion: Events, Paths, Porosity, and Absorption

This chapter has analysed the relationship between paths of practice, special events ascribed Orignary status, and the employment of such events and paths in terms of discursive identity construction. The analysis of event narratives, paths of practice, and the reconstruction of enactive phenomenologies enabled the construction of emic models of experience to complement the previously developed analyses of identity and discourse. Given that the focus of this thesis is on the discursive and experiential constructions of creative practice and identity within esotericism and occulture, the primary focus of these analyses has been cultural and behavioural, rather than attempting to analyse the biological and lower-level cognitive mechanisms that researchers involved in the present 'cognitive turn' in esoteric and religious studies seek to identify (e.g. Luhrmann et a 2021, Lifshitz *et al.* 2019, Taves & Asprem 2016b, Taves 2009, Taves 2016a).

It is acknowledged that, from sociological and discursive-psychological perspectives, the apparatus used to define and study psychological traits (e.g. self-report scales) are constructs of the researchers themselves, and participants are often influenced in their responses by contextual clues or expectations about the underlying construct (Lifshitz *et al.* 2019: 6-7). Nevertheless, even when engaged with higher-level (cultural, behavioural, discursive) analyses, the research of cognitive psychologists is useful to provide the vocabulary and analytic insights that enable us to connect clusters of psychological phenomena and biological mechanisms to understudied and often disparate cultural and behavioural manifestations. Lifshitz *et al.*'s 2019 review of absorption and spiritual experience is illustrative of this, suggesting that the relation between absorption and hypnotisability – initially considered strong – is only

modest and often contextually biased (:3-4). Rather, the construction of 'absorption' as a personality trait has instead highlighted the potential relationship of absorptive tendencies to engagement with arts, attachment to nature, positive emotions when listening to music, dissociative experiences, the thinness of mental boundaries, and transliminality (e.g. "a largely voluntary susceptibility to, and awareness of, large volumes of inwardly generated psychological phenomena of an ideational and affective kind" [Lange *et al.* 2000: 593]).

A tendency to absorption, or the 'willingness to be engrossed in the contents of awareness while relinquishing a sense of active control' (Lifshitz *et al.* 2019: 3) has been deemed a likely predictor of an individual being involved in activities that demand the use of imagination (e.g. reading fiction, story-telling) to such a degree that the imagined object takes on sensory qualities (:9). Although the characteristics associated with states of absorption (awe, self-transcendence) are present in many experiences deemed spiritual, absorption alone is not necessarily a reliable predictor of tendency toward either producing spiritual experiences, or interpreting unusual experiences in spiritual terms (:9). Cross-cultural studies have suggested that socio-cultural concepts relating to porosity actually inform the interpretation of absorption experiences and their ascription to supernatural or spiritual influences (Luhmann *et al.* 2021: 6-7). Luhmann *et al.* describe porosity as referring:

to ideas about how a person might receive thoughts, emotions, or knowledge directly from outside sources (e.g. through divine inspiration, divination, telepathy, or clairvoyance) and ideas about how thoughts and feelings might have a direct causal impact on the world (e.g. through witchcraft, healing energy, or shamanic powers). (:2)

In modern industrialised society, the cultural presence of porosity is often situated in either mainstream religiosity (e.g. Christian Evangelism), or reproduced through occulture (e.g. in films, books, media – fictional and non-fictional – and the forms of personal religiosity overlapping with these). The perceived persistence of the post-Enlightenment, objectivist *weltanschauung* may mean that there is no longer a widely-held belief in the 'evil eye', yet other accounts of porosity, such as psychic experiences and encounters with guardian angels, are continually rehearsed in magazines, film, television, and popular spiritual/New Age literature. The concept of a porous membrane between the mind and the physical and spiritual worlds is itself a fundamental motif in esoteric discourse, describing much of the phenomena cited by

Luhrmann above, as well as providing cultural explanations for practices such as astral travel and spirit mediumship. My own purist turn, in particular, led to the adoption of Agrippa's 'Threefold World' cosmology – a highly porous ontological structure itself, given that it describes a 'chain of being', stretching from the transcendent, intellectual world of the divine mind to that of the lower, phenomenal world, the celestial spheres acting as their intermediary.

Partridge referred to occulture as the 'spiritual/mythic/paranormal background knowledge that informs the plausibility structures of Westerners' (2004: 187), which describes the manner by which occulture acts as a vehicle for the epistemic adoption of porosity explanations (a cultural analogue to Luhrmann's interpretive drift [1989]). In my own experience of early occultural enculturation, or *occulturation*, porous concepts loomed large, such as my awareness of *A Nightmare on Elm Street*, which suggested that dreams were *more* than a purely internal mental phenomenon but had a porous relationship to the waking world (A1.1.2), or my belief that merely *thinking* about the playground folklore figure 'Bloody Mary' might be enough to conjure her presence (A1.1.4), suggesting porous boundaries between the mind and malevolent spiritual entities lying beyond it.

An analysis of the relationship between porosity explanations and experiences of absorption in my autobiographical document indicates that the two were often not explicitly linked until my teens: I did not have the cultural knowledge to interpret my early experiences of mental imagery, musical absorption, and immersion in nature as products of a porous mind-world boundary. It was not until I began to practically engage with occulture that explanations in terms of porosity were able to be posited (e.g. 'telepot contact' being a form of psychic communion [A1.3.4], encountering a 'denizen of dream' while doing a pathworking based on Lovecraft's 'Dreamlands' [A1.3.14]). From this point onward, almost all experiences with absorption characteristics are accompanied by porosity explanations (see Appendix D) – and by implication, also an ascription of 'specialness'.

A similar pattern can be observed in autobiographical statements by other contemporary occultists wherein childhood experiences with absorption characteristics are not necessarily given a spiritual or porous explanation at the time, but receive a *post hoc* interpretation many years later. For example, occultist-musician Richard Moulton (2011) opens his autobiographical account with descriptions of the childhood walks in the Cheviot Hills and teenage life in Hertfordshire – both

described in terms of an ‘intoxication’ with nature and provided with *post hoc* porosity explanations about the spiritual power of Nature (e.g. “All this furthered a natural love for Nature which was magickal – although in my early years I did not understand it as such [...] *Gradually I came to feel there were secrets*” [Moult 2011: 25, emphasis added]). The magical practitioner and scholar Dave Evans (2012) talks about ‘weird experiences’ during childhood, again with the *post hoc* porosity explanation that he was outside of his own body, communing with spirits (see Appendix D for additional examples).

The effortless production of mental imagery is a common absorptive phenomenon occurring in 65% of the autobiographical events inventoried in Appendix D. In my childhood these are often related to states of relaxation or intense absorption when listening to music or stories. Later, mental imagery becomes part of my magical practice (astral travel, visualisations, pathworkings) and musical practice (e.g. letting the music evoke mental imagery), both of which often occur in conjunction with a sense of diminished agency (relaxation, and the sense of images coming spontaneously). The spontaneity of the imagery would later elicit porosity explanations, articulated in terms of communication with the ‘ether’, and later with spiritual entities, as discussed in the next chapter. Examining the relationship between musical listening and performance, and experiences of absorption can also help us deepen our conception of the ‘affective space’ of music, which of course may instantly evoke mood, emotion, cultural and aesthetic references, but also provides ground for absorptive experience and – in the occultural and religious context – invites porosity explanations of those experiences.

While much of the development of my early musical path (ritual music) and subsequent path of practice (ether folk), depends on musical absorption, mental imagery, and a sense of diminished agency, it is notable that the Men-an-Tol experience involved a radically different set of absorptive characteristics such as a sense of immersion in nature, awe, expanded awareness, a sense of unity, and heightened reality. Other absorptive experiences in the related events following the Men-an-Tol narrative, such as a sensed presence at Mulfra Quoit, were already familiar to me through practice of conjuring spirits in ritual magic, and could be explained in porous terms. The Men-an-Tol experience was therefore an outlier: a new set of absorptive characteristics that – although identified as an event powerfully possessing a special quality – did not readily elicit a straightforward porosity explanation. Eventually it suggested a path of practice that attempted to recapture

events that clustered around the Men-an-Tol experience: in practical terms through making recordings within a landscape, and attempting to draw closer to that landscape and its 'spirit' through the absorptive metaexperiences arising from the gestures (external and internal) associated with the process of music production.

Chapter 6.

Mediumistic Musicianship: Porous Boundaries and Creative Practice

Introduction

The Originary Event and emergent paths of practice detailed in the preceding chapter highlight a variety of ways in which esoteric discourses influenced the processes of ascription and appraisal arising from experiences associated with altered states of consciousness: particularly in the form of intense absorption and vivid mental imagery. This chapter examines the discursive, experiential, and affective aspects of subsequent creative encounters which were attributed to spirits, and codified in a number of textual and musical artefacts produced between 2007 and 2011. To prepare for these discussions, we will begin with a brief survey of the general field of 'esoteric creativity', followed by a particular focus on creativity through *mediumship*, or communication with spirits.

Historically what we could describe as esoteric creativity – that is, the production of artefacts associated with, or derived from, heterodox and highly individualistic forms of *religioning* (Nye 1999, 2000; Kokkinen 2013) – has often been closely related to textual production. A historical example of this can be seen in the copying of ritual magic texts, which were often freely elaborated upon by their authors while also being presented as authoritative works by legendary magical figures (King Solomon, Hermes Trismegistus, etc [Klaassen 2012b: 352-5]). Esoteric textual productions also yield new corpuses based on personal revelation and negotiation with earlier texts, such as John de Morigny's *Liber Visionorum*, written as an attempt to legitimise a condemned Solomonian text called *Ars Notoria* (Fanger 1998), or the magical corpus produced by John Dee and his assistants under the guidance of angelic spirits. We could also draw attention to the vibrant visual culture that expressed the allegorical texts of alchemy in the 16th century, which borrowed from, and innovated on, contemporary emblem culture, inspiring later Symbolist and Surrealist artists in turn (Bauduin 2012: 23-4).

In modernity itself, the Romantic reaction to perceived Enlightenment values pre-empted contemporary occulture, producing a corpus of popular media in the form of poetry, fiction, painting, and music, often articulating themes of personal 'special'

experience unmediated by any institutional religious framework. Such Romantic works also prompted attributions and experiences of specialness from their listeners, viewers, and readers – as in E.T.A. Hoffman’s famed review of Beethoven’s *Fifth Symphony* (1810). Perhaps as a consequence of the perception of the Romantic artist as a seer into other, more vibrant realities, the line between artistry, mediumship and esotericism becomes blurred in the 20th century amongst occultist-artists such as Aleister Crowley, Austin Osman Spare, Kenneth & Steffi Grant, and latterly Alan Moore, who claims that art and magic are “almost completely interchangeable” (Moore in Hanegraaff 2016b: 242). Similarly, many individuals historically identified primarily as artists of modernity would claim insight into distinctly ‘irrational’ realms such as the unconscious psyche (e.g. Andre Breton [Bauduin 2012: 63]) or higher planes of reality (e.g. Wassiliy Kandinsky [Ringbom 1966]).

Pasi (2010: 107-8) has presented a tentative typology for describing the relationship between modern art and esotericism. We can summarise the four types of art which he identifies as follows:

Representative: Art depicting images or symbols associated with esotericism.

Talismanic: The product of an artistic or creative process yielding an artefact deemed magical.

Experiential: Art intended to produce extraordinary or initiatory experiences.

Mediumistic/Visionary: Art resulting directly from ‘inspiration/communication from spiritual entities, or of a visionary/mystical experience’ (:108).

While Pasi notes that the experiential and mediumistic types may overlap, what distinguishes these is the final artefact: does it present a record of experience, or does it intend to induce experience? It is evident that the musical work under discussion in this chapter and the preceding one often blur this distinction: the musical works being produced here are *not only* records of a spiritual encounter or mystical experience, but potentially served as ways to re-engage with that experience or re-encounter the spirit.

It could be further argued that the boundaries between all the types of esoteric artistic production suggested by Pasi are also subject to similar ambiguity. It may be easy to describe a piece of art as simply representative of an esoteric theme - Rik Garrett’s 2014 *Earth Magic* photography series, for example, which re-imagines as ‘a matristic,

nature-based world; a female-centric, ritualistic community' (Garrett, quoted in Fulgur Press n.d.) - however, ambiguities of type particularly reveal themselves when we move beyond figurative representations. The depiction of a demonic sigil or Tarot card, for example, may be a simple case of representation, but could also be also considered talismanic (embodying a connection to the spirit or essence by its form), and could also be used in an experiential manner (as a focus of meditation, for example). The typological assignation therefore might be said to depend not on the artefact itself, but on the intentions of both the artist producing it and the audience who engage with it.

Pasi's typology comes from a position of the etic analysis of visual arts: turning to music itself, the neo-tonal composer Johann Friedrich Hasler has provided an emic typology for what he considers 'Hermeticist' music, detailed in the commentary accompanying his doctoral composition portfolio (Hasler 2011). Although using the adjective 'Hermeticist' to distinguish his approach from the New Age, Wicca and Chaos Magick (:i), Hasler's typology, which describes three 'levels of representation' of the occult in musical works (:37-54), is not itself specific to Hermeticism as historically understood. Rather, Hasler's 'Hermeticism' represents those forms of 'Western' esotericism underpinned by Neo-Platonism. For Hasler, 'Hermeticism' is constituted by alchemy, astrology, and cabala, which reflect Agrippa's mundane, celestial and divine worlds. Hasler's typology esoteric music forms can be summarised as follows:

Aesthetic: Music inspired by general occult imagery or 'themes'.

Symbolic: Music whose form is influenced by occult symbolism (e.g. the symbolism of the number three in Mozart's *Die Zauberflöte*), although the composer works in established musical theories and idioms.

Speculative: Music composed through the development of new musical theories and aesthetics deriving their structures from esoteric concepts (numerology, astrology, etc).

Hasler's typology emphasises a number of emic philosophical biases. Of New Age music, which he considers broadly 'aesthetic', he writes:

Many composers of this type of music simply follow these stylistic parameters [e.g. slow, electronic] when composing, and write music that will be appropriate for this type of relaxed and contemplative meditative or ritual

activity, but in this general character or “atmosphere” lies all of what they consider of occult or magical value and power in their pieces: there is nothing *essentially* – in the philosophical sense – esoteric in their musical material or treatment of it, since tempo or “atmosphere” can hardly be considered essential to a piece of music. (:41-2)

It is difficult to fully synthesise the typologies of Pasi, whose approach is suggestive of the creative intentions of the artist, and Hasler, whose typology primarily concentrates on musical form. While aspects of Hasler’s ‘aesthetic’ level may be present in Pasi’s ‘representative’ type, a purely evocative piece of music may also be intended by its producer to elicit experience as part of a ritual or meditation. Hasler’s ‘Hermeticism’ also seems closed to the influence of spirits, although he has elsewhere suggested using the seals of planetary spirits to generate pitch material (Hasler 2007: 205-217).

For Hasler, the compositional theories underlying a piece of music – particularly their relation to the forms of thought that he identifies as Hermeticist – are considered to be more ‘essentially esoteric’ than forms of music which simply evoke the affective space of the ‘esoteric’, whether or not they are used in esoteric pursuits such as ritual and meditation. This emic attitude, which discursively posits ‘speculative’ music at a ‘higher level’ and thus more deeply and authentically esoteric than ‘mere’ representation is also reflected elsewhere in my own work, such as my experiments with ‘ritual music’ (broadly situated at Hasler’s ‘symbolic level’) which were precursors to my own later experiments with Hasler-esque ‘speculative’ music (e.g. A2.2.11, 2.13.3-5, 2.18.1). However, in much of my work and accompanying textual statements I also sought to frame improvised musics not as simply representative or aesthetic, but as something ‘deeper’ and in their own way ‘essentially’ esoteric: the final artefact providing both a record and a means of encounter with the spirits of place.

Hidden Hands and Glitch Grimoires: Intermediary Beings and Mediumistic Musicianship

Communication between a practitioner and spiritual beings is a recurrent theme in esotericism. Practices seeking occult or higher knowledge are often enabled through the roles of *intermediary* beings: ‘postulated entities [that] have access to powers and knowledge way beyond our own, but are still close enough to us to make contact and

interaction possible' (Asprem 2015: 646, see also Hanegraaff 2006a, 2006b: 340, Van Den Broek 2006, Fanger 2006, Brach 2006).

Amongst these types of being can be counted Judeo-Christian intermediaries (saints, angels, Virgin Mary, Jesus Christ), cosmological beings (planetary intelligences, elementals, Archons), initiated humans (ascended masters), the dead (ancestral spirits, spirit guides), pagan intermediaries (gods of various pantheons), aliens, and fiction-based intermediaries (such as entities from the works of H.P. Lovecraft) (Asprem 2015: 646-649).

As Asprem points out, discourse surrounding intermediary beings is highly dependent on modes of attribution, which he associates with positions on the 'reality' of an intermediary being, e.g. as a literal reality, as an unconscious psychological construct, and so on (:655). Yet there is also an emic sense by which events and experiences which are attributed to spirits and intermediary beings occur independently of any firm ontological position on the nature of spirits. For example, my conjuration of Havres (A1.3.36-37) yielded results attributed to Havres regardless of whether I believed spirits were literal, psychological, or 'somewhere in between the two' (A1.4.6).

The theme of attributing agency to spiritual intermediaries is prominent in the recent work of Ildikó Glaser-Hille (2019) who draws upon the work of Robert Orsi on urban religious experience in America to propose that spirits (or in Glaser-Hille's case, demons) are – like the Virgin Mary of Orsi's Harlem – social actors themselves. Their existence may not be empirically verifiable, but Glaser-Hille argues that they are more than simply symbolic, and exist as autonomous presences in individual lifeworlds (:78), enabling people to:

build up networks of relationships with social actors—here demons—allowing them to play a part in their lives and become involved in the expression of various tensions and conflicts. Through these relationships, they play a role in society, conditioning and helping to determine people's feelings, reactions and behaviours. (ibid.)

Spirits, demons, saints, and other intermediaries often make their presence known through narratives, taken by Glaser-Hille as not simply modes of expression, but means of making sense of experience (:87), as well as serving a variety of other

intentions such as the dissemination of discourse and construction of identity. Within the realm of ritual magic the major form of textual expression is in the form of grimoire literature: often pseudonymous texts compiling magical rituals of spirit conjuration, talismans, prayers, and *experimenta*. Glaser-Hille emphasises the way in which historical grimoires reflect social identity formations and discursive positions (for example, the 14th century *Liber Iuratis Honorii* demonstrates the Christianisation of Jewish mysticism and the author's alignment of licit magic with Catholicism [:119-138]).

As well as expressing facets of identity and discourse, grimoire texts may be considered themselves as 'mediatory texts'. As Frank Klaassen observes, 'they do not tend to record truths about the world but rather to represent ritual practices by which contact with spirits may be facilitated in order to attain truths about the world' (Klaassen 2012b: 352-3). A grimoire may present some sort of 'truth' about the other-than-mundane world in the form of the hierarchies of spirits and demons, and the verified manner in which they should be called: however, the proposed knowledge and power attributed to such spirits is unobtainable without engaging with experience by putting the grimoire to work in some manner (e.g. practicing some form of the rituals therein). This reflects the observation of Lycourinos (2014: 3-6) that magicians move between roles of reader (e.g. reading the grimoire) to author (e.g. following the practice and producing new forms of knowledge as a result) – a position also argued for by Glaser-Hille from the perspective of cognitive narratology (2019: 90).

Taves has related the practice of groups attributing the construction of new knowledge to revelations by intermediaries to Durkheim's concept of totemism (2016a: 293). The suggestion being that in order to affect social changes (e.g. through narratives and the identity formations surrounding them) the group chooses to identify a part of themselves as separate. An example of such totemism can be seen in Taves' discussions of *A Course in Miracles* (ibid., see also Hanegraaff 1996: 37-8), as well as other historical examples such as the communications attributed to ascended masters in Theosophy (Goodrick-Clarke 2010: 154-156). This practice of ceding autonomy and attributing direction to a totemic construction is a manifestation of Glaser-Hille's 'spirit as social actor' within a group dynamic: although it almost invariably stems from a preceding claim of individual revelation.

Such a totemic practice – whether occurring in a group or individual context – can be located in contemporary art practices that draw from the concept of automatism: an approach to artistic creativity intimately related to the occulture of the *fin-de-siècle*. Bauduin (2015) draws attention to manifestations of mediumistic art, or ‘spirit art’, from early French Spiritism in the 1850s, to 1950s outsider art, describing it as a product of the way in which means of spirit communication evolved in mediumship circles: ‘from raps and turning tables to mediumistic writing’ (:431). The result was the construction of automatic writing: whether moved by a spirit, or unconscious psychological forces, the person drawing or writing was a passive receiver: an automaton (:432). Although automatism can be most readily associated with Surrealism and the Surrealist milieu’s varied, occasionally ambivalent, relationship with the esoteric and occult, a number of both celebrated and ‘outsider’ artists held sincere beliefs that spirits guided their hands. Bauduin cites Hélène Smith (1861-1929), whose art is both mediumistic and visionary (based on astral travel experiences with spirit guides), to which we could also add the English outsider artist Madge Gill (1882-1961) who attributed much of her art to the spirit Myrnerest (Carvalho 2017, Wojcik 2017).

From the discussion above, we can see that intermediary beings can take the form of social actors and creative partners in a number of ways, often situated within a practical framework. This could take the form of channelling in a mediumistic setting, perceiving communications from entities as part of a ritual magic procedure, or simply encountering a sensed presence or sense of something ‘working through’ oneself during a creative act.

In musical creativity, improvisation has often been related to automatism and channelling. Giacinto Scelsi (1905-1988) improvised many works of his ‘second period’, creating works which described as ‘Music of the Gods’, attributed to the direct influence of his ‘Devas’: ‘creating works that were, in his opinion, unlikely to be devised with the tools of conventional composition’ (Fusi 2020:39-40). As with attentive musical listening, the phenomenology of improvisation engages the psychological constructs of ‘peak experience’ and ‘flow’ (Maslow 1970, Csikszentmihalyi 1990, Sarath 1996), which potentially involve a number of absorptive traits such as a diminished senses of self, agency, and temporality (in contrast to self-aware ‘peak performance’, e.g. Privette 1983: 1364). Such experiences may subsequently elicit their own ‘special’ attributions based on religious or esoteric motifs regarding porous self-world boundaries, often relating to the

capacity for intermediary beings or totemic forces to express themselves through a musician or medium.

Scelsi's perception of his improvising-self as a channel for transpersonal musical creativity is also reflected in forms of musical mediumship, as in the case of Rosemary Brown (1916-2001). Brown describes the Orinary Event in her musical mediumship narrative as occurring while sat at a piano and trying 'to remember some little tune which I had learned as a child [...] then suddenly my hands were controlled by Liszt and began to play the most beautiful, difficult music' (Raimond 1975, see also Bomfim 2019).

Beyond improvisation and automatism, the sense of a presence guiding the composer/producer can also be located in electronic music production, as in the occulturally-situated experiments with technological glitches by Coil and Kim Cascone. The 'glitch' aesthetic in electronic music became prominent in the mid-1990s through the work of artists such as Pan Sonic and Markus Popp's Oval project (Bailey 2012: 108-110, Cascone 2000: 15), and has now become commonplace in many forms of electronic music. However, amongst the earliest releases to explicitly use the term 'glitch' is *Worship the Glitch* (1995), attributed to ELpH versus Coil – the follow up to 1994's *Born Again Pagans*, released under the same alias. In interviews, it emerges that ELpH is a name that Coil's John Balance attributed to the presence of an extraterrestrial entity: for the period of a week, ELpH became the totemic force to which Coil attributed direction and inspiration for their experiments with glitch music production – their own Myrninerest:

Elph (sic), yeah, it's channeling. That's why we're finding it difficult to do another album because we're not sure if they're still broadcasting. Someone else said this is entities being channelled by you and I had to say yes *because it really did feel like that for like a week something opened up above us and poured into us*. We were constantly inspired and then it finished transmission. . . *we felt it finish*. Hopefully we can open the channels again. (John Balance in Keenan 1998, emphasis added)

[...] with ELpH the three of us, myself Peter, and Drew McDowell really felt that we [were] receiving extraterrestrial messages transmissions (sic) and we just went with it. *The sound was designed by whoever, or whatever, was*

coming through us. (John Balance, quoted in Pilkington 2001b, emphasis added)

The American sound artist Kim Cascone became a prominent theorist of glitch aesthetics and practice with the publication of his article *The Aesthetics of Failure* (2000), highlighting 'glitch' as a 'post-digital' tendency in electronic music, consciously undermining the perceived perfection of the digital medium. Cascone's influential article, published in MIT's *Computer Music Journal*, is situated in discourses surrounding academic discussion of electronic music, which frequently invoke the 'Art of Noises' of Luigi Russolo and John Cage's use of chance composition (Cascone 2000: 13-14, 17-18) as culturally and historically legitimate precursors of the glitch aesthetic. However, Cascone's work became more overtly occultural in the following decade, notably in 2011's *Errormancy: Glitch as Divination*, which opens with the exhortation of Cornelius Agrippa 'to divine by airy impressions [...] and by imagination in clouds and visions in the air' (Cascone 2011). Cascone compares glitches to the shewstone used by John Dee and his scryers to receive visions and communications from intermediary beings, suggesting that:

In the hands of the right artist, a glitch can form a brief rupture in the space-time continuum, shuffling the psychic space of the observer, allowing the artist to establish *a direct link with the supernal realm.* (Cascone 2011, emphasis added)

The mode of music production used by Coil and Cascone is evidently different from the automatism of Scelsi, which attributed inspiration for his improvisations to the Devas, or Brown from the spirits of deceased composers, even though they do result in artefacts that are also considered mediumistic works by their creators. For Coil and Cascone, we may suggest that the glitch material that they work with plays the part of a mediatory text: providing material that enables the composer/producer to become receptive to a sense of a guiding presence (Coil's ELpH) or evoking a sense of transpersonal encounter (Cascone's 'supernal realm'). As emphasised in previous chapters, absorption occurring at the computer desktop – in my case, in front of the Digital Audio Workstation software used to produce such music – becomes the locus for the production of not just music, but of metaexperience and esoteric attributions.

The obvious parallel to make between the experience of working with glitches and the perception of entities or other realities communicating through those glitches is

Electronic Voice Phenomena (EVP). Popularised in the 1970s by the parapsychologist Konstantīns Raudive, EVP presents anomalous recorded sounds (analogous to the digital glitch) as the voices of the dead. As highlighted by Nees and Phillips (2014) the perception of a supposed EVP recording depends on the phenomenon of contextual priming, such as being presented with the recording as a voice before it is played, alongside auditory pareidolia: the tendency of human auditory perception to seek recognisable words or voices in otherwise meaningless data, especially when repeatedly played back (for example, in the ‘phantom word’ experiments of Deutsch [2019: 103-115]). Certainly, while both EVP and esoteric glitch engage with the recurrent cultural motif that new technologies can become a means of communication with spirits and other entities (e.g. Davis 1998, Berbegal 2018), it is also useful to situate them in the wider context of how artists may also ascribe meaning and transpersonal agency to the complex auditory surfaces they engage with as part of their creative process.

In *Children of the Mantic Stain* (1951), the British surrealist Ithell Colquhoun drew upon the advice of Leonardo da Vinci to look at stains on walls for visual inspiration, relating it to a ‘visionary stare’ capable of calling forth ‘images from the depths of the unconscious’ (Morrisson 2014: 593). There are parallels between Colquhoun’s stains and Cascone’s adoption of Agrippa’s advice on divining by images in clouds. Colquhoun also makes similar comparisons to Cascone between da Vinci’s ‘mantic stain’ and the scrying glass. Surrealist techniques such as frottage and decalcomania also provided artists with complex visual surfaces on which to apply the practice of visual, rather than auditory, pareidolia. To draw on an example beyond Surrealism, the artist Cecil Collins (1908-89) produced ‘matrix paintings’ deriving from chance lines drawn upon the canvas, which were then elaborated into forms, which he believed reflected the play of archetypal powers in the ‘theatre of the soul’ (Collins 2002: 149).

The technique of the mantic stain, which I will call ‘manticism’, presented visual artists with non-figurative surfaces upon which to project their own imagined forms, ascribed to unconscious, transpersonal, and divinatory powers, and perceived by processes akin to mediumship or scrying (Morrisson 2014: 593). The parallel to these abstract, *non-figurative* surfaces in musical production are complex surfaces of *non-musical* audio such as glitches or field recordings. While these may, in some cases induce pareidolia, they more behave affectively: conjuring mental imagery, memories, or moods, which may in turn solicit attributions to transpersonal sources.

An example of this is my own use of field recordings to develop a sense of 'drawing closer' to the *genius loci* mentioned in the preceding chapter. Elsewhere, on *Worship the Glitch* the track 'Dark Start' evokes the affective space of a séance through extensive use of vocal manipulations producing, vestigially voice-like sounds and timbres that evoke a pareidoliac response. Similarly, the crackles on 'Caged Birds' are not recognisable as voice, but seem to suggest Morse code or the raps of a spiritualist séance. Neither auditory surface depends on conventional musical parameters (pitch, rhythm, harmony), but both evoke an affective space in which we may sense non-human agencies attempting communication.

The forms of 'mediumistic creativity' discussed above can therefore be described in terms of two broad types. First, automatic creativity, which includes musical improvisation, writing, drawing, and stream-of-consciousness speech, the origin of which are attributed to transpersonal or unconscious sources. Second are 'mantic' forms of creativity, focused on making meaning from abstract surfaces, which may be non-musical audio, or non-figurative visual surfaces. Meanings constructed from interpreting these surfaces are subsequently attributed to unconscious, transpersonal, or spiritual agencies through analogies with divination or scrying, or else the process of engaging with such a surface is interpreted as a way to evoke the presence of archetypal powers. In practice the boundaries between these forms of mediumistic creativity may also blur – in the case of Coil, the glitches were perceived to be the signatures of extraterrestrial communications, and subsequently coupled with a sense of the music being produced through automatism, in which inspiration 'poured through' the earthly members of the band (Keenan 1998).

The remaining sections of this chapter will analyse the role of intermediary beings and manifestations of these types of mediumistic creativity in my work between 2007-2011. During this period the path of practice outlined in the preceding chapter developed significantly, moving from what I have called 'ether folk' to 'psychegeographic' music production, and being codified in the various media that form the basis of the following analyses. The analysis of each artefact highlights a different facet of mediumistic creativity – from its presence in discursive positioning and identity construction, to the use of music as mediatory text, to the phenomenology of perceiving spirits and their role as social actors in my autobiographical narrative.

Daimonic Discourses: Psychogeographia Ruralis

The presence of intermediary beings is a recurrent theme in my autobiographical narrative. While I recall early experiences with ‘entities’ such as the encounter that was interpreted as a ghostly presence at a school friend’s house and the sense of presence evoked by the mere thought of the playground legend of ‘Bloody Mary’ (A1.1.4), intentional engagements with spirits as intermediary beings developed as I became more involved in the practice of magic. This began with a fleeting encounter with a fiction-based intermediary (Asprem 2015: 649), described as a ‘denizen of dream’ (A1.3.14) while magically exploring H.P. Lovecraft’s ‘Cthulhu mythos’, before moving on to practises of chaos magick involving servitors (A1.3.2). Although the servitor is absent from most academic discussions of intermediary beings, they are often ascribed similar qualities of power and agency (cf. Asprem 2015: 651) to intermediaries such as demons, angels, and elementals found in earlier grimoire literature: a form of literature that focuses primarily on instrumentalised accounts of the beings they catalogue (e.g. what their powers and material rulerships are, and how they can be coerced by the magician). While servitors differ from conventional constructions of intermediary beings, owing to their conscious formation by the magician, they are often emically associated with ‘entities’ and the magical field of evocation as a whole (e.g. Carroll 1987: 36, Hine: 1998), and, like the demons of the grimoires, mediate between the magician’s will and the world at large.

While it was fairly straightforward to attribute visions of dream denizens or the power of servitors to the action of the unconscious mind, as noted earlier, my ontological positions on the existence of spirits began to shift as I became involved in experiments with the ritual magic of the Goetia, and later turned toward purist discourses which emphasised the reality and independence of such beings.

My Goetic experiments with spirits primarily focused on particular functions that are commonly associated with intermediary beings. The conjurations attempted to exercise power and agency through charges delivered to the spirits, such as attempting to strengthen a relationship (A1.3.29-1.3.33), protection or revenge (A1.3.34-1.3.37), helping a contact find a job (A1.3.43), and healing (A.1.4.2). In other evocation-related practices beyond Goetia, my attempts to work with the spirits of the *Arbatel* (A1.4.8) and the *Heptameron* (A1.4.19-A1.4.23) focused on the attainment of knowledge and transformation (e.g. by evoking Raphael as a guide for further explorations of alchemical symbolism).

While my music-making experiences had focused on either the generation of mental imagery during listening and improvisation, or the production of music to be used in ritual, the *Sigilla Vur* album (2000) was the first to connect my music-making with concepts of mediumship, describing the lyrics on the first track as having been “channeled (sic) by a Lunary spirit called Vale, the 56th angel under Remasiel” (Legard 2000c). Remasiel is likely a misspelling of Ramesiel, a spirit found in Trithemius’ *Steganographia* and the *Ars Paulina* of the *Lemegeton*, both texts which I had found on Joseph Peterson’s website, and which fascinated me – although what is most notable here is the attribution of a flow state experienced in the music-making process to the channelling of an entity.

During 2002, my own musical practices developed alongside attempts to more seriously study prayer-based revelatory practices of the *Arbatel of Magick* (A2.3.12-2.3.26; A2.4.7) with the intention of encountering my own daimon or guardian genius. Although I kept my musical-magical practices separate from my practice of the magic of *Arbatel*, the practice of the latter nevertheless influenced the former: primarily through a turn toward the mind as the locus in which communication with ‘actual’ spirits takes place comes to the fore in my music during this period, as in with the experience of imaginatively perceiving elemental beings within a storm while on holiday in Southwold (A2.3.4-2.3.6).

In a 2004 interview with Brad Rose, I described such imaginative experiences involved in music-making as a form of ‘possession’. My response to his question about my working methods also invokes appeals to both experience (‘intuitions and associations’) and tradition (‘shamanism’):

Often intuitions and associations will move me, for example being alone by a stream in a quiet forest led me to feel a certain kinship with the ancient Welsh poet Myrddin and adlib some of his poetry - a case of possession, perhaps! Actually 'possession' would probably be quite close to the mark - I hardly have any memory of recording any of the music and I'm sure that many musicians have similar experiences. I often find myself in some kind of 'no-mind' state or some kind of lucid state in which images come fleetingly, images which are often incorporated into the music to some degree, for example the short monologue about the King of Swords on "The Suffolk Workings". It's quite a shamanic mode of working, perhaps? (Legard 2004)

The use of the term ‘no-mind’ was borrowed from chaos magician Peter Carroll, who uses it to frame the ‘gnosis’ of chaos magick as transcultural, transhistorical, and perennial, once again highlighting chaos magick’s ambivalent use of appeals to tradition:

The particular state of mind required has a name in every tradition: No-mind. Stopping the internal dialogue, passing through the eye of the needle, ain or nothing, samadhi, or one-pointedness. In this book it will be known as Gnosis. It is an extension of the magical trance by other means. (Carroll 1987: 31)

The following year, I also used ‘channelling’ and hypnosis to frame the process of improvising in terms of automatic creativity:

There are elements of both creativity and ‘channelled’ material. By ‘channelled’ I mean improvisations carried out in a distracted, ‘hypnotic’ state. Getting lost in making sound and being “moved by the spirit” is at the heart of this kind of intuitive musical experience. (Legard 2005a)

These connections between a ‘no-mind’ or ‘hypnotic’ state, and ‘channelling’ or ‘possession’, became fully developed into theory and practice in 2007 with the composition of *Psychogeographia Ruralis*, a 24-page chapbook subtitled ‘observations concerning landscape and the imagination’. The aesthetic production of the first edition of the booklet is itself a visual appeal to tradition: typeset in an ‘old style’ serif font, with a title-page influenced by 16th-century typography declaring the work to be ‘set down in the winter of MMVI by P.L., a musician of West Yorkshire’ (Legard 2007a).

As a description of a developed musical/esoteric path of practice, *Psychogeographia Ruralis* expresses a variety of positions related to discourse, identity, and authenticity, and can – as argued below – be read primarily as an appeal to the legitimacy of creativity in the mediumistic mode.

I wrote *Psychogeographia Ruralis* as a way to introduce myself to the ‘Northern Visionaries’ artist group, which a Yorkshire-based painter who described himself as a ‘shamanic artist’ was attempting to form (A2.17.1). The social setting and ambition to be taken seriously amongst a group of potential peers influenced the pseudo-

academic tone of the work, which also contains regular appeals to cultural authority in order to frame the material derived from more explicitly occult and esoteric sources.

This inclination to present culturally acceptable sources of the visionary and mystical, alongside the more *outré* and magical is demonstrated on the page of epigraphs that begin the work, commencing with two 18th-century sources. First is a line from James Hurdis' 1788 blank verse epic poem *The Village Curate*: 'If there be art, let it be hid in nature'. The second from a 1799 letter by William Blake: '[T]o the eyes of a man of imagination, Nature is Imagination itself'. Following these is a quote from Phil Hine's *Pseudonomicon* – an occult work with less cultural cachet – which concludes with the line: 'Outside, you don't need "to call things up" – they're only a breath away' (Hine 1997a).

On their own, the first two of these sources could be employed to articulate a Romantic position on the relationship between nature, the imagination, and art. The third, brings the more explicitly occult possibility of 'calling things up' into the picture. *Psychogeographia Ruralis* is, in fact, not solely occupied with 'observations concerning landscape and the imagination', but is predominantly concerned with both creatively engaging the spirits of place as intermediary beings, and the legitimisation of mediumistic creativity as an artistic process.

The introduction attempts to position myself as a serious seeker, who is not *simply* dabbling with an aesthetic – a strategy to distinguish myself from the other musicians involved with the wider 'wyrd folk' scene of the period (see chapter 7). However, the text also portrays an betrays with fully committing myself to a public proclamation of belief in spirits, which may suggest credulity to those who I was trying to persuade:

Although I have attempted to be as plain as possible, I realise that much of what follows is couched in esoteric and archaic terms that some may view as irrelevant or bordering upon superstition. I will not apologise for my approach, which I have undertaken out of a sincere devotion to the traditions of Western esotericism and folklore, and is in no way a solely aesthetic pretence.

I hope that the reader will decide for his- or herself whether they interpret the subjects here as purely poetical or psychological constructs, or literally accept

that here are hierarchies of spirits in our midst. I regularly find myself at different points between the two poles. (Legard 2007a: 1)

The lingering presence of Lovecraft is also marked in the text beyond the aforementioned epigraphic quote. The idea that Lovecraft's 'Plateau of Leng' exists both on earth and in the dreamlands is used as an example of '*psychegeography*', or the experience of inner, non-physical geographies, which are associated with the domains of the *genii locorum* and locations connecting physical geography to the folkloric underworld (Legard 2007a: 2-4). Drawing on the influence of Phil Hine's *Pseudonomicon* I also suggest that Lovecraft's preoccupation with non-Euclidean geometry in association with alien powers indicates that his 'Great Old Ones' are ciphers for natural or elemental forces, since plants and other natural phenomena do not mimic Euclidean forms (:20).

Also cited several times in the text is Colin Wilson, one of the earliest critics to treat the work of Lovecraft as seriously as the canonical authors and artists he often invokes in his works on the occult and paranormal (e.g. Nietzsche, Sartre, Romantic and Decadent poets and artists). This points toward the discursively diverse usage of Lovecraft's fiction within occulture. For Wilson, Lovecraft presents existential truths of the calibre of Nietzsche and Sartre, for Kenneth Grant and the chaos magicians indebted to Grant's non-dualistic philosophy Lovecraft's work undermines distinctions between the real and unreal (Otto 2019: 771, Bogdan 2015: 328), while Anton LaVey (and arguably many chaos magicians) invoked Lovecraft's entities to enhance the sinister affective space of his Satanic rituals (Faxneld 2013: 80, 87).

Lovecraft is a recurrent presence in my childhood (A1.1.18), formative occultural engagements (A1.2.3, 1.3.10), early magical experiments (A1.3.12-13, 1.3.16-19), and is referenced in relation to the affective spaces of some of my early musical work ('Hall of KVThL' on *Ananak* [2000], 'The Moon Bog' on *Under a Soular Moon* [2001]). However, his presence had been somewhat backgrounded in the five years preceding *Psychogeographia Ruralis*: during which my magical studies had focused on forms of purist authenticity in my explorations of the *Arbatel* and Dee's *Monas Hieroglyphica*. The return to citing Lovecraft in *Psychogeographia Ruralis* served to articulate my idea that places have both a physical and a psychic existence, and that events within such psychic or *psyche*-geographic representations of place possess a reality that is a counterpart to psychogeography and the visible, material world.

Colin Wilson is also mentioned in the footnotes (Legard 2007a: 21, 22), and at further length in a subsequent revision of the text in 2009 (Legard 2009a: 14). These footnotes both relate to poetry and special experience – one quotes Wilson’s reminiscences of the poet Robert Graves describing poetry as being written in the ‘fifth dimension’, while another quotes Wilson citing the poet Louis Singer declaring that ‘once one becomes involved in the psychic, there is a certain lack of communication with those who have not had a similar experience’ (Legard 2007: 15). A further interpolation in the 2009 edition explicitly tries to connect my own experience at Men-an-Tol with the notions of poetic consciousness, peak experience, and social and cultural legitimacy through the references to Proust and historian Arnold Toynbee who Wilson also used as examples of a proposed form of consciousness that he called ‘Faculty X’:

Colin Wilson has written that modern man lives in a state of constant unconscious hypertension as he juggles the various roles which modern society has thrust upon him. When the tension is removed the more vital, primal consciousness, usually reserved for dreams, has a tendency to seep into waking reality. An encounter with this visionary or ‘poetic’ state, which Wilson associated with his Faculty X, can occur at the most unexpected times. There are Wilson’s examples: Proust’s Madeleine (sic), Arnold Toynbee’s experience of being at one with the flow of history while walking near Victoria Station, which correlated with my own experience after passing through the holed stone at Men-an-Tol. Furthermore we can seek to trigger these states through meditation and contemplation, ascetic practices, dance, music and other art forms. (Legard 2009a: 14)

These concepts, concerned with the ‘fifth dimension’ of poetry, and the relationship between psycho- and psyche-geographies were presented in *Psychogeographia Ruralis* as a table of binary oppositions, inspired by the tables of correspondences found in the second volume of Agrippa’s *Three Books of Occult Philosophy*:

	Psychogeography	Psychegeography
<i>In the Faculties</i>	Visual Observation	Imaginative Reflection
<i>In Society</i>	The Multitude	The Individual
<i>In Consciousness</i>	Waking Passive Imagination	Dreaming Active Imagination
<i>Of Principles</i>	Material	Form ⁷
<i>In Time</i>	Temporal	Atemporal
<i>Of Worlds</i>	Outer Upper World	Inner Underworld
	Man in the World	The World in Man
<i>Of Magnitudes</i>	Macrocosm	Microcosm
	Collective Subconscious	Personal Subconscious
<i>In Dimensions</i> ⁸	1 st -4 th Limit	5 th Freedom

Figure 9. *Binary correspondence table from Psychogeographia Ruralis (Legard 2007a: 4).*

The intention here is to posit psychogeography as being concerned with the passive influence of the environment on the subconscious of the many. By contrast, psychegeography is individualistic, and possibly somewhat elitist, and unfolds in the imaginative space of the personal subconscious through dreaming and the use of active imagination.

The term 'active imagination' is commonly associated with the work of Jung (Asprem 2016: 10, Goodrick-Clarke 2008: 256, Hanegraaff 1996: 504). As a consequence of Jung's own writings, the work of fellow Eranos scholars such as Corbin, and the application of Jungian concepts to the ritual magic tradition of the Golden Dawn by Israel Regardie, such Jungian terminology often points toward the sacralisation of psychology or psychologisation of the sacred (Hanegraaff loc. cit.). Although the term 'active imagination' only appears once in the 2007 edition of *Psychogeographia Ruralis*, the 2011 edition extends the discourse on inner, psychegeographical locales explicitly in the direction of post-Jungian archetypal psychology, based on the work of James Hillman, who drew influence from both Jung and Corbin. Here, active imagination is applied to Corbin's concept of the *mundus imaginalis*, via a quote from Suhrawardi found in Joscelyn Godwin's collection *Music, Mysticism and Magic* (1986):

Shahab ad-Din Suhrawardi (1153-91) tells us of an 'imaginal' shadow world that co-exists with ours and contains within it multiple levels corresponding to the height and depth of the celestial and terrestrial worlds. This is the domain of active imagination in which reality appears "sometimes in the form of lines of writing, sometimes in the hearing of a voice [...] Sometimes they see human forms of extreme beauty who speak to them in most beautiful words..."

To ask whether such figures and visions actually 'exist' is to miss the point. Quoting Hillman on the subject of thereputic (*sic*) active imagination will serve as an illustrative example of the philosophical and psychological approach to images: "There is direct perception of and engagement with an imaginary figure or figures. [...] They are given the respect and dignity due independent beings. They are imagined seriously, though not literally. Rather like Neoplatonic *daimones* [...] their 'between' reality is neither physical nor metaphysical, although just 'as real as you – as a psychic entity – are real' (Jung, CW 14, §753). This development of true imaginative power (the *vera imaginatio* of Paracelsus; the *himma* of the heart of Corbin) and the ability to live one's life in the company of ghosts, familiars, ancestors, guides – the populace of the metaxy – are also aims of an archetypal therapy." (Legard 2011: 33)

As an appeal to science via 'sacred' psychology, the concept of the *imaginal* is legitimised through its association with Jung and Hillman: legitimising the position that communication with spirits of place is *more* than daydream – that the psychegeographic presents an engagement with the imaginal 'shadow world' of a place, inhabited by beings 'just as real as you' and I.

The discursive employment of terms like psychegeography, active imagination, and 'imaginal' all serve to validate a position concerning the porous boundaries of the self, in which the imagination is presented as an organ for the cognition of another form of reality. Scholars have observed the tendency for esoteric thought and practice to be oriented toward the use of imagination, and recently Asprem has posited imaginative practice in terms of *apophatic* and *kataphatic* mysticism (Asprem 2016: 7), with the latter position depending on the inheritance of ideas from high medieval scholasticism such as Bonaventure's notion of the human mind as the mirror of the Divine Mind (:19). As previously mentioned, the conception of imagination as the membrane between the self and the spiritual world has become a commonplace within esotericism and occulture: highlighted as a key element of Faivre's typology of esotericism, and appearing in countless manifestations such as the correspondence between Agrippa's Threefold Worlds to the cognitive faculties proposed in Robert Fludd's work (:26), the use of *vis imaginativa* in Golden Dawn meditations (Plaisance 2014: 165-174), the pathworkings and guided meditations of the Golden Dawn, chaos magick, and Archetypal Psychology, or the motif of intermediary beings encountered in dreams in popular film and fiction.

The path of practice described in *Psychogeographia Ruralis* depends on the instrumentalisation of musical practice to facilitate a state of absorption in which emerging thoughts and imagery are attributed porosity-related explanations: e.g. as arising as the result of communications from spirits, or from insights into their psychegeographic/imaginal domains. In this sense, playing music (and later in the production process, being seated at the computer listening, overdubbing, and so on) serves as a practice or ritual for encountering intermediary beings:

The function of playing an instrument is a mechanical distraction for the conscious mind, allowing the imagination to be open to an intuitive encounter with the genius loci. I feel that this enables a more immediate approach to contact with the genius than, for example, sombre meditation. (Legard 2007: 13)

In many respects this presents a more theoretically sophisticated development of the earlier ‘ether folk’ production practices. The above quote, and an event narrative elsewhere in the text relating to a vision of the ‘Landless Lord’ (Legard 2007: 14; A2.8.10.1) can be used to construct the following outline of the enactive phenomenology involved in what I will call ‘Psychegeographic music production’:

Practice	External Gesture	Internal Gestures	Metaexperiences
Psychegeographic Music Production (ca. 2007)	Sitting in a natural setting. Playing an instrument.	A. ‘After collecting my thoughts and stilling my mind [...] I let the notes come of their own accord until a musical framework has established itself’ (Legard 2007: 13). B. Continuing the improvisation along established lines: ‘I let my hands respond of their own intuition’ (Legard 2007: 14)	A. Relaxing and stilling the mind, entering an absorbed state. B. Being ‘free to mentally wander to meet the genius loci’ (2007: 14) – sense of presence (‘I felt something drawing near’), mental visual imagery (ibid.).

Table 7. Psychegeographic music production considered as enactive phenomenology (author’s work).

The way in which the *genii locorum* are encountered in this state is articulated in the text via a porosity explanation derived from Agrippa's *Three Books of Occult Philosophy*, which also functions as an appeal to tradition – both invoking the occult authority of Agrippa and also making a claim to authentic practices of communication with intermediary beings:

Historically communication with spirits often took place on a subtle, mental level [...] Cornelius Agrippa tells us that “souls going out of the body,” as well as angels and demons speak with inaudible voices that “would slide into the hearer without any noise, as an image in the eye.” Furthermore they impress upon the mind “the conception of speech to whom they speak, after a better manner than if they should express it by an audible voice.” The ‘better manner’ seems to refer to the notion that their impressions upon the minds of men go beyond simple speech, but also consist of images and the transmission of ideas and inspiration. (Legard 2007: 7)

The idea that the *genii locorum* communicate via the mental impressions of images, ideas, and inspiration emphasises their key practical function as intermediary beings concerned with the transmission (or production) of esoteric knowledge (Asprem 2015: 650), as well as being associated with a search for some form of *communitas*: these encounters also engendering what I earlier described as ‘a deep sense of belonging, even community, within my surroundings’ (Legard 2005a). Although the spirits were not consulted or followed in the same way as a totemic construction, e.g. as guides to a self-transformative goal, the suggestion that the music was produced through an encounter with these spirits in a manner in accordance with occult authorities such as Agrippa, embodies a strategy that invites the reader to authenticate the music and practices informing it as drawn from ‘genuine’ esoteric inspiration (*vide* Moore 2002).

In terms of the explanatory and attributive frameworks constructed around the path of practice, there is much in the core concept of inspiration from transpersonal sources being received in a natural or rural setting which accords with the narratives and aesthetics of 19th-century Romanticism. Closely related to these Romantic impulses are the criticisms of modernity later taken up by proponents of the Traditionalist school, which invoke the Weberian narrative of disenchantment and emphasise the positioning of the occult and enchanted *contra* a disenchanted modernity (Giudice

2016: 31, 54; Josephson-Storm 2017: 153-176): a position that Asprem critiques as the *re-enchantment paradigm* (2013: 5, 11, 37-54). The dialectic of disenchantment and re-enchantment is also marked in *Psychogeographia Ruralis*, in statements that suggest the enchanted can be excavated from the pervasive landscapes of modernity by those who know how to read them:

The speculative geographer cannot ignore the treasury of spirits that we have inherited from ancient days, whose names still haunt mundane geographies, and are occasionally teased out by perceptive toponymists. Historically tutelary spirits were also protectors of places. Men resisted the urge to exploit land whose spirits were particularly formidable, such as ancient burial mounds or 'fairy roads' between ancient landmarks. (Legard 2007: 6)

The footnote to this section cites historian Lynn White's anachronistic thesis that Christianisation led to both the decline of paganism and increased technological domination of nature (Afzaal 2012). This has been an influential thesis, and one which also parallels countercultural discourses on paganism (Partridge 2013b: 125). As an academic, and thus a figure judged to be in possession of authority, White is cited in my work to suggest that while Christianity was an instrument of disenchantment, earlier pagan, folkloric, and Romano-Celtic spirits can still be perceived as present in the landscape, an idea often expressed in song-titles such as 'Feast of Bwcca-Du' (2001), 'Verbeia' (2001), and 'Holly King' and 'By Silverhand Stream' (2003, the latter incorporating a chant of the Celtic deity name Nodens). However, this does not fully equate to a personal rejection or demonisation of Christianity, since many of the 'Part-time Purist' magical concerns concurrent with my musical practice, such as practicing the *Arbatel of Magick*, were themselves deeply embedded in Christian worldviews (see chapter 7).

Further criticisms of modernity and invocations of a re-enchantment paradigm occur in the text, such as the positioning of nature in opposition to the man-made environment (2007:2), the citation of Traditionalist art-historian Ananda Coomaraswamy on the inability of modern people 'think in images' (2009a: 9), and Colin Wilson's suggestion that modernity yields 'a state of unconscious hypertension' (2009a: 14). In contrast to modernity, the figure of the 'cunning man' (2007: 6) is invoked as evidence for a tradition of rural practitioners involved with streams of English occult literature, and Eliade's transhistorical shaman is used to validate a re-enchantment thesis 'whereby real-world locations provide points of ingress to a

‘psychic’ or shamanic underworld’ (:3) and to validate the ‘shamanic’ use of music to enter altered states of consciousness (:12).

These discourses on disenchantment, modernity, porosity, and the ontological status of spirits, serve to legitimate the form of automatic creativity embodied by the associated path of practice. A mantic form of creativity is also presented in the final chapter of *Psychogeographia Ruralis*, titled ‘Psychegeographic Photography’. It suggests that encounters with places and their spirits imparts an ‘inner, psychegeographic model of their abodes’, which finds a visual analogy in attempts to ‘express the multidimensionality of memory upon the photographic plane’ (:19). I suggested that, by using multiple exposures and digital processing, images could be constructed that reflect ‘the internal counterpart of a landscape, creating visual expressions of the ‘talismans of creation’, the contemplation of which could facilitate engagement with the psychegeographic landscape’ (ibid.).



Figure 10. *Psychegeographic photography.*
Clockwise from top-left: Little Almscliffe crag and neighbouring woods; Medieval church at Wharram Percy; Moorland above Troller’s Gill; Ilkley Moor, two views from the same spot (author’s work).

Despite the importance of re-listening to field recordings and improvisations, invariably while sat at a computer Digital Audio Workstation, as a way to revisit what I termed the 'psychegeographic domains' of the spirits, the chapter on photography is the text's only explicit mention of digital technology. This highlights the emphasis of *Psychogeographia Ruralis* on the experiential nature of encountering the *genii locorum* outdoors and through music, and the entangled relationship between places and the musical and photographic artefacts produced in them. This is in opposition to providing a practical tract on composition or music production itself: here, discourses on authenticity and tradition are more easily upheld by keeping the focus on the rural, rather than on the computer workstation – despite their equal potentials as sites of enchantment.

Grimoires of the Ear: The Musical Surface as Mediatory Text and Visionary Script

The Pyrognomic Glass was a Xenis Emputae Travelling Band album originally released in 2005 on Memoirs of an Aesthete, an underground micro-label curated by Phil Todd of Leeds experimental rock band Ashtray Navigations. The album itself consists of two long tracks entitled 'Abital' and 'Rorasa'. The reverse of the sleeve suggests that these tracks are further broken down into named sections with alchemical or folkloric themes, and declares the album 'Music for night and day, completed Spring Equinox 2005'. Above the text is a collage of a solar mask superimposed over the glare of the sun shining through trees near John O'Gaunt's castle, where I walked on the spring equinox of the album's completion. The front cover bears the place and date 'BRIGANTIVM MMV', and consists of a collage of a text from the Latin edition of John Dee's *Monas Hieroglyphica* (1564), and a diagram from the 1658 English edition of Giambattista Porta's *Magia Naturalis* (1558/1584). This mixture of alchemical and Hermetic imagery with the folkloric and antiquarian typifies the aesthetic which developed around my musical projects, and also situates the album within the occultural aesthetics and concerns of the neopagan, Earth Mysteries, and neo-antiquarian elements of occulture that will be explored in the next chapter.

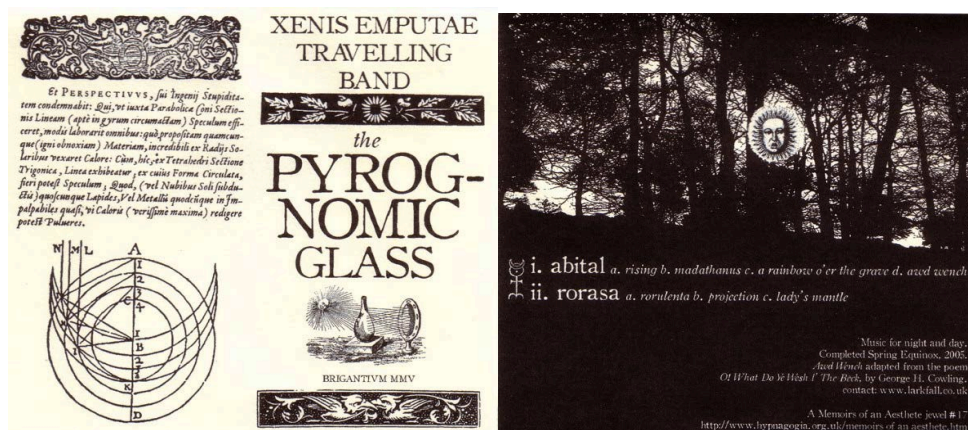


Figure 11. Front and back covers of *The Pyrognomic Glass* (2005, author's work).

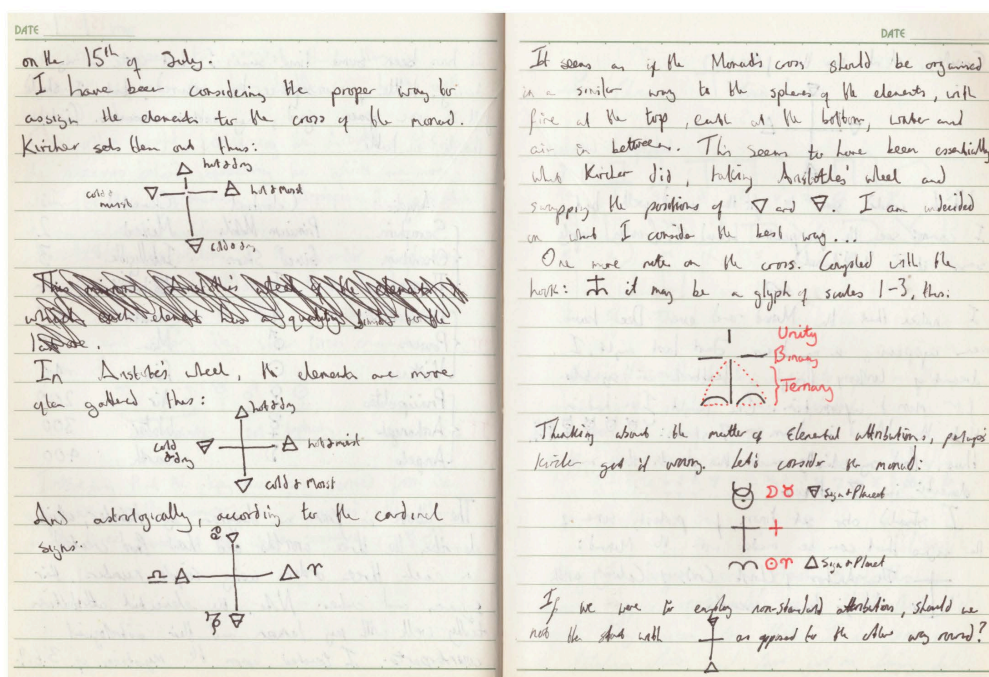


Figure 12. Example diary excerpt (15 September 2002), illustrating an attempt to relate the classical elements to Dee's Monad (author's work).

This album became the centrepiece of what I would call the 'Optical Trilogy': *A Selenographic Lens* (2004), *The Pyrognomic Glass* (2005) and *A Prism for Annwn* (2006). This particular fascination with optics developed from my preoccupation with Dee's *Monas Hieroglyphica*, which I studied alongside the revelatory prayers of the *Arbatel of Magick* during 2002 (A2.3.16-26, A2.11.3-4). In the case of *The Pyrognomic Glass*, the word 'pyrognomic' was also drawn from Dee's *Monas*. Dee uses the term *arte Pyronomica* (Josten 1964a: 164), which was translated by J.W. Hamilton-Jones as 'pyrognomic art', while Josten employed the more utilitarian translation: 'the art of controlling the fire' (101, 165). The connection between the *arte Pyronomica* and optics was drawn from Josten's translation of Dee's epistle to

Maximillian II which prefaces the original Latin edition of the *Monas*. Here, Dee describes the various *arcana* to be discovered within the figure of the Monad, including the assertion that:

[T]he optician will confound the stupidity of his art: he had worked in all manner of ways to shape a mirror into the parabolic line of a (suitably rotated) conical section, so as to attack any matter (liable to fire) with that incredible heat [issuing] from the rays of the Sun; yet here a line is revealed [that] when rendered three-dimensional, a mirror may be formed which (even when there are clouds before the Sun) can reduce any stones or any metal to, as it were, impalpable powders by the force of (truly the very strongest) heat. (Josten 1964a: 131)

It is this text that is quoted on the cover of the album, juxtaposed with an image of the parabolic glass heating an alembic, as well as a diagram from Giambattista Porta's 1584 procedure for constructing such a burning mirror.

Dew is also a recurrent symbol both in *The Pyrognomic Glass*, and in Dee's *Monas* – as well as alchemy at large. A reference is present on the title page of the *Monas*, which shows dew pouring from the sun and moon, beneath which is quoted Genesis 27: 'May God give you of the dew of heaven and of the fatness of the earth'. The final page of Dee's tract also shows an armorial depiction of the Monad with the motto 'supercaelestes roretis aquae, et terra fructum dabit suum' – *let the supercelestial waters fall, and the earth will yield its fruit* – similarly taken to be a reference to dew.

My own interest in dew as a theme for musical exploration was stimulated in early August 2002, when I made a lengthy note in my diary drawing connections between Dee's Monad, equinoxes, and alchemical depictions of dew-gathering (A2.3.22, see figure 12 above). Later that month I would connect the mysterious appearance of dew with the tears that came as I meditated before practicing my *Arbatel* prayers (A2.3.25).

Prior to *The Pyrognomic Glass*, dew had also appeared as a symbol on three tracks: 'Amongst the Grasses and the Dews' (2003), 'Dew Transmitter' (2004), and 'Evensong' (2005) the lyrics of which opens with the words 'Awaken and sing, o ye in the dust' paraphrased from Isaiah 26:19, a verse which, in the KJV translation, concludes 'for thy dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast forth the dead'.

As early as the 2004 interview with Brad Rose I had mentioned working on a monograph on 'dew in religion, folklore, folksong, alchemy and magic' (Legard 2004). The question of how this work was developing came up in a later interview for *Storing* magazine, and illustrates the scope of material that I was collecting:

Yes, I am still working on it, although life has been busy of late and I've not been able to spend as much time on it as I would like. I got rather carried away with the research and at the moment I'm just categorising and indexing everything. It's a bit of an obsession - references to dew can be found in religion, alchemy, magic, philosophy, folklore, poetry, folksong, practically everywhere. It's a magnet to inspiration - as a symbol it is very pure and evocative. I don't think that the cultural meaning has changed significantly with either time or location - in many cultures the dew is a symbol of fertility, plenty, purity and divine gifts, for example: the 'manna' that the Jews survived on in the wilderness, the 'sweet dew' of nirvana in Buddhist teachings, the 'dew of Thy grace' in Christian prayers. It's also a symbol of transience, it is ethereal: present for a moment, shining gloriously, and then gone. I don't have a concrete theory yet as to why this is the case, all I can say is next time you see dew in the early morning sit a while and observe it yourself. (Legard 2005b)

While my projected book on dew was never written, my information-gathering on the topic informed both *The Pyrognomic Glass*, and later a chapbook called *Abital* (2008), written to accompany the album's re-release on vinyl. The name *Abital*, used for both the first track and the booklet was discovered in an online Biblical dictionary and I recorded this in a document that I called *The Stone Grimoire*, which served as a repository for references and symbols found in my music. In *The Stone Grimoire*, the entry for *Abital* is accompanied by a magical seal constructed by following rules set out in Agrippa's *Occult Philosophy* II.xxix:

Abital

King David's fifth wife (2 Sam 3:4) whose name means either "My Father is the (Night) Dew" or "Father of Dew" (e.g. fresh).

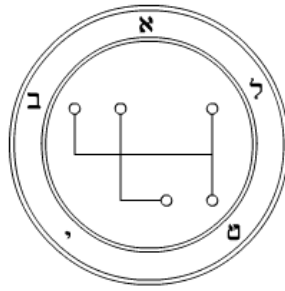


Figure 13. *Magical seal of Abital, from The Stone Grimoire* (Legard 2005c).

The similarity between the name *Abital* and *Arbatel*, my primary handbook of magical practice, appealed to me, and the association of the name with night dew meant that it was incumbent on me to find a name that suggested the morning dew. I found this in Charles Leland's *Aradia: The Gospel of the Witches* (1899): a book influential on the formation of early modern witchcraft: contributing to Margaret Murray's hypothesis on witchcraft as the survival of ancient paganism (Granholm 2014: 55) and influencing the development of Gerald Gardner's Wiccan religion (Hanegraaff 1996: 87; Wheeler 2019: 341). Chapter X of *Aradia* relates the tale of Rorasa, who was chided by girls in the local village for her good looks. Attempting to take her own life by casting herself into a ravine, she is saved by a beautiful woman who carries her off mid-air. This woman is identified by the villagers as the Madonna, but in fact reveals herself to be the goddess Diana. Having later prayed to Diana in a stone ruin, Rorasa wakes the next morning to find herself in a magnificent house, dressed in a diamond-studded wedding garment and 'wedded to her heart's desire' (Leland 1899: 63). Leland writes after the tale is told:

The name Rorasa seems to indicate the Latin *ros* the dew, *rorare*, to bedew, *rorulenta*, bedewed--in fact, the goddess of the dew. Her great fall and being lifted by Diana suggest the fall of dew by night, and its rising in vapour under the influence of the moon. (:64)

Having already assigned a name for the genius of the night dew, Abital, Rorasa's waking in the *morning* with a diamond-studded dress seemed to suggest the morning dew, counter to Leland's position. This association between Abital and nightly dewfall and Rorasa and morning dew is illustrated by the symbol of Dee's Hieroglyphic Monad on the back cover of the album – the track 'Abital' being placed next to the upper half of the Monad symbolising the moon's sign of zodiacal exaltation in Taurus, and 'Rorasa' positioned next to the symbol of Aries: the exaltation of the sun – associations both drawn from the Theorem XV of Dee's *Monas*.

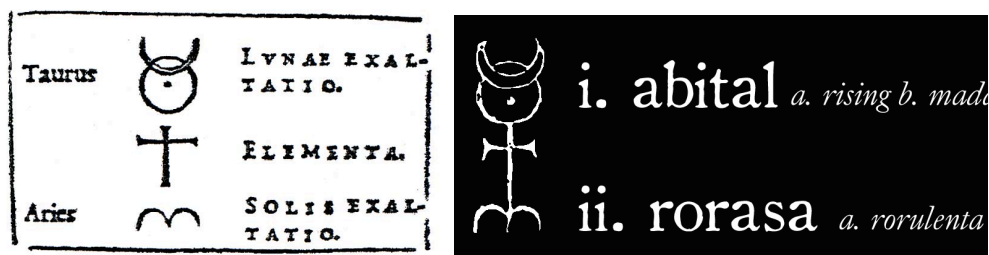


Figure 14. The Monad depicting the zodiacal signs in which the moon and sun are exalted, from Dee's *Monas Hieroglyphica* (1564), and used analogously for night (lunar exaltation) and day (solar exaltation) in *The Pyrognomic Glass* (2005, author's work).

Other influences on *The Pyrognomic Glass* can be inferred from the titles given to the sub-sections of each track, 'Abital' being composed of the sub-sections 'Rising', 'Madathanus', 'Rainbow o'er the Grave', and 'Awd Wench'. The first of these titles is vague – perhaps suggesting the rising of the moon. However, the second section 'Madathanus' explicitly points to one of the primary texts I was aware of that described dew in the alchemical process: *The Parabola of Madathanus*, a Rosicrucian allegory attributed to Henricus Madathanus (the pseudonym of Adrian von Mynsicht [1603-1638]).

Madathanus' *Parabola* begins with the allegorical description of the alchemist 'walking in a beautiful, green, young forest, meditating and deploring the difficulties of this life', before unknowingly diverging onto 'narrow footpath, very rough, untrodden, difficult and overgrown with so many bushes and brambles that it was easy to see it was very seldom used' (Madathanus n.d.). Pressing along this 'narrow path' leads the philosopher to a meadow, a rose garden, a mill, and a prison, each *locus* saturated with imagery that serves as allegories for alchemical processes, such as the death of a great lion, and the union of a woman in white to a youth in scarlet.

This woman and youth are later imprisoned in a room which is 'transparent-clear like crystal and round like a heavenly dome': evidently a description of an alembic. Madathanus warms the room with a constant heat, and ultimately the lovers dissolve into one another, assisted by the tears of the woman. Finally, they are resurrected as the water parts to form clouds and 'a rainbow of the most beautiful colours'. Continuing to heat the room, Madathanus observes 'that many vapours arose from the earth about evening, through the power of the sun, and ascended on high as if the sun itself were drawing up the water. But during the night they gathered into a lovely and fertile dew, descending very early in the morning, enriching the earth and washing the corpses of our dead, so that from day to day, the longer such bathing

and washing continued, they became even whiter and more beautiful.’ The title of the third movement of ‘Abital’, ‘A Rainbow o’er the Grave’ alludes to this passage.

‘Rorasa’ begins with a sub-section entitled ‘Rorulenta’, directly lifting from Leland’s analysis of the name Rorasa quoted above. As with ‘Rising’ on the previous track, the second section, ‘Projection’, invites a number of interpretations, such as astral projection, or the alchemical ‘powder of projection’, claimed to be essential for the transmutation of metals. The final section, ‘Lady’s Mantle’ alludes to the common name of the plant *Alchemilla vulgaris*, which I had discovered was supposed to have been a plentiful collector of dew.

Such descriptions of the influences on *The Pyrognomic Glass* only carry analysis so far: they are textually situated, relating the titles as presented on the album sleeve to my own reading and collection of dew-related texts. This serves to contextualise the work in biographical terms, but does little to illuminate the themes of experiential listening, music-evoked mental imagery, or mediumistic creativity previously highlighted as being important to the path of practice which developed around my music-making. The two tracks of *The Pyrognomic Glass* were certainly inspired by ideas about the *genii* of morning and evening dew, and elements of mental imagery and loose associations inferred from the affective space of the music did have their place in the production, especially in terms of naming the tracks. However, it seems like their direct, mediumistic presence or influence over the music itself was minimal: in terms of the original 2005 release, ‘Abital’ and ‘Rorasa’ are treated as symbols, serving as ways to organise the material I had gathered on dew into ‘day and night’ themes. The album, as released in 2005, could be considered in terms of Pasi’s ‘Representative’ form of esoteric art. However, the prospect of re-releasing the album with an additional textual component, would provide an opportunity for me to instrumentalise the original music – employing it as a form of ‘ritual music’ in order to produce a text which would be presented as the product of a process ascribed to mediumistic or visionary practice.

I began writing this text, *Abital*, in 2007. The first drafts were intended to present Abital and Rorasa in the context of grimoire literature, and were written in a faux-Romantic style. One of the early collections of notes describes an imagined sunrise near Troller’s Gill:

Beyond the morning chorus I could hear a more subtle music. The astral bell chimed a new day; chanters and trumpets were raised to invisible lips to hail the first daylight hour. The Lydian notes rose, fell and hovered in sympathy with the eternal musics that girdle the earth: the stellar harmonies that the Orphic bard or astrally-inspired musician may, from time to time, partake of.

The day was Thursday, the Jovial day, and in those hours of sunrise the angels of Satquiel's order took their places. Presiding over natural things they bejewelled the gathering dew. Each drop shone with the rainbow fire of the first light. (Legard 2007c)

Following these descriptions are several pages of prayers from the 13th/14th-century grimoire *Liber Iuratis*, included due to their mention of dew, and also lists of spirit names associated with Abital and Rorasa (influenced by Trithemius' *Steganographia*), and a form of magical alphabet. Many of these elements would be interpolated into the final version of the book: although not explicitly in the form of a grimoire.

The final text of *Abital* was completed in 2009 (Legard 2009b), and presented itself in the style of a 17th-century chapbook on natural philosophy, with appropriate apparatus such as dedicatory verses, marginal notes, and an appendix on three different magical optical devices.

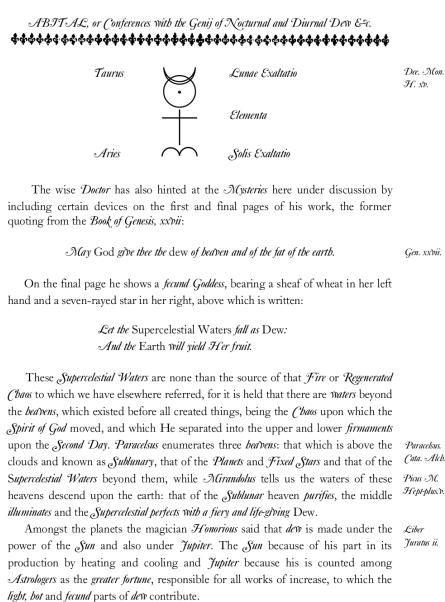


Figure 15. A sample page from *Abital* (Legard 2009c).

There is much in the writing and presentation of *Abital* that was intended to discursively position myself as a musician who possessed a 'serious' and authentic knowledge of historical occultism. The book appeals to purist attitudes through its sole reliance on early modern sources. However, it is the narratives of encounter with the *genii* of the dew that are immediately relevant to the discussion of mediumistic and visionary creativity. To describe the process by which associations were made between the music of *The Pyrognomic Glass* and historical texts, and how these developed into my own narratives of encounter with the spirits *Abital* and *Rorasa*, it will be necessary to turn to a consideration of the musical surface itself and its implications for connecting the affective space evoked by this music to phenomenological and cognitive responses such as the stimulation of mental visual imagery.

Weinel's 2018 survey of the relationship between altered states of consciousness (ASCs), electronic music, and related audio-visual media emphasises that musical properties of representation and affect are complex and dynamically related. It should be noted that Weinle's employment of affect in this instance concerns how musical properties evoke moods locatable in a valence-arousal space (e.g. happiness = positive valence, high arousal), rather than the broader social, discursive and embodied formulation of affect used by Wetherell (2012), which has been hitherto employed when talking about the affect and the affective space of music and ritual.

Weinel describes the experiential forms of knowledge derived from engaged music listening using the now-familiar term *gnosis*: in this context posited as a form of knowledge that encompasses the representational and affective qualities of the music in question. Weinle suggests a loose parallel with religious experience: religious *gnosis* often produces experiences (knowledge) aligned with a participant's cultural frameworks (Mulukom & Lang 2021), and similarly music often produces experiences aligned with its culturally-constructed *ethos* or genre (Weinel 2018: ch. 5, 8). Weinle relates his concept of *gnosis* to St. John & Henriques' 'vibe' (ch. 8), and such *gnosis* offers a complementary perspective on the experience of what we have hitherto described as the *affective space* of the musical surface itself – allowing us to analytically approach it through the features of representation and affect. Weinle's approach to analysing music is not solely focused on abstract musical properties (key, melody, rhythm), but is often concerned with how certain sound designs or ways of processing instruments can also be imbued with strongly representational

qualities – for example, the use of reverb, flangers, phasers, and so on in music that attempts to articulate and/or induce the psychedelic ethos (Weinel 2018: ch. 3).

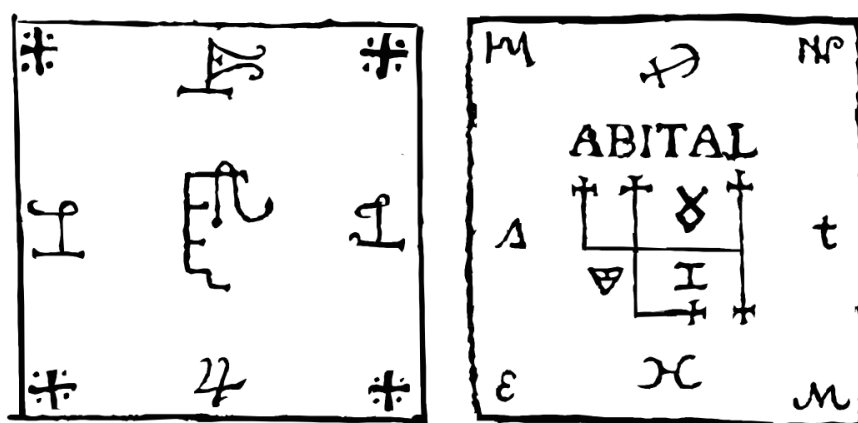
Weinel's representational-affective framework is useful when considering how to analyse the music of *The Pyrognomic Glass* and its relation to the narratives presented in *Abital*. Since the music of *The Pyrognomic Glass* is highly dependent on drones and fixed tonal centres, rather than conventional musical parameters of rhythm, modulation, harmony and so on, an initial analysis of the piece was undertaken by annotating a sonographic rendering of the two tracks on the album. The use of annotated sonograms has become common in the analysis of electroacoustic music: a genre which also lies outside conventional musicality, using 'real world' sounds presented with varying degrees of abstraction and thus necessitating new approaches and languages for musical analysis such as Smalley's concept of spectromorphology (e.g. Smalley 1997, Blackburn 2006, Mazzoli 2014). While the sounds presented on *The Pyrognomic Glass* are generally recognisable as having an instrumental source, unlike many of the abstractions in electroacoustic music, the organisational principles such as complex clusters of sound, drones, and the non-pulsatile structuring of events preclude conventional musical analysis, lending themselves instead to a consideration of their spectromorphological, representative, and affective content.

The methodology employed involved annotating the sonograms for *The Pyrognomic Glass* (presented in Appendix E) began by highlighting each sonic event as it presented itself. The textual narratives from *Abital*, describing encounters with the eponymous spirit, as well as those for the track *Rorasa*, were then juxtaposed with the sonographic analysis. This enabled me to demonstrate associative structures between passages in the narratives presented in *Abital* and events in the music. Finally the different narrative elements and corresponding auditory cues resulting from this process were tabulated. It was then considered how the auditory cues informed the narrative events, concluding that some events in the narrative may have been inspired by a strongly *representational* sounds, suggesting either a place, or an action. Alternatively, other narrative events seemed to emerge from less well-defined cues, based on the general *affective* nature of the music in question.

The two narratives of spiritual encounter described in *Abital* were both written at the computer while intensively listening to the tracks on *The Pyrognomic Glass*, and afterward noting any arising visual mental imagery or narrative experience. To some

extent, this mode of listening reprises of the approach I used when creating ‘Ether Folk’ music circa 2001 (see chapter 5). The chief difference is one of scale: the tracks on *The Pyrognomic Glass* concentrate on one theme (dew), and incorporate a variety of influences from prior research, as detailed above. The scale of the work – 35-minutes spanning two tracks – also provides an opportunity to demonstrate how Weinell’s *gnosis* or Partridge’s *affective space* functions in the context of music-evoked mental imagery (Taruffi and Küssner 2019) and its attendant creative output.

Both narratives presented in *Abital* follow a similar arc: they begin with the narrator situated in the landscape, and conclude with their leaving the scene after a visionary encounter, reflecting upon it, and receiving the seal or talisman of the spirit. These talismans had been composed prior to work on the narratives, and were derived from a method of producing spirit seals found in Agrippa’s *Occult Philosophy* (III.xxix), with additional sigils from the talismans and planetary characters of Jupiter (Abital) and the Sun (Rorasa) found in de Bry’s 1620 *Magical Calendar* (McLean 1994). The rationale for using Jupiter instead of the Moon for Abital can be found in the 2007 notes (Legard 2007c), which include an excerpt from *Liber Juratus Honorii* that describes the angels of Jupiter as being able ‘to bring forth dews’ (Peterson 1998: cvi). Additionally, the early notes toward *Abital* from 2007 also include a ‘blessing’ for each spirit, which forms an acrostic. Each blessing was formed using a historical cryptographic word-list: either from Trithemius’ *Polygraphiae Libri Sex* (1518), or Porta’s *De Furtivis Literarum Notis* (1563).



Amo Beatus Iustus. Taceo Apud Lucem.

Figure 16. Seal and blessing of Abital (from Legard 2007c & Legard 2009b).

Turning to the analysis of these tracks we can get a sense of how auditory stimulus from the music evoked different forms of mental imagery, enabling two narratives of visionary encounter to emerge.

Abital

Section A: Rising (0:00 - 5:53)

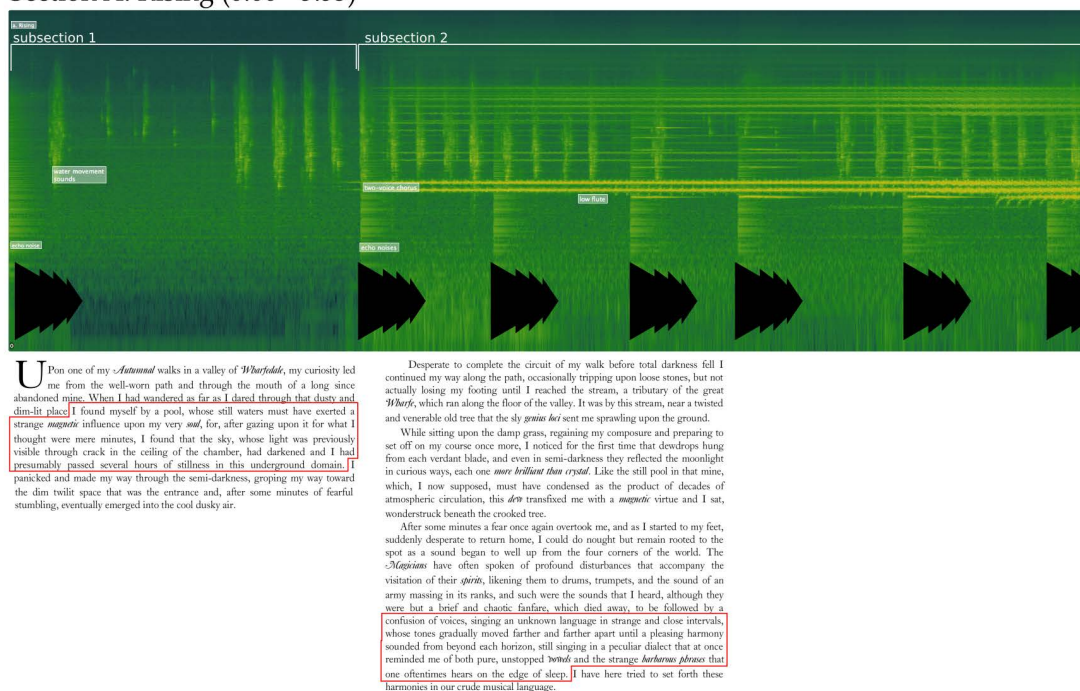


Figure 17. The first page of the sonographic analysis of *Abital* (see Appendix E), showing additional annotated ‘sound shape’ for a recurrent sound described as ‘echo noise’ (author’s work).

The first sound heard on ‘Abital’ is a muted burst of echoing noise, followed by the sound of gently lapping water. In the analysis (Appendix E) these non-musical sonic objects are referred to as ‘echo noise’ and ‘water movement’ (see figure 17, above). The appearance of these two sonic objects at the start of the track evokes a sense of being underground: the echo suggesting a large space, and the water – itself saturated with reverb – a subterranean pool. I immediately connected these sonic representations with the memory of exploring an old lead mine near Troller’s Gill during earlier recording sessions in Wharfedale, as well as being a location that had impressed me on an early visit as a child (A1.1.10, 2.9.9). As a consequence, the narrative presented in *Abital* unfolds in the vicinity of the lead mine and the valley at nearby Jackdaw Nick where a stream flows alongside the entrance to a ravine known as Troller’s Gill. The echo noise object becomes a near constant presence in all sections of ‘Abital’, except section b (entitled ‘Madathanus’), and often serves a

structural role, regularly being used to bring sections to a close (as at the end of sections a, c, and d, see Appendix E).

The above examples of the ‘echo noise’ and ‘water movement’ were, for the purposes of analysis, considered to be primarily representational in nature: their first appearance immediately evoked distinct mental imagery. While music-evoked mental imagery has been mentioned in prior chapters it is useful here to note the phenomenological work of Arcangeli (2019), who has proposed that the distinction between mental imagery and ‘sensory imagination’ has been historically confused (on sensory imagination, see Langland-Hassan 2015). For Arcangeli, mental imagery is often concerned with *objectual* recreation (e.g. thinking of a lilac), while sensory imagination is concerned with the mental recreation of a state of affairs (e.g. imagining a *specific* lilac bush and where it might be moved in the garden; imagining the lilac bush from the perspectives of several different people [:14-15]). One key facet of this distinction is that mental imagery is *unwilled* (e.g. we immediately think of the image of a lilac when told ‘think of a lilac’), while sensory imagination entails the *willed* act of ‘imagining that’ (:4-5).

This distinction between *unwilled* mental imagery and *volitional* sensory imagination serves as a useful analytic perspective when considering the relation of the musical surface of *The Pyrognomic Glass* to the emergent narratives of encounter with spirits presented in *Abital*. The tabulated narrative elements at the end of Appendix E, demonstrate associations between specific narrative elements in *Abital* and auditory cues on the corresponding tracks. Each pair of narrative elements and auditory cues in this table is assigned a ‘sound image derivation’, describing the relationship between the musical surface and the imagery described in the narrative. Borrowing terminology from Weinel, those cues that seem to prompt an immediate, *unwilled* suggestion of a movement, place, or event are described as *representational*. Examples of these representational sound images include:

‘Echo noise’ and ‘water movements’ evoking an underground space (‘Abital’ 0:00-0:19)

Crossfade from guitar to organ suggesting movement from one space to another (‘Abital’ 9:10-9:34)

Fade-out suggesting a vision fading and a return to a prior place (‘Abital’ 11:22-11:45)

Many chiming, tinkling sounds evoking water droplets/dew ('Rorasa' 0:00-2:49, 16:58-20:02)

Burst of harsh timbres produced by singing bowl suggesting a dramatic movement, associated with fleeing in the narrative: the narrator bolting from the tent, a fleeing rogue being hit by an arrow ('Rorasa' 4:52-4:57, 10:16-10:18)

By contrast, the more descriptive, and less dramatic elements in the narratives are associated with longer passages of music which have some more conventionally musical facets. Section b of 'Abital', for example is dominated by guitar arpeggios and flute. While it leads to a strongly representational moment - a crossfade with an organ, described in the narrative as the moment when the narrator is magically 'translated' to a nearby hill – there is little else in the music that overtly *represents* the events leading up to that moment. In these instances I suggest that the general *affective* quality of the music is being responded to, and the mode of imagination is more akin to the volitional sensory imagination of Arcangeli and Langland-Hassan: it is directed by the intention to connect the preceding and succeeding representational sound images, and loosely informed by the general feel or affect of the particular musical passage. This is most evident in section C of 'Rorasa', entitled 'Lady's Mantle' whose slow, canonic flute lines suggest the feeling or ethos of nobility, as related to the 'noble lady' described in the narrative, but does not contain any intruding or dramatic auditory cues suggesting striking changes in the narrative. Reflecting Weinel's representational-affective framework, these types of emergent mental images, which do not depend on strongly representational sounds for their content, are described as 'affective' in the tabulated analysis.

The interpretation of the narratives presented in *Abital* as resulting from the interplay between immediately evocative, 'representational' sound objects and longer, 'affective' and occasionally overtly musical passages also evokes an interesting parallel with the aforementioned analysis of electroacoustic music. Composer and theorist Denis Smalley (1997) formulated 'spectromorphological analysis' as a way to describe the qualities and movements of the type of non-musical sounds that typify the sonic palette of electroacoustic composition. Key to spectromorphology are Smalley's two 'forming principles' of gesture and texture (1997: 113-114). Gestures are sounds concerned with 'propelling time forwards' (:113): they are sounds which suggest movement, expel energy, and possess a trajectory 'from the smallest attack morphology to the broad sweep of a much longer gesture' (ibid.). By contrast,

textures are slowly evolving, suggesting events on 'a more worldly, environmental scale' (ibid.). Electroacoustic music presents a variety of gesture-texture mixtures, but may also include gesture-led and texture-led sections (:114). Although primarily realised on acoustic instruments, with the addition of field recordings, the use of drones and sustained tonal centres in *The Pyrognomic Glass* are analogous to the textures of electroacoustic music, with the representative 'sound cues' behaving in similar manner to electroacoustic gestures. One primary contrast, however, is in listening style: discourse around electroacoustic listening often privileges a phenomenological practice of 'reduced listening', influenced by Husserl, in which sounds are appreciated for their own merits: their original source, associations and contexts phenomenologically bracketed by the listener (Kane 2014: 4-5, 17, 19). Such an approach starkly contrasts with other modes of listening such as musical mind-wandering and music-evoked mental imagery.

A number of contemporary theorists and composers of electroacoustic music have responded to this attitude by attempting to re-situate listening to electroacoustic music not as a solely aesthetic and cerebral experience, but an imaginative, affective, embodied, and participatory one, too (e.g. Voeglin 2006, Kim 2010, Wanke 2017). Wanke (ibid.) has identified what he describes as a developing trend toward an 'ecstatic-materialist' perspective in many genres of experimental music, in which listening to the material musical surface provides scope for subjective, 'ecstatic' response: 'an open, personal, unique and thoroughly involved participation, as a synthesis of temporary feelings and sociocultural habits' (:429).

A parallel can be drawn between Wanke's ecstatic-materialist perspective and the modes of absorptive listening previously discussed in terms of enactive phenomenology, in which a reader/listener engages with material to initiate a participatory turn and assume an authorial position. In my own musical practice, there has tended to be fluid movement between the perspective of composer/improviser and listener throughout the production process, and both perspectives are imbued with a high degree of imaginative awareness (e.g. paying attention to music-evoked mental imagery while either playing music outdoors, as well as when listening at the computer). In the case of *The Pyrognomic Glass*, however, there is a significant temporal distance between composition of the original material, and the re-engagement with it three years later as a listener in order to develop the encounter narratives presented in the *Abital* booklet. This presents a

starker contrast between 'composer' and 'listener' roles than is common elsewhere in my creative practice.

In this instance, I suggest that repeated imaginative engagements with the musical surface of *The Pyrognomic Glass* came to serve as a form of 'visionary script'. Newman (2005) described Medieval manuals of contemplation as visionary scripts: 'series of texts meant to help readers visualize the life of Christ so vividly that pious imagination shade into visionary experience' (:25), and also drew parallels with contemporary neopagan ritual practices (:26). Klaassen (2012a) has also suggested that both the invocations and the supposed results of medieval ritual magic procedures (such as a spirit appearing before the magical circle) also function as looser versions of this concept, although lacking the explicit instruction found in the manuals of affective piety (:39-43, see also Plaisance 2014: 170-174). Newman also suggests these practices can cross a porous boundary between acts of visualisation and vivid visionary experience, often given religious or supernatural ascriptions (Newman 2005:29).

In *The Pyrognomic Glass*, I had already drawn together sonic materials that loosely reflected the themes of Abital and Rorasa, genii of the dew of evening and morning, notably watery sounds (suggestive of the night, and cold and dark places such as the mine), and timbrally complex sounds (such as bagpipe chanters, suggesting 'warmth'). The two tracks suggested loose themes and images to be constructed in what Arcangeli describes as the sensory imagination (as is also the case with scripted visualisations): over the process of listening, strong, but less intentional mental imagery, emerged from the representative and dramatic qualities of various gestures, which were then connected through developing sensory imaginative responses to the looser, textural, 'affective' sections of the music. Consequently, two narratives of encounter with spirits emerged from the representative and affective dimensions of the musical surface: narratives which could, as in a visionary script, be revisited and re-engaged with in the imagination by replaying the music, once again enacting a shift from the role of passive listener/reader to an 'author'.

Pasi has acknowledged that his suggested typology of esoteric art may apply either separately or in combinations to a range of artworks (2010: 108). The analysis of *The Pyrognomic Glass*, undertaken here, emphasises the porous boundaries between Pasi's types, and the importance of context and reception on the application of such typologies. From an etic perspective, the presentation of the work could be read as

Pasi's Representative type: employing imagery and symbols from esotericism prominently on its sleeve and titles. An emic perspective emphasises the presence of other forms of esoteric creativity based on the interplay of experience and ascription in the composition of both the music and the later text associated with it. Talismanic elements are demonstrated through the seals which I constructed for each spirit, and which are printed on the 'Abital' and 'Rorasa' sides of the vinyl LP release (A2.17.7-8). The music itself, particularly later engagements while writing *Abital*, was also intended – at least on a personal level – to induce some form of experience: to evoke in some way an encounter with the spirits or to suggest their 'psychegeographical domains'. These visions were then set down as narratives within *Abital*, resulting in a work that accords with Pasi's Mediumistic/Visionary type. These Talismanic, Experiential, and Visionary dimensions are, of course, rather insular by nature: they were important to form the work and imbue it with personal meaning, but not necessarily expressed to the audience as a way to promote or position the work as, for example, an explicit gateway into the psychegeographic domains of *Abital* and *Rorasa* (cp. Jorgensen's discussion of emic meaning in Coil's *How to Destroy Angels* 2011: 27).

Living with My Demons: The Social Agency and Phenomenology of Spirits

In her thesis concerning the relationship between demonology and Christian identity formation in the early modern period, Ildikó Glaser-Hille proposes that demons can be seen as social agents or actors (2019: 78-80), insofar that '[m]ore than mere reflections of the culture, they are active participants in it; they contribute to and communicate with the culture through the power given to them by the people who construct narratives and beliefs around them' (:79). Glaser-Hille examines the presence of demons in six German texts of the late-15th and early-16th centuries, to develop a thesis concerning the ways in which social discourses were projected onto narratives of the demonic to construct various facets of Christian identity – both personal and cultural (:91).

The discursive role of the demonic in the construction of modern (oc)culture and social identities has also been well-documented, finding its most conspicuous manifestation in Satanism, deriving from Romantic discourses on Satan as a liberating figure (Faxneld 2017), which is also visible in the performance of other antinomian spiritual and subcultural identities (Dyrendal 2008: 35). Most pertinent here is Woodman's study of the *demonic* as a fluid category in chaos magick,

variously representing selfhood (2003: 72, 88-95), resistance (:72), an identification with otherness (:35, :87-88), and a recourse from the 'rationalising thrust of modernity' (:110). These aspects are often expressed through the practices of magic and possession, in which demonic agents contribute to the magician's production of selfhood (:212).

While the description of such social actors as 'demonic' serves particular discursive purposes (e.g. Christian versus Jewish identity [Glaser-Hille 2019], or emphasizing the antinomian identity of the chaos magician [Woodman 2003: 121]), demons and other spirits often serve as intermediary beings (Asprem 2015: 651): connections between intermediary beings, experience ('gnosis'), and the chaos magician's construction of self being particularly evident in Woodman's study.

The formulation of demons as social actors can therefore be discerned as contributing to identity constructions within either individual lifeworlds and occultural milieus (as in Woodman), or as part of a wider socio-cultural field (as in Glaser-Hille). Here, however, given the focus of autoethnography, we are concerned not only with the influence of demons, but spirits and intermediary beings in general: their bearing on identity construction, their influence on inter-personal relationships, the phenomenological and ascriptive events associated with encounters with such spirits, and their influence on creative practice.

The preceding analysis of *The Pyrognomic Glass* and *Abital* illustrated the creative interplay between acts related to the musical domain (listening, composition, music-evoked mental imagery) and ascriptions deriving from those experiences, focused on porosity and related discourses on the imagination as the primary *locus* of spiritual encounter. Here, the spirits, *Abital* and *Rorasa*, had limited influence as social agents beyond the inspiration for the tracks, and the ways in which experiences of mental imagery were ascribed to their influence in the written narratives.

Beyond *Abital* and *Rorarsa*'s limited spheres of influence, my autobiographical statement describes two instances of encounters with spirits that affected not only my personal, creative life, but also my interpersonal relationships and social life. The first of these concerns a relationship with the spirit of Robert Lenkiewicz, an artist who died in 2002 (A2.17.3-4), and who was well-known for his extensive library which included a number of rare occult books, amongst them the second half of the 16th-century ritual magic text Folger MS. V.b.26, with which I was briefly involved in

producing an edition (A2.19.2; Harms *et al.* 2015: 2). At several points in my autobiography, I mention the sensed presence of Lenkiewicz' spirit, for example:

I had, however, also found myself slipping into a depression – often when I should have been working from home, I found myself lying on the floor, weighed down with worries, paralysed by uncertainties about how I was going to support my family as they grew up, and wondering whether I had made the right life decisions... and sensing the presence of Robert Lenkiewicz' spirit, urging me to *do something*. (A2.17.9, see also A2.17.4, A2.18.7, A2.19.1)

I had purchased a book from the sale of Lenkiewicz' library in April 2008, and, having obtained a physical link to the artist, I was able to then project my own frustrations and fears relating to my life choices onto this figure of an idealised, Bohemian artist. This situation persisted until the summer of 2009 when I went on holiday to the Yorkshire hamlet of Littlebeck, with my then-partner, our children, and her father (A2.18.2-9). Having taken a series of printed facsimiles from Add. MS. 36,674, which I was attempting to transcribe, I became fascinated with Elicona – the name of one of the spirits found in the manuscript:

For theft to bring againe Raguell & Uriel

Pro amore Almazim & Elicona

Alazel, Rathan, Oberion (Add. MS. 36,674, quoted in Legard 2011)

I would connect my solitary evening walks around the nearby woods and beck with a process of drawing closer to the spirit Elicona as a form of sensed presence. Once again, the spirit served as a way to project my own emotions about the relationship with my partner onto another entity: an intermediary being or social agent whom I felt was also working to resolve these issues. Certainly, when I met Layla the following month, I saw this as a sign from both Elicona and Lenkiewicz (A2.19.1), leading to me ending my relationship with my then-partner.

I wrote an account of this period in *The Mirror of Elicona* (2011), a text which serves a number of purposes with regard to esoteric discourse and identity formation. Often these two domains are entwined, as can be seen in the way the text appeals to a form of purist – or even post-purist – magic, which is informed by primary sources (e.g. Add. MS. 36,674, Cornelius Agrippa, Giordano Bruno), suggesting a form of authenticity. I describe it as 'post-purist' since the text also recognises that the

practices of magically working with spirits have, in fact, been historically manifold and argues that magical experience may be authentically situated in fields of affect and imagination, rather than the areas of strict ritual orthodoxy that purist approaches often emphasise. In terms of identity, this allowed me to situate myself both in esoteric tradition as an occult practitioner, and also to align this affective and imaginative approach with the field of poetry – making particular mention of the Traditionalist poet Kathleen Raine (see chapter 7) – and concluding the text with a ‘Talisman of Amity’, written as a ‘concrete poem’ arranged in the form of a heart.

While the encounter narrative that comprises much of the text evidently serves to embody a form of appeal to experience, and one which is emphasised in the introduction, expressed in a consciously self-othering or elitist mode of discourse, preceded in the text by a number of appeals to tradition:

As with a religious or psychedelic experience, the processes of magic open up new areas of experience and consciousness that, unfortunately, often isolate the magus from his fellow men. *Such experiences are unexplainable to those who have not themselves shared them.* (Legard 2011, emphasis added)

Asprem (2015: 655; 2014) has drawn attention to the ways in which the appraisals of the reality of intermediary beings may shift over the lifetime of a practitioner. The most prominent example being the appraisals made by Crowley around the reception of the *Book of the Law*, which moved from psychological to supernaturalistic attributions depending on the audience and the unfolding development of Crowley’s religious project of Thelema (2015: 655). In the works discussed in this thesis, the ontological status of demons and appraisals of experiences relating to them are similarly ambivalent in nature. Between 1998 and 2001 my positions on the existence of spirits moved from servitors as self-created mental processes, to the statements in *Goetia made Easy!* about spirits occupying some middle ground (Legard 1998f), to a more literal conception in writings about *The Arbatel* (1998c) and *Heptameron* (1999). The works discussed in this chapter also frame spirits both in terms of religious and psychological discourses on the imaginal and poetic (*Psychogeographia Ruralis*), and as literal beings through the anachronistic device of situating narratives of Abital and Rorasa in a faux-historical document (*The Pyrognomic Glass/Abital*). *The Mirror of Elicon* itself was published as part of the occult imprint Hadean Press’ *Guides to the Underworld* series. Thus, being written for

an audience of occult practitioners, the encounters with Elicona are presented as reflections of a spiritual reality:

The Mirror of Elicona is a grimoire in the form of magical biography: a personal reflection on a series of encounters with a spirit who was it seems, up until the close of the early modern period, was perhaps frequently called upon by the magicians and cunning folk of the British Isles. *In directing the orientation of my soul toward this spirit I feel that I have touched upon something of the magical unconscious of England.* (Legard 2011, emphasis added)

While my shifting positions of the ontological status of spirits may have served a discursive purpose, either as a means to legitimise esotericism to a more casual audience (as in *Psychogeographia Ruralis*), or to demonstrate a certain form of social capital to an occult audience (e.g. as someone who has authentically encountered spirits, as in *The Mirror of Elicona*), the motif of communicating with, and deriving creative inspiration from, spiritual sources through a porous mind-world boundary persists regardless of the explanatory model invoked. In this respect, the work of Cornelius Agrippa is cited in all three of the texts discussed so far, in particular a passage from the *Three Books of Occult Philosophy* III.xxiii, which describes the ‘tongue of angels’:

Now to us that we may speak, a tongue is necessary with other instruments, [but] if he could be coupled to the hearer, a softer breath would suffice; for he would slide into the hearer without any noise, as an image in the eye, or glass. So souls going out of the body, so Angels, so Demons speak: and *what man doth with a sensible voice, they do by impressing the conception of the speech in those to whom they speak, after a better manner then if they should express it by an audible voice.* (Agrippa 1993: 530, emphasis added)

Regardless of what my current position on the existence of spirits was, or who the audience was intended to be, this passage consistently enabled me to situate the phenomenological experience of mental imagery or thoughts which seemed to emerge from beyond the self within a historical esoteric framework: one which I considered authentic, and which also served the construction of my own identity as an authentic practitioner of both music and magic. In *Psychogeographia Ruralis*, the citation from Agrippa was prefaced by a defence of the imagination – rather than the

ritual space delineated by a magical circle or scrying surface – as an authentic *locus spiritus*:

[O]ne will find that, upon clearing the mind and opening oneself to the possibility of hearing the voice of a place, that a certain deep impression asserts itself upon the psyche, often of poetic, cryptic or inspirational significance. [...]

Historically communication with spirits often took place on a subtle, mental level similar to that described above. Cornelius Agrippa tells us that “souls going out of the body,” as well as angels and demons speak with inaudible voices [...] (Legard 2007a: 7)

While *Abitat* also mentions the ‘tongue of angels’ in passing (Legard 2009: 8), the above point is extended in *The Mirror of Elicon* as part of a discussion of ritual:

Ritual action is one mode of opening up the unconscious mind to hear what Agrippa calls the ‘tongue of Angels’ [...] Such a ‘better manner of speech’ is, I believe, not just limited to ‘spoken’ words, but to the transmission of other sensory stimulus and complexes of imagery and ideas, which Agrippa elsewhere confirms: “Also the divining of suitable things works so with mans mind, that good spirits do assist us willingly, and communicate their power and vertue to us, daily helping us with illuminations, inspirations, oracles, prophecyings, dreams, miracles, prodigies, divinations, and auguries.” (Legard 2011)

In this framework, any experience of insight, musical automatism, or multimodal mental imagery could be ascribed to a spiritual source, provided that it occurred in the correct context of engagement with place, such as while walking, participating in a ritual, or playing and listening to music or field recordings made at specific places.

In both a creative context (as in *Psychogeographia Ruralis* and *The Pyrognomic Glass*) and a social context (as in the discussions of Lenkiewicz and Elicon), discourses concerning communication or inspiration by spirits often served the purpose of ceding personal agency to another, supernatural agent. Since I often experienced self-doubt with regard to my own creative work, I employed a number of strategies to intentionally distance myself from it: I recorded under a band name

(Xenis Emputae Travelling Band), rarely put my own name on releases, and attributed the music at least in part to spiritual influences. Similarly in social interactions, thoughts and feelings about dissatisfaction with my life and relationships were projected on to the spirits of Robert Lenkiewicz and Elicona: it was *they* who urged me to make a change, and who brought new relationships into my life, effectively enabling me to avoid difficult realities and conversations with my partner. While the anxieties and fears of Christian culture were projected onto Glaser-Hille's early modern demonology (2019: 105-116), the more personal and intimate anxieties of modern identity and social relations were projected onto my own spirits.

This section has emphasised how certain phenomenological experiences and behaviours were articulated through the intimate social agency of spirits, and legitimated through the discursive use of passages from esoteric authorities such as Agrippa. The experiences with Abital, Rorasa, Lenkiewicz, and Elicona present the culmination of a 'path of practice' that has many parallels with Jack Hunter's study of mediumship at the Bristol Spirit Lodge, which describes 'mediumship development is a gradual process, beginning with a sensed presence, and an interjection into "personal space", and finally resulting in the embodiment of distinctive spirit personalities' (Hunter 2020: 204).

Both mediumship and the forms of creativity that I have described here as 'mediumistic' develop from a sense of a porous self-world boundary. However, the position of the *locus spiritus* varies: in both mediumship and the possession rituals of chaos magick, the practitioner embodies the spirit, or even 'downloads' it into the 'hardware' of their neural system (Woodman 2003: 169). My own practices, however, drew from early modern practices of ritual magic (e.g. the *Goetia* and the grimoires) and revelatory prayer (*The Arbatef*), where the spirit is considered external to the magus – even though they are impressing words and imagery onto the mind of whoever conjured them through a similar sense of a porous world-self boundary.

Conclusion: Experience, Identity, and Mediumistic Creativity

In this chapter, as well as the preceding chapters, the notion of a porous world-self boundary and an allied 'imaginal' discourse – positing the epistemological validity of the imagination as an organ of cognition – have been recurrent motifs. These motifs served an explanatory purpose by providing attributive frameworks through which experiences could be evaluated, as well as serving as part of a strategy of

legitimation when placed in a dynamic dialogue with what are, from an emic perspective, perceived as hegemonic cultural discourses on scientific naturalism and materialism.

Whether such motifs were employed in an explanatory, ascriptive manner, or as part of a legitimising strategy, both usages often occur in a public and performative context given that they are presented in either texts accompanying my work (such as those discussed in this chapter), or in interviews for music publications. The instrumentalisation of these motifs contributes to the formation of a discursive identity with similarities to the 'purist' identity discussed in the preceding chapter, in which I attempted to posit myself as an 'authentic' esoteric musician able to draw upon both a knowledge of historical occultism (e.g. a discourse on 'tradition'), and – crucially – my own appeals to experience. The discussions of discursive identity here, and in prior chapters, also emphasise how such formations participate in particular affective spaces associated with esotericism and occulture, most often conveyed by the tenor of the writing: in these instances often partaking in the serious, sombre, and academic style most conspicuously formalised in the 19th-century occult revival and suggestive of intellectual and cultural authority. Within music this identity was also expressed through discourse around improvisation as a form of channelling or spiritual inspiration, and engagement with affective spaces associated with ancient-, early-, and folk music, which evoke nostalgia and a sense of tradition.

Although the musical practice discussed in this chapter has focused on 'automatism' and 'manticism', there are also influences from contemporary classical music in many of my later works, which align them with what Hasler emically defined as 'speculative music', being 'composed through the development of new musical theories and aesthetics deriving their structures from esoteric concepts' (Hasler 2011: 47-53). Examples include the use of geomantic tables to compose 'Horizon of Eternity' (2006), the influence of Arvo Pärt on *A Prism for Annwn* (2006) and 'Descending Form' (2007), and chord progressions from the Baroque guitar repertoire of Gaspar Sanz (1640-1710) on 'Stella' (2006). Discursively these pieces attempted to demonstrate that I could also competently compose music or invoke theoretical ideas alongside improvisation. Considered in terms of affective and representative spaces, though, they continue to attempt to conjure similar feelings and imagery of the nostalgic, ancient, and mystical, despite developing from differing starting-points.

While automatism and manticism have been historically associated with the visual arts, and the way in which the eye can interact with the picture plane in a non-sequential manner, both approaches have loose analogues in the sequential, and time-based medium of music through the processes of improvisation (automatism) and listening (manticism) respectively. There are two important distinctions, however. The first concerns imagery: without a picture plane, mental imagery is evoked either by mind-wandering processes while absorbed in musical improvisation, or through the representative and affective dimensions of sound during listening. The second is a question of attribution and porosity: the images arising from automatic drawing and writing, or examining a randomly-constructed ‘mantic’ image, were often considered in Freudian terms by many Surrealists (e.g. Marchessau 2018:26-27), whereas in my work the experience of mental imagery and ideation common to both improvising and listening were ascribed to communication with spirits.

It was observed in the analysis of *The Pyrognomic Glass* that musical artefacts produced in these ways could serve as ritual scripts, allowing an experience to be recreated and elaborated on, while also serving as ‘mediatory texts’, through which spirits and other intermediaries are engaged. In a later interview, I describe my music as a record, or by-product, of spiritual experiences, as well as a method for focusing on places and spirits (Legard 2014), highlighting how improvisation and listening were instrumentalised as part of a path of practice that connected spiritual experience with music production, and placing particular emphasis on their experiential dimensions. A similar attitude is expressed by the ritual ambient group Arktau Eos who state that:

we can agree with Alexey Tegin from *Phurpa*, who is adamant that *Arktau Eos* – like his own group – in fact *has nothing to do with music per se*. (Barnett 2018, emphasis added)

While many of the sleeve-notes from Arktau Eos records describe their music in terms of non-being and *via negativa* (e.g. Arktau Eos 2006, 2009), it is apparent that they also see the representative and affective dimensions of their music as embodying:

travelogues and notebooks, quick sketches of eldritch spaces in mind or elsewhere (is there a difference?), cryptic but meant to communicate keys of

access to others via suggestion and deep, universal symbols: beyond textual means, beyond sound even. (2009)

The 'beyond' is latent in their music and its affective spaces, as well as its proposed function as, if not a mediatory text, then a liminal one. Ancient sites in the landscape are also described in terms of being 'beyond the veils of separation' (between being and non-being), and described as potential sites of encounter with spiritual 'un-beings', which:

shine as beacons to which flock entities that may bear little or no resemblance whatsoever to human life. Whether the impromptu sabbatic revels ensuing from encounters with such non- or un-beings still count as engagements with the natural world is obviously a matter of debate! (ibid.)

Being focused on 'the beyond' and 'non-being', Arktau Eos' work may come from differing, yet still esoteric, ontological and epistemological perspectives. Nevertheless, both Arktau Eos' and my own musical practices present musical practice as being intimately connected to the production of esoteric experience and knowledge – the spaces of 'non-being' which they claim are evoked by their music, and which may be encountered at ancient sites 'beyond the veils of separation', perhaps being analogous to my 'psychegeographic domains'. Although Arktau Eos, Phurpa, and myself described our work as 'nothing to do with music *per se*', a key distinction is that Arktau Eos' music is situated as a tool to facilitate such explorations (although they do not frown upon casual listening), whereas – with some exceptions such as *The Pyrognomic Glass* – my music was often presented as a record, or by-product of the experiences that occurred during the creation of the work. To conclude with a return to Pasi's typology: although we have highlighted the blurred boundaries and ambiguities between many of his proposed types of esoteric art, much of my work can be considered in the mediumistic sense (as resulting from 'inspiration/communication from spiritual entities, or of a visionary/mystical experience' [Pasi 2010:108]), whereas Arktau Eos predominantly presents their work as experiential: artefacts created with the intention to produce or enable extraordinary experiences.

Chapter 7.

Presenting the Path:

Occultural Milieus and the Discourses of Underground Folk Music

Introduction

Having engaged in analyses of my own esoteric and creative practices and their relationship to discourse, experience, paths of practice, and identity, this chapter explores the wider context for my work between 2001-2013. The first half of the chapter focuses on textual and discursive analyses of material produced by two overlapping occultural and musical milieus. Following these analyses, I will explore how the direct and indirect influences of these milieus informed my own presentation and performance of the discourses surrounding underground folk music and adjacent strands of occulture.

Discussions of milieu within the field of esotericism studies often owe much to Campbell's theorisation of the cultic milieu, summarised by Possamai (2007) as 'the cultural underground of society. It includes all deviant belief-systems and their associated practices, e.g. unorthodox science, deviant medicine, the world of the occult and the magical, mysticism, and alien intelligences' (: 157) and Partridge as 'a complex mixture of diffuse spirituality, amorphous networks, and structured groups and organisations' (2004: 66). Hammer, for example, posits the cultic milieu as a key theoretical component in his discussions of the discourses of modern esotericism (e.g. 2004: 27-29), while the identification of the cultic milieu with oppositional, anti-hegemonic thinking informs Hanegraaff's conception of esotericism as 'rejected knowledge' (e.g. 2013c: 155).

Over the last two decades, as sociologists of religion and scholars of esotericism studies began to more closely focus on contemporary esotericism and New Religious Movements, the theory of the cultic milieu has been critiqued from a number of angles (Partridge 2014: 118-120). Granholm (2014: 21; 2015: 721-2) and Possamai (2007: 156) have both noted emphasis on pejorative and negatively valenced terms (such as *cult* and *deviance*), while Partridge (Partridge 2014; Hammer 2015: 379-80) has often pointed out that when ideas associated with the cultic milieu become mainstream, we may then question what constitutes 'cultic' thought? Furthermore, when the 'cultic' becomes simply any form of oppositional culture, subculture, or

ideology – as in the work of Kaplan and Lööw (2002) where it encompasses Ultraconservatives, Nazi occultists, goths, anti-globalisation protestors, and white nationalists – it has been suggested that the concept becomes totalising and necessitates re-formulation, especially in the context of contemporary, globalised societies, as Partridge has undertaken through the theory of occulture (Partridge 2014: 117-118).

Instead of attempting to construct typologies to classify milieus as ‘cultic’ and practices as ‘cult’, the occultural perspective emphasises the mercurial nature of belief, and its relationship to cultural production and consumption. This chapter, therefore, intends to explore the social networks of esotericism as *occultural* – rather than purely *cultic* – milieus, with particular attention to the cultural productions produced by these milieus (such as books, magazines, music) and the way these not only articulate experiential and discursive narratives, but also contribute to both their immediate and wider cultures.

The relationship between milieus and fields of cultural production has been theorised by Webb (2007) in terms of global musical milieus, and Possamaï (2007) in terms of the relationship between the New Age cultic milieu and ‘late’ phase capitalism. Both Webb and Possamaï draw upon network paradigms for their analysis of milieus. Possamaï favours Schmalenbach’s concept of the *bund*: informal networks ‘maintained through the affectual solidarity its members have for one another in pursuit of a particular set of shared beliefs’ (: 155), which he complements with a model of the production and consumption in New Age spirituality that focuses on the New Age as an artifact of ‘late’ stage capitalism, driven by producers and a market of consumers who ‘shop around’ the cults and representatives of the cultic milieu (: 158).

Webb describes his own theory of networked cultural milieus as ‘a combination of Schutz’s phenomenology, Durrschmidt’s development of this, and Bourdieu’s “fields of cultural production” and Harvey’s dialectics within a Globalisation framework’ (2007: 11), and makes a clear distinction between milieu cultures and subcultures. This helps refocus his study away from the traditional focus of subcultural work on youth, such as the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies’ influential, but totalising, theories of subculture as class-based, and the Chicago School’s perspective of subcultural participation as deviant behaviour.

For Webb, the milieu describes 'a network that has a particular density in terms of connections, relevancies, typifications, commonalities, and aesthetics' (: 30). In many ways this is similar to Harris's concept on the musical 'scene' (2001: 14-27), although Webb approaches his analysis through a three-level relational paradigm, summarised as follows:

1. The first [level], the milieu, deals with the individual actor and their interactions with a group of other actors in particular social spaces.
2. The second, the field of cultural production, situates the first within the wider context of a field (Bourdieu, 1993), which in this case is the music industry.
3. The third level of abstraction is the dialectical relationship that the milieu and the field of cultural production have with other areas that the individuals inhabit or are in some form of contact with. (Webb 2007: 37-8)

Within the current field of analysis (*viz.* occulture) we have already encountered milieu cultures in online social spaces. In the discussion of the magical enthusiasts of the alt.magick Usenet hierarchy, and of the chaos magicians of the Z(Cluster), focus on dialectical relationships, for example, was primarily in terms of personal agency, identity, and discursive positioning.

This chapter introduces two milieus that either connected with, or otherwise directly or indirectly influenced, my work between 2001-2013. Firstly, I provide a historical and discursive overview of the occultural milieu of West Yorkshire, whose work preceded mine, and which was most active between the late 1970s and early 2000s. As this milieu developed, a range of occultural expressions such as chaos magick, paganism, UFOlogy, Earth Mysteries, and Psychic Questing intersected. The last of these also represents a notably under-represented field within the discipline of esotericism studies, but one which, along with Earth Mysteries, vitally serves to emphasise connection between the cultural productions of this milieu (e.g. small press books and zines) and the development of an enchanted perspective on the landscape of places like Wharfedale and Ilkely Moor. The works produced by this milieu established an *oeuvre* from which I would subsequently develop aspects of my own identity and sense of authenticity. Secondly, I survey the musical milieus primarily active during the early 2000s associated with the forms of underground and experimental folk music variously described as 'Wyrd Folk', 'Free Folk', and 'Freak Folk', which formed a loose globalised network of contemporaries with similar

aesthetic and occultural interests to my own. I will also draw attention to the significant connections between the aforementioned milieus and the networks of the underground folk and the neofolk genres, the latter of which will be demonstrated to also have strong links to occulture – particularly the chaos magick scene discussed in the first section. The ways in which influences from both these milieus (for example, their discursive presentations of enchanted landscapes) influenced my own production and presentation of cultural artefacts (e.g. musical albums) and my discursive identity as a Wyrð Folk musician are examined in the latter half of this chapter.

The Draw of the Moor: The West Yorkshire Landscape and Local Occultural Milieu

East Morton is a small West Yorkshire village adjacent to Keighley and Bingley. To the north is Morton Moor, to the east Bingley Moor, and, conjoined to both of these, Ilkley Moor. This unassuming village is composed like many others in the area of utilitarian terraces of old sandstone workers' cottages, facing onto estates of bungalows from the 1960s and 70s, which sprawl northward toward the moors. Although East Morton could be dismissed as an unremarkable backwater, it is a place deeply connected with the construction of chaos magick during the late 70s and early 80s.

The primary field of cultural production associated with the milieus discussed in this section is the written word, particularly small-press books and 'zines'. From East Morton, Thelemic magician Ray Sherwin instituted his own imprint, Morton Press, in 1976 to publish an occult journal called *The New Equinox* (1976-1979; Illuminates of Thanateros 2002: 5). The material published in *The New Equinox* primarily focused on the British revival of Thelema, which had entered the occultural mainstream in the 1960s through promotion by Kenneth Anger, the Rolling Stones, and The Beatles, and which was further stimulated by the publication by Kenneth Grant with John Symonds, Crowley's literary executor, of collections of Crowley's writings such as *The Magical Record of the Beast 666* (1972) and *Magick* (1973) – as well as Grant's own writings, which positioned Thelema as a living esoteric religion, and promoted other magical figures such as Austin Osman Spare.

Peter Carroll would contribute a number of articles to *The New Equinox*, many of which directly referenced practices and concepts that Grant had attributed to Austin

Osman Spare, such as the Death Posture and Gnosis (Illuminates of Thanateros 2002: 5). During 1976-77, Carroll and Sherwin advertised for interest in their own group, the Illuminates of Thanateros (IOT), discursively positioning the group as part of a tradition by describing its members as 'spiritual heirs to the Zos Kia Cultus' (e.g. the magic of Austin Osman Spare as explicated by Grant), furthermore stating that they were 'drinkers of the dual ecstasies of the sex- and death- gnosis,' and that 'the IOT represents a fusion of Thelemic Magic, Tantra, the Sorceries of Zos and Tao' (ibid.; Otto 2019: 762-3).

In 1978 Morton Press published Carroll's *Liber Null*, recognised as a foundational text for the 'chaos magick' movement, and by 1980 Carroll had moved to East Morton, where he and Sherwin formed a nascent IOT group – although unstable membership meant that this group only lasted until 1982 (Illuminates of Thanateros 2002: 6). Chaos magician Dave Lee was also part of this group, and described the group meeting at Sherwin's house in East Morton, and carrying out their rituals in the woods around Sunnydale reservoir at the eastern end of Morton Moor (Lee 2018b).

The involvement of Dave Lee in this early IOT group can be used to demonstrate the types of social interaction that took place amongst the occultural milieu of West Yorkshire. Having moved to the Headingley area of Leeds in 1977 to study biophysics at Leeds University (Lee 2017a), Lee attended a meeting of the Leeds University Union Occult Society (LUUOS), before deciding to dedicate himself to the 'serious' practice of magic in the autumn of 1978 (Lee 2017b). The LUUOS was an important social forum for this milieu, as were the 'coffee mornings' at The Sorcerer's Apprentice shop in Hyde Park, home of Leeds' densest student population.

Chris Bray – *alias* Frater Marabas – began trading as The Sorcerer's Apprentice in 1974, from a small shop unit at 6 Burley Lodge Road, next to its current imposing, and now boarded up premises at number 8, to which it relocated two years later. Primarily dealing with mail order, The Sorcerer's Apprentice also opened its shop on Saturdays, with the smaller unit becoming a 'coffee shop', with kettle, honesty box, and pre-filled paper cups of instant coffee and powdered milk (Lee 2017c). These 'coffee mornings' became notable networking events, where Sherwin – and later Carroll – would seek out likeminded individuals to join their group in East Morton (Illuminates of Thanateros 2002: 6).

Prior to becoming involved in Carroll and Sherwin's ritual group in 1980, Lee describes a trip at first light to Ilkley Moor in October 1978 to a beck called Spicy Gill on the northern side of the moor (Lee 2017d). Having decided to pursue magic following his encounter with the LUUOS, Lee elected to consecrate his magical robe on the moor. The moor – with its remote and wild places, and ancient carved stones – held a romantic appeal to those involved in magic and paganism in the area, and it was also a large area of countryside that was easily accessible by public transport from Leeds (Lee 2018a, 2018b).

Lee describes the first working of the early IOT group as an 'astral sabbat', which was intended to test out a belladonna ointment prepared by Carroll (Lee 2018a). The group prepared a site at Sunnydale Woods, on Morton Moor. The group left blood and spit at the site, which were intended to serve as 'homing beacons' to bring their astral bodies back to the woods under the influence of belladonna. Lee mentions doing breathing exercises (*pranayama*), before experiencing a sense of moving 'in and out of tiny dream sequences', and visualising 'the Sabbat site from a remarkable number of different perspectives' (ibid.). The IOT's practice of an astral sabbat, revisiting a physical place through magical means, is akin to the form of magical practice that I described earlier as 'psychegeography', as well as Arktau Eos' description of wild places as being the stage for 'impromptu sabbatic revels ensuing from encounters with [...] non- or un-beings' (Arktau Eos 2009).

With this attraction to the moors in mind, we may posit that, although chaos magick is popularly associated with post-modern urban magic (e.g. Woodman 2003), the practices of its formative milieu were often more congruent to the ethos of neopaganism than is usually acknowledged. Along with practices such as the astral sabbat, the final rite of the 1980 IOT group invoked the goddesses Ishtar, Sekhmet, Hekhet, and Babalon with the intention of the order being *renewed* – a process emically connected to the seasons, moon, and menstrual cycle (Lee 2018b). Furthermore, Sherwin and Carroll would form the 'Circle of Chaos' in 1984 (Illuminates of Thanateros 2002: 7), initially named the Circle of Weird (e.g. *wyrd*, fate), whose 'Cardinal Rites' of the equinoxes and solstices were published the same year under the *alias* Paula Pagani with a spurious history tracing the Circle back to 1960 (Pagani 1984). With the exception of the winter solstice (dedicated to Babalon), the other seasonal rites are all described as taking place in woods – presumably the woods near Sunnydale reservoir.

It is through the work of Phil Hine that we can connect chaos magick, neopaganism, and the draw of the moors to a wider network of interconnected occultural milieus in West Yorkshire. Hine arrived in Leeds in 1986, as Sherwin began publishing the influential *Chaos International* magazine, co-edited with fellow IOT member P. D. Brown (Brown & Sherwin 1986; Layla Legard 2021). Although often described as a chaos magician or even ‘urban shaman’ (Gyrus 1997a), Hine was also deeply involved in the Paganlink Network and published *Pagan News* from 1987, with co-editor Rodney Orpheus, who primarily identified as a Thelemite (ibid.).

Pagan News was one of many small-press ‘zines’ in circulation during the mid-late 1980s which, when viewed collectively, give a sense of the occultural atmosphere of the period, and also help us to visualise the networked milieus that constitute their authorship and readership. Most notable in this respect is Hine’s involvement with a Leeds pagan group called ‘Heal the Earth’, who performed an invocation to Arwen on Ilkley Moor in 1987 (Hine 1994), which led to Hine meeting with Earth Mysteries and UFO enthusiast Paul Bennett (Gyrus 1997a).

Bennett edited a zine called *Earth*, subtitled ‘a bi-monthly magazine of paganism, UFOlogy & mysticism’, which was published between 1986-1990. Bennett had also edited the newsletter of the West Yorkshire UFO Research Group (WYUFORG), and published the magazine *UFO Brigantia* between 1984-86, before passing editorship to Andy Roberts. Although *Earth* was Bennett’s first publication to explicitly connect UFOlogy and paganism, his earlier work also hinted at occultural connection-making between UFOlogy, ancient sites, and paganism: the drawing of a UFO above Stone Henge on WYUFORG’s February 1985 newsletter (Bennett 1985), for example, and the use of the term *Brigantia* – the historical name for northern England, drawn from the Celtic tribe of the Brigantes, who occupied the territory.

The countercultural connection between UFOs and ancient sites was popularised in the work of John Michell (1933-2009), through works such as 1967’s *The Flying Saucer Vision: The Holy Grail Restored*, which suggested that UFOs were visionary spectacles associated with ley lines and sacred sites (Hale 2011: 81) and which, along with *View over Atlantis* (1969), became key texts for the British counterculture (Partridge 2004:160-1). The connection between ley lines and UFOs was not Michell’s invention, but was initially made in the late 1950s by ex-RAF pilot Tony Wedd after reading Aimé Michel’s *Flying Saucers and the Straight Line Mystery* (1958; Heselton n.d.). Wedd’s theory was shared with two fellow UFOlogists, Philip

Heselton and John Goddard, who, being fascinated by the underlying concept that straight lines connected ancient sites and places of significance – a theory first proposed in Alfred Watkins' *The Old Straight Track* (1925) – established the Ley Hunters' Club in 1962 (Heselton & Goddard 1965).

The practice of ley hunting, along with dowsing, and speculation on 'Earth lights, UFO sightings, mysterious crop formations, psychic phenomena, and other curiosities' (Ivakhiv 2005) would become key to the development of the 'Earth Mysteries' movement, which blossomed throughout the 1970s in the wake of the popularisation of Goddard and Heselton's ideas through the work of Michell.

Heselton, who had been sympathetic to paganism and Wicca since 1960, would become a central figure of the Northern Earth Mysteries Group (NEMG), formed in 1979, as well as religiously identifying as a pagan from the 1980s (Wiccan/Pagan Times 2001). NEMG's journal, *Northern Earth* (1979-present) provided a forum for earth mysteries enthusiasts and alternative archaeologists in Northern England to present their work: the aforementioned Paul Bennett contributing a 1987 piece on encountering a Will-o-the-Wisp (Northern Earth n.d) and making several contributions about Ilkley Moor during the 1990s.

Bennett's own *Earth* magazine explicitly connects the Earth Mysteries and chaos magick milieus through its promotion of Hine's Pagan News (Bennett 1989: 10) alongside Sherwin's *Chaos International* (Bennett 1987: 22) and Sherwin's Leeds-based essential oils business, id Aromatics (Bennett 1988: 26). *Earth* also favourably reviewed and promoted the *Lamp of Thoth* magazine and Alawn Tickill's *Apogeton*, both published by Sorcerer's Apprentice, and the Satanic publication *Dark Lily*. Explicitly magical articles are also contributed by Hine, in the form of an extract from his book on shamanism, *Walking Between the Worlds* (Hine 1990). Hine also wrote polemically from a deeply embedded countercultural perspective under the pseudonym Kalkinath, which describes magic, ecological activism, and individualist 'autarchy' as ideals which contribute to ushering in a new aeon (Hine 1989) in opposition to 'Operation Mindfuck' – a term borrowed from Discordianism, but here signifying top-down political and social power rather than methods of challenging such 'consensus realities' (Urban 2006: 234, 240). Other articles published in *Earth* emphasise Bennett's editorial position on covering the gamut of occulture, for example, in articles about connections between UFOs and Qabalah (Southwood 1987), and 'Wicca as a Descendent of Ancient Hermetic Initiation' (Bardon 1987).



Figure 18. Covers from Bennett's *Earth* magazine, issues 1, 3, and 5 (1986-87).

Ilkley Moor is a constant presence in *Earth* magazine. Issues 1 and 3 have hand-drawn covers loosely inspired by the Swastika and Panorama Stones found near the northern end of the moor, while issue 5 depicts sunset at the Twelve Apostles stone circle at the top of the moor. In the first issue Ilkley (as well as Otley, Patley, Keighley, and Shipley) is idiosyncratically rendered IlkLEY, emphasising the notion that the monuments found nearby follow alignments and form a ritual landscape (Bennett 1986a: 3, 5, 7, 9, 14-15). The first issue also mentions Twelve Apostles stone circle as both the site of pagan offerings (:5) and of strange electrical phenomena and UFO sightings (:15). Many of the field studies published in *Earth* also connect Ilkley's prehistoric remains with UFO sightings and alien contact (e.g. Bennett 1986a: 15-18; The Wizard 1987: 8-12; Mortimer 1988: 6-7). Of particular note, issue 15 is largely dedicated to articles concerning a site on Ilkley Moor called Backstone Circle, which was considered lost – until rediscovered by dowser Nigel Mortimer and investigated by Bennett, Mortimer and others under the aegis of the Yorkshire Earth Mysteries Group (YEMG) (Mortimer 1990; Bennett 1990a, 1990b). Bennett's contribution about paranormal phenomena at the site describes his visit to the circle at 12:30am and the appearance of a dozen shadowy figures, who engaged in a circular dance, raising 'four vivid lines of striated energy' (Bennett 1990a: 21). Bennett's account of connecting Backstone Circle to ley alignments (1990b) also ends on an explicitly magical note:

Magickian Phil Hine (editor of *Pagan News*), amidst Goetia practices only days following the rediscovery of the circle, recounted that an entity form manifested in his home, telling that it had come from "a circle in the local hills," awakened for- the first time in many years. However dramatic, unlikely or absurd any/all of these events may seem, I am only reporting them as they

have been reported to us. Magickal and other works are forthcoming at this lively energy spot on our local moors. (:26)

The reference to the demonic evocations of Goetic magic also draw attention to darker forms of magic practiced upon the moor. As well as practicing neopaganism, chaos magick, and shamanism, Hine engaged with the magic of H.P. Lovecraft's Cthulhu mythos during the early 90s, considering Lovecraft's 'Old Ones' as elemental forces of nature. Ilkley Moor is mentioned in one of Hine's *Chaos International* articles in connection to the evocation of Lovecraft's god Yog Sothoth. A description of the deity as 'a conglomerate of iridescent globes' (Hine 1992a: 43), enables Hine to connect his Cthulhu magic to Ilkley Moor, ley lines, and the UFO and Earth Mysteries phenomena of Earth Lights (:39). A later postscript to this article describes that it was inspired by an 'event last year' (presumably in 1990) which 'elevate[d] the field of Earth Mysteries from a minor interest to a subject that I am increasingly drawn to' (Hine 1998: 40). This is evidently the incident that Bennett described as 'Goetic', although Hine's own account actually describes an encounter between Hine, his boyfriend, and an 'entity' lurking in the stairwell of his flat. Although Hine claims to have had little knowledge of Lovecraft's pantheon at that time, he says that the entity, after declaring 'I have come from the ancient hills', identified itself as Azathoth (ibid.).

We have, thus far, connected the occultural milieu of West Yorkshire during the 1980s and 1990s to chaos magick, Earth Mysteries, neopaganism, and UFOlogy. An additional, and critically understudied, area of occulture that also connects these fields and which was also present amongst this milieu is Psychic Questing.

The subculture of Psychic Questing largely emerged from the work of UFO investigator Andrew Collins and psychic Graham Phillips, who shared a flat in Wolverhampton and edited *Strange Phenomena* magazine in the late 1970s: a magazine with a wide occultural remit, covering 'UFOs, the occult, witchcraft, ESP, ghosts [...] astrology, myths & legends, the unexplained: the boundaries of human experience' (Phillips & Keatman 2019). In 1978, Phillips, assisted by Martin Keatman and Collins, followed a variety of clues delivered through séances and from intuitive associations derived from historical materials to retrieve an artefact that they believed to be the 'Meonia stone', and, in doing so, wove a tale that touched upon UFOS, the Egyptian dynasty of Ankhenaten, the Neolithic monuments of Avebury, Arthurian legend, the Gunpowder Plot, and secret Rosicrucian orders. Phillips & Keatman's account of the finding of the Meonia Stone was published by Neville Spearman in

1983, bringing Psychic Questing to far wider audience than prior small press publications such as Collin's own 1982 account of the events, *The Sword and the Stone*, could reach (Collins n.d.). Zines such as Collins' *The Supernaturalist* (1981) demonstrate the embedding of Psychic Questing into the wider occultural fields of UFOs, earth mysteries, and magic, opening with two UFO articles (a 'psycho-social' history of the phenomena, and an examination of a case of alien abduction in Aveley), an article on the parapsychology of ghosts, and a history of earth mysteries which posits John Dee as an early practitioner (Collins 1981: 41-43). A similar – but much expanded article – on the history of Psychic Questing also appeared in *UFO Brigantia*, then under the editorship of Andy Roberts (Potter & Taylor 1992a, 1992b), which illustrates how the practice was constructed as part of the wider occulture. Here, Clive Potter and David Taylor made a variety of discursive appeals to legitimacy of Psychic Questing, such as invoking myth and tradition to connect the practice to Isis' quest for the body of Osiris, shamanism, and the treasure-hunting practices of John Dee and Joseph Smith (1992a: 21-23), as well as constructing appeals to science through citations of dowsing as a practice that 'marries psychic sensitivity to archaeology' (1992b: 21).

The logo for Collins' *Supernaturalist* magazine – a serpent entwined around a sword – is described as the image of 'the dragon pierced with the sword of wisdom' (ibid.: 48), symbolising the capture of the subtle power of earth energies, which Collins associates with dragons and serpents. The use of this design likely indicates a familiarity with the work of Kenneth Grant, who reproduces a similar sigil in *Nightside of Eden* (1977), which he claims was 'received by Crowley in 1912' (n.p.). The more mundane reality is that Crowley used the sigil to pictorially represent the word 'shit' in a passage about coprophagy in his *Book of Lies* (1912/13: 105). The *Book of Lies*' humorous cabbalistic wordplay and its repeated collisions of the sacred and profane evidently influenced Grant's own non-dualist outlook, in which 'low matter' (dirt, filth) is considered symbolic of higher energies: in this case Crowley's humorous symbol of SHIT can be considered by Grant to be the seal of the higher mysteries associated with Set (rendered Shin-Teth/ShT in Hebrew by Grant). The importance of Grant as a populariser and interpreter of Austin Osman Spare has already been discussed in the context of the early chaos magick milieu, but Grant's writings, with their impressionistic collages of Thelema, UFOs, and the pulp fiction of Lovecraft and Sax Rohmer, are also shared by the style of Psychic Questing, which draws together similarly dense webs of occult connections around mundane events. Phil Hine, reviewing the 1992 Psychic Questing conference for *Pagan News*, noted that 'I heard

speakers at the conference refer to the works of both Aleister Crowley & Kenneth Grant, whilst describing how they made sense of their uncanny experiences' (Hine 1992b). Grant's *Magickal Revival* is also mentioned in a 1996 *Chaos International* article by Psychic Quester Jack Gale, which serves as further apologia for the practice, in this instance directed toward the chaos magical milieu (Gale 1996).

Grant himself was also clearly also acquainted with Collins' later works, citing Collins' *Seventh Sword* in his own writing and contributing a testimonial to the cover of Collins' *Twenty-First Century Grail* (2004; Nugent 2021: 10-11). Although the work of Paul Devereux' Dragon Project from 1977 attempted to legitimise Earth Mysteries as a scientifically credible pursuit (Ivakhiv 2005), Collins' early work demonstrates how the imaginative, Romantic, and occulturally-embedded strain of Earth Mysteries transformed into the subculture of Psychic Questing.

Given that Ilkley Moor attracted an interconnected milieu with interests in UFOlogy, Earth Mysteries, neopaganism, and chaos magick, the presence of Psychic Questing on the moor is also inevitable, exemplified in the work of Nigel Mortimer. Mortimer, founder of West Yorkshire UFO Research Group (WYUFORG) (Mortimer 2013: 132), was credited with the rediscovery of Backstone Circle, and had previously written collaborative articles on 'Earth Lights' with Bennett for *Earth*. In his later work, Mortimer suggests that sightings of the Earth Light phenomena of Orange Balls of Light (OBOLs) are 'a precedent to the arousal of deeper psychic awareness' (2013: 67), and credits his own OBOL experience in 1989 with the development of a psychic channel to the 'Celestials', whose manifestation is enabled by ancient sites such as those on Ilkley Moor (:122). Backstone Circle becomes particularly important to Mortimer, since he believes it is the resting place of a sacred sword, once owned by the king of Norway, Hakon the Good (:38-47). According to Mortimer's Celestial contact, Sharlek, who is frequently channelled in the narrative to provide new information, Hakon was the reincarnation of Akhenaten, and both are aspects 'of the same divinity' (:114). Mortimer's vision combines Psychic Questing with the eschatology of UFOlogical religiosity, stating that the Celestials convey a message which is contingent for mankind's future 'in which all Beings of Light, whoever they are, exist as one in the Truth' (:122-123). It may be noted that the connection between Ilkley Moor and the sword of Hakon actually derived from a spurious tale included in fellow WYUFORG member Andy Roberts' *Ghosts & Legends of Yorkshire* (Roberts 1992: 50). Whatever Roberts' intentions, the significance that Mortimer gives to this legend underlines the tendency of Psychic Questing (as well as the

works of Grant) to engage in forms of emergent narrative-making that are driven by what has been identified in the context of contemporary online conspiracy culture as apophenic connection-making (e.g. Greenwood 2022, McIntosh 2022). Also important to the construction of Mortimer's narrative is his own OBOL experience on Ilkley Moor (Mortimer 2013: 9-10), which functions as a form of Originary Event, and is returned to often in his text, yielding specific practices involving the channelling of Celestial entities.

Another instance of an Originary Event on Ilkley Moor can be found in the works of the pseudonymous Gyrus, who was resident in Leeds between 1993-1999 (Gyrus 2000 [1998]: 3). By this time key figures in the 'second-wave' of the chaos magick milieu, such as Phil Hine, had left the city (Gyrus 2008), although Gyrus made several trips to Ilkley Moor with Paul Bennett, who remained in West Yorkshire (Gyrus 1998).

Gyrus writes that, in 1997, after seeing the film *Crash*, he was 'hungering for unusual experience', and took the last bus to Ilkley Moor to sleep outside alone (Gyrus 2014: 7). He describes drifting into a hypnagogic state, and then opening his eyes to see one star apparently stationary against the motion of the others – this was, in fact, a satellite, 'drifting against the celestial backdrop' (ibid.) which his eyes were unconsciously tracking. He writes that later, when playing with a toy planetarium and a lamp he experienced a 'flare of visionary consciousness ignited by the moortop illusion' in which he sees the night sky revolving around him (:8). Gyrus also writes of a drug experience at Glastonbury Festival in 1993, in which he perceived himself to be dying – sucked into the *swirling* vortex of the sky (:1-2).

It is evident that these events – cited in the opening chapter of *North*, his 2014 work on 'polar cosmology' – informed much of Gyrus' work. As with Mortimer's OBOL experience, or my own Men-an-Tol event, Gyrus' own experiences of twisting, stellar vortices are re-invented and re-interpreted throughout his *oeuvre*. He associates vortices with shamanism and points of entry into the shamanic otherworld, and raises the possibility that cup-and-ring marks, as found on the stones of Ilkley Moor, are 'associated with this phenomenon' (Gyrus 1998). Two articles also describe a trip to Ilkley Moor under the influence of a modest dose of the psychedelic drug 2C-B (1997b, 1997c) where he visits the cup-and-ring marked Barmishaw and Badger Stones, and perceives the carvings of the stones arranging themselves into regular patterns, and modulating to his voice as he practices overtone singing before them. It

is interesting that an early article by Gyrus in *Chaos International* also mentions the trip to Ilkley moor after seeing *Crash*, but does not describe the experience of seeing a stationary star, but rather that he experienced ‘a lot of fear, but pushed through it and experienced a glorious sunrise as I chanted over a stone, soaking in the light and five minutes of rain that created a beautiful rainbow behind me’ (1997d) – emphasising that a powerful experience certainly occurred on the moor that night, which Gyrus has revisited and re-interpreted over the subsequent fourteen years.

All of these aspects are present in Gyrus’ most significant work associated with Ilkley Moor, *Verbeia: Goddess of Wharfedale* (2000 [1998]). The work describes Gyrus’ research into the goddess Verbeia, who, it has been suggested, is depicted as a woman grasping twin serpents on a Roman altar stone displayed at Ilkley’s All Saints’ Parish Church, and inspired the suggestion of antiquarian William Camden that the sculpture represented ‘the Nymph or Goddess of the Wherf [Wharfe]’ (Camden 1695: 713-714). As well as associating Verbeia’s serpents with the serpentine meandering of the river Wharfe, Gyrus also traces the etymology of her name to a number of verbs describing turning and vortical forces such as whirlpools, which he associates with the movement of Ursa Major around the pole star, and swirling entrances to the otherworld, such as the kelpie-haunted crossing of the Wharf at Strid Gorge (Gyrus 2000 [1998]: 11-13). Toward the end of the work, Gyrus proposes that the Swastika Stone on the edge of Ilkley Moor encodes the seasonal positions of Ursa Major and may also be associated with the vortical nature of Verbeia (:23-25), effectively interpreting his Originary Events at Glastonbury and Ilkley Moor through the landscape of the Moor and the figure of Verbeia.

A commonality between many of the accounts of Ilkley Moor produced by West Yorkshire’s occultural milieu from the late 1970s to early 2000s is the overt presence of the phenomenological and affective, through which experiences of being in the landscape are attributed particular, often deeply personal, significance. Beyond the Originary Events that developed into narratives of Gyrus’ stationary star and Mortimer’s OBOL, other accounts of experiences on the moor take particular note of seemingly mundane details. When writing about the elemental nature of Lovecraft’s Old Ones, Hine writes of straying into the ‘wildness of nature, where even the eyes of a sheep can look weird in the moonlight’ and the feeling that ‘Outside, you don’t need to “call things up” – they’re only a breath away’ (Hine 1997a: 7), while Dave Lee seems to place a particular significance on seeing a dragonfly after consecrating his robe at Spicy Beck (Lee 2017d).

While previous chapters have touched upon enchantment in terms of the discursive narratives of disenchantment and the re-enchantment paradigm, the above accounts also emphasise enchantment in the phenomenological sense. In the context of modern sciences, Jane Bennett has described enchantment in terms of sensing wonder or the uncanny ‘amid the familiar and every day’, and Thurgill has employed this perspective in his humanistic study of the use of landscape by what we may identify as occultural milieus, viz. ghost hunters and Neopagans (Thurgill 2014: 43-44). Thurgill considers this form of phenomenological enchantment to be synonymous with the sense of the sacred, and certainly there is a complex relationship between the historical discourse on the sacrality of nature and landscape and the way in which experiences of the same are appraised by those embedded in occultural perspectives. For example, the sight of a shimmering dragonfly may evoke a sense of wonder for many observers, but it can also point toward the numinous as an opportunity for apophenic connection-making, becoming a meaningful synchronistic event: an augur or a confirmation that a magical intent has been fulfilled (cp. A1.4.9). This form of enchantment could be also described ascriptively, as the act of attributing ‘specialness’ to events, places, and other observed phenomena.

For many members of the milieu under discussion, the experience of such phenomenological enchantment drives the process of seekership. Earth Mysteries, UFOlogy, and Psychic Questing all engaged with Ilkley Moor’s potential to evoke such ‘special’ experiences of wonder and the uncanny as part of a process of constructing knowledge – or, from an emic perspective, *revealing* knowledge or esoteric truths – concerning hidden alignments, shamanic consciousness, earth energies, and so on. Many of the intersecting interests of this milieu may, from an etic perspective, evoke parallels with similar complexes of belief amongst adherents to New Age religiosity, although, as with the chaos magicians of the Z(Cluster), or the magical purists, there was a discursive need for many in this milieu to present a distinct identity from what was viewed as ‘woolly’ New Age thinking. This is well expressed in the introduction to Bennett’s *Circles, Standing Stones and Legendary Rocks of West Yorkshire* (1999 [1994]):

The more information we can have about these old stone circles the better: be it poetry, scholastics, dowsing works or alignments – however my intolerance (*sic*) rarely stretches to incorporate the dewy-eyed blurb of the

New Age fraternity, whose wafflings on megaliths and their coloured healing energies currently stand outside the paradigms of all but the psychotic. (:1)

From this overview of the involvement of West Yorkshire's occultural milieu with Ilkley Moor over a twenty-year period, it is apparent that Hine provides the crucial link between the first wave of chaos magicians (Sherwin, Carroll, Lee) and the burgeoning Earth Mysteries and UFOlogy scene that Bennett was involved with. Bennett can be seen as the central figure in promoting Ilkley Moor as a place of enchantment amongst the milieu, as well as providing a continuity from Hine and chaos magick into the work of Gyrus, which sacralises not only Ilkley Moor, but Wharfedale as a whole through the symbol of the goddess Verbeia.

During the early 2000s I lived near the then-shuttered Sorcerer's Apprentice shop (A2.3.14), which gave me a sense of authenticity: to be living and practicing magic in the same place that was vital to the formation of chaos magick. Ilkley Moor also served a similar purpose – the idea that Ilkley and Wharfedale was the domain of Verbeia emphasised a sense that I was in proximity to the vestiges of *genuine*, historical paganism, complementing my purist appeals to similarly 'genuine, historical' magic discussed in the preceding chapters. However, I was unaware of how intimately the works of Gyrus and Hine were linked, and that my own work on the Moor and in Wharfedale was actually the next iteration of a set of occulturally embedded-practices which had established themselves more than a decade earlier. I will examine how this manifested in my musical work later in this chapter, although this is necessarily preceded by an analysis of the milieu associated with experimental folk music within which my music was produced, performed, and promoted: a globalised, rather than localised milieu, but one also entwined with contemporary occulture and the chaos magickal milieu via its proximity to the milieu surrounding the musical genre of neofolk.

Digital Troubadours and Apoliteic Aristocrats: The Underground Folk Milieu

The preceding analysis of West Yorkshire's occultural milieu helped to outline the localised social and cultural background which my own work – particularly its magical and pagan facets – was informed by and developed upon. Earlier chapters also explored the role of online magical forums (e.g. newsgroups, mailing lists) and their role in developing my identities as both a chaos magician and magical purist (chapter 4). However, online spaces were also a vital part of my later musical development,

allowing me to contact others with similar musical interests and to forge loose links with a globally connected milieu of underground musicians.

The accessibility of broadband Internet in the early 2000s meant that the online sharing of sound files (such as mp3s) became a phenomenon of global concern to the recording industry. While file-sharing platform Napster dominated news headlines due to a high-profile legal case brought against it by the Recording Industry of America (RIAA; see Whelan 2008: 36-37), smaller peer-to-peer file-sharing networks such as Soulseek catered to more niche tastes, and also enabled users to develop identities and status as 'collectors', based on the extensiveness of their collections of shared files (:292). From 2001 Soulseek enabled me to begin collecting hitherto inaccessible recordings of obscure occult, electronic, psychedelic, and experimental music (A2.2.6), and later became an adjunct to my online discussions of underground music on the *Unsung* forum, hosted on the *Head Heritage* website (A2.2.7).

Established in 2003 by pop musician Julian Cope, *Head Heritage* presents itself as a convenient point of entry into the present discussion of underground music. The site presents Julian Cope's three core interests: underground music (especially Krautrock and Japanese rock and roll), megalithic sites, and radical politics, each with its own web forum, respectively titled *Unsung*, *Modern Antiquarian*, and *U-Know!* Although I spent most time on *Unsung*, I would often read the *Modern Antiquarian*, where Gyrus and Paul Bennett (under the *alias* Paulus) also posted. At this time Cope and Gyrus were also close, the latter being described as 'my dear friend the Goddess writer Gyrus' in Cope's *Modern Antiquarian* book (Cope 1998: 54).

Although I would occasionally promote my own music on the *Unsung* forum, I generally used it as a means for discovering obscure music from the past, which I would in turn seek out either on reissues (via Delerium Records), or on Soulseek. To promote my own music – and discover obscure music of the present – I also became a member of the Yahoo mailing list *Routes for War and Travel (RWT)*, established in 2003 by American multi-instrumentalist Glenn Donaldson. *RWT* began as a forum for Donaldson and his immediate underground milieu to promote their work to interested parties, but quickly became a global venue for others to promote and discuss the experimental acoustic music with which the group concerned itself. Donaldson introduced the scope of the mailing list in the following terms:

please join us for updates on the migratory patterns of the pseudoarcana, jewelled antler, haamumaa, root don lonie for cash, wire bridge, pink skulls, lal lal lal, celebrate psi-phenomenon, last visible dog, 267 lattajjaa & apoplexy labels & our friends & extended family. postings will focus on the unlit forests of tones around the world, troop movements & the weather. (Donaldson 2003)

Donaldson and fellow musician Loren Chasse ran a collective and label called Jewelled Antler. Releases on Jewelled Antler were usually hand-produced CDRs, and the bands usually featured either Donaldson or Chasse to some degree. Although these projects ran the gamut of drone (Thuja), modal improvisation (Hala Strana), and psychedelic folk-pop (The Skygreen Leopards), they were commonly united by an aesthetic that made extensive use of field recordings, improvisation, and reverb. In many ways the artists presenting themselves on RWT felt closer to my own aesthetics than those in my immediate local orbit who primarily associated themselves with improvised drone, noise, and jazz-based musics associated with the Termite Club (A2.2.1, A2.3.27-28).

Groups from the Jewelled Antler collective, have often been associated with the descriptor 'New Weird America', a term coined by Wire journalist David Keenan in response to the 2003 Brattleboro Free Folk Festival organized by guitarist Matt Valentine. As Barrett (2014) highlighted, this is a misnomer, since the groups in question were also part of global networks of artists also producing similar material. *RWT* in particular brought together artists who recorded music which often bore some Romantic connection to nature, lyrically and/or aesthetically, while also taking advantage of modern technologies to execute their music (using compact recording devices and digital audio workstations), produce artefacts (using CD burners and desktop printers), and distributed and promoted music, and arranged tours via online *fora*. In this respect, the Free Folk explosion of early 2003 reflects a subset of the wider underground experimental DIY scene, who were also similarly taking advantage of the ease with which releases in small editions, intended for small audiences, could be produced with CDR technology, providing a significant advantage over the time-consuming task of home-dubbing cassette tapes or the cost of having CDs commercially mastered and duplicated.

The aesthetic associated with Free Folk was usually lo-fi, often capturing spontaneous improvised performances in natural or unusual environments, inclusive

of any interruptions or flaws in performance. Jewelled Antler's description of *We Walk the Young Earth* by The Blithe Sons (Chasse and Donaldson) describes the Free Folk ethos succinctly, through the confluence of wilderness (real and imagined), improvised music, the language of religious affect, and the situation of the place itself as in some way 'special':

Compiled from performances that took place under a creek bridge in San Gregorio and inside WWII-era bunkers on sea cliffs in the Marin Headlands, California, The Blithe Sons conjure an *imaginary wilderness through the sounds made within mysterious locales* [...] Chasse and Donaldson use acoustic guitar, harps, bells, harmonium, toy-amplifiers, gongs submerged in a creek, cymbals, battery-powered keyboards, vocals, banjo, birds, pipes, bell-blocks, drums, branches and *the location itself as an instrument, to weave these minimalist hymns*. (The Blithe Sons 2003, emphasis added)

The lo-fi aesthetic has commonly been associated with the discursive construction of 'authenticity': the attribution of authenticity (see Moore 2002) here serving to contrast lo-fi music with the technologically polished sounds of the mainstream music industry (e.g. Harper 2014: 7, 13, 45). In reality this discursive opposition is complicated: punk empowered a DIY movement, but also spawned major label successes; the indie and grunge scenes of the 90s also yielded global success with groups like Nirvana (: 274) similarly taking the lo-fi aesthetic mainstream. Coterminous with the construction of Free Folk was *Freak Folk*: developing from a revival of interest in the psychedelic folk music of the 1960s, and exemplified by the singer-songwriter Devendra Banhart, whose early albums are swathed in lo-fi hiss, but whose accessible songs, evoking Marc Bolan's early acoustic duo Tyrannosaurus Rex, found mainstream and major label acceptance.

Harper has also described lo-fi as a form of Primitivist aesthetic, and therefore a potential strand of Romanticism (: 380). This observation complements many of the themes found in the psychedelic folk music of the late 60s and early 70s that influenced the Free/Freak folk musicians (e.g. Incredible String Band, Vashti Bunyan, The Third Ear Band). Themes such as mythology, nostalgia, and a sense of the pastoral suggest both Free/Freak and psychedelic folk as forms of music that romanticise an enchanted, pre-Industrial age, while also taking advantage of modern technologies (e.g. sound recording media, effects pedals) and countercultural tropes (psychedelia, the Orientalist influence of improvised modal and drone musics).

In this respect the 'folk' with which Free and psychedelic folk are largely concerned pertains to the affective space conjured by the sounds of acoustic instruments and their association with ideals of a Romantic, pastoral existence – this is in contrast to the historical concerns of folk music as a cultural form that reflects a diversity of popular music-making through mediums such as broadsheet ballads, which dramatised daily life or newsworthy and historical events, music hall songs, or music associated with community rituals or the reconstructions thereof (e.g. morris dancing). In particular the emphasis of much Free folk music on elements of drone and spacious improvisation places it in an ethos and affective space which is closer to the forms of acoustic music that developed from the British post-industrial music scene, which mixed acoustic music with drones and experimental approaches suggesting a ritualistic, and often explicitly occult, aesthetic. The most salient example would be the work of David Tibet under the alias Current 93, whose work in the early 80s is typified by difficult, ritualistic experimental work (such as 1984's *Dogs Blood Rising*), before moving into folk-inspired territory with *Imperium* (1987, largely built around re-appropriations of the music of Celtic harpist Alan Stivell), and *Earth Covers Earth* (1988, whose cover is a conscious tribute to Incredible String Band's *The Hangman's Beautiful Daughter*).

Tibet was a prominent figure in the 1980s and 1990s post-industrial milieu, as a friend and collaborator with Coil (who had, along with Tibet been members of Psychic TV), as well as with Douglas Pearce (recording as Death in June) and Tony Wakeford (recording as Sol Invictus), both of whom had previously performed as the radical-leftwing punk band Crisis (Webb 2007: 71-75). Current 93, Death in June, and Sol Invictus became closely associated with the term 'neofolk', which describes a post-industrial approach to acoustically-orientated music, usually engaged with 'dark' themes, and we will see how neofolk came to be situated alongside Free/Freak and psychedelic folk as part of the construction of 'wyrd folk' in the mid-2000s.

Amongst the dark themes presented in neofolk, references to fascism are prominent. Death in June in particular became notorious for its militaristic aesthetic and use of the Waffen SS Death's Head symbol as its band logo, and Douglas Pearce remains wary of discussing any political meaning behind the group's music, stating that 'Those who understand do and those who don't won't!' (Webb: 80). While much of Death in June's political content is ambiguously veiled in layers of symbolism, early Sol Invictus explicitly presented an Evolan Traditionalist perspective on its first

release, *Against the Modern World* (1987), as did Wakeford's earlier musical project, Above the Ruins, with Ian Read, who would later become head of the IOT and editor of *Chaos International*. The lyrics of Sol Invictus frequently convey a pan-European outlook similar to the concerns of the European New Right (Bland 2019: 303-8) – an attitude also shared by Death in June in interviews (Bland 2019: 300) if not occasionally lyrically implied.

While Webb (2007: 60-109) has analysed the milieu surrounding Death in June and Sol Invictus during the 80s and 90s, he speaks in general terms about the connection between these groups and esotericism: a term that serves Webb as a catch-all for an interest in paganism, folklore, and magic without much bearing on the wider connections that an occulturally-focused examination of these milieus reveal. It is worth noting that Current 93, Coil, and Sol Invictus not only produced musical artefacts that can be considered contributions to the wider occulture of the period, but were also closely involved with the occultural milieus of the 80s and 90s as practitioners, or seekers, themselves. Coil, for example, received brief, but positive reviews in *The Lamp of Thoth* (Bray 1984: 22) and *Chaos International* (French 1986), and Coil's John Balance was also an honorary member of the Esoteric Order of Dagon, a Lovecraftian chaos magick group based in Leeds, led by Peter Smith, who also drew the logo for Coil's record label, Threshold House (Legard 2015b). Early in his music career as a member of TOPY, Current 93's David Tibet also completed probationer degree in Kenneth Grant's Typhonian OTO and collected and promoted Crowley's magical practices and literature extensively during the 1980s (Legard 2021b).

Neofolk also received regular coverage in *Chaos International*, peaking during the 1990s under the editorship of Ian Read, then-leader of the British section of the IOT and former member of Current 93, Death in June, and Sol Invictus, as well as frontman of his own neofolk project Fire + Ice from 1992 onwards (e.g. Read 1990: 47-48, 1992: 47-48, 1994b: 47). The movement of many of these artists away from post-punk and industrial music, and toward folk and pastoral themes can be viewed as a musical reflection of their seekership interests. David Tibet, for example, moves away from the influence of Crowley and Kenneth Grant and toward English folk music and the whimsy of Victorian artist Louis Wain, which – by way of an LSD vision of Noddy being crucified in the sky above London – is used to reflect the development of an intensely personal Gnostic theology. Both Wakeford and Read were involved in the National Front (Bland: 284) before developing interests in right-

wing, European paganism, expressed musically through the work of Sol Invictus and Fire + Ice respectively. Coil moved away from confrontationally homoerotic industrial music focused on Grant, surrealism, William S. Burroughs, Pasolini and Charles Manson, to more spacious ambient 'moon musick' coinciding with the pair's relocation to Weston-Super-Mare, Balance developing an interest in Earth Mysteries, the work of Julian Cope, and self-identifying as part of William Blake's visionary British mystical tradition (Everall 1995a, 1995b: 15; Keenan 1998). As established in discussions of magical identities in chapter 4, such apparent *volte-faces* are not an unusual pattern of seekership, in which practices and perspectives often rooted in an ambivalent relationship to modernity are replaced with a more explicitly traditionalistic or perennial ones – and *vice-versa*.

Amongst those involved in the UK's musical underground, David Tibet was an ardent promoter of both traditional and psychedelic English folk, bringing the music of Shirley and Dolly Collins, the Incredible String Band, and the disturbing progressive folk of Comus to the attention of neofolk and post-industrial music listeners during the 90s. During the early 2000s, an online and globally connected milieu of listeners and musicians exploring similar fringes of folk music also developed around online spaces such as *Head Heritage* and Soulseek. The most prominent codification of this wave of interest in fringe folk music was the website *The Unbroken Circle*, maintained between 2002 and 2006 by Mark Coyle, which brought together reviews and features concerning psychedelic, neo-, and Free/Freak folk under the umbrella 'wyrd folk': a term coined by Timothy Renner of 1990s American psychedelic folk group Stone Breath (Coyle n.d.a), who had also published artwork in *Chaos International* (No. 20: 42).

Chiefly focused on UK and North American artists, Coyle's website served to establish an awareness of obscure vintage folk music as well as on new fringe and experimental styles, with features on the Jewelled Antler collective and associated acts such as the Finnish groups Uton, Avaruus, and Kemialisest Ysavat, and also British wyrd folk: highlighting Sharron Kraus, Richard Moul, the Deserted Village/United Bible Studies collective, my own music, and also that of my occasional collaborator Andy Sharp (English Heretic). Collaborators with Sol Invictus, such as Andrew King and Matt Howden were also highlighted in Coyle's 'British Wyrd Folk' feature.

Coyle formed his own web-label, Woven Wheat Whispers, to distribute new recordings by the artists covered on his site, and also collaborated with the post-industrial/neofolk label Cold Spring Records to curate a compilation of contemporary *wyrd* folk music titled *John Barleycorn Reborn* (2007), featuring contributions by myself, English Heretic, Sol Invictus (and related artists and projects The Triple Tree, Sieben, Andrew King), Far Black Furlong (a group led by Richard Moul), and other artists associated with the UK's 'wyrd folk' scene such as Sharron Kraus, Mary Jane, Circulus, and the Kitchen Cynics.

Shekhovtsov has associated many of the artists published and distributed by Cold Spring Records with what he describes as an *apoliteic* musical milieu (Shekhovtsov 2009). Shekhovtsov uses the term *apoliteia* to describe a strategy for the dissemination of fascist currents through culture, and the term is borrowed from Julius Evola's exhortation that a true 'aristocrat of the soul' should be disinterested and detached from the decadence of modern politics, society, and their values (:437-8; Bland 2019: 153-4). Shekhovtsov concentrates his analysis on the works of Von Thronstahl and H.E.R.R. (*alias* Heiliger Europa! Römisches Reich), the latter group being a neofolk project led by Troy Southgate (former member of the National Front, and head of the National Anarchist Movement). The presence of Southgate on Cold Spring Records between 2004-2009, alongside Death in June, Von Thronstahl, and other neofolk and martial industrial groups sparked concern amongst some musicians featured on *John Barleycorn Reborn*, as well as folk music listeners unacquainted with the post-industrial subculture but concerned about the appropriation of British folk music by the far right (Spracklen 2015: 169). A fear which was potentially not unfounded, given that the decision of Southgate, who has historically identified with the metapolitical fascism of Aleksandr Dugin, to enter the neofolk scene does seem to have been driven by entryist motivations, being preceded with his promotion of neofolk music through reviews on his website, *Synthesis*, during the early 2000s, which were also published alongside translations of Dugin's work (Legard 2021c). Southgate also gave significant coverage to Cold Spring releases in his *New Imperium* journal (co-edited with Jonathan Bowden, subtitled 'The Metaphysical Journal of the New Right', 2005-2008).

As curator of the *Unbroken Circle*, Coyle's position on the discourses of neofolk is somewhat ambiguous. An early statement entitled 'Folk Music for Everyone' describes neofolk as:

a natural off shoot of the folk music style since both genres are built on principles that are against commercialization [and] quite often has its basis in young people speaking out against the establishment. (Coyle 2002)

Although often associated with left-wing discourse, anti-capitalist and anti-establishment sentiment also has an entangled history with the development of early fascisms (e.g. Paxton 2005: 10-11), as well as being an element of the discourse of the Nouvelle Droite/European New Right and Duginism (usually combined with anti-Americanism, e.g. Bland 2019: 144, 303-4). Later, Coyle made a more explicit statement on neofolk, stating that the genre is:

[a]n acquired taste for some and disturbing for others, it is essential to explore at some point but can be impenetrable and talking about issues the delicate[,] such as symbolic glory in militarism[,] may feel uncomfortable with. I have no interest in many of these issues and the site does not in any way promote or tolerate violence implied, symbolic or actual. The music is taken here on a case by case basis. (Coyle 2006)

Coyle's statement indicates that overtly militaristic neofolk of Death in June's ilk was not welcome on the site. Since the turn of the millennium the lyrical content of Sol Invictus' had begun moving away from explicit New Right Europeanism and Evolan rhetoric, and toward more overt English folk inspirations, with an occasional sense of hazy nostalgia for 'old Europe' and a continuing theme of pagan-centred anti-Christianity (as on the 2000 album *The Hill of Crosses*) – although ambiguities around the group's political orientations continued to arise, as when Sol Invictus collaborator Andrew King recorded an explicitly racist version of 'Wotan Rains on a Plutocrat Parade' by David E. Williams in 2007 (Who Makes the Nazis? 2011) and made statements against 'relativism, multiculturalism, rights-issues and cosmopolitanism' in the Radical Traditionalist journal *Tyr*, edited by Michael Moynihan (ibid.).

The proximity of neofolk to the UK's chaos magick milieu via Ian Read also highlights right-wing and *apoliteic* discourses surrounding the IOT which are similar to those found in neofolk. For example, Peter Carroll, former head of the IOT, demonstrated some aspects of a fairly traditional political right-wing orientation. Under the *alias* Alan Wicca, Carroll wrote an article against fascism (construed here as totalising, mass movements evoking the spirit of the Third Reich, rather than metapolitical

cultural movements), suggesting that the remedy for the problem of 'fascistic occultism' is 'a species of that robustly individualistic right-wing libertarianism that one might expect anyone who professes himself to be a magician to espouse' – and it is this which will remedy the 'creeping socialism that has rotted our proletariat and our industry and saddled us with the idiocies of "positive discrimination"' (Carroll 1994: 12). This anti-socialist, pro-neoliberal attitude is laid bare in 'Sorcerers Against Socialism' by Stokastikos (also an *alias* for Carroll), in which he ascribes the success of the Poll Tax riots to the IOT's magical workings: thus 'we [the IOT] ensured the continuation of Tory government, after Margaret's one silly error in an otherwise faultless career' (Carroll 1996: 26). Like Douglas Pearce and Tony Wakeford, Carroll opposed the European Union, becoming a treasurer for UKIP. Although, unlike Pearce and Wakeford, Carroll was seemingly unaware of the discourses of the New Right, although he similarly perceives the EU as a malign, globalising, hegemonic and dictatorial structure, which he describes as 'synarchic totalitarianism' (Carroll 2005: 11).

The context behind Carroll's article against 'fascist' occultism was a schism within the IOT concerning a sub-group led by the Austrian magician Frater U.D. (Ralph Tegtmeier), which was developing a form of magical martial arts called Ice Magick (Otto 2019: 779-792). Carroll described Frater U.D.'s group as an 'ultra right-wing mind control cult' (ZD96.50), while Frater U.D. later described these accusations as stemming from 'his [Carroll's] UK head honcho Ian Read teaming up with us at the time: Ian's notorious self-proclaimed right wing ideology had to be made fit into the overall picture somehow' (ZD00.076).

Read's 'notorious right-wing ideology' seems to follow the pattern of *apoliteia*, as might be expected from a magician also embedded in the neofolk scene. In the same issue in which Carroll's above article appeared, Read's editorial takes a detached, elitist, *apoliteic* view to contemporary world events, both describing pacifists as 'misguided fools', while taking the perspective that 'yer average war is fought for the same daft reasons as a local pub fight or a husband and wifey plate-throwing session' and asking 'why are humans such asses?' (Read 1994a: 1). From Read's perspective, the magician stands beyond the poles of conventional politics, and adopting an apolitical position is claimed to be itself an esoteric perspective found in the 'sacred inbetweenness', 'The Neither/Neither of A.O.S. [Austin Osman Spare]; The Paradox of Óðinn; and other out of the way places' (ibid.).

While the controversial nature of neofolk continues to generate academic analyses as well as emic polemics and apologias, Shekhotsov's theory of the *apoliteic* or metapolitical nature of the music – in which its lyrical and political ambiguity enables fascist forms of thought to be culturally disseminated – is highly insightful, for while many listeners do not necessarily share the same political beliefs (and may be quite oblivious to them in the case of a group such as Sol Invictus), far right actors are nevertheless well aware of the reactionary subtexts and themes often invoked by the genre (see Bland 2019: 311 for examples).

In my case I fell into the former and broader of these two camps: I listened to Sol Invictus and sang along to songs like 'The Death of the West' without considering too deeply their metapolitical context. I listened to Death in June, and even covered their song 'Runes and Men' live twice in 2004, substituting the line 'I drink a German wine' with 'I quaff an English ale' in the naïve belief that this would distance the song from a Germanic ethos so suggestive of fascism (A2.7.2).

I would regularly send out review copies of my music to a variety of underground music blogs and newsletters, such as Frans de Waard's *VitalOnline*, Mats Gustafsson's *Broken Face*, and Brad Rose's *Foxy Digitalis* – the last of which became a key online source for reviews and interviews relating to Free Folk music. These sites did not present (meta)political discourses, and predominantly remained apolitical in their presentation. Other sites which reviewed my music, however, can be seen as shading into the apoliteic: *Compulsion Online*, edited by Tony Dickie, was the online version of the 1990s industrial magazine *Compulsion*, which positively covered Death in June, Sol Invictus, and so on. Although *Compulsion* cannot be linked to any far-right activism or sustained ideological editorial bias, the same cannot be said of *Flux Europa*, a website which positively reviewed my 2003 recording *Lords of the Green Grass*. Flux Europa, was edited by Richard 'Rik' Lawson, an acquaintance of both Wakeford and Southgate, who similarly had prior involvement in the National Front (Fringeli 2011). FluxEuropa was also preceded by Islands of the North Atlantic (IONA), a New Right metapolitical cultural project with Wakeford (Searchlight 1997; Bland 2019: 289).

Although the types of music and milieus grouped under the heading Wyrð Folk (e.g. Psychedelic Folk, Neo Folk, and Free Folk) became marked influences on my own music, I generally focused my social engagement on the Free Folk milieu: although I was not fully aware of the discursive implications underlying many neofolk artists'

work, I still felt uneasy becoming *too* involved. I primarily corresponded with Gavin Prior, a member of a group of Irish experimental folk musicians identifying themselves as the Deserted Village collective, and often performing as United Bible Studies. The Deserted Village label also released my recording *The Hieroglyphic Mountain* in 2004. I was later contacted by the composer and painter Richard Moulton, who had become a collaborator with United Bible Studies, and was enthusiastic about my music – although after discovering that Moulton had previously been involved in the Order of Nine Angles (ONA), a satanic group embedded in fascist ideologies, I was similarly hesitant to engage in a collaboration with him (A2.11.9) – although I did release his music as Far Black Furlong on a compilation called *Reynardine: The Visits of Mister Fox* (2007). In 2018 an article in the online music magazine *The Quietus* suggested that Moulton had continued an association with the ONA: contributing in 2009 to the formulation of an ONA subculture known as the Dreccian Way, which was created in imitation violent skinhead street gangs (Miller 2018). Moulton had also collaborated with David Tibet (on the unreleased track *Mockingbird* [2010]) and Tony Wakeford's Orchestra Noir project. He may potentially also have moved in the same circles as Wakeford (and Richard Lawson) during the late 1990s, describing in his autobiography a period of membership with the National Socialist Movement, whose leader, Tony Williams also promoted Wakeford's Above the Ruins and early Sol Invictus projects (Home 2008; Williams is likely the 'millionaire' mentioned in Moulton's autobiographical narrative [Moulton 2011: 20]; see also Searchlight 1998: 7, 9, Goodrick-Clarke 2002: 50)).

I was also contacted by Martin Locker, who asked if I would be interested in sending some CDs to a distributor of Traditionalist books and music (A2.11.9). This distributor was Integral Tradition Publishing (ITP), whose musical offering was purely neofolk (Integral Tradition Publishing 2010). ITP would later become Arktos Media (and Locker one of their editors in 2015 [Valencia-Garcia 2018:329]). Arktos would become closely associated with the rise in visibility of the European and American New Right in the mid 2010s (Valencia-Garcia 2018). Although I was at that time unacquainted with the discourses of Evola and Traditionalism, I once again felt uneasy about becoming involved and let the offer lapse.

In this section it has been considered important to not only describe the online cultures which facilitated the construction of 'Wyrld Folk', but also to highlight the intersecting discourses and milieu of neofolk music at some length. This highlights the overlap between the UK's neofolk movement and the chaos magick milieu

discussed in the previous section, and also serves to outline the ambivalent and contested terrain in which underground and folk-related musics often find themselves situated. While many artists and listeners navigating this ambiguous terrain may consider themselves genuinely apolitical, rather than New Right, fascist, or Traditionalist, it also highlights how the apoliteic takes advantage of the naïvely apolitical: exposing listeners, who would not normally seek out music with far-right themes to discourses aligned with contemporary fascisms. My encounters with *Flux Europa* and Integral Tradition Publishing also highlight the interest that the far-right cultural project has in promoting work that they identify as having aesthetic or philosophical sympathies with their own. Parallels may also be drawn here to black metal, which is also both thoroughly occultural and often a site for the performance of elitist, far-right, and apoliteic discourses: although as with neofolk, many listeners may not necessarily share the perspectives of the music they consume, the music may nonetheless be instrumentalised to serve *apoliteic* ends (Spracklen 2015: 164-7; see also Coogan 1998; Goodrick-Clarke 2002: 71, 203-212; Nilan 2021:15-21).

Grotto Grove and Shrine: Framing Knowledge, Tradition, and Revelation through Wyrđ Folk Discourse

While the presentation of discursive identities has been a recurrent theme, thus far many of these discussions have been focused on expressions of these identities through written texts: from early alt.magick and Z(Cluster) postings, to later artefacts such as *Psychogeographia Ruralis*, *Abitat*, and the *Mirror of Elicona*. We have examined some musical artefacts, particularly my earlier forms of ritual and noise music production, which lay the foundations for a more formal path of practice from 2001. However, with the exception of *The Pyrognomic Glass*, we have not examined the breadth of the musical artefacts that the Xenis Emputae Travelling Band (XETB) project produced between 2001 and 2013, and their context in the musical and occultural spaces explored above.

The analysis of *The Pyrognomic Glass* in the prior chapter focused on emic and phenomenological perspectives, using Wienel's affective-representative approach to examine my own imaginative and creative responses to a musical surface as part of a path of musical/esoteric practice. The analyses in this section, however, are materially- and discursively-focused: we will examine the presentation of the albums themselves from an etic perspective, drawing attention to the way in which they

frame or present subcultural and occultural discourse through their visual and musical constitution.

Between 2001 XETB – and its closely-related project The Pneumatic Consort – produced twenty recordings on CDr, CD, vinyl, and tape, half of which were self-released through my Larkfall Recordings imprint. The remaining music was released through contacts made via Wyrð Folk and underground music networks. Although the presentation of the albums spans a range of visual styles, they all make use of landscape or naturalistic imagery in some way (see figure 19, below). Some of these are explicit presentations of photographic landscapes (e.g. *Full Moon June* [2001], the split release with The North Sea [2005], or *The Crooked Pool* [2008]), while others engage with drawing, painting, or image manipulation (e.g. the trees and black suns on *Under a Soular Moon* [2001], the collaged landscape on *The Hieroglyphic Mountain* [2004], the floral drawing on *Goat Willow* [2005] by Vanessa Rosetto, or the image from the alchemical *Mutus Liber* on *Grotto Grove and Shrine* [2007]). Even when naturalistic imagery is not explicitly presented on the front cover, as on *The Pyrognomic Glass* or *Toadsman's Bell* (both 2005), the back covers or interiors invariably present landscapes illuminated by solar glares (see figures 11 and 20).

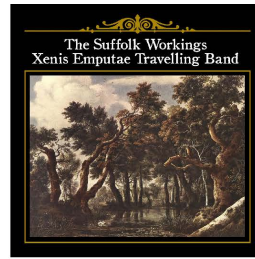
Taken collectively, the visual elements of these albums convey a sense of the pre-modern and the occult: affective spaces often associated with the discourses of Romanticism and Traditionalism. Aesthetically they can be considered proximate to the covers of the albums produced during the second folk revival of the late 60s and early 70s, or even in a similar vein to the English Black Metal bands described by Lucas (2010) where the use rural of imagery (woodland, moorland, rocks, stone circles) presents nostalgia for pre-industrial society, and suggests a connection between the artist and the historic environment, which I summed up in an interview with Mark Coyle, stating that 'The past is very important - the music is has a *backward looking heart*' (Legard 2005a, italics for emphasis).



Full Moon June (2001)
Larkfall Recordings



Under a Soular Moon (2001)
TM-Industries



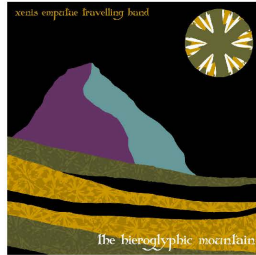
The Suffolk Workings (2002)
Larkfall Recordings



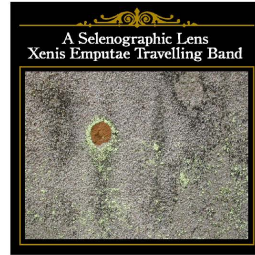
New Etheric Muse (2003)
Larkfall Recordings



Lords of the Green Grass (2003)
Queasy Listening



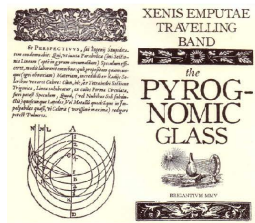
The Hieroglyphic Mountain (2004)
Deserted Village



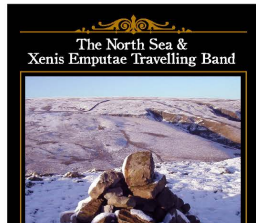
A Selenographic Lens (2004)
Larkfall Recordings



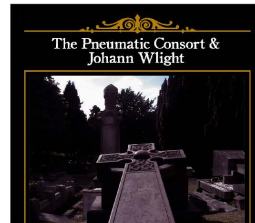
Toadsman's Bell (2005)
Digitalis Industries



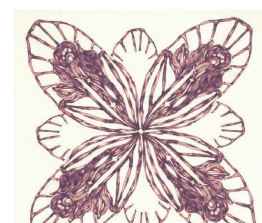
The Pyrognomic Glass (2005)
Memoirs of an Aesthete



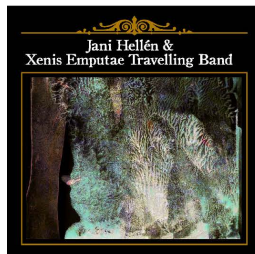
with The North Sea (2005)
Larkfall Recordings



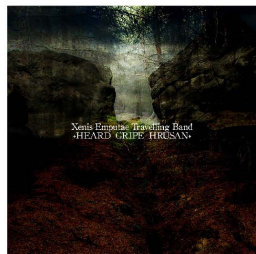
with Johann Wlight (2005)
Larkfall Recordings



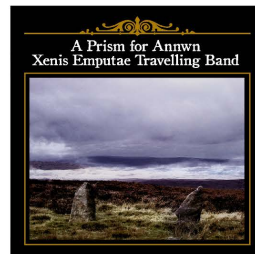
Goatwillow (2005)
Barl Fire Recordings



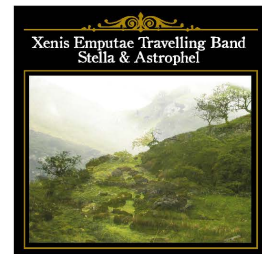
with Jani Hellén (2006)
Larkfall Recordings



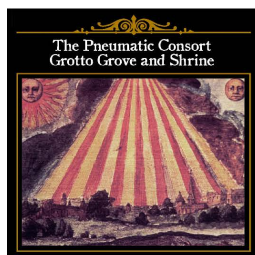
Heard Gripe Hrusan (2006)
23 Productions



A Prism for Annwn (2006)
Larkfall Recordings



Stella & Astrophel (2006)
Larkfall Recordings



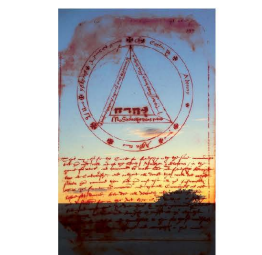
Grotto Grove and Shrine (2007)
Larkfall Recordings



Gamaaea (2007) (5 cover choices)
Beyond Repair



The Crooked Pool (2008)
Ikuisuus



Three Spirits (2013)
Brave Mysteries

Figure 19. Titles and covers of all albums produced by XETB and The Pneumatic Consort, 2001-2013 (author's work).

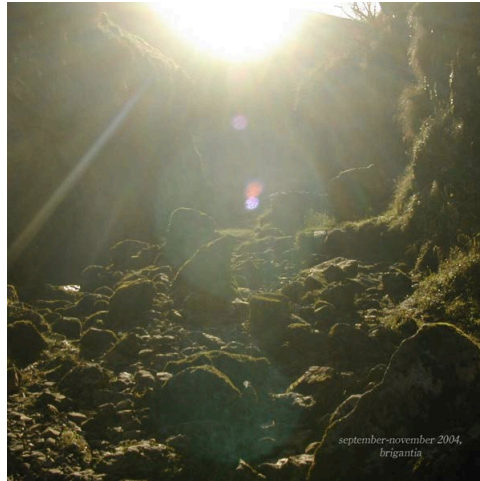
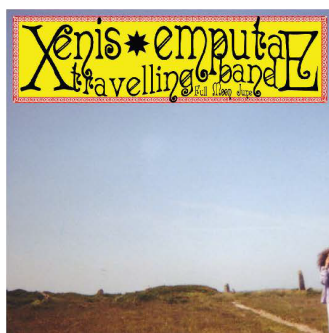
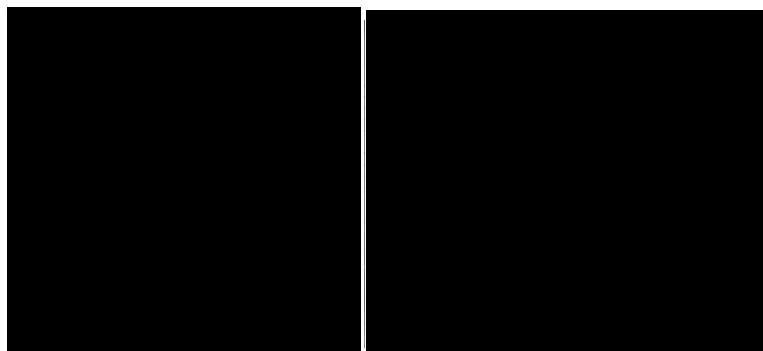


Figure 20. Interior cover of *Toadsman's Bell* (2005, author's work).

Beyond the more obvious references to natural and historical landscapes, magic, and alchemy, other 'backward looking' allusions are often present. The first two albums do not so easily fit with the aesthetics of the others, but do reflect some of the formative influences on the musical sensibilities of the project. The cover for the first, *Full Moon June*, was in imitation of the typography on an album by the Japanese psychedelic band Acid Mothers Temple, who themselves often drew inspiration from the countercultural music and aesthetics of the 1960s and 70s (notably Gong), and presented themselves in publicity pictures using aesthetics that suggested they were members of as a sprawling rural commune or Aum Shinrikyo-esque cult, as well as evoking the cover of Incredible String Band's *The Hangman's Beautiful Daughter* (1968) (or Current 93's *Earth Covers Earth* [1992]).



Full Moon June (2001)
Larkfall Recordings



Acid Mothers Temple & the Melting Paraiso UFO (1997)
PSF Records [front and reverse of CD case illustrated]

Figure 21. Visual references for *Full Moon June* (2001, author's work; artwork from PSF Records redacted).

The second album, *Under a Soular Moon*, visually alludes to the work of Coil. I had mentioned my enjoyment of their music to the graphic designer, Sean Keeble, who

created the cover, and had sent Sean a digital drawing of a black sun (the symbol, in this instance, of the alchemical process of Nigredo [A2.2.12]) between two bare trees. Sean processed this artwork into a kaleidoscopic image reminiscent of the digital artworks produced by Coil's Peter Christopherson:



Figure 22. *Visual references for Under a Soular Moon (2001, author's work; artwork by Threshold House and Eskaton redacted).*

An allusion to Coil is also evident in the sleeve note for *Full Moon June*, which describes one location that the album was recorded at as 'Temple House' – a grandiose name for my own home, and also an allusion to Coil's Threshold House.

The artwork on my later Larkfall Recordings releases would reference the graphic design of an album called *Pastime with Good Company*, by the Druids, released on the Argo label in 1972: a suggestion that, although the music I was producing was not conventional folk, it was influenced by a deep knowledge of the obscure corners of the 1960s and 1970s folk revival, therefore imparting to me some measure of subcultural capital.

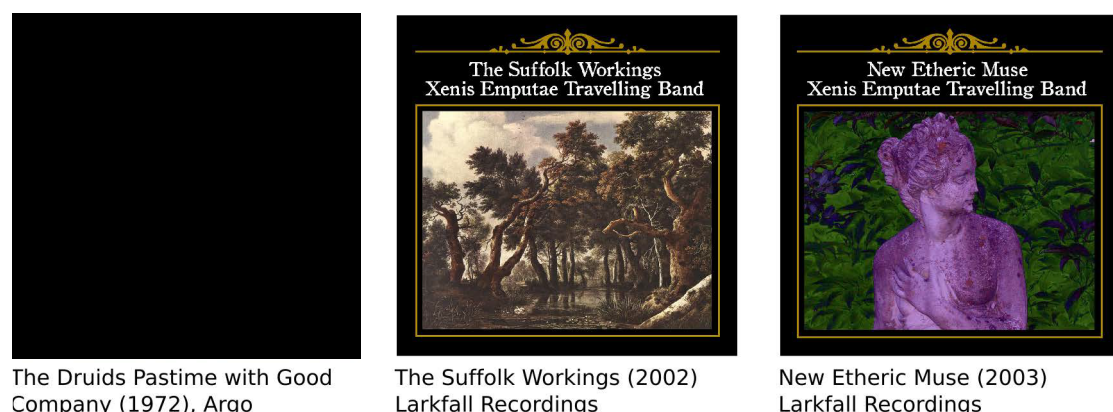


Figure 23. *Visual reference for albums published on the Larkfall imprint (author's work; artwork by Argo Records redacted).*

Although my own narratives emphasised the genesis of XETB in the Cornish countryside, it was the Yorkshire countryside – particularly Wharfedale – which would serve as the dominant backdrop for my esoteric and musical practices. Being based in Leeds between 2001 and 2013, with a brief break in Harrogate during my MA studies (2004-2005), Wharfedale, via the proximity of Ilkley Moor, presented itself as the most easily accessible ‘wild place’ to explore: and one which I also saw as enchanted and connected to an ancient pagan past, owing to my discovery of Gyrus’ work on Verbeia as goddess of the Wharfe (A2.2.7). I had also connected to the moor Leeds and chaos magick previously, when reading Phil Hine’s *Aspects of Evocation* (1998), which reprinted his *Chaos International* essay on the evocation of Yog-Sothoth.

Recorded in late 2001, *Under a Soular Moon* illustrates the ways in which the esoteric or magical aspects of my seekership were reflected in my publicly released music. As mentioned in chapter 5, both *Full Moon June* and *Under a Soular Moon* contain allusions to the lingering influence of Lovecraft. Having read Hine’s *Pseudonomicon* (A1.3.12), I also associated the Lovecraftian deities with natural phenomena, particularly the influence of the moon, and Lovecraft’s mythos provided a shorthand for an aesthetic of ‘dark paganism’. Despite the psychedelic front cover, the interior of *Full Moon June* hints at darker interests with the words ‘Gorgo Mormo, Thousand-Faced Moon’ printed across it – words which are also whispered at the end of *Under a Soular Moon*’s ‘Black Moon Mother’. These words were used in Lovecraft’s *The Horror at Red Hook* (1927) and are attributed to a sect of Yezidi cultists who summon a demonic form they identify as Lilith. I had associated this invocation with Lovecraft’s Shub-Niggurath, alluded to as ‘The Black Goat of the Woods with a Thousand Young’ in *The Thing on the Doorstep* (1937). The discordant flutes on the same track were also intended to suggest the ‘thin monotonous piping of a demoniac flute held in nameless paws’ associated with Lovecraft’s god of Ultimate Chaos, Azathoth in *The Haunter of the Dark* (1936). Like both Hine, Grant, and the chaos magicians studied by Woodman (2003), the position was not necessarily one of revulsion toward the ‘other’ represented by Lovecraft’s deities, but an identification with the natural, elemental forces which they represented.

However, these are the last overt expressions of Lovecraftian influence in my music, and *Under a Soular Moon* hints at what would become the dominant theme of an enchanted perspective on the Wharfedale landscape and the construction of knowledge and experience through encounters with the *genii locorum*, in which

appeals to tradition (through references to folkloric and early modern sources) eclipsed any lingering nostalgia for Lovecraftian magic or the affective and imaginative spaces evoked by Lovecraft's work. *Under a Soular Moon* has a slower, darker feeling than *Full Moon June*, the latter of which I had described as 'represent[ing] the project in its newborn "What the heck's happening?!" stage!' (Legard 2004). Whereas *Full Moon June* attempted to present something of the Orinary Event at Men-an-Tol through the aesthetics of psychedelic music (such as Acid Mother's Temple and Gong), *Under a Soular Moon* presents the experience subsumed into my esoteric practices, and the music-making process itself undergoing the process of development into a path of practice.

With regard to the abovementioned presence of the Wharfedale landscape in *Under a Soular Moon*, the album presented some of my first recordings from Ilkley Moor – although the use of a low-quality condenser microphone usually placed very close to the bodies of the instruments (in effect acting more like an instrumental pickup) meant that little of the actual environment was captured – although 'The Moon Bog' features muffled and slowed-down recordings from Backstone Beck. One track whose title, 'Verbeia', is an explicit reference to the enchantment I had found in the Ilkley and Wharfedale landscape uses processed tin whistle and vocals to attempt to produce an uncanny, ritual atmosphere. Finally the track 'Terraetheric Gnosis' suggests the direction in which my path of practice was developing (e.g. 'Ether Folk'), using the track title to suggest the reception of spiritual knowledge (e.g. gnosis) through the psychic medium surrounding the earth (e.g. terra-etheric) – hinting at the potential for discourses of secrecy and revelation within the presentation of the music as it became progressively more associated with ideas surrounding channelled inspiration from the *genii locorum*: a form of landscape-orientated seekership which may suggest parallels with Psychic Questing – although I avoided attempting to develop lengthy narratives or 'quests' from my experiences, instead simply positioning the music as a record of my own experience.

The Leeds/West Yorkshire occultural milieu in whose enchanted footsteps I followed was, of course, not the first group of urbanites to also explore Wharfedale in search of links to the past. In the late 1960s folk musician Bob Pegg carried out postgraduate research at Leeds University, which involved collecting songs in the area (Spracklen 2022) prior to the formation his folk-rock band Mr. Fox. I was well aware of both Mr. Fox and Pegg's connection to Wharfedale, and mentioned one of Mr. Fox's songs in connection to the name of my record label, Larkfall:

The name comes from a few places - I was thinking of Flora Thompson's "Lark Rise to Candleford" and the May Day Song performed in Padstow [as recorded by Mr. Fox], which has the lyric "Up flies the kite and down falls the lark". There's also Robert Graves' assertion that the Lark flies up to worship the sun, which is an image I really like. (Legard 2004)

With the exception of *The Suffolk Workings* (2002), the split release with Jani Hellén (2006), and *Three Spirits* (2013), the landscapes of Ilkley, Wharfedale and North Yorkshire are present in some form on all my other albums between 2001 and 2008. The preceding chapter touched imaginative engagements with the landscapes of Ilkley Moor and Troller's Gill (in Wharfedale) on one of these albums, *The Pyrognomic Glass* (2005/2009) – in which the narratives of spiritual encounters with Abital and Rorasa, which were situated in these areas. However, these landscapes are also explicitly represented on the other releases through the use of field recordings, track titles, and – most immediately - photography.

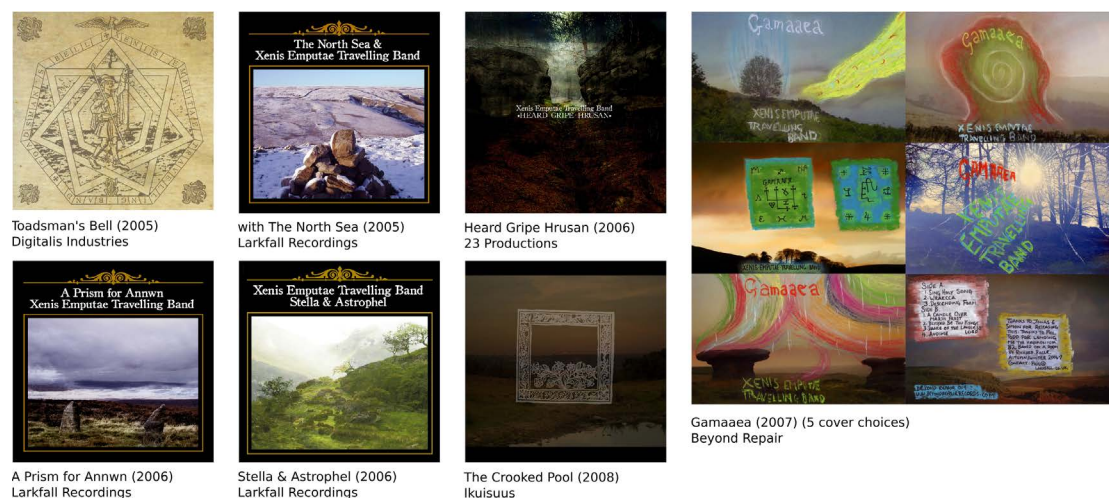


Figure 24. Landscape imagery used on Xenis Emputae Travelling Band albums (author's work).

With the exception of the split release with the North Sea, depicting a snowy cairn on the edge of a valley near Appletreewick, the photography presented is usually highly manipulated in some way. *Toadsman's Bell* (2005) features Troller's Gill on the inside cover (figure 20), as well as a high-contrast photograph taken in the valley adjacent to the gill (figure 24). The hawthorn tree which had captured my imagination when visiting the area as a child (A1.1.10) is also placed in the apex of the heptagram on the cover, which is an element borrowed from the *Sigillum Dei* – a

symbol synonymous with John Dee's Enochian magic. *Heard Gripe Hrusan* (2006), *A Prism for Annwn* (2006), and *Stella & Astrophel* (2006), all present images composed of overlaid photographs in the style of the 'psychegeographic photography' described in the prior chapter, presenting a complex, 'mantic' surface that reflected 'the internal counterpart of a landscape [...] the contemplation of which could facilitate engagement with the psychegeographic landscape' (Legard 2007: 19), thus presenting imagery which could be considered in Pasi's terms as both Talismanic and Experiential forms of visual art, while the music itself was often considered more broadly Mediumistic. The cover of *The Crooked Pool* (2008) was also produced using similar techniques, but additionally overlaid with woodcuts from early modern sources, suggesting the romanticised link between landscape and pre-industrial society.

The multiple cover designs for *Gamaaea* (2007) took a different approach, inspired by Phil Todd's addition of pastels to the collages used on his album covers, as well as referencing Theosophical depictions of music found in Besant and Leadbeater's *Thought Forms* (1901, see figure 25, below). The covers of *Gamaaea* largely rely on photographs from Ilkley Moor (the Swastika Stone, Doubler Stones, Willy Hall's Wood) and Wharfedale landscapes in the vicinity of Troller's Gill – the exception being the image of the woods with a glaring sun, which re-uses the same photograph as the back cover of *The Pyrognomic Glass*.

The use of manipulated representations of landscape, which attempt to convey some sense of immanence within the natural scene, as well as other artwork that presents occult imagery such as magical designs and alchemical illustrations, can be interpreted as a performance of the dialectic of concealment and revelation. Von Stuckrad has described this dialectic as a structural element in secretive discourses (or here, the *presentation or performance* of secretive [e.g. occult] discourse), which often serves as a form of social capital (2010: 54 - 60). Considered within the discourses around 'psychegeographic' music production, they present imagery that suggests the revelation of a 'deeper' inspiration, meaning, or connection to landscape, esotericism, and tradition in the visual and sonic artefact – although one, perhaps only known to its creator, once again suggesting parallels to Jorgensen's description of listeners to Coil's *How to Destroy Angels* as all being uniformly 'outsiders': only Coil themselves being fully party to the inner-meaning of the music (2011: 27).



Figure 25. Visual references for the cover of *Gamaaea* (2007 author's work; artwork by Ashtray Navigations redacted).

The practice of framing work as revelatory, or a musician performing the role of a guardian of secrets, is not unusual in other fields of occultural music production. Similar presentations can be found in the work of Arktau Eos, for example, who describe their *Mirrorion* (2006) using thoroughly performative occult language which evokes nature, the seasons, and a sense of ritualism. They posit themselves as occult explorers into realms of 'non-being', while remaining obscure about the significance of the recordings beyond their invitation to the listener to enter the affective space of the music:

The foundational sonic and conceptual structure was *captured in locations no longer frequented by the common folk, from Midsummer to Midwinter 2005 CE*, following the rise of the Hunter in the northern sky [...] These recordings were further refined in the *temple-laboratory* where ARKTAU EOS *held vigil* on through the luminous darkness of winter 2006 CE.

While aware that *Mirrorion* remains *mere marginalia in the cartography of non-being* [...] ARKTAU EOS nevertheless wish it offers *assistance to those desirous of setting their foot where we have been*. (Arktau Eos 2006, emphasis added)

Such statements are not so far from those surrounding the free-folk of The Blithe Sons cited earlier, which mentioned ‘mysterious locales’, ‘imaginary wilderness’ and the language of religious affect (‘minimalist hymns’) – although they are here presented in an explicitly occult context.

Other ‘revelatory framings’ can also be found in the track titles on my albums, which often suggest the language of religious experience or practice (‘An Awakening’, ‘Terraetheric Gnosis’, ‘Water Invocation’, ‘Sidereal Prayer’, ‘Fire Rite for the Landless Lord’), Romanticised nature (‘Amongst the Grasses and the Dews’, ‘By Silverhand Stream’, ‘New Light at Thornborough’, ‘Turning to Face the Western Oak’, ‘Nameless Stream’), or hints at spiritual encounters (‘Holly King’, ‘Verbeia’, ‘Abita’, ‘Rorasa’, ‘Hocroel’, ‘Sibyllia’, ‘The Liminal Messenger’, ‘Thalia’, ‘Elicona’, ‘Almazim’).

The sense that the music conceals or reveals some sort of mystery is also knowingly enhanced through use of symbols from magic, alchemy, and Hermetic literature, as well as through track titles which invoked historical occult terminology such as ‘Generatio Mentis’ (referring to the work of early Hermeticist Lodovico Lazzarelli), ‘Voarchadumia’ (the name of an early modern alchemical text by Pantheus, which influenced John Dee), and so on.

As the XETB project developed further, it also began drawing inspiration from the works of the poet Kathleen Raine (1908-2003). Although the form of her work is associated with a modernist poetic style, Raine herself empathised with the ideals of Perennialism and Traditionalism. Having studied Blake for her doctoral thesis, Raine developed a perspective on poetry which borrowed from Romantic theories of the imagination, the work of Traditionalist art historian Ananda Coomaraswamy on symbolism, Hindu philosophy, and the work of Marsilio Ficino (Sedgwick 2004: 214-5). Raine’s attitude was that the symbols in poetry were expressions of a perennial wisdom, which she described as part of ‘the Tradition’, found in Western mysticism, Neoplatonism, and Hindu scripture (Raine 1982: 52-55). Raine also considered poetry which successfully engages with this ‘ancient spring’ of perennial wisdom to be born from ecstasy: it is rhythmic and – contrary to what she sees in modernist and

Surrealist aesthetics – it is beautiful: the beauty reflecting the poet's possession by the ecstasy or divine madness of the sacred (Raine 1985 [1967]: 175). Raine also describes traditional art as possessing an anonymity that is 'a necessary outcome of its character as the expression of a transpersonal mind' (1982: 77). Her positions, at least on poetry as a form of spiritual revelation, appealed to me, and I used her authority as a poet and scholar to legitimise my own connection between states of creative inspiration and the experience of encountering the spiritual or transpersonal – as well to legitimise my tendency toward anonymity or ambiguous authorship by attributing my work, at least in part, to the influence of spirits (A2.12.3).

I made several references to Raine in my music – naming one album, *Grotto Grove and Shrine* (2007) after a line from her poetry cycle *Dreams* (1971), and naming another track after her poem *In Paralda's Kingdom* (1987), whose explicitly magical reference (to the elemental king of air in the Golden Dawn system) and description of 'high fells, the wind's kingdom' particularly spoke to me of my experiences on Ilkley Moor. Through Raine I also discovered the poetry of David Jones (1895-1974), which fused a modern voice with more 'traditional' religious and mythic sources drawn from Catholicism and Welsh and Arthurian lore (Raine 1985 [1967]: 133). Raine described Jones as 'more consistently traditional than any of his contemporaries save Joyce' (Raine 1975). Vitally, I had discovered Jones' poem *The Tutelar of the Place*: a dense, symbolic evocation of the goddess of place written in the voice of a Celt in opposition to the Roman Imperium. The final XETB album, *Three Spirits* (2013) includes two tracks named after phrases in Jones' poem: 'Arc of Difference' and 'Hidden Stream & Lode Ford'.

Although Raine was a fairly late discovery, entering my creative world in 2007, there run a variety of themes in my earlier work which are suggestive of the sort of Traditionalist perspectives that Raine and Jones articulated. In Old English and Medieval Welsh poetry I found an affective space that complemented my music: a sense of the austere, of loss, and mystery. The album *Heard Gripe Hrusan* (2006) took its name from a line of the Old English poem *The Ruin*, and in chapter 5 I mentioned a moment of identification with the Welsh poet Myrddin Wyllt. Discovering the poetry of Myrddin in 2002-3, shortly after my period of most intense involvement with the Christian mysticism of the *Arbatel*, initiated a proliferation of Christian references, and a decrease in overtly pagan ones, alongside the already established folkloric, magical inspirations. For example, 'Chapel of Infinite Echo' (2004) used the sound of waves recorded at Whitby, and drew inspiration from the figure of early

medieval English poet Caedmon who was resident at the nearby abbey (A2.7.4). The first line of 'Evensong' (2005) paraphrases Isaiah 26:19: 'Awake and sing, you who dwell in dust; For your dew is like the dew of herbs, And the earth shall cast out the dead', while the last line 'Oh but that first man, he loved you the best' was also intended to give the song a primal quality by intimating that it was addressed to Eve – hence the title 'Evensong'. Finally, 'Chwyfleian and the Projection of John' references a Welsh term meaning 'pale wanderer', found in the Black *Book of Carmarthen*, and which I supposed at that time referred to Myrddin's guardian angel, as well as referencing St. John of Howden (A2.9.5).

The 14th-century hermit Richard Rolle of Hampole also became a particular inspiration: the final track on *A Prism for Annwn* (2006) is multi-layered instrumental improvisation based on Rolle's hymn 'Lord Jesus, When I Think of Thee'. 'Blyssed be Thu Kynge' on *Gamaaea* (2007) also sets a text by Rolle – a prayer described in Rolle's *The Form of Perfect Living* and intended for constant repetition: an idea which also appealed to me having read E. F. Schumacher's *A Guide for the Perplexed* (1977), in which the practice of an internalised, constantly repeating 'prayer of the heart' is recommended. A Gurdjieffian, Schumacher may also be considered, like Raine, a figure with Traditionalist and anti-modernist sympathies (Sedgwick 2004: 15, 192, 212-3).

Partridge has described occulture as presenting a reservoir of ideas, some of which are not – in themselves – explicitly 'occult', which participants borrow from to concoct their own 'stews' of belief and practice (Partridge 2004: 70). Partridge's description of 'Buddhism' undergoing this process, and becoming a 'fungible, detraditionalised concept', however, raises issues when Traditionalism itself is considered as a form of occultural expression. Traditionalism is not a formation which Partridge's *Re-Enchantment of the West* explicitly engages, although he does stress that the notion of a perennialistic divine reality is a fundamental occultural motif (:64). We may still, therefore, consider Traditionalism as an occultural form. For example, in many Traditionalist discourses Hindu cosmology becomes culturally *disembedded* (-detraditionalised -), while also serving as an expression of perennial truth – or 'the Tradition' – itself. Furthermore, Traditionalism's anti-modern and anti-individualistic stance may outwardly seem the antithesis of the forms of highly individual and post-modern *mélange* that Partridge associates with occultural formations, but the discourses of Traditionalism are themselves conducted as a dialectic process with modernity itself. Traditionalism may be described as a conservative, or even

reactionary, form of thought: as Evola, one of the most extreme proponents of the current, polemically termed it, a 'revolt against the modern world' (e.g. against the liberal, atheistic, and decadent; Sedgwick 2004 :21-22). On the other hand, the counterculture that peaked in the 1960s which Partridge associates with the rise of occulture could broadly be described as a 'revolt against the *traditional* world' (e.g. that which is conservative, and religiously and sexually orthodox). Obviously, there are complexities and subtleties which such a division elides, but, as forms of occulture, both Traditionalism and counterculture invoke a particular response to their perception of modernity and attempt to transform it by constructing their own, contrary forms of being, religiosity, and enchantment.

Like David Jones, developing his vision of Tradition from antique sources drawn from the Roman and Celtic world, Arthurian legend, and Catholic theology, or like Raine forging hers from Romantic discourses on the imagination, the writings of the Eranos school, Coomaraswamy, Blake, and the 18th-century Platonist Thomas Taylor, I also constructed my own occultural *mélange* which could be considered adjacent to the Traditionalism of Raine, and which developed over the course of the albums discussed above, reflected by the movement from the broad and eclectic range of ideas offered by occulture (stone circles, earth energies, UFOs, Lovecraft) to a focus on themes that I explicitly associated with the archaic or 'traditional' and which reflected my own seekership interests: ancient stones, Celtic paganism, Medieval Christian mysticism (in stark opposition to mainstream Christianity), medieval and early modern magic and alchemy, folklore, and folk music. The landscapes of Ilkley Moor and Wharfedale provided an idealised space in which these elements could be expressed and explored, with the goddess Verbeia presenting a definitive link between the contemporary landscape and the archaic past.

Of course, the 'appeal to tradition' is also one of the common strategies of esoteric discourse highlighted by Hammer (2004) and many esoteric and occultural formations invoke such appeals as legitimising strategies without necessarily being Traditionalist in a polemical, anti-modern sense. However, when viewed from the broader perspective of occulture, and its globally networked milieus, it can easily be seen how such appeals to tradition may also legitimise and invite participation into *apoliteic* cultures, which lean toward far-right politics and harder Traditionalist sympathies.

‘Our Ancestor’s Landscapes’: Identity and Ambiguous Discourse in Wyrð Folk

In the preceding section we surveyed the musical output of XETB in terms of its presentation of different forms of knowledge on several fronts: occult knowledge presented through visual symbolism and track titles, the presentation of subcultural knowledge of experimental and folk music through the presentation of the albums, and the broad move toward presentations of themes suggestive of an occultural construction which could be located adjacent to Traditionalism.

Sedgwick has proposed that forms of Traditionalism can be described as ‘soft’ or ‘hard’ with regard to their adherence to Traditionalist tenets such as anti-modernism, Perennialism, religious orthodoxy, and moral conservatism. Works of ‘soft’ Traditionalism (those of Mircea Eliade, Kathleen Raine, or E. F. Schumacher) often achieve mainstream success, whereas ‘hard’ Traditionalist texts (such as those by Evola) only appeal to a niche audience chiefly within the fascist and reactionary right (2004: 102-117).

My own work viewed through the lens of Traditionalism could also be considered a ‘soft’ Traditionalism. Like the poetry of Raine and Jones, the ‘voice’ used may be by turns nostalgic, mystical, or archaic, but it is also one which also incorporates a modernistic aesthetic: in my case the use of electronic instruments and the incorporation of techniques inspired by the work of modern composers, amongst them Giacinto Scelsi, Steve Reich, John Tavener and, most often mentioned in interviews, Arvo Pärt. The latter pair, however, also used the language of new music to often express their own faiths of Catholicism and Eastern Orthodoxy: Tavener himself was also open about his inspirations from the Traditionalists Frithjof Schuon, Guenon, and Coomaraswamy (Sedgwick 2021; Seymour n.d.), and also set Kathleen Raine’s words in *The World* (1997), to whom the piece is also dedicated.

As mentioned earlier, I had been avoidant when faced with identifiably far right positions in neofolk, and in 2004, prior to my interest in Raine and Jones, wrote the following in my diary:

A sense of local history is important – however, it should not be used as an excuse for ‘us + them’ ideologies or preaching racial purity. Regardless of colour or belief, learning about our environments and their history both expands the appreciation of these places and the consciousness of the

individual. [...] Also, the emotional landscape enables the individual to be as one with the environment. (A2.8.5.1)

While this statement reflected my own enthusiasm at discovering local history and folklore – and thus finding a sense of ‘belonging’ in the local landscape or *communitas* with its *genii* – it could also be read less charitably as endorsing an assimilationist perspective. That is to say, if people (regardless of culture) simply *understood* the history of the place they are in, they would also ‘fit in’ and become part of their landscape. There is also a latent Traditionalist logic in this statement: that to appreciate a place is to comprehend its historical or essentialised facets, rather than any of its offerings associated with modernity.

These latent Traditionalist discourses also appear in my interviews from the same period. My developing interest in ancient sites coincided with expressions of concern amongst the Earth Mysteries community about the treatment of the Thornborough Henges: a series of three large prehistoric earthworks near Ripon, and located in a landscape earmarked for quarrying by Tarmac Northern (A2.7.5; Stonepages 2006). I closed a 2004 interview with the following words:

One last thing that's been on my mind, indulge me if you will, is that if the *wreckers of ancient civilization* such as Tarmac get their way and vandalize *our ancestors' landscape* for the sake of a few bags of gravel (as they are doing at the Thornborough henges) there may not be much to enjoy in the future. So, it's a bitter note to end on, but I'd like quote Purcell – “*Fight, and record yourselves in druid song!*” (Legard 2004, emphasis added)

The identification of Thornborough as ‘our ancestors’ landscape’ stakes out a discursive claim: that it is where / belong – the landscape is not just a temporary dwelling-place, but an ancestral (and thus sacralised) one. The quotation by Purcell is drawn from his patriotic song, ‘Britons, Strike Home!’ (1695):

Britons, strike home!
Revenge, revenge your Country's wrong.
Fight! Fight and record. Fight!
Fight and record yourselves in Druid's Song.

The idea of Thornborough (as well as Wharfedale and Ilkley Moor) being part of an 'ancestral landscape' can also be connected to the use of the term 'Brigantia' on releases from the same period. *Toadsman's Bell* (2005), the album I had just finished when the above interview was conducted, includes the following date and place on the interior cover: 'September-November 2004, Brigantia', while 'Brigantivm MMV' also appears on the front of *The Pyrognomic Glass* (2005). I had discovered the term 'Brigantia' through the *Brigantes Nation* website administered by George Chaplin, who led efforts to raise awareness of threats to Thornborough Henge from 2004. This culminated in the Thornborough Free Festivals of 2005 and 2006, both of which hosted performances by XETB (A2.10.9). Brigantia refers to Celtic tribe of the Brigantes, the extents of whose kingdom roughly corresponded with that of Yorkshire. Chaplin's site also stresses that Brigantia is the name of the goddess of the Brigantes, thus lending the landscape of Brigantia the same sense of sacrality as Gyrus' landscape of Verbeia (Brigantes Nation n.d.) – the cry 'Hail Brigantia!' becoming a chorused refrain at the neopagan Beltane gatherings at the henges where explicit identification was also made between ancestors, the Brigantes, and the Henges (e.g. Robinson 2006).

This sense of a local belonging, using a historical and spiritual awareness of the landscape 'to bring attention to our vanishing heritage' (Legard 2005a) also scaled up into wider discourses of national identity. In a 2005 interview with Mark Coyle I claimed that 'every culture has its own aesthetic values, I hope something of the ancient British culture is reflected in my music' (Legard 2005a), having also described my sound to earlier interviewers as 'primitive English music' (Legard 2004). One element of the 'English' aesthetic that I identified with was a melancholic sensibility, which I described as a 'large part of the English psyche' (Legard 2004) – a point I also revisited in an interview with *Deep Water Acres*:

I think that the 'liturgical' sound of some of my music is a natural effect of two things... as you know, I'm chiefly concerned with English landscape, folklore and culture, and most things that we think of as quintessentially 'English' often have that calm, melancholic nature that we often find in liturgical music. The second reason is probably due to the mainly diatonic basis of [my] music, akin to medieval chant and the melodies of folksong. (Legard 2007b)

And elsewhere in the same interview:

Perhaps, as has often been said, *some trace of ancient belief and practice remains in the folk rituals of the land*. However, we have to accept that there have been thousands of years of other influences and events shaping the land, replacing *or at least moulding the old beliefs into new forms*. These events have often led to very interesting hybrids – the Romano-Celtic gods, Christian saints taking the place of ancient pagan gods and heroes – *a rich tapestry of borrowings from far and wide, which still remains ‘English’ at its core* – which is still *tied in with the land*. (ibid., emphasis added)

The two above quotes illustrate my positioning of ideas about Englishness in loosely Traditionalist terms. The first quote also draws attention to the use of diatonic modes in my music with older forms such as liturgical music, chant, and folksong, thus positioning the music as connected to a *prisca musica*, drawing upon ancient religious- and folk-life. The second quote acknowledges the complex nature of English history in terms of Celts, Romans, and Christianity – much like the Traditionalism of David Jones – while claiming these are ‘old beliefs’ which undertake ‘new forms’. This functions as both a perennialist and a nationalist statement, since these forms are also claimed to retain some essential ‘Englishness’ as a consequence of being ‘tied to the land’, suggesting a sort of *terra perennis*: an immutable landscape in which these archaic and spiritual powers find expression through the rituals of the folk.

In these discursive presentations of my ideas about artistic creativity and ‘Englishness’, the idea of Tradition becomes an orientating factor: while I acknowledged that I was constructing an ‘idiosyncratic personal mythos’ from esotericism, folklore, and experiences in the landscape (Legard 2005), these creations could also be distanced from my own individualistic, creative control, both by attributing them to spiritual sources as mediumistic art, and also by framing them as elements of an anonymous, impersonal – and transpersonal – Tradition (*cp.* Raine 1982: 77). This highlights a striking paradox around identity construction in Traditionalism, in which discursive identities can be constructed around the motif of opposing modernity through the act of becoming subsumed into the anonymity of Tradition.

During the period 2003-2007 I, like Raine, publicly identified as a Neoplatonist, and also made pains to discursively separate this ‘higher’ philosophy from ‘lesser’, modern expressions of religiosity, for example:

There is no specific 'system' behind the music, save the personal 'shamanic' exploration of the environment by light of folklore and custom. Please note that *rather than being an advocate of the current neopagan trend, I consider myself as a Neoplatonist* in the mould of the Renaissance magi (Agrippa and Ficino being profound influences), with a deep interest in local custom and tradition. (Legard 2003, see also Legard 2007b)

As with Traditionalism, there is a sense of elitism that privileges what is seen as a perennial form of religious thought (e.g. the emanationist philosophy of Neoplatonism) over what I perceived as 'lesser' forms of religious expression (e.g. the 'neopagan trend'). A similar sense of elitism also extended to the evaluation of cultural artefacts, particular as a strategy to differentiate my music from the 'mass' of occult music available, in one interview stating that: 'The occult, mystical and spiritual has been the catalyst for *a lot of really bad music*. Many people also have preconceived (and negative) notions about people who employ such elements overtly. Therefore I usually try to avoid being too explicit about these influences [...] since I prefer the music to speak for itself' (Legard 2007b, emphasis added).

While I also made elitist comments about popular music in a 2004 interview with a local music promoter, such attitudes are not unusual amongst participants in musical subcultures, since they cement an identity of self-imposed otherness, in opposition to perceived cultural hegemonies. We may also draw a parallel here with Traditionalist discourse, in which the Traditionalist's religious or spiritual affiliations and knowledge are set in opposition to both 'inauthentic' forms of religiosity and the perceived spiritual vacuity of modernity.

The statements of Traditionalist discourse identified above could be read a 'soft' counterpart to the 'hard' discourses exemplified by Sol Invictus during the group's Evolan Traditionalist period. My discourse focused on bringing attention to a 'vanishing heritage' and finding belonging through a historical and spiritual engagement with the *terra perennis* of England, which – although intended to be open to all, 'regardless of colour or belief', is nevertheless haunted by the vague spectre of *völkisch* 'blood and soil' nationalism. I also presented myself in opposition to corporate or industrial 'wreckers of ancient civilisation' as a lone musician or seer. In Wakeford's neofolk discourse, the geopolitical emphasis is not exclusively English, but rather pan-European, and the core sense of loss relates to the 'decline' of Europa

owing to American influence, the EU, and ‘multiculturalism’ (Bland 2019: 304-7). While my discourse drew upon naïve expressions of my sense of belonging to an ‘English’ landscape, Wakeford’s were explicitly informed by the politics of the New Right and his proximity to far-right politics during the 1980s. However, despite these differing backgrounds, both potentially occupy similar discursive spaces grounded in anti-modernism, paganism, elitism, nostalgia, and an identitarian position on the significance of folklore and folk music (e.g. that it expresses something ‘essentially’ English or European), making them both potentially appealing to the overlapping milieus of Traditionalism and the pagan New Right.

Conclusion: Oppositional Milieus and Global Occultural Networks

This chapter has covered wide-ranging historical, cultural, and discursive ground, but the underlying theme is one that has already been encountered in discussions of the chaos magical milieu of the Z(Cluster) in chapter 4, where it was observed that many practitioners of chaos magick often turned to ‘traditions’ (Tantra, Dzog Chen, magical ‘purism’) as the next stage in their seekership journey. The milieus discussed in the first two sections of this chapter also follow similar patterns. Members of the West Yorkshire occultural milieu produced artefacts that presented a social network encompassing a florescence of occultural possibilities including chaos magick, UFOs, Earth Mysteries, chaos magick, Psychic Questing, and neopaganism. While some members of this milieu such as Sherwin and Carroll continued to plough their own furrows, many other members of this milieu exhibited a variety of recourses to ‘tradition’: Phil Hine became deeply involved in Tantra, which had been one interest amongst many in his early Chaos International articles; Gyrus’ encounters with stellar vortices and the goddess Verbeia led to a decade of work ‘recovering’ the ancient cultural significance of polar cosmology in *North* (Gyrus 2014), and both Dave Lee and Ian Read became deeply involved in the American ‘runology’ organisation known as The Rune-Gild, while also maintaining identities as members of the IOT.

The Rune-Gild was founded in Texas in 1980 by Stephen Flowers, *alias* Edred Thorsson, a prior member of the Church of Satan and Temple of Set (Granholm 2010:104-5). The Gild is closely aligned with the journal of ‘Radical Traditionalism’ *Tyr*, edited by Michael Moynihan, Rune Master of the Rune-Gild and also a ‘martial industrial’ musician (ibid.: 108-110). *Tyr* promotes and prominently features the work of Rune-Gild members and associated Radical Traditionalists. Responding to criticisms that Radical Traditionalism’s anti-modernism, anti-democratic, and anti-

materialist discourses were fascistic (see Granholm 2010: 101, 108 for a summary of these discourses), Moynihan claimed that Nazism (and by implication fascism) were a *modern*, rather than Traditional, phenomena grounded in biological materialism, and that *Tyr* operated simply as a forum for those who wished return to the 'cultural and religious traditions of [their] own people' (Moynihan 2004: 4-7). Although Granholm has stated that the Radical Traditionalism as presented by *Tyr* and the Rune-Gild is presented 'without any major fascist or Nazi linkages' (2010: 101) it could conversely be viewed as a thoroughly *apoliteic* or metapolitical project invested in New Right discourses of anti-modernism and pan-European cultural rebirth – such a rebirth, or 'palingenesis', being central to Griffin's general definition of fascism and Shekhotsov's conception of *apoliteia* (Shekhovtsov 2009: 436, 439, 451-4).

Read's own right-wing views, involvement in the European neofolk scene, and presence at a New Right conference in 1997 organised by the metapolitical journal *Scorpion* (Searchlight 1997: 7) demonstrate that he was familiar with the discourses of the New Right. However, a similar awareness did not necessarily extend to other members of the UK chaos magick milieu who were not so embedded in far-right discourses. Chaos magician and Rune-Gild member Dave Lee did, however express some reservations in his 2016 review of *Tyr* journal no. 4, drawing attention to a contribution from white nationalist Collin Cleary, who also edited the first issue of *Tyr* (Granholm 2010: 108). Lee describes *Tyr* as 'an extraordinary publication' and has no objection to the definition of Radical Traditionalism, nor the lead article by Alain de Benoist, ethnonationalist and founding member of the French *Nouvelle Droite* (Lee 2016). Yet, on treating Cleary's writings, which overtly support white nationalism and reject 'miscegenation', Lee concludes that 'to associate the Path of the Mysteries with a political movement, particularly one that is capable of using terms like 'miscegenation' is, to my mind, repellent' and that 'I, for one, do not want any kind of political game polluting my esoteric worldview' (ibid.). However, the aspirations of Radical Traditionalism, such as the rejection of modernity and urban life, rejection of corporatocracy, and the yearning for 'tribal societies' integrated into a 'holistic system' are themselves politically informed. They present fascism not as the sort of 'uniformed masses' that Carroll rejected in favour of 'robust right-wing libertarianism' and which Lee clearly identifies as troubling in the work of Collin Cleary, but as an enduring European cultural and ethnic project. It is a common motif in the discursive and emic perspectives of contemporary esotericism that what is deemed 'esoteric' exists apart from politics, which consequently makes esotericism and occulture fertile grounds for *apoliteic* and metapolitical projects.

This excursus into *Tyr* and the Rune-Gild also serves to develop Duggan's hypothesis on the interaction between iconoclasm and perennialism in chaos magick, and the suggestions made in this thesis that many seekers also engage with a perennial-iconoclastic continuum as they negotiate the tensions between modernity and Tradition. In the early development of chaos magick, the iconoclastic urge is often focused on issues which may outwardly be identified as 'progressive': the first IOT group at East Morton disbanded with a rite in 1982, the intention of which was to attract more female influence to the group (Lee 2018), while contributions to early issues of *Chaos International* essays prominently feature feminism and alternative sexuality, such as the arguments for gender equality and the transcendence of the bounds of patriarchy in Lynn Morgan's 'A Gauntlet from a Witch' (issue 2), Sheila Broun's 'In Search of Ourselves' (issue 3), and Phil Hine's 'Love Under Will: Magick, Sexuality and Liberation' (issue 4). However, within the discourses of chaos magick, the rejection of what Hine calls 'miserable, patriarchal conditioning' (1991: 27) is more concerned with individual liberation and the sacralisation of the self – 'reaffirm[ing] my sense of selfdom' (ibid.) – than it is with communal activism for broader social change. This discourse becomes particularly explicit under Ian Read's editorship, from issue 6, in which Read and Carroll regularly assume elitist stances to decry the perceived excesses of 'liberalism' and modernity, and it is this context that many of the tropes we have encountered amongst the chaos magical milieu make sense. Discourses adopted by chaos magicians around 'immanentising the eschaton' and the Kali Yuga (see chapter 3) are oppositional, and involve chaos magicians in a form of individualised reaction against established societal structures. What these individual reactions look like varies: for Carroll it was the adoption of a form of 'right wing libertarianism', for Marik a striving toward the destruction of 'consensual belief structure' and the end of civilisation, while 'Anton Long' of the Order of Nine Angles' submitted to Chaos International the practical proposal that Satanists should swiften the moral decline of modernity by becoming drug dealers and pornographers, or achieving powerful positions and using their influence subversively (Long 1992: 40). These critiques of modernity also found ready expression in the anti-modernistic discourses of Traditionalism and Radical Traditionalism, which overlapped with the Chaos International milieu via Read's proximity to groups such as the Rune-Gild, wherein the most profound form of iconoclasm in the face of modernity is a return to Tradition.

Elements of the pattern of a recursion to tradition – and consequently entering a discursive and cultural proximity to *apoliteic* expressions of Traditionalism – have also been demonstrated in this chapter as being locatable in my own work. The albums and other material artefacts produced demonstrated a move from a wide range of occultural influences (e.g. UFOs, earth energies, stone circles, psychedelia) on *Full Moon June* (2001) to a gradually more ‘traditional’ aesthetic – also expressed discursively through press-releases and interviews. Like Dave Lee, I was unable to connect my ‘soft’ Traditionalist sympathies with the wider implications of *apoliteic* and metapolitical fascism which encroached on various corners of occulture. While the work of Collin Cleary gave Dave Lee a sense of unease, as did my own experience of overtures from Martin Locker and Integral Traditions Publishing, I was still able to rationalise the presence of my music on labels like Cold Spring or *fora* such as FluxEuropa, as Lee was able to do similarly with his personal involvement with *Tyr* and the Rune-Gild’s Radical Traditionalist network.

The examination of milieus from a networked perspective has enabled us to demonstrate unexpected links between underground folk and esoteric milieus via the construction of Wyrd Folk music in the early 2000s. Wyrd Folk also bridged a gap, connecting the Romantic ideals of the free-folk musicians to the more ambiguous terrain of neofolk: a genre closely aligned both with the occultural milieu surrounding the IOT and chaos magick, and overlapping with a milieu promoting more explicitly ‘apoliteic’ metapolitical projects concerned the palingenesis of an ethnic European culture.

Here we might return to Partridge’s observation that ‘the left-wing, peace-loving environmentalist may share certain basic beliefs with neo-Nazi Satanists’ (2004: 70-1), which was cited in chapter 1 as part of a discussion of Granholm’s suggestion that the discursive compositions of particular forms of esotericism are constituted by both ‘esoteric’ and ‘ancillary’ discourses. The preceding discussions highlight the difficulty of separating the ‘esoteric’ from the ‘ancillary’, particularly where political perspectives are concerned. If Carroll considered the EU an institution which threatened individual liberty – and thus self-actualisation – then we may consider such a discourse as not merely ancillary, but actually thoroughly embedded in an esoteric lifeworld which stresses libertarianism as fundamental philosophy for shaping one’s own destiny and reality. Sherwin also presented similar discursive positions in the first issue of *Chaos International*, describing individual choice as a

form of 'heresy', pitted against 'the establishment' (Sherwin 1986; see figure 26, below).

An apolitical position, such as that taken by Lee, is also less than ancillary, since it places esotericism a transcendent form of knowledge, not associated with 'mundane' matters such as politics, while a position of the extreme moral relativism is maintained by Read from the esoteric perspective of 'sacred inbetweenness'. Similarly, my own discourses on 'ancestral landscapes', 'essential Englishness', and belonging as a process of embedding in the local landscape and its histories and traditions were held as esoteric perspectives, with little regard for their broader political dimensions.

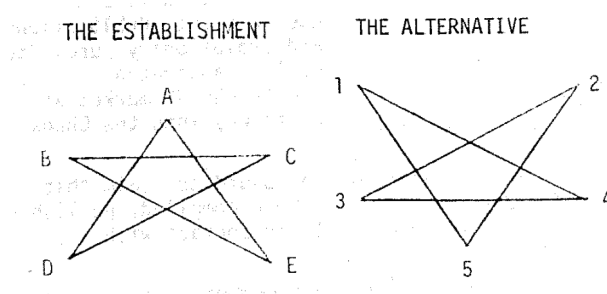


Figure 26. *Diagrams from Sherwin (1986), representing:*
A – Narratives of religious or national destiny; B – Priesthood; C – Banks;
D – Propaganda/Advertising; E – Ignorance, limitation.
1 & 2 – Individual choice; 3 – The 'right' kind of education; 4 – Magical techniques;
5 – True will

Asprem and Crockford's position that the ideological implications of esoteric and New Age discourses on the sacred-self help to naturalise 'a political economic project [e.g. neoliberalism]' (2018: 18-19; see chapter 1) is relevant with regard to the above, given that the ideological biases demonstrated by many participants in the milieus discussed above similarly naturalise what have become primarily right-wing agendas: particularly those concerned with the destabilisation of extant liberal democratic structures: either in service to a neoliberal agenda (as in Carroll), or as a preliminary to ethnic cultural palingenesis, exemplified in the forms of Traditionalism promoted by FluxEuropa, ITP, and – arguably – *Tyr*. The work carried out in this chapter further emphasises the conception of discourse as a material-semantic knot (Bührmann *et al.* 2007: 2) – the material in this case not only encompassing the zines, books, and music around which these analyses were conducted, but also extending to spatial contexts through the inscription of subjective experiences and knowledge on both local landscape and the broader, politicised space of Western Europe.

Conclusion.
Occulture and Creative Seekership:
Perspectives and Prospects

Introduction

This project sought to explore the application of an analytic autoethnographic method to the study of contemporary esotericism. Although the general area of study was known – my own occulturally-embedded music-making – the grounded approach to autobiographical reminiscence meant that the particular themes within this, and any overarching theoretical framework in which they were located, were emergent products of processes such as coding and theoretical diagramming (see chapter 3). The outcome of this process was a proposed model for creative seekership, which described the processes enacted by an agent embedded in occultural influences and practices. The main body of this thesis was concerned with the exploring these processes in detail, applying theoretical ideas where relevant to enhance the analytic understanding and thus refine the model.

Therefore, to conclude this work we will first revisit the creative seekership model proposed in chapter 3 and examine how it has developed in the light of the previous chapters, and what this may tell us about approaching the study of creative seekership from an interdisciplinary perspective in spirit of Hanegraaff's 'Western Esotericism 3.0' (Hanegraaff 2012).

The creative seekership model proposed here is fairly holistic: potentially applicable to a wide variety of forms of esoteric creativity, although the exact details of how the processes in the model are enacted will vary widely from practitioner to practitioner. From creative discipline to creative discipline the differences between forms of practice will be particularly marked. Therefore, after discussing the creative seekership model, we will turn to evaluate the exact forms of creative practice which have arisen in the context of musical creativity, and their applicability to future studies in the domain of esoteric musicianship.

Following these theoretical discussions, we will turn to a reflection on the autoethnographic methods involved in the present research, reflecting on the merits and challenges of analytic autoethnography as a research method within esotericism

studies. We will then conclude with an autoethnographic coda, reflecting on the period during which this thesis was composed, and how this scholarly work has affected my own status as a creative seeker.

Experience, Appraisal, Practice, and Identity: Modelling Creative Seekership

A theoretical model for creative seekership was initially proposed in chapter 3 (fig. 7), and emerged from an integrated analysis of the open codes produced during the composition of the autobiographical narrative. The intervening chapters of this thesis have studied seekership from the perspective of each of the themes or theoretical *loci* determined by the initial model, namely: experience and appraisal, elaborative creativity and practice, performativity and identity, and the milieus and discourses of occulture. Each of these chapters sought to reach a sufficient depth of analysis – or theoretical saturation – to refine the model further, and present new perspectives on musical practice and production as a mode of seekership in contemporary esotericism.

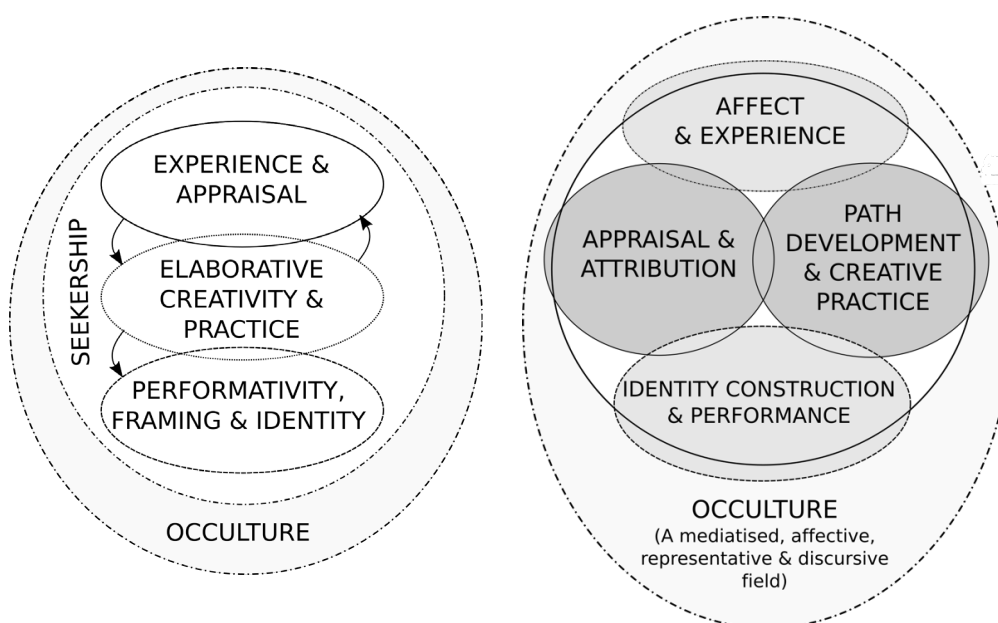


Figure 27. *Creative Seekership Models: the initial model (left), the refined model (right) (author's work).*

The refined model (fig. 27) once again presents the process of seekership as embedded within occulture, although the definition of occulture has been extended beyond Kokkinen's 'discursive field of seekers' (Kokkinen 2013: 28), to emphasise its thoroughly mediatised nature, as well as its discursive, affective, and representative dimensions (e.g. discourses and representations of the magical, monstrous,

extraterrestrial, archaic, transcendent, demonic, occult, and 'esoteric', and their ability to affect subjects via through emotional, aesthetic, and ritualised engagements). Of course, occulture is still a 'discursive field of seekers', typified by the milieus who engage with-, and draw from it to develop their identities and practices, and who contribute to it through the production of new (oc)cultural artefacts.

The processes involved in seekership are presented in the refined model as overlapping with one another – as well overlapping with occulture itself. This demonstrates a developing insight into how the processes involved in such seekership relate to one another, as well as how they draw from – and contribute to – occulture-at-large. The implications of these relationships are shown in more detail in figure 28, below.

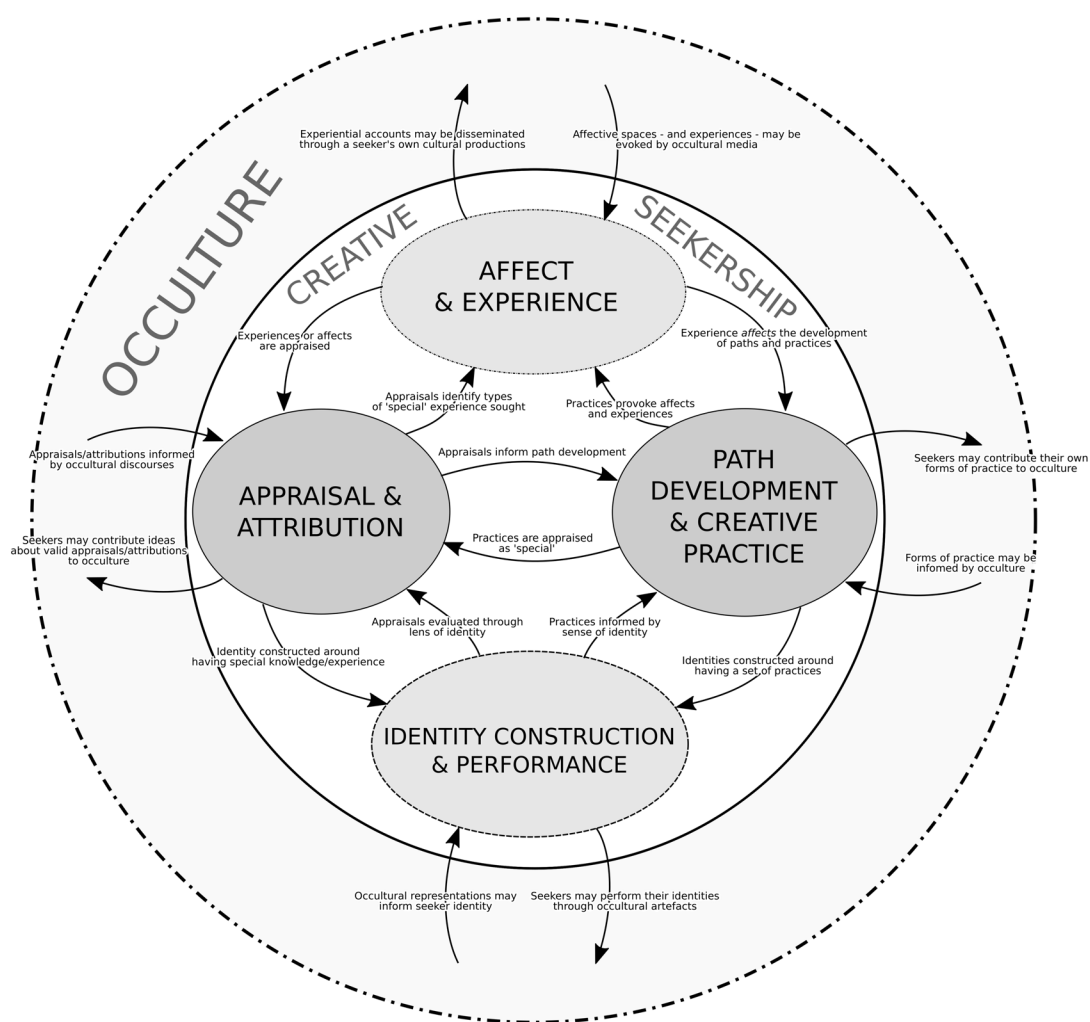


Figure 28. *Relationships between occulture and the processes of creative seekership (author's work).*

In the light of the preceding chapters, I will now describe each domain of the seekership model in more detail, as well as reflecting further on their relational aspects:

In the above figure, the creative seeker is positioned within **Occulture**, which is considered a subset of the subject's broader cultural environment. The diagram in figure 27 describes occulture as 'a mediatised, affective, representative and discursive field', and it is considered that the chief ways of engaging with occulture are through forms of occultural media (music, film, literature, web-pages, forums and so on). Such occultural media may act upon the seeker in a variety of ways: occulture may convey a variety of 'moods' and affective spaces; discursively it may provide a seeker with concepts regarding what types of experience can be called 'occult' or 'magical', through which they appraise events in their own lives. In terms of representation, occulture may also provide the seeker with ideas about what sort of practices may be undertaken, and provide models for constructing occultural identities.

A seeker may contribute to occulture through the production of their own occultural media: a work such as a book may, for example, contribute to narratives of experience, ideas about how these experiences are validated and attributed to transpersonal powers, and may also describe practices which may be enacted and adapted by others. Such works are also usually performatively contributed to occulture – for example, through a carefully cultivated identity as a serious magical practitioner, or via a pseudonym which signals a certain type of identity (e.g. identifying as a 'Frater' or 'Soror' in the context of ceremonial magic).

Turning to the processes involved in creative seekership itself, encounters with **Affect and Experience** have been two recurrent themes in this study. The presence of affect in this research originally developed from Partridge's concept of 'affective space': the 'emotive action' evoked by music which conveys the 'mood' of the occult or religious (Partridge 2014: 37-8). However, the implications of affect and affective space in terms of creative seekership became more pronounced as the research developed. The resulting theoretical connection between affective space, and its possibility for further *affecting* the processes of appraisal and attribution, path development, and creative practice bring the definition of affect in this work closer to Wetherell's description of affect as discursively-embedded, 'embodied meaning-making' (:1, 4, 19-21, 51-76).

Sometimes engagement with affects may be fleeting: a film may be unsettling, a piece of music may be uplifting, and so on, but may not take on a particularly profound significance otherwise. In the context of creative seekership, the ways in which affective engagements are subject to appraisals and attributions is particularly important: an appraisal re-casts the affective event, or a series of events, as an *experience*: often with an accompanying attribution to trans-personal influences or powers.

The autobiography details a variety of affective encounters which were considered noteworthy, but otherwise fleeting and lacking the experiential implications which would profoundly affect, for example, the ontological or epistemological structures by which attributions and appraisals are developed. An example might be the unexpected demonic presence mentioned at A1.3.37, which interrupted the sleep of my girlfriend and I. The atmosphere was described as ‘evil and oppressive’, and I attributed it to the influence of the demon Havares. The suffocating mood certainly had an *affect*: thinking back to the experience I can recall my sense of panic and unease – the atmosphere having both a psychological and physiological affect (ibid.). It also spurred on further physical action: the removal of the spirit’s seal from the box, and the performance of the Cabalistic Cross – a practice which brought its own affective space in the calming form of an imagined white light.

Elsewhere in the autobiography are events which may be described more fully as Originary Events, being narratives of experience to which deep personal significance is attributed. Furthermore, sustained processes of appraisal and attribution meant that these experiences affected the development of forms of esoteric and creative practice. The Men-an-Tol experience, for example, was predominantly described in deeply affective language: transfiguration, unity, joy, and warmth (see Appendix C). Subsequently this experience was attributed to the *genii locorum*, initiating the development of a path of practice which would attempt to recapture the original experience in some way. Both the attributions and the paths of practice deriving from this experience were revisited and refined over the biographical period being studied, emphasising the role of the Men-an-Tol event as an experiential touchstone.

Imaginative episodes and dreams should also be considered part of the process of encountering affects and constructing experiences. As mentioned earlier, the processes associated with affect and experience are depicted in the model as

overlapping with occulture, indicating the potential for the content of experience to be informed by the subject's engagement with a wider culture, as reflected in recent discussions concerning the role of cultural 'priors', predictive processing, and imaginative capacity in religious experience (Mulukom & Lang 2021; see also Taves & Asprem 2016a, 2016b). Some explicit examples of such engagement with 'occultural priors' in my experiences may include attempting to explore Lovecraft's Dreamlands (A1.3.14-15), reading the 'Akashic Necronomicon' (A1.3.16), or developing visionary encounters with the *genii* of dew through the use of musically-induced mind-wandering and music-evoked mental imagery (chapter 6).

Although 'real time' experience remains largely a closed box to researchers, the process of **Appraisal and Attribution** yields narratives which describe how an experience or affective event is emically interpreted, both in terms of it being appraised as conveying some sense of sacrality or 'specialness' (e.g. as being associated with a transpersonal, transcendent, spiritual, or other-than-mundane reality), and in terms of the events which transpired to justify that attribution. While Asprem and Taves (2016) have examined the possibilities of reverse-engineering such narratives to reconstruct original cognitive cues and low-level appraisals, the work in this thesis has concentrated on appraisal and attribution at a higher level, particularly as an emic hermeneutic process, wherein multiple narrative accounts written by the subject (e.g. myself) were examined to describe what happened, how those events were interpreted and re-appraised over a period of years, and how these appraisals influenced the development of both identities (e.g. 'orphic troubadour') and paths of practice (e.g. 'psychegeographic music production').

Considered in terms of the other relations outlined in figure 28, processes of appraisal and attribution may also inform the seeker about the type of experiences they believe they should be seeking. For example, if I received knowledge from occultural literature that one of the most important magical experiences is an encounter with the Holy Guardian Angel, then I might not only seek out practices which would help me attain this, but I may also use this knowledge to appraise incidents in my own biography that could be attributed to the presence of a Holy Guardian Angel. This may even have a consequence such as taking a curious, fleeting, but still affecting moment from childhood, such as a sensed presence, and re-casting it as a more narratively significant experience, potentially even developing a path of practice to try and re-visit and deepen the original event.

Path Development & Creative Practice are domains which have been closely connected throughout this thesis, demonstrating how creative practice became ritualised and sacralised by becoming central to the development of a 'path of practice' which attempted to recapture or evoke a particular experience. The appraisal of an Ordinary Event or similar 'special' experience is fundamental to the development of path of practice in this model, and the enacting of such paths may in turn yield additional experiences and further refine the practice. For example, the connection between mental visual imagery and musical listening is recurrent in this research, and I have demonstrated that these practices moved from being a casual pastime in my youth, to becoming elements of 'precursory paths' (e.g. 'ritual music'), before becoming fully integrated into a mature path of practice following the events clustered around Men-an-Tol (e.g. 'ether folk' and its subsequent development into 'psychegeographic music production'). My own autobiographical narrative also stresses that the creative paths developed were thoroughly embedded in occultural practices and discourse: to the extent that improvisation, musically-induced mind-wandering, and music-evoked mental imagery were all attributed to the influence of spirits or other transpersonal influences. There was, however, also a partition between esoteric-creative paths of practice and more purely 'esoteric' ones: I did not apply my musical practice to the prayer-work of *The Arbanel*, for example, partly out of a desire to maintain the latter as a traditional or 'authentic' practice, although both my musical practice and *Arbanel* practices engaged deeply with the discursive motif of porosity: stressing that the mind or imagination of the magician/musician is the *locus* for encounters with other, transpersonal powers, and arguable influenced one another.

Finally, both appraisals of experiences and the development of paths of practice can influence **Identity Construction and Performance**. In this study, we examined identity construction primarily through theories of reflexive and discursive identity, and used discourse tracing to demonstrate how these constructions reflected discursive drifts and ruptures, as well highlighting how identities were performed and reflected through artefacts presented to other occultural consumers. Although discourse tracing as formulated by LeGreco and Tracy (2009) concentrates on isolating discursive ruptures, it should be emphasised that concentrating on points of rupture may not necessarily be most suitable for the study of religious seekership. While the Men-an-Tol experience may have been presented as an event that dramatically precipitated a moment of rupture, many of the other identity formations

involved processes of 'seekership-as-discursive-drift', such as my 'drift' from neopagan, to chaos magician, to magical purist.

In figure 28, above, 'identity construction and performance' is linked to both 'appraisal and attribution', and 'path development and creative practice', as well as to the wider sphere of occulture. Intense experiences may indeed lead to radical appraisals, attributions, and new paths of practice, resulting in discursive ruptures and identity performances relating to them. However, more ambiguous 'drifts' toward other identities demonstrate that the processes described in this model do not necessarily only apply to 'life-changing' experiences, but are also enacted in the day-to-day life of the seeker, in which they regularly encounter the sorts of identities, practices, plausibility structures, and aesthetic/affective spaces associated with occulture. An encounter with the affective space of paganism may, for example, affect an appraisal suggesting that 'there is *something* here...', potentially affecting a further drift toward practicing and identifying as a pagan – and even performing such a pagan identity publicly (e.g. through writing, clothing, and so on). In some respects, this highlights Partridge's proposal that the affective spaces of music inform identity constructions within the context of occulturally-situated seekership practices (see Partridge 2017: 37).

This model of creative seekership is not necessarily presented as a totalising and generalisable theory, although it does convey something of the holistic character of the autobiographical accounts from which it developed. The refinement of the model in the preceding chapters has been further informed by the experiential accounts, artefacts, and textual productions of a number of other musicians and composers also locatable within occulture, such as Coil, Kim Cascone, and Arktau Eos. The creative seekership model may, therefore, provide an initial framework by which we may approach other instances of creative seekership within contemporary esotericism and occulture.

As an example of such an approach, we could use the model to examine the seekership processes informing Kim Cascone's sacralisation of listening as presented in his essay 'Subtle Listening – How Artists Can Develop New Perceptual Circuits' (2014). Cascone begins his essay by describing childhood listening experiences, in which sounds evoked 'strange visions', which 'I intuitively knew [...] represented the essence or the soul of a sound, as if the sound had an atmospheric or psychic flavor' (ibid.) These juvenile experiences precede and account of what we

might describe as Cascone's Originary Event, concerning an attempt to meditate in a park as a student, during which the sound of a flock of birds 'took on a distinct shape in my mind's eye', followed by an awareness of 'the space between them' as the flock separated (ibid.). This experience is appraised as a switching to 'an altered and slightly mystical reality', yielding a path of practice he describes as 'subtle listening'. Drawn from 'Jungian psychology, Hermetic philosophy, Rhythmanalysis, synesthesia, paradox mediation, and brainwave entrainment' (ibid.), Cascone's path seeks to re-create some aspect of his Originary Event by giving participants an experience of the subtle realm – 'an interworld viewed by the soul of a person while in an altered or mystical state of consciousness' (ibid.). Furthermore, Cascone's exegesis on subtle listening also includes a number of discursive positionings of his own identity, particularly those which legitimise his authority as a serious practitioner of sonic arts: as a former elite student at Berklee Music College, and a member of David Lynch's sound production crew – Lynch himself having a significant (oc)cultural cachet as both a surreal cinematic *auteur* and practitioner of transcendental meditation. We are, therefore, able to view Cascone's written text as an expression of the processes of creative seekership, drawing attention to key areas that may in turn inform our approach to studying a subject and their *oeuvre*.

Before we leave this discussion of the seekership model, we might also note that many of the accounts of seekership and the developments of creative paths of practice detailed in this research might be considered, in the light of the model, as 'top-down' forms of seekership: often developing as a consequence of particular experiences, from which follow attributions, path developments and identity constructions. However, we might also suggest that there are other potential forms of seekership suggested by emphasising different domains of the model. For example, a bottom-up seekership could stem from a sense of identity, from which may develop appraisals of what is 'special', sacred and otherwise important, as well as to a sense of what particular practices are appropriate to such an identity. An obvious example may be someone who identifies as having Northern European heritage pursuing practices based on runic magic or divination. However, the concept of identity-led seekership may potentially have utility beyond the study of white, Western European esotericism which has characterised much scholarly output in the field, and also suggest approaches to identity-linked practices relating to sexuality, race, anti-colonialism and other aspects of esotericism studies' developing global awareness.

Mediatory Musics: The Practices of Musical Seekership

The particular focus of this thesis on music-making as a form of creative seekership has necessitated both the development of perspectives on how different forms of music-making are emically attributed 'special' status as esoteric practices, and how we may also develop sympathetic approaches to the analysis of occulturally-situated musical works, particularly those in folk, ritual ambient, drone, and related genres.

In chapter 6 we examined the types of attribution which performers and composers locatable within occulture imposed on the experience and practice of music-making. This suggested three broad processes for musical creation which are likely to elicit attributions of 'specialness':

Automatism – In which a state of flow or absorption arising from the act of instrumental performance or improvisation is attributed to transpersonal influence or encounter (e.g. the experience of 'becoming one' with the music, Scelsi's attribution of improvisational creativity to the Devas, and my similar attribution of improvisatory inspiration to the *genii locorum*).

Manticism – Manticism describes the processes by which musicians or music producers ascribe qualities of specialness to the sonic materials that they work with. When a composer or music producer is working with music constructed from pre-recorded or synthesised materials, they are engaged with the problem-space of musical composition. As they explore and manipulate their material, they may turn variously to modes of critical-, affectively-, or imaginatively-engaged listening to develop solutions which move their compositions forward. As with musical automatism, manticism presents a response to the state of being absorbed in the listening-to, and creative-play-with, sonic material, in which the sounds come to present 'deeper' significances. The consequence may be that they seem to open windows to what are considered other realities or reflections of unconscious realms (as in Cascone's 'Errormancy', see chapter 6), or present themselves in such a way that it suggests a spirit or invisible hand leading the composition (as in Coil's music with ELpH). A mantic approach to listening describes the ways in which music-makers imaginatively engage with sonic surfaces as a form of esoteric practice, as in my use of field recordings to return to the 'psychegeographic' domains of the *genii locorum*, and my use of the tracks 'Abital' and 'Rorasa' as forms of visionary script to develop narratives of encounter with intermediary beings. This mantic response to

the musical surface can also be discerned in Arktau Eos' suggestion that their music evokes 'eldritch spaces in mind or elsewhere' (Arktau Eos 2009), or the perception that individual sounds seem to be possessed of 'souls' (as in Cascone's 'Subtle Listening' text, above). In short, manticism is a broad process of making meaning from a musical surface: moving beyond a critical appraisal of the sound (e.g. its fidelity, timbre, amplitude envelope and so on) and toward the attribution esoteric significances to the sounds being used.

Speculativism – The process of composing in the spirit of what Hasler describes as 'Speculative Music' suggests a sacralisation of both musical theory and the compositional process itself, whereas in automatism and manticism, absorption in the playing/improvising, digital production, and listening processes were subject to attributions of specialness. Although Christensen (2008: 5-7) has pointed out that the contemporary usage of the term 'speculative music' is highly anachronistic, it has nevertheless become an important emic construction, primarily as a consequence of the works on 'speculative' musical theory and symbolism produced by Godwin (1982, 1986, 1987, 1995). Godwin's construction of speculative music is firmly embedded in the Neopythagorean and Neoplatonic streams of esoteric thought, presenting historical forms of music theory (such as tuning, harmony, and the modes) as metaphysical mirrors of 'nature' and the cosmos (1982: 373-3, 382). An example of such speculativism as an emic construction is found in Hasler (2011), for whom compositions preceding from speculative bases were considered more authentically 'Hermetic' than compositions that either simply sought to suggest the aesthetics of esotericism, or whose musical language was not *wholly* informed by esoteric principles (:38-53). Hasler's construction presents speculative music as superior to his other classifications – although the research presented in this thesis often emphasises a contrary position: suggesting that the forms of music considered 'less Hermetic' (and by implication less authentic or 'esoteric') by Hasler are actually potentially mantic and mediatory when presented in such a way that their affective spaces enable listeners to attribute meaningful 'esoteric' experiences to them.

While elements of 'speculative' music are present in my own work, the *loci* for research which developed from the analysis of the autobiographical narrative emphasised discursive, experiential, and affective framings of music performance and production over theoretical and compositional practices. In my own work, the concept of music as the speculative mirror of the esoteric world can be found in *Star Synthesis* (2000), which intended to paint an image of the celestial world by sonifying

data relating to each star's magnitude and planetary association (A1.4.40). Other examples might include the track 'Horizon of Eternity', which sonified a geomantic reading (A2.13.3-6), and my computer-assisted compositions as Peter Cora (A2.16.1) which, for example, used the 36 astrological decans as a tonal organising principle on the track 'Decani'. Forms of ritual music also explored in the early stages of my seekership potentially straddle both Hasler's 'speculative' and 'aesthetic' categories: involving musical material directly determined by the 'magical will' that I sought to compositionally encode, alongside more explicitly symbolic sonic material that intended to evoke the affective space associated with a particular ritual (as in *Ananak* [2000], see chapter 5).

In practice, a mixture of these processes (automatism, manticism, speculativism) may inform the production of a musical piece. Much of my own work was developed through both processes of automatism (freely improvised material) and manticism (imaginatively listening to the improvised material and recordings from the environment in order to develop the musical work further). In a work such as 'Dark Stations', Kim Cascone's 2013 electronic composition for 'meditating audience', the process of composition is broadly speculative, highly exacting, and realised entirely through electroacoustic means: the audience is seated within a triangle of three speakers (suggesting the triangle of manifestation into which powers are conjured in the *Goetia*), while the frequencies that are used in the piece are drawn from concepts familiar to practitioners of New Age sound healing, such as brainwave entrainment and the Schumann resonance, as well as frequencies derived from the Spiricom – an EVP device developed in the 1970s by Bill O'Neil (Emitter Micro 2013; Ruiz 2016). Although the construction of Cascone's piece is speculative, the act of listening to it is firmly mantic, being likened by Cascone to a scrying mirror which brings 'the audience's unconscious to the surface through the technique of entrainment, allowing them to *project* onto the sonic gauze' (Emitter Micro 2013, italics added for emphasis).

Emic appraisals of automatic and mantic processes are both deeply invested in the attributive power of porosity explanations, in which, during the process of absorbed playing or listening, an influence from beyond the self is perceived in some way. This could be attributed to the projection of the 'unconscious' mind onto the musical surface of Cascone's 'Dark Stations', the perception of an invisible hand guiding the process (as in Coil's ELpH), or a sense of encounter with other entities (as in my

genii locorum, or Arktau Eos' 'un-beings'). In this sense, music, whether played or listened to, has the potential to develop a mediatory role for such music-makers.

An awareness of the use of automatic, mantic, or speculative processes by musicians and composers located within occulture suggests a variety of approaches to the musicology of contemporary esotericism. Hitherto, much work on musical composition and production in the domain of esotericism studies has concentrated on what might be identified as speculative processes, wherein composers applied esoteric theories to the development of new musical languages. This accords well with established scholarly practices of textual and score-based analysis, since the subjects have generally been composers who produced written scores, kept in-depth pre-compositional notes, and often produced accompanying theoretical writings. Examples of these approaches might be found in analyses of the dodecaphonic theories of Schoenberg and Webern (Covach 1992a, 1994; Hanegraaff 2010), their contemporary Josef Hauer (Covach 1990, 1992b, 1994), and later modernist composers whose spiritual beliefs directed their compositional theories such as John Cage and Karlheinz Stockhausen (Godwin 2006), Horațiu Rădulescu (Heery 2017), Jonathan Harvey (Jenkins 2006), and so on.

While the theories developed here, such as the importance of Originary Events on the development of musical-esoteric paths of practice, could be applied to composers whose work we may primarily describe as 'speculative' in nature, an emphasis on conventional musical and textual analysis is not necessarily suited to the study of forms of music-making which beyond the modern classical tradition. In these contexts, the production of music becomes more informal, often incorporating some degree of improvisation or loose experimentation, and lacking the detailed compositional plans, or music-theoretical justifications, produced by composers in the classical and modernist traditions.

To this end, an analytic toolbox which enables us to construct emic models and analyse the occultural productions of such artists whose work is primarily in the form of recorded media is necessary. In this thesis we have closely connected creative musical practice to the concepts of Originary Events and Paths of Practice. To actually examine the music itself, we have explored modes of analysis such as Smalley's spectromorphology and Weinel's affective-representative framework, which are indebted to the phenomenological approaches to listening which developed around the composition and analysis of electroacoustic music. Such

music necessitated new analytic languages, beyond what can be offered by common musical notation – which, I argue, can be successfully applied to other forms of work which defy conventional musical notation and theory, such as the ritual ambient and drone musics often touched upon in this thesis.

Combined with other approaches such as enactive phenomenologies and event narrative analysis, which describe the physical situation of an artist, the subjective experiences arising as a result of actions, and the forms of attribution they elicit, we may potentially develop detailed emic models to support our analysis of recorded musical artefacts. Of course, such an approach is ideally suited to autoethnographic projects, but also suggests a broad set of potentially useful methods for the study of other contemporary musicians situated within occulture, particularly in complement with the types of multidisciplinary practice found in contemporary critical musicology and popular music studies.

Evaluating the Analytic Autoethnographic Method

This project sought to explore the potential for autoethnography as a research method in the study of contemporary esotericism. In doing so, it focused on my own music-making and its embedding in occulture, primarily conceived of in terms of Kokkinen's 'discursive field' of seekership (2013). I initially argued that any approach to autoethnographic work should be conducted in the spirit of the recommendations which Hanegraaff described in his formulation of an interdisciplinary 'Western Esotericism 3.0' (WE3.0) (Hanegraaff 2012). Of particular relevance to autoethnographic approaches is Hanegraaff's emphasis that research in WE3.0 must follow a scholarly, rather than esoteric agenda: a recommendation which may potentially make the construction of traditionally evocative forms of autoethnography problematic. It was, therefore, necessary to approach the autoethnographic work from an analytic perspective: in this case approaching the data collection (e.g. the development of an autobiographical narrative and accompanying archive) from a perspective of 'groundedness', and enabling any model or theoretical insights to emerge from the data itself, in turn suggesting further theoretical *loci* or research themes.

The development of these themes in the preceding chapters applied principles of theoretical appropriateness and methodological pragmatism, determining a number of interdisciplinary approaches from the scholarly literature on the sociology,

cognition, phenomenology, and musicology of esotericism and religious studies. The broadness of theoretical and methodological perspectives examined here is reminiscent of the 'holistic' position undertaken by Harris for his ethnographic work on extreme metal music scenes (2001: 13-14). By also approaching ethnographic study from a grounded perspective (:47, 205), Harris identified that dealing with the complex, interconnected range of practices, institutions, texts that might be said to constitute a 'scene' necessitated becoming aware of, and balancing, a wide-range of potential paradigms and methodologies (:49-53). Of course, such an approach is demanding for a 'scene', and perhaps even moreso for a 'life' or extended biographical period, as explored in this thesis. In a nod toward the influential theorist of ethnography and autoethnography, Norman Denzin, Harris describes the substantive chapters of his thesis as 'messy texts' – which represent a multiplicity of interpretive perspectives, and are recursive and reflexive – although he acknowledges that the work written is presented in an academic style, which outwardly suggests otherwise (: 52, 204). There is a tension, therefore, between the expectations of the standard research-question-focused thesis format and the exploratory, reflexive, and emergent methods associated with grounded research. In the case of my own work, this occasionally meant that it was necessary to foreshadow what were emergent facets of the work in the early chapters, such as the note on the limits of discourse at the conclusion of chapter two, to prepare the reader for the fact that, although discourse theory informs much of the research and is a constant background presence, it was not necessarily always the best theoretical tool for exploring some of the experiential and phenomenological aspects of lived experience.

In other respects, once the initial data had been gathered and the early model of creative seekership proposed, the methodological approaches for the analysis of each theoretical theme often reflected common academic practices. Textual analysis of my archival materials, for example, was necessary throughout the research and has long provided scholars with a method for constructing emic models of their subjects' lifeworlds – and although my 'dual identity' researcher status may have helped to affirm the emic (re)constructions described herein, my own identity as an 'esoteric musician' was somewhat set aside while writing the substantive chapters. Some practitioners of autoethnography may see this as a failure of nerve: that I am less visible in the research as a consequence. However, this is also a consequence of the focus of the research on my earlier creative work between 2001-2013 – and particularly around the period of 'emerging adulthood' between 1998-2007. Focusing

on an earlier period of creative work enabled a sense of analytic distance and, I believe, helped me more effectively negotiate my entwined identities as a researcher and as an esoteric musician.

A drawback of this retrospective approach was, however, that the informed consent of those mentioned in the autobiographical narrative could not be easily sought, so it may, perhaps, be felt that the possible social dimensions of the work are not as fully developed as they could be. However, I would argue that much of my work occurred as a solitary practitioner, and many of the social relationships related to my practice and seekership were primarily mediated via online mediums, which have been treated in detail in my discussions of the Z(Cluster) online chaos magick group in chapter 4, and the underground- and wyrd-folk milieus examined in chapter 7.

Of course, one common criticism of autoethnographic research methods is concerned with scaling up general analytic or theoretical results from an *N* of one (Anderson 2006: 386). However, the field of esotericism studies often involves similar examinations of fringe subjects, in which the analytic and theoretical conclusions are supported by contextual and comparative analyses of the subject's *oeuvre*, milieus, and so on, as has also been the approach throughout this thesis. Furthermore, as prior attempts to define a multivalent, culturally- and historically complex concept such as 'esotericism' via strict typologies (as in Faivre's definition) have demonstrated, attempts to extrapolate generalised or universalising definitions and theories applicable to the whole field are often of limited utility, compared to the development of a theoretical and methodological apparatus which focus on more specific contexts. In this instance, it should be kept in mind that the insights developed in this thesis are most readily applicable to the cultural and economic contexts of contemporary Western Europe and North America, and definitions surrounding occulture in particular may need adapting to other global contexts.

With these cultural contexts in mind, ethnography and autoethnography are often pursued with the intention of giving a voice to the 'other', and the same could be said for influential micro-histories such as Ginzburg's *The Cheese and the Worms* (1980), and its reconstruction of the interior life of heretical miller Domencio Scandella. Of course, unlike Scandella I do not have to worry about interrogations by religious inquisitors, and there is little in my personal background in terms of geographical location, class, ethnicity, gender, sexuality and so on that corresponds to more common constructions of the 'other' in the hegemonic culture of Western Europe.

However, the themes of my autoethnographic narrative, such as the practice of various forms of magic and the pursuit of visionary revelations point toward a tendency toward a form of self-othering, which Asprem has recently described as an assumption of 'elected marginality' (2021: 141). Such self-othering is often performative: the actors carrying on a participation in 'mundane' society alongside their occultural identities, as is often the case with members of other, non-occultural, subcultures such as those associated with music. In many respects, this self-othering is a deeply discursive practice: for example, adopting an identity and othered status in opposition to the perceived excesses or disenchantment of modernity, as seen in my adoption of the identity of 'magical purist', the elitist perspectives of chaos magick, or the rejection of modernity in Traditionalist thought. Naturally, such elected marginality implies a degree of agency or privilege unavailable to the traditionally subaltern other, but nevertheless elective marginality dominates the forms of identity promulgated in post-secular religion and occulture.

To conclude, this thesis has demonstrated one possible answer to the question of 'what might an analytic autoethnography of contemporary esotericism look like?' In doing so it has demonstrated a broadly grounded approach which, despite its 'messiness', has yielded theoretical insights such as the creative seekership model and modes of musical seekership. It is hoped that future scholars may also adapt and critique the methodological and theoretical approaches presented here as befits their own work. Furthermore, the second volume of this thesis, the 'Occultural Memoir', is also offered as a potential data-source for scholars studying the lived experience of contemporary occulture which, in spite of its many necessary redactions, nevertheless contributes a detailed and lucid account of a life lived amongst occultural entanglements at the turn of the millennium.

Seekership and Scholarship: A Reflective Coda

I originally enrolled for my doctoral studies in October 2016. Prior to enrolling, my first draft proposal was a practice-based project with the title *Place / Non-Place: Deep Mapping and the Sonic Arts*. This set out to practically explore the possibilities for a 'transdisciplinary hermeneutic framework' inspired by Angela Voss' 'Methodology of the Imagination' (Voss 2009). This would have involved producing musical works which engaged with 'place' (e.g. the material, historical, and otherwise 'mundane' aspects of a location), and 'non-place' (e.g. imaginative/imaginal responses to the place). As my readings developed, the proposal moved more toward working on a

thesis in which practical work was backgrounded and the exploration of autoethnography foregrounded. Citing Voss (2009) and Versluis (2004), this proposal was still very much invested in a religionist approach to the topic of music and esotericism and titled *Kataphatic Soundings: Musical Practice as Hieroeidetic Creativity*. It was reading Granholm's *Dark Enlightenment: The Historical, Sociological and Discursive Contexts of Contemporary Esoteric Magic* (2014), followed by the works by Hanegraaff, Asprem, and Partridge which decisively refocused the epistemological and methodological foundations of this work by the time I met my confirmation of registration panel in February 2017.

I was beginning my research in the wake of the political turmoil caused by Donald Trump's presidential election and the UK's Brexit vote. Having witnessed an English Defence League march near my home in 2013, protesting a proposed Muslim community centre, I had become acutely aware of the increasing prominence of far right, nationalist groups and their investment in events which were then unfolding – culminating in the US in the horrific events of Charlottesville's Unite the Right rally in August 2017. What was also particularly sobering is that esotericism and neopaganism were also prominently represented in coverage of these events. Although elements of this discourse had been present in occultural milieus for several decades (as, for example, in the antinomian, libertarian, and anti-EU discourses explored in the context of chaos magic, neo-folk and the New Right in the preceding chapter), they were now writ large in the media, travelling alongside the presence of neo-nazis, far right militias, nationalist and Christian identity groups, and the Ku Klux Klan. Prominent examples of these discourses might be the brand of Evola-influenced Traditionalism attributed to former Trump advisor Steve Bannon (Feldmann 2019), and the influence of the Order of Nine Angles on the militia groups Tempel ov Blood and Atomwaffen Division (who drew inspiration from neo-nazi James Mason's *Siege*, originally published in 1992 by radical traditionalist, Rune-Gild member and martial industrial musician Michael Moynihan – see Legard 2021d, Ware 2019). Although this might be considered a phenomenon concentrated in America, closer to home groups like National Action were increasingly visible: amongst NA's membership was Ryan Fleming, based in Leeds, who led an Order of Nine Angles nexion called Drakon Covenant (see Center on Terrorism, Extremism and Counterterrorism 2023, Gartenstein-Ross 2022). In online spaces, occultural conspiracy theories such as Pizzagate, which had resurrected elements of the 80s Satanic Panic, took on new forms such as QAnon, and scholars began looking toward concepts such as conspирituallity to examine them (Ward and Voas 2011,

Parmigiani 2021, Greenwood 2022, Demuru 2022). It is with these themes in mind that I would like to conclude by reflecting on how both these political events and my scholarly activity have deeply influenced the forms of seekership activity that I have undertaken while working on this thesis, and I will also undertake to do this through the lens of the creative seekership model.

Between the summer solstice and 13th November 2014, my wife (Layla) and I undertook a project which we called Hawthonn. Part of the intention of Hawthonn was to further develop our music-making through a collaborative project, following our work on *Almias* (A2.19) and *Angelystor* (2013). The initial Hawthonn project set out to mark the tenth anniversary of the death of Jhonn Balance, of the band Coil, who died on 13th November 2004. Many of the approaches – exploring place and our ‘imaginal’ responses to it – had their roots in the practices discussed in this thesis. We often focused on speculative and mantic modes of creativity, such as listening to drones derived from the proportions of geographic triangulations, or writing lyrics based on intent listening to EVP-style collages made up of fragmentary, randomly accessed snippets from interviews with Jhonn. Our follow up album in 2018, *Red Goddess (of this men shall know nothing)*, released on the Brooklyn-based label Ba Da Bing also developed from similar practices, beginning as an exploration of the herb mugwort, which – due to a connection to menstruation and dreaming in herbalism – was cast through a lens of occult feminism inspired by the work of Penelope Shuttle and Peter Redgrove’s *The Wise Wound* (1978).

With this feminist perspective, our work was taking on a political dimension. In many respects this was also influenced by Layla’s own feminist perspectives and our close relationship to the venue Wharf Chambers, which had become home to Leeds’ experimental music scene over the preceding decade. As a space run by a workers’ co-op with strong links to women’s rights and LGBTQ+ activism, this venue and its patrons now found themselves potential targets in a gathering culture war (Gowans, Legard & Proctor 2023). Observing how the ‘irrational’ and esoteric had become prominent on the fringes of the extreme right led me to a questioning my own esoteric forms of thought, particularly my adoption of perspectives from the early modern revivals of Neoplatonism and Hermeticism that I had incorporated into my worldview as a ‘magical purist’ and carried into my subsequent work. On one hand, the highly ordered, mathematical ontology of Neoplatonism suggested a comfortably ordered universe, and which was knowable and manipulable by numbers and knowledge of the chains of correspondence that linked the mundane, astral, and

intellectual worlds. On the other hand, such schemas began to feel rigid and dogmatic. They emphasised a hierarchical set of power relations between the divine mind and a 'lower world' which itself follows some sort of 'natural order'. From a contemporary perspective it also seemed to perpetuate gender essentialism and gender binaries whose apparent nature was, more than ever, open to question: for example, the description of masculine essences as 'active' and feminine essences as 'passive', and so on. In many respects I felt myself found myself sympathising with Walter Benjamin and his attempts to reconcile the seductive mysticism and anti-modernism of groups like Ludwig Klages' Cosmic Circle with Marxist materialism and the development of critical theory (Josephson-Storm 2017: 226-236).

I have previously written about the tendencies of chaos magic practitioners to move from chaos, toward traditions of various types. Yet here I found myself – having continued to identify as someone whose practices were aligned to early modern occult philosophies – turning away from tradition and seeking something else. This could easily have been a return to chaos magick: perhaps to re-embrace or re-emphasise the relativistic aspects of its discourse. However, I elected to let my scholarly activities inform my seekership. Duggan's description of a dialectic between tradition and iconoclasm in chaos magick (Duggan 2013) is also applicable to seekership at-large, and my position here moved from a grounding in historical traditions, to one of critical iconoclasm.

My intention to refine this new position was given urgency by the announcement that Anathema Publishing was sponsoring a 2019 occult conference in London. Anathema's editor had recently published texts by Paul Waggener and Craig Williams, both of whom are associated with the Operation Werewolf: a men's movement saturated by far-right aesthetics and Evolan rhetoric (Burley 2020; Yahyaie 2021). We (Hawthorn) were approached by Mark Pilkington, co-owner of the publisher Strange Attractor, to participate in an event with Amy Hale at the Horse Hospital which would precede the conference and give participants an opportunity to reflect on where discourses of esotericism and those of the traditionalist far-right overlapped – and perhaps suggest alternate ways forward.

I wrote a text for the event called *Materia Magica Nova: Towards a Critical Magick* (Legard 2019), which explores the possibilities for approaching ritual from 'an anti-spiritualistic, anti-essentialist position' (ibid.) – discarding tradition, metaphysical certitudes, essentialisms, and hierarchies to attempt to find other approaches to

personal and creative ritual. *Materia Magica Nova* gives several practical examples of work carried out by Hawthorn that explored these ideas, invoking concepts such as deep time, animic ontology, horizontal (rather than vertical/hierarchical) transcendence, and the importance of a principle of hope (borrowed from Ernst Bloch) in the face of the apocalyptic discourses found in many esoteric currents. Much of my academic research into discourse, identity construction, and so on influenced the arguments made in this piece, which ends:

[...] [W]e should be explicit that we do not consider our material re-imagining of the esoteric to be the only correct way. Our personal intention has been to begin exploring a form of thought that does not fall back on perennialism to tell us 'how it is', but is reactive, rather than reactionary. We are not averse to tradition, but we are critical of a dominant form of conservative 'lazy traditionalism', which suggests a monolithic, unchanging edifice, underpinned by eternal ideals. [...]

The invitation of critical magick is to question the *status quo*: [...] to examine one's own path and beliefs and their wider socio-political implications, rather than shy away from addressing problematic elements of discourse. To organise, and push back by whatever suitable means present themselves. It is an invitation to struggle and hope; and to re-think and/or re-claim not just the symbols we use, but also the very terrain of the irrational and intuitive. (Legard 2019)

Having approached creative work and esoteric engagements from the perspective of 'Critical Magick' since 2019, it seems like I am making my peace once again with the perennial, spiritual, and transpersonal. An event that helped to initiate this discursive drift came when Layla and I undertook several experiments in scrying in order to compose lyrics for our album *Earth Mirror* (Ba Da Bing, 2021). The track 'Odo Galse', for example, rendered Layla's account of seeing a luminous island in a scrying vision into John Dee's Enochian language. Recent performances have also begun to lean heavily toward this magical language, incorporating loosely-composed, semi-improvised, ritualised sets based around Enochian poetry. However, our engagement with Enochian continues to be informed by the questioning nature of Critical Magick, particularly examining the Elizabethan magical milieu from which Enochian magic developed, and their relation to British colonialism and power structures (for example, Dee's acquaintance and fellow magical-enthusiast Humphrey Gilbert and his violent

oppression of the Irish. See Legard and Cummins 2020). From the present perspective of an ongoing journey of seekership, the Golden Dawn's presentation of Enochian as a perennial, *sui generis* language of magic disconnected from John Dee and Edward Kelly (Asprem 2012: 68, 80-1) seems not so naïve, as discursively appealing – even if profoundly ahistorical. It will be interesting, at least, to see how this next phase of seekership and creative practice might critically re-negotiate the contested waters of perennialism.

Appendix A: Catalogue of the Author's Archive

1. Xenis Emputae Travelling Band (2001-2013)

Textual Materials

- 2001-2006 Letters and correspondence w/ Andy Sharp (English Heretic), Simon Allen (Barl Fire Recordings), David Colohan (United Bible Studies), Johann Wlight
- 2003 Larkfall Newsletters
- 2004 Foxy Digitalis interview (2,212 words)
- 2004 – 2005 Live setlists
- 2006 Interview with Bart de Paape (1,005 words)
- 2006 Pumpleton Sonic Landscaping self-interview
- 2006 *Lords of the Green Grass* notes
- 2007 Interview with Deep Water Acres (4,627 words)
- 2007 Interview with Evening of Light (2,500 words)
- 2007 *Psychogeographia Ruralis* (chapbook; 12,350 words)
- 2008 *Abita* (chapbook, 9,500 words; plus formative material 2007-8)
- 2008 *Crooked Pool* liner notes
- 2008 *Gamaheu* – Notes on Speculative Music
- 2009 *Behemoth* interview
- 2009 *Zero Tolerance* interview (1,500 words)
- 2009 'The Creed of Philip Legard, Gentleman of Leeds'
- 2010 *A Latento* interview (3,000 words)
- 2011 *Cariad* (chapbook, Larkfall Press)
- 2012 *The Mirror of Elicona* (chapbook, Hadean Press)

Audio Materials

Attributed to Xenis Emputae Travelling Band unless otherwise stated:

- 2001 *Full Moon June* (CDr, Larkfall Recordings)
- 2001 *Under a Soular Moon* (CDr, TM Industries)
- 2002 *The Suffolk Workings* (CDr, Larkfall Recordings)
- 2003 *New Etheric Muse* (CDr, Larkfall Recordings)
- 2003 *Lords of the Green Grass* (CDr, Queasy Listening)
- 2004 *The Hieroglyphic Mountain* (CDr, Deserted Village)
- 2004 *A Selenographic Lens* (CDr, Larkfall Recordings)
- 2005 *Toadsman's Bell* (CD, Digitalis Industries)
- 2005 *The Pyrognomic Glass* (CDr, Memoirs of an Aesthete)

2005 split release with The North Sea (CDr, Larkfall Recordings)
 2005 split release as The Pneumatic Consort, with Johann *Wright* (CDr, Larkfall Recordings)
 2005 *Goat Willow* (CDr, Barl Fire Recordings)
 2006 split release with Jani Hellén (CDr, Larkfall Recordings)
 2006 *Heard Gripe Hrusan* (CDr, 23 Productions)
 2006 *A Prism for Annwn* (CDr, Larkfall Recordings)
 2006 *Stella and Astrophel* (CDr, Larkfall Recordings)
 2007 The Pneumatic Consort: *Grotto Grove and Shrine* (CDr, Larkfall Recordings)
 2007 *Gamaaea* (Cassette, Beyond Repair)
 2008 *The Crooked Pool* (2xCDr, Ikuisuus)
 2008 *The Pyrognomic Glass* [reissue] (LP, Memoirs of an Aesthete)
 2009 Peter Cora: *Rosicrucian Enlightenment* (CDr, Om Ha Sva Ha Ksha Ma La Va Ra Yam)
 2009 Peter Cora: *The Rosette of Sirius* (unreleased)
 2013 *Three Spirits* (Cassette, Brave Mysteries)

2. Supplementary sources (chiefly formative writings on magic and the occult)

Textual Materials

A Very English Trip (website archive)
 1996 – 2001 Z(Cluster) mailing list archives
 1997 – 1998 Posts from the alt.pagan, alt.magick.* Usenet hierarchies
 1998 – 1999 Lovecraftian Magic writings (*Primordial Earthwalk*, *Book of the Key*)
 1999 – 2000 *The Picatrix* (website archive)
 2000 *Liber Coelum Stellarum Fixarum*
 2002 – 2003 Personal magical diary
 2002 Notes toward *Senoi Sound Archive* project w/ Andy Sharp
 2003 *Cerebral Paisley* (zine, two issues)
 2003 *Zodzor Calling* (drafts for magical-psychgeographic book)
 2004 *Institute de Musique Occulte* notes (project w/ Andy Sharp)
 2006 Notes toward a commentary on *The Arbatel of Magick* (1575)
 2006 Notes on Brundish for first *Aossic Argonaut* project w/ Andy Sharp
 2007 *The Black Fleece* (summary of Lovecraftian magical experiments ca. 1998 – 1999)
 2007 Visionary notes from Felixstowe beach
 2009 *The Ku in Western Europe* (unfinished essay)

Audio Materials

1999 Jason Campbell/Penis Amputee (Cassette, Hermetic Museum Recordings)

2000 Xenis Emputae: *El ov Eh* (CDr, Stella Maris Recordings)

2000 Xenis Emputae: *East of Israel* (CDr, Stella Maris Recordings)

2000 Sigilla Vur: *Ing Na Astrum* (CDr, Stella Maris Recordings)

2000 Xenis Emputae: *Coelum* (CDr, Stella Maris Recordings)

2000 Xenis Emputae: *Star Synthesis* (CDr, Stella Maris Recordings)

2000 Xenis Emputae: *Ananak* (CDr, Stella Maris Recordings)

Appendix B: Example Magic Codes Used on the Alt.Magick Usenet Hierarchy

Phil Legard: **MWI/PA/CH** S* W++ N+ POT++ Dd Dr A- a+ C@ G QH+ 666(--) Y++

Al Billings: MHE/MPA S++ W++ N++ PNO++ Dr+ A a+ C G QH++>++++ 666+ y

Frater M.P.S.: MGD/HE S W N++ PEG/WM+++ Dr A(+) a+ C G++ QH/J+++++ 666+++ Y(+)

Orb: MWI S W N++ PEC++ A- a C G Q 666- Y

Collin White: MWI S* W++ N+(++) PCE++ D A a>+ C G+ Q 666 Y-

Chris Adams (alias Mhac de Bhandia): MWI W++ S N PCE++/GR++/EG++ A a+ C G Q 666-- Y

Silicon Rat: MWI S W++ N+ PEC++ A- a C G QO+ 666- Y

Psyche: **MCH** S* W++(--) N+++ PDI/PPA/PEC D* Dd Dr+ A a+ C+++ (42) G+ Q 666- Y+ Z

Crane48012: **MCH\TH** SW++N+PWM\CE+DS++DrAaC+++++G-Q+666-Y

Josh O'Brien: MO S+ W++ N++ POT++ Dsdr+ A a C----(+) G+ Q>+++++ 666++>-- Y++>+++++

Nakedboy: **MCH?SH** S- W N++ PNA/EG++ A a+ C+++ G+ Qo+ 666 Y

Will Linden: MAS/GD S++ W++ N+ PWM++ Ds/r+ A-> a++ C+ G- QO++ 666 Y

Fr. Mastinem Puralorom **MCH/WI** QH++ 666++++ C++++ N++ POT++

Zos Xavius: **MCH/DE/TH** S--- W-(-----) N++ PEC@ Ds+/r+ A- a--- O | S C++++(++) G* Q++>--- 666* Y+++

Stanley "StormWeaver" Shaw: MMU/EN S W N+ PWM D A a+ C G* QO++++>+++++ 666 Y <G>

Nyrath the Nearly Wise: **MCH/PA** S W++() N++>+++++ PEC++ D A a++ C++++>+++++ G>+ QH++ 666+>+ Y>++++

SpellDew the Thorn: **mch/sx/mpa**/swn+pdipsg/p++d Aa++C++[n]G*[n]Q+/666/y- - - -

Max: **MCH/YO/O** S W@ N++ PEC/OT D(r) A C\$+++>+++++ G>+ Q(+) 666 Y+>+++++

Fr. Ioiad: MTH/DE S++>+++++ N(++>+++++ PEC+++ Dr>+ A(-)>+ a(-)>+ C++(+++>+++++ 666++ G++(+++>+++++ QH++(++)>QO++++ Y++(+++>+++++ W@

Shedona: MTH/SX/EN S++ G* QO+++++ 666* y>+++++ W C* N++>+++++ PEC++ D2>

Frater M.A.Ch.H: MTH/HE/SX/TA/EN S++(*) W N+++((++)) PEG++(XX) Dr+ A>++ a++
C G+ QH++++ 666++ Y++(++++) Z+

The Heretic Heathen (Skorpion (Z) Node): **MCH/LV** S* W- N++ PCH----/PDI+/PCM*
Dr+ A++ a G* QO+++/QH++++(+) 666++(+) Y---- Z*

Appendix C: Men-an-Tol Event Narrative

Sources:

- 2004 Interview with Brad Rose for Foxy Digitalis website
- 2006 Interview with Odile Strik for the Evening of Light website
- 2007a Phil Legard: *Psychogeographia Ruralis* chapbook
- 2007b Interview with Kevin Moist for Deep Water Acres website
- 2009 Interview with Dan Hunt for Zero Tolerance magazine
- 2013 Phil Legard: *Music, Magic, Metaxy* (Uncanny Landscapes symposium, Royal Holloway University)
- 2015 Phil Legard: *The Many Coloured Earth* (The Alchemical Landscape symposium, Cambridge University Counterculture Research Group)
- 2018 Phil Legard: 'Grotto Grove and Shrine: Recollections on Music-Making and Numinous Experience in Nature' (published in *Folk Horror Revival: Harvest Hymns*, vol. 2, Wyrd Harvest Press)*
- 2019 Phil Legard: *An Occultual Memoir*

Inferences (“What an event meant”)

2004 I can vividly recall the birth of XETB in 2001. My partner and I had gone on holiday to Cornwall and decided to do a walk around an area with a large concentration of ancient sites. [- the first telling mentions my partner, subsequent narratives up until 2019 posit me as the sole actor.]

2006 XETB came into being at Men-an-Tol, a curious ancient stone in Cornwall, although I suppose some elements were present in some of the recordings I had made earlier as *Xenis Emputae*, *Princess Head* and *Fields of Dharma*. [- recognising that there were precursors]

2007b I was never really serious about music until 2001 when I began XETB. I'd been exploring the coast of Cornwall [*Appraisal* – the event made me 'serious' about music – drawing parallels with narratives of bardic initiation etc]

2009 I consider the band beginning at the moment I crawled through the ancient stone known as Men-an-Tol in Cornwall in 2001. [*Appraisal* – the originary event]

Reason explanation (“Why I did it”)

2015 In 2001 I found myself on the most western peninsula of Cornwall, where, after discovering a book of walks in the holiday house, I decided to take a trip to Penwith Moor to explore the antiquities there.

2018 In 2001 I found myself on the most western peninsula of Cornwall. At a loose end one morning, and after discovering a book of walks in the holiday house, I

* This 2018 narrative is largely based on the preceding 2015 narrative.

decided to take a trip to Penwith Moor and explore the antiquities there. I had no especial interest in stone circles and megalithic structures: at the time I was deeply engaged in the study of Renaissance occult philosophy, which often looked toward the heavens, rather than to the earth. The walls of my attic room, back in a shared house in Leeds, were covered with images from John Dee's *Hieroglyphic Monad*, the *Golden Chain of Homer*, and the works of Robert Fludd. Looking back at my diaries from the time, I note that I was constantly praying and meditating, attempting to work my way through the mystical *Isagogue* contained in the grimoire known as the *Arbatel of Magick* (1575). That was how I had left Leeds, after finishing my final year at university. The academic pressure was off for a short while – my mind was free... and potentially opening itself up to other influences and experiences. [This is actually out of temporal order – my *Arbatel* diary and the room described were not until 2002, whereas the event took place in 2001. I am post hoc attempting to draw a more distinct boundary between the events]

2019 In the June of 2001, while still working at the college, I encountered a pivotal experience in my creative life. We had been taken by P's parents to stay in Newlyn, Cornwall. I found a book of Cornish walks on the shelves of the cottage and was fascinated by the walk across Penwith Moor, taking in Men-an-Tol, Nine Maidens (Boskednan), Bodrifty Settlement, and Mulfra Quoit. I persuaded P and her brother to do this walk, and then to press onward to Penzance for tea.

Cue event ("What happened")

2004 Our first stop was Men-an-Tol, which is a small clearing with a large donut shaped stone flanked on each side by smaller stones. At one time it was probably the entrance to an ancient tomb. There is an ancient tradition that the stone had some kind of healing properties if people crawled through it, and some families still pass their newborn through it three times. [This is was prior knowledge from the book of walks]

2015 Standing on the edge of the moor, at the ruin known as Men-an- Tol, a number of feelings arise. There is a marked awareness of one's place in history, yet this is not a feeling of distance, but of closeness: in this landscape, time is tangled: everything seems to be happening at once - historical periods fuse; ruins reveal the secrets of their builders, as well as entropic processes as they transform themselves over time. The holed stone of Men-an-Tol almost seems to act as a focal point for these feelings.

2018 Standing on the edge of the moor, is the ruin known as Mên-an-Tol. All that survives of the structure are a donut-shaped stone, flanked by two smaller rocks. Although it looks like an archaic Barbara Hepworth sculpture, it is likely the skeletal remains of an ancient burial chamber.

2019 We were dropped at the Men-an-Tol Studio, and walked across a short stretch of moor to the Men-an-Tol standing stones.

Behaviours ("What I did as a result")

2004 I decided to crawl through it myself [Being in control – 'decided']

2007b and passed through the ancient ruined tomb of Men-an-Tol.

2013 Let me state at this point that, although having some romantic inclinations, I had no belief in 'earth energies', ley lines and so on. I simply crawled through the hole on a whim. [Not being fully in control?]

2015 Yet, playfully crawling through the hole ...

2018 Taken by the playful impulse to crawl through the hole ... [Being not fully in control – 'taken']

2019 At the stones we joked around a bit, and I read the passage from the guidebook, which alluded to the use of the holed stone in 'gypsy' baptism rites. We teased one another to crawl through the stone. I went through, head first ...

Cue event ("What happened")

2007b Within a moment **the landscape had been transfigured**... an experience I can't quite put into words.

2009 It was at that moment that **I found what I'd been searching for** in my music: the genius of places and ... [- appraisal]

2013 When I emerged on the other side I was suddenly and inexplicably **overwhelmed by a feeling I can't easily describe**. A **profound sense of 'belonging', euphoria** and **connectedness** with the landscape, nature, the universe and a numinous 'other' spiritual or intelligent presence.

2015 ... changes things profoundly: the landscape and my relationship with it becomes inexplicably unified. To look upon the imprints left by periglacial activity and the hands of ancestors is not to look on history, but the present: everything no longer *seems* to be happening at once, but *is* happening at once. The hours that follow are overwhelmed by a sense of both **belonging and yearning; connectedness and euphoria**; and the sense of both **landscape and universe suffused with light**, with **profound numinous presence**, and the **revelation of a great mystery**.

2018 ... things changed profoundly: almost immediately, **the landscape and my relationship with it became inexplicably unified**. To look upon the imprints left on the geography by periglacial activity and the hands of countless ancestors seemed not to look on history, but to look on the present: the rich history before me all seemed to be happening at once. The hours that followed were overwhelmed by a sense of both belonging and yearning; connectedness and euphoria; and the sense of both landscape and universe suffused with light, shrouding a profound numinous presence ever on the verge of manifestation: the joyful revelation of a great mystery. [- heavily retrospectively appraised, as is the 2015 narrative]

2019 I stood, surveying the countryside: the undulating, brush-strewn landscape, with the austere, imposing ruined engine house of an old mine in the distance. I was elated, I felt an **intense inner-glow**, and a **connection with the landscape** and my surroundings. An **ecstatic** feeling, which deepened as we set off across the moor.

Causes ("Why was it believed to happen?")

2007a There are Wilson's examples [*of Faculty X*]: Proust's Madeleine, Arnold Toynbee's experience of being at one with the flow of history while walking near Victoria Station, which correlated with my own experience after passing through the holed stone at Men-an-Tol. [*Appraisal* – connecting the event to Wilson's Faculty X]

2013 It wasn't until years later when I read Paul Marshall's survey *Mystical Encounters with the Natural World: Experiences and Explanations* that I was able to identify my numinous encounter as a classic form of what is called 'extrovertive mystical experience'.

Inferences ("What an event meant")

2004 I think that is the moment in which the project began - a sort of birth into a new world. [Note: an appraisal, and tropes of **rebirth**]

2007b Prior to that my mind had been inclined to the stars – the study of medieval astrology and stellar lore... I'd always thought of 'earth mysteries' as an even flakier practice than astrology for tie-dyed stone-hugging hippies, but in that moment everything made some kind of sense... [Note: **unity** - 'a kind of sense']

2013 Now, up until that day I'd had a rather aloof tendency to discount these kinds of tales as modern folklore: new-age ramblings of suggestible personalities... and yet, here I was experiencing the type of experience that hundreds of people (judging from Marshall's data) had also encountered in nature: not necessarily at sites of notability or antiquity, but in natural contexts nonetheless. If there was one thing that lingered in the days following the experience, it was the **sense of a presence**. Having never been conventionally religious **it seemed natural to associate this presence with the landscape** that had triggered the experience.

2015 Having had little sympathy for notions of 'earth mysteries' (to my mind then tied up with the crankier elements of New Age counterculture such as ley-lines, UFOs and crystal healing), this was an ontological shift, irreversibly altering my relationship with landscape and history ...

2018 Up until that moment, I'd have said that any sort of mystical encounter arising from a stone circle or Neolithic ruin was 'New Age shit', since I was so invested in the astrological visions of occult philosophy. This experience, however, redefined my entire worldview – it was an ontological shift.

2019 In retrospect, this experience was an ontological shift. I had been deeply involved in a very intellectual world: calculating Cabalistic numerology, speculating on astrological influences and the imagery of the heavens. Being in a natural scene, encircled by the horizon was a profound shock. I had never been particularly interested in 'earth energies' or stone circles, but I became convinced that 'something' had happened here. [Note: I may have been priming my relations with the natural world by observing the stars etc?]

Behaviours ("What I did as a result")

2004 I'd brought a few instruments and a dictaphone with me and I felt moved to start recording ... [- collapsed into a single event, rather than a couple of days]

2006 Men-an-Tol was the real catalyst though... the days spent experiencing the surrounding landscape, with its circles and ancient tombs ...

2007b So, I spent some time making field recordings, getting to know the landscape, parts of which became integrated into *Full Moon June*. Practically all other musical exploits fell by the wayside.

2013 It was this experience - the type of which I have only had one other time since - that led me to begin investigating the idea of the genius loci as a driving force for artistic practice.

2018 The next day, I revisited the moor with some musical instruments, and began to improvise at the various sites dotted between Mên-an-Tol and Penzance.

2019 I revisited the moor the next day, with a handheld Dictaphone and minidisc recorder, to make musical recordings.

Cue event (“What happened”)

2004 Brad Rose: What's the one place you've recorded that stands out most to you? Why?

Phil Legard: It would have to be Mulfra Quoit, which I visited during the birth of the project. It's the remains of a megalithic tomb. As I arrived a storm was gathering, so I took shelter inside the tomb. The atmosphere was really tangible - it really felt as if something were beginning to manifest itself. It felt very much like some kind of MR James story - I was half expecting the spirit of an ancient tribal lord to materialize! [sub-event: sensed presence – leading to path formation of practices concerning the genius loci]

2018 The warmth of the vision still lingered, and I was aware, for example, when playing accordion in Mulfra Quoit, of a profound sense of another presence being with me – manifesting in the place – while I played.

2019 However, I found that revisiting the places and trying to engage with them musically did not yield the same, overwhelming ‘extroverted’ mystical experience. What it did yield, however, was something more imaginatively involved: an inner-meeting with the landscape and its presences.

Reason explanation (“Why I did it”)

2004 ... to try and immerse myself in this ancient landscape and somehow **channel** its sound. [- ‘channeling’ and music is a major construct: the muse, medium, etc.]

Inferences (“What an event meant”)

2006 It really **awoke** something within me and fired my imagination. [- inner senses and imagination used to explain]

2009 It precipitated a **profound shift** in my conception of the landscape.

Causes (“Why was it believed to happen?”)

2004 A lot of New Age-type people say that the ancient stones have the power to profoundly transform people. I would, until recently, have dismissed this as a lot of rubbish, but after considering the path which my life and music has taken over the last few years I think they may be on to something. [Earth Mysteries explanation]

2007b It was a psychedelic experience in the truest sense – no drugs involved, just a **life-changing revelation** that has fed into almost all of my musical explorations since. [Psychological explanation]

2018 Although the experience of the previous day had been what the psychologist of religion Paul Marshall would call an 'extrovertive mystical experience', these further encounters seemed somehow more internalised: akin to making contact with an intelligence residing within the place, which guided my thoughts and hands: an encounter with the *genius loci*.

Behaviours ("What I did as a result")

2007a Furthermore we can seek to trigger these states through meditation and contemplation, ascetic practices, dance, music and other art forms. [Explicit statement of the concept of a path]

2015 ... and compelling me to pursue visionary engagement through my own creative practices. [Development of path of practice]

Appendix D: Absorption Experiences and Porosity Explanations

From *An Occultural Memoir*:

Reference	Event	Absorption Characteristics*	Porosity Explanations
A1.1.2	Awareness of <i>Nightmare on Elm Street</i> : dreams/nightmares are 'real'		Agents are able to enter the dreams of others
A1.1.2	Attempting to enter <i>Eterna</i> through dreams/visualisation	Feeling of being carried away (diminished agency), mental imagery	
A1.1.4	Sensing a ghost in G-'s house	Sensed presence	
A1.1.4	Thinking about 'Bloody Mary'		Even thinking about 'Bloody Mary' in the presence of a mirror could call her (e.g. spirits can hear our thoughts)
A1.1.9	Repeatedly listening to The Hobbit at night	Mental imagery, sonic/musical absorption, getting lost in the story	
A1.1.10	Noticing a particular tree at Troller's Gill	Immersion in nature	
A1.2.2	Intense listening to Megadeth	Musical absorption, mental imagery	
A1.3.4	Intense listening to Gong	Musical absorption, mental imagery	'Telepot Contact' with Planet Gong (- but not taken completely seriously!)
A1.3.6	Listening to my own music (whistle & reverb)	Mental imagery	
A1.3.14	Entering the 'Temple of Flame' visualisation	Diminished agency, mental imagery	'A fleeting encounter with a denizen of dream'
A1.3.15	Astral travel experiments	Diminished agency, mental imagery	The mind can leave the body
A1.3.16	Encountering the Astral Necronomicon	Diminished agency, mental imagery	The mind can infer information from the 'astral plane'
A1.3.25	The Lightning Servitor working	Nature (weather), mental imagery	The mind can create a 'servitor' that has an effect on the world-at-large.
A1.3.27(a)	Exploring the ritual magic of <i>The Goetia</i>		Demons are either 'circuits' of the mind that effect the world-at-large, or have an independent existence.

* These characteristics derived from Table S9 in the supplementary information to Luhrmann et al (2021).

A1.3.27(b)	Feeling of attack by malevolent entities at night	Sensed presence	The spirit of Aleister Crowley able to manifest in some manner.
A1.3.31	Performing the <i>Headless Invocation</i>	Light-headed, but empowered, buzzing with energy.	The assumption of 'divine power'.
A1.3.32	Reading the <i>Goetia</i> conjuration	Sensed presence, changed atmosphere.	'The spirit was near'.
A1.3.37	Night visitation by the spirit Havres	Sensed presence, changed atmosphere.	The spirit was agitated by the way I stored its seal (porosity between spirit and physical object).
A1.4.8.1	Prayer/meditation with <i>The Arbatel</i>	Diminished agency, sensed presence, mental imagery	Conversation with spirits occurs through 'meditation'.
A1.4.10.1	Performing the <i>Primordial Earthwalk</i>	Diminished agency, mental imagery	The mind can travel to other places and times (astral travel)
A1.4.14	Reading scholarly work on medieval magic		'I began to take more seriously a worldview that saw the spirits as autonomous intelligent entities'
A1.4.19-22	<i>Heptameron</i> conjuration of Raphael	Sensed presence, audio-visual hallucinations	A dream encounter afterward is attributed to Raphael
A1.4.28	Interacting with Damascus MUSH	Mental imagery	Mind and digital environment interfaced with via Netgymit servitor (spirit)
A1.4.30	Intense music-listening while producing/ recording music	Mental imagery, diminished agency	
A1.4.34	Adopting Agrippa's tripartite cosmology		Highly porous ontology (spiritual essences flow into physical ones)
A1.4.38.1	Construction of 'Ritual Music'	Altered perception through musical absorption	A magical will can be encoded (e.g. which works on the outer world)
A2.1.2-4	Men-an-Tol experience	Immersion in nature, awe, expanded awareness, unity, 'doubly real'	Porosity explanation vague in immediate aftermath
A2.1.5	Recording at Mulfra Quoit	Diminished agency, musical absorption, sensed presence, vivid daydream/ mental imagery	Connection made to similar experiences in magic
A2.1.7	Recording on Newlyn Beach	Diminished agency, musical absorption, mental imagery, revisiting memories intensely	

A2.2.8-10	Recording on Ilkley Moor	Sense of enchantment (awe)	First hints at developing 'genius loci' theory
A2.2.13	Astral visit to the Witches' Sabbath	Diminished agency, mental imagery	Sense that I had trespassed too far on the 'dark side'
A2.2.16	Visits to the imaginary record shop	Diminished agency, mental imagery	(Considered 'fun' diversions, exercising imagination but not 'serious' in an esoteric sense)
A2.3.4	Recording during a sea-storm at Southwold	Musical absorption, diminished agency, mental imagery (air elementals)	The imagination can perceive the spirits of the air
A2.3.7	'Calling forth' imaginatively during improvisation	Musical absorption, diminished agency, mental imagery	Mentally encountering the 'King of Swords', a spirit
A2.3.12, 17-20	'Serious' work with the <i>Arbatel of Magick</i>	Absorption in prayer, mental imagery, diminished agency	God can reveal secrets to the mind; familiar spirits can also do this; prayers can be answered with physical results (e.g. easing my partner's breathing example A2.3.18)
A.2.3.24-25	<i>Arbatel</i> prayer experiences	Mental imagery, diminished agency, awe/excitement	Revelation of spirit name through prayer, journey with a spirit
A2.2.4	Recording <i>Astrophel the Rustic Lasses Love</i>	Musical absorption (in field recording), revisiting memories, mental imagery	
A2.5.4	Sense that spirits had been guiding my thoughts		Spirits can impress thoughts on the mind without knowledge of the receiver
A2.6.2	<i>Lords of the Green Grass</i> press release	Musical absorption, mental imagery (Holly King),	'Intuiting suggestions from the spiritus mundi'
A2.7.1	Witnessing dew on the grass	Awe, sense of transcendence	Dew seen as semi-divine (<i>prima materia</i> , manna)
A2.7.4.	Recording <i>Chapel of Infinite Echo</i>	Musical absorption (in field recording), revisiting memories, mental imagery	
A2.8.4.	Recording <i>Bogle Burn</i>	Musical absorption, diminished agency, mental imagery	The mind can 'leave' the body while making music
A2.8.10.	Encounter with the 'Landless Lord'	Musical absorption, diminished agency, mental imagery	Perception of spirit deemed to presage changes & upheavals in my life. 'Proven' by changing job (A2.8.13)

A2.9.3.	Recording <i>Turning to face the Western Oak</i>	Musical absorption, mental imagery	
A2.9.9.	Recording <i>The Pyrognomic Glass</i>	Musical absorption, mental imagery	Imagery developed into discourses with 'spirits' in 2009 chapbook <i>Abital</i>
A2.10.13.	Recording on Felixstowe beach	Musical absorption, diminished agency, mental imagery	Related my vision of Roman soldiers to Robert Graves' 'analeptic' method: throwing the mind back in time to receive impressions from the past.
A2.14.2.	Recording <i>Grotto Grove and Shrine</i>	Musical absorption, diminished agency, mental imagery, sensed presence	Sense of the mind entering a communion with the underworld (Anwn), experience of sensing a spirit behind me.
A2.17.2.	Use of 'psychegeographs' to re-engage with place	Revisiting memories, mental imagery	Implication that these can be used not just to stimulate memory, but to re-engage with the place <i>itself</i> (and its spirits).
A2.17.4, 9	The shade of Robert Lenciewicz as a familiar spirit	Mental imagery, sensed presence	Spirits of the dead can 'speak' to the minds of the living
A2.17.8	Description of genius loci in <i>Abital</i> and <i>Psychogeographia Ruralis</i>	Mental imagery	Spirits have a psychic reality ('imaginal'), and speak directly to the spirit/mind of the perceiver.
A2.18.4.	Account of drawing close to the spirit Elicona	Musical absorption (listening), diminished agency, mental imagery	Mental encounter with the domain of the spirit Elicona – a mirrored pool.

From third-party autobiographical narratives written by occultists:

Reference	Event	Absorption Characteristics	Porosity Explanations
Moult (2011): I	Walking on Simonside & Cheviot Hills as a child with father	Immersion in nature, awe ('intoxication')	<i>Post hoc</i> porosity explanation: 'those numinous manifestations of Nature possessed my soul [...] and guided me to where I am now'.
Moult (2011): I	Teenage experience of Hertfordshire countryside	Immersion in nature, awe ('intoxication')	<i>Post hoc</i> porosity explanation: 'I did not understand it as such [...] gradually I came to feel there were secrets'.

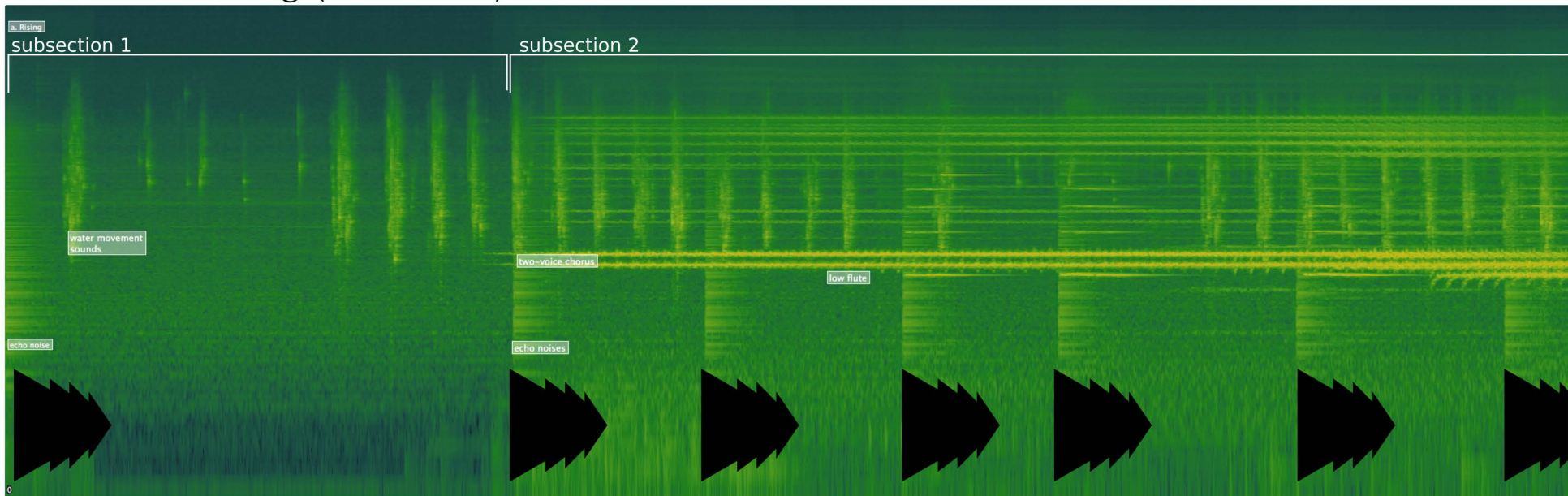
Moult (2011): I	Listening to his grandmother play Romantic composers on the piano	Musical absorption	Porosity between music, nature, and the 'numinous': 'both [music and Nature] emanated from the same "thing"'.
Moult (2011): III	Engaging with the Goetic spirits	Sensed presence (assumed – reference to 'calling them forth')	Storms occur whenever painting their pictures (porous relationship between spirits and weather/nature)
Evans (2012)	Account of childhood illness	Diminished agency, 'weird experiences'	<i>Post hoc</i> porosity explanation: 'the larger part of me was outside, looking in, consorting with spirits'.
Evans (2012)	Teenage exploration of ceremonial magic		[Assumed influence on porosity concepts]
Stratton-Kent (2018)	Initial interest in occult, sparked by a chance comment	'A brainstorm in my head about my identity, my purpose on the planet, etc.'	'It was like I knew some of the rules already, but had not been thinking about them until then. It was quite odd.'
Nebelhexe (1996)	Childhood experiences	'Out of body experiences', 'Visions, strong emotions for the nature, wild animals and past times' [mental imagery, heightened emotions, awe]	<i>Post hoc</i> : I was working magic, but not aware of it at the time.

Appendix E: Sonographic Analysis of *The Pyrognomic Glass*

[Analysis begins overleaf]

Abital

Section A: Rising (0:00 - 5:53)



Upon one of my *Autumnal* walks in a valley of *Wharfedale*, my curiosity led me from the well-worn path and through the mouth of a long since abandoned mine. When I had wandered as far as I dared through that dusty and dim-lit place I found myself by a pool, whose still waters must have exerted a strange *magnetic* influence upon my very *soul*, for, after gazing upon it for what I thought were mere minutes, I found that the sky, whose light was previously visible through crack in the ceiling of the chamber, had darkened and I had presumably passed several hours of stillness in this underground domain. I panicked and made my way through the semi-darkness, groping my way toward the dim twilit space that was the entrance and, after some minutes of fearful stumbling, eventually emerged into the cool dusky air.

Desperate to complete the circuit of my walk before total darkness fell I continued my way along the path, occasionally tripping upon loose stones, but not actually losing my footing until I reached the stream, a tributary of the great *Wharfe*, which ran along the floor of the valley. It was by this stream, near a twisted and venerable old tree that the sly *genius loci* sent me sprawling upon the ground.

While sitting upon the damp grass, regaining my composure and preparing to set off on my course once more, I noticed for the first time that dewdrops hung from each verdant blade, and even in semi-darkness they reflected the moonlight in curious ways, each one *more brilliant than crystal*. Like the still pool in that mine, which, I now supposed, must have condensed as the product of decades of atmospheric circulation, this *dew* transfixed me with a *magnetic* virtue and I sat, wonderstruck beneath the crooked tree.

After some minutes a fear once again overtook me, and as I started to my feet, suddenly desperate to return home, I could do nought but remain rooted to the spot as a sound began to well up from the four corners of the world. The *Magicians* have often spoken of profound disturbances that accompany the visitation of their *spirits*, likening them to drums, trumpets, and the sound of an army massing in its ranks, and such were the sounds that I heard, although they were but a brief and chaotic fanfare, which died away, to be followed by a confusion of voices, singing an unknown language in strange and close intervals, whose tones gradually moved farther and farther apart until a pleasing harmony sounded from beyond each horizon, still singing in a peculiar dialect that at once reminded me of both pure, unstopped *novels* and the strange *barbarous phrases* that one oftentimes hears on the edge of sleep. I have here tried to set forth these harmonies in our crude musical language.

325

435

subsection 3

repeated inhalation
sound

more active flute parts

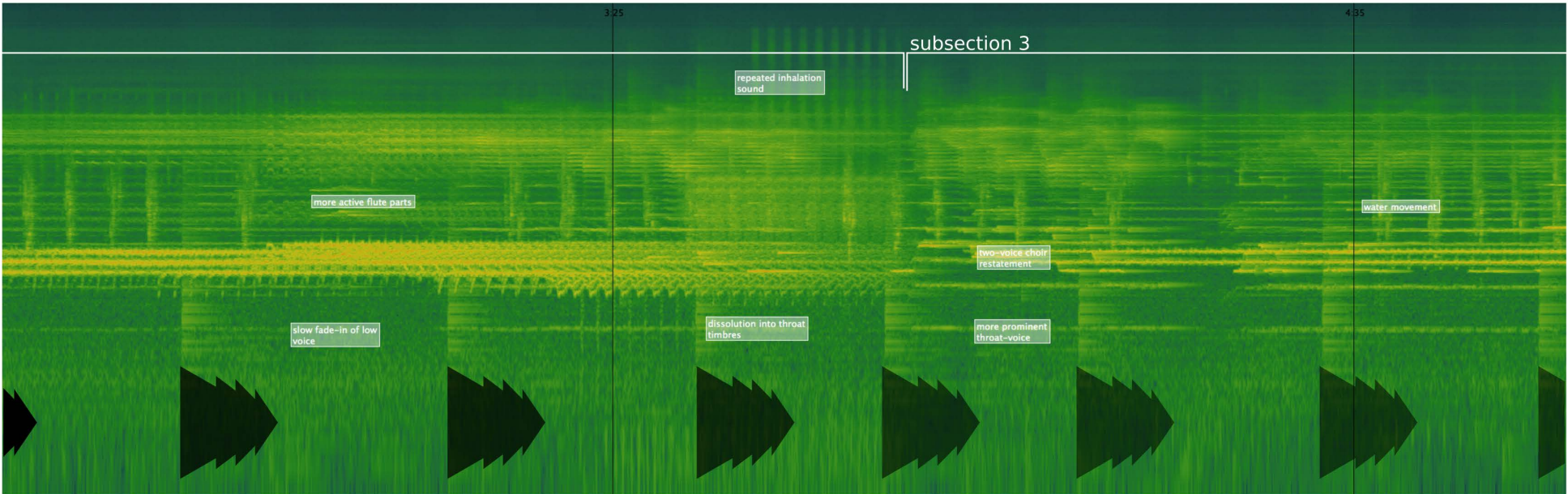
water movement

two-voice choir
restatement

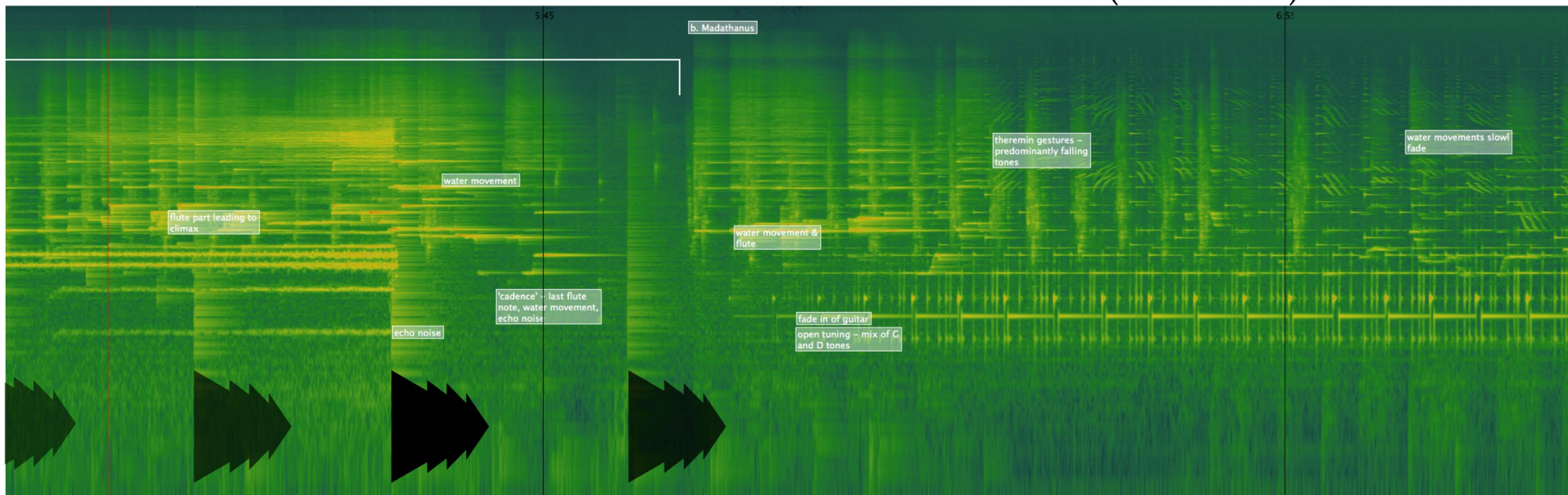
slow fade-in of low
voice

dissolution into throat
timbres

more prominent
throat-voice



Section B: Madathanus (5:54 - 8:29)



After some time these voices all became as one, echoing over the craggy walls of the valley and appearing to converge on a point above me, each voice having its own colour and dancing about the others. A light breeze blew over a weathered outcrop, sounding as if it were a flute, joining with the harmony, before an owl called, causing the music to abruptly stop and returning me to silent darkness.

I discovered that I was not, however, alone, when after some minutes I heard the rustle of leaves and the creaking of an aged bough. A moment later this was followed by the sound of a voice that was so old and cracked I assumed it to be that of the tree itself. It uttered a gnomish phrase:

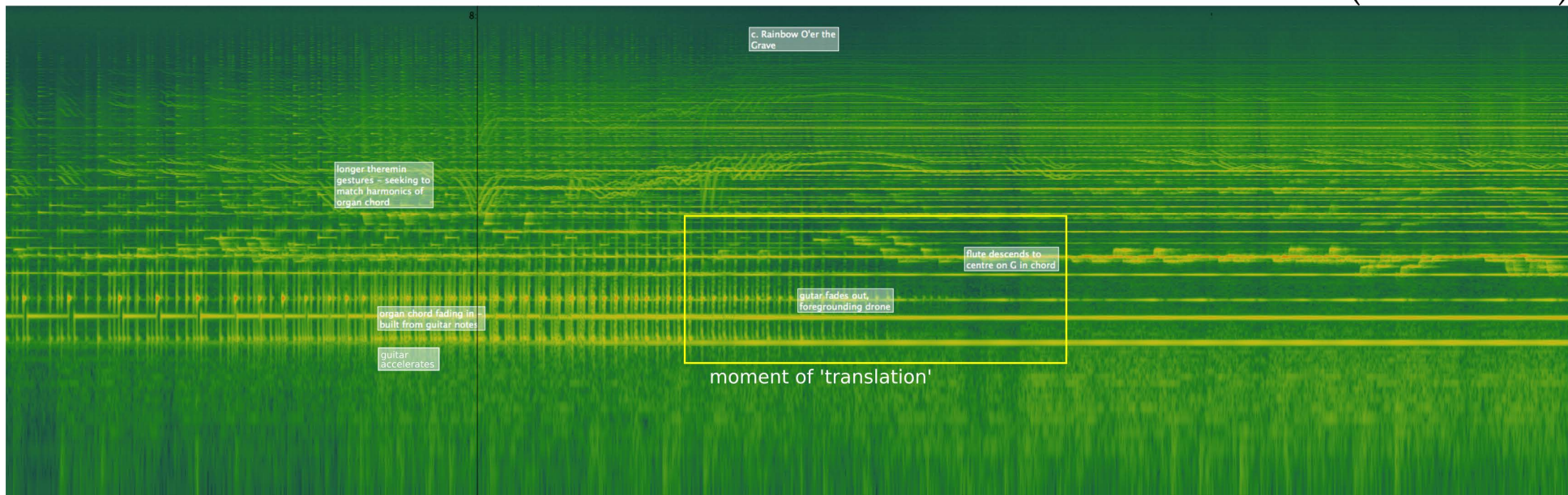
Anno Beatum justum. Taceo apud lucem.

I turned so that I might perceive this hidden speaker and, after not a little time, was able to discern the shape of a thin and extremely ancient woman within the tree, naked and almost indistinguishable from the bare branches amongst which she squatted.

Being shocked at the sudden appearance of this *phantasm*, I could do nothing but stand awestruck beneath her bough, as she hopped from her perch and descended the trunk with all the agility of a schoolboy. Her steps did not disturb the evening dew as she came toward me, one hand outstretched, the other covering her sex, and for the first time I noticed the *luminous* depth of her eyes: they shone with an ancient light. I kept my silence before this light, although that part of man which philosophers call *Rational* revolted at the idea and preferred the notion of flight from the place, assigning these sights to the category of pitiful delusion; its sensibility offended by the very presence of the *spectre*.

<i>In the Zodiac</i>	<i>Aries</i>	<i>Taurus</i>
<i>In the Horoscope</i>	<i>Ascendant</i>	<i>Cadent</i>
<i>The Luminaries</i>	<i>Sun</i>	<i>Moon</i>
<i>The Wandering Stars both</i>	<i>Venus</i>	<i>Jupiter</i>
<i>Fortunate and Infortunate</i>	<i>Mars</i>	<i>Saturn</i>
<i>In Motion</i>	<i>Movable</i>	<i>Stationary</i>
<i>In Quality</i>	<i>Hot</i>	<i>Cold</i>
<i>In the Seasons</i>	<i>Spring</i>	<i>Autumn</i>
<i>Liminal Hours</i>	<i>Dawn</i>	<i>Dusk</i>
<i>Genij Temporum</i>	<i>Rorasa</i>	<i>Abital</i>
<i>Sounds</i>	<i>Reeds</i> <i>Plucked</i>	<i>Flute</i> <i>Bowed</i>
	<i>Organ</i> <i>strings</i>	<i>Choir</i> <i>strings</i>
<i>Divisions of the Self</i>	<i>Right</i>	<i>Left</i>
<i>Divisions of the Horizon</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>West</i>
<i>In Musical Modes</i>	<i>Dorian</i>	<i>Lydian</i>
	<i>Raga Kafi</i>	<i>Raga Yaman</i>

Section C: Rainbow O'er the Grave (8:30 - 11:41)



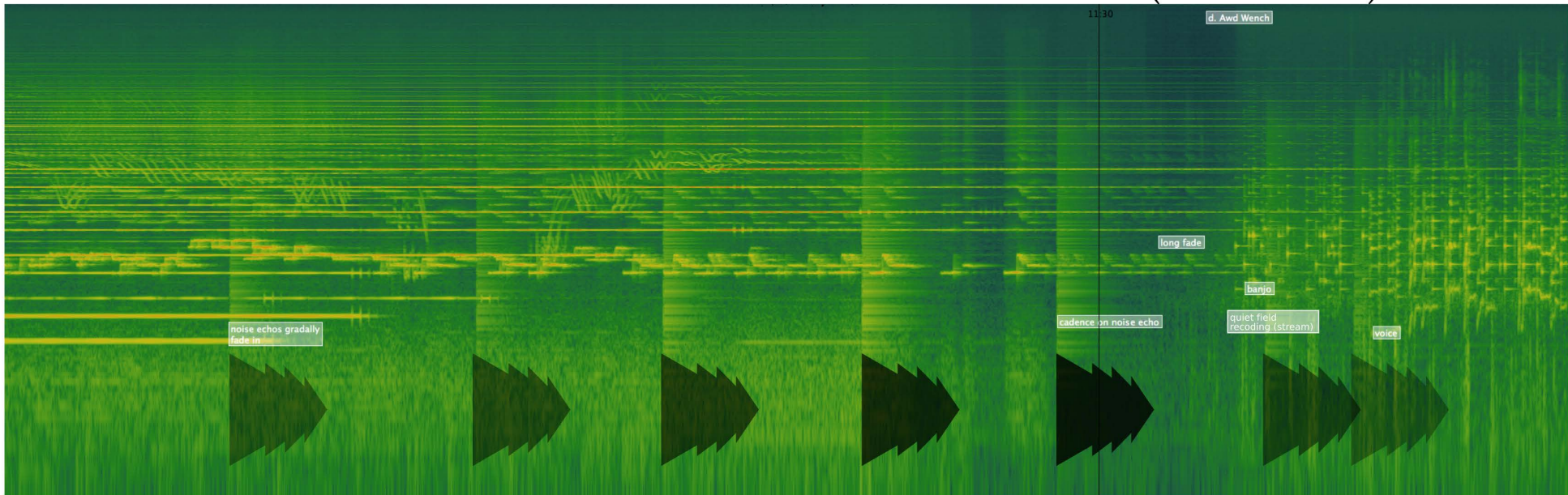
I found myself inexplicably touching her outstretched hand and at once both the *spirit* and myself were translated by her power to a hill above the valley looking down from which I spied the tree that I stood by just a moment before.

Further examining this place I noted that, immediately between the spirit and I, there was a *cairn* of a modest size, perhaps three foot in both height and diameter. Here too I noticed that the *dew* had condensed upon its cold stones and was slowly dripping into the cracks between them. The *spirit* spoke:

*Here lies the body of a Saint, blackened with the labours of mortification.
The dew shall penetrate his cist, his impurities shall be washed away, and, at the turning of his age, only his Divine Chaos remain.*

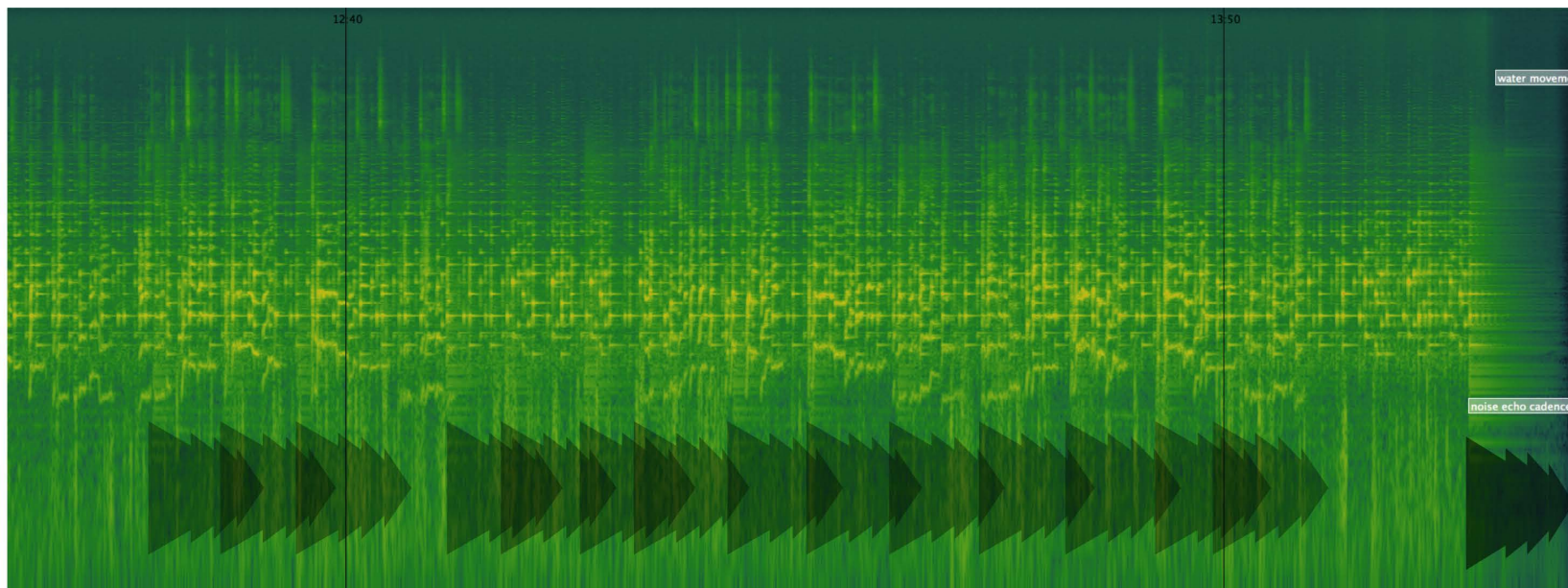
I nodded, feigning that I understood, whereupon she fixed me with her stare and, extending her brown and withered arm, pointed westward, across the valley to the another hill upon which I could see forms that were at first indistinct, but as the clouds unveiled the shining *Moon* I saw clearly two figures sitting before a table, engaged in a game of wits. With not a little astonishment I discerned that one of the figures was myself and the other a fair lady, who I then understood to be this *Autumnal spirit* in her youth. My astonishment was compounded when, as I looked upon this scene, variously glancing between the *cairn*, the *spirit* and the figures on the faraway mount, a distant shower, still some way beyond the valley, apparently drew closer, within whose vapours, which caught the moonlight in some miraculous way, there appeared to be a faint rainbow, a phenomena that some call the *moonbow*, which appeared to span the opposing hills.

Section D: Awd Wench (11:42 - 14:18)



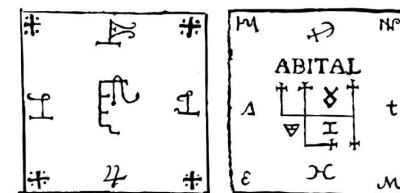
As the rain drew close and its first drops fell upon the *cairn* the vision faded. I found myself alone upon a dark, cold hillside. Storm clouds now obscured the *Moon* and stars and, not knowing the way to my lodgings from this vantage point, descend into the valley from whence I came by the most direct route I could find.

I slipped and skidded to the foot of the hill, and, after clambering over a dilapidated stone wall found myself with one foot in the river and one on the sodden bank. Though the cold water stung, the stream was shallow at this place and, removing my shoes, I walked to the other side, to that tree where I had first encountered the *spirit*. Sheltering beneath it, drying my feet I heard something amidst the patter of the rain and hiss of the stream: a loud slapping noise occurring at regular intervals, as though a wet cloth was being beaten against a rock. I assumed it to be a large fish in the waters, but, as the clouds once more let the *lunar* light penetrate the scene, I beheld that ancient crone stood further upstream, waist deep in the flowing waters, washing a jaundiced length of linen, which she would at times smash and rub against a large, polished rock near the river's edge. With some revulsion I realised what this material was – it must be the shroud of the *saint* interred above the valley, and the *spirit* was cleansing those black impurities that



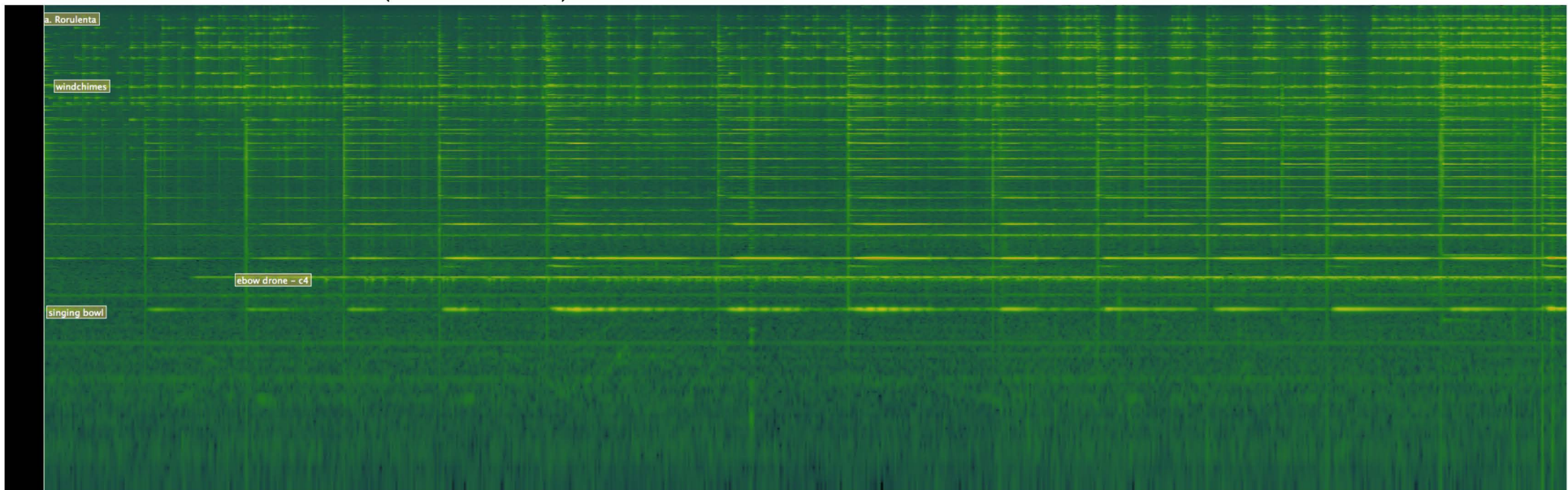
leached from his corpse from its funereal garb. Finding my voice, for I had not spoken since I set out upon my journey, I called out to her: *O Spirit, will you not tell me your name? Your Denomination or Star?* To which she replied: *My name I have to you spoken upon meeting. My natures you will discover upon waking.*

At which juncture the *Moon* again became clouded and brought this visionary masque to its conclusion. Having retraced my route to the main road I proceeded barefoot, sodden shoes in hand, to a nearby hamlet where I had arranged to stay at the local inn. My attempts to sleep were troubled by recurring visions of the *spectre* in the stream, purging the ancient shroud. When sleep finally took me I found myself dreaming of the valley and the tree, to which was nailed a square of parchment upon which the signs below were drawn in blue ink, such signs indicating the natures of the *spirit* in its *allegorical* language as it had promised.



Rorasa

Section A: Rorulenta (0:00 - 3:00)

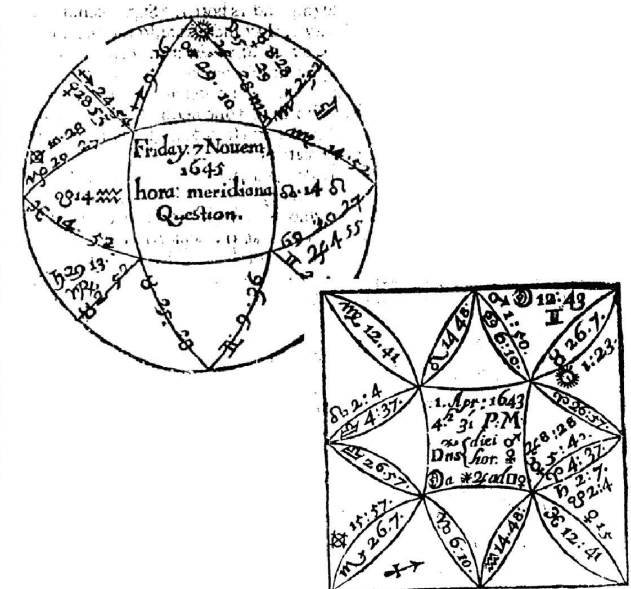


It was not until the new year that I found myself drawn toward that ultimately *Solar* intelligence that is the *Springtime* reflection of the *Autumnal spirit*. Intent on spending the night upon a local moor, noted for its sites of great antiquity, I spent some portion of the day rambling with an eye for an inconspicuous place to pitch my tent. It was on a site of medium elevation surrounded by patches of overgrown flora that I decided to make my camp, resolved that the grasses and bushes would afford enough cover so as to evade the notice of a casual passer by.

Having erected my tent I noticed that, amidst these bushes grew a citron-coloured plant, whose open flowers struck me as having an uncanny similarity with the traditional form of the *horoscope*, that is, a square figure dividing the sky into twelve houses. Taking this as a benevolent *celestial augur* I undertook my evening ramble in high spirits and returned at a little past midnight.

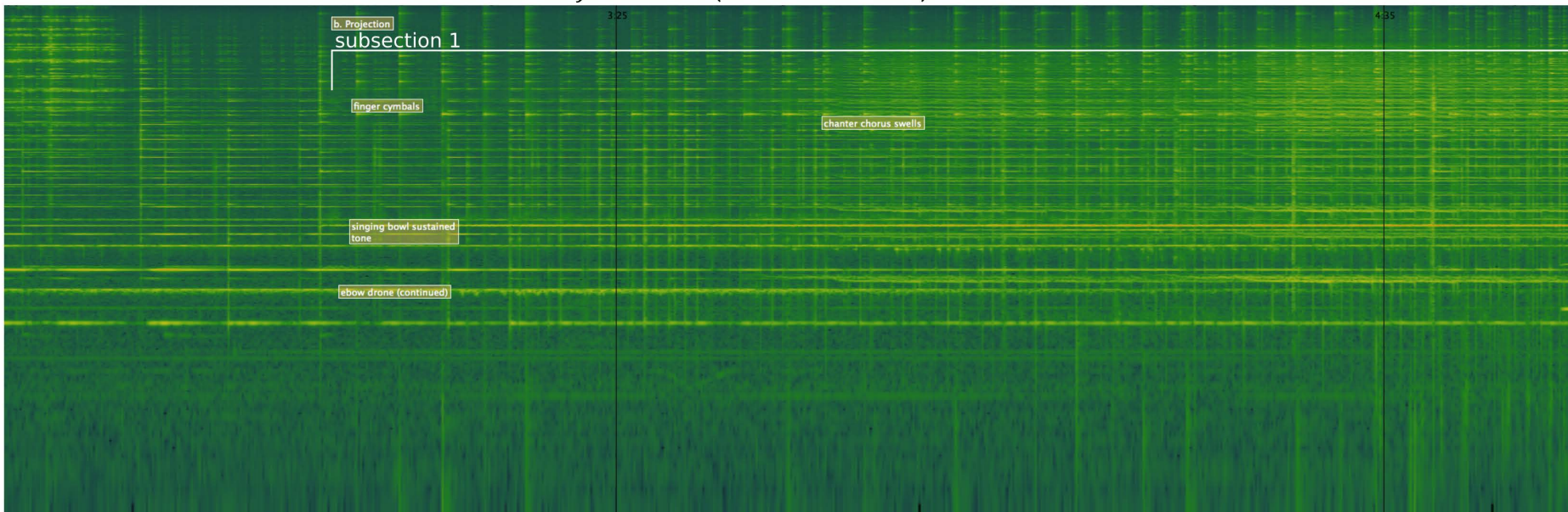


<https://www.uksouthwest.net/wildflowers/rosaceae/alchemilla-vulgaris.html>

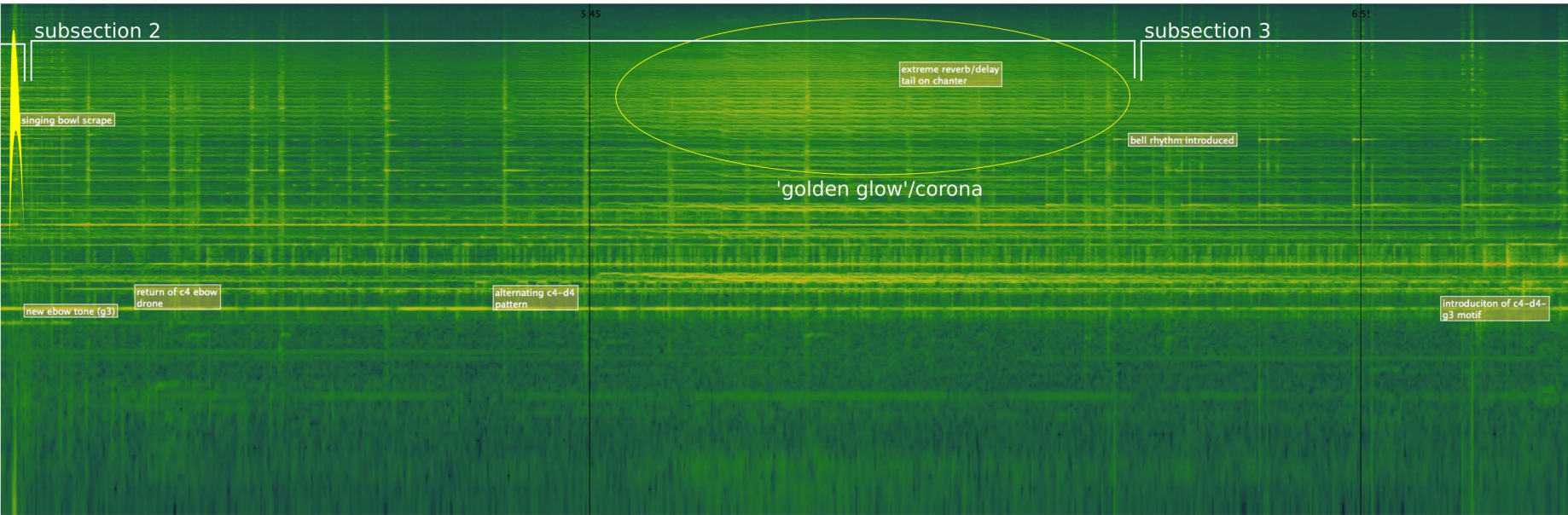


Charts from William Lilly's *Christian Astrology* (1659)

Section B: Projection (3:01 - 13:27)



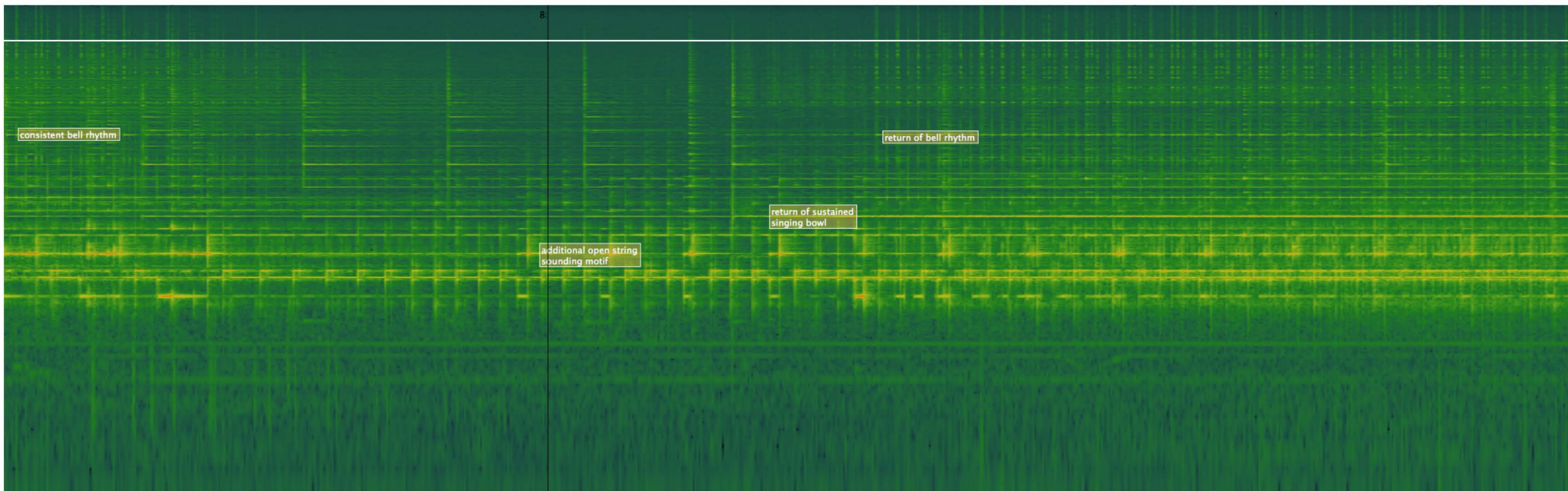
I believe my sleep to have been relatively good thanks to the night air, although something woke me in the dark hours of the morning – a distant sound, which, as I rolled over to try and get back to sleep, I presumed to be that of some nocturnal bird. Each time I was to upon the threshold of slumber the noise would start again, growing louder each time so that there was nothing to do but lie in my *liminal* state and fix my attention upon it. It sounded like a thin, shrill wind or reed instrument: there was something undoubtedly *masculine* in its tone, evoking the quality of a *Maori* pipe, and indeed it was joined at intervals by another instrument or war – a horn sounding at regular intervals some distance beyond it.



With a start I realised that there must be a hunt in the area, and I bolted from my tent lest any horses that rode through the area would trample my concealed den.

Once outside the tent I surveyed the horizon and could see no indication of a hunting party. The sky was dull gray, the air moderately cold and the grass felt damp with dew against my ankles. The phantom call began again and, as I turned to face it, the Eastern clouds were suddenly illuminated with a golden glow, in the midst of which I perceived that there was indeed a hunt, for in the corona of the Sun four horsemen rode abreast and as they came nearer so their horns and pipes grew louder, the rise and fall of their notes seeming to scale the height and depth of the world, inducing a sense of vertigo that caused me to crouch upon the damp grass as though humbling myself for their immanent arrival.

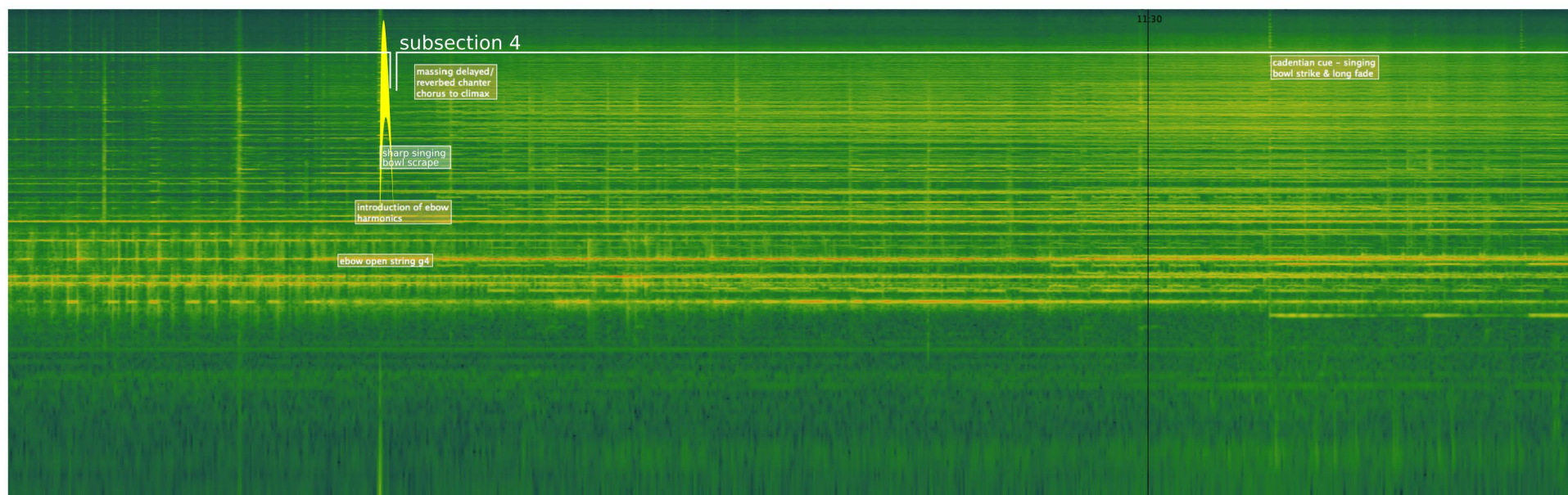
<i>In the Zodiac</i>	<i>Aries</i>	<i>Taurus</i>		
<i>In the Horoscope</i>	<i>Ascendant</i>	<i>Cadent</i>		
<i>The Luminaries</i>	<i>Sun</i>	<i>Moon</i>		
<i>The Wandering Stars both</i>	<i>Venus</i>	<i>Jupiter</i>		
<i>Fortunate and Infortunate</i>	<i>Mars</i>	<i>Saturn</i>		
<i>In Motion</i>	<i>Movable</i>	<i>Stationary</i>		
<i>In Quality</i>	<i>Hot</i>	<i>Cold</i>		
<i>In the Seasons</i>	<i>Spring</i>	<i>Autumn</i>		
<i>Liminal Hours</i>	<i>Dawn</i>	<i>Dusk</i>		
<i>Genij Temporum</i>	<i>Rorasa</i>	<i>Abital</i>		
<i>Sounds</i>	<i>Reeds</i>	<i>Plucked strings</i>	<i>Flute</i>	<i>Bowed strings</i>
	<i>Organ</i>		<i>Choir</i>	
<i>Divisions of the Self</i>	<i>Right</i>		<i>Left</i>	
<i>Divisions of the Horizon</i>			<i>East</i>	
<i>In Musical Modes</i>	<i>Dorian</i>		<i>Lydian</i>	
	<i>Raga Kafi</i>		<i>Raga Yaman</i>	



It was while in this position that I heard the swift steps of a man approaching on foot, running across the moorland, together with the rattle of a coins or chain-mail and the jostling of other sundry other metal objects gaining with his approach, although at first I presumed these sounds to be *tinnitus* brought on by the horsemen's continuing din.

Though dizzied I stood up and espied, beyond the foliage which hid my camp, that there was indeed a man a short distance from me running from his pursuers, the horsemen, who were still many miles distant.

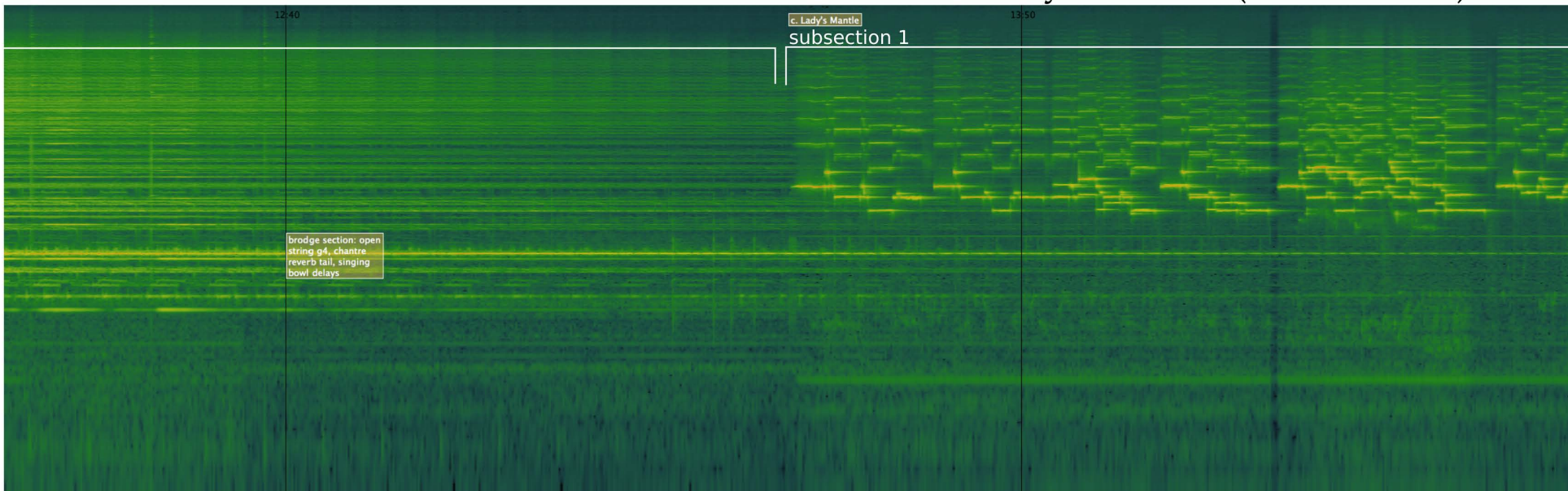
There was something roguish about this man, for he was covered in mud and had about his shoulders a tattered *babergeon*, while he carried upon his back a heavy sack. He noticed me and grinned before putting down his sack and opening it to reveal a horde of treasure: the sort that might have been plundered from an ancient hill, wherein was interred one of the semi-divine kings of prehistory. Having come upon the scrub by which I had pitched my tent he was now digging as well as his bare hands would allow, obviously trying to hide his shining trinkets and make a quick escape on foot before his pursuers arrived. His grin was an invitation to join him and perhaps take whatever payment I considered fitting from his *acbe*.



Wanting neither to get involved with this character nor stir up the wrath of the huntsmen I elected to stand by and watch and it was well that I did so, for just as he had removed a shining cauldron from his sack a golden arrow penetrated his body, passing clean through his coat of mail, through his heart and thence seeming to continue its journey uninterrupted beyond the *Western* horizon.

The horns became mute as the startled rogue fell and the cauldron rang like a dull bell as his skull cracked upon it while, during his fall, one jet of his dying blood arced from his breast landed therein. In an instant, as if magically transported, the horsemen had drawn closer and it was easy to discern their particulars. It was a surprise that only one of the riders had a male countenance. He rode ahead of the other three and appeared to be a soldier in fine armour, his sword sheathed and a quiver of arrows upon his back. Beyond him there was a noble woman, dressed in green, and I noticed that she seemed to lack her left leg, although this presented her with no difficulty in controlling her steed, while two young maids dressed simply in white flanked her upon their mounts. The group continued riding, the lady and her maids taking the lead, while the soldier fell behind. In a short time they stood before me.

Section C: Lady's Mantle (13:28 - 20:02)

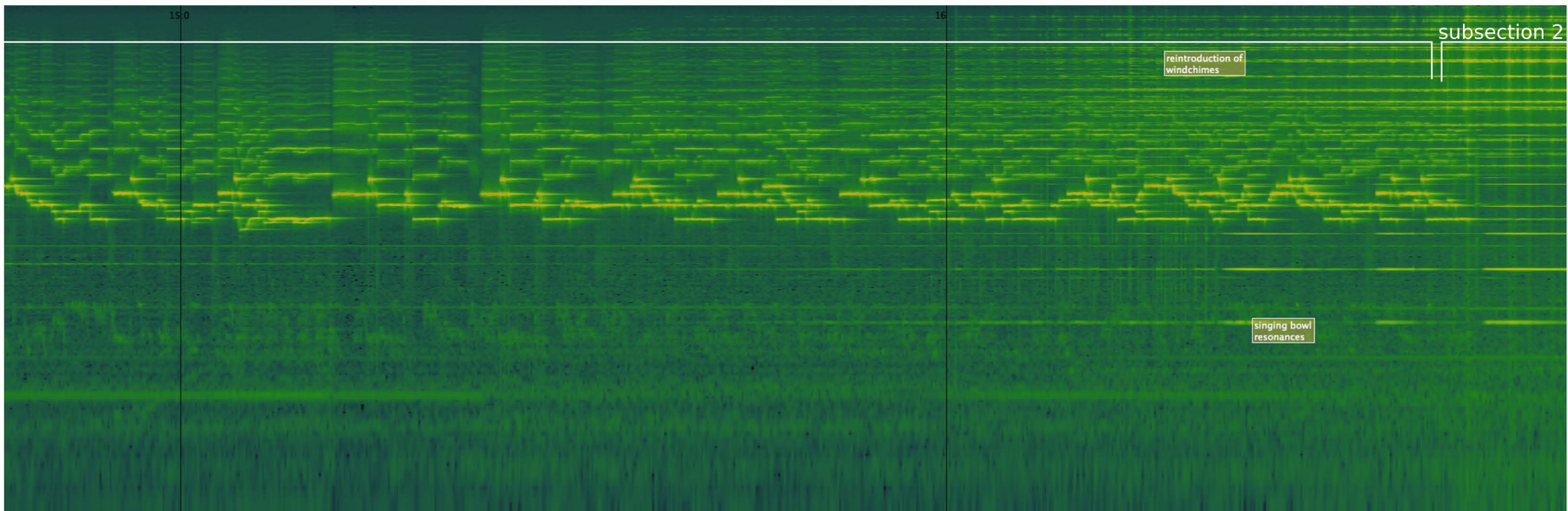


The noble lady silently surveyed the bedewed grasses, her presence so penetrating all things in the place that even the trees on a faraway hill seemed to bow their branches in reverence. I was also so moved by her otherworldly dignity that, against all usual instincts, I too found myself kneeling before her.

Approaching me upon her steed, she held out a white rose, upon whose petals dewdrops shone in the morning light, and she made her utterance:

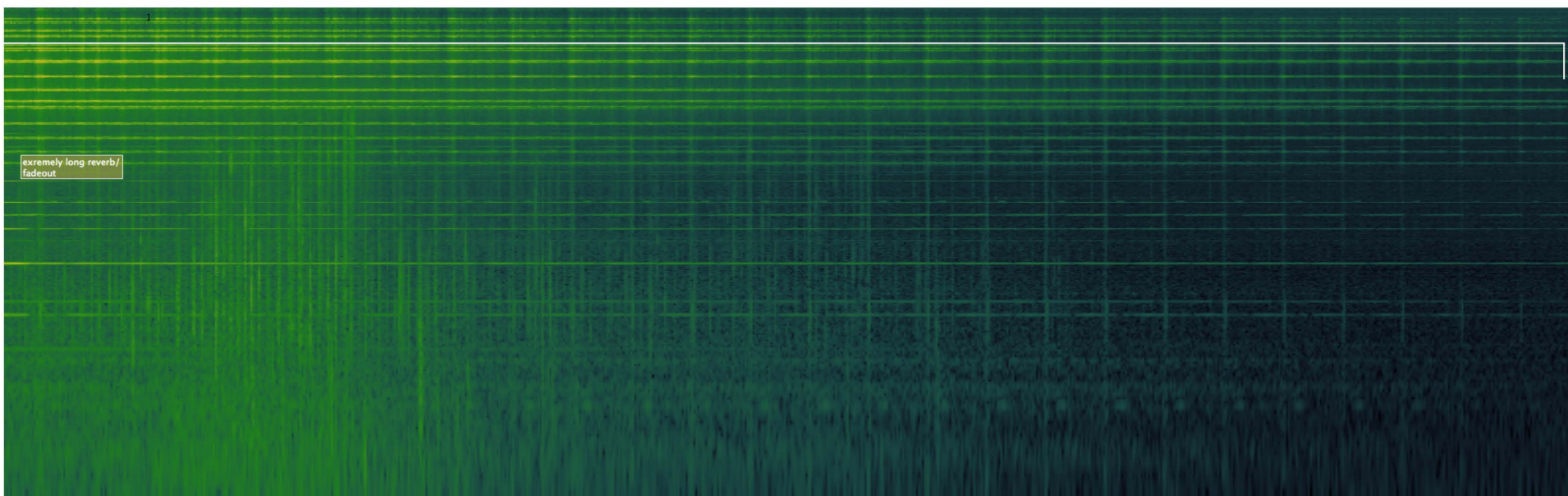
Ros est oraculum religiosum. Accipias signum amantis.

These words I understood as a direction to take the rose from her hand, and this I did, although with some hesitation as I caught sight of the soldier and thought about the fate that befell the vagabond, but taking it I noticed that mingled with the *dew* was another material which was white like unto tears of *myrrh* upon the petals.



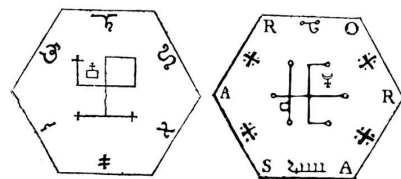
However, I had no time to examine this flower further since my attention was attracted toward the two maids who, having dismounted from their horses, walked past me toward where the corpse of the rogue lay. They emerged from behind the bush, one carrying the cauldron, the other with a length of canvas, which she proceeded to drag across the dewy grass until such a time as it was sodden with dew, whereupon she wrung it into the cauldron.

After six or seven gatherings of the dew the maids gingerly carried the cauldron over to where I stood and placed it between the noble lady and I. The sun was now at a curious angle in the sky and shone upon the water in the bowl. The reflected light was neither blindingly bright nor dull, but pleasurable to behold as the moorland breeze gently stirred upon the surface. After observing this for a short time, the breeze dropped, and yet the water continued in its agitation, causing me to apprehend that it was not a *terrestrial* breeze that animated the collected dew, but a *celestial* one: this water moved in sympathy with the flow of its *Supercelstial* progenitor as it whirled upon the outer surface of the *primum mobile*. Some hours must have passed since this vision began, for I beheld that the *Sun* was approaching its apex, and as it approached that node the agitation in the water became more profound until I beheld, turning in clockwise manner upon its surface, tinted red with rogue's blood, the *simulacrum* of a rose with six petals.



Having contemplated this vision, my mind particularly dwelling upon the similarities of the Latin of *rus* and *rosa*, I turned to question the noble woman and her companions to find that they had vanished, along with the *dev* that brought them, and also along with the rose I held in my hand, along with the cauldron, and – having looked behind the hedges – along with the corpse of the rogue and his golden spoils.

Sitting in the mouth of my tent I silently bemoaned that, aside from this vision, I had been left nought by the spirits, but consoled myself in the thought that perhaps these preceding scenes may contain the kernel of some profound *philosophy*. While immersed in these *melancholic* thoughts the *solar* rays happened to catch upon those plants whose forms I had, the previous night, considered auspicious, and upon this event I noticed that, suspended from one of their curious flowers was a jewel of similar form to one which the noble lady wore about her neck. This was its form, showing forth her mysteries in what the *Hermeticists* call their *green language*:



***Abital*: Tabulated Narrative Elements and Auditory Cues**

Section	Narrative Element	Auditory Cue	Sound Derivation	Image
A. Rising				
Subsection 1	Sitting by a pool in an abandoned mine	'Echo noise' and 'water movement'.	Representational	
Subsection 2	Hearing strange voices, singing close tones	'Two-voice chorus'.	Representational	
Subsection 3	Breeze blowing over outcrops, joining in the harmony.	Flute.	Representational	
B. Madathanus	Encounter with spirit in tree bough	No specific cue beyond general affect of music in section (rurality, mystery).	Affective	
C. Rainbow O'er the Grave	'Translation' to a hill above the valley	Accelerating guitar arpeggio, crossfade with organ, flute descends to harmonise w/ organ.	Representational (a literal translation from one instrument and tone-centre to another)	
	The vision on the hill fades	Fade out of section	Representational (literal fade)	
D. Awd Wench	The spirit washes a shroud in the beck.	Lyrics, derived from Cowling's poem.	Affective	

Rorasa: Tabulated Narrative Elements and Auditory Cues

Section	Narrative Element	Auditory Cue	Sound Derivation	Image
A. Rorulenta	Seeing a plant whose petals suggest a horoscope (- e.g. the flowers of Lady's Mantle)	Tinkling sounds: chimes, singing bowl.	Representational (tinkling suggests dew; Lady's Mantle is known to attract dew)	
B. Projection				
Subsection 1	Hearing massed hunters horns	'Swelling chanter chorus'.	Representational	
	Suddenly bolting from the tent	'Singing bowl scrape'.	Representational (sudden, discordant sound suggest rupture)	
Subsection 2	Seeing horsemen in the corona of the sun	Extreme reverb and swell on chorus of chanters.	Representational (complex higher harmonics suggest brightness).	
Subsection 3	The rattle of coins or chain mail.	'Bell rhythm'.	Representational	
	The rogue opens his sack to reveal treasure.	'Return of bell rhythm'.	Representational	
	The rogue is shot by a golden arrow.	'Sharp singing bowl scrape'.	Representational	
Subsection 4	The cauldron rings like a dull bell as the rouge's skull cracks against it.	'Cadential cue – singing bowl strike and long fade'.	Representational	
C. Lady's Mantle				
Subsection 1	A noble woman surveys the dewy grasses.	No specific cue beyond general affect of music in section (slow, canonic, noble).	Affective	
Subsection 2	Two maids collect the dew with a length of canvas.	Twinking sounds: Chimes, bells, etc.	Representational (twinking sounds suggestive of dew)	

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Note: Entries above marked * can be streamed or downloaded at:
<http://xetb.bandcamp.com/music>