

**Composing with Schizo-narratives and Sonic Chorographies:  
The Territory of Disembodied Voices and the Perception of Acousmatic Identities**

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I hereby declare that the work in this thesis and the work presented in the accompanying portfolio have been carried out by myself except as otherwise specified.

Signed,



Emmanuel Spinelli

| An early version of Chapter II was presented at Soundfjord, London (29/05/2011).

| A version of Chapter III was presented at Goldsmiths University of London: *Phonography Colloquium*, London (07/07/2011); and University of Kent: *Symposium on Acoustic Ecology*, Chatham (09/11/2013).

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## ABSTRACT

This PhD focusses on the body of work that has emerged from the author's compositional practice between 2008 and 2015. It tackles a range of issues including (dark) tourism, identity and remembrance, and the tensions between history, narrative and myth; from folklore practices to postwar Eastern Europe and the Holocaust.

Three extended projects using field recordings and interviews as their primary source material are examined: a soundscape study of Padstow, a composition dealing with the soundscapes of historically-charged places, and an ongoing project that further explores issues of memory, narrative, and myth-making. Through a detailed contextual investigation of these sound-works, the text endeavours to provide a dialogue between the phonographies of the sites and voices featured in the compositions and the social, historical, political and economic forces that have contributed to the making (and metamorphosis) of these places and communities.

The author develops a number of notions including the construction of schizo-narratives: an editing technique where fragments of interviews are reorganised to create unexpected and non-linear narratives, and sonic chorographies: the use of field recordings to represent not only the fragmentary delineations of a soundscape but also to operate a re-scaling of the elements depicted to highlight crucial aspects of the socio-political fabric of a specific place. These elements lead to an investigation of the territory of disembodied voices – the phenomenological mechanisms of interaction between disembodied voices and the sonic environment – as well as a reflection on the perception of acousmatic identities.

From the multitude of conflicting histories that underpin the origins and beliefs associated with the Mayday festival to the problematic site transformations that have occurred in Krakow and Auschwitz as a result of the Holocaust tourist trade; from the dislocated narratives of 'twin language' to the imagined myths of the lost Jewish community of thirteenth century Hereford, this PhD endeavours to show how disembodied voices and soundscapes might be creatively and conceptually explored through plurality and contradiction, as a territory where no element is fixed, where no narrative is crystallised, where identities are in constant motion, where *meaning* is always transient.

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## PORTFOLIO CONTENTS

– Flash drive:

1. Padstow Cosmesis (8 Channel) + [Installation Max Patch] 33:57
2. Padstow Cosmesis (Stereo Reduction) 33:57

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### - *Before the End of Time* project:

3. Footsteps in the Wind (8 Channel) 14:55
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### - *Lands and Genotypes* project:

7. Lands and Genotypes: Anseriformes Twins (8 Channel) 17:35
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11. Diary of a Malfunctioning Leg (8 Channel) 06:53
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13. The Golem of Hereford (Multi-channel) Max Patch Standalone ~30:00
14. The Golem of Hereford [Rendering 1] (Stereo Reduction) 29:45
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16. Bregenz by Cycle (8 Channel) 17:01
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  18. Electro+ (*Orăștie*) (8 Channel + LFE) 20:35
  19. Electro+ (*Orăștie*) (Stereo Reduction) 20:35
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# Chapter I

## Introduction

This thesis is primarily concerned with the practical and theoretical underpinnings of the body of work that has emerged from my composition practice and research projects between 2008 and 2015. All the practical elements for this PhD are essentially fixed or generative multi-channel<sup>1</sup> acousmatic soundscape compositions using fragments of interviews, montages<sup>2</sup> of field recordings, archives and found sounds as their primary source material. As will be discussed throughout this dissertation, the utilisation and exploration of disembodied voices and the sonic environment is central to both my compositional process and my research.

Through a detailed contextual examination of my creative practice, intertwined with a number of socio-historical considerations, this text tackles a series of contrasting sound-works that strive to engage with places, individuals and communities. Underpinning this thesis and my practice in general is the idea, as Jonathan Sterne puts it, that: “Sound is an artifact of the messy and political human sphere.”<sup>3</sup>

Addressing a range of issues including (dark) tourism, identity, remembrance, and the tensions between history, narrative and myth – from folkloric practices in Cornwall to postwar Eastern Europe and the Holocaust – this text endeavours to provide a dialogue between the phonographies of the different sites and voices featured in the works and some of the social, historical, political and economic forces that have contributed to the making (and metamorphosis) of these places and communities. This dialogue then leads to a reflection upon how their identity might be perceived, imagined and understood.

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<sup>1</sup> Mostly 8-channel.

<sup>2</sup> This term is used throughout this text to refer to the editing and mixing techniques used in my composition practice when producing a new composite whole (a segment or section of a piece) by juxtaposing or superimposing various field recordings, found sounds or voice recordings together. The term is discussed further in Chapters IV and V.

<sup>3</sup> Sterne (2003: 13)

Three extended projects in particular are examined:

- *Padstow Cosmesis* (2009-2011): a soundscape study of the Mayday festival in the town of Padstow, in Cornwall.
- *Before the End of Time* (2005-2014): a project that includes a series of sound-works using field recordings from various places in Poland (Krakow, Kazimierz, *Muzeum Auschwitz-Birkenau*, and KL Gross Rosen).
- *Lands and Genotypes* (2006-ongoing): a project from which two pieces are discussed: *Anseriformes Twins* (2007-2009), a soundscape composition centred on a pair of twins (and their mother) who developed idioglossia<sup>4</sup> in the first few years of their lives; and *The Golem of Hereford* (2012), a generative sound-work that deals with the imagined history of a small Jewish community who lived in the town in the thirteenth century, and further explores issues of memory, diaspora, self-narrative and myth-making.

As part of the portfolio for this PhD, a number of sound-works, commissioned or otherwise, are submitted but not discussed within the main body of this dissertation:

- *Bregenz by Cycle* (2010): A sonic journey around Lake Constance and Bregenz (Austria).<sup>5</sup> The piece explores the soundscapes of different sites in this popular holiday destination; following the lake's cycle and the city's rhythm, from running around the urban landscape, sitting by the lake, to a microphone drifting on a plank of wood. (See *Appendix 3: 233*)
- *Electro+ (Orăștie)* (2012): A soundscape study that accompanied the publication of a book of photographs and poems of the same name by artists Nicu Ilfoveanu and Agnès Birebent. The piece deals with the sonic environment of non-touristic places in the Orăștie region of Romania; composed from a tourist-driven perspective. (See *Appendix 4: 235*)
- *Lands and Genotypes: Naiara and Firat* (2006-2008): A piece that focuses on two individuals through field recordings and interviews: Naiara, a Basque person whose parents suffered under the

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<sup>4</sup> Or 'twin language'. (See Chapter IV, pp. 134 - 135)

<sup>5</sup> Commissioned for *Field Trip, International Showcase*, London Festival of Architecture, (06/2010) London; and *Kunsthau Bregenz*, (06/2010) Bregenz (Austria).

repression of Franco's regime; and Firat, a Turkish person whose family history shares a somewhat similar narrative. (See Appendix 5: 238)

- *Lands and Genotypes: Diary of a Malfunctioning Leg* (2014): The continuation of *Naiara and Firat*, this text-sound composition focuses on the relationships between Naiara, her physical condition, and her mother. (See Appendix 6: 239)

The figure below presents a diagram of the various sound-works composed as part of this PhD as well as some of the thematic and conceptual links between them:

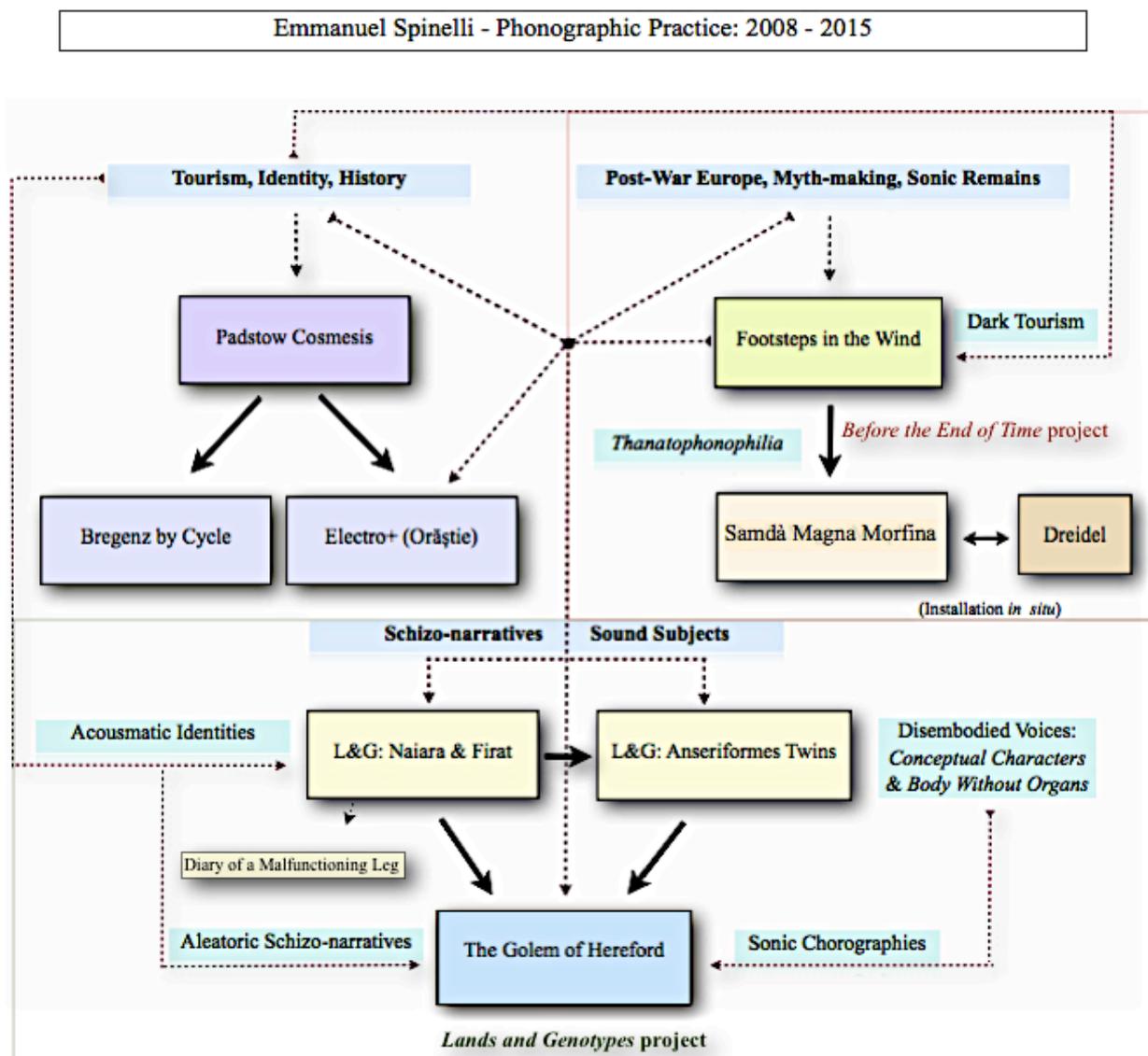


Fig. 1 Diagram of the author's composition practice 2008 - 2015

## 1.1 Structure of the dissertation and portfolio

Chapter II (*Padstow Cosmesis*) examines a soundscape composition that explores the yearly cycle of the Padstonian community, centred on the Obby Oss ritual. It provides a detailed account of the polyphony of meanings, myths and histories that permeate this folkloric practice and fuel the imagination of Padstonians and tourists alike. Throughout this chapter, the socio-economic context and the politics that surround the town, its local inhabitants, and this folk tradition, are also discussed in relation to the overwhelming increase in touristic activity and the issues of second home ownership in the area. In this chapter, the soundscapes of Padstow – the voices of local inhabitants, the songs, the beating of the Brenton drums, the sea, the harbour, and so forth – lead to a reflection on the significance of the Obby Oss ritual as a device of resistance; resistance against a number of socio-economic challenges, and perhaps also against the sentiment of endangered and fragile identity expressed by some members of this ostensibly dissolving community.

Chapter III (*Footsteps in the Wind*, 2007-2009; *Samdà Magna Morfina*, 2014) examines the effects of the tourist industry on our perception and understanding of several sites of pilgrimage, memory and trauma such as Auschwitz, the main market square of Krakow<sup>6</sup> and its hourly trumpet call<sup>7</sup>, the former Schindler factory, and Kazimierz, the historical Jewish ghetto. *Muzeum Auschwitz-Birkenau* in particular has become a major tourist destination, a controversial place as well as a powerful symbol of European identity. Through a discussion of the composition process and the field recordings that form the source material of *Footsteps in the Wind*, the soundscapes of these different sites are investigated alongside a series of detailed descriptions and comparisons of the various myths, legends and (often conflicting) histories attached to them, in order to address and question issues of place, site preservation, historical and social alienation, as well as the manipulation, mediation, and representation of the ‘past’ and its traces.

With the rise of dark tourism as an industry arguably fuelled by the narratives and imageries of Hollywoodian cinema, we are sometimes led to believe that ‘memory’ is better preserved and more accessible – it is there for our eyes to see. Nonetheless, an aural rather than a visual

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<sup>6</sup> *Rynek Główny*

<sup>7</sup> *The Heynal*

experience of these sites might reveal something different. While the resonating trumpet call of Square Mariacki and its associated legends might constitute a powerful sonic symbol of Polish identity and national military pride, the phonographies of the Old Jewish District and *Muzeum Auschwitz-Birkenau* not only echo the aftermath of the Holocaust but also help to reveal how a number of cultural/political agendas (regeneration projects, tourism and *muséification*<sup>8</sup>) have contributed to transforming the identity of these sites and have affected the ways in which their histories are told and remembered. All these elements finally lead to a questioning of the role and relevance of the Auschwitz museum, a tourist attraction built on the ground of the former death camp.

These first chapters also lay the foundations for the introduction and devising of the core concepts and notions which have come to underpin and define the creative and theoretical aspects of my compositional practice.

Through the examination of another two of my soundscape compositions (*Anseriformes Twins; The Golem of Hereford*)<sup>9</sup>, Chapters IV and V explore a number of conceptual, technical and analytical tools including the notions of ‘sound-subjects’, ‘personal soundscapes’<sup>10</sup>, ‘schizo-narratives’ and ‘sonic chorographies’ in order to investigate and reflect on what I have come to think of as the ‘territory of disembodied voices’ – the phenomenological mechanisms of interaction between disembodied voices and the sonic environment – as well as the construction and perception of *acousmatic identities*: the (unstable) perception of individual identities through sound.

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<sup>8</sup> A process by which a site is transformed into a museum, or acts as one, for education, tourism, conservation and cultural purpose. Cf. Serfati-Garzon (1987: 102 -121)

<sup>9</sup> As well as other sound-works by various composers.

<sup>10</sup> These two terms refer to the use of interviews and field recordings in the *Lands and Genotypes* project. I call ‘sound subject’ the person(s) interviewed for the work; and ‘personal (or intimate) soundscape’ the series of field recordings carried out in their home and various sites that bear a connection and significance for the sound subject(s) featured in the work. (See Chapter IV pp. 138-141 for further discussions about these terms.)

## 1.2 Definitions

Using fragments of interviews and field recordings as the source material for my creative practice, the core ideas of my research revolve around the matter of composing with schizo-narratives and sonic chorographies.

The term ‘schizo-narrative’ refers to both a compositional and theoretical tool. It relates to an editing technique I use to treat the voice material in my compositions. After splitting the original interviews into hundreds of small fragments, the various utterances are reorganised on the timeline of the sound-work (often using aleatoric techniques) in order to construct a *new*, unexpected, broken and non-linear narrative, more removed from of its original context and its original unfolding and oscillating between rational and nonsensical stances. The semantic of the resulting discourse therefore becomes a malleable and constantly shifting element that never ossifies into one definite narrative.<sup>11</sup> As will be discussed further in Chapter V, the notion of schizo-narrative also potentially constitutes a meaningful conceptual framework for a reflection on the practice of myth-making and historical discourse where the same events or storyline might be presented from – or might even embrace – all manner of conflicting angles, chronologies and agendas. Schizo-narratives and myth-making constitute salient aspects of *The Golem of Hereford*<sup>12</sup>.

In Chapter V, the term ‘sonic chorography’ is introduced to describe the montages of field recordings used in *The Golem of Hereford* and, by extension, the other sound-works of the *Lands and Genotypes* project.<sup>13</sup> Chorography refers to an eighteenth century antiquarian mapping practice seeking to represent not only the fragmentary delineations of a place but also to operate a re-scaling of the different elements depicted – including social structures, folklore, myths, history, natural history, architecture, hearsay and memories – in order to highlight various aspects of the socio-

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<sup>11</sup> This term is discussed further and at length in Chapters IV and V.

<sup>12</sup> *The Golem of Hereford* constitutes the central and major sound-work of the *Lands and Genotypes* project, which incorporates and extends upon the core techniques and ideas of my creative and research practice.

<sup>13</sup> See *pp.* 167-172.

political relationships<sup>14</sup> that might exist within the ecology of a specific place.<sup>15</sup> It is this subjective approach to the study of place that leads me to consider the capture and assemblage of field recordings as the delineation and re-scaling apparatus that helps to construct ‘sonic chorographs’ and thus allow a chorographical experience of the diverse soundscapes discussed throughout this text. By extension, the schizo-narratives themselves might also be considered as participating in the construction of sonic chorographies.

In these two chapters, all these elements are deciphered using a wide and contrasting array of theoretical and contextual considerations including structuralism, post-structuralism and phenomenology. In particular, the Deleuzian concepts of *bricolage*, the *Body without Organs*, *assemblage*, and *conceptual personae*<sup>16</sup> provide some of the fundamental tools that help shed light upon the different compositional and philosophical ideas that permeate this thesis.

Bringing the various sound-works together and discussing the contact points between utterances and field recordings, the last chapter of this dissertation provides a final reflection on the questions of trace and memory in relation to myth, schizo-narratives and sonic chorographies, as well as the unstable nature of the territory of disembodied voices and acousmatic identities.

As exemplified in the following chapter and developed throughout this text, I hope to uncover some of the potential for phonographic methods to address and interrogate issues of historical narratives, myth-making, tourism, remembrance, self-narrative and identity; as well as some of the socio-political aspects and socio-economic challenges of the sites and communities studied for this research. From the multitude of conflicting legends and histories that underpin the origins and beliefs associated with the Mayday festival in Padstow to the problematic site transformations that have occurred in Krakow and Auschwitz as a result of the increasingly popular Holocaust tourist trade; from the dislocated narratives of the twins and their mother to the imagined myths of the lost Jewish community of thirteenth century Hereford, this dissertation – in dialogue with the portfolio – endeavours to show how voices and the sonic environment might be creatively and conceptually

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<sup>14</sup> Such as class strata, population density and distribution, religious hierarchies, etc...

<sup>15</sup> Cf. Pearson & Shanks (2001) and Zimmer Lederberg (2015) for example.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. Deleuze & Guattari (1983; 1987; 1994) for example.

explored through plurality and contradiction, as an unstable milieu, as a territory where no element is fixed, where no narrative is crystallised, where histories and identities are in constant motion, where *meaning* is always transient.

## Chapter II

### The Polyphony of Voices of the Obby Oss Ritual, a Device of Resistance: Padstow Cosmesis

“Early in the morning which ushers in the first of May, the young people assemble, and sing through Padstow streets, a barbarous composition to rouse the inhabitants from their beds. What this composition originally was, it is impossible to say; but in its present state, it is too despicable for insertion. [...] From this strange but ancient composition, the two following verses are selected; which, as they conclude the song, shall terminate the history of Padstow.

O Where is St. George, O where is he O?  
He is in his long boat upon the salt sea O,  
And for to fetch the summer home the summer and the May O!  
For summer is a come, and winter is ago.

O where are the French dogs? They are on the coast O,  
And they shall eat the grey goose feathers, and we will eat the roast O!  
And for to fetch the summer home the summer and the May O!  
For summer is a come, and winter is ago.” Hitchens and Drew, *The History of Cornwall* (1824: 529)

Every year, on Mayday, the town of Padstow becomes the site of what is believed to be one of the oldest and most enduring folk traditions in Britain: the Obby Oss ritual. The festival draws Padstonians from all over the world who ‘reunite’ with their friends and families for the celebration of Mayday. Around that time of year, the entire town is “decorated with sycamore branches mingled with spring flowers, up the fronts of houses, up lamp posts, on arches erected across streets, and up the May Pole in Broad Street.”<sup>17</sup> The place is also adorned with an array of multicolour and Cornish flags. The May rite of Padstow is best known for two of its striking features: the Obby Oss and the May Song. The former, a man disguised as a hobby horse<sup>18</sup>, consists of a black wooden disk of about 1.5 metres in diameter with a hole in the middle. The disk is worn on the shoulders, with the man’s head placed through the central hole. A black skirt is attached to the rim and reaches almost to the ground, partially hiding the man's body. A horse’s tail hangs from the rim of the disk on one side, and on the other a small, stylised head protrudes from a stick. On the man's head is a conical

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<sup>17</sup> Coote Lake (1960: 124)

<sup>18</sup> The term ‘Obby Oss’ is a contraction of ‘hobby horse’.

black hat and a menacing mask “with glaring eyes and snapping jaws.”<sup>19</sup> As the procession moves around the town, the members of the Oss party perform a traditional gyrating dance to the sound of the accompanying accordionists and drummers.

The Obby Oss is the central character of the ritual. Its dancing and striding through the streets is accompanied by the May Song (or Day Song), a folk tune ostensibly unique to Padstow. The song is traditionally performed by a very large ensemble of accordions and Brenton drums, which can be heard from a great distance throughout the town.

There are in fact two Osses: the original Red Oss, also known as the Old Oss, and the more recent Blue, or Temperance, Oss. The latter was introduced after World War I, allegedly as a reaction to the heavy drinking and rowdiness traditionally associated with the original Oss, and also as a symbol of peace and further resistance against what might be perceived as the threat of outsiders’ influence:

“Here in Padstow the mood of survival gave encouragement for a new ‘Oss party to emerge, based on a previous Blue Ribbon ‘Oss with a patriotic red, white and blue ribbon round the rim of the gown and on the hat. It was also called the Armistice or Peace ‘Oss. Today the friendly rivalry between the two enthusiastic groups helps to ensure the future of this special custom. Tourists flock to witness the spectacle, but it is not for them that it continues. This is Padstow’s day and it is a tribute to both ‘Oss parties that it has essentially remained as such, in spite of this invasion.”<sup>20</sup>

Whether one follows one Oss or the other is contingent upon the ‘depth’ of ones Padstonian roots. Older Padstonian families, of at least three or four generations, would belong to the Old Oss; the others to the Temperance Oss. On Mayday morning, the locals don their white trousers and shirts and adorn themselves with either the blue ribbons of the Temperance Oss or the red of the Old Oss. The two Osses make their way around town, following different routes, accompanied by members of their respective parties. According to Ronald Hutton: “The whole occasion is a formidable display of communal solidarity, symbolised by the passage of the model beasts through

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<sup>19</sup> Hutton (1996: 81) Some believe that the mask represents a “fierce dragon-like” figure. (Cf. Tydeman, 1978: 10)

<sup>20</sup> Wood and Cutting. *Following the Old Oss* (2010): <http://grapewrath.wordpress.com/2010/05/01/chris-wood-andy-cutting-following-the-old-oss/> [Accessed 02/08/2014]

the whole little port, the closure of the town to all 'foreign' motor vehicles, and the conviction that only natives are allowed to wear white on the day."<sup>21</sup>

In Padstow, particularly within the context of the Mayday celebration, the notions of *insider* and *outsider* – as they relate to the various actors (participants and onlookers) and the socio-economic challenges faced by the community in the region – play a significant role in the way events unfold and how they are understood. As Herman Gilligan (1987) has shown, the dichotomy between what constitutes a Padstonian and a non-Padstonian is a complex (and possibly unresolved) one where incomers are located within a 'sliding scale of exclusiveness'<sup>22</sup> and where residence in Padstow is "not a sufficient condition for being considered a 'local' person."<sup>23</sup> Only those who are seen as 'Padstonians' (or 'Padsta people'<sup>24</sup>) are allowed to take part in the festival. According to Gilligan, ancestry is a *sine qua non* condition for being properly accepted as an insider by the community. Everyone else may be perceived as an outsider (or non-Padstonian): "When people say they are Padstonian, it means their parents and grandparents came from here – it's a matter of families."<sup>25</sup> Nevertheless, the insider/outsider paradigm is ambiguous for not all insiders possess the same level of 'privilege' or recognition (belonging to the Old Oss or the Blue Oss for example), and not all outsiders face the same level of exclusion (or hostility) from the town's social and cultural networks.<sup>26</sup> Nonetheless, in this chapter, for simplification and clarity, the terms *Padstonian* and *local* will broadly refer to anyone who resides in Padstow and/or participates in the Obby Oss ritual. Groups considered as outsiders will include 'non-Padstonian' residents, tourists and second home owners.

On Mayday, the Obby Oss is led along the way by another important character of the ritual called the 'Teaser'. It is the Teaser's role to guide the party through the relatively strict and pre-determined path around the town and to ensure the proper unfolding of the festival.<sup>27</sup> The Oss will

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<sup>21</sup> Hutton (1996: 260)

<sup>22</sup> (1987: 80)

<sup>23</sup> Crow and Allan (2013: 74)

<sup>24</sup> Cf. Gilligan (1987: 66)

<sup>25</sup> (1987: 77) Consequently, one might be described as a Padstonian even if one lives elsewhere for the rest of the year.

<sup>26</sup> For a more in-depth analysis of the complexity of the insider/outsider issues in Padstow, see: Gilligan (1987: 76-79) and Crow (2013: 74-76).

<sup>27</sup> For a precise description of the Osses' routes, see: Rawe (1999: 3)

be dancing and twirling all day long, on occasion clasping a young girl under his cape to dance for a few seconds, or pushing through the crowd of onlookers. Often, the Obby Oss is spurred on by cries of ‘Oss! Oss! Whee Oss!’, usually as a call and response, and involving everyone including members of the party as well as tourists.<sup>28</sup> For Rawe, the ‘Oss! Oss!’ cry – followed by a “thunderous response from Padstonians”<sup>29</sup> (shouting ‘Whee Oss!’) – is a ‘war-cry’; and a relic from the old Morris dance traditions. Other folklorists such as Violet Alford and Thurstan Peter interpreted it to mean: ‘Come to us, Oss!’ or ‘Follow my Oss!’, and suggested that it was formerly used to encourage the Oss to capture and symbolically mate with the women he might be pursuing.<sup>30</sup> What is certain is that, despite its unclear origins and meaning, this holler constitutes one of the powerful *soundmarks*<sup>31</sup> of the Obby Oss ritual. At first glance, it seems to be a shout of joy, unity and celebration; a vernacular expression of identity and a rallying cry for the Padstonian community.

Geographically speaking, three sites are of utmost importance for the May rite of Padstow: the Maypole, erected on Broad Street, a focal point of the festival and the only place where the two Osses meet; Prideaux Place, a mansion house on the hilltops above the town; and the Golden Lion Inn, the Old Oss’ stable, where it is kept when not in use. This is the place where the festival begins and ends. At 11am on Mayday morning, the red Oss “makes his first appearance [from the Golden Lion] through an Arch of sycamore, or May leaves”<sup>32</sup>. At the end of Mayday, the Obby Oss returns to the same place and finally ‘dies’ for another year, accompanied by the sound of the *Farewell*, a different, slow and solemn tune, sung *a cappella* by the members of the party.

Every year, the festival attracts tens of thousands of tourists and onlookers who come for both the spectacle and the dramatic scenery of this picturesque Cornish town. As I will further discuss later in this chapter, the increasing popularity of Padstow as a holiday resort has been arguably both

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<sup>28</sup> Cf. Jackson (2010) This call and response can be heard at different points in the sound-work discussed in this chapter.

<sup>29</sup> Rawe (1999: 20)

<sup>30</sup> Cf. Rawe (1999); Peter (1913); Alford (1939)

<sup>31</sup> The term soundmark refers to: “a community sound which is unique, or possesses qualities which make it specially regarded or noticed by the people in that community. Soundmarks, therefore, are of cultural and historical significance and merit preservation and protection.” Truax (1999b)

<sup>32</sup> Rawe (1999: 10)

a blessing and a curse for the locals, the Obby Oss ritual itself, and the overall socio-economic situation of the region.

## 2.1 *Padstow Cosmesis*

In this chapter, I will discuss an extended acousmatic sound-work I composed between 2009 and 2011 entitled *Padstow Cosmesis*. The composition is a multi-channel soundscape study of Padstow and its Mayday celebration. *Padstow Cosmesis* is c.34 minutes long and has been presented both as a concert piece (8 channel with no visuals) and an audio-visual installation. Even though the work is centred on the Mayday rites of Padstow, the aim of the composition is also to explore a broader yearly cycle of the village, contrasting the buzzing soundscape of the tourist season with the radically different ambience of wintertime. All the sound material for *Padstow Cosmesis* was recorded during three field trips in April/May 2009, April/May 2010 and January 2010<sup>33</sup>. During each field trip, a series of interviews was also carried out with local inhabitants and Padstonians from abroad.<sup>34</sup> Fragments of these interviews are featured sporadically throughout the piece. In terms of content, the composition does not follow strictly the chronological unfolding of the festival but rather moves freely from one event (or place) to another, somehow moving ‘back and forth in time’. The structure of the overall sound-work was often driven (at least partially) by the field recordings’ textures and how they connected and interacted aesthetically. The same can be said about the duration of each segment. Often, the textures of the recorded elements as well as their pace and dynamic have informed either their placement on the timeline of the work or how they linked to one another. According to Hildegard Westerkamp:

“A fundamental truth about soundscape compositions is that they emerge, they can only be pre-planned to a limited extent. The sonic material brings about the essential structures and sound development of the piece just as words bring about a poem. And this can happen in very subtle ways. Not only do we never know what kinds of sounds/soundscapes we gather when we go out recording for a piece, but we often cannot anticipate what is revealed to us when we listen to the recorded sounds and when we start editing, mixing and processing them. Environmental recordings never give us sound objects, [...] they give us sounds within a context of other sounds, indeed a whole

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<sup>33</sup> Each field trip lasted approximately two weeks.

<sup>34</sup> The interviews were carried out by filmmaker Rosalind Fowler as part of a collaboration for an unfinished student project.

soundscape. It is precisely this context that guides the composer's decisions of how to work with available sound materials. The emergence of a piece is not unlike getting to know a soundscape itself, its rhythms and shapes, its atmosphere."<sup>35</sup>

However, although the sound-to-sound relationships were at times treated playfully, a conceptual structure has been retained, both in the way the events are presented and in the overall arching of the work's narrative. *Padstow Cosmesis* comprises five sections, each presenting a series of different yet related elements:

- Padstow Harbour 0'00''
- The Strike Up to Mayday 09'23''
- Mayday 14'47''
- Winter Season 20'34''
- 'Silent' Section 30'00'' - 33'57'' (loop point)

Fig. 1 Padstow Cosmesis: Structure and sound material

| Section I: Padstow Harbour   | Section II: The Strike Up to Mayday  | Section III: Mayday   | Section IV: Winter Season  |
|--|--|---|--|
| <p><b>Voices</b><br/>May Song excerpt (Solo a cappella)<br/>+ 'High pitch resonance'<br/>+ Wooden objects</p> <p>0'00''</p>                                | <p><b>Waiting for the Old Oss</b><br/>Mayday morning<br/>Outside Golden Lion Pub<br/>Tourists and locals cheering</p> <p>9'23''</p>  | <p><b>Prideaux Place</b><br/>Mayday morning and afternoon<br/>Streams, bird songs, cemetery<br/>+ Drums in the distance<br/>+ Cattle bells and flagpoles</p> <p>14'47''</p> | <p><b>Pier and SW Coast Path</b><br/>Winter<br/>Voice<br/>+ Wind, roadwork, lorry's alarm<br/>+ Dogs barking, bin bags, bushes</p> <p>20'34''</p>                                    |
| <p><b>Padstow Harbour</b><br/>River Camel<br/>Mayday -1 &amp; Winter<br/>4 points stereo recordings<br/>+ Seagulls</p> <p>0'57''</p>                       | <p><b>Voices</b><br/>Schizo-narrative 2</p> <p>9'54''</p>  | <p><b>May Song excerpt</b><br/>Accordions and drums<br/>Mayday +1 &amp; Mayday<br/>Children's cardboard 'Oss<br/>+ Full band by Maypole</p> <p>16'40''</p>                  | <p><b>Riverside Docks</b><br/>Winter at night<br/>Water + voice</p> <p>22'58''</p>   |
| <p><b>Market Strand</b><br/>Mayday -1<br/>+ Buskers<br/>+ Tourists</p> <p>4'46''</p>   | <p><b>Accordion's 'breath' and Tune</b><br/>Mayday -1 &amp; Mayday<br/>Drums reverberating in village<br/>+ 8 chan. macro-granulation</p> <p>10'28''</p>                       | <p><b>Mayday +1: Early morning</b><br/>Voices<br/>Harbour, River Camel<br/>4 points stereo recordings<br/>2 'high pitch resonances'</p> <p>17'30''</p>                      | <p><b>Lower Beach &amp; Pier</b><br/>Winter low tide<br/>Coast Path gates<br/>+ Temporary streams in the sand</p> <p>23'34''</p>   |
| <p><b>Padstow Harbour</b><br/>Mayday +1 at dawn<br/>4 points stereo recordings<br/>+ 2 'high pitch resonances'<br/>+ Seagulls</p> <p>5'10''</p>            | <p><b>Folk Songs Excerpts</b><br/>Mayday -1 at night<br/>Outside Golden Lion Pub<br/>Crowd singing</p> <p>12'03''</p>  | <p><b>Farewell Song Excerpt</b><br/>Mayday close to midnight<br/>Voice<br/>+ Locals singing a cappella<br/>+ Crowd cheering &amp; Voice</p> <p>18'19''</p>                  | <p><b>Riverside Docks</b><br/>Winter early morning<br/>Workers in metal storage<br/>+ Water</p> <p>25'33''</p>   |
| <p><b>Funfair &amp; Speedboats</b><br/>Mayday<br/>Attractions and boat engines<br/>+ Voice announcements<br/>+ Children singing (spring)</p> <p>5'47''</p> | <p><b>Midnight Singing</b><br/>Mayday -1 &amp; Mayday<br/>Midnight bell<br/>+ May Song Excerpt<br/>Locals singing a cappella<br/>2 points stereo recordings</p> <p>13'03''</p> | <p><b>Padstow Estate</b><br/>Mayday +1 morning<br/>Gates, cars, dogs, low rumble</p> <p>19'23''</p>   | <p><b>Voice &amp; Clock Ringing</b><br/>Market Strand<br/>Winter morning<br/>Street cleaners and roadworks</p> <p>26'34''</p>  |
| <p><b>Voice</b><br/>Schizo-narrative 1</p> <p>8'05''</p>   |  |   | <p><b>Voice &amp; Rain</b><br/>Different locations<br/>Winter &amp; Mayday<br/>Rain and bird songs in different places in the village<br/>(Drums in the distance)</p> <p>27'29''</p> |
| <p><b>Riverside Docks</b><br/>Mayday +1 at dawn<br/>+ Workers in metal storage<br/>+ Bird songs</p> <p>8'53''</p>  |  | <p><b>Section V: Silent...</b></p>  | <p><b>'Silent' Section</b><br/>Winter<br/>(Loop point at 33'57'')<br/>+ Quasi-inaudible wind<br/>+ Bird songs</p> <p>30'00''</p>   |

<sup>35</sup> Westerkamp (2002: 1)

Between the 4<sup>th</sup> and the 28<sup>th</sup> of May 2011, an audio-visual version of the work (as an installation) was exhibited at *SoundFjord* gallery (London). The installation consisted of the full sound-work on loop punctuated by a live video feed of Padstow. The live video stream showed a view of the harbour from overhead. The image would fade to black when the piece began and remained black for almost the duration of the composition before reappearing for the final four minutes, during which time the work was very quiet, almost silent.<sup>36</sup> The objective was that no visual cues would be added to the unfolding of the main part of *Padstow Cosmesis*, thus allowing the audience to focus on the sound. During the brief ‘silent’ section, the video feed would then conceptually link up the un-synched (non-real-time), non-linear and displaced sound-work with a real-time visual projection of the place itself before fading to black again when a new cycle started.

This chapter begins with a discussion of the structure of the work and the different field recordings that constitute the sound material of *Padstow Cosmesis* as well as an examination of the polyphony of origins, myths, and meanings of the village’s Mayday festival. This will lead to a reflection upon the issues of second home ownership as well as the effects of tourism on the local population (factual and/or as perceived) and on the place itself in an attempt to shed light on the recent shifts in the (sometimes conflicting) ways the Obby Oss ritual is now considered by its participants.

### 2.1.1 Petrockstow and Padstow Harbour: *Padstow Cosmesis*, Section I

According to a report by the OCSI in 2009, the population of Padstow is estimated to be around 2400<sup>37</sup>. The town nestles in a valley on the west side of the Camel Estuary, in North Cornwall. For almost four thousand years the area had been a trading port:

“From the Bronze Age onwards traders from Ireland travelled east and traders from the eastern Mediterranean travelled west. [...] The port of Padstow thrived in Tudor times

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<sup>36</sup> This ‘silent’ section features a montage of field recordings of extremely quiet wind sounds, mixed to a low volume.

<sup>37</sup> OCSI Report (2009: 4)

when Sir Walter Raleigh worked for Queen Elizabeth in the Old Custom House. The first stone pier was built in the sixteenth century.”<sup>38</sup>

Padstow’s ancient name was ‘Loderick’, which according to Hitchins and Drew (1824), is said to “imply the *creek of robbers*, so called from the piratical Irish who frequented this part, long before St. Patrick came hither to introduce the Christian religion.”<sup>39</sup> They then explain that – following the establishment of a religious settlement by St. Patrick in 432<sup>40</sup> – the town was renamed after:

“St. Petrock<sup>41</sup>, a disciple of St. Patrick [who] took up his abode here in the same house; after thirty years’ labour in the ministry, died and was buried in this place. [the] town shortly afterward obtained the name of Petrockstow, which, if derived from him, signifies ‘Petrock’s place’.”<sup>42</sup>

In time, Petrockstow became known as Padstow. As I shall discuss further when reflecting on the origins of Padstow’s Mayday celebrations, the link between the legends surrounding the life of St. Petrock and some of the features of the Obby Oss ritual (and the May Song) is a crucial one.

The importance of mining and quarrying in the area saw the port grow, and fishing has always played a large part in the life of the town, especially in the mid-nineteenth century during the pilchard boom years. At the time there were six shipyards, all busy building new vessels. “As the mining industry declined, many Cornishmen, women and children emigrated to Canada, leaving for their new life on ships departing from Padstow.”<sup>43</sup> Today, while some of the locals have traded their fishing boats for speedboats in which they take tourists on water-trips, the few remaining fishermen of Padstow have day-boats that catch lobsters, crab and crayfish. They drop thousands of lobster pots to the sea bottom and check them daily. Their catch is offloaded in the harbour, often into refrigerated lorries heading straight to the continent. Last Century, tourism became increasingly

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<sup>38</sup> Jackson (2010: 7)

<sup>39</sup> (1824: 521)

<sup>40</sup> St. Patrick’s house will later become known as Prideaux Place, a site that plays an important role in the Obby Oss ritual, which I discuss later in this chapter.

<sup>41</sup> Petrock is also often spelled: ‘Petroc’

<sup>42</sup> (1824: 521)

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid*

central to the economy of the region and visitor numbers have continued to grow ever since.<sup>44</sup> Nevertheless, Padstow Harbour has always been a defining element of the town and the ‘beating heart’ of the community.

At present, the port of Padstow is mainly used to welcome ‘leisure boats’ during the tourist season. Around Mayday, more than any other time of year, it turns into a sparkling and staggering display of wealth where the whole space is occupied by a wide range of festively decorated yachts and sailing boats.

## 2.2 Padstow Harbour: Mayday -1 and the Winter Season, Death and Resurrection

In the following pages, I will be drawing mainly on folklorist literature – particularly the works of Donald Rawe, Barbara Spooner, Thurstan Peter, Merv Davey, Alan Harlow and other members of The Folklore Society (FLS) – in order to highlight the various and rather complex set of beliefs and narratives that surround the popular understanding of the Obby Oss ritual (and by extension other Folk practices around the UK and Europe). I will then draw on more contemporary writings that will help to paint a slightly different picture of the historical foundations of the festival.<sup>45</sup> This will lead me to challenge, or at least nuance, some of the most commonly found explanations of the significance and origins of the Mayday celebration in Padstow; before considering its present social and political implications. All these different elements will be interwoven with a description of the structure and content of the sound-work.

The first section of *Padstow Cosmesis* features a series of field recordings carried out around the harbour the day before Mayday in 2009 and 2010, and during the winter season in 2010. The material was captured using a bespoke *4 points stereo recording* technique.<sup>46</sup> That is to say that each

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<sup>44</sup> Cf. Jackson (2010)

<sup>45</sup> e.g. the works of Ronald Hutton (2001), Bob Trubshaw (1996; 2003), Gillian Bennet (1994), Stephen Corrsin (2004), amongst others.

<sup>46</sup> This is a technique that I have used very often in my compositions. It is exemplified here and was used in other works as well; particularly in *Anseriformes Twins*, *The Golem of Hereford* (discussed in Chapters IV and V), and *Bregenz by Cycle*.

layer is constituted of four stereo recordings carried out at four different times and in four different locations around the harbour. Once edited, these recordings were placed in discreet parts of the 8 channel field, thus somehow situating the listener in a *virtual* point of listening, at the centre of the depicted acoustic environment. Throughout the first section of *Padstow Cosmesis*, we can hear different elements of the harbour's soundscape: flag poles and rocking boats, various masts and cables, wooden structures moving on the surface of the water, waves, wind, seagulls and other birds, as well as human activities.

During the first part of this section, the calm and fairly quiet ambience of late spring and early summer alternate with the more menacing and stormy weather of wintertime. It presents the soundscape of the site at two opposite times of the year. Most importantly it is used to symbolise one of the defining and most intriguing elements of the Obby Oss ritual: "The mimed dance combat of the Oss and the Teazer is sometimes interpreted as the ritual dual<sup>47</sup> [sic] between Summer and Winter and sometimes Good and Evil."<sup>48</sup> Along with the idea of death and resurrection in the natural cycle, it is a reminder of the alternating seasons of country life, 'dormant' periods and months of intense activity: "The basic ritual division in the year is the dual one between the summer or agricultural cycle and the winter or nonagricultural cycle."<sup>49</sup> Mayday was regarded as the symbolic start to a busy season of farm work. People worked in the fields focusing on the care of animals and moving them to different pastures. It was also marking the beginning of a more intense fishing period.<sup>50</sup> Traditionally on Mayday, tenant farmers paid their half-yearly rents to landlords.<sup>51</sup>

The 'duel' between summer and winter, between the 'warm' and the 'cold', but also the fast and often unpredictable shifts between good and bad weather, are indeed of utmost importance amongst traditional fishing and agricultural communities. In *Albion: The Origins of English Imaginations* (2002), Peter Ackroyd reflects upon the fundamental role that the sea has played in the construction (and narratives) of English identity (both as a source of life and terror). Drawing on the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, Ackroyd notes:

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<sup>47</sup> 'duel'

<sup>48</sup> Davey (2009: 6)

<sup>49</sup> Ortiz (1972: 105)

<sup>50</sup> Cf. Doyle (2012)

<sup>51</sup> Cf. National Museum of Ireland, *Traditional May Day Customs in Ireland*. (2015)

“The island is filled with the sound of water. [...] The poetry of the sea is deeply implicated in the Anglo-Saxon imagination with its ‘*sealte saestreamas ond swanrade*’, the salt sea-currents which are the swans’ path, running into all subsequent English verse. The sea is also ‘*cald waeter*’ with lines which vary ‘the emphasis on the “depths” to “space” to “terror”’<sup>52</sup> suggesting the English fear of the ocean. In Anglo-Saxon it is as if the island of Britain were truly the home of harbour. This in turn has informed the pastoral dream of England as a calm and tranquil haven. The exile or wanderer, in contrast, is customarily depicted as surrounded by ‘the sea booming – the ice-cold waves’.<sup>53</sup>

The symbolic cycle of death and resurrection is enacted during the Obby Oss ritual when, after a few verses of the May Song, the Oss sometimes sinks to the ground, immobile, as if dead. The music stops and it all quietens down. The members of the party then begin to sing an unaccompanied Dirge, which Coote Lake describes as “a lovely old folktune, hymn-like and most moving, with a drop in scale of a perfect fifth.”<sup>54</sup> The Teaser strokes the Oss with his staff and – as the Dirge suddenly ends with a loud crescendo of drumming – the orchestra of accordions and drums perform the May Song again at the same time as the Oss jumps back to life and the crowd cheers vigorously. This event is repeated several times during the day. “The short but most effective ‘dying’ and ‘reviving’ of the Oss is one of the dance’s salient features [...], symbolising the death of winter and coming of summer.”<sup>55</sup> Alan Harlow (1967) further links this part of the ritual to the origins and functions of the Maypole – perhaps a later incarnation of what would previously have been a “sacred tree or a sacred stone [where] the pre-Celtic people of the district danced and upon which they offered sacrifices.”<sup>56</sup> The lyrics of the Dirge that accompanies this part of the Obby Oss ritual refer directly to King George and are believed to also allude to the ancient Norse myth of Freya and her longboat. Freya is the Goddess of flowers, fruit trees, gardens and Mayday, in the Anglo-Saxon and Germanic mythologies<sup>57</sup>:

“Oh where is King George? Oh where is he O?

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<sup>52</sup> Johnson (1999: 34)

<sup>53</sup> Ackroyd (2002: 263)

<sup>54</sup> (1960: 129)

<sup>55</sup> Rawe (1999: 7)

<sup>56</sup> Harlow (1967) in Rawe (1999: 12)

<sup>57</sup> Cf. Rawe (1999)

He's out in the longboat, all on the salt sea O.  
Up flies the kite, down falls the lark O.  
Aunt Ursula Birdwood she has an old ewe,  
And she died in her own park O.”<sup>58</sup>

Drawing on an interview with poet Peter Redgrove, Paul Bentley points out the simultaneous presence of Life and Death in the Oss’ dance and that: “past and future are simultaneously present as we celebrate crossing the threshold from spring to summer.”<sup>59</sup> Interestingly, Bentley also notes that, in his novel: *The Sleep of the Great Hypnotists* (1979), Redgrove ascribes a surprising religious and supernatural function to the Oss. The May rites of Padstow would act as a controlling force of the elements, the Oss’ dance being a rain-charming ritual, as well as a device designed to somehow help the *pious* maintain a sound mind:

“[The Obby Oss] is a rotary spark discharger (Redgrove explains: ‘That’s a machine for using negative ionization. [...] The electrical weather in Cornwall can be so terrible that we have to do something about it’), and the electrical sparks it produces are like the Holy Ghost. Christian and pagan merge [...] in a way that makes each seem like a different metaphor for or ‘explanation’ of the same natural and psychosomatic forces.”<sup>60</sup>

The weather on Mayday is hugely important for locals and tourists alike. During the interviews that were carried out as part of the project, many Padstonians expressed how they always hope for a sunny Mayday, explaining that it is an important element for the party to be a more complete success.<sup>61</sup> On a more superstitious side, the weather on that day (not only in Cornwall but all over the British Isles), is also considered as a sign of the weather to come and its effect on the crops. For example, Irish scholar Anne O’Dowd (2011), reflecting on the divination powers attributed to Mayday in Ireland, explains that traditionally: “It was also a time to study the weather and weather in the month of May would forecast what was expected to follow in the summer.”<sup>62</sup> O’Dowd then illustrates this point by citing three popular expressions:

“‘*A wet May and a dry June makes the farmer whistle a tune*’  
‘*A swarm of bees in May is worth a load of hay*’

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<sup>58</sup> Rawe (1999: 6)

<sup>59</sup> Bentley (2002: 94)

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>61</sup> Although they also insist that even when the weather is wet, it does not stop them from enjoying Mayday...

<sup>62</sup> O’Dowd (2011: 111)

*‘A wet and windy May fills the barns with corn and hay’*”<sup>63</sup>

This is another example of a set of beliefs associated with Mayday’s celebrations relating to the year cycle of agricultural life, much like the cycle of death and resurrection depicted in the quiet Dirge Padstonians occasionally sing during the Obby Oss ritual.

In the first section of the sound-work, a recording of the Dirge – sung by the children of Padstow and recorded during a winter rehearsal at school – can be heard in the background of the harbour’s soundscape, amongst the sound of waves, applause, and seagulls. Another brief excerpt of the Dirge, recorded in front of the Golden Lion Inn, the night before Mayday (2009), is featured in the second section (*The Strike-up to Mayday*) of *Padstow Cosmesis*.

### 2.2.1 The May Song and the Multiple Origins of the Obby Oss Ritual

The first section of *Padstow Cosmesis* opens with two consecutive fragments of interviews. The first one is the voice of a Padstonian lifeboat crew member:

*“Some people say that Padstow has changed for the better and some people say that Padstow has changed for the worse. I couldn’t get a house in Padstow, I couldn’t afford there... afford to buy a place there, and got a place to rent and it was crippling me... and I ended up having to move out of the town.”*<sup>64</sup>

The second fragment is a Padstonian person singing the first verse of the May Song, recorded in her kitchen, in a house situated on the outskirts of the town. This segment is superimposed onto a montage of field recordings of the harbour (carried out at dawn a few days before Mayday), which can be heard in the background:

[Sung] *“Unite and unite and let us all unite,  
For summer is a come unto day,  
And whither we are going we will all unite,*

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<sup>63</sup> *Ibid* p. 112

<sup>64</sup> Transcript of interview fragment featured in *Padstow Cosmesis*

*In the merry morning of May.*

[A second person comments]: ‘*And that’s what they sing*’

[Interviewee again]: *And then you get a couple of verses and then...*”<sup>65</sup>

The exact origins of the May Song are uncertain. However, for Rawe (1999) and Peter (1913) the song presents many similarities with the Helston’s Hal-an Tow and the Furry Dance<sup>66</sup> tunes: “It appears likely that Padstow’s song has developed from the general Morris dance tunes brought to Britain during the 14th century or even earlier.”<sup>67</sup> In 1959, Reg Hall and Mervyn Plunkett went even further and identified a common lineage across a whole range of May songs throughout Britain: “Almost every known English May Song is a variant of this tune, [...] This tune is not only ‘standard’ for May Songs but it is also known for wassailing songs and at least one New Year Carol, sung in Cuckfield, Sussex.”<sup>68</sup> Nevertheless, most of the other May songs have been either forgotten or are very rarely performed. “Thus in its very song Padstow is one of the last places to maintain a tradition which was at one time generally observed all over Britain and large areas of Europe.”<sup>69</sup> During Mayday, the song is played over and over again throughout the day, almost without interruption.

In the middle of the first section of *Padstow Cosmesis*, we hear another fragment of interview from the same person who sings an excerpt of the May Song in the opening segment of the sound-work:

*“It’s an ancient pagan custom that says: winter’s gone, summer’s come... to fertilise the land. Bring the green in, to show that the world is coming to life again... pick the flowers. And celebrate the fact that the sunshine’s back. And, you know, that’s not entirely been lost.”*<sup>70</sup>

In this segment, the interviewee refers to one of the many possible origins and meanings of the Obby Oss ritual; namely the festival of Beltane, an ancient pagan fertility rite dedicated to the return

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<sup>65</sup> Transcript of interview fragment featured in *Padstow Cosmesis*

<sup>66</sup> Also known as “The Flora”

<sup>67</sup> Rawe (1999: 9) “Morris (deriving from the Spanish ‘morisco’ = Moors) is said to be a reference to the early custom of the participants of blacking their faces in disguise. The integral elements of Morris are a May Pole, dancers, Robin Hood and Maid Marion, and – the Hobby Horse (Hobby = dim. Robin).” (*Ibid*, p. 10)

<sup>68</sup> Hall and Plunkett (1959) in Rawe (1999: 9)

<sup>69</sup> Rawe (1999: 9)

<sup>70</sup> Transcript of interview fragment featured in *Padstow Cosmesis*

of the Celtic Sun god *Bel*, thought to cause the crops to grow and the hours of daylight to lengthen: “The 8th May was the old Celtic Bealtaine, or Beltane, when the coming in of summer was observed with the lighting of fires. May 1<sup>st</sup> had come to be bonfire day in Scotland and Ireland.”<sup>71</sup> It seems that, confused and later combined with the Morris May Games and celebrations, which became popular all over Britain in the Middle Ages, this might be one of the original sources of the basic festivities themselves.<sup>72</sup> The Obby Oss ritual would therefore have been primarily a religious rite, part of a country-wide festival for summer's coming: “a fertility transference by which the wearer expects some power of the new blooms and leaves to pass into himself.”<sup>73</sup> This is why the people of Padstow believe that, if a young girl gets caught under the Oss' skirt, she will marry or become pregnant within a year. Traditionally, if captured by the Oss, they were “marked by soot or blacking off the canvas of the creature.”<sup>74</sup>

Indeed, as Thurstan Peter points out, with the arrival of Christianity in Cornwall, many of the features and unfolding of the festival have probably disappeared; or have at least been greatly transformed. The church condemned all forms of polytheist celebrations, seen as heretic practices. Particularly the old English May Games were considered “as a resurgence of uninhibited and licentious paganism.”<sup>75</sup> Nevertheless, much like the *Helston Furry Dance*, it has retained its quality as a festival “of revival and of fruitfulness, one of those forms of magic, not by any means implying the notion of invariable cause and effect, but an attempt to express in ritual the emotions and desires – and on to this have been grafted on the one hand folk-lore and on the other Christian ceremonies, the history being still further confused by mistaken efforts of well-meaning persons to remove elements regarded by them as coarse.”<sup>76</sup> The link between Beltane and Padstow's Mayday celebrations is one of the most commonly found explanations for the origins of the festival. This explanation is given in many of the tourist-guides, blogs and websites dedicated to the region and to the Obby Oss ritual.<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> Rawe (1999: 10)

<sup>72</sup> Cf. Rawe (1999)

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid*, p. 13

<sup>75</sup> Harlow (1967) In Rawe (1999: 12)

<sup>76</sup> Peter (1913) in Rawe (1999: 10)

<sup>77</sup> Cf. for example: *The Padstow Obby Oss*: <http://padstowobbyoss.wordpress.com/about/> and [http://www.padstow.com/obby\\_oss/obby\\_oss.php](http://www.padstow.com/obby_oss/obby_oss.php) [accessed: 12/07/14] and Jascckson (2010)

However, as Spooner and Rawe suggest, the origins of the Oss creature itself, particularly in its current incarnation, might in fact come from another ancient folk practice:

“We know that a Hobby Horse custom existed in 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> Century West Cornwall. The creature was known as the Penglass. [It consisted] of a horse's skull held up on a stick by a hide-covered or sheet-draped man, and had its own name in the Cornish Language: Pen-glass. Grey Head.”<sup>78</sup>

This ongoing interweaving of the various alleged mythological origins of the ritual continues: Folklorist Merv Davey (2009) asserts that the *Hobby Horses* of European folklore were variously used to represent a medieval knight or a mythical creature. In Cornwall, it tends to be the latter. Davey claims that: “The ‘Obby Oss’ makes an appearance in the Mystery Play ‘Gwreans and Bys’<sup>79</sup> [...]. This is the Penguizers and Pen - Gwyn borrowed from West Cornwall’s Pen Glaz blue head.”<sup>80</sup> The *Penglaz horse*<sup>81</sup> – with the inside of its hood smeared with black lead which left its mark and was thought to bring good luck and a husband or a baby within the year – is considered a powerful symbol of fertility.<sup>82</sup> Before the Industrial Revolution and the development of mechanisation in the countryside, the horse was the all-important ‘power supply’ of agriculture. Not only did the horse do most of the work on farms but, once it had superseded oxen as a more efficient means, no ploughing was possible without it.<sup>83</sup> “The stallion is an animal of immense virility, and old manuals quote the recommended figure of fifty mares to one stallion.”<sup>84</sup> However, while the *Penglaz* horse was ridden, the Obby Oss of Padstow is worn instead. In that sense, the carrier of the Oss and the creature itself become one.

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<sup>78</sup> (Rawe, 1999: 10)

<sup>79</sup> Cf. Stokes (1824: 3-35) A horse, ‘marth’ in the Cornish language, is mentioned twice in the play but it is unclear whether it actually relates to the Obby Oss.

<sup>80</sup> Davey (2009: 5)

<sup>81</sup> ‘Penglaz’ (also spelt ‘Penglass’) is the historical name traditionally associated with mast or pole style hobby horses in some parts of Cornwall. (Spooner 1958; Rawe, 1999)

<sup>82</sup> Cf. Spooner (1958); Davey (2009)

<sup>83</sup> Cf. Rawe (1999)

<sup>84</sup> Rawe (1999: 12)

### 2.2.2 St. Petroc, the Last Cornish Dragon and the ‘Frightening of the French’

Interestingly, as is often the case with folk traditions, other interpretations of the significance of the Obby Oss ritual exist. The first one is another enduring, yet less well-known myth that permeates the origins of the festival: the legend of St. Petroc and the Dragon. Featured in a biography of St. Petroc written by the monks of Bodmin, the story tells of an epic battle in which he banished a fearsome Dragon<sup>85</sup> that had been terrorising the Padstow district for a long time, by binding it with his girdle and leading it to the sea where it swam away. Rawe further explains: “Mr. Riley, an antiquarian of Little Petherick, suggested that this is the origin of the Oss, which represents the dragon, and of the Teazer, representing the Saint. [...] The event happened, it would seem, about the same time of year as the Beltane celebrations”. This might suggest that a commemoration of St. Petroc's deed became part of the traditional welcoming in of summer; “later to be confused with St. George and the Dragon and the Hobby Horse of the Morris.”<sup>86</sup> Thus, according to this theory, when members of the Oss party sing the following verse during the Dirge: “*O where is St. George, O where is he O? He's out on his long boat, all on the salt sea O*”, they could be referring to St. Petroc's heroic feat with the last Cornish dragon. Furthermore, it implies that the Obby Oss would not be a horse after all but, again, a mythical creature. Despite the obvious lack of evidence and historical plausibility, it is nonetheless another striking example of the different superstitions, myths and legends that surround the celebration of Mayday in Padstow.

A second and persistent story often accepted as an explanation of the Oss' early incarnation and function is that of Aunt Ursula Birdhood and the ‘Frightening of the French’. Here again, we are faced with slightly conflicting narratives in terms of dates and the exact unfolding of events. One version states that, during one of the wars against France, while the men of the village were away fighting on the continent, a French battleship was seen approaching the shores of Padstow:

“Under Aunt Ursula's directions, the women, nothing daunted, wrapped themselves in their best red Sunday cloaks and marched, with the Oss at their head, out along the

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<sup>85</sup> This was said to be the last Cornish dragon, which in its cannibalistic fashion had eaten up the others of its kind, introduced by the tyrant Teudar, Prince of Meneage; who is a character in *Bewnans Meriasek*, a Cornish play completed in 1504. Cf. (Doble, 1960; Rawe, 1999)

<sup>86</sup> Rawe (1999: 13)

cliffs, with drums beating in support. The French sailors, seeing this 'army' in the distance with what they took to be the Devil at their head, upped anchor and sailed away. [It is sometimes believed that] the Hobby Horse first appeared at Padstow during the Siege of Calais (1346-7) and scared off the French in the aforesaid manner."<sup>87</sup>

The third verse of the Day Song seems to refer to this particular narrative:

“Where are the young men that here should dance?  
Some they are in England and some they are in France  
Where are the French dogs that here should boast O  
They shall eat the grey goose feather and we shall eat the roast O!”<sup>88</sup>

A second and more detailed version of the story again describes the Oss as a devil-like figure, imbued with the power to scare unwanted invaders away. The legend seems to also explain why, traditionally, the Teaser as well as some amongst the members of the party were sometimes dressed in woman's attire.<sup>89</sup> Spooner writes:

"In February 1797, six hundred French troops landed near Fishguard in an abortive attempt to stir up the Welsh and then found that their ships had cleared off, perhaps literally 'seeing red'. [...] Some say the Oss was rushed to Stepper Point on purpose to frighten the invaders, which it did; they thought it was the Devil. Some say they took the red cloaks for the military; there is evidence that in the middle of the last century the Oss was 'always accompanied by an old woman in scarlet cloak and cape'. [...] Probably the Oss has more than once been a terror to alien shipping."<sup>90</sup>

In their 1824 *Parochial Survey of Cornwall*, Hitchins and Drew seem to correlate Spooner's version and even link the aforementioned story with the origins and significance of the May Song itself when – recalling the French who fled to their ships in fear – they claim that: "a particular song is sung, that is supposed to commemorate the event that gave the hobby-horse birth."<sup>91</sup> As Rawe acknowledges, similar stories in which a Hobby Horse creature was used to warn the local

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<sup>87</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid* p. iv

<sup>89</sup> “Describing the Padstow Hobby Horse celebration, *The Cornish Guardian* of May 1911 says six fishermen ‘dressed themselves in ladies’ fashionable attire, one even wearing the harem skirt, which caused great amusement.’ Today the Teaser wears a white shirt and trousers, but old photographs show a variety of fancy dress costumes, and sometimes he would dress as a woman.” (Newall, 1986: 131)

<sup>90</sup> Spooner (1958: 37-38)

<sup>91</sup> Hitchins and Drew (1824) in Rawe (1999: 14)

population of the coming of invaders can be found in folktales all along the Irish Sea and Bristol Channel, particularly at Minehead<sup>92</sup> and Fishguard. However, in Minehead's case: "the would-be invaders were Danes."<sup>93</sup> Whether we give credence to these stories or not, they have been fertilising the imagination of the people involved in the Obby Oss ritual for a very long time and have greatly participated in the construction of its narratives.

Importantly, as will be developed later in this chapter, the vision of the Oss as a form of resistance and a way to keep 'invaders' (outsiders) at a distance is nowadays as much as ever a fundamental aspect of the perceived function and significance of the festival for Padstonians. It is at the same time a ritualistic performance wherein individual identities are momentarily put aside in favour of a reunification and celebration of the community and a defining element for what it means to be a Padstonian; and by extension, it is also perhaps a powerful symbol of Cornish identity that many feel is in danger of being subsumed by globalisation and gentrification.

### 2.2.3 A Brief Historical Alternative on the Origins of the Festival

As we have seen, it is evident that many folklorists, including Rawe, Spooner, Hitchins and Drew amongst others, have made a conscious effort to link the origins of the Obby Oss ritual to ancient pagan and even pre-Celtic practices. The idea that the May rites of Padstow date back to an immemorial past, that they are essentially religious in nature, and that they help to uncover a deep and complex network of roots attached to both the land itself and its local population – as well as identifying and regrouping a set of seemingly similar practices elsewhere in England and on the continent – is rather seductive. As Bob Trubshaw explains, early folklorists fostered the notion that these rural customs were survivals of a tradition that stretched back unbroken to a pre-Christian past and could thus be used to both define and 'protect' the idea of 'Britishness' (or 'Englishness') and national identity.

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<sup>92</sup> The Minehead Hobby bears striking similarities to the Oss of Padstow. According to Rawe: "The Minehead folk claim that long ago a Padstow ship put into harbour, and the crew were so taken with the Hobby that they took it (whether the Horse itself or only the idea is not clear) back to Padstow with them." (Rawe 1999: 14) i.e. The Oss would simply have been 'borrowed'...

<sup>93</sup> Rawe (1999: 14)

This is what Jack Carloye, after Lévi-Strauss, called: “The fallacy of the picture theory of meaning. It takes representation to be based on formal resemblance. [...] Similarity cannot account for reference.”<sup>94</sup> Gillian Bennett (1994) further argues that British folklore studies have had a fairly consistent underlying theory that has shaped both its methodology and subsequent conclusions:

“Almost since the inception of the Folklore Society (FLS) in 1878, folkloristic concepts and methods have been dominated by a single theory of culture – ‘cultural evolution’ (alternatively called ‘social evolution’ or ‘sociocultural evolution’).”<sup>95</sup>

Seen as ontologically ‘ancestral and primitive’, rural practices were thought to slowly and progressively evolve<sup>96</sup>, while retaining their core ritualistic and religious self. Any variation or inconsistency would be interpreted as either an ‘historical confusion’<sup>97</sup> or would be described as the emergence of a different stem or branch (when similarities in practices are observed in different places, for example). It meant that all these different practices could therefore be regrouped under the same umbrella and analysed through the prism of Primitivism. This vision of folklore clearly borrowed Darwinian terminology and the analogies and methodologies used to describe these folk practices always implied the existence of a ‘common ancestor’. Bennett then remarks: “Folklorists were not slow to see the significance this gave to their researches. Above all, cultural evolution gave them the opportunity to transform their ‘trivial pursuit’ into (a least a part of) the most exciting endeavour of the age and join the scientific community on the coat-tails of anthropology.”<sup>98</sup> Nevertheless, folklorists “were not concerned with evidence (or the lack of it) of historical continuity, and [...] relied entirely upon similarities and parallels in form to construct grand hypotheses”<sup>99</sup>. For example, one of these hypotheses was that Morris dancing was a very ancient

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<sup>94</sup> Carloye (1980: 184)

<sup>95</sup> Bennett (1994: 25)

<sup>96</sup> Or simply remain unchanged.

<sup>97</sup> As in “The 8th May was the old Celtic Bealtaine, or Beltane, when the coming in of summer was observed with the lighting of fires. May 1<sup>st</sup> had come to be bonfire day in Scotland and Ireland.” (Rawe, 1999: 10) It seems that, confused and later combined with the Morris May Games and celebrations, which became popular all over Britain in the Middle Ages, this might be one of the original sources of the basic festivities themselves.” (*Ibid*), for example...

<sup>98</sup> Bennett (1994: 29)

<sup>99</sup> Bushaway (1982) in Trubshaw (1996)

pagan rite which had remained unaltered for centuries.<sup>100</sup> The underlying theory of folklore studies in 19<sup>th</sup> century Britain and, indeed, elsewhere in Europe was a subtle but very effective one nonetheless. As Stephen Corrsin acknowledges:

“Notions of pagan rites, sacrifices and initiations, all part of hypothesised primitive religious practices, were fundamental in approaches to ritual dance studies beginning in the late nineteenth century, when such studies began, to the post-World War II period. The common and consistent point is that they took a selection of historic performance practices — Morris dances and sword dances, mumming, and others in England — and declared them to be the survivals of ancient sacrificial rituals. The picture was of a generalised pagan prehistory, surviving in village festivals, and much the same the world over.”<sup>101</sup>

The notions of ‘folklore’ and ‘folk’ (encompassing and describing both the nature of the practice and its participants) had become a generalised way of thinking about the rural working classes, implying that the folk were primarily ‘peasants’, or at least peasants of direct or indirect decent. Folklores were thought to be essentially unchanging<sup>102</sup>, ontologically conservative, and a symbol of rural life, often seen only through the eyes the urban scholars: “Since folk life was by definition static, the folk were ipso facto conservative and uncreative, ‘living depositories of ancient history.’”<sup>103</sup> This is to be understood in contrast with the popular vision of urban life as essentially progressivist and ever-changing, and whose rhythms are dictated by trends and new developments in fashion and ‘high art’:

“The idea of primitive society therefore provided an idiom which was ideally suited for debate about modern society, but in itself it was neutral... Primitive society was the mirror image of modern society-or, rather, primitive society as they imagined it inverted the characteristics of modern society as they saw it.”<sup>104</sup>

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<sup>100</sup> This vision was challenged in 1957 by historian Barbara Lowe when she uncovered documents that unravelled a very different narrative: “Lowe found that Morris dances first appeared about 1450 as a new craze in the courts of the nobility and royalty throughout western Europe. These courts were notoriously fashion-conscious and briefly-favoured novelty was as prevalent then as in our own times. [...] Courtly morris of the fifteenth century was a Christmas-tide entertainment involving a group of men with bells on their legs, dancing frenetically in an attempt to woo a lady. After this display of male vitality she, in fine fickle, gave her heart to a fool. Not only did this little scenario find favour in the palaces of England, soon it was spreading among the common people. First along the Thames to nearby towns and then, by the sixteenth century, throughout England. Along the way it became less a feature of Christmas than of the Maytime or summer games.” (Trubshaw, 1996) <http://www.indigogroup.co.uk/edge/paganism.htm> [Accessed 12/01/2013]

<sup>101</sup> Corrsin (2004: 327)

<sup>102</sup> Or changing in ways that were considered insignificant. Cf. (Trubshaw, 2003)

<sup>103</sup> Lowenthal (1989: 1273)

<sup>104</sup> Kuper (1988: 240)

At the same time, as mentioned earlier, these practices became considered as the epitome of national identity. They were the symbols used to describe the local population as indigenous, rooted in deep time and into the land. By indiscriminately linking and regrouping religious (or ritualistic) practices and various local ‘village community festivals’ across Europe (and even outside Europe), folklorists such as Cecil Sharp and Thurstan Peter have striven to convey the vision of England as a rural haven, to be understood through the assumption that all ancient societies (described as ‘primitive’) were essentially the same. Therefore, sacrificial rituals observed in rural parts of India for example, served as basis for speculative imaginings of the genesis of some English festivals such as Morris dances.<sup>105</sup> In time, these imaginings became a widespread and commonly accepted narrative.<sup>106</sup>

Furthermore, folklorists believed that the processes of modernisation during the Victorian era were threatening the existence of these traditions. At the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> and the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, as nationalistic sentiments began to grow dangerously all over Europe, the rise of Fascism led to the study of folklore being identified with deeply reactionary or racist ideologies. In *The Invention of Tradition* (1983), Eric Hobsbawm and Terrance Ranger revealed the extent to which some traditions were created to legitimise the status quo of political and monarchical establishments or nationalist aspirations.<sup>107</sup> In a number of places – including the British Isles – could be observed a series of strong political and social moves striving to create a sense of national identity. The ‘folk’ of folklore seemed to fit within this agenda very well. However, throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> and the 20<sup>th</sup> century (and perhaps still today), the idea of a deeply rooted people possessing immemorial and unchanging customs was certainly as seductive for the British as it was for the Germans and other nations. As Trubshaw wittily puts it: “Wagner wrote the soundtrack and Hitler became the leading scriptwriter.”<sup>108</sup> Indeed, even nowadays, notions of indigenesness, and pagan (Celtic) rootedness are still summoned by far-right nationalist rhetoric. The *Western Voices World News*, a white supremacist blog with an openly racist agenda, reported recently:

“BNP chairman Nick Griffin spent May Day campaigning at the famous 'Obby 'Oss festival in Padstow, Cornwall, a folk survival of the old Celtic Beltane May Day feast,

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<sup>105</sup> Cf. Corrsin (2004: 321-322) for a more detailed description of this particular point.

<sup>106</sup> Cf. Trubshaw (2003); Corrsin (2004)

<sup>107</sup> Cf. Hobsbawm and Ranger (1983: 263-308)

<sup>108</sup> Trubshaw, *Problems with popular folklore* (2003)

in keeping with the BNP's position of the sole political voice of the traditional values of the indigenous peoples of the UK.”<sup>109</sup>

It is critical nonetheless to stress the fact that no link has been established between the May rites of Padstow and right-wing extremism; and many have protested against Griffin's attempt to co-opt English folklore “for the purposes of reinscribing hegemonic ideas of whiteness that forward a far-right cause.”<sup>110</sup> This is exemplified in the works of musician Eliza Carthy (2010), scholar Caroline Lucas (2013), and the *Folk Against Fascism* movement.<sup>111</sup>

Despite all this, a number of folklorists, blogs and websites dedicated to the subject still disseminate these primitivist ideas and consequently, these conceptions are still very much present in the way the Obby Oss ritual is considered and mediated today. Donald Rawe even states that the main purpose of his study of the May rites of Padstow is not simply to document the ritual but, most crucially: “to set down the true form of the Ossing so that it shall not, like so much else, change or be lost to sight under pressure of the public attention it now receives.”<sup>112</sup> Furthermore indeed, the ontological rurality of the festival and its participants can also be challenged:

“The folk are not some vaguely defined rural peasants, living in a lost idyll and sharing simple pleasures distinct from the more cultured activities of the more genteel classes. This view of the ‘folk’ was a nineteenth century invention. Everyday life is much more deeply interwoven with folklore and folk customs than is commonly supposed, although this would be not be obvious from most books about folklore, which continue to focus on the ‘fossils of a lost rural idyll’ and their so-called ‘revival’.”<sup>113</sup>

Cornish people were being seen as a primitive and simple ‘Celtic’ folk and contrasted with the supposed ‘modernity’ of England.<sup>114</sup> In the inter-war period Cornwall was routinely evoked as: “a foreign land – still rooted in the natural essence of its uncorrupted, aboriginal peasantry.”<sup>115</sup> Far

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<sup>109</sup> ‘May Day Protests Rock Europe’, in *Western Voices World News*, 1 May, 2009.

<sup>110</sup> Lucas (2013: 2)

<sup>111</sup> Cf. Lucas (2013); Carthy, ‘Traditional English song has no links to the far right or Nick Griffin’ *The Guardian*. 26 January, 2010. And: *Folk Against Fascism*: <http://www.folkagainstfascism.com/about.html>. [Accessed 12/12/2014]

<sup>112</sup> Rawe (1999: 2)

<sup>113</sup> Cf. Trubshaw (2003)

<sup>114</sup> Cf. Hudson (1908)

<sup>115</sup> Vernon (1998, 165)

from being composed exclusively of farmers and fishermen, the community that constitutes the members of the Obby Oss party is a diverse and non-homogenic one. Underneath the costume, under the Oss itself, one might find a school teacher, a shop owner, a dentist, a retail assistant, a cook, an office worker, or any other fairly typical modern-day woman or man. In other words: *we* are the *folk*.

Throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> and the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, the concept of folk customs as static fossils of a pagan past practised by an ‘aboriginal peasantry’ became so pervasive that it was not effectively challenged by academics until the 1970s and it is still the popular view of folklore today.<sup>116</sup> As David Lowenthal acknowledges: “As late as 1968, leading folk song experts were asserting that ‘folk society and folk art do not accept, reflect, or value change.’”<sup>117</sup> However, as Corrsin demonstrates, more recent studies seem to reveal a rather different picture of both the origins and significance of the Obby Oss festival:

“Systematic research into its history has now been carried out by E. C. Cawte and Roy Judge [...]. The former reveals that the oldest known record dates from 1803, when the horse consisted of a stallion's skin and the man inside splashed water over the crowds from the town's pools. [...] There is no doubt that the *frisson* of ancient and arcane ceremony which has been attached to it is in large part responsible for its popularity, and indeed the ferocity of local pride manifested in Padstow on May Day, the pounding of the drums, and the clumsy lunges of the great beasts do combine to produce an archaic atmosphere of disturbing or exhilarating intensity; even though there is now no reason to assign the tradition a greater age than the late eighteenth century.”<sup>118</sup>

Similarly to the Morris dancing and its mid 15<sup>th</sup> century ‘court antics’ origins, there is little evidence to suggest the existence of a long, unbroken lineage of the Obby Oss festival with the pre-Christian era.<sup>119</sup> Instead, the Obby Oss ritual could perhaps be seen as a more intricate and more

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<sup>116</sup> Cf. Trubshaw (2003)

<sup>117</sup> Lowenthal (1989: 1273)

<sup>118</sup> Hutton (1996: 82-83)

<sup>119</sup> “The imaginations of the late Victorian folklorists were fuelled by this on-going popular ‘paganism’ within Christianity and the notions of a unified pre-Christian pagan past seemingly supported by Frazer’s melting-down of ethnology. [...] These imaginations asserted that hobby horses – such as that at Padstow – must be survivors of the masked dancers which early Christians, such as Theodore in his oft-quoted homily, attempted to suppress. [...] Yet, despite bending over backwards to incorporate all evidence for an early origin for ritual animal disguises, E.C. Cawte is forced to conclude that, while there are records of hobby-horses throughout most of the sixteenth century, these were intended to represent a horse and rider in a pageant. ‘It is only toward the end of that period that there are records of a single hobby-horse with a Morris team.’ (E.C. Cawte, *Ritual Animal Disguise*, D.S. Brewer, 1978)”. (Trubshaw, 2003)

recent and imagined re-incarnation (or a re-invention) of many different borrowed traditions, that include but is not limited to ancient Celtic and Christian beliefs and superstitions, as well as a number of non-religious practices such as military music<sup>120</sup>, theatre and social trends. Nonetheless, the popularity (amongst participants and onlookers alike) of the Mayday celebration in Padstow has never been stronger and the various myths and legends that surround the ritual play an integral role in the unfolding and perception of the event. As the fragment of interview featured in the first section of *Padstow Cosmesis* alludes to, Padstonians themselves are often keen to make the connection between the (likely imaginary) notion of an ancestral pagan fertility rite and the Obby Oss festival.

#### 2.2.4 Padstow Harbour: Market Strand, Rick Stein, Funfair and Speedboats

*“Anyone else for a speedboat trip? We’re waiting for three more people!”* (Speedboat announcement, Padstow, 02/05/2009)

The last part of the first section of *Padstow Cosmesis* begins with a montage of field recordings captured around the Market Strand of Padstow Harbour, with its funfair and other tourist attractions. Amongst the cry of seagulls and other birds, we can hear the crowd of locals and visitors passing by, buskers on the pier, market-stall holders, as well as seasonal holidaymakers pottering about, manoeuvring ropes and chains on their leisure boats. Particularly around Mayday, and for the duration of the summer season, the Market Strand is a busy and vibrant place. It is the most profitable centre of Padstow’s tourist industry. Rick Stein’s famous seafood restaurant is situated nearby, just a few steps away from the Strand. The market section of the sound-work features two fragments of interviews. The first one is a comment on the ever-increasing popularity of the village, and mentions the influence of the ‘celebrity chef’ on this matter:

*“I think Padstow has become much more well-known because of Rick Stein’s television programmes. And I think they have done programmes on the television, showing Mayday.”*<sup>121</sup>

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<sup>120</sup> This specific point will be exemplified further when discussing the ‘Farewell’, later in this chapter.

<sup>121</sup> *Padstow Cosmesis*, interview fragment.

Rick Stein opened his first restaurant in 1975. The previous year, he had purchased a nightclub which, according to Stein: “didn’t last very long, owing to some problems with keeping law and order with a clientele of burly fisherman [sic].”<sup>122</sup> Through the years, the business has grown tremendously and one can hardly overstate the effect that Stein’s establishment has had on the local community and the tourist economy of the region. Nowadays, Stein owns a vast array of businesses in Padstow including a Bed & Breakfast, three luxury hotels (St Edmund's House, St Petroc's Hotel & Bistro and Prospect House), a fish & chip shop, a cookery school, a café and gift shop, a patisserie, a fishmonger (Stein’s Fisheries), and a pub (The Cornish Arms); all of them more or less situated within walking distance of the harbour. The chef’s television series has greatly contributed to the town’s fame, perhaps as much as the Obby Oss ritual.<sup>123</sup> In Padstow, Rick Stein is omnipresent. It is then not surprising that the town has come to be nicknamed *Padstein*.<sup>124</sup> Although he employs between 200 and 450 people locally (depending on the season), a number of complaints have arisen over the years; from shop owners denouncing the nefast effects that ‘Stein’s empire’ has had on their small businesses, to residents being outraged by the rocketing prices of property. In particular, the transformation of *Prospect House*, a historic building, into another hotel has been the subject of ongoing controversies. After the council first rejected the building plans, Stein successfully appealed and finally went ahead with the project in 2007, despite the anger of a number of residents and shop owners.<sup>125</sup>

At the end of the Market Strand section of *Padstow Cosmesis*, the second fragment of interview illustrates a Padstonian’s concern with the overwhelming number of onlookers visiting the town for the Mayday celebration: “*You don’t really want any more people to come to Padstow on Mayday...*”<sup>126</sup> A Parish Plan devised by the *Cornwall Rural Community Council* (CRCC) and published in 2007 sums up the tension between the upsides and downsides of Padstow's ever increasing popularity and, again, acknowledges Stein’s influence:

“It is estimated that over 150,000 visitors a year stay in the town (and the nearby parishes to the south) and the number of day visitors to Padstow itself is over 500,000 a

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<sup>122</sup> Rick Stein’s official website: <https://www.rickstein.com/about/our-history> [Accessed 02//01/2015]

<sup>123</sup> Cf. Graham and associates (2013) for example, for a more detailed study of the ‘Stein Effect’.

<sup>124</sup> Cf. Salkeld, *The battle of 'Padstein': TV chef Rick Stein at war with the locals* (2007), for example.

<sup>125</sup> Cf. Walmesley (2013) for example.

<sup>126</sup> *Padstow Cosmesis*, interview fragment.

year. The restaurant trade has also become an industry for which Padstow is now famous. Both the tourist and restaurant industry have brought benefits to Padstow, but have also given rise to a number of challenges. Residents highlighted the danger of the over reliance on such an economy. Many were concerned with the low wages of many of the jobs available and the limited variety of employment opportunities.”<sup>127</sup>

Most crucially, the Parish Plan also highlights the housing crisis and the impact of second home ownership on the area and its local population. Noting the rising concerns of Padstonians over their ability to remain in the village, the Parish Plan states:

“The need for affordable housing was voted the second highest priority for the Parish, attaining a total of 374 votes. 334 of these votes were for action to take place ‘Now’. It was stressed heavily that the lack of affordable housing was posing a great threat to Padstow as more and more local people were finding it impossible to afford to live in the area. The pressure of second homes and holiday lets was seen as a major cause of this problem. There were also concerns raised as to how affordable ‘affordable housing’ is to many local people due to the low wage employment common in the area.”<sup>128</sup>

The negative effects of second home ownerships on local communities and small-town life is indeed a problematic issue all around the British coasts; and Padstow is a conspicuous example of the dangerous combination of high property prices and the fact that the average salaries are some of the lowest in the country. As a result, most Padstonians actually reside in nearby towns or abroad, or at best in the council estate situated on the outskirts of Padstow.

The interview fragment mentioned previously is followed by a montage of field recordings of the harbour and the Market Strand before sunrise on Mayday 2009. At that time of night, the harbour seemed to possess a rather haunting and intriguing atmosphere where one could feel the emptiness of the place as well as – perhaps in a more symbolic way – a sense of expectation for the day of celebration to come. The calm and quiet nature of this short sequence is also used in the composition as a contrasting counterpart to the hectic soundscape of the funfair and other daytime tourist attractions such as speedboats, one-armed bandits and other games.

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<sup>127</sup> Cornwall Rural Community Council (CRCC), *Parish Plan*. (2007: 8)

<sup>128</sup> Cornwall Rural Community Council (CRCC), *Parish Plan*. (2007: 10)

The fairground is situated behind the Market Strand, in between the harbour and the pier. It is present in Padstow throughout the tourist season. The funfair segment of *Padstow Cosmesis* is constituted of an intricate montage of different recordings realised in the weeks leading up to Mayday, as well as during the Obby Oss ritual. It features the voices of speedboat owners encouraging tourists to take part in a trip around the bay, some shouting, others using megaphones. We can also hear the voice of a crew member of the *Jubilee Queen*<sup>129</sup>, announcing that the ship is ready to depart. Structurally speaking, each voice excerpt punctuates the overall soundscape and is often used to introduce new textures or a change of pace within the sequence of elements. Amongst the sound of boat engines, rigging, and other sailing apparatus, we can hear various funfair attractions such as carousels, gambling machines, *waltzers*, and other rides.<sup>130</sup> Another sound-layer features several short excerpts of songs sung by the children of Padstow which were recorded during a rehearsal at the local school, in January 2010. The joyful, light-hearted and vibrant atmosphere of the fairground is somehow reflected in the playfulness of the editing as well as the fast-paced interactions between the different textures that make up this particular segment. On Mayday itself, it is not unusual for the younger members of the party to escape the procession for a little while and enjoy themselves at the funfair.

### 2.2.5 *Padstow Cosmesis*' Narrative 1: "A Room..."

The end of the first section of *Padstow Cosmesis* features a fairly extended montage of fragments from an interview with a Padstonian who lives abroad but comes back every year for the Obby Oss celebration. Conceptually, it acts as a transition between the first and second section of the sound-work. It offers a poignant account of the significance of the custom as seen from the point of view of a young Padstonian:

*"It's about if you walk into a room, and everybody in the room, in Padstow. It's like the country of America; it's founded on immigration and they don't want any more immigrants and it's kind of... to me, that's what's there. I've always been the same"*

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<sup>129</sup> A ship offering daily coastal cruises from Padstow to offshore islands.

<sup>130</sup> It is interesting to note that the textures of quite a few of these recordings (from both the boats and the fairground) sounded surprisingly similar, often making it very difficult to distinguish between the different sources. As well as the nature of the site itself, these particular textural similarities really seemed to call for a playful approach.

*because there are people who take this very seriously, and it's the be all and end all. A room, and that's it! And it's become polarised and tribal and you can't... well... I kind of get excited about Mayday on Mayday eve, before that, it's purely about... a room, and everybody in the room is happy and chatting away.*"<sup>131</sup>

This montage playfully mixes together several allegories used by the interviewee to describe how he feels about Mayday. Halfway through the narrative of this interview montage, I have added a field recording from the hills of Padstow, captured during Mayday. The recording has been slightly processed and slowed down. We hear the beating drums of the procession, sounding in the distance. For the expatriate Padstonian in question, more than a symbolically charged ritual, the Obby Oss is an occasion to return to Padstow, celebrate in the festivities, and reunite with friends and family. The montage also alludes to fears expressed sometimes by local residents regarding the presence of foreigners, 'English outsiders', and second home owners in the region. It highlights as well certain tensions and disagreements between some members of the party. Indeed, it seems that there might be a thin line between the will of the community to protect their town and the Obby Oss celebration and what can perhaps be perceived as a form of localised xenophobia.

As mentioned earlier, the presence of the chairman of the BNP in Padstow on Mayday 2009 was mostly met with anger and spite. Nevertheless, a 'Minority Report' published in the same year makes a case about the unease felt by certain people in Cornwall towards those perceived as outsiders as well as the frustration of some – who identify themselves as *Cornish* rather than *English* – for not having been recognised as a 'national minority'<sup>132</sup>. It is undoubtedly difficult to assess how representative this report actually is, but it nonetheless shows once again how at least a section of society, in Padstow and elsewhere in Cornwall, feel that their regional distinctiveness might be threatened or in need of more recognition. In any case, the sense of Cornish identity is undeniably strong in Padstow. As we will see in the following section of this chapter, anxieties over the potential loss of identity and the fading of traditions is a source of concern for some members of the party and is expressed in the way the Obby Oss ritual is perceived by its participants, particularly in relation to the number of tourists who visit the town on Mayday.

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<sup>131</sup> *Padstow Cosmesis*, interview fragments: Narrative 1

<sup>132</sup> "The UK Governments Compliance Report in respect of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities should have been an important event for the Cornish People, as we strive to help build a Europe founded on diversity, recognising the role to be played by all the peoples of Europe in creating sustainable harmony and peace. However, the Compliance Report explicitly denies identification as a national minority to the Cornish." (*Cornish National Minority Report*, 2009: 3)

### 2.3 The Strike-up to Mayday: *Padstow Cosmesis*, Section II

“The men of the town begin preparations several days before, putting strings of flags across the main streets of the town, and bringing in greenery – the traditional sycamore branches – to decorate doorways, lamp posts etc. [...] Other preparations – the painting and repairing of the respective Osses – have already been attended to.” Rawe (1999: 2)

The second section of *Padstow Cosmesis* explores the soundscapes of various communal activities leading up to the official start of the Obby Oss ritual, which culminate with everyone gathering for the midnight singing, known as the *Strike-up*. This section begins with a montage of field recordings carried out by the docks, on Mayday eve, early in the morning. We hear harbour workers walking inside the metallic storage facilities and refrigerated lorries, moving crates of crabs, crayfish and lobsters. During this segment, we can also hear the cry of seagulls following the men around, waiting to scavenge on the seafood that might drop from the crates. The day before the festival is one of the busiest days of the year for all retailers, restaurants and hotels. Tourists usually arrive early to visit the place and to watch the last preparations for the festival.

In contrast to the sparseness and quietness of the docks recordings, the next segment is a short exploration of the excitement and expectation of the crowd of onlookers on Mayday morning, while everyone is waiting for the procession to come out of the Golden Lion Inn, the Red Oss’ stable. As a senior member of the party is passing through a large group of tourists gathered in front of the pub, collecting donations, he warms up the crowd and shouts “Oss Oss!”. The sheer loudness of the response he gets gives us an idea of the tremendous crowd’s density. For about half-an-hour before the start of the event, a small group of men have to keep pushing the crowd away from the doors, constantly asking them to move back to ensure that the procession is allowed to emerge into the street safely and with enough space to play and dance, and for the Oss to prance. During this sequence, not only can we feel the vibrant atmosphere of a party about to begin, but also the palpable tension between the members of the party and the crowd of tourists, squeezed and pushing, growing larger each year. This short segment ends abruptly and we hear a second montage of interview fragments that mirrors ‘Narrative 1’, discussed earlier. The various fragments have been

mixed together and often overlap, thus interlacing the different utterances together and conceptually embracing some of the contradictions expressed during the interviews. This second narrative is a reflection on the effects of the crowd upon the enjoyment and celebration of the festival:

[Interlaced] *“It’s about if you walk into / It’s about... it’s nice / a room / a lot of people / night singing / and everybody in the room / tourists I suppose... in the way! Who are just sat there / But that’s the signal / and then they get in the way and people get very... / but for me it is a... / annoyed with it, and it affects the / religious experience / the atmosphere of the collective.”*<sup>133</sup>

This montage is followed by another fragment of interview where another Padstonian anxiously expresses her discomfort with the way she feels tourism and second home owners have affected the life of the town. She also evokes the May rites of Padstow as a form of resistance, something that cannot be taken away, an immutable force that carries on despite the changes and what she sees as non-Padstonians moving in:

*“I think it’s just trying to hold on to your traditions that is sort of devolving with everyone moving in to Cornwall. And I think a lot of people begrudge it, and this is the only... this they can’t... they can’t! They can’t take it away!”*<sup>134</sup>

In one of the early editions of his study of the Obby Oss, published in 1971, Rawe remarks upon the change of attitude towards onlookers that had already occurred between the fifties and the seventies. He first cites an excerpt from Claude Berry’s book *Cornwall* (1959), in which the author declared that: “Anybody and everybody can join in. Well we know that crowds will not come from elsewhere to watch our revels; and we are neither sad nor glad therefor.”<sup>135</sup> Rawe then acknowledges that after the recent increase in tourist numbers, the festival certainly feels different and that “senior mayors complain that crowds of visitors restrict the dancing: in Claude Berry’s day the crowd could still keep to the street sides and pavements and allow the Oss plenty of room.”<sup>136</sup> In 1971, tourists on Mayday were estimated to be a few thousand. Nowadays, it is not unusual to see

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<sup>133</sup> *Padstow Cosmesis*, interview fragments: Narrative 2

<sup>134</sup> *Padstow Cosmesis*, interview fragment

<sup>135</sup> Berry (1959) in Rawe (1971: 5)

<sup>136</sup> Rawe (1971: 5)

30,000 people crammed in the town to watch the spectacle.<sup>137</sup> It is not difficult then to imagine the concerns of some members of the party, and why tensions might sometimes arise within their ranks.

### 2.3.1 The Strike-up to Mayday: Nightmares and *Little Eyes*

*“You have Mayday nightmares for ages before  
Mayday...” (Padstow Cosmesis, interview fragment)*

The second part of the second section of *Padstow Cosmesis* is a sonic exploration of a specific point that has come up during the interview with the aforementioned young woman. She explained that, for weeks before Mayday, she (and others) had all sorts of nightmares and moments of anxiety ranging from the fear of a family tragedy happening just before the event to perhaps more trivial (but nonetheless still important) worries such as the Obby Oss being broken or lost, or even her whites not being clean on Mayday morning. This formed the basis of the dense montage of field recordings, some processed, some not, that make up this particular sequence.

During my third field trip to Padstow in January 2010, I recorded the sound of a broken accordion in a workshop.<sup>138</sup> I felt that the gasping and breathing sonic textures as well as the cracking wood and other percussive sounds that emanated from the malfunctioning instrument were very evocative and relevant for this sequence. I have then edited the different takes together and applied a bespoke multi-channel granular synthesis processing to some of the recordings in order to alter their texture and enhance their expressive qualities (in pitch, timing, duration and density). This technique is also used to achieve a more dynamic 8 channel specialisation. As Truax puts it:

“[The] granulated material is time-stretched [or compressed] by various amounts and thereby produces a number of perceptual changes that seem to originate from within the sound. [...] This effect is used not merely to create drones, but to allow the inner timbral character of the sound to emerge and be observed, as if under a microscope.”<sup>139</sup>

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<sup>137</sup> Cf. *Padstow May Day*: <http://www.padstowlive.com/events/padstow-may-day> [accessed 14/12/2014]

<sup>138</sup> The accordion in question belonged to a member of the Blue Oss party.

<sup>139</sup> Truax (1999a)

Several other layers composed of different field recordings of the festival itself have also been added to complete the sequence in an attempt to convey the sense of anxiety expressed by the interviewee. These recordings include excerpts from the crowd cheering (some under the influence of alcohol), the May Song, the Brenton drums resonating through the streets as well as sounds from a park, near Prideaux Place. All these combined elements are also used as an opportunity to embrace and engage with possibly conflicting trajectories and interpretations, thus not attempting to fix a specific narrative but rather to open a field of abstractions and a multitude of possible meanings (including the possibility of meaninglessness). Discussing *Island*, an extended sound-work he composed in 2000, Truax reflects on multi-channel soundscape composition and the effects of transformation techniques on both the listener's perspective and the composer's creative approach, and proposes:

“The narrative, the epic, the myth, and the novel have always entranced people with the experience of a journey, whether literal in the sense of an adventure, psychological in the sense of the developmental stages of life, or symbolic in the sense of conflict and resolution. Soundscape compositions that propose the illusion of a moving perspective may function at any or all of these levels. Motion is the very basis of sound, first at the level of vibration, then at the level of gesture or pattern, and finally at the macro level of longer term change, whether cyclic or otherwise. [...] Philosophers have argued that the auditory sense is largely responsible for our experience of both time and space in ways that are unique (and complementary) to that created with our visual faculty. Therefore, the composer who creates the illusion of relative motion between the listener and the auditory space has a rich palette of meaning from which to draw.”<sup>140</sup>

The ‘nightmare sequence’ of *Padstow Cosmesis* is followed by a recording of a traditional folk tune played by an accordionist who belongs to the Red Oss party. This tune is used in the composition as the transition to another series of recordings made in front of the Golden Lion Inn – the night before Mayday – where the festivities really begin.

On Mayday eve, from around six o’clock onwards, everyone gathers inside the Golden Lion. There on, Padstonians play and sing various traditional folk songs (some related to the Obby Oss, some not) all evening until the time comes for the *Strike-up*. After the solo accordion segment, the second section of *Padstow Cosmesis* features two excerpts of songs recorded by the pub window. Fortunately the three tunes were in the same key, making it easier to create a smooth and seamless

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<sup>140</sup> Truax (2002)

editing. The first excerpt we hear is a verse from the Dirge, normally sung during the Obby Oss ritual:

“[Sung] *Up flies the kite and down falls the lark O.  
Aunt Ursula Birdhood...*”<sup>141</sup>

As the evening progresses, the dancing and singing intensify. The second song excerpt we hear features the last line of a verse and the chorus of another traditional Cornish folk song called *Little Eyes*. The chorus is sung as a call-and-response:

“[Sung] *Behind the garden wall  
And she said:  
Little eyes I love you (honey!)  
Little eyes I love you  
I love you in the springtime and the fall  
Little eyes I love you (honey!)  
Little eyes I love you  
I love you best of all.*”<sup>142</sup>

Around an hour before midnight, as the moment of the *Strike-up* finally approaches, the excitement of the crowd is palpable. Inevitably, the event also attracts many tourists who try to join in and, as the effects of heavy drinking can be perceived through the friendly banter all around, it is not unusual for the curious onlookers who have come too close to be gently but firmly reminded to step back. Though doing my best to be as discreet as possible, I too got my fair share of being pushed around (though without any real animosity) while recording the party that night.

### 2.3.2 Midnight on Mayday Eve: A ‘Noisy Crowd’ and the Night Song

The last part of the second section of *Padstow Cosmesis* is constructed from a series of field recordings of the Night Song, also called Morning Song or *Strike-up*<sup>143</sup>, sung *a cappella*, and marking the official beginning of the Obby Oss ritual. At approximately a quarter to midnight, the local residents finally begin to gather in front of the Golden Lion. This is the moment where

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<sup>141</sup> Folk song fragment as featured in *Padstow Cosmesis*.

<sup>142</sup> Folk song fragment featured in *Padstow Cosmesis*.

<sup>143</sup> Cf. Rawe (1999) and Spooner (1958) for example.

everyone, regardless of whether they belong to the Blue Oss or the Old Oss party, comes together. They form a very large choir, several-hundred strong, standing with the harbour before them in the distance. Closer to midnight, the streetlights go off and both the congregation and the tourists find themselves in the dark:

“The night-singing has a special quality of its own; without drums, accordions or Oss, it creates a powerful folk atmosphere and is one of the experiences of May Day that should not be missed. Part of the attraction is, of course, singing in darkness; not long ago a television company attempted to film it, every so often lighting flares for illumination, and considerably detracted from this part of the proceedings.”<sup>144</sup>

In theory, total silence is expected from the participants and any onlookers before the singing can begin (one is normally supposed to wait until he or she hears the midnight church bells). However, on April 30<sup>th</sup> 2009 – when the recording was made – the rowdiness of some of the local residents, along with a number of visitors unaware of the etiquette, meant that numerous people were still chatting and being agitated, thus greatly upsetting other members of the party. In the first part of the sequence in question, we can hear many Padstonians becoming frustrated as they heckle with the crowd and struggle to get them to be quiet. After a few minutes, silence was finally obtained. The church bell struck midnight and they started singing. The song is traditionally addressed to the landlord and landlady of the Golden Lion Inn.

This part of the ritual was for me one of the most striking moments of the festival. The tremendous emotional and evocative power of communal singing is here undoubtedly tangible. The tune is sung slowly, unaccompanied, in a solemn manner, and many people chanted with tears in their eyes. The last part of the second section of *Padstow Cosmesis* features the first two verses of the Night Song. We can hear these hundreds of voices sing in unison, merging together and becoming one while resonating through the narrow streets of Padstow; thus spectacularly symbolising and giving strong significance to the first lines of the tune:

*“Unite and unite, and let us all unite  
For summer is a-comin' today.  
And whither we are going we will all unite  
In the merry morning of May”*<sup>145</sup>

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<sup>144</sup> Rawe (1999: 2)

<sup>145</sup> Cf. *Ibid* p.6 (Excerpt of the *Strike-up* featured in *Padstow Cosmesis*)

The overall melody of the Night Song is the same as the May Song. They also share the same first verse while the second verse of the *Strike-up* song differs:

*“I warn you young men everyone  
For summer is a come unto today,  
To go to the green-wood and fetch your May home  
In the merry morning of May.”*<sup>146</sup>

This verse warns the population of the imminent coming of summer and urges them to go to the woods for the gathering of sycamore and may tree greenery, which are used to decorate the town. At the end of the second section of *Padstow Cosmesis*, as the *Strike-up* finishes, we hear people clapping, cheering, and wishing each other a ‘lovely day’. After the Night Song, the Obby Oss party then moves around the town and carries on singing and dancing, paying tribute to notable Padstonians – or to elderly people who might be stranded at home for example – until the early hours of the morning.

#### 2.4 **Mayday, Prideaux Place, The May Song and Farewell: *Padstow Cosmesis*, Section III**

The third section of *Padstow Cosmesis* explores the soundscape of Padstow, during the Obby Oss festival itself. The sound material that constitutes this section was captured around the town on Mayday 2009-2010. It begins with a montage of field recordings realised at Prideaux Place in the morning, before the two Osses come out of their respective stables. This segment also contains other sounds from the harbour, Lanadwell Street, and then Broad Street, where the maypole is erected. As briefly mentioned earlier, Prideaux Place plays an important role in the journey of the Obby Oss ritual. The Prideaux mansion is situated on the hilltops, up Church Lane, and dominates the landscape. It possesses a fairly large front yard, and during the rest of the year visitors are welcome to wander around. However, on Mayday, when the Obby Oss party arrives at Prideaux Place, the participants gather inside the front yard and the gates are closed behind them. Practically no onlooker is allowed in. It is the only moment of the day where the members of the party are

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<sup>146</sup> Cf. *Ibid* (Excerpt of the *Strike-up* featured in *Padstow Cosmesis*)

really on their own, as a group, without the presence of the crowd. There, the participants dance and serenade the Prideaux-Brune family for almost an hour.

These notable Padstonians have owned the house and its land since the late 16<sup>th</sup> century. The house was built by Sir Nicholas Prideaux in 1592. He then decided to marry his nephew to the Prior of Bodmin's niece. The marriage left the Prideaux family in charge of vast amounts of land including the area around Padstow.<sup>147</sup> The land has remained in the family ever since:

“The house has been continuously occupied by fourteen generations of the Prideaux family, since Elizabethan times. The family itself has been around in Cornwall even longer. The first Prideauxs date back to William the Conqueror. In fact, [the present residents’ son, William] is the Conqueror's great grandson 26 times on.”<sup>148</sup>

At the beginning of the segment, we can hear the sound of small streams that surround the house, Prideaux’s guard dog barking from within the front yard, as well as a big piece of wood being moved to the side of the road during the morning preparations as it was blocking the pathway. We also hear birdcalls coming from the nearby churchyard and cemetery. For many Padstonians, Mayday is often an occasion to remember those who have passed away during the previous year. The May Song – as well as the ‘Farewell’ (discussed later in this chapter) – is usually sung during funeral services in Padstow. The end of the ‘Prideaux Place segment’ then features a short excerpt from the harbour’s water recordings, which mirrors the first section of *Padstow Cosmesis*. It transitions to a montage of field recordings carried out on Broadstreet, under the Maypole. Maypoles were once common throughout Europe. In Padstow it used to be erected in front of Cross House. The site itself might have had some ritualistic significance but after many complaints, the pole was moved to its present location, where it is an impressive focal point during the festival.<sup>149</sup>

During the ‘Maypole section’ of *Padstow Cosmesis*, we can hear the chiming sounds of the ropes and metal rigging that hold the pole together as well as the various flags attached to it and flapping in the wind. Texturally speaking, it sounded very similar to the boats’ rigging in ‘Section I’

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<sup>147</sup> Cf. Jackson (2010)

<sup>148</sup> Jackson (2010: 92)

<sup>149</sup> Cf. Rawe (1999); Spooner (1958)

and this is why this sequence is preceded by recordings of the harbour. Most importantly however, in the background of this soundscape, we can hear the constant beating of the drums coming from the distance. Apart from the May Song itself, it is perhaps the most salient soundmark of Padstow during Mayday. Wherever one stands, all day long, the Osses' drumming can be heard resonating through the entire town, either nearby or on the horizon.

#### 2.4.1 The Children's Oss and the Accordions of the May Song

After 11am, the Red Oss party has left the Golden Lion Inn and the procession perambulates around the town for the rest of the day. In this next segment of *Padstow Cosmesis*, we hear the end of an instrumental version of the Dirge, played by the children of Padstow. This was actually recorded the day after Mayday. A small group of children had built an Obby Oss of their own. The Children's Oss was in many ways identical to the real thing, except that the creature itself and the masks and hats they were wearing were made of cardboard and painted plastic cups; as for the Oss' skirt: black bin-liners, stapled around the cardboard Oss! They were strolling up and down the pier, playing their accordions and beating their drums.

Following the instrumental version of the Dirge, we first hear the May Song played by the children, which then crossfades with the full version of the tune performed by the large Old Oss orchestra, recorded on Broad Street on Mayday 2009. It is a defining element for the *acoustic community*<sup>150</sup> of Padstow. During this segment, the sound-work also features an array of interlaced interview fragments that juxtapose some of the contrasting ways in which the festival is perceived by various participants:

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<sup>150</sup> Truax defines the notion of *acoustic community* as: "any soundscape in which acoustic information plays a pervasive role in the lives of the inhabitants [...] therefore, the boundary of the community is arbitrary and may be as small as a room of people, a home or a building, or as large as an urban community, a broadcast area, or any other system of electroacoustic communication. In short, it is any system within which acoustic information is exchanged. [...] Such a system is 'information rich' in terms of sound, and therefore sound plays a significant role in defining the community spatially, temporally in terms of daily and seasonal cycles, as well as socially and culturally in terms of shared activities, rituals, and dominant institutions. The community is linked and defined by its sounds." (2001: 66)

“[Interlaced] *You feel like another person... / You’re just pushing, pushing back! / You know... / At the end of the day, it’s our day! / You’ve got that bass! / That’s what it’s all about you know, that’s all! / And it’s get up, you know. Get up and join in!*”<sup>151</sup>

The May Song, played continuously during the festival, not only galvanises the members of the party (and onlookers), but is also a powerful sonic marker for the Padstonian community. Other Hobby Horses might be found elsewhere; and maypoles and other traditional artefacts are indeed common throughout Europe. However, the May Song – with its massive assembly of accordionists and its intense, obsessive drumming that permeates everywhere in town during the festivities – is unique to Padstow. It holds an undeniably strong emotional power over the community. Together with the Obby Oss, it is practically revered. For Padstonians, the song is very often associated with a variety of deep feelings and memories, from the death of loved ones, the reuniting of friends and families and the joy of dancing and partying, to the socio-political resistance and the reinvesting of the streets of Padstow, where most cannot afford to live anymore. For all these reasons, the ubiquitous presence of the May Song in the soundscape of Padstow and the life of its community makes it another poignant soundmark of the area.

At the end of this segment of the sound-work, we hear another fragment of interview in which a young Padstonian comments on the aches and pains of the following day, suffered as a result of the physical intensity of all the dancing and singing. This fragment is followed by a short re-exploration of the montage of nighttime field recordings that were carried out around the harbour previously featured in ‘Section I’ of the sound-work:

*“Your shoulders ache, your legs ache, your calf muscles ache, your feet ache, everything aches...”*<sup>152</sup>

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<sup>151</sup> *Padstow Cosmesis*, interview fragments.

<sup>152</sup> *Padstow Cosmesis*, interview fragment.

#### 2.4.2 The Farewell and the “*drum that’s almost like a heartbeat inside of you*”

The Obby Oss ritual officially ends at around ten in the evening. It started in the dark, with the night singing in front the Golden Lion Inn, and ends in the dark again, still by the Oss’ stable, but this time the townsfolk sing a different song. After a last round of playing the May Song and dancing around the Maypole, the procession finally comes to a stop. The Obby Oss is ceremoniously laid onto the ground and everyone gathers around him. The members of the party then begin to sing the Farewell, a slow and solemn tune, with a dark and poetic undertone:

“Farewell farewell my own true love  
[...] I think of thee with longing  
Think though while tears are thronging  
That with my last faint sighing  
I whispered soft whilst dying  
Farewell farewell my own true love”<sup>153</sup>

The Farewell’s lyrics tell the story of an Edwardian soldier, leaving for war, and struggling to say goodbye to his loved one. As he is approaching certain death, the soldier addresses his farewell one last time and dies. The song is a fairly recent addition to the festival. It started around the time of the First World War, at the same time the Blue Oss was being introduced in Padstow.<sup>154</sup> It further links the Obby Oss ritual with the military tradition. In a BBC online article published in 2005, a journalist reports the words of a Padstonian who travels to Padstow for Mayday every year and recalls:

“I was reading a book the other day about the First World War. On the 1<sup>st</sup> May with all the fighting two Padstownians were dancing in the trenches because it was May Day.”<sup>155</sup>

A similar story can be found in John Betjeman’s book, *First and Last Loves* (1952):

“I knew someone who was next to a Padstow man in the trenches in the 1914 war. On the night before May Day, the Padstow man became so excited he couldn't keep still.

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<sup>153</sup> Cf. *Obby Oss Procession - Padstow May Day*. (2014)

<sup>154</sup> Cf. Rawe (1999; Spooner (1958)

<sup>155</sup> ‘All eyes are on Padstow’, in *BBC Cornwall Uncovered*, 24 Sept., 2014.

The old 'obby 'oss was mounting in his blood and his mates had to hold him back from jumping over the top and dancing about in No-man's-land.’<sup>156</sup>

From the *Frightening of the French*, the legend of St. Petroc and the dragon, to the creation of the Peace Oss (Blue Oss) during the First World War, the various lineages of the Obby Oss ritual with the military and its mythical function as a symbolic protector of Padstow play a fundamental role in the *meaning* of the festival.

The singing of the Farewell at the end of Mayday is another very emotional moment for everyone involved. As the ritual comes to a close, many Padstonians have tears in their eyes one more time. This song is also often sung at funerals. In this segment of the sound-work, we hear the last chorus of the Farewell. In theory again, similarly to the night singing the night before, silence is traditionally expected before this part of the festival may proceed. Nevertheless, as the recording clearly shows, we can hear the crowd of onlookers chatting fairly loudly in the background. In this segment of the sound-work, the Farewell excerpt is preceded by a fragment of interview in which a resident expresses all the personal emotional weight the song carries for her, and how difficult singing it can be:

*“It took me about five years to be able to actually sing the Farewell all the way through, because my uncle Trevor had it played at his funeral. And a lot of people will have the Farewell at their funeral.”*<sup>157</sup>

When the Farewell song ends, the Oss is picked up from the ground, accompanied by a loud and vigorous round of “Oss Oss! Whee Oss!” The creature is then moved inside the Golden Lion, where it will stay for another year, until it is time to resurrect it again. The last segment of the third section of *Padstow Cosmesis* features another fairly extended interview fragment. It is a reflection upon the sensations and feelings that remain after Mayday. It shows again the powerful effects of the Osses’ drumming on the participants, and its significance:

*“Even when it’s all stopped, you can come home, you can go to bed, you know you’ve had a long day and that... and you can put your head on your pillow and all you can still hear is the drums. You don’t hear the accordions, but you can still hear the drum*

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<sup>156</sup> Betjeman (2012: 62) The book referred to in the previous citation from the BBC article might be Betjeman’s book.

<sup>157</sup> *Padstow Cosmesis*, interview fragment.

*because it's just got that beat that, you know, once you hear it, I don't know, it's almost like a heartbeat inside of you. It sorts of sets a pulse or something inside of you.*"<sup>158</sup>

Interestingly, when Tim Shaw, an Irish sculptor “fascinated by the ancient Pagan traditions of Cornish feasts and rituals like the May Day Obby Oss”<sup>159</sup>, was recently commissioned to make a public work that represented Cornwall, he chose a drummer as a symbol. In an interview for the *Western Morning News* (2011), the sculptor explains:

“Twenty-five years ago when I first set foot in Cornwall I described it as a place whose drumbeat drums differently to anywhere else. The description refers to the timeless, primordial and magical qualities the land possesses”<sup>160</sup>

Indeed, the sound of drumming being perceived as a signifier of cultural memory and identity is not just endemic to Padstow. For example, as Cora Bender (2003) and Paul Moore (2003) have shown, sounding the drums (as well as *how* the drum itself sounds) plays an important role in the performance of patriotism for various Native American communities<sup>161</sup>; and in the affirmation of identity and differentiation in Catholic and Protestant communities in Northern Ireland.<sup>162</sup> For Moore, the meanings that these sounds have appropriated “give them a reverence beyond their acoustic structures. They become, in effect, echoes of the sacred, passed without words from generation to generation, underpinning the notion that for communities united against a perceived threat, hearing as well as seeing is believing.”<sup>163</sup> Moore’s remark seems to resonate with both the socio-political aspects of the Obby Oss ritual and the feelings expressed by the Padstonian person interviewed when she poetically associates the beating sound of drums that remains ‘in her head’ long after the music is over with a heartbeat – a sound that “*sets a pulse inside of you*”.

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<sup>158</sup> *Padstow Cosmesis*, interview fragment.

<sup>159</sup> ‘Distant drums carry the beat of a Belfast upbringing to the heart of an adopted land’, in *Western Morning News.*, 21 May, 2011.

<sup>160</sup> *Ibid*. The article describes *The Drummer*: “He’s bold and intense, heavy-browed, naked and strong; his feet balance precariously on a giant sphere that appears in perpetual motion, while muscular torso and legs lean backwards to compensate for this stance; his downward gaze is fixed firmly on his target, rippling arms giving momentum to powerful stick-wielding hands as they prepare to beat a barrel-like drum.” (*Ibid*)

<sup>161</sup> Cf. Bender (2003: 241 - 247)

<sup>162</sup> Cf. Moore (2003: 265 - 277)

<sup>163</sup> Moore (2003: 274)

The ‘Mayday section’ of the sound-work ends with a montage of field recordings from the council estate of Padstow – where quite a few members of the party had returned to their daily lives – realised a few days after the festival ended. We can hear the sound of heavy traffic, dogs barking, and a local café. This short segment is used in the composition in an attempt to highlight the stark contrast between the rich soundscape of the village, the picturesque quality of the harbour, the wild life and ‘glamour’ of Prideaux Place, and the rather grim atmosphere of the estate, grey buildings hidden by the hills, opposite the main road (the A389) out of town. It is perhaps a little removed from the ‘timeless, primordial and magical’ qualities of the land, evoked earlier by Tim Shaw. Indeed, visitors generally do not experience that part of town.

## 2.5 The Winter Season: *Padstow Cosmesis*, Section IV

*“It is so depressing to see so many houses empty in the winter. This town needs people living in it. We must provide more for local people.”* (Resident’s comment. ‘Parish Plan’ Cornwall Rural Community Council (CRCC), 2007: 10)

The penultimate section of the sound-work deals with the soundscape of Padstow outside of the tourist season, in winter. The field recordings that make up this section were carried out during a two-week field trip in January 2010. It is a re-exploration of the town at the opposite end of the yearly cycle. One of the first differences that one immediately notices when visiting the area is that the vast majority of businesses are closed during the whole of the winter period, apart from Rick Stein’s restaurants and a few basic food and retail shops. The town feels mostly empty, quite far from the vibrant and overwhelmingly busy atmosphere that characterises the place during summer. The first segment of the section in question is constituted of a montage of field recordings realised by the estate and along the Camel Trail, not far from the beach. We can hear the heavy wind blowing through the buildings and the bushes, an aircraft passing overhead, bin bags flapping erratically in the wind, as well as car alarms, the hissing of metal gates, roadworks, and dogs barking at the microphone as a couple of people are walking along the coast path. The segment opens with a short fragment of interview:

*“She appears for Mayday and perhaps at Christmas, but the rest of the year you don’t really see her at all...”*<sup>164</sup>

Indeed, one would normally expect a coastal town to be quieter during the wintertime, nevertheless the contrast with the tourist season and the absence of human activity in Padstow was such that I could not help but think about the fact that the place reminded me of a typical American ‘ghost town’, a settlement deserted because it is no longer economically viable. Padstow was still all around but seemed abandoned, practically empty of even the most basic social activities that one might expect to find, even in rural communities. In *Ghost Towns and Mining Camps of Southern Nevada* (2010), Shawn Hall poignantly encapsulates what Padstow’s wintery atmosphere feels like (and sounds like) when he defines what characterises a ghost town as being simply: “a shadowy semblance of a former self.”<sup>165</sup> The howling winds featured in the ‘Winter Season’ section of *Padstow Cosmesis* seem to symbolically resonate with this idea.

### 2.5.1 The Docks and a Brief Reflection on the Socio-economic Situation in Padstow

The second and fourth segments of ‘Section IV’ present two montages of field recordings made by the Riverside Docks, separated by a montage of recordings (third segment) carried out on the beach.<sup>166</sup> We hear a few dockers loading and unloading crates from a refrigerated lorry, various seabirds, and a fragment of interview with a retired person who used to work as a docker himself. The interviewee reflects upon the irresistible appeal that Mayday exercises on him, to the point that even a heart condition would not stop him from participating:

*“My heart... my heart blew up, and I came out of hospital. You see, Mayday is a funny thing because...”*<sup>167</sup>

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<sup>164</sup> *Padstow Cosmesis*, interview fragment.

<sup>165</sup> Hall (2010: 7) See also: Florida, Richard. ‘The Boom Towns and Ghost Towns of the New Economy’, in *The Atlantic*, Oct. 2013.

<sup>166</sup> See *Fig. 1*.

<sup>167</sup> *Padstow Cosmesis*, interview fragment.

The Obby Oss is also mentioned another two times during this section of *Padstow Cosmesis*. One fragment of interview alludes to some of the repair work that generally occurs in January, the other addresses the fact that women have been more involved in the ritual itself in recent years.

Despite the relative emptiness of the town, I observed a small group of fishermen still working in the winter season. It is perhaps one of the only trades that keeps running at this time of year. Nevertheless, it only concerns an extremely small fraction of the active population. In a report written for the UK Government published in 2006, the socio-economic situation in Padstow and other coastal towns was assessed in comparison with inland locations. Regarding the variety of available professional activities in the region, the report stipulates:

“Excluding the Principle Urban Areas (PUAs), the pattern of employment is fairly consistent between inland and coastal towns. The area where the clearest distinctions lie is in the lower proportion of manufacturing employment in the coastal towns and the higher proportion of hotel and catering work and health and social work. In the smaller sectors the coastal towns show a smaller proportion of financial workers, and whilst fishing is an almost exclusively coastal occupation it is a very small sector, the highest proportion is in Padstow, but even there is only 2.5%.”<sup>168</sup>

The small fishing community of Padstow is, at least partially, sustained by Stein’s hotels and restaurants. Nevertheless, their impact on the rest of the population, particularly the large number of catering employees and small businesses, is far from being negligible: “Social care and hotels and catering tend to have relatively low wages, and so contribute to low productivity and incomes in coastal towns.”<sup>169</sup> As I pointed out earlier, Stein’s presence in Padstow has often been met with resentment. Critics claim that as a result of the celebrity chef’s ‘seafood empire’, there has been an influx of wealthy second home owners, with house prices in the area driven up to unaffordable levels in addition to the fact that: “the shops only cater for ‘tourists with money.’”<sup>170</sup> However, Stein’s gastronomical enterprise is undeniably not the only factor that has determined the town’s situation. Surfing activity providers, scenery visits and nautical activities also constitute some of the

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<sup>168</sup> Starkey, *Great Britain Parliament House of Commons ODPM: Housing, Planning, Local Government and the Regions Committee* (2006: 30)

<sup>169</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>170</sup> Savill (2008) The article also worryingly reports that: “The chef also said he would carry on using endangered species of fish in his restaurants despite warnings of over-fishing. He said that if he followed government and fishery guidelines he would lose 80 percent of his menus and would not be able to keep his restaurants in Padstow going.” (*Ibid*)

reasons why the town is subjected to such a density of holiday makers who fuel its tourist industry. Nevertheless, these activities are only possible during a few months of the year. Noting the worrying discrepancies in the economic health of the community and its seasonal variance, the ODPM report remarks that: “Clearly, much of the character of employment on the coast is affected by tourism, and this tends to be seasonal in nature. It is therefore likely that the number of jobs available will also vary seasonally.”<sup>171</sup> The scarceness of employment opportunities during the winter period is one of the important factors that drive the local residents away from the area:

“The pattern of unemployment – falling in the late 80s, rising to a peak in 1993 and declining steadily thereafter – is the same for coastal and inland districts, but there is a striking seasonality for coastal areas with January unemployment levels consistently higher than July. This means that indicators of need may not reflect ‘average’ conditions on the coast, but more significantly that business and services in coastal towns face a distinct problem of seasonality. This variation is evident at a district level, but it seems likely that analysis at the settlement level would reveal an even greater disparity between summer and winter for coastal towns.”<sup>172</sup>

The absence of significant human activity feels to me quite evident in the overall winter soundscape recordings presented in the fourth section of *Padstow Cosmesis*. Most of these textures, and in particular the water recordings by the Riverside Docks, would have sounded radically different during the tourist season. Situated near the car park, and one of the only routes into town, the constant sound of car engines, footsteps, and the chatter of the hoards of visitors would have been inevitable during the summer. In winter, the absence of tourists and seasonal workers is immediately tangible and indeed plays a big part in Padstow’s general atmosphere. However, the ‘ghostly desertedness’ of the town is also dramatically enhanced by the fact that many houses are uninhabited, an unavoidable consequence of the number of second homes in the region:

*“So then yes, I... My opinion on second home ownership has changed over the years. When I was growing up, they were the worst people in the world, I hated them! Maybe I am a bit resentful about that, because that’s what drove me away from... and they’ve done nothing with their lives.”*<sup>173</sup>

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<sup>171</sup> Starkey (2006: 30)

<sup>172</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>173</sup> *Padstow Cosmesis*, interview fragment.

The vast majority of second home owners are away during most of the year. In addition, Padstow has been subjected to a process that is economically comparable with the gentrification phenomenon that has been observed in certain parts of large cities such as London.<sup>174</sup> The rising cost of housing has been perpetrating enormous strain on the local community and as such constitutes the most important factor that has driven people away. According to an article published by *The Cornish Guardian* in 2014, Padstow, Wadebridge and Saint Mawes have been named in a chart of the most expensive coastal towns: “[house] prices in seaside towns have risen by up to £500 a month in the last decade. [...] The Westcountry dominates the league of expensive places to live by the sea with Padstow taking fourth position in the top ten with its average house prices of £381,812.”<sup>175</sup> And *BBC News Cornwall* (2010) provided an even more alarming figure: “The Halifax says the average cost of a property in Padstow last year was £421,954 – 18.9 times higher than local average earnings. [...] Padstow saw the biggest house price increases between 2001 and 2009, with the cost of property in the town jumping by 211% during the period.”<sup>176</sup> Noting the urgency of the situation, *The Cornish Guardian* announced in January 2013 that: “Calls have been made to toughen the rules on second homes after latest figures show a staggering 40 per cent of properties in some areas of Wadebridge and Padstow are owned by non-residents.”<sup>177</sup> Furthermore, as Howard Newby claims, the establishment of urban newcomers and their specific expectations (and a whole new set of prejudices) might have further consequences for the life of the community:

“The newcomers often possess a set of stereotyped expectations of village life which place a heavy emphasis on the quality of the rural environment [...] many newcomers hold strong views on the desired social and aesthetic qualities of the English village. It must conform as closely as possible to the prevailing urban view—picturesque, ancient and unchanging [...] [this has led] many newcomers to be bitterly critical of the changes wrought by modern farming methods.”<sup>178</sup>

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<sup>174</sup> See for example: Wong (2014) “The term ‘gentrification’ was coined by University College London researcher Ruth Glass in 1954. She observed a process where Victorian houses were gradually upgraded by new, middle-class residents, raising prices and eventually causing working-class residents of the area to leave.” (*Ibid*)

<sup>175</sup> ‘Padstow, Wadebridge and St Mawes the most expensive seaside places in Cornwall’, in *The Cornish Guardian*, May 24, 2014. In 2013, *The Guardian* reported a different figure and said the average house price in Padstow was £421,954, instead. (Cf. ‘Padstow's locals are priced-out of Cornish resort by tourist boom’, in *The Guardian*, 17 Aug. 2013)

<sup>176</sup> ‘Padstow, Fowey and Rock among ‘least affordable’ towns’, in *BBC News Cornwall*, 30 May, 2010.

<sup>177</sup> ‘Up to 40% of homes in Wadebridge and Padstow now second’, in *The Cornish Guardian*, 24 May, 2014.

<sup>178</sup> Newby (1985: 167)

Despite a number of measures adopted by the Council of Cornwall and other political bodies, many still feel that the situation is inextricably difficult.<sup>179</sup> The conclusions of the 2006 ODPM report clearly sum up the effects of tourism and the alarming socio-economic issues faced by coastal communities, particularly in Cornwall:

“Coastal towns [...] face a unique combination of factors that conspire to make environmental social, economic regeneration projects more difficult and more expensive to deliver than in their non-coastal counterparts. This stems from the peculiar constraints that they face which then ripples out and affects other matters. [...] There is a danger then that the poverty gap in Coastal Towns will widen unless the issue is addressed.”<sup>180</sup>

The final lines of the report are unequivocal:

“Housing affordability is therefore often a particular issue and one of great significance in the south east of the region. Tourism is often seasonal, masking and exacerbating levels of deprivation.”<sup>181</sup>

The last segment of the fourth section of *Padstow Cosmesis* is a montage of a series of field recordings made during rainy days, carried out in different locations around Padstow. These sounds were captured during both the winter season and around Mayday. In this segment, we can hear different sonic textures created by the falling rain, as it interacts with various surfaces. Reflecting upon the ability of rain to help reveal the features of an environment to the visually impaired, John M. Hull explains:

“Rain has a way of bringing out the contours of everything; it throws a coloured blanket over previously invisible things; instead of an intermittent and thus fragmented world, the steadily falling rain creates continuity of acoustic experience [...]”<sup>182</sup>

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<sup>179</sup> Recently for example, Richard Buscombe, the Cornwall councillor for Padstow and St Merryn (elected in 2013), announced that he would support moves to restrict second homes through the planning system, and “do all he could to bring more affordable homes to the area.” (‘Soaring Padstow house prices blamed on second homes’. In *The Cornish Guardian*, June 05, 2013.) See as well: ‘Second home owners in Cornwall banned from voting in elections’, in *Mail Online*, 10 Sept. 2011.

<sup>180</sup> Starkey (2006: 14)

<sup>181</sup> *Ibid* p. 30

<sup>182</sup> Hull (1990: 29)

In this segment of the sound-work, as a metaphor for the scarce and shadowy presence of members of the party during winter, the distant beats of the Obby Oss drumming can be heard in the background.

## 2.6 Conclusion: The Silent Section and the Obby Oss as Device of Resistance

As discussed in the introduction to this chapter, the last section of *Padstow Cosmesis* is constituted of a short montage of field recordings of wind, mixed to a very low volume, and was used in the installation version of the sound-work to (very quietly) accompany a live video feed showing the harbour and the docks.

In *Tourism Management* (2011) by Stephen Page, Padstow is cited as an example of places suffering from their over-popularity. Rick Stein's ventures are again put forward to explain why the situation is such: "His success has led to this small town becoming so saturated in the peak of the season that it is no longer pleasurable to visit."<sup>183</sup> Page then concludes that measures as drastic as those used in Venice are needed to manage and reduce the daily influx of day-trippers to Padstow.<sup>184</sup> Indeed, as we have discussed, the tourist industry has led to a thriving but irregular economy, and has also led to parts of the historic town being defaced (Prospect House for example), while others have been renovated (or constructed in protected areas) for the benefit of a richer fraction of society; and tensions arise, for others are being forced to relocate. Sociologist John Urry explains this process further:

"Studies of rural communities have shown that there may be considerable conflict and opposition in such places, especially around status, access to land and housing and the nature of the 'environment'. In Britain many rural areas have become increasingly populated not by those employed in farming but by urban newcomers who have pushed out existing poorly paid farm labourers or their children."<sup>185</sup>

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<sup>183</sup> Page (2011: 173-176)

<sup>184</sup> Cf. *Ibid* p. 176

<sup>185</sup> Urry (1995: 19)

For Dean MacCannel (1992), minorities are strengthened by the *Tourist Gaze*<sup>186</sup>, and tourism participates in an increased sense of separation and identity, thus leading to a stronger sense of belonging and solidarity amongst members of the community.<sup>187</sup> Because of all these elements, tourism can be seen as both a blessing and a curse for the community. This can be felt also in the way the Obby Oss ritual unfolds nowadays, and how locals relate to it. This has been expressed at different moments throughout *Padstow Cosmesis*.

On the black screen of the opening credits of a 1932 film about Mayday, one can read:

*“Cornwall. The Padstow Hobby Horse. Whose origin is buried in oblivion and has been held from time immemorial to ‘welcome in Summer’, sound-filmed for the first time.”*<sup>188</sup>

Primitive, immemorial, pagan, conservative, indigenous, mesmerising, weird, strange, and even despicable are amongst the many terms that have been used to describe the May rites of Padstow. In the film mentioned above, one can see the festival, one can hear the drumming clearly, the May Song is sung loudly, and just a few accordions can be perceived in the background (the cohort of musicians was not as big then). Most strikingly, apart from the occasional fisherman in his white uniform, everyone is wearing their everyday attire. This is in stark contrast to what one would observe today. On Mayday, each and every Padstonian ‘religiously’ wears his or her – impeccably clean – whites. In the early 1930s, there was of course no need for the members of the party to differentiate themselves from the rest of the crowd, for they *were* the crowd. Nowadays, rumours even tell of the misfortune of outsiders who once dared to dress in white on Mayday a few years back and got unceremoniously thrown into the harbour. “*Be Warned!*” To quote a popular phrase...

Throughout this chapter, and in the soundscape composition on which it is based, I hope to have shown the polyphony of contrasting, and sometimes contradicting, views that affect the ways

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<sup>186</sup> The *tourist gaze* expresses the dynamics associated with the construction of tourist experience, the complexity of the social organisation of tourism, and the systematic nature of these processes. It suggests that tourist experience involves a particular way of seeing and consuming. Images and myths about what to see tend to be distinctive, exotic, striking, unusual, and extraordinary, often in contradiction with the potentially ‘mundane’ nature of those who are ‘gazed upon’. Cf. (Urry, 1995; 2002; MacCannel, 1992)

<sup>187</sup> Cf. MacCannel (1992: 136)

<sup>188</sup> *The Padstow ‘Hobby Horse’*. British Pathé Ltd, 1932.

in which the Obby Oss ritual is perceived by participants and onlookers alike. The May Song, the soundscape of the harbour (and Prideaux Place), along with the drumming that resonates through the town and in the ‘stomach of Padstonians’, are all powerful sonic markers of the acoustic community of Padstow. To be slightly more precise, these are the soundmarks of the community, each year, for one day. Undoubtedly, the ‘ghostly desertedness’ of Padstow’s sonic atmosphere in the winter is another manifest soundmark of the area; one that reveals the intricate socio-economic challenges faced by the local residents. Nevertheless, it seems that even though the tensions between Padstonians and those who are perceived as outsiders are inevitable, the significance of the ritual for its participants, and their emotional connection to it, is undeniable. During this one day, the whole community comes together, reclaims the streets, and renews with a tradition in which:

“The bones of every Padstow Boy are fired by the Hobbyhorse. As soon as a child is able to lisp its parent's name it will chant the glorious strains of our ancient Festival Song: and will usher in May's first merry morn, with 'The summer, and the Summer, and the May, O'. And shall we allow aliens and strangers to usurp our pleasures, and rob us of our bright right, that we have inherited from Mother to Daughter, from Father to Son? No we will not!”<sup>189</sup>

For Doc Rowe (2006), the Obby Oss, acts as a shield against the dissolving of the community: “[A] clenched fist in the face of the ravages of time and outside influences. The ‘Oss can be seen as a communal pace-maker and, on Mayday, it recharges the community and the good fellowship of the people of Padstow.”<sup>190</sup> As such, the Obby Oss ritual can be considered as a device of resistance. Despite the presence of second homes, despite the rise of what some have called *Padstein*, despite the constant flow of tourists in summer and the emptiness of winter, once a year, Padstow reunites with its Padstonians, and – for a moment at least – perhaps ceases to feel like a ‘semblance of its former self’.

I have chosen to call the composition *Padstow Cosmesis* for all these reasons. The term ‘cosmesis’ is borrowed from the field of plastic surgery. It refers to the preservation, restoration, or bestowing of bodily beauty. In the medical context, it usually refers to the surgical correction of a

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<sup>189</sup> Rawe (1999: 5) Rawe recounts that on one occasion in the mid 1800s (the exact date has not been established), a merchant and local preacher called Thomas Tregaskis attempted to stop the Obby Oss celebration by offering a roasted bullock to be consumed in Padstow in place of the usual festivities. The Mayers and the 'Hobby Horse Fraternity' firmly rejected the merchant’s offer and issued the statement cited here. (Cf. *Ibid*)

<sup>190</sup> Rowe (2006: 40)

disfiguring defect, or the cosmetic improvements made by a surgeon following incisions.<sup>191</sup> Symbolically, it feels to me that the May rites of Padstow are a form of cosmesis in their own right, a corrective or restorative action, if only at surface level, upon the various mutations and challenges the town and its diffused community have faced over the decades. The sound-work itself was partly conceived with a similar aim.

In a *postscript* to the 1999 re-edition of his Obby Oss study, Padstonian folklorist Donald Rawe poignantly reflects upon the relevance and the future of the festival at the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The sounding of the Brenton drums as well as the cheering of the crowd are once again summoned to express and symbolise all the deeply emotional, sensual, and almost religious attachments of the community to their Mayday celebrations and the power of its soundscape. After acknowledging the influence of the Great War – and the young soldiers who returned home “determined to make this great day a worthy one for their town and towns-people”<sup>192</sup> – on the revival of the tradition, Rawe writes:

“If we could return for an hour or two to the festivities of 1900 to 1910, we might well pity or smile at the mere handful of poor, drink-loving fishermen and their followers who each year brought out the Old Oss [...]. Padstow has, without exception, the liveliest and most unforgettable May Day ceremony anywhere, even if our Osses are not as unique as we like to think. [...] But when the Brenton Drum thumps into one’s stomach and the great shout of ‘Oss Oss! Whee Oss’ goes up, we know that we are celebrating something older, more primitive and unspoiled, and much less self-conscious, than any contemporary religion or cult can offer. Should we – can we – keep it entirely for ourselves?

In the past the world has looked to Padstow to show it the way back to those happier, more innocent times when mankind was young. And surely Padstow still has something very valuable to tell our over-civilised, televised, computerised, bureaucratic world.”<sup>193</sup>

Yet, many Padstonians feel that their identity and the integrity of the festival itself are perhaps still fragile and might be increasingly threatened by gentrification, tourism and the rapid mutations of the region. This is due as well to the new set of socio-economic challenges that small rural areas

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<sup>191</sup> Cf. *Dorland’s Medical Dictionary*. 25th ed. Philadelphia: W.B. Saunders Co., 1995.

<sup>192</sup> Rawe (1999: 33)

<sup>193</sup> *Ibid* p. 33-34

have been faced with, because of globalisation. However – and paradoxically – the issues faced by the community also mean that, across generations, Padstonians tend to cling onto their folk practices even more vigorously and in greater numbers each year. The Obby Oss ritual is not just a festival, it is also a political statement, a symbol. “Without meaning, folk customs soon die out.”<sup>194</sup> Addressing and challenging the reasons for what she identifies as a pessimistic assumption, Kate Smith (2008) notes that: “[most] teachers and students of folklore, and folklorists will have encountered the widespread and persistent belief that ‘folklore’, including traditional beliefs and behaviours, customs and rituals, is dying.”<sup>195</sup> After demonstrating the durability and endurance of numerous Mayday festivals around the country, as well as their ability to adapt and transform through time, Smith concludes: “Ample evidence was collected during the course of my research, which demonstrated the very real importance of May Day celebrations and other customs, whether in a new, simulacrous form, or as an ongoing and unchanging tradition.”<sup>196</sup> It is difficult to say whether the Obby Oss ritual belongs to the first or the second of these categories, but what is sure is that its popularity has never been stronger and the passion expressed by its participants does not seem to have faded away, nor does it show any signs of doing so any time soon. In these conditions, it is very likely that the Osses will continue to come out of their stables each year on Mayday morning, and prance through the streets, pushing through the dense tourist crowd all day, for a long time still.

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<sup>194</sup> *Ibid* p. 14

<sup>195</sup> Smith (2008: 142)

<sup>196</sup> *Ibid* p. 158

## Chapter III

### Footsteps in the Wind: The Touristic Noise of *Muzeum Auschwitz-Birkenau*

“Nine million dead haunt this landscape. Who is on the lookout from this strange tower to warn us of the coming of new executioners? Are their faces really different from our own? Somewhere among us, there are lucky Kapos, reinstated officers, and unknown informers. There are those who refused to believe this, or believed it only from time to time. And there are those of us who sincerely look upon the ruins today, as if the old concentration camp monster were dead and buried beneath them. Those who pretend to take hope again as the image fades, as though there were a cure for the plague of these camps. Those of us who pretend to believe that all this happened only once, at a certain time and in a certain place, and those who refuse to see, who do not hear the cry to the end of time.” *Nuit et Brouillard* (1955)

Before the Second World War the Jewish population of Poland was estimated to be around 3.5 million. Today there are between 3000 and 4000 left.<sup>197</sup> The systematic and industrial mass murder of civilians that took place on an unprecedented scale in Europe between 1941 and 1945 has a name: *The Holocaust*. For the Jewish community, particularly in Israel and a few countries in Europe, the preferred term is *Shoah*. The Shoah narrative has been ossified and transmitted worldwide in two films: *Nuit et Brouillard*<sup>198</sup> (1955) by French director Alain Resnais and *Schindler's List*<sup>199</sup> (1993) by American director Steven Spielberg. The former is a black and white documentary that presents archive and contemporary footage of two extermination camps, the latter recounts the story of former Nazi industrialist Oskar Schindler who ‘saved’ around 1200 people during the Holocaust by employing them as slave workers in his factory, first on the outskirts of Krakow, then in Bohemia. The popular Holocaust narrative is also deeply embedded within two

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<sup>197</sup> Cf. Wisniewski (2006)

<sup>198</sup> Eng. Trans: *Night and Fog*

<sup>199</sup> The screenplay of *Schindler's List* is loosely based on the novel *Schindler's Ark* (1982) by writer Thomas Keneally. Cf. Cole (1999: 73-94)

books: *Se questo è un uomo*<sup>200</sup> (1947) by Holocaust survivor and Italian writer Primo Levi, and *Het Achterhuis*<sup>201</sup> (1947), the diary of Anne Frank; but above all, the Shoah manifests itself symbolically in a specific site. This symbol is at the same time a place of historical significance that played a pivotal role in the construction of European identity, a former concentration/extermination camp, a source of endless debate and controversy, a museum and a tourist attraction. The symbol of the Shoah has a name: *Auschwitz-Birkenau*.

Between 2005 and 2008 I carried out a series of field recordings and research projects in Poland, particularly around Krakow. The original project was called *Before the End of Time* (2005). I took a group of musicians on an experimental journey through southern Poland. We started in Zgorzelec, where Olivier Messiaen composed the *Quartet for the End of Time*<sup>202</sup> (1941) while he was a prisoner of war. We then travelled to *Muzeum Auschwitz-Birkenau*, passing by a number of historically-charged places including former KL Gross-Rosen, Krakow and Kazimierz.<sup>203</sup> This collective project and the further two research trips I carried out in 2007 led to the creation of two sound-works: *Footsteps in the Wind* (2007-2009) and *Samdà Magna Morfina* (2005-2014); as well as a site-specific installation: *Dreidel* (2005) in one of the barracks of KL Gross-Rosen.<sup>204</sup> In this chapter, I will focus primarily on *Footsteps in the Wind* for it constitutes the central composition that came out of *Before the End of Time*.

The idea for *Footsteps in the Wind* originated in my jarring experience of visiting *Muzeum Auschwitz-Birkenau* for the first time in 2005. I then returned to Krakow on my own in 2007 for further research and field recordings, to capture the elements that make up the sound material for the work in question. This chapter begins with a discussion on the context, motivations and historical considerations that led to the composition of *Footsteps in the Wind*, and my experience of

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<sup>200</sup> Eng. Trans: *If this is a man*

<sup>201</sup> Also known as *The Diary of a Young Girl*

<sup>202</sup> *Quatuor pour la fin du Temps*. Under Nazi occupation, Zgorzelec was then called *Görlitz*.

<sup>203</sup> Along the way we performed a series of specially written text-based compositions, and works by Cage, Messiaen, Fluxus, and Klezmer improvisations.

<sup>204</sup> These projects have been supported by the George Blunden travel award (2005) and the CCP award (2007) and have been presented at a number of events in the UK (Tate Modern, London, 2007; *Large Scale Audio Experiment*, Duran Audio, London, 2009), in France (Cave Poésie, Toulouse, 2008), and the US (UCSD, San Diego, 2014).

visiting (and recording in) Krakow, Kazimierz and the open-air museum of Auschwitz-Birkenau. I will then address the subsequent personal questionings and ethical reflections that have arisen as a result of this project. *Samdà Magna Morfina*, together with *Dreidel*, are discussed in *Appendix I*<sup>205</sup> of this dissertation.

*Footsteps in the Wind* is a fixed multi-channel soundscape composition constituted of a series of field recordings of four different sites bearing strong historical and political significance for tourists and the local population alike: Rynek Główny, the main market square in the centre of Krakow; Kazimierz, known as the Old Jewish District; Schindler’s Factory – the factory is now a museum; and *Muzeum Auschwitz-Birkenau*, in the Polish town of Oświęcim, situated approximately thirty miles west of Krakow. For historian Tim Cole, “more than any other places, ‘Auschwitz’ has come to symbolise everything about the ‘Holocaust’. Auschwitz is to the Holocaust what ‘Graceland’ is to ‘Elvis’.”<sup>206</sup> The piece is c.15 minutes long and its final version was completed in 2009. *Footsteps in the Wind* comprises four main sections and a short opening<sup>207</sup> separated from the rest of the composition by a short, very quiet moment:

|                                    |                   |
|------------------------------------|-------------------|
| ▪ <i>Ofiar Holocaustu</i>          | 0’00’’            |
| ▪ Rynek Główny (Bell & Heynał)     | 0’29’’            |
| ▪ Kazimierz                        | 3’45’’            |
| ▪ Schindler Factory                | 5’40’’            |
| ▪ <i>Muzeum Auschwitz-Birkenau</i> | 11’13’’ - 15’36’’ |

Even if it was never intended that way, the composition roughly follows what became known as the ‘Schindler’s List Tour’<sup>208</sup>, a classic sightseeing journey that most ‘Holocaust tourists’ would embark upon when visiting the region.<sup>209</sup> This guided tour is a service offered by a number of tourism companies around the globe. It usually starts with a wander around the market square with

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<sup>205</sup> pp. 212-222

<sup>206</sup> (1999: 97-98)

<sup>207</sup> This particular segment will be discussed further at the end of this chapter.

<sup>208</sup> See for example: ‘Schindlers List Tour’: [http://www.krakow-tours.com/tour/Schindlers\\_List-Krakow](http://www.krakow-tours.com/tour/Schindlers_List-Krakow) [Accessed 17/07/2014]

<sup>209</sup> Cf. Cole (1999)

perhaps a listen to the trumpet call<sup>210</sup>, followed by a detailed visit to the Old Jewish District – and its various museums – where visitors are given the opportunity to have a taste of ‘pre-war Jewish life’ in one of the many ‘Jewish themed’ cafés and restaurants, before finally travelling along the ruins of Podgórze (the historical ghetto during WWII) to the former site of Schindler’s factory.<sup>211</sup> The ‘Schindler’s List Tour’, or ‘Ghetto Tour’<sup>212</sup>, is generally coupled with a visit of *Muzeum Auschwitz-Birkenau*<sup>213</sup>.

### 3.1 Rynek Główny, the Heynał and Other Legends: *Footsteps in the Wind*, Section I

Rynek Główny has been Krakow’s commercial and social centre for centuries. It is also one of Europe’s largest medieval squares. It is surrounded by forty-seven tall brick buildings and palaces called *Kamienica*; cafés, restaurants, shops, banks, the town hall and two churches<sup>214</sup>, which not only gives a sense of enclosure to the place but also creates an astonishing acoustic effect where the reverberation and echo can be perceived quite clearly. The market square was established in the 13<sup>th</sup> century when Krakow had to be rebuilt after the Tatar invasion of 1221. The city had been flattened, destroyed by fire.<sup>215</sup> Dividing Rynek Główny in two, the Cloth Hall, called *Sukiennice*, is an elongated building of Renaissance architecture, with arcades on each side. It is the heart of the market and an architectural wonder. The roof features various copper globes surmounting small spires, and interestingly: “During recent renovations it was discovered that these globes contained historic documents from the late 18<sup>th</sup> to the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century – there is a long tradition of builders secreting items for posterity in such ‘time capsules’.”<sup>216</sup> *Sukiennice* was originally a covered market:

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<sup>210</sup> Called Heynał, sometimes spelled Hejnal.

<sup>211</sup> Cf. Grubber (2009); Cole (1999)

<sup>212</sup> See for example: <http://www.cooltourcompany.com/jewish.html> [Accessed 19/06/2014]

<sup>213</sup> Cf. Cole (1999); Novick, (1999); Finkelstein (2000)

<sup>214</sup> Cf. ‘The Rynek and its Environs’: <http://www.kasprzyk.demon.co.uk/www/krakow/krakow2.html> [Accessed 19/06/2014]

<sup>215</sup> Cf. Wisniewski (2006)

<sup>216</sup> Wisniewski (2006: 24)

“It was illegal to sell anything on the street, so everything had to be sold here on the Main Market Square. [...] In the Middle Ages, this was the place where cloth-sellers had their market stalls. Kazimierz the Great turned the Cloth Hall into a permanent structure in the 14<sup>th</sup> century. In 1555, it burned down, and was replaced by the current building. [The] Cloth Hall is still a functioning market—mostly souvenirs, including wood carvings, chess sets, jewellery (especially amber), painted boxes, and trinkets.”<sup>217</sup>

The Cloth Hall has retained its commercial role. On the official webpage of Krakow in the English language, *Sukiennice* is described by the following statement: “The world's oldest shopping mall has been in business for 700 years. The present Renaissance edifice dates from 1555.”<sup>218</sup> Nowadays, the stalls sell folk arts and crafts, jewellery, leather goods, superior quality souvenirs and plastic statuettes of either Christian icons and angels, or rabbis playing an instrument, holding the Torah, or most strikingly, holding firmly against their chest a real Polish coin... I shall return to this last point later in this chapter.

### 3.1.1 The Main Market Square and St. Mary’s bell

After a short unedited field recording made in front of the *Ofiar Holocaustu*<sup>219</sup> in Kazimierz, the first section of *Footsteps in the Wind* explores the soundscape of Krakow’s main square, recorded in January 2007. I spent a period of time exploring the area and observing its activity during the high tourist season (in summer), and again during the low tourist season (in winter, particularly around Christmas). Rynek Główny is always busy, swarming with shoppers, locals, visitors and party-goers from the early hours of the morning until late at night. It is a very lively place and amongst the incessant sound of footsteps on the paving slabs that reverberates against the architectural features of the square, one might also hear the splutter and gurgle of fountains, the multi-lingual chatter of people gathering around the Adam Mickiewicz Monument<sup>220</sup>, horses pulling carts, carrying tourists and couples in ‘wedding outfits’ – going round and round the square, dogs

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<sup>217</sup> Steves (2010: 41-43)

<sup>218</sup> Strzala, *Krakow's Rynek Glowny Central Square*. (2014)

<sup>219</sup> A small Holocaust memorial in Kazimierz. This particular section of the work is discussed in more details at the end of the first part of this chapter.

<sup>220</sup> Pommik Adama Mickiewicza. The statue is a popular meeting point on the main square. Erected in 1891 and designed by Teodor Rygier, it “honours Poland’s greatest romantic poet.” (Wisniewski, 2006: 25) In fact, the statue is a copy as the original was destroyed by the Nazis during WWII.

barking, the clanking of merchant stalls, and the cries of several-hundred pigeons. These sounds are present throughout the first section of *Footsteps in the Wind*.

Rynek Główny is also a place where one can hear one of the loudest bells in Poland. The imposing, Gothic, twin-towered *Kościół Mariacki* – St. Mary’s Basilica<sup>221</sup> – dominates the main square. Its construction began in 1290, incorporating fragments of an earlier Romanesque stone church.<sup>222</sup> The side chapels and the two towers were completed in the early 14<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>223</sup> The shorter of the two towers is the bell tower. On the hour, the ringing of the bell bounces off the buildings that surround Rynek Główny and its *acoustic horizon*<sup>224</sup> extends all across town (including the district of Kazimierz). Heard from the square, the sound is sometimes loud enough for one to feel a slight pressure on the chest. In the sleeve notes of the first of his three-volume collection of field recordings of bells, anthropologist Steven Feld notes certain similarities between the functions of bells in Europe and bird songs in the rainforest:

“I’m struck by a sonic resemblance: bells stand to European time as birds do rainforest time. Daily time, seasonal time, work time, ritual time, social time, collective time, cosmological time – all have their parallels, with rainforest birds sounding as quotidian clocks and spirit voices, and European bells heralding civil and religious time. [...] Bells simultaneously sound a present and past, as their immediate resonance also rings the *longue durée* of their technological and social history. [...] They sound the place of memory and the memory of place.”<sup>225</sup>

During my time in Krakow, I recorded several iterations of St. Mary’s bell. In the first section of *Footsteps in the Wind*, the featured field recording was made at 5pm. In January, it is nightfall in Poland. The place was still buzzing with tourists and locals, and we can hear the sound of the bell resonating through the space. It seemed as though the pace of people walking slowed down when the bell rang and some even came to a halt in order to listen, engendering at the same time both a

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<sup>221</sup> Also known as the ‘Church of Our Lady Assumed into Heaven’ (Kościół Wniebowzięcia Najświętszej Maryi Panny)

<sup>222</sup> Itself being remnants of a wooden church “believed to be the first in Kraków, and the wooden remains of an even earlier pagan temple.” (Wisniewski, 2006: 25)

<sup>223</sup> Cf. Wisniewski (2006)

<sup>224</sup> Blesser and Salter (2007) define *acoustic horizon* as: “the maximum distance between a listener and source of sound where the sonic event can still be heard. [...] The acoustic horizon is thus the experiential boundary that delineates which sonic events are included and which are excluded. [...] Physical boundaries are only one means of delineating a space, and they are not always the most useful for describing for describing social interactions.” (2007: 22)

<sup>225</sup> Feld, Steven. *The Time of Bells 1* CD Sleeve notes, 2004 (VOXLOX 104)

little more chaos amongst the crowd and the quieter moments that can be heard in the recording. The church bell is indeed a marker of time and of social and religious power. Reflecting on the wedding of mechanical clocks and bells, R. Murray Schafer remarks:

“Together they became the most inescapable signals of the soundscape, for like the church bell, and with even more merciless punctuality, the clock measures the passing of time audibly. [...] The clock bell had a great advantage over the clock dial, for to see the dial one must face it, while the bell sends the sounds of time rolling in all directions.”<sup>226</sup>

One of the bell's functions was, and perhaps still is in some parts of the world, to regulate and bring order to the community. This is particularly true in Poland where the Catholic faith is still very present despite the country's recent history of “forced atheization and religious repression”<sup>227</sup> during the 1945-1989 Communist era. The election of a Polish pope in 1978 reinforced and even revived Polish Catholicism as well as enthusing social resistance in opposition to the power in place.<sup>228</sup> Even after his death in 2005, John Paul II has remained a revered character within the Catholic community and this is why a visit to the Wieliczka Salt Mine, where he is said to have worked, is often offered as part of the package during a typical ‘Schindler's List Tour’.<sup>229</sup> Interestingly, St. Mary's Basilica has two different entrances, one for tourists (admission charged) and one for worshipers.<sup>230</sup> It is common for tourists to be reminded quite firmly that church visits are only allowed in-between religious services and one is asked to leave the church promptly before the start of the ceremony. While discussing the symbolic relationship between bells, mechanical clocks, and Christianity, Schafer later acknowledges:

“The association of clocks and church bells was by no means fortuitous; for Christianity provided the rectilinear idea of the concept of time as progress, albeit spiritual progress, with a starting point (Creation), an indicator (Christ) and a fateful conclusion (the Apocalypse). [...] Time is always running out in the Christian system and the clock bell punctuates this fact. Its chimes are acoustic signals, but even at a subliminal level the

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<sup>226</sup> Schafer (1994: 55)

<sup>227</sup> Young and Zuelow (2007: 128)

<sup>228</sup> Cf. *Ibid* p. 127 and ‘The Solidarity Movement’, in Gaddis (2005: 193)

<sup>229</sup> Cf. Cole (1999)

<sup>230</sup> Cf. Wisniewski (2006)

incessant rhythm of its ticking forms a keynote of unavoidable significance in the life of Western Man. Clocks reach into the recesses of night to remind man of his mortality.”<sup>231</sup>

As will be developed further later in this chapter, the imposing sound of St. Mary’s bell and its very wide *acoustic arena*<sup>232</sup> has crucial implications for the sonic representation, or sonic remains, of the historical, cultural and social identity of Kazimierz, the old Jewish District. In *Village Bells* (2003), a study on the role and meaning of bells in 19<sup>th</sup> century French countryside, Alain Corbain explains that the “emotional impact of a bell helps to create a territorial identity for individuals living in range of its sound.”<sup>233</sup> As well as a marker of cosmological and physical time, the acoustic arena of St. Mary’s bell delineates the contours of the community – the bell tower is situated at its centre. Its sound envelops the community of faith and helps define its spiritual and cultural identity. Beyond the architectural constraints and social organisation of the urban space, “bell ringing was one of a range of markers obviating the quest for an identity of the sort that defined the very being of the proletarian who, as a migrant, was isolated in a condition that all too often resembled exile. [...] The bell reinforced divisions between an inside and an outside”<sup>234</sup>.

The migrant, often exterior to the community of faith yet still inhabiting the physical space circumscribed by the city walls, remains isolated, outside, silent, or perhaps just quiet enough not to be a noticeable presence in the soundscape. It is perhaps what Murray Schafer alludes to when, drawing on the writings of Lévi-Strauss, he places “noise in parallel with the sacred and silence in the same relationship with the profane.”<sup>235</sup>

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<sup>231</sup> Schafer (1994: 56)

<sup>232</sup> Blesser and Salter (2007) define an *acoustic arena* as: “a region where listeners are part of a community that shares an ability to hear a sonic event. An acoustic arena is centered at the sound source; listeners are inside or outside the arena of the sonic event. [...] Aural architecture is a major factor in determining the size of an acoustic arena.” (2007: 22-23)

<sup>233</sup> Corbain (1999: 96)

<sup>234</sup> *Ibid* p. 97

<sup>235</sup> Schafer (1994: 51) Schafer acknowledges in a footnote that Lévi-Strauss himself contacted him to somehow challenge this idea. However, as Susan Voss argues: “The Raw and the Cooked is an attempt to demonstrate a logic of ‘properties based upon the opposition between what is raw and therefore part of Nature, from what is cooked and therefore part of Culture. It is Lévi-Strauss’ proposition that, on the plane of food, the distinction between raw and cooked is the same as the distinction between Nature and Culture on the plane of society, between sacred and profane on the plane of religion, and between silence and noise on the plane of sound.” (Voss, 1977: 35) Furthermore, Mircea Eliade and Lévi-Strauss have both noted that ‘noises’ (in which they include sound and music) may be used to ‘silence’ the individual self, our intuitive impulses toward constructing narratives, and satisfying desires. It would therefore be this idea of noise that might indeed turn towards the religious. Hence the importance of both music and transgression in ritually structuring (or re-structuring) space and time as sacred. Cf. Eliade (1987) and Lévi-Strauss (1979)

### 3.1.2 The Heynał Mariacki

“The whole world changed beneath him. The great stone city had become wood, and it was everywhere in flames. Men of short stature and ugly faces were riding about furiously on little horses. Close at hand a man had descended from his horse and had drawn a bow from his shoulders and an iron-tipped arrow from a quiver. The bow bent, the arrow was notched. He played.” Eric Kelly, *The Trumpeter of Krakow* (1928: 237)

Following the ringing of the five o'clock bell, the first section of *Footsteps in the Wind* features a montage of field recordings of the hourly trumpet call on Rynek Główny. The main square is a place of many myths and local legends. One of them explains why the pigeons, which form a prominent presence on the main market square, are thought to have originally appeared in Krakow in the 13<sup>th</sup> century. Either Duke Henryk Probus or Duke Władystaw Łokietek, depending upon the version, was attempting to unify Poland's independent duchies with the aim to be proclaimed King. In order to persuade the Pope to support the enterprise and the subsequent coronation, the 'legendary duke' had to visit the Vatican:

“[The duke] didn't have the funds for the trip, so he sought the help of a notorious witch. She promised to lend the money on condition that his retainers remained with her as a form of collateral. The witch then turned the retainers into pigeons. [...]. Soon the gold was spent and when he returned to Kraków penniless, the witch refused to break the spell. She then vanished, leaving the duke's retainers as pigeons.”<sup>236</sup>

This is perhaps why the pigeons of the main market square are allowed to proliferate freely. They are fondly considered by Krakovians to be noble rather than vermin. Birds that come close to people are said to be “the duke's retainers hoping to be told that the witch is finally going to be reimbursed.”<sup>237</sup>

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<sup>236</sup> Wisniewski (2006: 26)

<sup>237</sup> *Ibid* p. 27

Another enduring legend concerns the origins of the trumpet call: the Heynał Mariacki:

*“I swear on my honour as a Pole, as a servant of the King of the Polish people, that I will faithfully and unto the death, if there be need, sound upon the trumpet the Heynal in honour of Our Lady each hour in the tower of the church which bears Her Name.”* (Ancient Oath of the Krakow Trumpeter)<sup>238</sup>

The term *Heynal* comes from the Hungarian *hajnal*, meaning ‘dawn’<sup>239</sup>. Trumpet calls were used in many European cities to signal the opening and closing of city gates at dawn and dusk, and also to warn of fires and other dangers.<sup>240</sup> Performed from the higher tower of St. Mary’s Basilica, historically a municipal watchtower, the Heynał is a five-note melody played every hour, on the hour, after the ringing of the bell. Schafer, reflecting on the traditional sonic environments of pastoral Europe, remarks: “The rural soundscape was quiet, but it experienced two profound acoustic interruptions: the noise of war and the ‘noise’ of religion.”<sup>241</sup> If the ringing of St. Mary’s bell belongs to the latter, the sound of the Heynał is somehow related to the former. The trumpet call in its contemporary form is said to have originated during the Mongolian Tatars’ invasion and since then: “The trumpeters of the Church of Our Lady Mary in *Krakow* have sounded on the trumpet at the close of each hour, to the east and south, the west and north, the *Hejnal* (Heynal).”<sup>242</sup> The trumpet call is repeated four times in a row, with a brief pause between each iteration. Each time, the bugler faces a different cardinal point. Traditionally they are not professional musicians but members of the fire brigade.<sup>243</sup>

The Heynał’s legend was popularised outside Poland by scholar and writer Eric Kelly in his 1928 novel: *The Trumpeter of Krakow*. The book tells the story of a young fifteenth-century Polish watchman in post at St. Mary’s. One morning at dawn, seeing the Tatars prepare to scale the city walls, he ran to the top of the tower and blew his trumpet to raise the alarm. Speaking through the voice of the novel’s main protagonist, Kelly describes the approaching hordes. Many of the Jews of Kazimierz had already been killed:

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<sup>238</sup> As quoted in (Mahony Miller, 1944: 49) and (Kelly, 1928: xiii)

<sup>239</sup> Sometimes translated as ‘wake up’.

<sup>240</sup> Cf. Wisniewski (2006)

<sup>241</sup> Schafer (1994: 49)

<sup>242</sup> Miller Mahony (1944: 49)

<sup>243</sup> Cf. Steves (2010: 39)

“When they travelled, the dust rose high into the sky from beneath the hooves of their little horses, and the thunder of the hoofbeats could be heard many miles away. They were so numerous that it took days for the whole hoard to pass any one given point, and for miles behind the army itself rumbled carts bearing slaves, provisions, and booty – usually gold. [...] Already a colony of Jews in the Black Village had perished, also those refugees and town dwellers who had not rushed inside the walls of defense. There remained but one man – or rather, a youth – still alive in the midst of all that destruction.”<sup>244</sup>

The young guard then decided to warn the villagers and, with an obvious sense of duty and the expression of national pride, declared: “Now, for Poland and Our Lady, I will sound the Heynal’ [...], [and he] raised the trumpet to his lips.”<sup>245</sup> Unfortunately, as the bugler was playing his trumpet, the enemy discovered him:

“A Tatar below crouched to his bow and drew back the arrow as far as he could draw. The string whirred. The dark shaft flew like a swift bird straight for the mark. It pierced the breast of the young trumpeter when he was near the end of his song – it quivered there a moment and the song ceased. But, still holding to the trumpet, the youth fell back against the supporting wall and blew one last glorious note; it began strongly, trembled, and then ceased–broken like the young life that gave it birth.”<sup>246</sup>

Before he could finish the tune, the Tatars fired a salvo of arrows at the watchman and, after a few notes, he was hit in the chest – although most of the other versions of the myth mention that the bugler was actually hit in the throat – which is why, even today, the Heynal stops *subito* partway.<sup>247</sup> Other versions of the legend explain that it was some moments before a replacement took over and this is why there is always a pause after the first few notes.<sup>248</sup> Indeed no one knows whether the legend is true and Kelly has been accused of having partly fabricated the story in 1929, thus

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<sup>244</sup> Kelly (1928: 2-4)

<sup>245</sup> *Ibid* p. 6

<sup>246</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>247</sup> Cf. Wisniewski (2006); Steves (2005)

<sup>248</sup> Cf. Wisniewski (2006)

blurring the line between myth and historical reality even further.<sup>249</sup> In any case, Kelly's tale is set some two hundred years after the historical event that led to St. Mary's being burnt to the ground.<sup>250</sup> Furthermore, the history of the Hejnał custom is in reality more complex and its origins probably do not date back to the early middle ages. As Don Smithers points out: "The 'Hejnał' has most certainly been played this way since the beginning of the nineteenth century."<sup>251</sup> The use of a bugle call for timekeeping cannot be found in historical records until the end of the 14<sup>th</sup> century. The custom went into abeyance in the 17<sup>th</sup> century but was revived in 1810. However, the connection with the Tatar invasion of 1241 was not made until the inter-war years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>252</sup> It is nonetheless Kelly's 'tale', more-or-less transformed, that is found again and again in every tourist guidebook and is engraved into the consciousness of many tourists and the Poles themselves. Still, despite its uncertain origins and its 'imagined' past, the Hejnał (much like the Obby Oss of Padstow) has acquired the status of cultural and historical mythology. Its legends, in one form or another, have been nurturing Polish collective imagination for decades, if not centuries. More than just history, it is a symbol.

The Hejnał indeed constitutes a powerful and poignant marker of Polish national identity and military pride. In *Poland: Military Machines* (2012), Walter Simmons comments on its ubiquitous and symbolic nature:

"All Poles know this musical phrase by heart. [...] Poland has been invaded many times throughout its history. Each time, Poles have risen up and saved their country. Today, the trumpeter in the tower of St. Mary's turns in four directions while playing the Hejnał. The tune is a symbol of Polish resistance, determination, and unity."<sup>253</sup>

Simmons' romantic assumption might sound somewhat rather exaggerated and idealistic, however Ziemnowicz and Spillan argue: "Events during its early history became some of Poland's most

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<sup>249</sup> "A Polish journalist Leszek Mazan wrote in *Polityka* magazine that he believes American journalist John M. [sic] Kelly fabricated the 'legend' in 1929. While little to no documentation regarding the origins of the song has been found, Mr. Kolton and the other players are certain the song's story far precedes Kelly's writing as a fire warning for the city." (*The Hejnał*: [http://www.inyourpocket.com/poland/krakow/The-Hejnał\\_3755f](http://www.inyourpocket.com/poland/krakow/The-Hejnał_3755f)) [Accessed 19/07/2014]

<sup>250</sup> Cf. Wisniewski (2006) and Steves (2010)

<sup>251</sup> Smithers (1988: 131)

<sup>252</sup> Cf. Smithers (1988)

<sup>253</sup> Simmons (2012: 27)

enduring mythological stories that impart on critical beliefs and values.”<sup>254</sup> During World War II, the Nazis had banned the Hejnał for several months in an attempt to repress the morale (and national pride) of the Polish population whom they feared might otherwise have resisted more virulently. After the liberation of Krakow, and despite the oppression of postwar Soviet regime, the trumpet call was to be heard again, resonating through the city, the radio waves, and elsewhere. The Hejnał’s melody “became a legend and is used as a national symbol. For example, during World War II, Polish soldiers in the Battle of Monte Cassino played the Hejnał Mariacki to proclaim victory.”<sup>255</sup>

In *Klezmer's Afterlife* (2013), Magdalena Waligorska provides another poignant example that further demonstrates how the Hejnał plays a pivotal symbolic role in the expression of Polish identity, even within the Jewish Diaspora. Discussing one of the first Klezmer concerts given by Polish musicians in Israel, they recall that Tomasz Lato<sup>256</sup>, having met Steven Spielberg during the filming of *Schindler's List*, was invited to play at a reunion of ‘Schindler's Jews’.<sup>257</sup> The encounter between Lato and Leopold Rosner, a former Krakowian entertainer – now an Israeli citizen – who was forced to play for Amon Goeth in the Płaszów concentration camp and later saved by Oskar Schindler, was “very emotional for both parties.”<sup>258</sup> Waligorska cites the interaction between the two artists:

“Rosner sat down next to us and asked us: "Jurek, Tomek, why are you doing this?" "Are you the only ones doing this now?" "Are there more?" "How did it come about?" "Do you play in Kraków?" "You're kidding me! In Kraków?" ... And then he said: "Pass me the accordion!" He had his own small accordion with him. "Gentlemen, I'm going to play you the most famous klezmer melody from Kraków." And then he played *Hejnał Mariacki*.”<sup>259</sup>

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<sup>254</sup> Ziemnowicz and Spillan (2009: 188)

<sup>255</sup> *Ibid* p. 88

<sup>256</sup> From the klezmer band: *Kroke*

<sup>257</sup> Those who were ‘saved’ by Oskar Schindler came to be nicknamed that way.

<sup>258</sup> (2013: 125)

<sup>259</sup> Lato interview [Kroke], June 25, 2005. As quoted in Waligorska (2013: 125)

Even within the long expatriated Jewish community (in Israel and elsewhere), this five-note melody still symbolises Poland, be it from a distance and with a sense of nostalgia. It provides “a common frame of reference. Playing the *Hejnał* as a klezmer melody, Rosner inverts the musical symbols of Polishness and Jewishness. His playful appropriation points out how unstable and permeable the imagined boundary really is between what is Polish and what is Jewish.”<sup>260</sup>

In the second part of the first section of *Footsteps in the Wind*, the trumpet call segment is an assemblage of a series of field recordings carried out on the site of Rynek Główny. The different takes, recorded from a similar angle and distance but at different times and on different days, were put together to recreate the *Hejnał* in its content and timing, with the exception of the last part of the trumpet call. The first two iterations featured in the work are single takes and we can hear the resonance and intensity change as the bugler moves from one cardinal point to another. Then the sound of the *Hejnał* slowly moves into the background and blends a bit more with the other elements that make up the overall soundscape of Rynek Główny. This third iteration is a montage of two different takes, superimposed onto one another. The resulting perceptual shift (as well as blending with the rest of the soundscape, the call seems to be coming from a greater distance) is used as a slow transition to the second section of *Footsteps in the Wind*, a sonic exploration of Kazimierz. At the end of the first section, when the tune ends abruptly, we hear the crowd cheering and applauding the trumpeter. As I discussed earlier, the *Hejnał* is a meaningful soundmark of Krakow:

“While nearly every large town and city in Europe before the Industrial Revolution had its trumpet blowing, *Stadtpeifer* watchmen, this long and important tradition was allowed to atrophy in all but one place. The Polish capital of Krakow is a unique exception. It is a tribute to the intelligent preservationists in Poland today that the remarkably preserved medieval city of Krakow still maintains the office of the fire watchmen trumpeters.”<sup>261</sup>

The *Hejnał* is a reminder of Poland’s troubled past, the many waves of invasions, victories and defeats, cultural resistance, continuity, national pride and identity. It is also a marker of time and place. It is one of the carriers of Polish national narratives (real, imagined or mythified) and a

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<sup>260</sup> Waligorska (2013: 125)

<sup>261</sup> Smithers (1988: 130)

powerful vessel for Poland's collective memory. Together with the bell of St. Mary's, the trumpet call helps define and delineate the Krakowian, and by extension the entire Polish acoustic community.

### 3.2 Kazimierz, *Sonic Remains* and the 'Virtually Jewish': *Footsteps in the Wind*, Section II

On Rynek Główny, a street sign indicates the presence of the nearby Old Jewish District. Kazimierz is just a short walk away from the market square of Krakow. It is located Southeast of the city. Kazimierz was founded in 1335 by King Casimir the Great<sup>262</sup>, who named it after himself, and "who wanted a new Polish town to counterbalance the unpopular Cracow with its German aristocracy."<sup>263</sup> Kazimierz is known as the historic Jewish district of Krakow taking in an array of synagogues from different periods, the Museum of Judaism, and the *Ofiar Holocaustu*. The Jewish nature of the place dates back to 1494 and King Jan Olbracht's expulsion of Krakow's Jewish population. Many settled in Kazimierz, soon followed by other persecuted Jews from across Europe. By the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the town's Jewish community was one of the most prominent in Europe.<sup>264</sup>

The Old Jewish District is essentially constituted of a small market square, about a quarter the size of Rynek Główny, surrounded by 'themed' cafés and restaurants, and the six *museum-synagogues*<sup>265</sup>. Amongst these former places of worship, we also find three Catholic churches, Corpus Christi Basilica, St. Catherine's church, and the *Skalka*, a riverside sanctuary described as "one of the most important religious sites in Kraków"<sup>266</sup>. All three are still active. In recent years Kazimierz has become a major touristic destination, has greatly contributed to the economic growth

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<sup>262</sup> Kazimierz III Wielki

<sup>263</sup> Torbus (2001: 107)

<sup>264</sup> "A tiny area of about 300m by 300m northeast of Corpus Christi Church, the Jewish sector of Kazimierz became, over the centuries, a centre of Jewish culture equal to no other in the country." (Bedford, 2008: 186)

<sup>265</sup> Plus a seventh synagogue, still in use for occasional religious events.

<sup>266</sup> Van Reed (2015: 87)

of Krakow<sup>267</sup>, and is an integral part of the ‘Schindler’s List Tour’<sup>268</sup>, for this is the location where Steven Spielberg shot most of the ‘ghetto scenes’ in *Schindler’s List*. Because of this, in addition to its annual Klezmer festival, its museums and ‘themed’ cafés, it has been argued that Kazimierz has become one of the most vibrant places for one to experience a ‘European Jewish Revival’.<sup>269</sup>

The second section of *Footsteps in the Wind* begins with a slow transition leading into the different field recordings of the aforementioned area. While exploring Kazimierz I was trying to find and record traces of the ‘old Jewish’ community. As I mentioned earlier, I carried out a first series of field recordings during the high tourist season<sup>270</sup>, in July 2005, and another series during the low tourist season, in January 2007. The latter recordings constitute the main sound elements for this part of the sound-work whereas the former is used mostly as a second layer, often existing only in the background. The second section therefore features a montage of these different recordings, often superimposed on top of one another and/or playing simultaneously and placed in different parts of the multi-channel field. The summer recordings act as an *empreinte*<sup>271</sup>, a distant remanent print-through of the tourist crowd, fading in and out and remaining barely perceptible throughout this section of the composition. Indeed, it was important to capture a trace of the touristic nature of the site. However, it was even more crucial for me to also record the soundscape of Kazimierz in the (quasi) absence of tourists in order to highlight its local sonic characteristics such as ambience, architecture and quieter everyday sounds, and see whether I could uncover sonic traces, or as I will later discuss, *sonic remains* of the alleged ‘revived Jewishness’ of the Old Jewish District.

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<sup>267</sup> Cf. Sandri (2013)

<sup>268</sup> Cf. Cole (1999)

<sup>269</sup> Cf. Francisco (2010); Waligórska & Saxonberg (2006)

<sup>270</sup> Although due to the relatively ‘low-fi’ nature of these recordings, they are less present in the final version of the work.

<sup>271</sup> ‘Trace’, ‘a leftover sign’ (like footprints for example) or ‘print-through’. Cf. (Augoyard, Torgues, 2005: 86)

### 3.2.1 Brief Historical Perspectives on Jewish Kazimierz

The Jewish population of Poland has fluctuated greatly over the centuries. Moments of relative peace have been regularly punctuated by pogroms, forced displacement as well as religious and social tensions of all sorts.<sup>272</sup> In *Jews in the Early Modern World: Continuity and Transformation* (2008), Dean Philip Bell notes: “The earliest record we have of a Jew in Poland comes from the early eleventh century. Jewish migration to and development within Poland grew during the high and later Middle Ages, and in the fourteenth century there was a significant increase of Jewish settlements.”<sup>273</sup> Nevertheless, Bell explains that Jewish life in Poland was rather troublesome and remarks that late medieval population setbacks due to pogroms and anti-Jewish inflammatory preaching led to periodically tenuous Jewish settlement: “Most scholars seem to agree that there were 450,000 Jews in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth in the middle of the seventeenth century.”<sup>274</sup> However, growing antisemitism in Europe and Poland meant that a large number of Jews had been killed: “By the last quarter of the [17<sup>th</sup>] century, estimates range from 180,000 to 350,000, accounting for perhaps a third of the total world Jewish population.”<sup>275</sup> With these elements in mind, we can easily understand why Kazimierz, where Jews are said to have benefited from the protection of King Kazimierz, has been considered a special case and has become a historical symbol, regarded by many with fondness and nostalgia. Tomasz Torbus points out the fact that after 1495: “When Jews were forbidden to settle in Cracow, Kazimierz became the most famous Jewish town in Poland.”<sup>276</sup> Subsequently, the Monarch himself is often considered Poland’s greatest ruler and, for example, is fondly described by Rick Steves:

"Most of all, Kazimierz is remembered as a progressive, tolerant king. In the 14<sup>th</sup> century, other nations were deporting – or even interning – their Jewish subjects, who were commonly scapegoated for anything that went wrong. But the enlightened and kindly Kazimierz actively encouraged Jews to come to Poland by granting them special privileges, often related to banking and trade – establishing the country as a safe haven for Jews in Europe."<sup>277</sup>

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<sup>272</sup> See for example: Hillaby (2003) and Bell (2008)

<sup>273</sup> Bell (2008: 55)

<sup>274</sup> *Ibid* p. 56

<sup>275</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>276</sup> Torbus (2001: 108)

<sup>277</sup> Steves (2010: 41)

Steves' vision does indeed correspond to the popular views that one would read in most of the tourist-guides. Kazimierz is generally portrayed as being sympathetic towards the presence of Jews in Polish lands. Nevertheless, the reasons behind the King's policies are often omitted, or left *à demi-mots*.<sup>278</sup> When Steves discretely mentions the "privileges, often related to banking and trade" he is referring to the two charters of 1334 and 1365, granted to the Jewish community, and the long-standing and, at the time, prevailing belief that Jews were successful bankers.<sup>279</sup> Kazimierz Wielki's alleged 'enlightenment' might therefore have more to do with a desperate need for gold and the securing of power than an altruistic desire to nurture and protect. In fact, Kazimierz has always been stricken by poverty. Money lenders were often stripped of their rights as soon as funds had run out and, apart from a minority of wealthy merchants who owned wine and textile warehouses, the vast majority of Jews were poor.<sup>280</sup> Furthermore, the same old stereotypes and superstitions that caused havoc for the Jewish community elsewhere in Europe were still prevalent within the city walls. As Prazmowska acknowledges:

"During the reign of Kazimierz the first anti-Jewish pogroms took place. In that respect what happened in Poland reflected a pattern of developments that had taken place elsewhere, in particular during the spread of the Black Death plague through Europe. As the epidemic ravaged Europe, Jewish communities were attacked because of the suspicion that they had either directly or indirectly caused the disease."<sup>281</sup>

In the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Jewish district became increasingly poor and religiously conservative, though it was still considered the community's cultural centre. Contrary to how it might seem, as Tony Musgrave (2004) reminds us, Jewish Kazimierz had been a ghetto long before the outbreak of World War II and had remained so for most of its existence. Following the great fire of 1494, for which they were allegedly held responsible, the Jews were faced with an angry mob who sought revenge and attacked them. Eventually the community built walls to protect itself, and for over three centuries lived behind these fortifications, across the river that separates Krakow and Kazimierz.<sup>282</sup> The Jewish community was therefore walled-in and crowded-in, in one way or another, from 1495 until March 1943. Ironically, it is interesting to note that the immigration to

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<sup>278</sup> Lit. "with half-words"; implicitly, unsaid.

<sup>279</sup> Cf. Prazmowska (2011)

<sup>280</sup> Cf. Torbus (2001); Berenbaum (2007)

<sup>281</sup> Prazmowska (2011: 40)

<sup>282</sup> Cf. Francisco (2010)

Polish lands had long been considered by many amongst the Jewish community as divinely ordained “since *po lin* in Hebrew meant literally ‘here rest’ [...]”<sup>283</sup> Another wave of antisemitism grew in Krakow at the close of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Even if the worse was still to come, on the eve of World War II the decline of Jewish settlements in Poland was already under way.

### 3.2.2 Kazimierz During World War II

The estimated Jewish population of prewar Kazimierz varies quite significantly depending on the source. From 56,000<sup>284</sup> to 68,500<sup>285</sup>; 68,000 for Torbus, (2001), and 65,000 for Gruber (2009). The larger estimations are likely to also include the neighbouring Jews who were rounded up and moved to the ghetto after the German invasion of 1939. On the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> of December 1939, the district of Kazimierz, the 8<sup>th</sup> District, was cordoned off. Jews were consequently searched and most of their belongings were confiscated. During this first *Aktion*<sup>286</sup>, the Jewish Community Council building was burned to the ground and several synagogues were attacked.<sup>287</sup> That month a *Judenrat*<sup>288</sup> for Krakow was appointed by the Nazis to administer Jewish affairs. In April 1940, the German authorities “issued an order for most of the Jews to evacuate the city within four months. Some 35,000 left, while about 15,000 Jews received special permission to remain.”<sup>289</sup> On the 21<sup>st</sup> of March 1941, the ghetto was erected in the small city district of Podgórze and “close to 20,000 Jews, including 6,000 from neighbouring communities, were crowded in.”<sup>290</sup> During this *Aktion*, patients at the hospital, residents of the senior care home and 300 children at the orphanage were killed. A

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<sup>283</sup> Bell (2008: 55)

<sup>284</sup> Cf. Berenbaum (2007)

<sup>285</sup> Cf. Musgrave (2004)

<sup>286</sup> Term used for non-military campaign to further Nazi ideals of race, but most often referred to the assembly and deportation of Jews to concentration or death camps. See for example: Spector (1990: 157-173)

<sup>287</sup> Cf. Birenbaum (2007)

<sup>288</sup> ‘Jewish Council’ *Judenräte* were responsible for the internal administration of ghettos, standing between the Nazi occupiers and their Jewish communities. Cf. Trunk (1977)

<sup>289</sup> Birenbaum (2007: 262)

<sup>290</sup> *Ibid* p. 263

year earlier, the Nazis had decreed that Krakow was to become one of the '*cleanest*' cities in the Nazi-occupied (but non-annexed) Poland.<sup>291</sup>

The systematic extermination began in June 1942. In three successive 'selections', after several hundred victims were put to death in the ghetto itself, about 5,000 people were deported to the death camp of Bełżec. Some form of opposition began to surface and the *Żydowska Organizacja Bojowa*<sup>292</sup> was active in organising resistance in the ghetto. The final 'liquidation' of Podgórze, in March 1943, meant that most remaining Jews in the ghetto were transferred to the nearby labour camp of Plaszow. The others were either killed on the spot or dispatched to KZ Auschwitz-Birkenau or KZ Bełżec.<sup>293</sup>

By the end of World War II, a small number of Jews who had been in hiding were saved, practically everyone else had been exterminated, and a vast area of Krakow had been ravaged. In the old 8<sup>th</sup> District, the synagogues were scarred but still standing because they were "classified by the Nazis as 'museums of the extinct race' and were thus spared destruction."<sup>294</sup> At the end of 1945 and in 1946, a few survivors returned to Krakow from Russia, where they had found refuge during the war years. The Jewish quarter of Kazimierz, however, was not re-established after the war because most of the remaining Jews sought residence elsewhere in the town, fearing the outbreak of another pogrom. According to Birenbaum: "the last Jew left Kazimierz in 1968."<sup>295</sup> A few hundred Jews were still present in Krakow in the 1990s and around 150, mainly elderly, remain today. Of the estimated 68,000 Jews of prewar Kazimierz and neighbouring areas, fewer than 3000 survived, and about 1200 of these did so "because they were taken to Bohemia by the German industrialist Oskar Schindler under the pretext that he needed them to work in his factory."<sup>296</sup> Even though the district had not been the main site of the massacre – as mentioned earlier, the ghetto was in Podgórze – by

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<sup>291</sup> Cf. Francisco (2010)

<sup>292</sup> Jewish Combat Organisation: an underground organisation established in Warsaw and Podgórze. Cf. Henry (2014: 118)

<sup>293</sup> Cf. Musgrave (2004; Birenbaum (2007)

<sup>294</sup> Torbus (2001: 108)

<sup>295</sup> Birenbaum (2007: 263)

<sup>296</sup> Torbus (2001: 188)

1945, Kazimierz had become a desolated Jewish graveyard. Despite all this, a relatively large number of buildings were still standing, even if empty and in bad condition.

For the nearly fifty years of communist rule that followed World War II, Kazimierz was largely a forgotten place on Krakow's map. The area persevered in a slow socio-economic decline. Impoverished Krakowians were moved into the vacuum left by the exterminated community and by the early 1970s, the district had become a proletarian *slum* (the likes of which could also be found elsewhere in Europe and on the American continent):

“With the disappearance of Jews from Kazimierz, the city district quickly degenerated and the whole area fell into disrepute for being particularly dangerous. In 1945, after the district had been completely emptied and desolated, the post-War authorities started to settle the local proletariat there. [...] Kazimierz slowly turned into the poorest and most neglected district of Krakow.”<sup>297</sup>

Kazimierz's history of isolation was therefore continuing to manifest itself and it seemed as though the Old Jewish District “had lost its former inhabitants but not its poverty: run-down houses, tired and rather inhospitable residents, [...] not a place to go walking at night.”<sup>298</sup> A derelict place, where traces of the vanished culture that once flourished were slowly fading away, despite the efforts of a small number of activists who strove to preserve what remained. As Saxonberg and Waligórska put it: “In a way, it became a ‘modern ghetto’ [...] in which the poorest groups in society lived in un-renovated, deteriorating buildings, in an area seen as devoid of restaurants, cafes, or cultural activities.”<sup>299</sup> For decades, the synagogues were used for storage and the houses were in decrepitude.<sup>300</sup> There were also no museums. To use a zoomorphic metaphor, if the identity of Jewish Kazimierz still had a few breaths left here and there, and was quietly holding on, it was nonetheless in a state of agony.

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<sup>297</sup> Saxonberg and Waligórska (2006: 433)

<sup>298</sup> Torbus (2001: 110)

<sup>299</sup> Saxonberg and Waligórska (2006: 434)

<sup>300</sup> Cf. Szulc (2002)

### 3.2.3 Kazimierz in the Aftermath of *Schindler's List*

In 1992, when Stephen Spielberg was in search of a location to create the set for his forthcoming film: *Schindler's List* (1993), the Old Jewish District was chosen. The reasons for this were twofold: Firstly, the district's overall picturesque architecture and geographical proximity to the diegesis of the story, and secondly, the fact that Podgórze, the original site where the historical events took place, was now a decrepit estate – even more impoverished than the 8<sup>th</sup> District – built during the communist era. (Manchel, 1995) Therefore the scenes depicting the ghetto of Podgórze in *Schindler's List* instead show Kazimierz. The screenplay of Spielberg's film was inspired by *Schindler's Ark* (1982), a biographical novel by Australian writer Thomas Keneally. After its release, Spielberg's film became a worldwide success, a blockbuster. It won seven *Oscars*<sup>301</sup> and grossed a total of \$321,306,305. \$96,065,768 in the United States and a further \$225,240,537 at box offices outside of America.<sup>302</sup> This led historian Tim Cole to (rather bitterly) declare: "In short, 'Shoah business' is big business."<sup>303</sup> Spielberg, who chose to shoot in black and white<sup>304</sup> and with a hand-held camera, has suggested that *Schindler's List* was to be seen "more like a document" and that his role had been more that of "a witness rather than a film director."<sup>305</sup> In *A reel witness* (1995), Frank Manchel explains how *Schindler's List* has brought the Shoah back to the attention of a global culture<sup>306</sup> and has become: "the most important source of historical information affecting popular perception of the Holocaust."<sup>307</sup> The images and the narrative disseminated in Spielberg's film have had a major impact on the generations who watched it and influenced the work of educators and policy makers around the world. This vision of the Holocaust is seared into public consciousness, steering the imagination of millions, and has consequently triggered an

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<sup>301</sup> Academy awards.

<sup>302</sup> See: <http://www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?id=schindlerslist.htm> [Accessed 10/05/2014]

<sup>303</sup> (1999: 1)

<sup>304</sup> "Which gives large parts of the movie the feel of being an authentic newsreel film of the ghettoisation and deportation of Polish Jews." (Cole, 1999: 75) Furthermore, the images were given an overall sepia texture (but only subtly) during colour-grading in post-production, thus re-enforcing the aesthetic of 'aged film'. There are two moments where we see colour in the film: the first one is the scene with 'the girl in the red dress', somehow symbolising Schindler's epiphany and taken "not from Keneally's novel, but from testimony given at the Eichmann trial" (Cole, 1999: 74); the second one is at the end of the film, when the narrative shifts back to the 'present'.

<sup>305</sup> Steven Spielberg [interview] cited in Zelizer (1997: 23)

<sup>306</sup> The first event that participated in the widespread dissemination, and arguably the emergence of the Holocaust in the public sphere was the trial of Adolf Eichmann in Israel, 1961 and its subsequent TV broadcast. Cf. Cole (1999: 47-92)

<sup>307</sup> (1995: 84)

unprecedented popular interest in Holocaust-related ‘things’ and places.<sup>308</sup> The Old Jewish District of Krakow is one of the places that benefitted the most from the film’s widespread aura and the resulting financial dividends of Holocaust tourism.

The release of *Schindler’s List* almost coincided with the fall of communism in 1989. Kazimierz then slowly began to develop again. With its newly acquired notoriety and tourists increasingly pouring in, the district saw Jewish-themed cafés and restaurants emerge. The old buildings were refurbished and their façades decorated. The inexorable gentrification that followed *out-rented* the poorer part of the population who relocated in Podgórze estate. The first *Jewish Culture Festival* event was organised in 1988, marking the first tentative step in the development of what some have claimed to be ‘the Jewish revival’ of Kazimierz. Since then, this nine-day festival attracts thousands every year<sup>309</sup> and is an occasion to educate people about Jewish culture, history and Judaism. Addressing Kazimierz’s alleged Jewish revival, Suzanne Weiss writes that today: “you can find a good kosher meal, a number of klezmer bands, Jewish cabaret, art exhibits and folk dancing.”<sup>310</sup> On my way to explore Kazimierz again in 2007, I was determined to find and record as much of these elements as possible and capture the traces of the Old Jewish District.

#### 3.2.4 Jewish Kazimierz’s *Sonic Remains*?

The field recordings that make up the second section of *Footsteps in the Wind* do not include the festival. I wanted to capture the soundscape of Kazimierz outside of the tourist season. When, a few lines earlier, I quoted Suzanne Weiss’ description of the Jewish ‘things’ one can apparently find in the Old Jewish District, the citation was incomplete; it was missing its concluding statement: “The only thing you probably won’t find – unless you look very hard – are Jews.”<sup>311</sup> With the mass deportation and extermination of the Jewish people of Krakow, the folklore, life and atmosphere of

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<sup>308</sup> Cf. Cole (1999); Finkelstein (2003)

<sup>309</sup> Cf. Torbus (2001)

<sup>310</sup> Weiss (2003) as quoted in Saxonberg and Waligórska (2006: 433)

<sup>311</sup> *Ibid*

the quarter disappeared. Today only the architecture reveals that this was once a Jewish town.<sup>312</sup> Recording in Kazimierz, all I could hear was the rain, walking shoppers, and sounds coming from the different churches scattered around the area. Try as I might, I could not hear or record anything that would convey Kazimierz's Jewish past, nor its alleged revival. Instead, the sound of Catholic faith was permeating the soundscape of the whole district.

This led me to reflect further and address the theoretical underpinnings of a notion that I call *sonic remains*. This notion refers to the excavation and capture of sonic traces of an apparently absent or vanishing community, and/or the former identity of a specific place. Sonic remains would thereafter help represent a past culture that once inhabited a particular location, factually or symbolically. For example, the Heynał, even if its origin is a myth, conveys a link between Poland's past and its national identity in the present. In the same way, the beating of drums and the May Song of Padstow can be seen as sonic remains of the community's (imagined, mythified, or factual) past, linked to farming traditions, as well as a strong symbol of contemporary Cornish culture. It does so to such an extent that, at least in the minds of its participants, the sound of the Obby Oss ritual is thought to summon the community together and even define and reunite the 'Padstonian diaspora.'<sup>313</sup>

In this second section of *Footsteps in the Wind*, we hear the sounds of church services amongst the rain and people's footsteps. The sound of the pipe organ and the congregation's hymns were leaking through the walls. This section is constituted of different locations recorded in the streets of Kazimierz. The montage is punctuated by the opening and closing of the church doors. The organ, synonymous with higher religious power, is first and foremost a symbol of order and chronology. It ensures the proper unfolding of the Catholic liturgy. The organ produces a "sacred noise"<sup>314</sup>, a prodigious sound whose "vibratory effects of high-intensity, low-frequency noise, which have the power to 'touch' listeners, [...] made the pews wobble under the Christians."<sup>315</sup> It is the complementary sound event that sometimes follows the ringing of bells and resonates through the urban environment of the Old Jewish District of Krakow.

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<sup>312</sup> Cf. Bedford (2008)

<sup>313</sup> Cf. Chapter II

<sup>314</sup> Schafer (1994: 273)

<sup>315</sup> *Ibid* p. 115

The sonic remains of Jewish Kazimierz seemed to be absent. Where were the Jews of Kazimierz? Where was this Jewish revival? Yet, when I looked at the architecture, I saw Hebrew letters on the buildings, typical houses, synagogues. In reality, what I was gazing upon was not so much a revived Jewish neighbourhood but, essentially, a film set. Some of the Hebrew letters of the restaurants were just random, the Jewish-like tombstones of the cafés near the old cemetery were made of solidified papier-mâché. The synagogues were museums, or a kindergarten. Even *Remuh*, supposed to have kept its role as a place of worship, was in fact functioning simply as a community centre. What I felt during my several explorations of Kazimierz echoes the experience of many others. In *Into the Darkness, Into the Light* (2004), Tony Musgrave describes his puzzlement when he arrived in the district:

“The article was titled: *There's nothing kosher at all in Kazimierz* [...]. On my first visit it had been a shock to realize that the orthodox Jews whom I'd seen on Szeroka Street about to enter the Remuh synagogue and the orthodox Jews with long white beards who were pictured in the book of lavish black and white photos [...] were all tourists, mainly from the States. [...] From my house I had watched my families driven away in a lorry. I was traveling along the rails that led to Kattowitz and then branched to Auschwitz. East of Auschwitz, in Kazimierz, had been the Polish Jews, the unassimilated orthodox Jews, a whole civilization. I had to try to see them, feel their presence, look at their footsteps.”<sup>316</sup>

It is a similar experience that led Ruth Grubber (2009) to coin the term ‘virtually Jewish’ to describe the situation in Kazimierz and how certain so-called Jewish spaces where a void was created have been filled by the stereotypical representation of Jewishness<sup>317</sup>, often for exploitative purpose.<sup>318</sup> In her 2009 article, Grubber builds an insightful parallel between the emergence of the ‘virtually Jewish’ of Kazimierz and its Jewish-themed commodities, and the imaginary representation of the ‘Wild West’ in similarly tourist-driven environments. Squaw waitresses and Cowboy bartenders, ‘Big Sioux’ or ‘Rio Bravo’ steaks on the menu, a stagecoach bench and saloon doors at the entrance.<sup>319</sup> Perhaps, the difference between the ‘virtually Jewish’ and the ‘imaginary Wild West’ is that the Native-American genocide has now been fully mythified and does not bear any relationship whatsoever to historical reality. Is the emergence of the ‘virtually Jewish’ an early

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<sup>316</sup> Musgrave (2004: 87-88)

<sup>317</sup> Primarily by ‘non-Jews’ although a minority of Jews have recently started to exploit this ‘usurpation’ as well. Cf. Grubber (2009)

<sup>318</sup> Cf. Grubber (2009)

<sup>319</sup> Cf. *ibid*

sign of a similar process happening to Europe's Jewry and the historical Holocaust? Amongst the many inescapable examples of the fantasised and stereotypical *past* represented in the Old Jewish District, including brand-new doorposts where newly made grooves reproduce scar-like traces that imitate those found not too long ago on derelict buildings, Grubber points out:

“Today's Jewish Kazimierz is built on this architectural skeleton, but [...] it bears little resemblance to the teeming district it was before World War II. The "Jewish" cafe at which I was sitting, like several of its neighbors, wrote its name in Hebrew-style letters. Just as Sioux provided a stylized image of the Wild West, the cafe's old-fashioned decor, with candlesticks and menorahs, shtetl scene paintings, and portraits of rabbis on the wall, evoked a literary image of the lost Jewish past. Klezmer music played in the background, and the menu featured dishes called ‘Rabbi's Salad’ and ‘Yankiel the Innkeeper of Berdytchov's Soup.’”<sup>320</sup>

The issue becomes even more complex when one realises that most Holocaust tourists who visit Kazimierz do so thinking they are sightseeing the location of the historical ghetto.<sup>321</sup> Their motivation being at the same time to visit the set where Spielberg's film was shot – that's the selling point of every ‘Schindler's List Tour’ – and to physically experience the place where these historical events unfolded. Faced with Kazimierz's cultural appropriation and epigonism, and the way it is sold to the general public, how not to think about Baudrillard's *simulacra* – where the simulation can become the thing itself?<sup>322</sup> Not only has the site been transformed, and now conveys a series of misconceptions and stereotypes about Jewish culture that led some to claim it has become a “Jewish Disneyland”<sup>323</sup>, but the historical location of the mass murder that occurred in the area has been replaced and sold as authentic. Eyal Weizman calls architecture the ‘political plastic’ in that it “rearticulates relations between political forces and material forms. [...] Architecture is

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<sup>320</sup> Grubber (2009: 487)

<sup>321</sup> Cf. Cole (1999)

<sup>322</sup> Cf. Baudrillard, ‘Simulacra and Simulations’ in *Selected Writings* (1988: 166-184)

<sup>323</sup> See, for example: Weiss (2002) “The danger in the exoticization of Jews is that one loses the sense of how Jewish culture and the local environment influenced one another, and how Jewish culture contributed to local cultural traditions, whether music, cuisine, language, or other features. Instead, this pattern helps maintain stereotypes of the Jew as an outsider, at least in Central Europe. [...] The apparent vitality of "virtual Jewish realities" leads to the intermingling of fiction with reality, and the two become difficult to distinguish from one another. [...] Following the success of the movie "Schindler's List," there was a boom in tours to "authentic places" — in reality, places where the movies were filmed. Fiction and reality blur into one another again, cancel each other out.” (*Ibid*)

politics in matter. Like a diagram of sorts, the arrangement and disposition of matter across a terrain becomes the starting point for reading political forces.”<sup>324</sup>

The size, the architecture, the urban spacial context and topography that allowed the Nazis to ghettoise and exterminate Kazimierz’s population are ‘all wrong’. Again, the historical ghetto was elsewhere. But it is Kazimierz, not Podgórze, that is in the film. Furthermore, if as Umberto Eco suggests, we consider that for: "historical information to be absorbed, it has to assume the aspect of a reincarnation"<sup>325</sup>, then Kazimierz is the poignant example of a place where "absolute unreality is offered as real presence."<sup>326</sup> Therefore, a potential forensic reading of the ghetto’s political plastic would be for the most part fictional, only partially understood, perhaps even misleading. Lastly, in Kazimierz’s market, amongst flyers offering a guided “ghetto tour”, it is possible to find the incarnation of a Krakowian Jew:

“A little more than an inch in height, a jolly figure smiling behind his red beard and sidelocks — and clutching a real Polish coin in his hands. The coin, a one-grosz piece, came up above his waist, like an apron. He was a good luck talisman, someone explained to me later, whose power was rooted in the Jews' supposed special relationship with money.”<sup>327</sup>

In 2007, I brought several of these statuettes back to England. Some are fridge-magnets, others simply stand on their feet.



*Fig. 1* Statuette purchased by the author in 2007, in Kazimierz.

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<sup>324</sup> Weizman (2012: 1) “I think it's clear that in terms of architecture spatial analysis is becoming the pathology of our era, in the sense that we increasingly understand the state of contemporary politics by looking at the thick surface of the earth: at destroyed buildings, at systems of infrastructure, at the earth and meteorology above.” (*Ibid*)

<sup>325</sup> Eco (1986: 7)

<sup>326</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>327</sup> Grubber (2009: 493)

### 3.2.5 Jewish Kazimierz and the ‘Bronze Voice’

The Old Jewish District is relatively quiet outside the tourist season. As Schafer astutely acknowledges in a footnote of *The Soundscape* (1994): “Typically, while both the Muslim and Christian faiths have important signalling devices, the Jewish faith, which is not missioning, does not.”<sup>328</sup> Jews consequently had to live immersed in the sound of an identifiable otherness. On the importance of those defining factors and the meaning of shared sound-worlds, Mark M. Smith explains that sounds “serve as anchors to regions, as acoustic identifiers of community. As a result, if those soundmarks are threatened by other strains and rhythms, communities interpret these alien sounds as noise, as palpable and metaphorical threats to their identities and ways of life.”<sup>329</sup> Despite the sounds of Catholic faith all around it, Jewish Kazimierz remains silent, immobile.

I have already mentioned how the sound of church bells delineates a territory and envelops its associated parish, both physically and spiritually. The bells of St. Mary’s Basilica propagate all the way to Kazimierz. It is part of the district’s acoustic arena. Other churches in the area also participate in the sonic environment of the place. Beyond the territorialisation of their community, bells are also signifiers of power and theological domination. According to Corbain:

“The bell was also the voice of authority and the means by which announcements were made. It prevailed over rumor because it alone could mark what was new in the sea of truth. Within the aerial space, over which it still held a monopoly, this bronze voice, falling from above, hammered home the injunctions of authority; it called to mind the connivance established around a system of norms.”<sup>330</sup>

Because its auditory territory is sacralised, because the Catholic faith ascribes to it “the power to open a path for the good angels from heaven and ward off the creatures of hell”<sup>331</sup>, the bell sound in Kazimierz can be seen as a symbolic representation of the historical relationship between the two

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<sup>328</sup> (1994: 55)

<sup>329</sup> In *The Auditory Culture Reader* (2003: 159)

<sup>330</sup> Corbain (1999: x-xi)

<sup>331</sup> *Ibid* p. xi

communities that once coexisted in Krakow. As Musgrave points out, the district has always existed within the perimeter of the Catholic Church:

"Even after 1822, after the walls came down, and Jews were allowed to settle throughout the whole of Kazimierz, they lived in the shadows of the massive catholic churches, The Brothers of Mercy, St Catherine's, St Paul's and The Body of Christ, even after 1860 when they began building a seventh synagogue, [...] even after 1867, when they were legally emancipated, and encouraged to assimilate, to become identical in appearance to their Catholic neighbours, it was still the ghetto area that was the centre of Cracowian Jewish culture in the ancient, civilised and royal city of Cracow."<sup>332</sup>

The Jewish community of Kazimierz may have been tolerated and allowed to prosper in the area. Nevertheless, they did so in a social context "obsessed by the demarcation of communal identities, ever mindful of the defining features of groups and always ready to issue challenges."<sup>333</sup> In a passage called *Soundscapes at War* (2003), Smith comments on the potential consequences of sensing conflicting sound-worlds in Northern and Southern Antebellum America:

"Aural constructions of the 'North' and the 'South' gained wide currency, so that soon Northerners and Southerners heard one another in decisive ways, although in reality some sectional differences were not pronounced. The heard world, imagined and distorted though it was in part, was real to those who did the selective listening; real enough, in fact, to prompt men to palpable, destructive action."<sup>334</sup>

The sonic environment of Jewish Kazimierz has always been dominated and defined by the church bell. They belonged to the place, yes, but likely lived in a soundscape that cyclically reminded them of the established norm, their status, even perhaps how they were perceived and where the power was. The migrant, even assimilated, even after generations, stayed a migrant. City bells were a sign of the hierarchical distribution of the urban space; the sound of the organ leaking through the walls: a sonic reminder of the *rightful* liturgy. Thus was, and somehow still is, the soundscape of the Old Jewish District. Even in situations of peace, the outsiders were kept, theologically and socially, under control – under the scrutiny and authority of this "bronze voice". In this respect, the sound of the organ, the hymns, and the ringing of bells that constitute for the

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<sup>332</sup> Musgrave (2004: 108)

<sup>333</sup> Corbain (1999: 73)

<sup>334</sup> In *The Auditory Culture Reader* (2003: 159)

most part the ubiquitous soundscape of the district are perhaps the only (and *true*) sonic remains of Jewish Kazimierz.

### 3.3 Schindler's Steps: *Footsteps in the Wind*, Section III

“Schindlers [sic] Steps: A four hour walking tour, taking in Kazimierz, Podgorze, Schindlers [sic] Factory (visit only not museum entry), Liban Quarry (optional walk to site of Plaszow camp) with English speaking guide. Prices from 25.00pln per person.”<sup>335</sup>

At the end of the second section of *Footsteps in the Wind*, a field recording of a Krakowian tram is used as a transition to the next section of the piece. During the passage of the tram, we can hear a voice uttering: “Spirit? Spirit factory?”. It is the caretaker asking if I had grasped the “spirit” of the place. I have recently discovered that the ‘Schindler’s List Tour’, or ‘Ghetto Tour’, is also sometimes called ‘Schindler’s Steps’.<sup>336</sup> This guided retracing of the *hero*’s steps is said to be: “a difficult day, but you will be a better person for having experienced the horrors of WWII first hand, and look towards the future with a brighter outlook.”<sup>337</sup> The website advises us to watch *Schindler’s List* prior to our visit. After all, what would be the point otherwise? And if by any chance we were not compelled enough by the idea of visiting the film’s location, we are invited to experience ‘the horrors of WWII first hand’<sup>338</sup>.

The former Oskar Schindler’s Factory is situated about two hours walk from Kazimierz. To get there, one has to walk through Podgórze estate. This time, the scars on the high-rise blocks are not decorative. They are the telltale signs of buildings inexorably losing their structural integrity, while people still inhabit them. The factory is almost indistinguishable from its derelict

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<sup>335</sup> *Krakow Tours* (11 June, 2015)

<sup>336</sup> See: <http://www.getyourguide.co.uk/krakow-140/oskar-schindler-retracing-the-steps-in-krakow-t14090/> [Accessed 28/07/14]

<sup>337</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>338</sup> Interestingly, in this instance the tour is no longer available. It was a limited offer...

surroundings; it took me a long time to find, and when I arrived it had already closed. The third section of *Footsteps in the Wind* therefore begins with a montage of field recordings taken in front of the factory's metal gates. For some reason, slightly disheartened by the fact that I was too late and no one was there (so I thought), I started to quietly move the closed gate back and forth and record its vibrations. I also felt compelled to rub my nails against the wall. These two sounds make up the material for the first segment of that section. It reminded me of Dallas Simpson's notion of *environmental improvisation*, or *location performance*. Simpson's work has been described as: "The physical sounding of otherwise silent surfaces and objects with his hands and feet. The aim is to bring into acoustic visibility elements of the environment that are purely visual and material, which would otherwise be invisible (as silent objects) in a sound-only recording."<sup>339</sup> I still cannot explain to myself why I stayed there for so long instead of walking back, but soon it was nightfall. I became more confident that no one could hear me so I "performed" with the gates a little more intensely to obtain a better signal. I jumped when I heard a Polish injunction through my headphones. The factory's caretaker was behind me. I was of course recording with high gain, which amplified the startling effect.

Although I was too late for an official tour, the caretaker, who insisted he was not one of the guides, kindly invited me to visit the factory. The first utterance I recorded was him saying what sounded like: "Vac car!" as he slammed the gate behind me. The rest of the third section is constituted of field recordings carried out inside the factory. It features the caretaker's voice, punctuated by the sound of our footsteps walking up and down the stairs from room to room. His English was rather thin so he mostly used single words to describe the different artefacts on display:

*"(Spirit? Spirit factory?) Vac car! Original gate factory. Original gate, original (Wait! Wait...). Mobile platform, car. Office room, Oskar Schindler. Office room."*<sup>340</sup>

During the visit, I recorded broken doors, bin bags being thrown away, old windows being opened with difficulty, and the sound of pans and pots, leftovers from the factory's past. On the third floor, images were projected onto the wall of an alcove, next to Schindler's private office, overlooking the factory. Two small speakers were diffusing the percussive sound-effect of a vintage typewriter into the space as the slide projector moved from one image to another. It was there of course to evoke the typing of the famous *List*. The caretaker's voice describing some of the pictures can be heard:

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<sup>339</sup> *Binaural Sound Works* (2013)

<sup>340</sup> Transcript of the caretaker's voice in *Footsteps in the Wind*, third section.

*“This is slide historical, factory concentration camp Plaszow, historical ghetto. This is script historical. Come, speak English. General [?]. Hans Frank General Governor District Krakow, Poland. Square Mariacki. Repression sequence, Jews. Star David, Blockade Bank, continuing repression, sequence ghetto. Ghetto street, Szeroka Street Miedova, [?], bridge, Plac Nowy Ghetto Square, [?], Train, for Jews... for Jews, parking, no Jews! Sequence repression, control document non-stop, street, house, bridge, train platform, historical ghetto.”<sup>341</sup>*

Typewriters, and particularly their sound, play a poignant role in the *imaginaire*<sup>342</sup> of the Holocaust. The role of paperwork in the Nazi administration has fulfilled a double historical function: on the one hand, ordering, recording and enacting the transportation of victims to death camps; on the other hand enabling the historian to later retrace the fate of the victims, assess and reflect upon the disaster. In *Traces of the Holocaust* (2011), Tim Cole comments on the typewriter as part-and-parcel of the bureaucrat’s artillery:

"There is something terrifyingly banal about a single sheet of paper being part of the process of transporting people to their deaths. [...] It is an example of the destructive potential of paperwork within state bureaucracies. [...] The typewriter was the weapon of the desk killer."<sup>343</sup>

However, the typewriter sound-effects of Schindler’s Factory are not supposed to evoke the ‘weapon of the desk killer’. Instead, they represent the voice of the ‘Saviour’: Oskar Schindler. This reversal is interesting enough in itself. The sound of the typewriter is also present, of course, throughout Spielberg’s film. Nevertheless, as I shall discuss in the following paragraphs, it is perhaps symptomatic of a dangerous paradox. This paradox stirs many elements together, including good intentions, semantic dissonance, religious bigotry, imperialism, and historical manipulation.

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<sup>341</sup> Partial transcript of the caretaker’s voice in *Footsteps in the Wind*, third section.

<sup>342</sup> Lit. ‘Imaginary world’. A set of imagined associations and narratives related to a specific notion. In this case, I use the term *imaginaire* to refer to the perceived realities, images, inner representations of the Holocaust in the collective imagination.

<sup>343</sup> (2011: 1)

### 3.3.1 The Paradox of the Empty Room and the Hollywoodian Holocaust

My visit happened during the low tourist season. Surprisingly, the original site of Schindler's factory was not one of the most visited. Due in part to its location, most tourists would give up before getting there, or perhaps because there was 'not much to see'. The caretaker confirmed that they rarely got as busy as the other museums in the region. To my surprise, the different spaces of the factory were mostly empty.<sup>344</sup> The factory did not seem to possess many permanent exhibits. It seemed at odds with the sempiternal overload of pictures, captions, neon lights, videos and display cabinets that the other museums and memorials usually rely upon. Instead, the walls were whitewashed, bare, a table and a chair in the office, a chessboard, an old bar.<sup>345</sup> All genuine artefacts according to my host. The relative emptiness of the different rooms can be clearly perceived in the recordings as the caretaker's voice reverberates through the space with the recognisable colouring effect<sup>346</sup> that bricks, concrete and plasterboard create. Most importantly, this natural reverb tells us something about the place, something about an absence. The way sound bounces off the factory's walls, and the quasi-nil level of absorption, indicate that the space is not only empty of furniture, it is also devoid of people. In other words, it clearly reveals that the caretaker and myself were alone. It felt to me as if this particular sonic characteristic could be interpreted as a metaphor for what I hoping to sense: a *palpable presence of absence*. Something tangible. A void that I could systematically perceive when listening back to the recordings of the factory during the editing process for the third section of *Footsteps in the Wind*.

It is a void, a terrifying emptiness, that almost all other museums have striven to remediate by filling, at all cost, every inch of the rooms with reductionist captions, exhibits, reproductions, images, lists of numbers, ornamental furnitures to accompany all this, or even genuine artefacts: Information overload as a remedy against the fear of absence, of having to face the ineffable solitude of finding oneself *one against millions*. This void that we need to be in the presence of, with perhaps the risk of losing hope (or faith) in front of the overwhelming disaster. This palpable

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<sup>344</sup> During the high season, the factory used to sometimes host various temporary exhibitions.

<sup>345</sup> Schindler's drinking as well as his womanising tendencies are an integral part of the *Schindler's List* narrative. (Cole, 1999)

<sup>346</sup> Cf. Augoyard and Torgues (2005: 28)

presence of absence might be the one thing we need to experience, to be confronted with, if we are to *truly* explore the meaning of the Holocaust – outside of its Hollywoodian representation and re-appropriation. As Cole rightfully argues, *Schindler's List* “has attained the status of reality in its own right.”<sup>347</sup> Visitors are shown where the film was shot rather than the genuine sites because “the virtual reality of Spielberg’s ‘Holocaust’ is more real than the ‘Holocaust’ of history.”<sup>348</sup> The *myth* of the Holocaust<sup>349</sup> that has emerged in recent years has found its definitive narrative in Hollywood. It has affected the way our culture understands, considers, historically orders the event, and “teaches how the Holocaust should be remembered.”<sup>350</sup> Unfortunately, Spielberg’s film does not *truly* address the Holocaust. Instead, while the Shoah provides the backdrop for the action, it tells a classic hero tale based on traditional American values.<sup>351</sup> First, Amon Goeth: the Devil, or at least the symbol of ‘pure evil’ (and sexual lust), killing at will and at random. Second, *Schindler's Jews*: nameless, barely able to work, in need of absolution and destined to be saved. In the middle, Oskar Schindler: a modern hero, an imperfect man of Biblical status. After committing the sin of greed and almost succumbing to temptation, he becomes a righteous man through a journey of redemption. Oskar Schindler singlehandedly redeems humanity by committing the ultimate sacrifice: losing all his money. At the end, Goeth is hanged. Everyone else is saved.<sup>352</sup> It is a Holocaust story that leaves us “with a sense of triumph.”<sup>353</sup>

In the hands of Hollywood the spectacle was of course inevitable. As historian Paul Hilberg, angered by *Schindler's List*, puts it: “There is nothing to be taken from the Holocaust that imbues anyone with hope or any thoughts of redemption, but the need for heroes is so strong that we will

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<sup>347</sup> Cole (1999: 75)

<sup>348</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>349</sup> Cole traces the development of popularisation of the Holocaust in around the world. He uses the term ‘myth’ not to question the fact of six million murdered Jews in any way, but to point out the gradual emergence of the Holocaust in much contemporary thinking and narratives. History, at any particular time and place, is a refining and processing of pertinent facts with the cultural values of the existing establishment that creates a ‘myth’ of the historic reality. Different times in the same place or different places at the same time result in varying ‘myths’. (Cf. Cole, 1999: 6) The subtitle of the book: *From Auschwitz to Schindler, How History is Bought, Packaged and Sold*, is most appropriate in expressing this manipulation of historic events to conform to a particular country's existing policies.

<sup>350</sup> Bernstein (1994: 432)

<sup>351</sup> Cf. Novick (2000)

<sup>352</sup> See: Cole (1999); Finkelstein (2000); Bernstein (1994)

<sup>353</sup> Hoberman (1994: 31)

manufacture them.”<sup>354</sup> Just like the ‘Jewish Disneyland’ of Kazimierz. Most crucially, the Hollywoodian Holocaust is a tale of salvation, a mythified vision designed to trigger an emotional response and transmit a system of moral values. A sentiment of hope, or perhaps even an adventure that can be experienced “first hand” in the safety of an ever-promised absolution. A ‘look towards the future with a brighter outlook.’ Evidently, one cannot help but feel that this value system is greatly disconnected from the historical Holocaust. “These particular mythical tellings of the ‘Holocaust’ are ideologically laden and thus, by definition, partial representations of historical reality.”<sup>355</sup> By narrowing the scope of the event and through a process of simplification driven by an archetypal narrative and a moralist agenda<sup>356</sup>, *Schindler’s List* not only manipulates our interpretation of the Shoah but might be in danger of “displacing the evidence and documentation on which it is based, [and therefore] acting on people’s minds as a metatext of historical evidence.”<sup>357</sup> In other words, Spielberg’s spectacle has partly usurped the place of the historical Holocaust, and has done so while looking falsely authentic in its form<sup>358</sup>: a *simulacra*.

At the end of the film, Schindler gathers ‘his Jews’ and, perched from above, sets them free during a long sermon during which he “weeps over the realisation that he could have done more.”<sup>359</sup> This does not fit with the Schindler of history. As Tim Cole (1999) and later David Crowe (2004) have shown, the Schindler of history simply made a ‘speedy get away’ as the Soviets were approaching, taking his wife and mistresses with him. His speech was more a reminder of what he had done for ‘them’ rather than a self-loathing and messianic sermon.<sup>360</sup> Spielberg had to “re-write history, to stress not only that one ‘good man’ can – and should – make a difference, but also to suggest that redemption can – and should – be achieved through virtuous actions.”<sup>361</sup> In the final scene of the film, we are transported to another place, some forty years after the war. Schindler’s

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<sup>354</sup> Hilberg as quoted in Schemo (1994: 6)

<sup>355</sup> Cole (1999: 76)

<sup>356</sup> i.e. the traditional Biblical or romantic scheme: Victim (or Princess) vs Pure Evil + Saviour (Hero or Messiah), for example.

<sup>357</sup> Bresheeth (1997: 206)

<sup>358</sup> Black and white images, hand-held camera, supposedly shot ‘on location’, etc.

<sup>359</sup> Cole (1999: 80)

<sup>360</sup> Cf. Crowe (2004)

<sup>361</sup> Cole (1999: 80)

tomb, on Mount Zion<sup>362</sup>, is shown to be a site of pilgrimage. Schindler has become a ‘saint’, a Christ-like figure of the Holocaust:

“I sometimes think that American Jewry ‘discovering’ the Nazi holocaust was worse than its having been forgotten. True my parents brooded in private; the suffering they endured was not publicly validated. But wasn’t that better than the current crass exploitation of Jewish martyrdom? [...] Both my parents, although daily reliving that past until the day each died, lost interest by the end of their lives in The Holocaust as a public spectacle.”<sup>363</sup>

The myth of the Holocaust acts as a rampart against *really* thinking about the philosophical underpinnings, the ethical consequences of the Holocaust, the moral failure of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. It still clings “valiantly to the illusion that the Nazi genocide of nearly eleven million human beings has not substantially altered our vision of human dignity.”<sup>364</sup> It is easier that way. It is also perhaps easier to sell. In *Voicing the Void* (1997), Sarah Horowitz emphasises the fact that we are left “outside the film, admiring one man, condemning the other. [Therefore, we are] never implicated in the moral economy of the film.”<sup>365</sup> Nothing forces us to examine our own social and political ethics.<sup>366</sup> The Hollywoodian Holocaust focuses on one man and a thousand lives spared instead of the millions of victims and the powerlessness of people to prevent them. It is this reversal – the erasure of the administrative weapon of the ‘desk killer’ in favour of the reassuring finger-tapping of the Saviour’s hand and his *List* – that the typewriter sounds of Schindler’s Factory symbolically and perversely convey. Thus, I could not help but feel this paradox and experience a semantic dissonance when listening to these percussive sounds resonating through these empty rooms. The Hollywoodian Holocaust still permeating through, even in the tangible presence of absence. In the last segment of the third section of *Footsteps in the Wind*, we hear the caretaker closing a series of doors, and finally the main gate of the factory, as I was leaving the premises:

*“This is desk, chair, chess, private Schindler, alcohol drinks. Schindler sit down, observers comes, people factory absolution! Jews product enamelware, enamelware...”*

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<sup>362</sup> In Israel

<sup>363</sup> Finkelstein (2000: 6-7)

<sup>364</sup> Cole (1999: 77)

<sup>365</sup> Horowitz (1997: 138)

<sup>366</sup> Cf. *Ibid*

*Reconstruction of windows... windows. This is administration, administration of factory. Finish!*<sup>367</sup>

Recently, the site of the former Schindler Factory (with its empty rooms) has, in turn, been transformed into a fully fledged museum. In July 2010, the *New York Times* announced:

“On June 11, the factory’s sprawling administration building opened as Krakow’s newest museum, an ambitious, multimedia evocation of Krakow’s experience under Nazi occupation from 1939 to 1945. Three years in the making, Schindler’s Museum. [...] Cost €3.7 million, or about \$4.7 million. [...] A guide wearing acid-green sunglasses led us in the footsteps of both Schindler and Mr. Spielberg, on a route that mixed celluloid and reality, Hollywood and the Holocaust. ‘This,’ he said more than once, ‘existed in reality AND in the film.’ [...] The symbolism is sometimes tangible. One section is paved with floor tiles that bear the Nazi swastika. ‘It was a dilemma how to show Nazi symbols without seeming to promote them,’ Ms. Gawron said, ‘but in this case, though some people are shocked, it clearly works — the swastikas are there, but they are being trampled underfoot.’<sup>368</sup>

It seems the desire to fill (and exploit) the empty space was simply too tempting after all. “Such a museum was needed,” said one of the curators: “People visit Auschwitz, but they have no idea of what life was like here in Krakow.”<sup>369</sup> Interestingly, sound effects, including music, reproduced radio broadcasts and ‘ordinary city noises’ are apparently used to “heighten the impact of the visuals.”<sup>370</sup> The poignant *tangible presence of absence* that I felt and tried to capture in 2007, when the factory was mostly empty, has now been all but shrouded in noise. I wonder how the *new* museum sounds today.

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<sup>367</sup> Transcript of the caretaker’s voice in *Footsteps in the Wind*, third section.

<sup>368</sup> Grubber, ‘New Museum Tells Krakow’s Stories of World War II’, in *New York Times*, 15 July, 2010.

<sup>369</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>370</sup> *Ibid*

### 3.4 27 Buses in *Muzeum Auschwitz-Birkenau: Footsteps in the Wind*, Section IV

I have been to *Muzeum Auschwitz-Birkenau* twice, in July 2005 and January 2007. Both times, I carried out a series of field recordings on and around the site. During a typical ‘Schindler’s List Tour’, it would be the culminating last stop of the journey. There are *two* Auschwitz, ‘Auschwitz I’ is the museum. This is where most of the artefacts and the tourist facilities are. ‘Auschwitz II’ (Birkenau) is larger in size, less welcoming, and situated about two miles away from the museum. Tourists are less frequent and facilities are more ‘minimal’. In the following pages, I will only discuss my experience of ‘Auschwitz I’, referred to as *Muzeum Auschwitz-Birkenau*. It is the main tourist attraction. In 2007, when I arrived at the site, I counted twenty-seven buses on the car park that faced the camp. The fourth section of *Footsteps in the Wind* begins with a montage of different sonic events recorded by the entrance to the museum as well as within its fences. Speaking of the place as ‘busy’ would be an understatement. The whole area was swarming with tourists of all ages and nationalities. *Muzeum Auschwitz-Birkenau* receives more than one million ‘Holocaust tourists’ each year, with a record of 1.43 million visitors in 2012.<sup>371</sup> In the first segment of the fourth section we can hear the endless traffic of buses, children crying or running on the green grass of the camp, one of the Polish employees mowing the lawn, couples sitting on benches scattered along the barbed wire where they can smoke a cigarette or exchange kisses by the ‘blocks’, wandering tourists frantically taking pictures of anything and everything, visitors seeking information in one of the little kiosks that sell postcards and sweets, and of course a seemingly endless queue of people waiting to have their picture taken in front of the infamous gates of concentration camp Auschwitz.

We have seen how legends and myths – many of which bear no, or very little relationship to historical *truth* – have nonetheless become ‘historical realities in their own right’. The Heynal Mariacky and its pierced-throated medieval bugler, the reversal of *Schindler’s List* and its factory-museum, Kazimierz and its ‘virtually Jewish’ revival, and the misplaced ghettos of World War II, are all symptomatic examples of a process that mixes up national tensions and pride (or identity), historiography, genuine suffering and fantasised pasts, branding and marketing, with all the

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<sup>371</sup> ‘Auschwitz draws record 1.43 million visitors in 2012’, in *Haaretz*, 4 Jan., 2013.

potentially exploitative abuses<sup>372</sup> that this mishmash would consequently allow. Yet, all these places and characters participate in the telling of history and often remain unchallenged. However, none of the aforementioned sites have played such a fundamental role in the implementation of the Shoah, and later in its (spectacular) representation, than ‘Auschwitz-Birkenau’. The homepage of *Muzeum Auschwitz-Birkenau*’s official website makes it clear:

“All over the world, Auschwitz has become a symbol of terror, genocide, and the Holocaust. It was established by the Germans in 1940, in the suburbs of Oswiecim, a Polish city that was annexed to the Third Reich by the Nazis. Its name was changed to Auschwitz, which also became the name of Konzentrationslager Auschwitz.”<sup>373</sup>

The underlined statement is a *link* to another webpage, which rightly acknowledges that: “Auschwitz was a state institution, administered by the SS and funded by the state treasury, which earned income from labor performed by prisoners hired out to companies.”<sup>374</sup> Most importantly, it hints towards a conceptual misunderstanding that has stirred tensions and outrage amongst Poles, the Jewish community and the press, regarding how Auschwitz was often portrayed. In 2005, during the fifty years commemoration of the liberation of the camp, David Harris, the executive director of the *American Jewish Committee*, issued a statement in reaction to the number of ‘misleading’ news articles that referred to Auschwitz-Birkenau as a ‘Polish camp’:

“We would also like to remind those who are either unaware of the facts or careless in their choice of words, as has been the case with some media outlets, that Auschwitz-Birkenau and the other death camps, including Belzec, Chelmno, Majdanek, Sobibor and Treblinka, were conceived, built and operated by Nazi Germany and its allies. [...] The camps were located in German-occupied Poland, [...] they were most emphatically not ‘Polish camps’.”<sup>375</sup>

Most importantly, this statement highlights a conceptual, ideologically-driven perspective on the geography of the area: namely the fact that when one steps foot onto the ground of the former death camp, one leaves the Polish town of Oswiecim, and Poland all together, to enter ‘Auschwitz-land’. A territory with a German name, technically on German soil, *Muzeum Auschwitz-Birkenau* is indeed

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<sup>372</sup> Financial, historical and political...

<sup>373</sup> [http://en.auschwitz.org/h/index.php?option=com\\_frontpage&Itemid=1](http://en.auschwitz.org/h/index.php?option=com_frontpage&Itemid=1) [Accessed 16/04/2014] (Emphasis in the original)

<sup>374</sup> [http://en.auschwitz.org/h/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=32&Itemid=3](http://en.auschwitz.org/h/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=32&Itemid=3) [Accessed 16/04/2014]

<sup>375</sup> *Statement on Poland and the Auschwitz Commemoration* (2005)

‘no ordinary place’. The ‘Holocaust tourist’ conceptually enters the museum through an invisible looking-glass that instantly relocates him or her to a different place, and a different time; or perhaps a place of ‘no time’, where the stillness of the preserved artefacts has stopped the clock of the infernal killing machine that Auschwitz once was. The magnitude of the Shoah is represented in *grandeur nature* through the architecture of the site, complemented by captioned photographs.

However, as I have mentioned earlier, this symbolic site has been the theatre of many disputes and ideological debates over the years. One of the most famous was perhaps the *Carmelite Convent* controversy. In 1984, a convent was established just outside the fence of the museum. It was originally planned to be “dedicated to the memory of Father Maximilian Kolbe and Edith Stein, who would be two named victims through whom the Church ‘pays homage to each and every victim’.”<sup>376</sup> As Isabel Wollaston indicates, Pope John Paul II spoke of Kolbe’s sacrifice as “a victory through faith and love.”<sup>377</sup> After an altar<sup>378</sup> surmounted by a cross with a barbed-wire crown of thorns was moved in front of the convent it provoked a fierce international dispute over iconography (but surprisingly not over bad taste), and most essentially, over the ownership of Auschwitz.<sup>379</sup> The crosses of Auschwitz were associated with the representation of Polishness because “just like Jesus, Poland was sacrificed to save the world from evil.”<sup>380</sup> Beyond the issue of the representation of Polish victims and other communities who suffered a different but equally hellish and often fatal end in the ‘death camp’, it was a question of narrative. In *The Carmelite Convent at Auschwitz: The Nature and Scope of a Failure* (1994), Bernard Suchocky argues that the Church, trying to silence controversies over its neutral position during the war, was attempting to subsume the ‘specificity of the suffering of Jews’ by disseminating on ‘Auschwitz-land’ a universalised message of salvation through the individual sacrifice of Kolbe, “and ultimately Jesus.”<sup>381</sup> It of course resonates greatly with the reversal operated later in the narrative of

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<sup>376</sup> Cole (2009: 103) Kolbe was a Polish priest who took another inmate’s place to be executed. Stein was born a Jew (and murdered in Auschwitz ‘as a Jew’) but had converted to Catholicism before her death. See: Cole (2009); Suchocky, Dobie (1994); Young, Zuelow (2007)

<sup>377</sup> Pope John Paul II, cited in Wollaston (1994: 25)

<sup>378</sup> Dedicated to Kolbe’s sacrifice.

<sup>379</sup> Cf. Cole (1999)

<sup>380</sup> Young and Zuelow (2007: 126)

<sup>381</sup> Cole (2009: 102)

*Schindler's List*. Reflecting on the instrumentalisation of the Holocaust, Suchecky and Dobie declare:

“Confronted with what is still too often, and with great complacency, called the 'mystery of Auschwitz,' Western thought, since 1945, has developed numerous lines of flight: historization taken to extremes; near-cosmic amplification; trivialization; outright denial; ideological discourse of memory or the rhetoric of 'never again!' And last but not least, the cramming with religious meaning brutally demonstrated in the affair of the Carmelites of Auschwitz, and which, in its Wojtylian variant, manifests itself as a perverse subversion of the real: the catastrophe of Auschwitz transformed into a 'victory won with Christ!' ”<sup>382</sup>

The dispute was political as well as symbolic. According to Young and Zuelow: “the Christian symbol [summoned] historical and contemporary echoes far removed from its religious semantics.”<sup>383</sup> The crosses were seen as a sign of inaction and indifference.<sup>384</sup> In July 1993, the Carmelite convent was removed, and most of the Christian crosses with it. ‘Jewish ashes’ were resurfacing, back on top of ‘Polish blood’.<sup>385</sup> These two controversies – the ‘ideological geography’ of the museum and the ownership of its symbolism and memorials – clearly show how the site has become a *sacred* ground and a very sensitive and complex issue. Furthermore, it demonstrates how the essence of the polemic concerning Auschwitz is often, if not always, over its narrative and its scope (and who owns them). Another important debate that has emerged early in the history of the museum and continues to this day is over the very essence and ethical implications of the existence of an open-air museum on the ground of the former ‘death camp’. As Wood wittingly acknowledges: “Monuments are built to institutionalise, to collectivise memory and guilt. Monuments to human suffering on a vast scale are difficult affairs.”<sup>386</sup>

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<sup>382</sup> Suchecky and Dobie (1994: 160)

<sup>383</sup> Young and Zuelow (2007: 130)

<sup>384</sup> See: *Ibid* p. 127. The Catholic Church has been criticised for its refusal to intervene and to alert the public opinion when, from 1941 onwards, the crimes of the Nazi and Fascist regimes became undeniably apparent.

<sup>385</sup> See: Young and Zuelow (2007)

<sup>386</sup> Wood (2000: 45-46)

### 3.4.1 Perspectives on Visiting *Muzeum Auschwitz-Birkenau* and the Touristic Noise

As I have mentioned earlier, my first visit to the museum was a rather jarring experience. I will even admit that I was shamefully disappointed at first. It simply was not what I expected. Like most children in the Western World, I had learnt about the Holocaust at school and in films. I later became aware that, at least in France, it was no longer right to use that term but that ‘Shoah’, the Hebrew word for ‘Holocaust’ was now preferred. For the same reason that Auschwitz was in Germany, not in Poland, the Nazi genocide was to be called ‘Shoah’. Since the late 1990s, for personal reasons but also out of sheer curiosity, I had been interested in discovering more about that part of history and it became a fascination for a while. By the time I arrived at *Muzeum Auschwitz-Birkenau*, I already knew a little about its architecture, parts of its history and the estimated number of Jews and other prisoners who had been murdered. When I got off the bus, my expectations were certainly high. I was silent, emotionally charged, and anxious. In his 1999 seminal book, Tim Cole provides a poignant yet perhaps unsettling description of a tourist’s inner speech upon arrival:

“[We] stepped from the bus in turn and walked quietly down the track towards ‘Auschwitz’. We were tourists of guilt and righteousness: guilt at an almost pornographic sense of expectancy of the voyeurism ahead. And yet guilt tempered by a sense of righteousness at choosing to come to this place. Those who talked did so in hushed tones. Most just looked around, trying to work out what was the former concentration camp Auschwitz [...]”<sup>387</sup>

Cole’s description partly corresponds to the way I felt, with perhaps the exception of one crucial detail: the sound. In the first segment of the fourth section of *Footsteps in the Wind* we can hear a montage of field recordings taken in the car park and by the entrance. Groups of people were walking towards the museum. The remainder of the segment is constituted of field recordings made inside the camp. The initial thing that shocked me when I first experienced *Muzeum Auschwitz-Birkenau* was the general sound level of the place. In 2007, during the second recording, the car park was so loud that some of my takes ended up completely saturated and unusable. Most of the recordings featured in the work were carried out near the entrance (i.e. not directly in the car park) and even then we can still hear the roaring sound of the rows of idling buses.

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<sup>387</sup> Cole (1999: 97)

Most remarkably, practically no one was speaking in ‘hushed tones’. Instead, as shown in the recording, the ‘Holocaust tourists’ were far from silent. On the contrary they expressed themselves quite openly and loudly. Some were trying to jump the queue. Some, wandering on the lawn of the museum, were pushing each other to get past and be the first to reach the barracks on the other side. On the same lawn, children were enjoying themselves accompanied by the constant noise of cameras and plastic cups being crushed. The overall sound and the experience felt rather distasteful. Did they know that this lawn was once frozen mud? Did they know that this lawn used to be a mass grave and that the bodies are still there, underneath? Perhaps they did. “Birkenau is a cemetery, but not a cemetery where you can conduct funerals.”<sup>388</sup> In the recently built and high-tech Schindler museum, tourists are invited to trample on the Nazi swastika of the decorated floor, in Auschwitz they can trample on a graveyard without tombs. In the afternoon, one of the bins had caught fire because of a discarded cigarette. Plastic wrappings and leaflets were burning, producing a dense smoke that could be seen from afar. Some were unsuccessfully trying to douse the flames with their sodas. Others around them were not even paying attention, simply gazing at the site.

Thus the analogy is terrifying, I have to admit that the sonic environment of *Muzeum Auschwitz-Birkenau* sounded like a shopping centre, or perhaps a theme-park – at least, a ‘non-place’. In 1995, anthropologist Mark Augé commented upon the effects of what he called ‘supermodernity’ on the emergence of non-places such as commercial centres and airport departure lounges:

“A person entering the space of a non-place is relieved of his usual determinant. [...] Subjected to a gentle form of possession, to which he surrenders himself with more or less talent or conviction, he tastes for a while – like anyone who is possessed – the passive joys of identity-loss [...]. The only face to be seen, the only voice to be heard, in the silent dialogue he holds with the landscape-text addressed to him along with others, are his own: the face and voice of a solitude made all the more baffling by the fact that it echoes millions of others.”<sup>389</sup>

These patterns of behaviour, as captured in the recordings, are nonetheless not that surprising once one realises that Auschwitz is essentially an open-air museum. A cultural space for holiday

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<sup>388</sup> Ryback (1993) in Cole (1999: 119)

<sup>389</sup> Augé (1995: 103)

makers. Tourists therefore behave accordingly. If the Shoah, particularly in its Hollywoodian incarnation, is arguably ‘sacred for all’, the museum itself is only sacred in the mind of some, it is a recreational space for everyone else. It can of course be both at the same time. This is one of the most potently problematic issues of Auschwitz as a tourist attraction. The ‘supermodernity-driven’ organisation of ‘Auschwitz-land’ – with its glass display cabinets showing huge piles of shoes, of women’s hair, of suitcases, its “movie theatre, a book shop, a cafeteria [and] exhibition halls in old barrack buildings”<sup>390</sup> – is a superficial and partly fictional construct. It “makes the old (history) into a specific spectacle, as it does with all exoticism and all local particularity. [...] In the non-places of supermodernity, there is always a specific position [...] for ‘curiosities’ presented as such, [...] but they play no part in any synthesis, they are not integrated with anything; they simply bear witness.”<sup>391</sup> The permanent artefacts exhibited at Auschwitz have been the subject of much polemic, and Cole ascertains that: “an element of voyeurism is central to ‘Holocaust tourism’. [...] By visiting the sites of death we are afforded a degree of titillation, albeit titillation camouflaged by more ‘worthy’ reasons for visiting.”<sup>392</sup> Challenging the need for a memorial in Auschwitz, William Miles rightly asks: “Why construct a monument at a former extermination camp? Is not the historical site itself a monument?”<sup>393</sup> In 1961, Birkenau survivor Primo Levi returned to the camp for the first time since the end of the war. In an appendix added in 1976 to a school edition of *If this is a man*, Levi recalls how he already felt uneasy about the very existence of the museum on Auschwitz’s ground. He also commented upon the voyeuristic displays:

“The visit to the Main Camp did not leave a big impression on me. The Polish government has transformed it into some sort of national monument: the barracks have been cleaned up and repainted, trees have been planted, and flowerbeds installed. There is a museum where appalling vestiges are being exhibited: Tons of human hair, [...] hair combs, shaving brushes, dolls, children's shoes; but all this stays a museum, something petrified, reorganised and artificial. In reality the whole camp gave me the impression of being a museum.”<sup>394</sup>

Crucially, Levi notes that the site has been dramatically transformed, and very little remains. It therefore calls for the uneasy question of whether the site of Auschwitz-Birkenau, the historical

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<sup>390</sup> Cole (1999: 97)

<sup>391</sup> Augé (1995: 110-111)

<sup>392</sup> Cole (1999: 114)

<sup>393</sup> Miles (2002: 1175)

<sup>394</sup> Levi (1976: 291-292) Translated from the French by the author.

‘death camp’ where approximately 1.2 million people were murdered<sup>395</sup>, even exists anymore. *Muzeum Auschwitz-Birkenau* has perhaps completely subsumed it. Yet, we are sold Auschwitz as the ‘authentic’ *par excellence*, a first-hand experience of the horrors of the Shoah. It is not surprising then that *revisionists* and *negationists* such as Robert Faurisson and David Irvin<sup>396</sup> have chosen the reconstructed crematoriums<sup>397</sup> and the repainted barracks<sup>398</sup> of ‘Auschwitz-land’ as their primary source of evidence for Holocaust denial. For example, Deborah Lipstadt (1994) explains that Irvin and Faurisson spent “three days in Auschwitz/Birkenau [...] illegally collecting bricks and cement fragments [and] called them ‘forensic samples’ from a number of buildings, including those associated with the killing process.”<sup>399</sup> After chemical analysis they concluded that: “there had never been homicidal gassings at any of these sites.”<sup>400</sup> The bricks they sampled were not originals, the fallacious conclusion was easy, and almost inevitable. Indeed, material was added on top of the ruins during the process of restoration: “The crematorium was a ‘reconstruction’, which is a representation of a situation that had existed earlier that had disappeared. [...] [On the basis of survivors’ descriptions], two of the three furnaces were built using original parts.”<sup>401</sup> Was the approximative reconstruction really necessary?

Beyond the problematic implications of the ‘recreated’ buildings associated with the Nazi genocide and the voyeurism involved in the sightseeing of the museum’s ‘pornographic’ yet macabre displays<sup>402</sup>, James Young questions what the ‘Holocaust tourists’ can *really* take away from these relics:

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<sup>395</sup> Overall number of people killed in Auschwitz by ethnic origin and category of deportees: Jews 1,000,000; Poles 70-75,000; Gypsies 20,000; Soviet POWs 14,000; Others 12,000; Total: ~ 1,100,000. Cf. *Auschwitz-Birkenau Memorial and Museum*, official website. Another source provides a different figure of 1.3 million. Cf. Wellers (1983) I have therefore used the figure 1.2 million as a loose approximation.

<sup>396</sup> Cf. Lipstadt (1994)

<sup>397</sup> Some of them, along with gas chambers, reconstructed in a different location for practical reasons. Cf. Van Pelt (2002)

<sup>398</sup> Many of them are fitted with red carpets, double-glazing, neon lights, etc... Even a miniature wooden train where children can go on ‘the ride of deportees’.

<sup>399</sup> Lipstadt (1994: 161)

<sup>400</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>401</sup> Van Pelt (2002: 121)

<sup>402</sup> Cf. Cole (1999)

“What has the viewer learned about a group of artefacts, about the history they represent? On exiting the museum, how do visitors grasp their own lives and surroundings anew in the light of a memorialised past? [...] What precisely does the sight of concentration camp artefacts awaken in viewers? Historical knowledge? A sense of evidence? Revulsion, grief, pity, fear? That visitors respond more directly to objects than to verbalised concepts is clear. But beyond affect, what does our knowledge of these objects – a bent spoon, children’s shoes, crusty old striped uniforms – have to do with our knowledge of historical events?”<sup>403</sup>

The petrified relics and other exhibits might not be relevant for our understanding of history. These piles and photographs might be nothing but the logical precursors of the Hollywoodian Holocaust representation. Emotions, affects, and particularly the devious mixture of guilt and absolution through the summoning of binary archetypes, have consistently been the preferred mode of communication when addressing the Nazi genocide. It is a shortcut to thinking and again, sadly, financially more sustainable.<sup>404</sup> It constitutes the perfect alibi in protecting us from reassessing ourselves. The spectacular magnitude of the event represented and the constantly hammering reminder of our ‘impossible grasping’ of the Shoah, ensure that Arendt’s philosophical legacy remains silent.<sup>405</sup> On the other hand, the motivations of the ‘Holocaust tourist’ is an unresolved issue. After all one might not necessarily come to *Muzeum Auschwitz-Birkenau* with the intension to learn or to be challenged – or indeed to ‘change the world’. The burgeoning field of dark tourism has emerged, in part, out of these questionings.

Dark tourism “entails the recreational visitation to ‘sites associated with death, disaster, and depravity’.”<sup>406</sup> Commenting on the nature of Auschwitz museum as an educational resource as well as an historically-charged environment, Miles stresses the fact that, compared to the giant multi-media complex of the Holocaust museum in Washington DC – offering diverse high-tech immersive

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<sup>403</sup> Young (1994: 127-132)

<sup>404</sup> Cf. Finkelstein (2003)

<sup>405</sup> In *Eichmann in Jerusalem* (1963) Hannah Arendt theorised that the Holocaust was symptomatic of a notion she called ‘the banality of evil’. It meant that the reasons atrocities had been committed were based on “no theory or doctrine but something quite factual, the phenomenon of evil deeds, committed on a gigantic scale, which could not be traced to any particularity of wickedness, pathology, or ideological conviction in the doer, whose only personal distinction was a perhaps extraordinary shallowness. However monstrous the deeds were, the doer was neither monstrous nor demonic.” (Novick, 2000: 136) It is in blatant opposition with the Hollywoodian Holocaust narrative where the binary opposition (good vs evil) dominates.

<sup>406</sup> Miles (2002: 1175)

attractions<sup>407</sup> – *Muzeum Auschwitz-Birkenau* still lacks pedagogical content: “In chillingly incarnating the locus of death, however, Oświęcim does not provide the kind of historical contextualization that the Washington museum does.”<sup>408</sup> The American museum receives around two million visitors each year. It is “the largest attendance figures in history for a national museum.”<sup>409</sup> The *Yad Vashem* in Israel has not much to envy in its American counterpart with its 600,000 visitors per year on average. Its giant domes, covered with victims’ photographic portraits overlooking vast series of glass cabinets in which original administrative documents, lists of names, but also maps and technical plans, are presented in a dramatic fashion as if the reality of the Shoah was yet to be proven. It is then easy to see why it was so urgent to build a similar product in Schindler’s Factory.

The Holocaust memorial in Berlin, Washington’s museum, *Yad Vashem*, *Schindler’s List*, Schindler’s Factory-museum, Anne Frank, Kazimierz and more, are all – conceptually if not ideologically – extensions of the original museum in Auschwitz-Birkenau. Consequently, the aura of the ‘Hollywoodian Holocaust’ has reached such a magnitude that it has become biased, untouchable, often inauthentic and spectacularly petrified; and its sad financial exploitation is indeed more than unsettling. In an attempt to propose a solution to end the nefast implications of what he calls the ‘Holocaust Industry’, Norman Finkelstein suggests:

“In studying the Nazi holocaust we can learn much not just about ‘the Germans’ or ‘the Gentiles’ but about all of us. Yet I think that to do so, to truly *learn* from the Nazi holocaust, its physical dimension must be reduced and its moral dimension expanded. Too many public and private resources have been invested in memorializing the Nazi genocide.”<sup>410</sup>

The overload of representations has certainly helped to corrupt our understanding of the Shoah. The Nazi genocide has been instrumentalised by some and too often used as a shield against self-

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<sup>407</sup> Cf. Cole (1999); Finkelstein (2003)

<sup>408</sup> *Ibid* p. 1176

<sup>409</sup> Flanzbaum (1999: 96)

<sup>410</sup> Finkelstein (2003: 8)

questioning, moral responsibility, ethical behaviour and fairness.<sup>411</sup> As Cole (1999), Finkelstein (2003) and Novick (2000)<sup>412</sup> have demonstrated, the Holocaust – because it has become an indeterminate series of misleading and conflicting narratives and locations, and because its spectacle and its physical incarnations have been inflated beyond reason – is in fierce danger of losing its truthful place in history and its potential as a force for wisdom in our societies.

### 3.4.2 The Homonymic Sound of Crema I at *Muzeum Auschwitz-Birkenau*

Krema I, II, and III<sup>413</sup> were originally situated in Birkenau and destroyed by the Nazis before they fled in January 1945. A replica of Crematorium I, erected on the site of ‘Auschwitz I’ in 1948<sup>414</sup>, is on display in one of the museum buildings. “The climax of the museum tour [...] was rebuilt as part of the broader transformation of the original Auschwitz concentration camp into a site of memory.”<sup>415</sup> As Van Pelt and Dwork acknowledge:

“When Auschwitz was transformed into a museum after the war, the decision was taken to concentrate the history of the whole complex into one of its component parts. The infamous crematoria where the mass murders had taken place lay in ruins in Birkenau, two miles away. The committee felt that a crematorium was required at the end of the memorial journey, and ‘Crematorium I’ was reconstructed to speak for the history of the incinerators at Birkenau.”<sup>416</sup>

However, for the ‘Holocaust tourist’, who would not have necessarily studied the architectural details of the original death camp, the displacement of the building, even if historically accurate in its form and content, was never made explicit: “There are no signs to explain these restitutions, they

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<sup>411</sup> Cf. Cole (1999); Finkelstein (2000); Novick (2000); Bernstein (1994) for a more in-depth discussion about how the Holocaust has been instrumentalised by the US and the State of Israel to justify both their foreign and internal policies.

<sup>412</sup> “To understand something historically is to be aware of its complexity, to have sufficient detachment to see it from multiple perspectives, to accept the ambiguities, including moral ambiguities, of protagonists' motives and behavior. Collective memory simplifies; sees events from a single, committed perspective; is impatient with ambiguities of any kind; reduces events to mythic archetypes.” (Novick, 2000: 4)

<sup>413</sup> Original German names for the crematoria.

<sup>414</sup> Date when the museum was first constructed.

<sup>415</sup> Cole (2013: 224)

<sup>416</sup> Dwork and Van Pelt (2006: 363)

were not marked at the time, and the guides remain silent about it when they take visitors through this building that is presumed by the tourist to be the place where it happened.”<sup>417</sup>

The last segment of *Footsteps in the Wind* features a montage of field recordings taken inside Crematorium I. At the end of the preceding segment of the fourth section, I have used a cut-out effect<sup>418</sup> to enhance the contrast between the swarming sound of the open-air space of Auschwitz and the solemn quietness of Krema I. The listener is transported suddenly to the perimeter of the building, then slowly enters the room. The first field recording was carried out near the barbed-wire fence at night, when the museum was closed. I was pointing the microphone towards the crematorium. A slow crossfade then introduces a morning recording of the inside of the room. During this recording, only a few people and myself were in the building. Contrary to the rest of the museum, this was a place where the sound level somehow reflected the disturbing and intensely macabre reality of the horror depicted. At least, that is how it felt at first. During that segment, we can hear the slow footsteps of seemingly disoriented tourists. Leaning against the wall, an elderly woman was weeping. The ovens stood in the centre of the room. For a moment, it made me forget the grotesque piles of hair and shoes. I knew the walls had been reconstructed, but the vision, the details of this machine, the blackness of its metal frame and the diabolically precise mechanism that would facilitate the sliding of a body on one side, and the collection of its ashes on the other, froze my blood, like so many before me.

The last segment of *Footsteps in the Wind* is a single take recorded in the afternoon when I returned to the crematorium one last time. It begins inside the room and ends a few meters away from the building. On my second visit I decided to get closer to the ovens and I began to hear a sound that immediately confused and terrified me. A low rumble seemed to be emanating from of the artefact itself. It was not very loud but it could be clearly perceived throughout the space. It was not a sonic hallucination. I could hear a sound that resembled both pressured gas and the noise of cremating bodies. I could not help but think about the dozens of testimonies I had read about the crematoriums of Auschwitz-Birkenau:

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<sup>417</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>418</sup> Cf. Augoyard and Torgues (2005: 29)

“Fire and smoke were everywhere. I had to clean the gas chambers and put the bodies in the crematoria, or burn them outside when the extermination was in full swing and the crematoria were not enough ... we then had to crush the bones into powder and throw it in the river.”<sup>419</sup>

On hearing this sound, I switched my recording equipment on again and set out to look for its source. Initially, I thought that someone might have placed a sound device inside the oven’s cavity. Perhaps a cruel joke? Or maybe another one of these immersive multi-sensory installations, designed to enhance the visitors’ experience? Could this be? After all, this would not have been the first time that sound was used for a Holocaust memorial:

“[The] first symbols used at sites of persecution and genocide were taken from iconic features of the Nazi camps: barbed wire and fence posts, smokestacks, and the colored triangle badges that were used to categorize prisoners. Later, more specifically Holocaust-related icons of deportation, such as railroad cars and tracks, and even the sounds of trains, were added to the repertoire of camp memorials.”<sup>420</sup>

I then realised that it was not the case and that the noise was in reality coming from outside. As I walked out of Crematorium I, I found the sound source I was looking for: a hot dog van was parked a few meters away from the building. The low rumble was coming from its heating system, and the ‘cremating’ sonic texture: from the sausage grill. The shocking irony was inescapable. That confusing, tasteless, insanely insensitive juxtaposition was simply another expression of the touristic noise of *Muzeum Auschwitz-Birkenau*. The sound-work ends with the low rumble getting louder, more intense and progressively saturated as the microphone came closer to the van.

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<sup>419</sup> Henryk Mandelbaum *I thought I was in hell*: [http://www.thestar.com/news/2008/06/21/i\\_thought\\_i\\_was\\_in\\_hell.html](http://www.thestar.com/news/2008/06/21/i_thought_i_was_in_hell.html) [Accessed 30/07/2014]

<sup>420</sup> Marcuse (2010: 57)

### 3.4.3 Questionings and *Thanatophonophilia*

“So this story will not finish with some tomb to be visited in pious memory. For the smoke that rises from crematoria obeys physical laws like any other: the particles come together and disperse according to the wind, which propels them. The only pilgrimage, dear reader, would be to look sadly at a stormy sky now and then.” André Schwarz-Bart, *The Last of the Just* (1960)<sup>421</sup>

The opening segment of *Footsteps in the Wind* that I briefly mentioned at the beginning of this chapter is a short, unedited field recording carried out on the site of the *Ofiar Holocaustu*, in Kazimierz, in January 2007. Standing between two benches, the monument is formed of a large stone with an inscription written in Polish and Hebrew. It is situated close to the old Jewish cemetery. On that quiet day, the square was totally empty. After a moment, two teenagers, who were probably intrigued by my equipment and the fact that I was recording a ‘stone’, approached and sat on one of the benches. They then began to spit on the memorial as a provocation. At the time, I was shocked. The monument most certainly did not mean much to them. However, I have now come to understand why.

The conservation and representation of the past is a problematic and unresolved issue. Forgetfulness is a process that sometimes seems inevitable. For André Schwarz-Bart, the memorialisation of the Shoah is a metaphysic nonsense and Marcus Wood subsequently ascertains that, faced with the impossibility of an accurate narrative or representation, a memory of the Holocaust is only to be found in the observation of the world around us:

“The memory of the holocaust cannot be contained within art or public building. The burning bodies become smoke, the smoke disperses into the air, and this is fact. But this fact is expanded into an ocean of mourning which is elemental – the elements in mourning are a memorial beyond human endeavour. Smoke and clouds look similar, and consequently every stormy sky carries within it the association of mass cremation.”<sup>422</sup>

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<sup>421</sup> As quoted in Young (1993: 1)

<sup>422</sup> Wood (2000: 45)

Inauthenticities sold as authentic in museums and elsewhere, reconstructions, artefacts, and seemingly pointless memorials, might have already dispersed the object they are supposed to preserve.<sup>423</sup> If the Shoah has left any remains, they cannot be museified, they cannot be exhibited, for ‘absence’ is not an object.

Are there any remains at all or is it just diffused smoke? According to W. G. Sebald: “Memory logically consists almost inevitably in the recall of past torments”<sup>424</sup>. Inner pain and self-questioning would thereby constitute the only wisdom to be gained from the memory of the Shoah. As Nietzsche writes in *Genealogy of Morality* (1968): “There is nothing more terrible and mysterious in the whole prehistory of mankind than our mnemonic technique. We burn something into the mind so that it will remain in the memory; only what still hurts will be retained.”<sup>425</sup> Do we only remember what hurts, what is absent, in need of discovery, not what is *here and now*? Stone monuments and museums are all static mnemonic structures. Perhaps memorials are to memory what souvenirs are to experiences, mutually exclusive. Because if there is something to be remembered, it must have faded away first and must perhaps remain so for a memory to be a memory. Thereafter only the irreversible presence of a ‘tangible absence’ – a void without the possibility of reconstruction – might constitute a memorable phenomenon, a trace. As Sebald, drawing on Kant and Nietzsche, puts it: “These acts of mutilation and amputation can be interpreted as pendants to the categorical imperative of memory. Their constant presence ensures the suspension of that active forgetting which Nietzsche [...] called the doorkeeper of mental peace and order.”<sup>426</sup> Remembering might therefore induce more confusion and more suffering. The emergence of monuments has often been explained by the notion of collective moral duty, as an inevitable

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<sup>423</sup> Recounting her experience visiting ‘Virtually Jewish’ places in Berlin in the company of Iris Weiss, Francisca Kellett recounts two examples that illustrate the issue of over-memorialisation and stereotypical representations of Jewishness: “She shows me the artwork Missing House by Christian Boltanski, a bombed shell of a house with names of its former occupants painted on signs. ‘I hear other guides telling tourists they are all names of Jews who were deported - which isn’t true.’ Just four of the names belonged to Jewish inhabitants. She takes me around the same area I saw with Gaby, but points out the less cheery side of things - such as signs of recently scrubbed-off anti-Semitic graffiti on the old synagogue memorial, or the police guards by the Jewish school. [...] I decide to visit one final site - Peter Eisenman’s vast Holocaust Memorial. It’s a controversial structure, which Iris told me “was neither wanted nor needed by Jews”. The Germans, it would seem, did need it, and it took 10 years of controversy and cost €27.8 million to build.” (Kellett, 2005)

<sup>424</sup> Sebald (2003: 188)

<sup>425</sup> Nietzsche (1968: 311)

<sup>426</sup> Sebald (2003: 187)

consequence of loss and suffering. As Paul Ricoeur suggests, should we be suspicious when we speak of a duty of memory?

“Is it possible, [Paul Ricoeur] asked, to claim *Tu te souviendras* (“You will remember”) – i.e., to use the verb “to remember” in the future tense – whereas its content relates to the past? Is it appropriate to claim *Tu dois te rappeler* (“You ought to remember”) – to create for the verb an imperative form – when it is the very nature of memory to spontaneously develop, and then merely emerge as an affection, a *pathos*? According to Ricoeur, many other questions arise, as soon as one begins to reflect more carefully upon the expression *devoir de mémoire*. The call for remembrance might appear as a demand made upon memory to by-pass the historian’s work. [...] The “duty of memory” might thereby lead not just to an optimal use, but also to the worst possible misuse of memory.”<sup>427</sup>

For Ricoeur, more than the duty of memory we need a *travail de mémoire*, a ‘work of remembering’ or a ‘memory at work’; more complex, more fragile and transient, linguistic as well as non-verbal. *Footsteps in the Wind* is partly an attempt to capture these moments of ‘absence’ as well as possible inconsistencies in the perceived sonic environment of the places in question. The composition is also, I hope, an invitation to ‘remembering’, and not ‘memorialising’. Nothing is fixed and remembering is a volatile, unstable processing, reinvented each time. However, the Holocaust, despite its prominent position as the ‘mother of all memorialised atrocities’, is far from being the only over-commemorated historical event. Reacting to the immobility of many with regards to the recent political climate, and angered by our obsessive focus on the adorning of graves and memorials – to the detriment of urgently needed diplomatic action – writer and journalist Robert Fisk comments on the commemorations of the centenary of World War I:

“Let them die now. Let the memorials gather grass and the commemorations be over. I wish all those dead men could lose their eternal youth beneath those ever-fresh graves, now that their natural lifespan has ticked past the final Zero Hour, and that the kind old sun would finally go down and spare them another morning, that they may now grow old as we grow old. Close down the annual production line of replacement gravestones. So at least we can get on with the business at hand. [...] Men die. Machines can be wounded. History goes on forever.”<sup>428</sup>

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<sup>427</sup> Bienenstock (2004: 1)

<sup>428</sup> Fisk (2014)

Many of these questions have been with me from the beginning of the project. I did not know what I was going to find on the sites I decided to record. I knew some of the legends, the myths. I had a map and some local history. I had gathered scant clues about my own heritage and all these elements have indeed informed the way I explored Kazimierz and later Auschwitz and Gross-Rosen. I knew I was only going to record what I could find, at least for the composition of *Footsteps in the Wind*. However, was I in danger of exploiting the macabre? Most importantly was I going to record the macabre and enjoy it? Were listeners going to enjoy it as well? The tension between the overwhelming desire of capturing and disseminating a memory in the form of tangible absence<sup>429</sup>, and the potential exploitation and recreational use of the sound of death and the macabre, is a notion I came to call *thanatophonophilia*<sup>430</sup>. Listening to the touristic noise of ‘Auschwitz-land’, particularly the confusing anamnesis effect of the low rumble recorded inside the crematorium, might cause a thanatophonophilic experience. In other words, one might feel a sense of disgust and repulsion while at the same time taking pleasure in the aesthetic experience of the sound texture.

In his 1982 novel, Israel Charny described his reaction while reading an intense murder mystery and the arousal he felt as the killings were unfolding: “One murderous incident follows another [...] my excitement mounts [...] it is almost a sexual feeling.”<sup>431</sup> Soon, the process of identification operated and he was no longer a spectator: “I flow into the next account of killing and become one with the murderer. [...] I am increasingly excited, and it is almost as if I am experiencing myself as one of the killers.”<sup>432</sup> Indeed, the jubilation and excitement might be greatly enhanced when the atrocities are labelled ‘authentic’. In October 1995, the magazine *Weekly World News* published a sensational article reporting the release of a VHS tape featuring several videos of ‘State-sanctioned executions’: “The documentary tape, *Executions* contains graphic footage of real – not simulated – deaths by beheading, hanging, firing squad, electrocution and gas chamber.”<sup>433</sup> The journalist later reports that despite the outrage of anti-death penalty campaigners, “financial

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<sup>429</sup> i.e. the absence of sonic remains.

<sup>430</sup> From *Thanatos*: ‘death’; *Phono*: ‘sound’, ‘voice’ and *Philia*: ‘friendship’, ‘appetite or liking for’. This notion is derived from Drever’s notions of ‘Topophonophilia’ and ‘Topophonophobia’. Cf. Drever (2007)

<sup>431</sup> Charny (1982: 28)

<sup>432</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>433</sup> *World News* (10 October 1995: 31)

analysts expect the shocking video to sell like hotcakes on this side of the Atlantic.”<sup>434</sup> In *Lynching and Spectacle* (2009), Amy Wood explains what it meant for white Americans to perform and witness sadistic acts of torture. Most importantly, Wood stresses the fact that, as well as being a defining characteristic of ‘White Supremacist’ culture, the recordings of such atrocities were much sought after, all over America. They were “intended to seduce viewers by offering the sadistic thrill of watching another’s violent death and satisfying a perverse curiosity. [...] They were extensions of the spectacle created when showmen hawked the photographs and sounds of Henry Smith’s 1893 lynching in Paris, Texas.”<sup>435</sup>

The low rumble of the crematorium in *Footsteps the Wind* was of course never recorded with the intention of evoking the despicable acts of mass murder and cremations that occurred in Auschwitz-Birkenau, but rather to expose the arguably unfortunate and disgraceful ‘collision of meanings’ (i.e. this homonymic sound of the hot dog van seeming to come from the *krema*) that occurred because of the maddening noises of tourism in *Muzeum Auschwitz-Birkenau*. Nonetheless, the risk of sonic voyeurism over the macabre – or thanatophonophilia – is ever present.

### 3.5 Conclusion: A Brief Reflection on the Entropy of Museums

“We buttress our identities upon such bastions, but if what they defended were not threatened, there would be no need to build them. Conversely, if the memories that they enclosed were to be set free they would be useless; if history did not besiege memory, reforming and transforming it, penetrating and petrifying it, there would be no *lieux de mémoire*. Indeed, it is this very push and pull that produces *lieux de mémoire* – moments of history torn away from the movement of history, then returned; no longer quite life, not yet death, like shells on the shore when the sea of living memory has receded.” Pierre Nora, *Les Lieux de Mémoire* (1989: 12)

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<sup>434</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>435</sup> Wood (2009: 115)

As is the case for most field work, many of the issues that I have discussed in this chapter greatly surpass the scope of the sound-work on which they are based. Nevertheless, I hope to have shown how phonographic methods can perhaps help reveal not only that a study of acoustic identities within the soundscape can potentially challenge the way in which we think about the meaning of historically-charged places, but also how it might help uncover the ethical discrepancies that one would not necessarily perceive at first sight. Man-made environments, and particularly curated spaces such as museums and theme-parks, are often well designed in terms of visual display. At least in theory, the dangers of problematic ethical paradoxes, contradictions and mixed-messages are relatively easily identified and remediated. In other words, it might *be* wrong but it *looks* right. It is then easy for us to be comforted by ignorance through oversight. Arguably, this often leads to the dysfunctional ways in which we interact with these spaces and relate to each other. These environments are sites we give meaning to – and identify with – whether because we inhabit them, or, just like Auschwitz, Kazimierz, St. Mary’s Basilica, and other symbolic places of human heritage, because we use them to learn about ourselves and our place in the world, to feel a connection with a conceptual sameness or otherness, to encounter the past and present, and even sometimes to give meaning to our life:

“Semantics have always been an integral part of museums. Just as the act of collecting objects into a singular physical site defines museums today and through history, so too does the ongoing act of making meaning with and between these objects. [...] Traditionally, museums bring fragments of society’s knowledge and experience into a highly controlled environment, a closed system, within which order can then be found – or contrived.”<sup>436</sup>

On the other hand, the soundscape of these places is too often left unresolved, or simply ignored by architects and curators who design their organisation and intended function. Therefore phonographic methods can help reveal the fact that it *looks* right but it *sounds* wrong. With *Footsteps in the Wind*, I hope to at least stir a debate. Despite the ‘highly controlled’ (yet often partially fictional or inaccurate) visual display of *Muzeum Auschwitz-Birkenau* and the Old Jewish District, they are places where semantic dissonance often occurs and remains problematic. These historically-charged environments should not be ‘exploited’, stand still and be instrumentalised, for they are places of memory and identity. In a 2009 article written in reaction to a seemingly ‘careless remark’ by British comedian Steven Fry who seemed “to think that Auschwitz was in wartime

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<sup>436</sup> Parry (2008)

Poland and was, in some way, connected to ‘rightwing Catholicism’ [thus upsetting the Poles]”<sup>437</sup>, David Cesarani emphasised the crucial role that historical narratives play in the construction of identities, as well as their political impact on international relations, and explained:

“Versions of the past remain central to a country's national identity and how its citizens think about themselves. The way that history, especially national history, is told and taught is a matter of public policy, and hence inevitably a political issue. It can even intrude into international relations, as demonstrated by the response of much of the international community to Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's proclivity for denying that millions of Jews were systematically murdered by the Germans and their allies between 1939 and 1945. [...] They exemplify the time lag between scholarship that demolishes historical myths and the more slowly shifting public understanding of the past.”<sup>438</sup>

These elements – the tension between the telling (and the representations) of history and identity, as well as their diverse forms of commodification – are indeed some of the issues that I have attempted to tackle in the making of *Footsteps in the Wind*. At a time where various conflicts and the aftermath of another global economic crisis has led to the resurfacing of fierce communitarian tensions, xenophobia, and nationalism, continuing to address (and perhaps help to demolish) historical myths feels to me as relevant a task as ever.

As I will discuss further in Chapters IV and V, memories, historical narratives and identities are always in movement. Memory, history and identity resist the process of conservation and stillness. Therefore museums are often places where one can observe the unfolding of their destruction, their dissipation, in favour of chaos. This is what I call the ‘entropy of museums’. This might lead us to wonder whether it is therefore time for *Muzeum Auschwitz-Birkenau* and its voyeuristic display to cease to function as a tourist attraction, so that instead the former death camp finally finds its rightful place in history and in the collective consciousness; and that its victims may be remembered, not memorialised, and perhaps at last rest in peace.<sup>439</sup>

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<sup>437</sup> Cesarini, ‘Stephen Fry's Auschwitz blunder: A few careless remarks about Poland show that history is too serious a matter to be left to comedians and politicians’, in *The Guardian*, 12 Oct., 2009.

<sup>438</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>439</sup> Please see Appendix 1, pp. 212 - 222, for a discussion on the other two works made as part of this project.

## Chapter IV

### Lands and Genotypes (*Anseriformes Twins*):

#### Schizo-narratives, Sound Subjects and the Territory of Disembodied Voices

“Il s'agit d'arriver à l'inconnu par le dérèglement de tous les sens. [...] Ce n'est pas du tout ma faute. C'est faux de dire: je pense; on devrait dire: On me pense. [...] Je est un autre. Tant pis pour le bois qui se trouve violon [...]” Arthur Rimbaud, letter to Georges Izambard (13 May 1871)<sup>440</sup>

Throughout the making of *Padstow Cosmesis* and *Footsteps in the Wind*, and in the further reflections developed in the two previous chapters of this dissertation, I have been directly and indirectly tackling the complex and unresolved issues of memory and identity, particularly in relation to historical narratives and/or sociopolitical tensions (and agendas). I have attempted to address these issues both as *paregon* (i.e. outside the ‘work’) and through the utilisation of disembodied voices (fragments of interviews) and field recordings within the soundscape compositions themselves.

In parallel to the two aforementioned sound-works, I have been working on another project entitled *Lands and Genotypes* in which I have been composing a series of discreet yet related multi-channel soundscape studies centred on a particular individual rather than places or communities. In other words, through interviews and field recordings, I have been attempting to capture fragments of the *personal* or *intimate* soundscape of a specific person (or related persons): a *sound subject*. This notion will be discussed further later in this chapter. From the *Lands and Genotypes* project, four pieces are submitted as part of my portfolio: *Naiara & Firat* (2006); *Diary of a Malfunctioning Leg* (2009-14); *Anseriformes Twins* (2007-09); and *The Golem of Hereford* (2009-12)<sup>441</sup>. All these works rely primarily on recorded interviews, and the use of (disembodied, schizophonic) spoken

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<sup>440</sup> Eng. Trans. “It is a question of attaining the unknown through the disordering of all the senses. [...] It is not at all my fault. It is wrong to say: I think; one ought to say: I am being thought. [...] I is another. Too bad for the piece of wood who considers itself to be a violin...” [my translation]

<sup>441</sup> Discussed in Chapter V.

voices plays a central role in the articulation and narrative of the compositions. In this chapter, for the purpose of brevity, I will only examine and contextualise one of these works: *Anseriformes Twins*, since while constituting a well-suited example that illustrates the different techniques and notions I am about to discuss, it is also partly thematically related to *Footsteps in the Wind* and the *Before the End of Time* project.

This chapter begins with a brief examination of three pieces that have broadly influenced (or resonate with) the aesthetic of the various pieces I have composed as part of *Lands and Genotypes*; followed by a discussion about the source material and the composition techniques used in *Anseriformes Twins*. In the last section of this chapter, I will introduce and discuss a number of conceptual considerations that have arisen both during the making of the sound-work and *a posteriori*, which will help to further address issues of narrative, identity and memory.

#### 4.1 *Nancy Grows Up*

*Nancy Grows Up* (1970)<sup>442</sup> was composed by media pioneer, sound recordist and radio broadcaster Tony Schwartz. In the 1950s and early 1960s, Schwartz made a series of recordings of his niece's voice, from her birth until she was about thirteen years old. In this short piece, Schwartz constructed a compelling biographical history of development. It begins with the sound of anxious crying; we then follow the young girl's progress as her language skills and her intellect develop concomitantly throughout the work. According to Michael Schmidt, *Nancy Grows Up*: "narrates the phases and stages of a young girl's early life. [...] Schwartz likened what he did to time-lapse photography: it condenses the story of thirteen years, as Schwartz said, in less than two and a half minutes."<sup>443</sup> As Merleau-Ponty remarks in *The Child's Relation with Others*: "The acquisition of language [...] is a phenomenon of identification. To learn to speak is to learn to play a series of roles, to assume a series of conducts or linguistic gestures."<sup>444</sup>

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<sup>442</sup> An earlier version of the piece was released on: 'History of a Voice' from *You're Stepping on My Shadow*, "Sound Stories" of NYC (1962) which gives clues that Schwartz's niece was born around 1951.

<sup>443</sup> Schmidt (2013)

<sup>444</sup> Merleau-Ponty (1964: 109)

In the piece, thanks to the composer's editing, *Nancy's* schizophonic<sup>445</sup> voice evolves at a very fast pace, thus fascinatingly exposing the metamorphosis that occurs within the first few years of a young person's life. "It does so quite successfully and evocatively and achieves a rich unspoken analysis in its juxtaposition of different voices, words, and timbre."<sup>446</sup> What is remarkable here is that, although the source material is entirely constituted of voice recordings, the narrative aspect of the sound-work does not rely upon the *meaning* of what is being uttered; instead, the evolution of the subject's vocalisations, their widening texture and spectrum, their progressively refining morphology and complexity, their journey from abstraction (crying, babbling, etc.) to concrete utterances, *are* the narrative: "Poetic and expository, it reveals a type of storytelling that has an enigmatic intelligibility."<sup>447</sup>

These sonic and semantic transformations, utilising the intimate sound of a 'home recorded voice', perhaps also reveal the potential of (sound) archiving in its ability to conjure up memories as well as to render tangible the effects of time on our perception of ourselves and others. Arguably, through and beyond the changing texture of *Nancy's* vocal expression, we might somehow hear a history of our own voice. However, we might also hear something that we have lost, and this is perhaps why Schwartz' piece potentially resonates in all of us. As Seán Street puts it:

"We are all archivists; it is part of human instinct to collect the material evidence of existence [...]. It may be that this instinct is a subconscious attempt to hold on to the invisible force of time or to preserve something material that confirms the journey thus far [...]. Memory is too poignant, recollection is too often not only the remembrance of things past, but also the recalling of things lost. This is particularly true of the human voice—poignant too, because unlike the objects with which we surround ourselves, it is invisible."<sup>448</sup>

*Nancy Grows Up* is the result of acts of collecting and re-assembling, which not only document but also mediate the objects collected within a particular, creative, and intimate framework. In other words, it is an archive at work, a becoming work of memory, attempting to preserve what has been

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<sup>445</sup> Cf. Schafer (1969: 43-47) The term was first employed by Schafer to refer to the split between the source of an original sound and its electroacoustic reproduction in a soundscape composition.

<sup>446</sup> Schmidt (2013)

<sup>447</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>448</sup> Street (2015: 74-75)

lost (and perhaps cannot be retrieved) – and yet all too familiar: the loss of infancy’s abstraction in favour of the *concreteness* of adulthood, through the development of language.

#### 4.1.1 *A Sound Map of the Danube*

“All roads lead back to water. [...] The rivers of the world speak their own languages.” R. Murray Schafer, *The Soundscape* (1994: 18)

Another sound-work that somehow echoes the aesthetic of *Lands and Genotypes* is *A Sound Map of the Danube* (2008), by composer Annea Lockwood, which she describes as: “An aural tracing of the Danube, interleaved with the memories and reflections of its people. 59 sites and 13 interviews, from the Black Forest to the Black Sea.”<sup>449</sup> *A Sound Map of the Danube* is part of a series of pieces by Lockwood focusing on a single river. The first one, *A Sound Map of the Hudson River*, was composed in 1982, and the most recent one, *A Sound Map of the Housatonic River*, in 2012. With *A Sound Map of the Danube*, Lockwood probed “deeper into people’s personal, spiritual bonds with that river [...]”<sup>450</sup> During five separate trips to Europe between 2001 and 2005, she travelled slowly down the Danube, gathering field recordings of the river and conducting interviews with local inhabitants. The result is an intricate narrative journey where the soundscape is equally evoked and defined by the river’s biophony and geophony, the semantic of the spoken words, as well as the very sonic qualities of the different languages encountered throughout the sound-work. At times, these disembodied voices seem to almost directly emanate from the Danube’s *isorhythms* and tidal cycles, periodically surfacing above the water so as to be heard; then drowning again, as if to leave space for the river to speak for itself. Each location is already present as an echo in the language spoken by the various interviewees, and within each language, the places themselves are echoed through the particular accent of each speaker; and the river is in dialogue with them – and with us:

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<sup>449</sup> Lockwood, *A Sound Map of the Danube*. CD Liner note, 2008.

<sup>450</sup> Lockwood, ‘Affective Sound Map’ (interview), in *Landscape Stories* (2013)

“The issue becomes a philosophical, even an existential one; field sound poems such as Lockwood’s [...], stepping outside the walls of human space, go beyond documentation because of the motive and the intent in the sound artists’ minds; Lockwood’s river recordings are about ‘the special state of mind and body which the sounds of moving water create when one listens intently to the complex mesh of rhythms and pitches’.<sup>451</sup> There is something profound that recording in the field releases in us. Listening through headphones to the voice of landscapes is an intense experience [...]. Focussed listening is akin to meditation; [...] and water, the flow of it, the life of rivers and tides, contain for human beings a strong metaphor.”<sup>452</sup>

For me, one of the most compelling moments of *A Sound Map of the Danube* is the fourth section, entitled: *Backo Novo Selo/Geese (Gänse)/Smederevo/Floating Dock/Gizela Beba Ivkov*. Commenting on her experience recording along the Danube in Hungary and in Serbia just a few years after the Kosovo War and interviewing a local inhabitant, the composer explains:

“I interviewed Gizela Ivković about the destruction of the Danube bridges at Novi Sad, Serbia, during the 1999 NATO bombings. That river’s human history has a dark side, as you would expect of a great natural frontier, and the way people think about the river today is of course rooted in that history.”<sup>453</sup>

Recalling a concert in a bar on the riverbank in Mohács, southern Hungary, Lockwood explains that she wandered over to the railing to look at the river in moonlight and describes an experience that further symbolised some of the ‘dark’ aspects of the Danube’s history:

“[The river was] very black, shining, when the band invited a singer up and she launched into I think the saddest song I’ve ever heard, a Serbian love song. That combination, the impenetrable blackness of the water, the song, brought home to me how there is this sorrowful aspect of the river, how it has been used for human violence, hence my questions to Geza Ivković.”<sup>454</sup>

In this section of Lockwood’s piece, the interview is mixed with an underwater recording of the moving docks. As the different parts of the docks’ structure collide due to the movement of the water, they create very low frequency shockwaves that spread across the depth of the river. This

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<sup>451</sup> Lockwood, CD insert note as quoted in Street (2015: 101)

<sup>452</sup> Street (2015: 101)

<sup>453</sup> Lockwood (2013)

<sup>454</sup> *Ibid*

recording beautifully shows the rich and complex soundscape that exists beneath the surface. Moreover, these transient sounds, re-contextualised by the narrative content of the interview<sup>455</sup>, might trigger in the imagination of the listener a series of sonic images that resonate with the bombings and the destruction that once occurred here. This is an interesting example of the potential of interleaved field recordings and disembodied voices to evoke memories of place and historical events; or even perhaps to symbolically act as an aural trace, a sensory (yet imagined) perception of something long gone, a projection into the past.

#### 4.1.2 *John Gray: The Last Lyric Documentarist*

Composed in 2007 by John Levack Drever, *John Gray: The Last Lyric Documentarist*<sup>456</sup> is another sound-work whose composition techniques and aesthetic share some similarities with *Lands and Genotypes*. The source material for Drever's piece was gathered during an interview, conducted in 2005 at the Savile Club<sup>457</sup> (London), with John Gray: "a sound engineer who worked for the GPO Film Unit, working on such pioneering documentary films as *Night Mail*, *Spare Time* and *West Highland* (which he directed). [He] was experimenting with field recording in the 1930s [...]."<sup>458</sup> In December 2006, John Gray passed away.

From the one hour long edit of the interview that was produced for broadcast on *Resonance FM*, Drever composed an eight minute sound-work mainly featuring Gray's voice but also including short music excerpts as well as the voice of the composer himself. It was first performed in February 2007 at the Theatre Workshop, in Edinburgh, for John Gray's memorial service.

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<sup>455</sup> Gizela Beba Ivkovic (excerpt of the interview featured in *A Sound Map of the Danube*): "During the war we were often bombarded. We were in a state of shock the whole time, regardless of the bombardment. The bridges [in Novi Sad] near which we grew up were a part of us. It was miserable to watch those pictures, and it was painful to look at the Danube after the bombing because it looked like a decapitated man. We were not only frightened, but also disappointed with what was happening. [...] Those are things that can never be forgotten." Lockwood, *A Sound Map of the Danube*. CD Liner note, 2008. (Eng. Trans. by Z. Kratovac)

<sup>456</sup> From here on, the title of Drever's piece will be shortened to: '*John Gray*'.

<sup>457</sup> The Savile Club is a very selective gentlemen's club founded in London in 1868. See: <http://www.savileclub.co.uk/> [Accessed 15/02/2015]

<sup>458</sup> Drever (2004: 4)

*John Gray* begins with a brief music prelude<sup>459</sup> quickly followed by a fairly complex montage of interlaced interview fragments, spread across the stereo field. The result is a turbulent texture where the interviewee's voice is multiplied and folded in upon itself several times, rendering the 'text' almost entirely unintelligible and forcing us to listen instead to the timbre, the grain, the rhythms, of the subject's vocal delivery rather than the narrative of the interview. By drawing our attention away from the words – from the text – Drever somehow provides us with an opportunity to also 'hear the space' in which the recording was conducted. As the composer himself suggests: "The location is part of the work."<sup>460</sup>

As the sound-work unfolds, more defined utterances surface above the vocal texture and we begin to hear clearer, more intelligible units of speech, in a gesture that might loosely resemble Lockwood's use of voices in *A Sound Map of the Danube*. Nonetheless, even then no clear coherence of thought or expression seems to emerge. The segments of interview keep interrupting and interfering with each other, passing from one subject matter to another, seemingly beginning and ending randomly. Thus the listener is regularly experiencing semantic shifts where a definite narrative cannot fully settle and crystallise. Occasionally, short excerpts of Drever's voice are heard, momentarily floating with the rest of the vocal textures before disappearing again, reminding us that, even if the focus of the work is centred on John Gray, this is still the result of a dialogue between the subject and the composer.

Importantly, as mentioned earlier, *John Gray* was composed for the engineer's memorial service. As such, it can be considered that the phonographic montage itself is the composer's eulogy for John Gray; and Drever himself acknowledges that this piece could not have seen the light of day before Gray passed away.<sup>461</sup> In *The Audible Past* (2003), Jonathan Sterne describes how early recording technology may have offered some hope of *immortality* and comfort for many in the prospect of death. Citing a passage from *Voices of the Dead* (1896), Sterne shows how the conservation of the spoken voice was seen as a way to keep the memory of loved ones alive and help tame the sorrow of absence:

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<sup>459</sup> The opening music is from the short film *Spare Time* (1939) by Humphrey Jennings.

<sup>460</sup> Drever (2015), e-mail correspondence with the author.

<sup>461</sup> "I could / would not have treated his voice in the free way that I did while he was still alive. As a broadcaster he was concerned with intelligibility, while I wanted to transmit another level of meaning and quality." Drever (2015), e-mail correspondence with the author.

“How salutary and consoling it is for loving children and friends to be able to retain the voices of their dear departed ones for communion in times of trouble, and of pleasure. [...] Death cannot deprive us from their help, advice and encouragements, if we will but record their voices whilst they live, and treasure them not only in our hearts, but in a certain and lasting form, on the surfaces of phonograph and gramophone cylinders. [...] The voice, formerly invisible and irretrievably lost as soon as uttered, can now be caught in its passage and preserved practically for ever. [...] Death has lost some of its sting since we are able to forever retain the voices of the dead.”<sup>462</sup>

Arguably, *John Gray* seems to serve this function of preservation. It is also Drever’s way to pay homage to the departed recording engineer. However, the sound-work is perhaps a little more than this. Through the free and playful editing techniques used by the composer, the work moves beyond what could be considered as a straightforward conservation of the subject’s voice. More than a mere act of preservation, *John Gray* is a transformative gesture. By losing its internal narrative coherence, by becoming a broad texture in which the subject’s voice as well as his discourse are dislocated and reassembled to form a series of fragmented and disconnected sonic rather than semantic interactions, Drever seems to have deliberately moved away from the illusion of portraying the *real* John Gray. Instead we are presented with a character, almost in the fictional sense, perhaps as what Deleuze and Guattari would have called an *aesthetic* or *conceptual persona* (*personnage conceptuel*)<sup>463</sup>. In other words, we have moved from the documentation of the ‘man himself’, in his *own words*, to a ‘purely’ mediated version of the subject; and this *conceptual persona* might in turn tell us something else...

More than an attempt to reach the ostensible immortality of the phonographic portrait where the subject is supposedly preserved forever, *John Gray*, while placing its subject firmly in time and in context, interrogates the very nature of the person interviewed. What we hear is not John Gray’s life story, we hear instead his physicality, his mannerisms, his social status, his accent, etc., a man of his time, of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. In Gray’s voice, we also hear the nature of the location in which the work was recorded; i.e. the Savile Club, whose self-described “air of elegant exclusivity

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<sup>462</sup> ‘Voices of the Dead’, in *Phonoscope* I, No I (15 November 1896) as quoted in Sterne (2003: 308)

<sup>463</sup> Cf. Deleuze & Guattari (1994: 61-84) “Here is a very strange type of persona who wants to think, and who thinks for himself, by the ‘natural light’.” (1994: 62) Conceptual personae (*personnages conceptuels*) refer to fictional, or semi-fictional, characters created by one or more authors to convey an idea. Although a historical individual might have eventually existed, they are then co-opted by authors to serve a particular narrative. Nietzsche’s *Zarathustra* and Dostoevsky’s ‘Idiot’ are examples of conceptual personae.

reflects [a] uniquely creative ambiance”<sup>464</sup>; and we might hear within the articulations of Gray’s speech the voices of other members of the gentlemen’s club, of “the most distinguished writers and artists of the time”<sup>465</sup>. It tells us more about the world in which John Gray lived, than his intimate self. *John Gray* is a portrait and an anti-portrait at the same time, factual and lyrical.

In a similar fashion, Lockwood’s *Sound Map of the Danube*, Schwartz’s *Nancy Grows Up* and Drever’s *John Gray* all make creative and conceptual use of disembodied voices to produce works that require more than the words they contain to construct their meaning and aesthetic. In Schwartz’s work, we hear our own history through a young person’s language-learning and her developing ‘linguistic gestures’. In Drever’s composition, we hear a man rooted in a specific historical period – a *psycho-social type*<sup>466</sup> that moves beyond the strictly individual – the portrait of a particular time, place and socio-professional sphere, through the construction of a *conceptual persona*: a broadcast about a broadcaster, the lyric documentation of a lyric documentarist.

#### 4.2 “*They both said the word ‘duck’, and then they never learned another word...*”

*Anseriformes Twins* is an 18 minute long, fixed multi-channel soundscape study I composed between 2006 and 2009 and is part of the ongoing project: *Lands and Genotypes*<sup>467</sup>. In 2010, I was interviewed about this particular piece and the composition process of *Lands and Genotypes* was evoked:

“Each piece is centred around a person, or a subject (or group of subjects), and built from there. Interviews of the subject are conducted and recorded to be used as material

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<sup>464</sup> *The Savile Club*, official website: <http://www.savileclub.co.uk/> [Accessed 15/02/2015]

<sup>465</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>466</sup> For Deleuze and Guattari, *psycho-social types* are characters, individuals (or personae) defined by their social environment and attributes such as gender, ethnicity, professional function, sexuality etc. As D. N. Rodowick explains: “These are social types in the sociological sense [...]: the stranger, the excluded, the immigrant, the city dweller, and so forth. To think of these figures as stereotypes (for example, of masculinity or femininity, hetero- or homosexuality) is equally possible. But more precisely, the *raison d’être* of psycho-social types is to express the forces of territorialization and deterritorialization that constitute the social fields they occupy, thus defining their structure and function.” (2000: 2)

<sup>467</sup> In the next two chapters, for the purpose of brevity and clarity, I will not describe the content of the sound-works ‘section by section’ (as I have done in Chapter II and III for example) but rather briefly discuss the overall structure of the compositions and focus instead on their theoretical underpinnings, the techniques used, and their aesthetic.

for the piece. Field recordings are then made of places and objects that relate to the subject. Spinelli helps shed some light on this process, ‘Each sound must have a relationship, in one way or another, to the people interviewed during the composition process, and all these sounds are part of [...] their personal soundscape. Prior to the field recordings, I always ask my interviewees to map the different locations where they usually spend most of their time and, when appropriate, sounds they remember from those places. I usually record much more material in those locations to capture other sounds they might not be aware of and seemed less obvious in order to highlight other soundmarks that are part of the sound subjects’ [sonic] surroundings in a more detailed fashion.’<sup>468</sup>

In 2006 and 2007, I conducted a series of interviews with a pair of monozygotic twins, Charles and Thomas Richardson, and their mother, Rosie. Charles is a saxophonist and was one of the musicians who accompanied me during the *Before the End of Time* project in Poland. The first interview with Charles took place in a studio in London, a few months after returning from our visit to KL Gross Rosen and *Muzeum Auschwitz-Birkenau*. During this first interview, we discussed Charles’ experience of visiting these sites. We also tackled some of his family history and how he felt about current politics. The rest of the interviews with the Richardson family were then carried out about a year later, in the twins’ basement and in their living room, at their home in the city of Bath (UK). In terms of structure, *Anseriformes Twins* comprises five sections. Each of them corresponds to a different interviewee and/or place of significance in relation to the twins’ narrative as well as their personal soundscape<sup>469</sup>:

|                                  |                   |
|----------------------------------|-------------------|
| ▪ Rosie Richardson               | 0’00’’            |
| ▪ Anseriformes Circus: Duck Pond | 4’19’’            |
| ▪ Thomas Richardson              | 6’56’’            |
| ▪ Drone (Early Morning)          | 9’07’’            |
| ▪ Charles Richardson             | 11’09’’ - 17’35’’ |

The idea for this piece was to study sonically how these particular twin brothers relate to each other through an evocation of their childhood memories and any other elements that might transpire

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<sup>468</sup> Spinelli, (Interview by Marcus Staniec) *Emmanuel Lorien Spinelli - Lands and Genotypes* (2010)

<sup>469</sup> A detailed schematic description of the piece’s content and structure is provided in *Appendix 1*: 224 - 233.

during the interviews. In addition, I was interested in discovering how their ‘story’ and their fraternal relationship had been experienced from their mother’s perspective. In 2007, I spent several weekends at the Richardson’s home, doing research and learning more about their daily routine. During that time, between interviews, I carried out a series of field recordings in the city of Bath and in their home. During this field work, the information I gathered about the twins not only informed the structure of the piece but also guided the recording of practically all of the sound material used in the final composition.

One fact in particular caught my attention early on in the project. During the interviews, the three family members told me the same story: Once, when Charles and Thomas were toddlers, they were taken to the local park by their mother. There, by a pond, they both said their first word: ‘duck’. After this, they did not speak another word of English until they were almost four years old. Being twins, the two of them first developed a personal language, a way of communicating with each other peculiar to them, which no one else could understand.

Research in language acquisition and speech disorders has shown that, due mainly to environmental factors, monozygotic twins are far more likely to develop speech and language difficulties than single birth children. This can be explained by the fact that they are often born prematurely (as is the case for the Richardsons) but can also be because they might receive less individual attention from their parents.<sup>470</sup> A fascinating part of many twins’ development is the emergence of a phenomenon called idioglossia, or ‘twin language’. Language therapist Caroline Bowen suggests that: “twin language is most often seen in twins with immature or disordered language, especially when the twins are performing at the same developmental level.”<sup>471</sup> Usually due to the fact that they share a particularly strong emotional closeness, twins might be less inclined to develop normal speech and language.<sup>472</sup> During the interview, Rosie expressed how the twins’ idioglossia had been a real source of worry at the time. She also explained how she sought medical advice and devised a number of strategies to help Charles and Thomas develop both their listening and communication skills. Even so, it took several years before they began to properly speak.

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<sup>470</sup> Cf. Lewis & Thomson (1992)

<sup>471</sup> Bowen, *Twins Development and Language* (2014)

<sup>472</sup> Cf. Tomasello *et al.* (1986)

Most interestingly, this period of the twins' lives had been partly documented by their parents, recorded on VHS tapes, during the mid to late 1980s. Amongst the hours of footage, containing mainly the filming of family celebrations, birthdays, holiday trips, and daily activities (baths, dinners, playtime, etc.), the tapes featured several short examples of the twins' idioglossia as well as various other interactions between them and their parents, both before and after they acquired English language. It was a captivating document. I therefore decided to digitise the tapes and use some of these family archives as part of the sound material for *Anseriformes Twins*.

#### 4.2.1 A Manic Episode

*“One of us said duck, and the other one said duck straight away / and I ended up in a psychiatric ward...”*<sup>473</sup> Thomas Richardson (2007)

Another important element that transpired during the interviews concerns Thomas more specifically: During his adolescence, he suffered a manic episode and was hospitalised for a brief period of time. Over the course of the interviews both of them explained how Thomas, for no apparent reason, began obsessing over various things – including starting up his own business venture for example – and experienced serious loss of sleep, incoherence of thoughts and ideas, and erratic behaviour for several days. Although he quickly recovered, this event profoundly marked both of them as well as the rest of the family.

In clinical terms, a manic episode is not considered a disorder *per se*, but rather is part of a broader type of manic depression, also called *bipolar disorder*.<sup>474</sup> A manic episode is defined as: “a distinct period during which there is an abnormally and persistently elevated, expansive, or irritable mood. This period of abnormal mood must last at least 1 week (or less if hospitalisation is

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<sup>473</sup> Transcript of fragments of interview as featured in *Anseriformes Twins*.

<sup>474</sup> Cf. Beck *et al.* (2009)

required).<sup>475</sup> Along with moments of obsessional behaviour, this mood disturbance is usually accompanied by several other symptoms that include:

“[Inflated] self-esteem or grandiosity, decreased need for sleep, pressure of speech, flight of ideas, distractibility, increased involvement in goal-directed activity or psychomotor agitation, and excessive involvement in pleasurable activities with a high potential for painful consequences.”<sup>476</sup>

The anomalous mood of a person experiencing a manic episode might be described as unusually euphoric or cheerful, or might on the contrary induce moments of reclusion and/or aggressive outbursts when prolonged sleeplessness begins to seriously affect the subject.

As I will discuss further later in this chapter, Thomas’ manic episode is not only a recurring theme throughout *Anseriformes Twins* but also symbolically parallels the editing techniques used in the composition as well as its aesthetic and structure.

### 4.3 Home & Duck Pond: Recording the Twins’ Personal Soundscape

In the following paragraphs, I will briefly discuss two sites in which the sound material for *Anseriformes Twins* was gathered and their significance in the narrative sound-work in question. As mentioned earlier, while staying with the Richardsons, I carried out a series of field recordings around their home. Since the twins grew up there, I wanted to explore some of the sonic qualities of the intimate environment in which the two of them cohabited. Being a fairly large house, it provided me with a wide range of sounds to capture. As well as fragments of the soundscape of their garden, I recorded various kitchen appliances, doors creaking, machine sounds in the laundry room, objects in bedrooms, in the living room and in the basement, and the general sonic atmosphere of the house at different times of day.

The challenge here was twofold: firstly, it was important to carefully navigate my way around them being as ‘discreet’ as possible to avoid being perceived as an annoyance, or dramatically

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<sup>475</sup> Goodwin and Redfield Jamison (2007: 94)

<sup>476</sup> *Ibid*

interfering with their day-to-day routine. Secondly, it was crucial for me to not treat these recordings purely as sound objects. The objective was to consider and study this family home as a territory, a field of interaction, identity and memory. As Edward Relph points out: “Without exception, the home is considered to be the ‘place’ of greatest personal significance in one's life – the central reference point of human existence.”<sup>477</sup> In *Anseriformes Twins*, the recordings of this sonic environment not only provide the soundscape in which the interviews took place and where the twins have been immersed from birth to the present day, but also actively and symbolically participate in both the narrative and significance of the sound-work:

“There is for virtually everyone a deep association with and consciousness of the places where we were born and grew up, where we live now or where we have had particularly moving experiences. This association seems to constitute a vital source of both individual and cultural identity and security.”<sup>478</sup>

During the recording, editing and mixing process of *Anseriformes Twins*, I thus felt that it was fundamental for me to try to keep the vast majority of these sounds firmly grounded in their context, using as little audio processing as possible while allowing enough playfulness to explore this domestic sonic environment in a creative, meaningful and engaging manner.

Another location that played an intriguing and fundamental role in the making of this composition is the local pond, situated within walking distance of the house, where Charles and Thomas both said their first word (‘duck’). As a site of personal memory, this is a place of great significance for the twins and their mother. I therefore spent several hours recording the duck pond using the same bespoke *4 points stereo* recording technique mentioned in Chapter II<sup>479</sup> in order to gather the sound material that makes up the second section of the sound-work (*Anseriformes Circus: Duck Pond: 4’19” - 6’56”*). This section features the sounds of ducks, pigeons, and children playing by the pond and in the nearby playground; as well as fragments of field recordings carried out in the twins’ garden.

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<sup>477</sup> Relph (1976: 20)

<sup>478</sup> *Ibid* p. 43

<sup>479</sup> See p. 24

These two sites – the family home and the duck pond – hold a central function in the articulation of the sound-work. They illustrate, expand and disrupt its narrative content. They represent two environments that have actively informed both the construction and perception of Charles’ and Thomas’ identity and their sense of self. As places of memory and sentiment, they bind together a series of decisive and defining moments in the twins’ intimate history. From a phenomenological perspective, reflecting on his personal involvement with the environmental space and the internal traces of one’s past, Merleau-Ponty explains:

“I am thrown into a nature, and that nature appears not only as outside me, in objects devoid of history, but it is also discernible at the centre of subjectivity. Theoretical and practical decisions of personal life may well lay hold, from a distance, upon my past and my future, and bestow upon my past, with all its fortuitous events, a definite significance, by following it up with a future which will be seen after the event as foreshadowed by it, thus introducing historicity into my life.”<sup>480</sup>

Indeed, the ‘home’, more than any other milieu, is a place that acquires “deep meaning through the accretion of sentiment.”<sup>481</sup> Lynne Manzo (2003) further validates Merleau-Ponty’s point about the pivotal role of historicity in our perception of – and attachment to – our surroundings. Homes, as privileged environments of identity formation, as well as other familiar ‘outside’ places, become meaningful as “transitional markers or symbols of critical life events, such as a benchmark in a significant relationship (positive or negative), as well as in simpler moments of reflection.”<sup>482</sup> As Doreen Massey (1994) acknowledges, the sense of home is always in movement and always extends to other places as well as other historicities:

“A large component of the identity of that place called home derived precisely from the fact that it had in one way or another been open; constructed out of movement, communication, social relations which always stretch beyond it.”<sup>483</sup>

In *Anseriformes Twins*, the montages of field recordings of both the Richardson’s domestic sonic environment and the duck pond, in addition to the family archives, act as historical,

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<sup>480</sup> Merleau-Ponty (2002; 403)

<sup>481</sup> Tuan (1977: 33)

<sup>482</sup> Manzo (2003: 53)

<sup>483</sup> Massey (1994: 170 -171)

conceptual and narrative markers. They constitute fragments of the twins' personal soundscape. In the work, they might be perceived as completing, linking-up – sometimes even diverting or adding confusion to – the different anecdotes, life-events and sentiments expressed by the interviewees (sound subjects). They open a field of interpretation. They are vibratory patterns that actively resonate with the semantic of the work:

“It is the rhythm, a sympathetic vibration or resonance, which opens up one milieu onto another. It is this rhythm, which is the basis of communication (the sympathetic vibration of divergent series of events; the photograph and its subject, the portrait and the family represented are unique, they have gone their separate ways, diverged, and yet they resonate. [...] Communication, then, is not the exchange of meaning or information [...], but a resonance. [It] points to the importance of sound in the construction of space, and orality in the construction of identity, home, and everyday life.”<sup>484</sup>

These soundscape sections create moments of potentially meaningful, non-verbal tension; or indeed might even substitute missing parts of the narrative (calling upon the imagination of the listener) in a gesture that perhaps echoes Lacan's insight when he urges the analyst, and us in general, to intently listen to and carefully consider: “the sigh of a momentary silence for the whole lyrical development it replaces.”<sup>485</sup>

In this composition – and throughout the *Lands and Genotypes* project – because the works' primary focus is centred on a specific individual; and because all the sound material used in these soundscape compositions relates directly to the subject(s) interviewed<sup>486</sup>, I refer to the persons featured in these sound-works as *sound subjects*<sup>487</sup>. In *Lands and Genotypes*, sound subjects are sonically and conceptually delved into and mediated through an exploration of both their disembodied voices and their personal soundscapes; with the objective of compositionally

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<sup>484</sup> Wise (2000: 302) See also Deleuze (1990: 174-178)

<sup>485</sup> Lacan (2001: 48)

<sup>486</sup> As domestic or familiar sonic environments, significant places where life-events happened, places or sounds of memory, i.e. what I refer to as their *personal soundscape*.

<sup>487</sup> This term is indeed a conceptual reversal of the Schaefferian notion of sound object (*objet sonore*). Arguably, in contrast to the sound object – a sound reduced “to the field of hearing alone” (Kane, 2007: 3) – the aesthetic of sound subjects fundamentally rely on context, source-bonding, and narrative.

constructing a fragmentary and non-strictly-representational assemblage of their acousmatic identity<sup>488</sup>.

#### 4.4 Interview Editing: The Construction of Schizo-narratives

“According to Kant, one should not count on hearing the truth when one hears a ‘tone of truthfulness’ in the voice.” David Kleinberg-Levin, *Before the Voice of Reason* (2008: 10)

For *Lands and Genotypes*, when I interview the various sound subjects for a particular sound-work, I often ask the same question several times, either during the course of the same interview or at another time with the intension to obtain more comprehensive and more nuanced responses from the interviewees. Intriguingly, this sometimes results in narrative contradictions or incoherences emerging or becoming more apparent. Nonetheless, these moments, as Kleinberg-Levin argues, are perhaps the most revealing:

“There is really something very foolish about speaking and writing. [...] One can only marvel at the ridiculous mistake that people make when they think – that they speak for the sake of things. The particular quality of language, the fact that it is concerned only with itself, is known to no one. Language is such a marvelous and fruitful secret – because when someone speaks merely for the sake of speaking, he utters the most splendid, most original truths.”<sup>489</sup>

During the interviews, the subject matter is often deeply personal but can also be more mundane and anecdotal. The latter sometimes leads to interesting instances whereby the interviewees forget the presence of the microphone for a moment and express themselves in a more casual, perhaps less self-aware manner. Indeed, I usually gather much more material than is needed and a vast majority of the recorded discussion is not featured in the final composition.<sup>490</sup> During the composition process, I edit the interviews by creating hundreds of small fragments – utterances, breaths, pauses,

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<sup>488</sup> The sound subject’s identity as perceived and imagined through the act of listening. (Including elements that only emerge or become more apparent through the act of listening, as we have seen in Chapter III for example.)

<sup>489</sup> Kleinberg-Levin (2008: 9)

<sup>490</sup> The potentially problematic implications of ‘choosing’ what is featured in the work is one of the factors that led to the generative techniques used in *The Golem of Hereford* (in which the whole of the interview is conceptually present in the work) discussed in Chapter V.

parts of a sentence, hesitations, and so forth – and classify them by either thematic content or more abstract categories such as approximative rhythm, length (short, medium, long), intonation, etc. and place them in a ‘folder’. Each file is named according to the content of the interview fragment.

From these fragments of the sound subjects’ voices, I begin by running a series of listening experiments using a ‘random playlist’ function on a standard media player. These experiments are of two types:

- 1 - All the interview fragments are loaded into the playlist and are randomly shuffled and played back-to-back.
- 2 - Smaller playlists are created by using a single theme ‘folder’, thus creating a narrower set of possible outcomes.

The objective of these experiments is to listen for unlikely and surprising combinations of utterances as well as to revisit and experience the overall content (and overall dynamic) of the interview from a fresh perceptive, more removed from of its original context and its original unfolding. Informed and inspired by the listening experiments, I then proceed to piece together longer and longer strands of utterances, which form *new*, unexpected, broken and non-linear narratives. In *Lands and Genotypes*, this technique is used to construct a series of ‘Schizo-narratives’: The listener experiences constant shifts in the semantic of the discourse of the various disembodied voices presented in the sound-work.

By editing and reorganising the small fragments of interviews in such a way, I create a compositional gesture whereby the narrative oscillates between rational and nonsensical stances.<sup>491</sup> One subject matter might drift seamlessly towards another while ostensibly remaining syntactically correct. Equally, ‘wordplays’ or homonyms might drive the schizo-narrative, in which case the result becomes an even more confusing perceptual experience where one might be led to wonder what is *really* being said (for example: “*For one to / three / no four / for one to stay four nights...*”). Within the broken structure of schizo-narratives, the original chain of events is dismantled and reconstructed anew; dislocated and structurally dysfunctional. Life-events are randomly juxtaposed

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<sup>491</sup> Or at least non-strictly coherent stances.

with mundane and unrelated anecdotes, different subject matters interpenetrate each other, interrupt the coherence of the discourse, or suddenly move the overall narrative content towards a nonsensical or contradictory direction. Throughout the unfolding of a schizo-narrative, hesitations, incoherences of thought or chronology, mispronunciations, anacolutha<sup>492</sup>, confusions of names or places, often emerge and deviate the expression of the sound subject away from its natural course.

The turbulent internal structure of a schizo-narrative – resulting from a combination of aleatoric juxtapositions and purposeful manipulations where individual elements are not necessarily bound to one another by causality but rather add-up, multiply, devise, subtract each other – might allow for a more open expressivity to surface. In the continuation of his argument for the virtues of chatter, Friedrich Novalis (1997) contends that ‘words’, not unlike mathematical formulae, might “constitute a world of their own”<sup>493</sup>:

“[Words and formulae] play only with themselves, express nothing but their own marvelous nature, and just for this reason, they are so expressive – just for this reason the strange play of relations between things is mirrored in them. Only through their freedom are they elements of nature and only in their free movements does the world’s soul manifest itself in them and make them a sensitive measure and grand plan of things.”<sup>494</sup>

On a different level, the schizo-narrative is also an invitation to listen to and decipher the inner significances of the speech’s non-verbal articulations. It is an attempt to urge the listener to (perhaps imaginatively) retrieve the information, the meaningful nuances embedded in the grain of the sound subject’s disembodied voice; its tones, its rhythms, its contours, its wordless emotional content. It is an invitation to pay attention not only to the *said*, but also, more importantly, the *unsaid*. In *For the Sound of Her Voice* (2013), Amber Abbas describes a deeply emotional recording of her grandmother’s voice. It was captured shortly before she passed away. Reflecting on the

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<sup>492</sup> An anacoluthon is a “syntactical inconsistency or incoherence within a sentence [...]: a shift in an unfinished sentence from one syntactic construction to another.” (Cf. <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/anacoluthon>) Anacolutha are often sentences interrupted midway, where a change in the syntactical structure of the sentence and of intended meaning follows.

<sup>493</sup> Novalis (1997: 83)

<sup>494</sup> *Ibid* pp. 83-84

content and meaning of the interview she carried out, Abbas explains how, beyond the words uttered, it is in the sonic qualities of the voice itself that the more poignant and meaningful elements are situated:

“Above all, though, the meaning, for me, resides in the voice. It is there that I first and finally come to understand the story. The voice hesitates before a painful memory; it spills mirth when remembering childhood mischief. I can hear it smile, or stifle a smile, or signal tears about to come. The voices of my narrators betray their age, breathing heavily, or coughing, or laughing; the physical and emotional strain of the experience is captured on the tape. The voice communicates the texture of life’s experience, sometimes smooth, sometimes coarse. [...] The voice, with its stops and starts, guides the story, embodies it.”<sup>495</sup>

Furthermore, in *Lands and Genotypes*, and particularly in *Anseriformes Twins*, the soundscape sections and the schizo-narratives symbolically extend each other’s semantic content in a process that echoes Chion’s notion of *tressage* (braiding); a way of linking the ‘said’ (*le dit*) and the ‘shown’ (*le montré*):

“I speak of braiding among sound elements, or of one sound element of any type (verbal, musical, etc.) with all or part of an image, when there is a response or transfer between the two – the impression that the one is being continued or relayed (even via denial) by the other. This occurs especially in certain forms of the relationship between the said and the shown.”<sup>496</sup>

As I will discuss further later in this chapter, I would argue that these ‘transfer’ relationships between the personal soundscapes of the sound subjects and their associated schizo-narratives<sup>497</sup> – their contact points, which give the impression that one is ‘continued or relayed’ by the other – play a fundamental role in the understanding of *Lands and Genotypes* and the perceived acousmatic identities of the subjects depicted in the sound-works.

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<sup>495</sup> Abbas (2013)

<sup>496</sup> Chion (2012: 34)

<sup>497</sup> And also within the schizo-narratives themselves...

#### 4.4.1 Interlaced Schizo-narratives

In *Lands and Genotypes*, another editing method I have developed to construct a different kind of schizo-narrative is a technique I call *interlaced schizo-narrative*: At various strategic points in the work, several fragments of interviews are played at the same time, often spread across the 8 channel field, in fast succession. They usually feature conflicting statements and are designed to further induce a sentiment of ‘confusion’ where the sound subject is split into several instances of itself. For example, during the interviews, one of the twins had a tendency to often highlight the similarities he shared with his brother, (“*same school, same friends*” etc.), while the other would more readily put forward their differences. I have therefore edited together all these different instances in an attempt to symbolise the twins’ contrasting perceptions of each other. (See *Section V*: 12’15” - 12’40”)

Interestingly, in *Anseriformes Twins*, the interlaced schizo-narratives seem to also metaphorically resonate with the evocation of Thomas’ manic episode, a central theme in the work. This uncontrollable ‘flight of ideas’, the feeling of manic restlessness portrayed during these sections of the composition, seems to further parallel and reinforce this part of the work’s narrative.

#### 4.4.2 Evocation of Gross Rosen and Auschwitz in *Anseriformes Twins*

*“A couple of months before my mum had found something in our family tree [...] I wasn’t sure about know... knowing my full identity [...] My mother’s heartbeat [...] Well... Gross Rosen, I remember walking in and / plastic-backed text books [...] I suppose my mother’s heartbeat but there was no one in there and... [...] I can’t really imitate it / I don’t know where I am! / I don’t know, I suppose my mother’s heartbeat but I have no memory of...”*<sup>498</sup>

The last section of *Anseriformes Twins* features a schizo-narrative constructed from fragments of the very first interview I conducted with Charles, after we returned from Poland. (See *Section V*:

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<sup>498</sup> Transcript of excerpts of Charles Richardson’s schizo-narrative: *Anseriformes Twins*, Section V.

15'39" - 16'53") Charles poignantly evokes his experience of visiting Auschwitz and Gross Rosen. At several moments during this section, I have interspersed this narrative with a particular fragment in which he is trying to recall the first sound he ever heard: his mother's heartbeat. The juxtaposition of these two narratives results in an emotionally-charged moment in the composition.

*Anseriformes Twins* ends with a montage of field recordings of the twins' garden and the duck pond (early morning recording) superimposed onto a heavily processed field recording of KL Gross Rosen following a similar 'electro-analgesic mechanism of defence' method to the one used in the composition of *Samdà Magna Morphina*.<sup>499</sup>

#### 4.5 Conclusion: A First Reflection on the Territory of Disembodied Voices

"Each of us, then, should speak of his road, his crossroads, his roadside benches; each one of us should make a surveyor's map of his lost fields and meadows." G. Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space* (1969: 11)

As we have seen, in *Lands and Genotypes*, sound subjects are mediated using their disembodied voices (schizo-narratives) and fragments of their personal soundscapes in an attempt to explore versions of their acousmatic identity. However, the pieces that make up the *Lands and Genotypes* project are not intended to function as 'sonic portraits' or 'sound documentaries'. Instead, they are fragmentary and non-strictly-representational explorations in which the sound subjects are deconstructed, reassembled and presented in interaction with not only their intimate sonic environment, their personal soundscape, but also with themselves. Much like Drever's *John Gray*, the sound subjects of *Lands and Genotypes* become *psycho-social types* and *conceptual personae*, fictional or semi-fictional characters created to convey an idea, and who express "the forces of territorialization and deterritorialization that constitute the social fields they occupy"<sup>500</sup>.

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<sup>499</sup> See Appendix 1, pp. 212 - 222.

<sup>500</sup> Rodowick (2002: 2)

They are at the same time a representation of themselves and the evocation of a multitude of other selves. As such, they resonate with Rimbaud's famous assertion: *Je est un autre*, "I is an other".

Through the process of schizo-narrative – embracing nonsense, anacoluthon and contradiction – the focus is shifted away from the ostensible authority of the spoken voice to allow for a more playful, mysterious, malleable, unstable, and indeterminate phenomenological object to emerge: a territory. I refer to this assembled field of interaction as the 'territory of disembodied voices'. Here, the concept of territory is to be considered in the Deleuzian sense: both as a field, a domain of enquiry, interaction and study, and as a topology. It is always a terrain of socialisation, movement and identity formation. In ethology, a territory is understood as:

"[...] the environment of a group (e.g. a pack of wolves, a pack of rats, or a group of nomads) that cannot itself be objectively located, but is constituted by the patterns of interaction through which the group or pack secures a certain stability and location."<sup>501</sup>

Most crucially, at an individual level, the territory of disembodied voices is also metaphorically a *psychological* one. In just the same way that natural and social habitats are constituted of patterns of interaction:

"[...] the environment of a single person (his or her social environment, personal living space, or his or her habits) can be seen as a 'territory', in the psychological sense, from which the person acts or returns to. In this sense there are already processes of deterritorialization and reterritorialization – as processes of such a (psychological) territory – going on, which designate the status of the relationship within a group or within a psychological individual."<sup>502</sup>

Cameron Crain (2013), suggests that the essential reason for the creation of the concept of territory is primarily to respond to "the problem of **Identity**, whether this be of a person, or a place, or something else."<sup>503</sup> Moreover, as Macgregor Wise (2000) puts it, the *subject* itself is indeed already an expression of the territory: "Territories, homes, have subject-effects. Identity is territory, not

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<sup>501</sup> Günzel (1998)

<sup>502</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>503</sup> 'What is a Territory?', in *Economics*, 22 July 2013. Emphasis in the original.

subjectivity. [...] This is not to deny the existence of individuals, but rather to deny the illusion of individualism.”<sup>504</sup>

Francisco Varela *et al.* (1991) argue that the ‘personality’ of a subject – an expression of individual identity through the trope of everyday habits – consists primarily of dispositional formations.<sup>505</sup> The idea of self, therefore, being the habitual grasping for such a self, bringing together the various *aggregates* that are our experiences of the world. For Varela *et al.*, there is no fixed self, only the habit of looking for one or imagining one.<sup>506</sup> Similarly, there would be no fixed home and no fixed territory, only the process of forming one through acts of imagination, socialisation, association, and appropriation.

I have come to think of the phenomenon in which the imagination of the listener is summoned to somehow piece together all the different elements of the schizo-narratives and the soundscape sections as a ‘*Tessera Process*’. (The listener might have to speculatively recreate the chain of events in her/his mind in order to ‘make sense’ of the work.) The term *tessera* is borrowed from Lacan (2001) reflecting on Mallarmé’s poetry and the implications of symbolism in psychoanalysis. Lacan refers to the function of the *tessera* as a token of recognition and a process of identification, a link, or ‘password’:

“The *tessera* was used in the early mystery religions where fitting together again the two halves of a broken piece of pottery was used as a means of recognition by the initiates – and in Greece the *tessera* was called the *sumbolon* [a link]. The central concept involved in the symbol is that of a *link*.”<sup>507</sup>

In *Lands and Genotypes*, the *tessera process* implies both a way of ‘entering into’ the work (identifying with the sound subject for example) – even when faced with incoherence or

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<sup>504</sup> Wise (2000: 301)

<sup>505</sup> Cf. Varela *et al.*, (1991: 67)

<sup>506</sup> Cf. *Ibid* p. 80

<sup>507</sup> Lacan (2001: 118) “Indeed, however empty [a] discourse may seem, it is so only if taken at its face value: that which justifies the remark of Mallarmé’s, in which he compares the common use of language to the exchange of a coin whose obverse and reverse no longer bear any but effaced figures, and which people pass from hand to hand ‘in silence’. This metaphor is enough to remind us that speech, even when almost completely worn out, retains its value as a *tessera*.” (*Ibid* p. 48)

contradiction – and the process of appropriating as well as imaginatively linking the disparate elements of the composition in order to decipher the work’s overall narrative.

The territory of disembodied voices – formed and delineated by the *assemblage*<sup>508</sup> of different contact points between schizo-narratives and soundscape sections – is populated by *conceptual personae*, *psycho-social types*, places of memory and sentiment, domestic soundscapes, anecdotes and historicities, all potentially interacting with each other. As will be developed further in Chapter V, rather than constituting a fixed and stable ground, this malleable territory is instead set in motion by all the random linking, distancing, and free associations that occur between the different perceptual elements cohabiting within it. In other words, the perceived overall narrative of the sound-works, and by consequence their perceived *meaning*, might be in constant fluctuation as the content of the schizo-narratives collides with the soundscape sections and new imaginary connections are created in the mind of the listener. It is arguably through these assemblages – these intricate and unstable fields of interaction – that the acousmatic identity of a sound subject emerges and is expressed; and might consequently be perceived by the listener:

“What do I bring to the problem of the same and the other? This: that the same be the other than the other, and identity difference of difference.”<sup>509</sup>

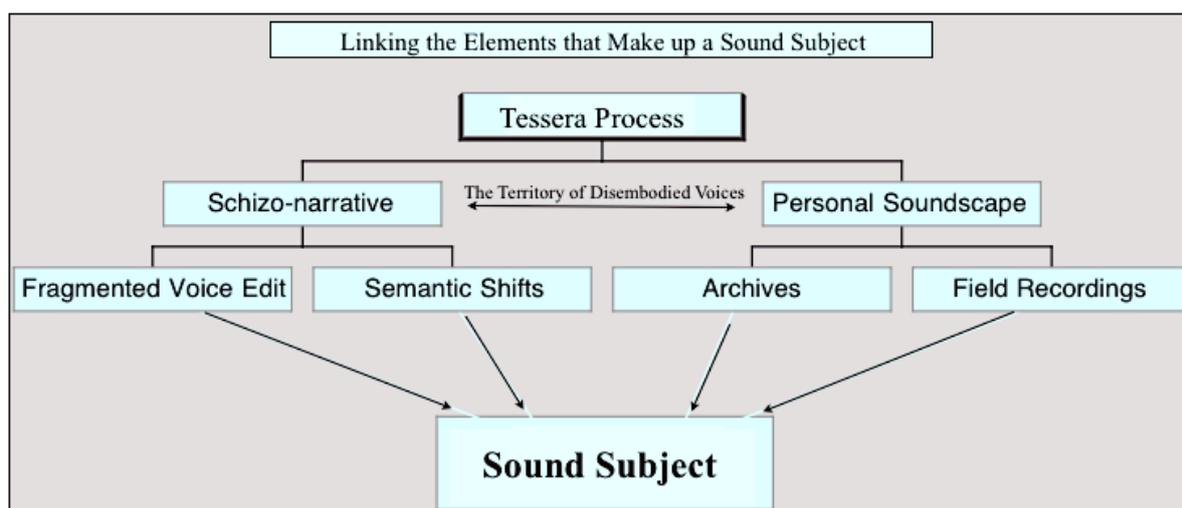
In *Lands and Genotypes*, the meeting points and transfers between the voices of the sound subjects and these soundscape sections – that I will later call ‘sonic chorographies’ – function as ‘sensations’: “the zone of indeterminacy between subject and object, the bloc that erupts from the encounter of the one with the other. [...] It is not representation, [...] but force, energy, rhythm, resonance.”<sup>510</sup>

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<sup>508</sup> *Assemblages*, as conceived of by Deleuze and Guattari (1987), are complex constellations of objects, bodies, expressions, and qualities that come together and interact for varying periods of time to ideally create new ways of functioning and new territories: “Assemblages operate through desire as abstract machines, or arrangements, that are productive and have function; desire is the circulating energy that produces connections. An assemblage transpires as a set of forces coalesces together, the concept of assemblages applies to all structures, from the behaviour patterns of an individual, the organisation of institutions, an arrangement of spaces, to the functioning of ecologies.” (Parr, *The Deleuze Dictionary: Revised Edition*, 2010: 18) Assemblages emerge from the arranging of heterogeneous elements into a productive (or machinic) entity. Further considerations of this particular notion are discussed in Chapter V of this dissertation.

<sup>509</sup> Merleau-Ponty (1968: 264)

<sup>510</sup> Grosz (2008: 73)



*Fig. 1* Tessera processes and sound subjects

In light on these reflections on the unstable quality of the territory of disembodied voices and, subsequently, of the perception of acousmatic identities, I have come to question the fixed nature of the schizo-narratives in *Anseriformes Twins* and the other sound-works that make up *Lands and Genotypes*. In addition, the selection process<sup>511</sup> involved in the making of these fixed schizo-narratives seems to conceptually limit the work's potential to express the acousmatic identities of the sound subjects by being too fragmentary and too exclusive.

In order to address and symbolise these fields of interaction and the malleability of this territory in my practice, I have since developed more 'open', indeterminate techniques to construct real-time generative schizo-narratives (using Max/MSP). As I shall discuss in Chapter V, their generative and aleatoric nature not only allows for the whole of the interviews to be potentially featured in the work, but also metaphorically embodies the ever-changing topology of the territory of disembodied voices and the *chaotic* and *nomadic* strands of utterances and sonic chorographies that constitute it: "Art indeed struggles with chaos, but it does so in order to bring forth a vision that illuminates it for an instant, a Sensation [...], a composed chaos – neither foreseen nor preconceived."<sup>512</sup>

<sup>511</sup> Selecting only very short excerpts of the interviews and excluding the rest.

<sup>512</sup> Deleuze and Guattari (1994: 204)

In the next chapter, discussing *The Golem of Hereford*, all these various notions – schizo-narratives, sound subjects, acousmatic identity and so forth – will be examined further, particularly in relation to historiography, sonic remains and myth-making, thus thematically and conceptually consolidating and expanding on the different techniques and approaches that have so far underpinned both the practice-related considerations and the theoretical framework of this dissertation.

## Chapter V

### **The Golem of Hereford: Myth-making, Sonic Chorographies and Generative Schizo-narratives as *Body Without Organs***

“There are the so-called inert gases in the air we breathe. They bear curious Greek names of erudite derivation which means ‘the New’ [Neon], ‘the Hidden’ [Krypton], ‘the Inactive’ [Argon], and ‘the Alien’ [Xenon]. They are indeed so inert, so satisfied with their condition, that they do not combine with any other element, and for precisely this reason have gone undetected for centuries. [...] The little that I know about my ancestors presents many similarities to these gases.” Primo Levi, *The Periodic Table* (1975: 3)

In this chapter, I will examine and contextualise an extended work I composed between 2009 and 2012. *The Golem of Hereford* is a multichannel soundscape composition constituted of a mixture of fixed electroacoustic elements (unprocessed field recordings) and real-time generative sections (fragments of interviews) programmed in *Max/MSP*. The piece is approximately 30 minutes long and is part of the *Lands and Genotypes* project. This project has been driven by my interest in *sonic remains*<sup>513</sup>, memory, identity, diaspora, myth-making and historiography, particularly in the context of post-war Europe and the Holocaust.

In the first part of this chapter I will discuss the origin, structure and construction of the work as well as the theoretical underpinnings that led to the different compositional strategies adopted for this particular piece. Drawing on the works of Mallarmé, Derrida, Artaud, Deleuze & Guattari, Lévi-Strauss, Barthes, and Midgley amongst others, the second part of this chapter will delve further into the practice of myth-making and its relationship with the construction and perception of schizo-narratives, the territory of disembodied voices and the notion of ‘sonic chorography’. I will present contrasting views borrowed from the fields of structuralism, post-structuralism and phenomenology in an attempt to decipher the conceptual and perceptual connections and

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<sup>513</sup> Cf. Chapter III

interactions between generative schizo-narratives and sonic chorographies – thus bringing about the idea of the disembodied voice of *The Golem of Hereford* as what Artaud, and later Deleuze, termed a *Body without Organs* – a vision of history and identity as *nomad science*.

### 5.1 *Un Coup de Dés Jamais N'Abolira Le Hasard*

In the framework of *Lands and Genotypes*, and my practice in general, *The Golem of Hereford* holds a peculiar place for it deals with all these elements in an unusual way and, as I will develop later in this chapter, was constructed with the idea of creating an unfixed, ever-changing narrative built from a series of interchangeable fragments of speech (schizo-narratives and interlaced schizo-narratives). It is also a composition in which the subject of the sound-work and the sound-work itself are embedded in the form of a myth. The piece was put together in collaboration with musician and programmer Tom Mudd, who helped design the computer program used for the performance of the work and the different algorithms involved. Each iteration of *The Golem of Hereford* is different – with the emergence of a new storyline and a new version of the subject's history being generated every time. The dislocation of the narrative structure along with the absence of determinate cause-and-effect relationships seems to resonate with Umberto Eco's seminal notion of 'open work' and can be seen as:

“[...] the discarding of a static, syllogistic view of order. [...] This is just part of a general breakdown in the concept of causation. The two-value truth logic which follows the classical *aut-aut* [either/or], the disjunctive dilemma between *true* and *false*, a fact and its contrary, is no longer the only instrument of philosophical experiment. Multivalued logics are now gaining currency, and these are quite capable of incorporating *indeterminacy* as a valid stepping-stone in the cognitive process.”<sup>514</sup>

Although he wrote in the early days of indeterminate compositions, Eco's thoughtful analysis of the movement towards the rejection of syllogistic organisational systems (particularly in the literary arts) as a reaction and response to social changes in the 20<sup>th</sup> century still feels relevant today; particularly in his reflections concerning the work of French symbolist Stephane Mallarmé whose poetry has been influential to my own approach to textual experimentations. This “field of

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<sup>514</sup> Eco (1959) in Cox & Warner (2004: 171)

possibilities”<sup>515</sup> (the aleatoric processes involved in the re-organisation of the voice fragments), as well as the tension between ‘*true* and *false*’, particularly in relation to the cognitive process, both played a critical role in the creative motivations that led to the making of *The Golem of Hereford*. Furthermore, as mentioned in Chapter IV, these generative (aleatoric) processes constitute a re-evaluation and a new approach to my previous methods for the construction of schizo-narratives. They also suggest a specific take on the telling of history and on the nature of myth-making.

In *Un Coup de Dés Jamais N’Abolira Le Hasard* (1897)<sup>516</sup>, Stéphane Mallarmé turned his poem into what resembles a map; a disjointed system of representation “where grammar, syntax, and typesetting introduced a plurality of elements, polymorphous in their indeterminate relation to each other.”<sup>517</sup> In Mallarmé’s poem, fragmented utterances become spatial coordinates and invite the reader to journey through the topography of the text. For A. S. Bessa, a typical Mallarméan text “resembles a field with a variety of traps — ambush, trick, stratagem, maneuver, artifice.”<sup>518</sup> Following a similar principle, the disembodied voice of *The Golem of Hereford* is constructed from thousands of fragments of text and interviews algorithmically reorganised in real-time, thus inducing a map of quasi-infinite potential where the narrative constantly shifts from place to place, from subject to subject, from one point of reference to another. It uses the aforementioned aleatoric processes for the creation of generative *schizo-narratives* that merge and alternate with fixed sections made up of field recordings from different locations in Herefordshire and London.

Mallarmé deliberately aspired towards a state of “unformed language”<sup>519</sup>, the irregular interspaces bringing about fragmented “word islands in a sea of white.”<sup>520</sup> They interrupt the whiteness of the page and are organised spatially rather than semantically. The open spaces in *Un Coup de Dés Jamais N’Abolira Le Hasard* indicate that the text cannot coagulate into any definitive meaning; the words refer to one another, but together they do not form a closed structure.

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<sup>515</sup> *ibid*

<sup>516</sup> Eng. Trans. “A roll of the dice will never abolish chance”

<sup>517</sup> Eco (1989: 8)

<sup>518</sup> Bessa (2004: 43)

<sup>519</sup> Van der Sijde (1998: 87)

<sup>520</sup> *ibid* p. 203

In *The Double Session* (1981), Derrida refers to a sheet in Mallarmé's (unfinished) *Livre* and points out the fundamental role that contexts and exteriority play in poetic and historical writings:

“[...] a reading here should no longer be carried out as a simple table of concepts or words, as a static or statistical sort of punctuation. One must reconstitute a chain in motion, the effects of a network and the play of a syntax.”<sup>521</sup>

*Livre* would have been the culmination of the whole of Mallarmé's oeuvre. Designed as a mobile apparatus allowing an infinite number of permutations and combinations, it would have been impossible to conceive of a single element of text as having a definite *meaning*. Again, only the (constantly changing) context in which these verses might be reorganised and experienced would determine the *narrative* of the poem.<sup>522</sup> Derrida further observes: “The movement of signification is possible only if each so-called ‘present’ element, each element appearing on the scene of presence, is related to something other than itself.”<sup>523</sup> *The Golem of Hereford*, silent creature, addresses the listener in this ‘unformed language’ and, borrowing the voice of another, reinvents its own history with every performance of the work. The dice being cast after every utterance, the thread of the story can twist at any point and change its trajectory. As Mallarmé puts it: “As opposed to a denominative and representative function, as the crowd first treats it, speech, which is primarily dream and song, recovers, in the Poet's hands, of necessity in an art devoted to fictions, its virtuality.”<sup>524</sup>

### 5.1.1 The Jewish Community of Maylord Street

In 2009, while researching historical accounts of the creation of the *Mappa Mundi*, I discovered the existence of a small Jewish community who lived in the town of Hereford between 1179 and 1290. I immediately became interested in finding out more about possible material remains, archives, or perhaps just traces of their passage. This search quickly turned into the primary motivation for the different field trips and recordings I made during the composition of *The*

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<sup>521</sup> Derrida (1981: 194)

<sup>522</sup> Cf. Eco (1989: 26)

<sup>523</sup> Derrida (1982:13)

<sup>524</sup> Mallarmé *Divagations* (1897: 210 - 211)

*Golem of Hereford*. The community in question was gathered around Maylord Street, then called *Jewry Lane*. By the end of the 13<sup>th</sup> century, Jews throughout Britain had been expelled, and Hereford's Jewish community had disappeared without trace.

Historian Joseph Hillaby is one of just a few to mention this community in his account of the history of Jews in Medieval Britain. He explains that in the early 13<sup>th</sup> century some of Hereford's Jews had moved from Oxford because of rising anti-Semitism and notes:

“Dominican friars had a priory in Jewry aiming to convert Jews. In 1222 a deacon adopted Judaism, was circumcised and married a Jewess. He was handed over to the secular authorities and burned at the stake. Hereford was different from any other Jewry in remaining on war footing after the end of civil war in 1217 due to conflict with the Welsh. At the end of the civil war in 1217 Walter DeLacy, the sheriff, was looking to revive the economy. One measure was to reassure English Jewry who had survived the tribulation of John's reign, especially because of the rising Anti-Semitism (preparation for the Crusades) being preached by the Pope in 1215.”<sup>525</sup>

Hereford has a long history as a military town. The end of the civil war and the need for financial support in Britain (Jews were subjected to heavy royal taxations and were considered as the monarch's *personal property*...) <sup>526</sup> ensured relative peace for the community for almost a hundred years:

“Hereford's Jewish community flourished from 1218, under Hamo and his family. [...] The family line passed to Ursell until 1241 and Moses until 1253. Moses died and the family sank into insignificance due to royal pardons to their debtors. From 1260 to the expulsion of 1290 Aaron le Blund, from London, dominated the Hereford community.”<sup>527</sup>

However, by 1280 the Jewish community had been exploited to such an extent that many, if not all, could no longer be of any financial use to the Kingdom.<sup>528</sup> In 1279, Edward I, who had been crowned on his return from the Crusades in 1274, ordered the arrest of the head of every Jewish

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<sup>525</sup> Hillaby (2003: 45 - 46)

<sup>526</sup> Cf. Stacey (1985, 175 - 180) and Prestwich (1997: 344)

<sup>527</sup> Hillaby (2003: 46)

<sup>528</sup> Cf. Prestwich (1997: 344 - 345)

household in England. Around three hundred of them were executed. Nevertheless, the final blow to the Jewish community only came a year later:

“In 1290, Edward I sent secret orders to the sheriff that all Jews, with their wives, children and chattels, were, on pain of death, to quit the realm by November the first, the feast of All Saints. The sheriff was to ensure that they suffered no injury, harm, damage or grievance in their departure. The penalty for any Jew who remained behind after that was death. Paris was the goal of the wealthiest, but in February 1291 Philip the Fair expelled all English Jews from his lands except those profitable to the French crown. It is not known what became of Hereford's Jews. The Expulsion was announced on 18<sup>th</sup> April, which, that year, fell on the 9<sup>th</sup> of Av, on the Jewish calendar. The 9<sup>th</sup> of Av is *Tisha B'Av*, a day of fasting, since it was also the date of the destruction of the First and Second Temples.”<sup>529</sup>

The once thriving community who lived on *Jewry Lane* all vanished after 1290, leaving practically no remains behind. Maylord Street has now become a commercial centre. The absence of evidence and the mystery that surrounds what this community went through, as well as what has become of the different individuals who constituted it, fascinates me. Where did they go? What happened to them after settling abroad? Have they settled at all? Sudden transportation and displacement are indeed recurrent themes in the history of the Jewish diaspora. It has led me to wonder and to ask myself another question; a question about another mysterious and recurring theme of many stories in Jewish folklore; a question about a creature that seems to appear in a number of tales and myths, and in the histories of the Pogroms:

Did they build a golem? If so, can it be excavated?

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<sup>529</sup> Hillaby (2003: 46)

### 5.1.2 Golems

The golem is an anthropomorphic creature created from mud or clay and animated by writing the word *emet* (אמת: “truth” or “reality” in the Hebrew language) on its forehead. The term “golem” first appeared in the *Torah* and meant ‘unformed substance’ or ‘embryo’ or ‘dumb’, amongst many other things. The golem’s primary function is to be employed for protection in the face of danger:

“The golem stories originated in the rabbinic literature and became part of the Jewish folktale tradition. [...] The primary function of the golem is to save Jewish people from danger. Some golems, however, assist with homely household duties like lighting the stove of the Jews on the Sabbath and fetching water.”<sup>530</sup>

In any case, the golem could wreak terrible havoc, and was often an agent of vengeance. This creature, neither alive nor dead, could not speak – having no voice of its own – nor did it have intelligence. It could only follow instructions. It was unable to exercise reason or judgement. A golem would be deactivated by erasing the aleph (א) in *emet* to form *met* (מת: "dead").<sup>531</sup> In the most famous myth: the Maharal Golem of Prague, Rabbi Loew ben Bezalel is believed to have created a golem to protect the Jewish community in the ghetto of Josefov from antisemitic attacks and pogroms. In his 1896 article called *A Glossary of Jewish Terms*, Joseph Jacobs writes:

“In the Middle Ages the Jews, like their neighbours, thought that it was possible by application of practical Cabbala to create a living being similar to a man. In particular, a celebrated necromancer named Reb Löw, of Prague, is reported to have actually created such a being which did his behests.”<sup>532</sup>

According to the legend, the Emperor then begged Rabbi Loew to destroy the golem, promising to stop the persecution of the Jews. The golem's body was stored in the attic of the Old New Synagogue, where it would be restored to life again if needed. The body of the golem supposedly still lies in the attic of the synagogue, but has never been found.<sup>533</sup>

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<sup>530</sup> Bienstock Anolik (2001: 43)

<sup>531</sup> Cf. Idel (1990: 296)

<sup>532</sup> Jacobs (1899: 90)

<sup>533</sup> Cf. Leiman (2010: 1 - 36)

The golem's myth can indeed be traced back all the way to the Biblical tale in *Genesis*, when Adam is first fashioned from earth before life is instilled in his body. In *Genesis*, the entire animal kingdom is created out of the ground. Strikingly however – and it is certainly one of the most powerful and pervasive traits of socio-religious codes and myths in Hebraic culture – words, whether written or spoken, are granted god-like qualities, thus allowing the naming of things to bring them to life:

“[...] out of the ground the Lord God formed every beast of the field, and every fowl of the air; and brought *them* unto Adam to see what he would call them; and whatsoever Adam called every living creature, that *was* the name thereof. And Adam gave names to all the cattle, and to the fowl of the air, and to every beast of the field;” (Gen. 2:18-20)<sup>534</sup>

The golem appears in many forms in a number of myths and in popular culture. It can be a child, as in the Yiddish and Slavic story of the *Clay Boy*; a slave worker in the case of the *Golem of Chelm*; or even a curse for the hubristic Vilna Gaon. In *Briah* (2001), playwright Yossefa Even-Shoshan tells of a female golem who “falls in love with its creator [and] invites comparison with the myth of Pygmalion [sic] and Galatea.”<sup>535</sup> Moreover, the golem formed the basis for Frankenstein's monster in Shelley's 1818 novel, amongst many other cultural productions. Nevertheless, a golem is not mentioned in any of the literature I could find on the history of the medieval Jewish community in Hereford. It is indeed impossible to know whether the creation of a golem was attempted at all during that time. However, all these golems, in their quality as protectors or uncontrollable monsters, mechanistic and sometimes sexual beings, constitute powerful symbols of fear as well as defiance against both religious and socio-political oppression. These figures “manifest generalized cultural anxieties of power, creation, and voice, [...] circumscribed by outer forces of persecution and prejudice [...] and by inner forces of God-imposed rules and constraints that limited and problematized the avenues of creative expressions for all Jews.”<sup>536</sup> Golems are created in times of struggle and doubt and can be used as liberating and cathartic instruments. Furthermore, it is worth noting, as Ruth Bienstock Anolik acknowledges, that in the *Judeo-Christian* tradition the act of instilling life into inert matter poses a serious theological issue, a transgressive act:

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<sup>534</sup> *Holy Bible, King James Version*. Cambridge edition (1629: 2)

<sup>535</sup> Bienstock Anolik (2001: 41) “Creation themes abound in Jewish history and myth. [...] R. Sholmo Del-Medigo (probably a doctor, writing in 1625), which states, in part, ‘and they said of R' Shlomo Ibn Gabirol that he had created a woman and she was serving him; and when they informed on him he showed them that she was not a complete being and returned her to the pieces of wood and joints that she had been fashioned from.’” *Briah* (2001)

<sup>536</sup> *Ibid*

“In creating a golem, the rabbi violates the second commandment prohibition against graven images and subversively reenacts God’s creation of man, vivifying a creature of clay through the power of the word. Both the golem and the dybbuk are, in fact, monsters of language [...]”<sup>537</sup>

With all these elements in mind, inspired by Hebraic belief in the supernatural power of words and speech as well as the mute and mechanistic nature of the golem, I decided to somehow reverse this paradigm and compose my own creature using disembodied sounds as my material – a disembodied voice and a series of assemblages of field recordings made on site while looking for the golem’s body and for traces of the passage of Jews in Medieval Hereford. My intention was not only to evoke the absence of remains and the mystery surrounding the vanishing of this particular community, but also to relate their story to the rest of the Diaspora as well as all those whose histories are filled with displacement, alienation, and *déraciné* experiences.<sup>538</sup>

### 5.1.3 *The Golem of Hereford: The Chained Library and the Search for Rats*

In the following paragraphs, I will discuss the structure of *The Golem of Hereford* and provide more details about the source material and the key compositional elements. Between 2009 and 2010 I went on a series of field trips in Hereford to research different archives in the local library and to record the sonic environment while looking for traces. After capturing sounds on Maylord Street, the main location I explored was the Cathedral Church of St Mary the Virgin and St Ethelbert the King. There, two artefacts in particular caught my attention: The Mappa Mundi, and the manuscripts and chains of Hereford’s Chained Library. It is estimated that the map was created between 1285 and 1300, therefore either during or shortly after the expulsion of all Jews from England. It is a fascinating artefact which provides an insight into the minds of Medieval scholars and their vision of the planet’s geography. What I find particularly fascinating is the fact that the Mappa Mundi presents a world-view of people and places, known and imagined, and is filled with all sorts of mythical creatures and monsters represented alongside wild animals and men:

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<sup>537</sup> *Ibid* p. 40

<sup>538</sup> I use here the French adjective “*déraciné*” (*uprooted, rootless, dispersed*) to refer to the idea of a person uprooted from their natural environment, displaced or dispersed (deported) away from their place of origin, or simply for the lack of known origins. Nevertheless, the term does not necessarily imply the absence of roots but instead might suggest that new (hybrid or artificial) roots are being generated through this process of displacement.

“Superimposed on to the continents are drawings of the history of humankind and the marvels of the natural world. These 500 or so drawings include of around 420 cities and towns, 15 Biblical events, 33 plants, animals, birds and strange creatures, 32 images of the peoples of the world and 8 pictures from classical mythology.”<sup>539</sup>

Then considered as the centre the Christian world, Israel is at the centre of the map.<sup>540</sup> The Israelites are shown roaming in the desert. The Mappa Mundi Museum contains several copies of the map in simplified forms (as well as the original), including an ‘interactive map’ with pre-recorded information activated by the tap of a button. It also contains different objects such as an oversized manuscript made from wood and chained to its shelf as well as a wooden structure where a loop of pre-recorded Gregorian chants resonates through the space. I have recorded all these elements and they are featured at different points in the composition. Situated in an adjacent room is the Chained Library.

The library contains around 230 manuscripts from throughout the Middle Ages and is mainly dedicated to theological writings. In Europe, from the Middle Ages to the 18<sup>th</sup> century, chaining books was the most widespread and effective security system in libraries:

“Hereford Cathedral's seventeenth-century Chained Library is the largest to survive with all its chains, rods and locks intact. A chain is attached at one end to the front cover of each book; the other end is slotted on to a rod running along the bottom of each shelf. The system allows a book to be taken from the shelf and read at the desk, but not to be removed from the bookcase.”<sup>541</sup>

I spent some time recording the space at different moments during the day, the quietness of the room, people whispering, the squeaking floor, but it was here that one of the pivotal events of the project happened. It informed most of the subsequent field recordings I made during the rest of my explorations: I asked one of the volunteer librarians if he had heard of the Medieval Jewish community of Hereford. The librarian replied that, although he did not know much about them, he recalled a crude map of Herefordshire in one of the ancient manuscripts wherein streets or neighbourhoods known to be mainly or partially populated by Jews were highlighted with the drawing of a rat, to signify their presence in the area.

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<sup>539</sup> *Hereford Cathedral*, official website.

<sup>540</sup> In the case of Eurocentric world maps, it is still the case nowadays...

<sup>541</sup> *Ibid*

Intrigued by this story, and taking what perhaps could be perceived as a rather cynical route, I set out to search for rodents all around Hereford and record their habitat. Perhaps these were some of the traces I was looking for. It led me to explore and record different locations including gas heaters in the cathedral, water pipes outside, water-wells around the town, the market square, and along the banks of the River Wye during night time. During my first field trip in Hereford, I established the location of the Jewish cemetery mentioned by Joseph Hillaby but could not find any trace of it. I recorded a heavy snowstorm on the site instead. Trying to uncover traces of the past and communicate them poses many challenges. One is confronted more often than not with absence. Even if the overused metaphor of the microphone as microscope perhaps bears some truth, one can only explore the sounding bodies encountered, the surface and part of what lies beneath, but rather little of the depth of what has disappeared and remains silent. In his 1991 seminal book *Experiencing the Past*, archaeologist Michael Shanks offers a striking reflection upon the challenges he faced while trying to uncover and revive the past:

“In the excavation the raw existence of the past is impenetrable. The sands and rubbles are merely what they are. Absurdity, not fitting with reason. They are beyond, transcendent. And with the loss of tradition (and the death of God) there are no answers to this element of beyond. [...] The particularity of what I find is fascinating, unsayable, uncanny. It is discovery, uncovering what was hidden, showing our homely and familiar categories and understanding to be insufficient. [...] The uncanny is a confrontation with absence; the pot is not what it is. Here is a hidden lack of being. It is death. The sands and rubbles are merely what they are and absolute signification or meaning never arrives. [...] Archaeology excavates a hollow. There is an emptiness. The raw existence of the past is not enough, insufficient in itself. Waiting for an epiphany is in vain. What is needed is our desire to fill the hollow, raise the dead. This is archaeology's necromancy.”<sup>542</sup>

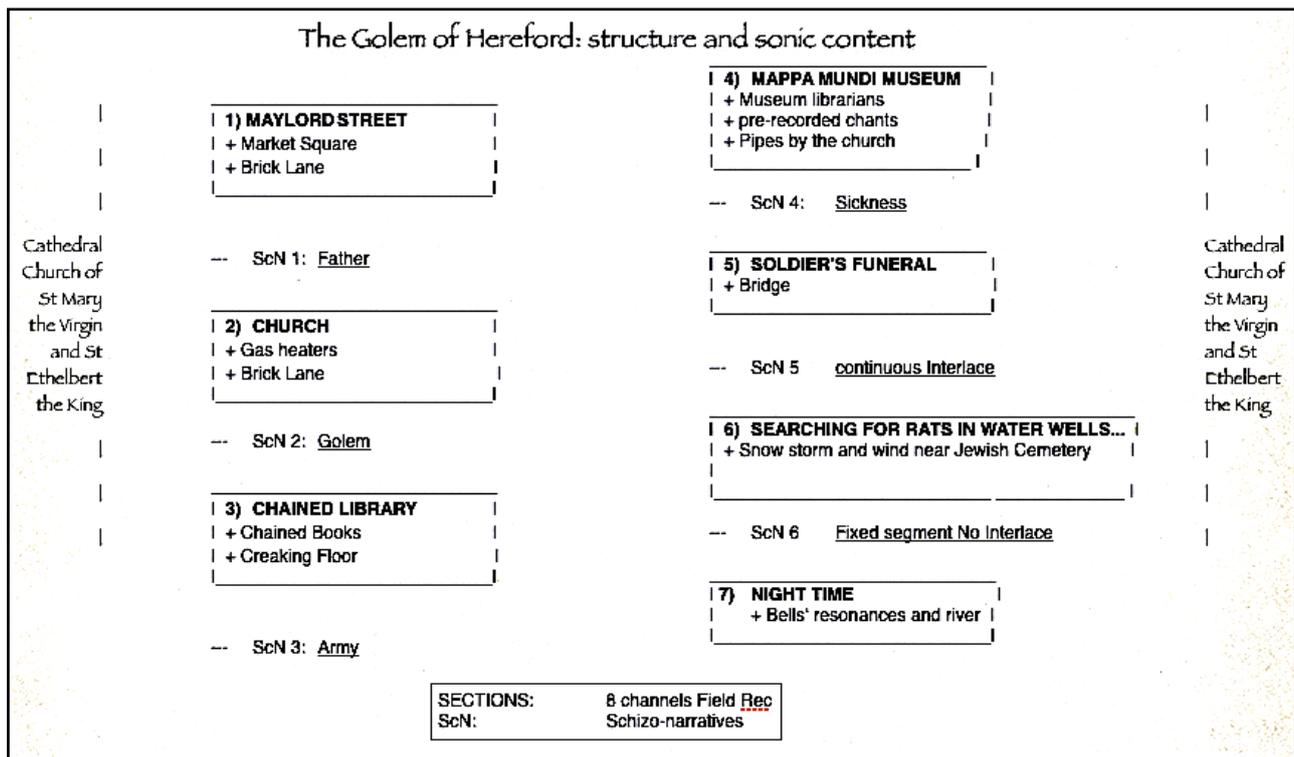
Perhaps *true* silence does exist for the archaeologist. On the last day in Hereford, I stumbled upon a soldier's funeral, the recording of which has become a key moment in the resulting work. Finally, as I will describe later, the project took me to Brick Lane, in London, where I made another series of field recordings.

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<sup>542</sup> Shanks (1991: 114)

## 5.1.4 Structure, Source Material, and a Brief Reflection on the Sense of Place

The figure presented below includes the various different sonic elements previously mentioned and provides a clearer idea of how the material has been structured within the piece:



*Fig.1 The Golem of Hereford: Simplified structure and sound material*

During the recording process, certainly due to the nature of the sites I was exploring and the subject of the work, I felt particularly drawn towards sounds that had an eerie and haunting quality. From the squeaking floor and whispers of the Chained Library, reverberating gas heaters and Gregorian chants in the cathedral, to the resonating engines and yelling during the soldier's funeral, all the sounds seemed to be imbued with a sinister undertone. The search for traces of rodents, the golem, and the vanished Jewish community also led me to record small contraptions, deadwood, dark corners and particularly a place by the River Wye, at night time, where the transients of the different church bells were almost imperceptible while their decay felt strangely long. These echoing bell sounds recur at different moments in *The Golem of Hereford*, especially in the first and

last sections of the piece. Each soundscape section somehow explores a different type of eeriness. In *Sinister Resonance*, David Toop discusses Charles Dickens' reference to the act of listening in his 1862 novel *Haunted House*:

“Dickens suggests that noises, real and unreal, reveal themselves through conscious, intent acts of listening. The nervous body fills the vacuum of silence with phantom sounds generated by its own hyperacuity. If we believe that what we cannot see, we cannot know, then the possibility exists that inert and lifeless objects may have a secret life that only reveals itself when we look away or fall asleep.”<sup>543</sup>

Our propensity to imagine, to fill the vacuum, whether with the intention of covering the silence with imaginary sounds, or to extrapolate the source or meaning of a sound-event, is crucial to the understanding of how we listen to (and by extension capture) our sonic environment. According to sound-artist Christine McCombe, the link between history, sense of place, memory, and imagination plays a central role in the conception and perception of sound works using field recordings as source material. Perhaps in contrast to the ‘archaeological necromancy’ of Michael Shanks, McCombe calls upon memory and imagination in an attempt to overcome some of the phenomenological issues concerning the perception of a space and the sense of place. She explains:

“Our experience of a particular space is influenced by many things – by our knowledge of the function and/or history of a space, by cultural associations, by memory and imagination. The way we experience a space is determined largely by our aural perception and our physical presence within that space. Or our imagined projection of ourselves into that space.”<sup>544</sup>

As with many sound-works dealing with the notion of trace and the past, the thread of memory is indeed a central element of both the soundscape montage and the oral testimony presented in the work. According to Barry Truax, sonic events are all-encompassing elements containing both sense of place and social identity. As Truax puts it:

“As the essence of individual sonic events, timbre speaks to the nexus of experience that ultimately constitutes us all as individuals. The texture, the grain, the tactile quality of sound brings the world into us and reminds us of the social relatedness of humanity.”<sup>545</sup>

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<sup>543</sup> Toop (2010: 126)

<sup>544</sup> McCombe (2001: 64)

<sup>545</sup> Truax (1996: 50)

Yet, Truax and McCombe's assumptions about the sense of place – as a sort of given, stable, all-encompassing phenomenon – and the immediacy and pervasiveness of aural perception – could be questioned. On the one hand, the bodily experience of a particular place cannot be a prerequisite for the listener's appreciation and perception of a particular soundscape; on the other hand, the (rather fetishised)<sup>546</sup> sense of place is not necessarily self-contained within the aural experience, nor within the sounds themselves. Cultural associations might allow the listener to re-appropriate the sonic events for herself/himself but this could therefore imply certain personification or identification processes that divert the nature of the work, or the captured memory it is supposed to represent, thus altering the acousmatic identity of the perceived object. Both McCombe's 'imagined projection' and Truax's 'nexus of experience' therefore transform and displace the represented space, rather than crystallise it. The sense of place might need to be reconstructed anew each time. In *The Emergence of the Sonic Symbol* (2001), Cathy Lane explains that the multiplicity of symbolic contents present in the soundscape, along with the semantic or poetic quality of a potential spoken voice, also call upon the listener to imagine themselves as embodying the represented space and time, as well as to identify with the (abstract or subjective) narrative of the work. Drawing on the notion of oral history, she emphasises the pivotal role of the (disembodied voice of the) storyteller, and suggests:

“In oral history there is an extra element, the skill of the storyteller. The storyteller may trigger the ‘mind’s eye’ or imagination of the listener by relating what an event or period felt like, allowing them to identify and thus recreate a sense of the past by drawing them into someone else’s experience. This suggests that things do not have to be directly experienced by an individual in order to be felt but that somehow the experience of an individual can be generalised.”<sup>547</sup>

In *The Golem of Hereford*, rather than mere reminders manufactured to retrieve a global stream of information or semantic knowledge, the soundscape sections are designed to embody and depict the knowledge they represent. As assemblages of sonic elements potentially subjected to constant re-contextualisation, they acquire new meanings in interaction with the golem's schizo-narratives.<sup>548</sup> They are “maps, things designed to represent other things. [...] [the] sensory memory

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<sup>546</sup> Cf. Pfaffenberger (1988: 236-249)

<sup>547</sup> Lane (2001: 50)

<sup>548</sup> And in interaction with the listener's own internal dialogue...

of space and sound is no less conceptual than our abstract memory of meanings.”<sup>549</sup> These sounds are designed to act as symbolic representations of place and history as well as augmentations of the work’s narrative. The multichannel soundscape sections are structures whose morphology and layers provide detailed delineations as well as broad-brush features of the landscape and objects they depict. Yet, they are transitory forms – becoming dispersed edges and symbols – and they only crystallise as (perhaps incomplete) ‘vessels’ or ‘maps’. I would therefore suggest that these assemblages of sounds act as archives; *embodied memories* – or what Lane identifies as a montage of “fragmented sound material which in itself is a metaphor for memory, loss and disappearance.”<sup>550</sup> In addition, these fragmentary montages are partial yet detailed representations that highlight or focus on certain features of the explored sonic environment (augmenting or diminishing the presence or ‘size’<sup>551</sup> of these elements within the soundscape) while leaving the rest of the soundscape unrecorded; thus essentially presenting a subjective narrative. For all these reasons, and for their relationships to notions of trace and historicity, I refer to the soundscape sections in *The Golem of Hereford* as ‘sonic chorographies’.<sup>552</sup>

## 5.2 Sonic Chorographies

“Geography focuses on the entire globe, much as we might look at a complete body, but chorography looks at just one part of the Earth as if we were to cut off just an ear or an eye from a whole body and then describe it in detail.” (Eustathe. *Commentaire à la Périégèse de Denys*, 1861)<sup>553</sup>

Chorography is a field of study devoted to place; its topological features, its surface and delineation, as well as its narratives and its factual and imagined histories. Michael Shanks

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<sup>549</sup> See Fentress & Wickham (1992) in Lane (2001: 50)

<sup>550</sup> Lane (2001: 51)

<sup>551</sup> Loudness, intensity, width of frequency spectrum, etc.

<sup>552</sup> Indeed, this notion could also be applied to most of the soundscape sections in the *Lands and Genotypes* project as well as, to an extent, to *Padstow Cosmesis* and *Footsteps in the Wind* (and arguably to many soundscape compositions by other composers).

<sup>553</sup> As quoted in Balay (2004: 13)

describes it as an exploration of the “practices of representing a region; in its historicity and genealogy.”<sup>554</sup> Chorography bears a strong relationship to the traditions of land surveys and archival work as well as early anthropological and archaeological studies. It is also sometimes referred to as *deep mapping* or *temporal topography*.<sup>555</sup> In a broader sense, it is simply the ‘representation of space or place’. (Rohl, 2011) Creating representations “of the visible features of single parts of the *oecumene*, the inhabited world, was recognized by Ptolemy as the final aim of chorography. [...] Chorography was therefore intended to convey only a limited knowledge of the earth; an individual part rather than the whole, the secondary rather than the primary, quality rather than quantity.”<sup>556</sup> In *Mapping, the Body and Desire* (1999), Michael Charlesworth’s study of Christopher Packe’s early 18<sup>th</sup> century chorography of Kent reveals a process in which “choice of scale clarifies relations among selected phenomena and reveals patterns and harmonies invisible without such scalar manipulation.”<sup>557</sup> In other words, chorographic methods focus on the relationships between the elements that both inhabit and define a specific place, and attempts to uncover different patterns of interaction at a small, fragmentary, scale.

A sonic chorography would therefore attempt to highlight the features of a soundscape in its historicity, narratives, and selected details rather than aiming at a global, large-scale, representation of place, as perhaps geographers might. Discussing the historiographical character of chorography, Pearson and Shanks explain:

“In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries chorography was a term used to refer to antiquarian studies of topography, place, community, history, memory. [Chorography in a reflection of] eighteenth century antiquarian approaches to place, which included history, folklore, natural history and hearsay, the deep map attempts to record and represent the grain and patina of place through juxtapositions and interpenetrations of the historical and the contemporary, the political and the poetic, the discursive and the sensual; the conflation of oral testimony, anthology, memoir, biography, natural history and everything you might ever want to say about a place...”<sup>558</sup>

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<sup>554</sup> Shanks (2012)

<sup>555</sup> Cf. Helgerson (1992: 132)

<sup>556</sup> (Nutti, 1999: 90)

<sup>557</sup> (Cosgrove, 1999: 10)

<sup>558</sup> Pearson & Shanks (2001: 64-65)

Through exploratory actions, discovery, and decision-making (not knowing in advance what one might find), only an *instant* of the soundscape is recorded. Indeed, each sound thus results from the composer's subjective angle, capturing sonic interactions within the environment from her/his standpoint and possibly influenced by her/his agenda.<sup>559</sup> However, most interestingly, this change of scale as well as these 'lensing' and subjective methods of representation and enquiry might also help to uncover certain power relationships and social structures within the landscape and the architecture of the represented space:

“[Chorographs] tend to show details in a way to emphasize importance, status or function. For example, representing a city, a chorograph would likely show the buildings of the wealthy as tall and ornate, decreasing in height and detail until the buildings of the poor are depicted as small and simple. Churches would also be shown as tall and ornate, as would governmental buildings and military institutions. Thus, a chorographic representation typically illustrates class strata and sources of power and differentiates this from other aspects of the population. One can easily see that a chorographic representation is quite different from the usual ideas of maps studied in cartography.”<sup>560</sup>

Indeed, these contours and shapes are not only fragmentary by definition but also deemed to be volatile, because the phenomena they attempt to represent are in constant movement, which echoes Lucia Nuti's remark: “Chorography [can] offer only subjective records of ephemeral reality.”<sup>561</sup> In that sense, sonic chorographies would therefore become archival in nature: An historical enquiry, through field recordings, of fragments of the soundscape, to be re-interpreted and re-assessed anew each time as the social, cultural and historical contexts in which they are reproduced and experienced evolve and change.

This, in turn, seems to echo the indeterminate and ephemeral nature of the golem's schizo-narrative and its influence upon the ways in which the soundscape elements of *The Golem of Hereford* might be perceived and understood. Each iteration of the piece arguably triggers a new set of images, signifiers and memories, as a function of the random associations that might emerge as a result of the generative discourse created within the sound-work.

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<sup>559</sup> Here the microphone of the field recordist plays the role of the 're-scaling instrument'.

<sup>560</sup> Zimmer Lederberg (2015)

<sup>561</sup> Nuti (1999: 99-100)

The idea of sonic choreography as archive-making – embodied memories – resonates with Lane’s views<sup>562</sup> on the power of the soundscape to evoke and embody knowledge. However, when delving deeper into the ontology of embodiment, and in particular the embodiment of memory or the past, one might find oneself confronted with a paradox. The memory might be there but in what state? One might find that the capture of an object is inevitably an act of fragmentation and editing. Archive-making is always linked with a movement towards the subjectification of its core.<sup>563</sup> In other words, the archaeological object, like the perceptual object, might always be ontologically incomplete. It is someone’s memory, not something’s.<sup>564</sup>

### 5.2.1 Archives at work

In *Archive Fever* (1995), Jaques Derrida offers a thought-provoking take on the concepts of archiving and preserving and challenges the *a priori* self-contained, all-encompassing nature of the archive as an object of structured (or pure) memory. For Derrida, an archive is always fragmentary and fails to preserve memory without an external space of confinement and decipherment. The archive is hypomnesic. After all, it might only be a memorandum. According to Derrida, it is not a fully formed memory because:

“[...] the archive will never be either memory or anamnesis as spontaneous, alive and internal experience. On the contrary: the archive takes place at the place of originary and structural breakdown of the said memory. *There is no archive without a place of consignation, without a technique of repetition, and without a certain exteriority. No archive without outside.*”<sup>565</sup>

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<sup>562</sup> Amongst many others such as R. M. Schafer, H. Westerkamp, S. Feld, etc.

<sup>563</sup> See *Subjectification* in Deleuze & Guattari (1980: 131-164)

<sup>564</sup> In *Speech and Phenomena* (1973), Derrida somehow suggests a possible way out to this paradox when discussing Husserl’s theory of sign: “We have experienced the systematic interdependence of the concepts of sense, ideality, objectivity, truth, intuition, perception, and expression. Their common matrix is being as *presence*: the absolute proximity of self-identity, the being-in-front of the object available for repetition, the maintenance of the temporal present, whose ideal form is the self-presence of transcendental *life*, whose identity allows *idealiter* of infinite repetition. The living present, a concept that cannot be broken down into a subject and an attribute, is thus the conceptual foundation of phenomenology as metaphysics.” (1973: 99)

<sup>565</sup> Derrida (1995: 14) Italics in the original.

The sonic chorography sections also remain incomplete in that they do not provide a pure spontaneous and internal experience but instead call upon the listener's imaginative listening to complete and interpret them through repeated encounters. Memories are perhaps embedded rather than embodied. They need to be exteriorised. It is perhaps through the possibility of repetition and a process of identification that the paradox might be solved. Archives are malleable forms.

In her article entitled *The Sound of Memory* (2001), Leslie Morris provides an intriguing argument for the necessity of exploration of aural traces in relation to the *Shoah* and its subsequent sites of commemorations in Germany. In an attempt to overcome the ostensibly impossible rationality of a discourse about the Holocaust, Morris calls upon phonography and indeterminacy to address “what lies beyond language”<sup>566</sup>:

“Rather than joining in the repeated compulsive chorus of the trope of unspeakability (incommensurability or incomprehensibility) of the Holocaust, I place the focus instead on sites of indeterminacy, where meaning and reference are, as Libeskind famously insists, ‘voids’ [...] I think, that it is emblematic of the indeterminacy of referential meaning and the indeterminacy of art. Aesthetic and linguistic indeterminacy open up rather than close spaces for contemplating the vicissitudes of memory – visual and aural – after the Shoah.”<sup>567</sup>

In *Of Grammatology* (1967), Derrida also speaks of the object of phonography as the conservation of the spoken language and its characteristic is “to make it work outside the presence of the speaking subject.”<sup>568</sup> Speech is indeed central to *The Golem of Hereford* and the other sound-works of the *Lands and Genotypes* project. For Deleuze and Guattari, the first musical operation is “to machine the voice”<sup>569</sup>, and “words do not represent things so much as *intervene* in things, performing ‘incorporeal transformations’ of bodies through speech-actions”<sup>570</sup> In the sound-work, intermingled with each sonic chorography section we hear the schizophrenic voice of the golem,

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<sup>566</sup> Morris (2001: 371)

<sup>567</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>568</sup> Derrida (1967: 21)

<sup>569</sup> Deleuze & Guattari (1987: 303)

<sup>570</sup> *Ibid* p. 86

speaking with the tongue of another. As we will see, the power of disembodied voices to intervene and transform will prove fundamental in the comprehension of *The Golem of Hereford*.

### 5.3 Giving a Voice to the Creature: Interviewing the One Who Would *Become* the Golem

While working on the project in Hereford, I met a rather extraordinary character. Through our discussions, I discovered that we shared a common interest in myths and stories of absence, displacement and, in particular, another golem tale, the Golem of Brick Lane, i.e. David Rodinsky, who mysteriously disappeared without trace in the 1960s. His room was discovered undisturbed twenty years later and has more or less remained that way ever since. Rodinsky's room is now part of the *London Museum of Immigration*, situated at 19 Princelet Street, Brick Lane.<sup>571</sup>

Field recordings of Brick Lane are featured in the first and second sonic chorography sections of *The Golem of Hereford*. In the first part, these recordings are juxtaposed with other sounds from Hereford. In an attempt to evoke the idea of 'map' (as a sonic representation of the *Mappa Mundi*, Brick Lane, and Maylord Street) and the 'magic of words' bringing the golem back to life, I have placed four recordings of different recitations of the *Torah* at the four corners of the surround field. They represent the four cardinal points. Inspired by the layout of the *Mappa Mundi*, the listener is therefore facing south, and east is on his/her left. The four prayers are: *Behar* (from Uzbekistan, symbolising east); *Korach* (from *Central Synagogue*, New York, symbolising west); *Kaddish* in Sephardi (prayer for the dead, Tunisia, symbolising south); and *Kaddish* in Ashkenazi (from Brick Lane, symbolising north).

In 2010, I recorded a series of three interviews with the person I met in Hereford. Amongst other things, we talked about his life, about the golem of Brick Lane (Rodinsky), about psychoanalysis, and about his various professional experiences. What is important to note here is that his voice has then become the disembodied voice of the *Golem of Hereford*; and by extension, conceptually, this person somehow *became* the golem (as such, the sound subject of this

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<sup>571</sup> See Sinclair & Lichtenstein (1999: 191-197)

composition can be considered as a ‘conceptual persona’ *par excellence*...). Due to the nature of his past as well as his work, the interviewee has asked to remain anonymous. Nonetheless, the following elements were given to me in an e-mail correspondence with the intention of providing a summary of what was discussed during the recording sessions:

- [He] *spent a number of years in the army in various roles including jungle warfare instructor and intelligence work.*
- [He] *was diagnosed with OCD and medically discharged from the army.*
- [He] *suffered from severe depression and its consequences.*
- [He] *then became a psychotherapist specialising in working with veterans.*
- [He] *developed a fascination for the mystery surrounding the disappearance of David Rodinsky, the writings of Primo Levi and a curious affinity with the Brick Lane area.*
- [He] *feels a connection between the absence of his father and the Golem’s myth.*
- *As a soldier and keeper of secrets [He] perhaps feels like a golem himself.*
- [He] *has been living in Hereford for 30 years.*<sup>572</sup>

From the interviews, I gathered approximately three-and-a-half hours of recorded material. During the editing process I then realised that I did not want to choose what segments to include in the final piece and what should be left out. I wanted the whole interview to be potentially available for the listener. I therefore decided to move away from the generally fixed nature of my compositional practice and the way I usually edit and construct the schizo-narratives within it. As I will develop in the following paragraphs, this move towards a more ‘open form’, a more dynamic and indeterminate system, is also the result of a number of conceptual re-assessments of my creative practice as well as the particularities of the project in question. It was first motivated by a reflection on the very nature and potential of the cut-up and collage techniques (creating schizo-narratives) I had been using for many years and in particular a further investigation of two Deleuzian concepts, which played a pivotal role in the composition of *The Golem of Hereford: Bricolage* and the *Body without Organs*.

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<sup>572</sup> From e-mail correspondence, October 2012.

### 5.3.1 The Monster's Schizo-narrative: *Bricolage* and *Body Without Organs*

“The old idiot wanted truth, but the new idiot wants to turn the absurd into the highest power of thought – in other words, to create.” Deleuze and Guattari, *What is Philosophy?* (1994: 62)

In *Anti-Oedipus* (1983), Deleuze and Guattari refer to *bricolage* when discussing the modes of production of the early industrial era – the chaotic gesture of steam-powered engines quickly moves towards what resembles the mass-manufacturing of Frankenstein monsters or towards the “broadly *schizoid* tendencies of desire in a state of excess [where] everything functions at the same time, but amid hiatuses and ruptures [...] distances and fragmentations, within a sum that never succeeds in bringing its various parts together so as to form a whole.”<sup>573</sup> It is a disparate sum of material, *détourned*<sup>574</sup> from its original function or identity, and bearing relative disregard for internal coherence or territoriality. These objects of *détournement*, much like the unformed substance of the golems, are also malleable and mechanistic systems, subjected to re-appropriation and in constant motion. They are nomadic:

“A tinker’s assembly of amorphous collections of metal and junk, oblivious to the materials’ original purposes in industrial machinery. *Bricolage* thus involves the re-appropriation of familiar materials, into a chaotic assemblage that deviates from those materials’ expected purposes.”<sup>575</sup>

The three-and-a-half hours of recorded material has been edited into more than 2800 fragments. Each file was named individually according to its semantic content. The fragments of interview range from single words or breaths to short sentences. They were then organised into categories of ‘duration’ (*short / medium / long*), ‘thematic content’ (*father / army / golem / mental illness*), or

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<sup>573</sup> Deleuze & Guattari (1983: 42) Italics in the original.

<sup>574</sup> “Détourned” or “Détournement” (*deviation, diversion*) is a term coined by Guy Debord and the *Situationist International* movement of the 1960s. The method consisted in the re-contextualisation of existing objects, imagery, or texts by using collage/montage techniques or exhibiting the *détourned* artefact outside of its usual context. (Cf. Debord & Wolman, 1956) In the case of the golem’s schizo-narratives, the different interview fragments are *détourned* when associated with other unrelated utterances. A similar process happens between the soundscape sections and the overall ‘generated discourses’ of the golem.

<sup>575</sup> *Ibid* p. 7

‘syntactic attribute’ (beginning with the pronoun *he* or *she* for example). The computer program then uses random objects (generating random numbers using Brownian motion) to reassemble the different utterances together in real-time. It is through this process of *bricolage*, randomisation, and assemblage that the disembodied voice of the golem is constructed.

Each schizo-narrative section follows a specific stochastic strategy where the different utterances are linked so as to form a new semantic montage every time. Nevertheless the process is not completely random. The dice are slightly loaded. Each section addresses a particular *theme*. The first one, for example, explores the theme: ‘Father’. It means that fragments of interviews where the word “father” is mentioned or alluded to are more likely to be picked and played at different points during that specific section (see Fig. 2 and 3 below). Categories of duration such as *short/medium/long* are used for two purposes: on the one hand they help to create a certain dynamic in the rhythm or delivery of the golem’s speech (for example by alternating short bursts with longer statements); on the other hand they act as semantic deviations. The absence of semantic classification of the latter categories allows the narrative to take a different turn at any point. Even if the schizo-narrative might possess a topography – or at least the outlines of one – where the discourse is directed towards particular semantic elements, the random cut-ups allow for a total exploration of the entire (fragmented) voice material, thus favouring *unexpected* encounters and the formation of new associations.

The following two *figures* show an example of how the generative schizo-narratives are constructed and the general structure of *The Golem of Hereford*

Fig.2 Example of the structure of 2 Generative Schizo-narratives

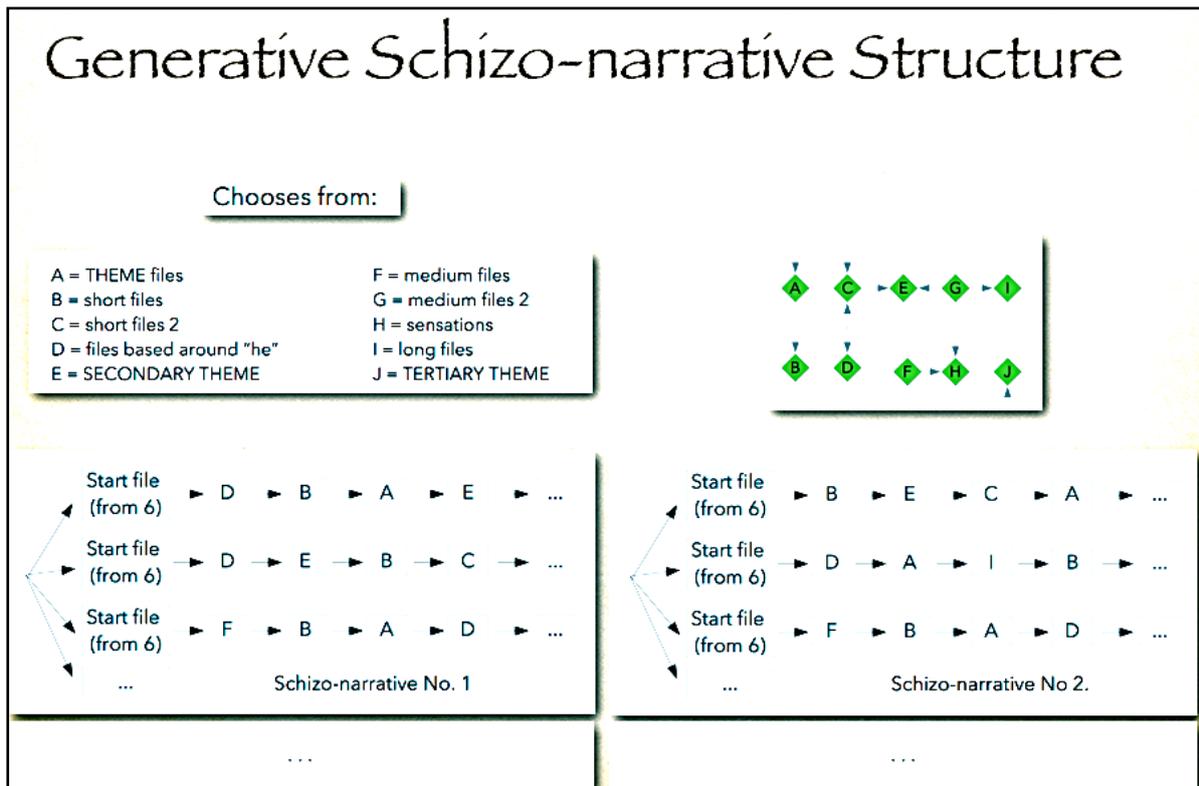
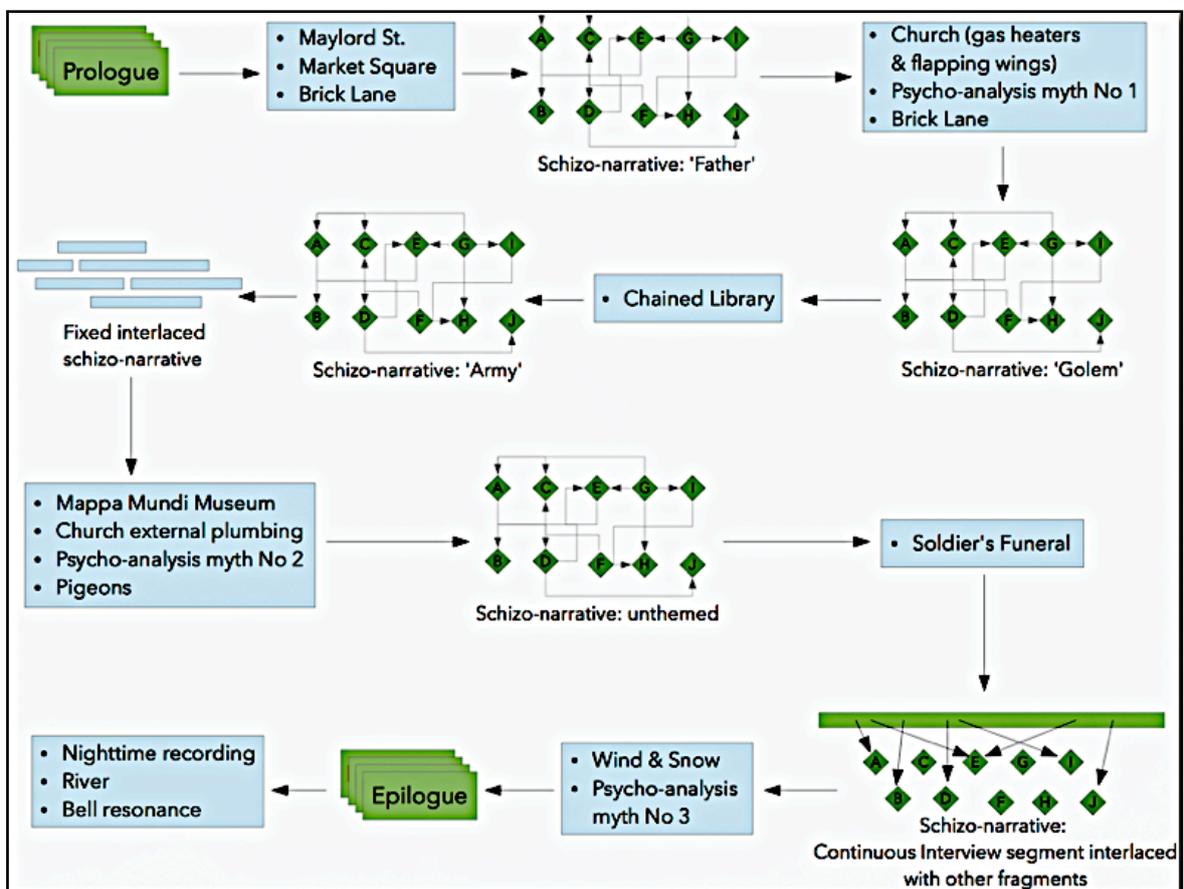


Fig.3 Structure of the generative elements in relation to the sonic chorographies



Textual indeterminacy and word collages have many historical precedents. From Mallarmé's poetry, Burroughs' Cut-ups, the *poésie directe* (or *poésie action*) of Bernard Heidsiek and Jean-Jacques Lebel at POLYPHONIX<sup>576</sup>, the theatre of Beckett and Artaud, to the disembodied voices of Godard's *Pierrot le Fou* (1965) or *Allemagne 90 neuf zero* (1991), Drever's *John Gray: The Last Lyric Documentarist* (2007), Wynne's *Hearing Voices* (2004), Schwartz' *Nancy Grows Up* (1970) and Cage's *A year from Monday* (1967), and many more, the text has been manipulated, dismembered, and dislocated time and time again. Guy Debord reflects on collage practices and remarks:

“The discoveries of modern poetry regarding the analogical structure of images demonstrate that when two objects are brought together, no matter how far apart their original contexts may be, a relationship is always formed. Restricting oneself to a personal arrangement of words is mere convention. The mutual interference of two worlds of feeling, or the juxtaposition of two independent expressions, supersedes the original elements and produces a synthetic organization of greater efficacy.”<sup>577</sup>

The voice of *The Golem of Hereford*, like many amorphous collages, is imbued with certain aspects of monstrosity. The monster in question is a creature constituted of disparate and moving parts. Yet these parts somehow come from a single source material. The golem is therefore a monster whose own internal structure (or its internal dialogue) is made of malleable matter that has ceased to function as a purely regulated organism. Its internal coherence is subjected to constant manipulation and allows the emergence of non-sensical stances.<sup>578</sup> The *détournement* happens from the inside. The fixed parts (such as the sonic chorography sections) remain in place but are nonetheless distorted or re-contextualised by their different interactions with the aleatoric schizo-narratives – the monstrous, disembodied voice – of the golem. This seems to resonate with the double conundrum of *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. One changes while the other remains the same. Nevertheless these attributes are only exterior manifestations. Gray's skin remains slick yet his mind continues to age and his sanity slowly decays. The portrait changes form, but its essence remains intact: “Dorian's portrait confers visibility upon internal corruption that otherwise escapes sensory apprehension. The full-length portrait behaves, in Wilde's conspicuous phrasing, as ‘a

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<sup>576</sup> Cf. Lebel & Labelle-Rojoux (1994) and Wendt (1985: 13-15)

<sup>577</sup> Debord & Wolman ‘A User's Guide to *Détournement*’ (1956), in *Situationist International Anthology* (2006)

<sup>578</sup> Jean-Jacques Lecercle offers a compelling reflection on the mechanisms of non-sensical literature and notes: “Conversation, dialogue and verbal struggle are the explicit or surface manifestations of the constitutive dialogism of the text. [...] Only the utterance, as opposed to the proposition, has full meaning, because it expects a response. [...] Language is unified only in so far as it is an abstract grammatical system.” (1994: 191)

mirror that mirrors the soul' [...] ”<sup>579</sup> Indeed, it leads us to wonder: Who is *really* real? Gray, or the portrait?

“Is it the real Dorian?” cried the original of the portrait, running across to [Basil].  
“Am I really like that?”  
“Yes; you are just like that.”  
“How wonderful, Basil!”<sup>580</sup>

The golem’s monstrosity, as well as the oscillating uncertainty between stillness and “internal corruption” – a constant mutation of the *inside* – might however constitute a powerful asset to evoke the deraciné experience of the diasporic self.<sup>581</sup> Daniel Punday notes that the figure of the monster, and the term itself, was first used as a means to *show*, to *expose*, to *render public* aspects of physical or psychological deformity or mental prowess, social awkwardness or alienation. It is therefore critical to consider that *monster* is a term linked with “the French term *montrer*, to demonstrate. In this sense, monstrosity is a fact that must be interpreted by considering what message it sends. [...] The monstrous body is assured of meaning because of its participation within a nexus of traditional assumptions about nature and humanity.”<sup>582</sup> The *bricolage* that makes up the schizo-narratives of *The Golem of Hereford*<sup>583</sup> plays a fundamental role in enabling the golem to communicate its alienation. The schizo-narrative, using its internal malleable and mechanistic deformity as an instrument, thus allows the listener to perhaps reflect on his own sense of displacement. Punday further explains:

“Literary monsters serve to challenge the homogeneity of society by revealing its tension, inconsistencies, and gaps. Contemporary theory, as well as popular culture, is clearly in sympathy with the monster story’s goal of revealing social disunity through bodily multiplicity. More than ever we are aware of our bodies as constructions dependent upon technology and social expectation.”<sup>584</sup>

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<sup>579</sup> Craft (2005: 114)

<sup>580</sup> Oscar Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1890: 194)

<sup>581</sup> A distant (home)land might change, physically, culturally, while remaining forever the same in one’s mind; or one might ‘change’ and find oneself feeling like an ‘outsider’ when returning to a former home place.

<sup>582</sup> Punday (2001: 804)

<sup>583</sup> Through the generative algorithms of the computer program reorganising the fragments of interviews

<sup>584</sup> *Ibid* p.803

Monsters threaten *normality*. When created, they address both “the personal dreams of their makers and the collective dreams of their audiences.”<sup>585</sup> They are systems of irregularity. In a masochistic and schizoid movement, we are drawn to them. Every copy of the monster is unique, no two performances of *The Golem of Hereford* are the same. This tension between the notion of *bricolage*, the monstrosity of the golem’s schizo-narratives, and the (fixed) sonic choreography sections, works as an articulated body whose skin remains in place while its internal dialogue is in constant struggle, never stable, never regulated, never repeatable as a solid state: a *Body without Organs*:

“Man is sick for he is badly put together. We must make up our minds to strip him bare in order to scrape off that animalcule that itches him mortally, god, and with god his organs. For you can tie me up if you wish, but there is nothing more useless than an organ. When you will have made him a body without organs, then you will have delivered him from all his automatic reactions and restored him to his true freedom. [...] To be done with the judgment of god”<sup>586</sup>

The process “is already under way the moment the body has had enough of organs and wants to slough them off, or loses them.”<sup>587</sup> The term was first used by French playwright and artist Antonin Artaud. He used the notion of *Body without Organs* for actors who do not adhere to the transcendence of an author (such as the intention or the development of a play), or the transcendence of a text (dialogues), or the transcendence of an audience (its anticipated reaction and social codes), but for actors who bear the play from within themselves. In his article *Immanence and Deterritorialization*, Stephan Günzel describes the *Body without Organs* in relation to Artaud’s theatre practice:

“In his idea of a ‘Theater of Cruelty’ Artaud wants not only every performance to be unique with regard to the structure of the play, but also wants the actors to give birth to sounds, voices, languages and gestures which are not rehearsed, but have to be produced anew each time. Phenomena such as hypochondria, drug consumption, paranoia or schizophrenia appear to be attempts ‘to make yourself a Body Without Organs’.”<sup>588</sup>

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<sup>585</sup> Friedman (1984: 49)

<sup>586</sup> Artaud, excerpt from ‘Pour en Finir Avec le Jugement de Dieu’ [1947] in *Selected Writings* (1988: 570)

<sup>587</sup> Deleuze & Guattari (1983: 150)

<sup>588</sup> Günzel (1998)

For Deleuze and Guattari, the *Body without Organs* consists of an assemblage or body with no particular or fixed organisational principles, and hence no organs within it. A body but not an organism. “In other words, the unformed, unorganized, nonstratified, or destratified body and all its flows.”<sup>589</sup> *The Golem of Hereford* is indeed an assemblage. The schizo-narrative of the golem ties together heterogeneous or disparate elements. As *Body without Organs*, it provides the smooth space<sup>590</sup> through which movement can occur. Rather than the unifying principles of a system of organisation, it is a system of embodiment which is constituted through principles of consolidation. The different edits of interviews randomly bind to each other so as to form new syntactic connections. Furthermore, the stochastic strategies and programming<sup>591</sup> ensure that transitions between utterances always remain as seamless as possible.

Nevertheless, the assemblage of the golem’s voice is still “a decentred body that has ceased to function as a coherently regulated organism, one that is sensed as an ecstatic, catatonic, [...] degree of intensity.”<sup>592</sup> The discourse might deviate towards the awkward or the non-sensical, or by chance produce an illusion of (semantic and rhythmic) continuity. This assemblage might also be a territory and a system of representation.<sup>593</sup> According to Deleuze, the “territory is made of decoded fragments of all kinds, which are borrowed from the milieus but then assume the value of ‘properties’, even rhythms take on a new meaning (refrains).”<sup>594</sup> The assemblage and *bricolage* of the sonic chorography sections and the golem’s schizo-narratives together crystallise the issues of

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<sup>589</sup> Deleuze & Guattari (1987: 49)

<sup>590</sup> Smooth space refers to an environment, a landscape (or soundscape) in which a subject operates. In contrast to ‘striated’ space – a partitioned field of movement which prohibits free motion – smooth space is conducive to free form trajectories and *nomadic* movement: “Smooth space is filled by events or haecceities, far more than by formed and perceived things. It is a space of affects, more than one of properties. It is *haptic* rather than optical perception. [...] A *Body without Organs* instead of an organism and organization. [...] Perception in it is based on symptoms and evaluations rather than measures and properties. That is why smooth space is occupied by intensities, wind and noise, forces and sonorous and tactile qualities [...]” Deleuze & Guattari (1987: 479)

<sup>591</sup> Using fast dynamic envelopes and fades / cross-fades for example.

<sup>592</sup> Deleuze & Guattari (1983: 329) in Buchanan (2004: 110)

<sup>593</sup> In *The Deleuze-Guattarian assemblage: plastic habits* (2011), John-David Dewsbury, drawing on Kaufman (1998), explains: “First, take assemblage as a mode of thinking; you thus research through *thinking assemblages* whereby this is about a ‘rhizomatic or nomadic thought’ forging ‘linkages or connections between different systems of knowledge-formation’ (Kaufman, 1998: 5) rearticulating the way we see [hear], understand and thus live the world. [...] Second, assemblages are about how individual organisms (humans, for example) and objects are understood in terms of the *intensive environment* in which they emerge.” (2011: 148) See also: *Deleuze and Guattari, New Mappings in Politics, Philosophy and Culture*. (1998)

<sup>594</sup> Deleuze & Guattari (1987: 555)

perception of any heterogeneous object designed to evoke or revive the past. This multifaceted object:

“[...] postulates intersubjective communication and the transmission of meaning, but it refuses the literal character of representation and the direct accessibility of its meaning. Just like collage, montage is a destruction of reality; but when collage, insisting on the heterogeneous superficial character of the summoned-up fragments, plays the hand of *provocation* (the rapture of the rupture), montage is an inducement to rediscover the network of signification that organizes them”<sup>595</sup>.

Coming back to my analogy of *Un Coups de Dés Jamais N’abolira le Hasard* – I would suggest that the sonic chorography sections perhaps also embody the whiteness that surrounds Mallarmé’s verses, and allow for the topography of the open poem to become apparent. In *The Golem of Hereford*, sonic chorographies and schizo-narratives intertwine to give each other new meanings in a particular way: they connect so as to fabricate a myth.

#### 5.4 Conclusion: Inert Gases (nonsense, *unmakeable* beings, and malleable identities)

“The old idiot wanted to be accountable only to reason, but the new idiot, closer to Job than to Socrates, wants account to be taken of ‘every victim of History’ [...] the new idiot wants the lost, the incomprehensible, and the absurd to be restored to him”  
Deleuze and Guattari, *What is Philosophy?* (1994: 62-63)

Through my practice as a sound artist and throughout this dissertation, I have endeavoured to tackle the tension between oral testimony, expression of self, remembrance, historiography and identity. From the problematic soundscapes of the *Schindler’s List Tour* and the schizo-narratives of the Richardson twins, to the polyphony of voices and meanings of the Obby Oss ritual and the socio-political environment of the Padstonian community, I have explored a series of cases wherein history and identity are expressed, perceived, and investigated in a number of ways. One of the most fascinating elements for me is the intricate relationship between *true* and invented memories. Most of the time, the delineation between the two is imperceptible. As Mary Midgley observes, our

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<sup>595</sup> Jacques Thomas, in Norman (1996: 18)

imaginative visions “are not a distraction from our serious thinking but a necessary part of it.”<sup>596</sup> Imagined, invented and *true* memories are an integral part of our understanding of ourselves and the world around us. In myths they collide to become indistinguishable.

According to Midgley, although we are accustomed to think of myths as the opposite of science, they are in fact a central part of it. “Myths are not lies. Nor are they detached stories. They are imaginative patterns, networks of powerful symbols that suggest particular ways of interpreting the world. They shape its meaning.”<sup>597</sup> Once again, the potential of imagination is summoned to characterise humankind’s natural inclination towards explaining history and the phenomena it encounters through myth-making. In Chapters II and III of this dissertation, we have indeed seen many examples of this.

Drawing on the ways in which different cultures relate to their environment and how myths do not necessarily require religious thinking to emerge and retain their meaning, Midgley stresses the fact that even “in cultures where deities are involved, they are often expressions of the natural human tendency to personify rather than damaging forms of superstition.”<sup>598</sup> Much like Derrida’s reflection on the exteriority, subjectification and hypomnesic qualities of archives, myths might be considered as active processes of personification and symbolic constructs. *The Golem of Hereford* not only contains a series of myths (*golem/Rodinsky/absent father/versions of the ‘myth of psychoanalysis’*<sup>599</sup>), it also functions as a myth itself. Like a set of Matryoshka dolls, the telescopic nature of this generative sound-work constitutes a paradigm of infinite variations<sup>600</sup>; but somehow variations of the same. *The Golem of Hereford* aims to invite the listener to personify and conjure the schizoid monstrosity of the golem’s narratives in order to make sense of the work and, much like the Deleuzian ‘new idiot’, to eventually restore “the lost, the incomprehensible, and the absurd”<sup>601</sup>.

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<sup>596</sup> Midgley (2011: xii)

<sup>597</sup> *Ibid* p. 1

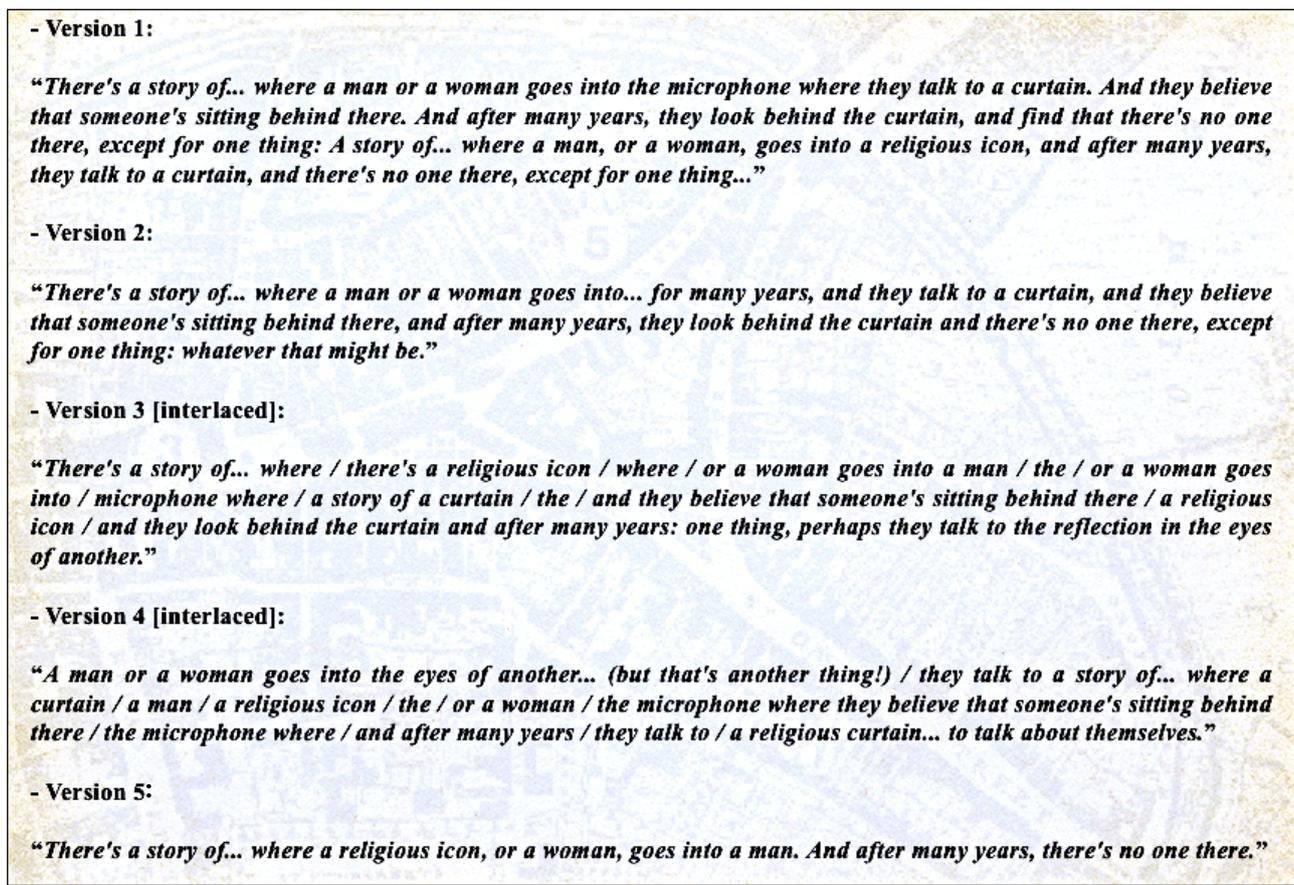
<sup>598</sup> *Ibid* p. 248

<sup>599</sup> See *Transcript of the versions of the ‘myth of psychoanalysis’ in The Golem of Hereford* in Fig. 4 of this chapter.

<sup>600</sup> Following the ‘matryoshka principle’: A myth inside a myth inside a myth... a golem inside a golem inside a golem... a memory inside a memory inside a memory... etc...

<sup>601</sup> Deleuze and Guattari (1994: 63)

Fig. 4 Transcript of the versions of the ‘myth of psychoanalysis’ in The Golem of Hereford



In his article entitled *Myth, Method, and Madness* (1975), Morris Freilich draws on Lévi-Strauss’ structural analysis of myths and develops a method he calls: ‘Non-sense-in-myth strategy’. Freilich agrees with Lévi-Strauss and Midgley about the fact that myths, everywhere, essentially share the same purpose. According to Freilich, they exist: “to resolve the dilemmas and the paradoxes which pervade human existence. Perhaps because their message is timeless, explaining the present, the past, and the future, myths communicate in code. [...] Myth, in short, is a tension-reduction tool, a vital system for the maintenance of human sanity.”<sup>602</sup>

In *Padstow Cosmesis*, *Anseriformes Twins* and *The Golem of Hereford*, the schizo-narrative is also a political voice. Its non-sensical surface may in fact be simply the result of a logic of repeated metonymy: one utterance for another, one sentence for another, one sound for another, one myth for

<sup>602</sup> Freilich (1975: 207 - 209)

another. Jean-Jacques Lecercle acknowledges the fact that nonsense also belongs to the political voice – where rhetoric is key – as well as poetry, and remarks that: “within this abstract grammatical language there emerges a concrete historical language, harbouring a multitude of worlds, of literary, ideological and social perspectives. Nonsense as a genre is like language in this: from within the abstract formal characterisation of the genre, a multitude of discourses, of literary and ideological perspectives, develops.”<sup>603</sup> For Gregory Whitehead, drawing on Beckett’s *Texts for Nothing* (1952), the nonsensical, political voice is a voice of identity, an impossible voice, the voices of the ‘*unmakeable* beings’, which he describes as:

“misarticulated nervous systems caught, at loose ends, in the wrong place at the wrong time, stop time, deep time, drive time; beings driven by the will to communicate with some distant, unnameable and perhaps unspeakable other; beings who, like Hamlet, spin out into the fathomless headache unleashed by that most simple, and yet most terrifying question, who *is* there?”<sup>604</sup>

As acknowledged by Ruben Moi, the indeterminate nature of Beckett’s political voice posits identity in constant uncertainty: “a voice to no place.”<sup>605</sup> In a movement that resembles the mechanics of myth-making, *Texts for Nothing* address their subject by embracing conflicting and often contradictory stances. Moi suggests that *Texts for Nothing* – within, but also perhaps beyond the *nonsensical* and the *indeterminate* – are indeed a response to post-war existentialist crisis:

“In *Texts for Nothing* the recognizable world of an alienated subject is already left behind, and the many interrogatives and contradictions engage with the moribund, the dying, and the many elsewheres beyond in an increasing annihilation of identity, narrativity and linguistic coherence. These thirteen installments of narrathanotography explode the metaphysics of auto-identification, and posit the development of self upon the processes of alterity, [and] the complexities of linguistic variance, [...] where the possibilities and the significance of life and death can not be ascertained. *Texts for Nothing* suggest an implicit critique of the indomitable I and the metaphysics of being of existentialism, they issue a reminder of the utter despair in the aftermath of WWII and the Holocaust, and they disclose the flaws of ideologies of progression, positivism and utilitarianism.”<sup>606</sup>

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<sup>603</sup> Lecercle (1994: 191)

<sup>604</sup> Whitehead (1997: 40)

<sup>605</sup> Beckett (1952) in Whitehead (1997: 40) “And were there one day to be here, where there are no days, which is no place, born of the impossible voice the *unmakeable* being, and a gleam of light, still all would be silent and empty and dark, as now, as soon now, when all will be ended, all said, it says, it murmurs.” Beckett, *Text for Nothing* #13 in Whitehead (1997: 40)

<sup>606</sup> Moi (2011: 151-152)

The schizo-narratives of *The Golem of Hereford* attempt to speak *the unspeakable* – of absence and alienation. Meaning is left in a state of syntactic indeterminacy where the disembodied voice of the golem, far from carrying the authoritative *voice of the author*, embraces the ‘internal corruption’, and the possibility of nonsensical manipulations of signs and signifiers, of myth-making.

I opened this chapter with a quote from Primo Levi’s novel: *The Periodic Table*. Levi’s reflection on the *New*, the *Hidden*, the *Inactive*, the *Alien*, seems to deeply resonate with most of those who are *déracinés*, uprooted and dispersed. According to Ivan Illich, “all living is dwelling, the shape of a dwelling. To dwell means to live the traces that past living has left. The traces of dwellings survive, as do the bones of people.”<sup>607</sup> Sometimes, these traces (or these sonic remains) can be particularly difficult to excavate. The vanished Jewish community of Hereford is just one such example. From the double-consciousness of the *Black Atlantic*<sup>608</sup> to the situation of Roms<sup>609</sup> in Europe, whether because one is part of a diasporic community, or for any other reason, the sentiment of not being totally *situated*, of belonging to several places at once, or sometimes perhaps to no place at all, is an experience many of us share. For these reasons, the unstable territory of disembodied voices – as explored in *The Golem of Hereford*, and also more generally throughout *Lands and Genotypes*, *Footsteps in the Wind* and *Padstow Cosmesis* – might in turn constitute a fertile ground for nomadic dwellings and explorations of memories and identities; an attempt to conjure up these ‘inert gases’ – the little we know about our ancestors. It certainly speaks to my own *déraciné* experience.

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<sup>607</sup> Illich (1982: 119)

<sup>608</sup> “It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one’s self through the eyes of others, of measuring one’s soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his two-ness,—an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder.” (Du Bois, 1994 [1903]: 2) See also Gilroy (1993: 190-197)

<sup>609</sup> I use here the term *Roms* (meaning ‘men’ or ‘people’ in Romani language) as the term ‘gypsy’ is considered derogatory by many members of the Roma community because of its negative and stereotypical associations.

## Chapter VI

### Conclusion:

#### Myth, Schizo-narratives, Sonic Chorographies and the Territory of Disembodied Voices

“The totality of the true is made up of multiple persons: the uniqueness of each way of hearing bearing the secret of the text; the voice of Revelation, precisely as it is inflected in the ear of each person, would be necessary to the All of truth.” Emmanuel Levinas, *Beyond the Verse* (1982: 49)

According to Roland Barthes, meaning (*la signification*) “is the myth itself, just as the Saussurian sign is the word itself.”<sup>610</sup> In this case, myth is more a unit than an assemblage. For Barthes, contrary to how it may seem, myth does not hide anything. Myth does not necessitate an unconscious. It is a distorting machine instead. Its attribute is “to deform, not to erase.”<sup>611</sup> Myths are *significations* that embrace nonsense and show next to no concern for internal coherence. *The Golem of Hereford as Body without Organs* presents many similarities with Lévi-Strauss, Barthes, and Freilich’s views. Its fragmentary, contradictory and non-regulated self is key to both the golem’s aesthetic and its power to address, embody, evoke and perhaps even question the notions of memory and history. For Lévi-Strauss, in myths, behind all sense there is nonsense: “behind the obvious sense of the ‘story’, non-sense exists in the form of coded messages.”<sup>612</sup> In *The Raw and The Cooked*, the ‘final meaning’ of mythological thought is addressed through a reflection on the structure of the mind itself and an evocation of the raw material of ‘nature’, including geophonic and biophonic elements, and their relationship to the building blocks of language and storytelling:

“[M]yths signify the mind that evolves them by making use of the world of which it is itself part. Thus, there is simultaneous production of myths themselves, by the mind that generates them and, by the myths, of an image of the world which is already inherent in the structure of the mind [...]. By taking its raw material from nature, mythic thought

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<sup>610</sup> Barthes (1957: 194) [my translation]

<sup>611</sup> *Ibid* [my translation]

<sup>612</sup> Lévi-Strauss (1963: 209) in Freilich (1975: 207)

proceeds in the same way as language, which chooses phonemes from among the natural sounds of which a practically unlimited range is to be found in childish babbling.”<sup>613</sup>

The generative schizo-narratives of *The Golem of Hereford* are built through coding and the use of aleatory functions. The semantic discourse of the golem, even in instances where it appears coherent, is also coded. Yet, the armature of myth perhaps constitutes an inversion of the golem’s *Body without Organs* and Freilich explains:

“Loose threads join up one another, gaps are closed, connections are established and something resembling order is seen to be emerging from the chaos. Sequences arranged in transformational groups, as if around a germinal molecule, join up with the initial group and reproduce its structure and determinative tendencies. Thus is brought into being a multi-dimensional body, whose central parts disclose a structure, while uncertainty and confusion continue to prevail along its periphery.”<sup>614</sup>

This *Body without Organs* therefore becomes a perceptual object, an exteriority, a territory. What remains of the golem and of the myth is their transformative power. They are malleable forms because in myth: “The smart is constantly transformed into the proper, (repeated process). [...] The function of myth is better considered as transformation function.”<sup>615</sup> Myths are unfixed stories – like historical discourses, they evolve with time and depend upon how often the story has been told and who is telling it. The testimonial nature of golem’s schizo-narratives, as transformative archive-making, as what Deleuze would refer to as a *nomad science*<sup>616</sup>, or perhaps an aleatory machine, both preserves and transforms our notion of the past. Every time the myth is told, part of it is lost while new elements emerge. It forms a series of potentially conflicting trajectories whose interactions, points of convergence and divergent pathways are an attempt to interrogate our

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<sup>613</sup> Lévi-Strauss (1969: 341)

<sup>614</sup> Freilich (1975: 208)

<sup>615</sup> *Ibid* p. 209

<sup>616</sup> For Deleuze and Guattari, ‘Nomadism’ (or *nomad science*) is a way of life that exists outside of the organisational “State.” The nomadic way of life is characterised by movement across space which exists in sharp contrast to the rigid and static boundaries of the State: “The nomad has a territory; he follows customary paths; he goes from one point to another; he is not ignorant of points (water points, dwelling points, assembly points, etc.). But the question is what in nomad life is a principle and what is only a consequence. To begin with, although the points determine paths, they are strictly subordinated to the paths they determine, the reverse happens with the sedentary. The water point is reached only in order to be left behind; every point is a relay and exists only as a relay. A path is always between two points, but the in-between has taken on all the consistency and enjoys both an autonomy and a direction of its own. The life of the nomad is the intermezzo.” (1987: 380) The nomad is thus a way of being in the middle or between points. It is characterised by movement and change, and is unfettered by systems of organisation.

perception of history. Each rendering of *The Golem of Hereford*, each listening of *Lands and Genotypes*, provide a new account, a new set of facts and associations, an ‘unformed’ testimony that tears apart the authoritative (disembodied) voice in favour of the creation of symbols, identification processes, and multiplicity.

Drawing on the late writings of Merleau-Ponty and the thinking of Levinas, philosopher David Kleinberg-Levin (2008) proposes a metaphysics of the voice and the body in which he posits that behind each voice, a multitude of other voices – hiding in the shadow of ostensible uniqueness – can be heard “like the echo of a sound that would precede the resounding of this sound.”<sup>617</sup> In other words, despite being an oral expression of the Self and of one’s identity, every utterance, the *grain* of one’s voice, all the verbal and non-verbal textures that emerge from our vocal cords, still bear the remnants, the *empreinte*, of what came before us and what surrounds us. This process, Kleinberg-Levin says, might be described and understood as:

“[...] a deep topography, or palimpsest, of the intersubjective body: a body belonging as much to preceding and future generations – to the dead and the yet unborn – as to those living in the present, including myself. For when I listen to the voice I call ‘my own’, I can hear within it a congregation of voices, the voices of my ancestors, my family, my teachers, my friends, my compatriots, even the voices of poets from distant lands and distant times, each voice with its own distinctive claim on my response-ability.”<sup>618</sup>

For Kleinberg-Levin, the voice itself might therefore be considered as a trace; a trace of ourselves as well as an echo of the ‘presence’ of others, past, present, and future. At the same time, speech itself acts like the writing of the word *emet* (אמת) that awakens the golem: “for the breath breathes life into the inert materiality of the written words, and each voice that lends itself to these words, being the expression of a singular individual, contributes its unique experience of the truth to the life of the whole.”<sup>619</sup>

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<sup>617</sup> Levinas (AE 142, OB 112) as quoted in Kleinberg-Levin (2008: 209)

<sup>618</sup> Kleinberg-Levin (2008: 208 - 209)

<sup>619</sup> *Ibid* p. 156

Kleinberg-Levin's metaphysical considerations are perhaps to be taken metaphorically or figuratively rather than literally. However, the idea of linking voices – with each other as much as with their environments – is certainly interesting in relation to the notion of *tessera process* briefly discussed in Chapter IV. We might identify with each other through the perception of an other's schizophrenic voice and their intimate, personal soundscape, and we do so while hearing the distant echoes of a constellation of other voices and environments, including our own; and including imagined ones. This linking of the distant and the close, of the centre (the disembodied voice) and the peripheral (its sonic environment)<sup>620</sup>, of the imagined and the sensory, and the various unpredictable semantic trajectories that emerge from it, constitutes a territory where *meaning* is in constant formation but never ossifies. This is another defining element of the territory of disembodied voices:

“There is always a place, a tree or a grove, in the territory where all the forces come together in a hand-to-hand combat of energies. The earth is this close embrace. This intense center is simultaneously inside the territory, and outside several territories that converge on it at the end of an immense pilgrimage (hence the ambiguity of the “natal”). Inside or out, the territory is linked to this intense center, which is like the unknown homeland, terrestrial source of all forces friendly and hostile, where everything is decided.”<sup>621</sup>

The territory of disembodied voices is thus a field of interaction whose borders are porous, inhabited by (indeterminate, transient) perceptual objects, a multitude of fields. It is a bodily space as well as a cognitive one. Its acousmatic identity is always in movement as the territory extends, shrinks, changes shape, as new elements appear and others are omitted, and our perception and understanding of its narrative(s) are always contingent and temporary; often embracing confusions, nonsense and conflicting stances:

“[...] It will often be in what appears to be nonsense that the limits of language – limits that are also its conditions of possibility – are encountered, offering fertile ground for the transformation of all-too-settled experience. [...] Can there be knowledge of the world without the imagination? Can there be truth without fiction?”<sup>622</sup>

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<sup>620</sup> Indeed, this statement could be reversed: the centre may be a soundscape and voices may be on its periphery.

<sup>621</sup> Deleuze & Guattari (1987: 354)

<sup>622</sup> Kleinberg-Levin (2008: 10 - 11)

The disembodied voice of *The Golem of Hereford*, the armada of myths and origins of the Obby Oss, the multiple and ever-changing narratives of the Hejnał, Kazimierz and Auschwitz, and the conceptual personae of *Lands and Genotypes*, and all of their surrounding sonic chorographies, metaphorically behave like a diaspora; scattered, displaced, nomadic, migrating from one story to another. They question our perception of the past, and interrogate how we perceive each other's 'homes'; how we perceive ourselves and each other:

“A dynamic and processual view of home is crucial to the global nomad. [...] The specificity of these processes, their freedom and structure, [...] are entirely contextual. These are but some of the processes of everyday life.”<sup>623</sup>

Through these schizo-narratives, these *bricolages*, we might hear a version of our own self-narrative; a (possibly inverted) sonic image of ourselves in a gesture that might resemble Lacan's remark: “Human language constitutes a communication in which the emitter receives from the receiver his own message in an inverted form.”<sup>624</sup>

### Further reflections

Throughout this dissertation, and through an exploration of my own composition practice, I hope to have shown some of the potential for phonography to uncover, address and interrogate issues of historiography, myth, memory, narrative and identity. Through these assemblages of field recordings, interview fragments, archives – either fixed or using generative techniques – I have endeavoured to engage with the sounding of what Hayden Lorimer (2005) describes as “our self-evidently more-than-human, more-than-textual, multisensual worlds”<sup>625</sup>

However, most crucially, I have also tried to tackle the *deeply* human, the fallible, the myth, the unstable and the malleable. I have often been focussing on the chorographical small-scale and the

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<sup>623</sup> Wise (2010: 307)

<sup>624</sup> Lacan (2001: 365)

<sup>625</sup> (2005: 83)

fragmentary to find the sound material to work with; always with the intention to explore and decipher some of the socio-political aspects of the various places I have visited, the poignant and contrasting voices of the people I have met along the way; and the multitude of histories that coexist within our understanding of these places, within these myths, artefacts and architectures, and within these constructed narratives.

Through an investigation of these fields of interaction (these *tessera* processes), I have tackled the phenomena that participate in the constellation of meanings arising from the collisions of field recordings, fragmented disembodied voices and the imagination of the listener. According to Salomé Voegelin:

“Exciting field recording does not record the field but produces a plurality of fields. It neither abandons the reality of the recorded, nor does it take it for granted, but works with it, responds to it, understands it as one imprint in the landscape made by the body of the recordist and retraced tentatively by the listener. This listener in turn generates a new imprint between the heard and the recorded, listening to the authenticity of a particular rendition rather than its source, and embracing interpretation as part of the actuality of the real.”<sup>626</sup>

In the making of *Footsteps in the Wind* and *Padstow Cosmesis* for example, I have explored the potential of soundscape composition to address socio-historical struggles and debates, to actively engage with ‘the messy and political human sphere’. A practice that calls for ‘more than listening’, and more than the words it contains, to acquire its significance. (As such, this text is itself an integral part of my composition practice, my own disembodied voice added to the ‘territory’.) This engagement is also perhaps a response to the “need to give something back to [the] environment; a reciprocal relationship, not simply a one-way plunder.”<sup>627</sup> Composing with schizo-narratives and sonic chorographies (*bricolage*), I hope to have also shown how the sonic environment might be explored through plurality, even contradiction, as an unstable milieu, to be interpreted anew each time it is experienced. Similarly, acousmatic identities always remain

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<sup>626</sup> Voegelin (2014)

<sup>627</sup> Drever (1999: 28) Drever, here, attempts to reconcile (his) artistic practice with the capture and exploitation of these “tangible ghosts”. He urges us to develop “the utmost awareness of our actions’ ramifications on society, with our ears and eyes wide open, and to respond appropriately to that awareness.” (*Ibid*) Throughout my various composition projects, I have certainly been dealing with numerous ‘tangible ghosts’ of my own...

unresolved, unfixed, for they emerge from this turbulent and volatile *Body without Organs*: the territory of disembodied voices.

As we have seen in Chapters III and V particularly, I have also been dealing with the encounter of tangible *absence*, the absence of trace and sonic remains in Hereford and Kazimierz, the ‘ghostly desertedness’ of Padstow in winter; or on the contrary, with the presence of noise, i.e. the touristic noises of the *Schindler’s List Tour* and the excessively crowded Mayday festival. Here, noise is to be understood both as a chaos-inducing force that favours singularly over the (often more quiet) nuances of plurality and the margins: an instrument of power, and as interference, as a blurring force, generating countless conflicting and confusing narratives and fields of interpretation.

Expanding on the notion of schizo-narrative, this process was indeed already at work in the various histories, myths, and politics that have been presented in this text. The polyphony of voices, imagined origins, and meanings of the Mayday festival, as well as the different ways in which the Hollywoodian Holocaust, the displays of *Muzeum Auschwitz-Birkenau* and so forth, have engendered myriads of narratives and reshaped the numerous ways in which we perceive and understand this part of history, might all be forms and constructions of schizo-narratives in their own right.

Through my composition practice and the different research projects carried out during the course of this PhD, I have engaged with a number of fields including acoustic ecology, soundscape studies, geography, folklore, the social sciences, politics and history. The several notions I have devised and investigated – schizo-narratives, sound subjects, sonic chorographies, sonic remains, the territory of disembodied voices – have not only provided the theoretical and practical tools to describe and explain the techniques and the underpinnings of my composition practice, but might, arguably, also constitute useful creative and conceptual tools for further compositions and the analysis of future soundscape studies, as well as contributing to a more comprehensive grasping of the various aforementioned disciplines.

## Possible future research and development

In the continuation of *Lands and Genotypes*, further research projects might lead me to work with speech therapists and people who suffer from various types of speech impediment. This would be an occasion to investigate the territory of disembodied voices in a different way, deploying creative and theoretical tools, such as generative schizo-narratives and sonic chorographies for example, to collaboratively produce sound-works. Admittedly, my longstanding fascination for the exploration of the spoken voice partly stems from my own struggle with (a mild) speech impediment. Such a project would certainly be an interesting opportunity to delve deeper into issues of non-verbal communication and sonic expressions of the self, as well as engaging with an extended investigation of various malfunctions of the voice (and how to perhaps creatively overcome them).

Much like *Electro+ (Orăștie)* – a soundscape study of non-touristic places in the Orăștie region of Romania, composed from a tourist-driven perspective – and as a possible extension of *Before the End of Time*<sup>628</sup> and *The Golem of Hereford*, future research might also lead me to explore the soundscapes and the socio-political implications of non-touristic regions imbued with an equally rich and loaded history. In particular, I am interested in sites of ‘non-remembrance’. One of these symbolic and controversial sites is the former concentration camp of Lety, now in the Czech Republic, where hundreds of Romani people were imprisoned and murdered during World War II. *Lety u Pisku* has since become an industrial pig farm... Apart from a wooden signpost indicating that the camp once existed, next to no traces remain.<sup>629</sup> This would be an occasion to further address issues of memory, diaspora, and remembrance beyond what we remember and commemorate; and further tackle some of the fundamental and loaded questions that have silently underpinned a large part of my research thus far: How to excavate what is forgotten? Who is remembered? And, importantly, who isn’t?

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<sup>628</sup> *Footsteps in the Wind* and *Samdà Magna Morfina* (Cf. Chapter III, parts 1 & 2)

<sup>629</sup> “The exact nature of a Czech-run camp where hundreds of Roma, mainly children died from disease, hunger or abuse during the German occupation has long been a polarising issue for the nation’s politicians. But the stench of the pig farm built above the mass graves of the Lety u Pisku ‘concentration camp’ back in the 1970s has now, metaphorically speaking, travelled all the way to Brussels. The Czech Republic has been singled out in a European Parliament resolution for failing to remove the pig farm and create ‘a graceful memorial’ to honour victims of the Romani Holocaust.” (Keneti, 2005)

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## **APPENDICES**

## Appendix 1

### (Add-on to Chapter III)

#### KL Gross-Rosen: Dreidel & Samdà Magna Morfina

*“They told us we would be back with our parents in the evening. That evening never came.”* Sidney Glucksman, 26 March 2009<sup>630</sup>

In this appendix I will briefly discuss two other works that were produced during and after *Before the End of Time* (summer, 2005). These two works relate in many ways to *Footsteps in the Wind* but stemmed from a very different approach and were made for different reasons. Towards the end of the first field trip to Poland – prior to the visit to *Muzeum Auschwitz-Birkenau* – we stopped in Rogoznica, where the remains of former KL Gross-Rosen are situated. The camp was originally established in 1940 as a subcamp of Sachsenhausen, near Berlin. In 1941, Gross-Rosen was designated an autonomous concentration camp. There, the prisoners were employed primarily as slave workers in the nearby granite quarry, owned by the SS.<sup>631</sup> It is estimated that of the 120,000 prisoners who passed through the camp system between 1940 and 1945, around 40,000 perished either in Gross-Rosen, or during forced ‘death marches’ and the evacuation of the camp, mostly due to lack of food and water.<sup>632</sup> KL Gross-Rosen is one of the lesser known sites where the Holocaust was perpetrated and therefore attracts far fewer visitors than Auschwitz. It was nonetheless part of a vast and complex constellation of smaller camps and subcamps that played a pivotal role in the Nazi’s war effort and the systematic mass murder of European Jews and others: “[It] was a terrible place, created for ‘Vernichtung Durch Arbeit’, Destruction [or Extermination] through Work”<sup>633</sup>.

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<sup>630</sup> Sidney Glucksman interviewed by Abbe Smith in: ‘Survivor tells of Holocaust horrors’. In *New Haven Register, Conn.Knight Ridder/Tribune Business News*. March 26, 2009.

<sup>631</sup> Cf. Gutterman (2008)

<sup>632</sup> Cf. *Holocaust Encyclopedia: Gross-Rosen*: <http://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/article.php?ModuleId=10005454> [Accessed 20/12/2014] See also: Freeman, Joseph, and Donald Schwartz. *The Road to Hell: Recollections of the Nazi Death March*, 1998.

<sup>633</sup> Musgrave (2004: 225)

Alongside the notoriously fatal working conditions in the stone quarry, one of the specificities of Gross-Rosen was that it held a very large proportion of women, teenagers and children: “As of January 1, 1945, the Gross-Rosen complex held 76,728 prisoners. Nearly 26,000 of these were women, most of them Jews. This was one of the largest groupings of female prisoners in the entire concentration camp system.”<sup>634</sup> In *A Narrow Bridge to Life* (2008), Bella Gutterman explains that the records show how the internment of teenagers began in 1941 and that what is certain is that their hardship was not made easier to bear because of their young age:

“The factory work assigned to children and youths was no less difficult than that of the adult prisoners. [...] Since their rations were smaller than those of other prisoners and their labor was not considered vital, many soon collapsed. [...] For the most part, teenagers in the Gross-Rosen camp met with a crueler fate than the adult prisoners. Totally disoriented, they meandered among adults who were not always able or willing to give thought to their distress. When their lonely battle failed, they became prey for sexual exploitation. [...] Only fifteen survived to liberation.”<sup>635</sup>

Nowadays, amongst the ruins of the camp, a plaque shows the location of one the *jugendlicher Schutzhäftling*<sup>636</sup>. In an interview conducted by Sidney Bolkosky for the *Voice/Vision Holocaust Survivor Oral History Archive* (1991), survivor Lanka Ilkow<sup>637</sup> describes her experience and her various encounters with children in Auschwitz and Gross-Rosen. She poignantly recalls watching them sing and dance, until they sang and danced no more:

“[...] we saw the children you know, walking and singing German songs. They taught the children – beautiful girls, you know. And then all of a sudden they don't sing anymore. They killed 'em.

This is, this still in Au...you're talking about Auschwitz now.

Yeah.

The Kinderlager.

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<sup>634</sup> *Holocaust Encyclopedia: Gross-Rosen*: <http://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/article.php?ModuleId=10005454> [Accessed 20/12/2014]

<sup>635</sup> (Gutterman, 2008: 159-160)

<sup>636</sup> ‘Juvenile Protective Custody’

<sup>637</sup> “In 1944, [Lanka’s] family was shipped to a ghetto in Ungvar. From there they were sent to Auschwitz-Birkenau where her father was gassed upon arrival. While in Auschwitz, Lanka’s mother was later “selected” for extermination and Lanka and her sister were sent to the forced labor camp Hundsfeld, near Breslau. From there they were shipped to Gross Rosen, Mauthausen and finally, Bergen-Belsen, where the British army liberated them.” <http://holocaust.umd.umich.edu/ilkow/> [Accessed 20/12/2014]

*Yeah, yeah. They was walking and singing, just beautiful kids. And they was walking through, we could not talk to them and ask 'em questions. This always you know, I wouldn't have a child, but whoever had wanted to know if his child is there. But they was not allowed to go to the children, nobody. But they was, we – they brought us to see uh, they, those children uh, singing and, and at how good they have it. But we knew when all of a sudden no more singing. You know, we don't heard 'em, we don't see 'em.*<sup>638</sup>

### ***Dreidel, an ephemeral installation in situ at KL Gross-Rosen***

A few weeks before the first field trip to Poland, I had started to collect objects, extracts of newspaper articles, and other artefacts, some relating to the history of the sites I was about to visit, some not. I took a selection of them with me and continued to gather items, toys, and fragments of text from graffiti and tourist guides throughout the journey. I did not have a specific plan for how these objects and texts were going to be used, but I kept collecting them anyway. We arrived at Gross-Rosen in the very early hours of the morning; no one was there, apart from the four of us. Compared to my rasping encounter with the touristic noise of *Muzeum Auschwitz-Birkenau*, my visit to KL Gross-Rosen was a radically different experience.<sup>639</sup> The landscape was bleak, and amongst the architectural remains of the camp, seeming to emanate from the ground below the grass, was a particular smell that reminded us of the odour of graveyards, only stronger. Moreover, the sense of enclosure and entrapment, terrifyingly enhanced by the barbed wire fence as well as the hills that surround the site – which not only hid the camp from view but also acoustically isolated it from the rest of the land and its soundscape – made the deeply disturbing silent atmosphere of the inside of Gross-Rosen feel to me to be the most tangible signifier of the camp's former function: a well hidden site of death, of a viciously industrial nature, chosen for the topography of its landscape.

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<sup>638</sup> Lanka Ilkow interviewed by Sidney Bolkosky, October 12, 1991. In *Voice/Vision Holocaust Survivor Oral History Archive*: <http://holocaust.umd.umich.edu/interview.php?D=ilkow&section=62> [Accessed 30/12/2014]

<sup>639</sup> In fact, an experience I admittedly struggle to put into words.

Upon arrival, while the others stayed behind, I crossed the gates and entered the first barrack I came across: the ruins of *kuchnia więźniarska*, the ‘prisoners’ kitchen’. There, for reasons that I still cannot really explain to myself, I felt compelled to take from my bag some of the objects, toys, and fragments of texts that I had gathered and place them on the floor. I then intuitively arranged the different objects together, more or less into a semicircle.<sup>640</sup> Admittedly, this ephemeral installation was the result of a purely emotional response to the site. I knew some history about the place already, particularly the presence of a *Kinderlager* and the fate of children who worked in the quarry. Consequently perhaps, and upon reflection, I am aware that it was also a display of some of the stereotypes that the imaginings of the Shoah have given birth to. Plastic soldiers, hand-torn books and newspaper cuttings, dolls, and strands of human hair, are amongst the many cliché artefacts one might expect to find in museums and artworks dedicated to this period of history. I left the installation there for a couple of hours before dismantling it. Little documentation was gathered.

Nonetheless, this ephemeral, rather naive and histrionic intervention in the *kuchnia więźniarska* formed the starting point for the composition of *Samdà Magna Morfina*, an electroacoustic multi-channel sound-work that symbolically explores my personal experience of visiting KL Gross-Rosen. Whereas *Footsteps in the Wind* clearly followed a more critical and reflective approach, *Samdà Magna Morfina* stemmed from a more idiosyncratic and intimate response, informed by both the bodily experience of the site and my research into survivors’ narratives. It is also an attempt to respond sonically and emotionally to my imaginings of the hardship of youngsters during the Holocaust.

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<sup>640</sup> I have called this installation *Dreidel* in reference to the spinning top recordings that were carried out in the same space and later used in the sound-work *Samdà Magna Morfina*, discussed later in this chapter.

**Fig. 1** Dreidel installation, 'Prisoners' Kitchen' Barrack, KL Gross-Rosen (Poland), 2005.



***Samdà Magna Morfina: An electro-analgesic mechanic of defence***

“By way of atonement he will be plagued by dreams such as that he is no longer living at all, that he was sent to the ovens in 1944 and his whole existence since has been imaginary, an emanation of the insane wish of a man killed twenty years earlier.” Theodor Adorno, *Negative Dialectics* (1973: 362-363)

*Samdà Magna Morfina* is 11 minutes long and constitutes a rather unusual composition in my overall practice for it borrows techniques from electroacoustic compositions and *musique concrète*,

and relies heavily on digital audio processing technology. Although the original recordings were made in 2005, the work in its current form was composed between 2008 and 2014. The sound material and textures used in the piece were generated from a series of field recordings carried out around KL Gross-Rosen and in the city of Krakow, as well as recordings of several toys and objects. It also features the sounds of Romanian stray dogs rescued by the *Battersea Dogs Home* in London and caged birds in a pet shop in Rogoznica. Structurally and conceptually speaking, *Samdà Magna Morfina* is based upon the interaction between inner worlds (processed field recordings of the camp, sound objects recorded on site and in the studio) and excerpts of the sonic environment of Gross-Rosen and Krakow, (unprocessed field recordings of the quarry, the ‘prisoners’ kitchen’, various barrack’s doors, and the Cloth Hall market). The sound-work comprises three sections:

- Gross-Rosen Soundscape (outside/inside): 0' 00"
- Flying Dogs (outside/caged): 4' 10"
- Dreidel (inside/outside): 7' 20" – 11' 06"

The Holocaust has indeed been the subject of numerous sound-works and musical compositions. Schoenberg’s *A Survivor from Warsaw* (1947), Shostakovich’s *Thirteenth Symphony* (1962), Wilfried Joseph’s *Requiem* (1963), Penderecki’s *Dies Irae* (1967), and of course Reich’s *Different Trains* (1988) and Luigi Nono’s *Ricorda Cosa Ti Hanno Fatto in Auschwitz* (1966), are amongst the many works that have combined music/sound and survivors’ narratives (or prayers) and have explored what Adorno has described as post-Holocaust’s ‘perennial suffering’, which “has as much right to expression as a tortured man has to scream.”<sup>641</sup> For journalist Steve Smith, Nono’s uncompromising piece is to be heard as a profoundly disturbing scream: “As musical fragments and metallic howls erupt, it sounds as if a civilization were being ripped to shreds.”<sup>642</sup> *Samdà Magna Morfina* is an abstract reaction to my visit to Gross-Rosen. It might perhaps be considered as my own intimate expression of perennial suffering, another denial of redemptive narratives and an

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<sup>641</sup> Adorno (1973: 362)

<sup>642</sup> Smith, Steve. ‘Radical Raging Against the Machine: Four Compositions by Luigi Nono at Frederick Loewe Theater’. In *The New York Times*, 28 Feb., 2012.

attempt to refuse the “easy continuation of culture by keeping alive the memory of the destruction.”<sup>643</sup>

The title of *Samdà Magna Morfina* was inspired by an anecdote featured in *The Periodic Table* (1975) by Primo Levi. *Magna Morfina* was the nickname of one of the author’s relatives; a person whom Levi, as a child, had feared, and for whom he created an imaginary world and a series of imaginary tortures. In the novel, Levi first describes how his ‘Aunt Morphine’ inherited such a name and alludes to her alleged use of narcotics to ease her psychological pain:

“Barbaricô had no less than twelve brothers and sisters, who described his companion with the ironic and cruel name of *Magna Morfina* (Aunt Morphine): ironic because the woman, poor thing, being a *goyà* and childless could not be a *magna* except in an extremely limited sense, and indeed the term *magna* was to be understood as its exact opposite, a non-*magna*, someone excluded and cut off from the family; and cruel because it contained a probably false and at any rate pitiless allusion to a certain exploitation on her part of Barbaricô’s prescription blanks. The two of them lived in a filthy and chaotic attic room on Borgo Vanchiglia.”<sup>644</sup>

In certain Jewish traditions, *Samdà* is one of the terms used to signify ‘baptised’, and also means ‘destroyed’.<sup>645</sup> As I will briefly discuss at the end of this appendix, *Samdà Magna Morfina* symbolically (and poetically) functions for me as both an analgesic and cathartic sonic exploration, which has helped me to cope and make sense of my personal experience of visiting KL Gross-Rosen.

After installing the objects and fragments of texts in the ‘prisoners’ kitchen’, I explored the rest of the camps and carried out field recordings around the granite quarry, various barracks, and an empty field at the centre of the camps. I captured the sound of barrack’s doors opening and closing (some of them slamming violently), rain on the memorial stones and ruins of the camp; and the friction of fairly large granite slabs in the quarry. These elements formed the basis for the sound

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<sup>643</sup> Godfrey (2007: 11) Godfrey later adds: “Perhaps then, we might not think of abstraction as ‘silent art’ [or ‘imageless’ art], but as tortured art [...]” (*Ibid*)

<sup>644</sup> Levi (1975: 17)

<sup>645</sup> Cf. *Ibid*

materials featured in the first section of the piece. We can also hear the sound of children's toys, mixed with the rest of the textures.

Throughout the composition process and my exploration of Gross-Rosen, I kept thinking about and imagining the peril of children in the camp system. When listening to these field recordings on my way back to London, they triggered in me vivid memories of the site, to the point of inducing anxiety and uneasiness. During the editing and mixing of *Samdà Magna Morfina*, I have applied a series of digital audio processings to many of the sounds in order to transform them and turn them into more 'abstract' electroacoustic textures. Most crucially, these processings were applied 'destructively' to the only copy of the sound-files, thus permanently altering (or perhaps destroying or losing) some of the original source material.

The first section of the sound-work features four fragments of texts. The first one is the voice of Bucharest-based poet Agnès Birebent speaking about the wolf-like and threatening behaviour of large packs of stray dogs in Romania, recorded in a train. The other three fragments of text were performed by three different computerised voices<sup>646</sup>. The first excerpt comes from a piece of Polish graffiti (translated into English) found on a wall in Rogoznica:

“[Computerised Voice 1, Sung] *Fleeing from the bulldozers...*”<sup>647</sup>

The last two fragments come from a montage of various excerpts of survivors' testimonies and other texts found in tourist guides and newspapers during the journey:

“[Computerised Voice 2, Spoken] *Command, so on... Due to job requirements, I will have to run into the morning, any days, for the forty years to come, at least until it starts staying light outside later again.*”<sup>648</sup>

“[Computerised Voice 3, Sung] *We couldn't see the train. The train, packed up with our kind. They were all squeezed and smelling excrements. The train was already gone, they forced us to run faster.*”<sup>649</sup>

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<sup>646</sup> Using a freeware called *Talkany* and recorded on DAT tapes.

<sup>647</sup> *Samdà Magna Morfina*, transcript of text fragment 1

<sup>648</sup> *Samdà Magna Morfina*, transcript of text fragments 2

<sup>649</sup> *Samdà Magna Morfina*, transcript of text fragments 3

The second section of the sound-work is a montage of processed and unprocessed field recordings of the Cloth Hall (on the main square of Krakow), dogs barking, and caged birds. Some of these sounds have been recycled in a different form from other pieces such as *Footsteps in the Wind* and the *Lands and Genotypes* project<sup>650</sup>. This section acts as a re-exploration of these places and their soundscapes, re-contextualised and transformed, and is used within the work to symbolise a momentary escape from the imaginings of the camp. It slowly transitions to the last section of *Samdà Magna Morfina*.

This last section begins with a montage of dreidel recordings carried out in the ‘prisoners’ kitchen’. The dreidel is a spinning top in the shape of a dice bearing the four Hebrew letters corresponding to N, G, H, and Sh.<sup>651</sup> These letters stand for *Nes gadol haya sham*, which means: ‘A great miracle happened there’. As Holly Hartman explains, as well as a gambling game, these spinning tops are believed to have been used at one time as decoys, devices of resistance, and protectors of religious freedom:

“Long a favorite Hanukkah toy, the dreidel once had a serious purpose. When the Syrians forbid study of the Torah, Jews who studied in secret kept spinning tops – sivivons, or dreidels – on hand. This way, if they were found studying, they could quickly pretend that they had only been playing.”<sup>652</sup>

Even if this legend does not likely bear much historical truth, it is still the popular view of the origins of dreidels, a story that some Jewish children still learn at school, and which plays an important role in the symbolism of the object.<sup>653</sup> The spinning top recordings in the last section of *Samdà Magna Morfina* are used to further explore my imaginings of the camp’s past and to evoke the children’s capacity of resistance, their potential escapism, through playfulness. The sound-work ends with another series of processed sounds followed by a short montage of field recordings carried out by the remains of the quarry.

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<sup>650</sup> Krakow, Kazimierz, etc. The section in question also features field recordings that were discarded during the composition of these sound-works.

<sup>651</sup> Hebrew letters: *nun*, *gimel*, *hay*, and *shin* (or *pay*, meaning ‘here’ (*poh*) rather than ‘there’, sometimes found on Israeli’s dreidels).

<sup>652</sup> Hartman (2007: 15)

<sup>653</sup> Cf. Schorr (2010), for example.

Levi opens *The Periodic Table* with an old Yiddish proverb: “*Ibergekumene tsores iz gut tsu dertsejlin*”<sup>654</sup>, ‘Troubles overcome are good to tell’. It is a double articulation, arguably even a paradoxical one, where the overcoming of pain allows the narrative to emerge and, at the same time, the ‘act of telling’ (through both testimony and fiction) seems to be the only way to finally come to terms with the author’s traumatic experience.<sup>655</sup> It is a thought that has remained with me throughout the composition of *Samdà Magna Morfina*. Upon reflection, I have come to consider that these destructive and transformative processings of the camp’s field recordings and the subsequent loss of the original source material, as well as the recycling of previously used sounds<sup>656</sup>, were perhaps the result of a series of defence mechanisms, an unconscious denial through acts of alteration and destruction. Brad Bowins explains:

“Psychological defense mechanisms represent a crucial component of our capacity to maintain emotional homeostasis. Without them the conscious mind would be much more vulnerable to negatively charged emotional input, such as that pertaining to anxiety and sadness. Fear and anxiety occur within the context of threat and danger [...].”<sup>657</sup>

In Freudian psychoanalytic theory, defence mechanisms are psychological strategies brought into play by individuals or groups in order to cope with reality or traumatic events. “[They are] forces, which try to keep painful or socially undesirable thoughts and memories out of the conscious mind [...]”<sup>658</sup> Nevertheless, memories banished to the unconscious do not disappear. They continue to exert a powerful influence on behaviour and often reappear under a different form.<sup>659</sup> Much like Levi’s *Magna Morfina*’s use of narcotics to forget the pain of her condition, the textural material that makes up the sound-work came about through a cathartic process of digital alteration, destruction, and re-assemblage. This is what I have come to think of as an ‘electro-analgesic mechanic of defence’, an attempt to suppress the evocative nature of a field recording and the memory it relates to, and at the same time the inevitable re-emergence of that memory under a different form. According to McLeod, who draws on Freudian theory: “There is a perpetual battle

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<sup>654</sup> Levi (1975: 4)

<sup>655</sup> Although of course many have argued that the trauma always remains unresolved.

<sup>656</sup> De-contextualised sounds, not directly related to the traumatic memory of the place in question, tentatively used as ‘diversions’ that might draw one’s attention away from the subject matter.

<sup>657</sup> Bowins (2004: 1)

<sup>658</sup> McLeod (2009)

<sup>659</sup> Cf. McLeod (2009); Freud (1993)

between the wish (repressed into the id<sup>660</sup>) and the defence mechanisms.”<sup>661</sup> As a consequence, this electro-analgesic mechanic of defence is perhaps always a process of failure; the failure to rid consciousness from both the evocative nature of the original source material, and the subsequent recollection of the bodily experience of these historically-charged (or traumatic) places, for their powerful contextual and emotional presence – even if transformed and reconstructed – might be inescapable.

Indeed, these Freud-inspired considerations do not correspond to actual somatic functions of the brain *per se*<sup>662</sup>, and perhaps instead are to be taken as purely symbolic concepts about the mind. The complex and problematic issues of conscious and unconscious memory, active forgetting (suppression), and psychological defence mechanisms still remain unresolved. Yet perhaps, they seem to resonate, metaphorically and conceptually at least, with some of the processes involved in the making of *Samdà Magna Morfina*.

The sound-work discussed here remained unfinished for a few years and was never performed in public until April 2014, when the final version of *Samdà Magna Morfina* was premiered at a festival at UCSD, University of California (*Last Friday Listening Room VI: Eidola*), in San Diego (USA). I consider this piece to be a relatively ancillary sound-work in the overall arching of this thesis. Nonetheless, it feels to me that *Samdà Magna Morfina* provides an interesting and contrasting counterpart to *Footsteps in the Wind* (Chapter III). Together, the two sound-works arguably complement each other and present two very different – and possibly contradictory – aspects of my overall experience of visiting Krakow, Kazimierz, Schindler’s Factory, KL Gross-Rosen, and *Muzeum Auschwitz-Birkenau*.

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<sup>660</sup> In Psychology, the ‘id’ is the primitive and instinctive component of personality. (Cf. McLeod, 2009)

<sup>661</sup> McLeod (2009)

<sup>662</sup> Somatic structures of the brain as dealt with in neuroscience for example.

## Appendix 2

### ANSERIFORMES TWINS

#### LANDS AND GENOTYPES: ANSERIFORMES TWINS

(c. 17min. [8.1] 2007 - 2009)

#### Structure and Content

- Section I: Rosie Richardson 0'00"
- Section II: Anseriformes Circus: Duck Pond 4'19"
- Section III: Thomas Richardson 6'56"
- Section IV: Drone (Early Morning) 9'07"
- Section V: Charles Richardson 11'09" - 17'35"

Anseriformes Twins Section I: ROSIE RICHARDSON

**Opening (a)**

**Opening (b)**

**Rosie first edit**

>>>>Family archives excerpts

[Cornwall / Bath: 1985-89]

>>>>Field rec. Twins house

>>>>Several layers

[Baby talks / outside on the beach / Rosie asking the twins if they want "NANNAN<sup>2</sup>"]

>>>>Field rec. Victoria park in Bath

[Birds, footsteps, quiet street]

>>>>Family archives Cuts

[Twins birthdays 1988-89: twice the same question a year apart...]

>>>>Int. rec.<sup>1</sup> Rosie

[Noticeable sound of the bracelets she is wearing]



>>>>Rosie voice:

*"Russia falling behind / they all have the same eyes but I don't know which eyes they are / who was who...they didn't know..."*

(+ Twins' idioglossia excerpts)

>>>>Rosie + father's voice:

*"What's your name?" 2X*

>>>Charles: *"Tom Tom!" 2X*

>>>> Rosie voice:

*"They were 3 and a couple of month / they had so so they had to manage on their own / a lot on my hands / still didn't say anything / anxious / it was dormant / hurtful to..."*

<sup>1</sup> Interview recorded in Rosie's living room (12/2007)

<sup>2</sup> "food" in the twins' language

Anseriformes Twins Section I: ROSIE RICHARDSON

**Bathroom Twins**

**Rosie second edit (a)**

**Rosie second edit (b)**

>>>>Family archives Cuts

>>>>Int. rec.

>>>>Int. rec.

[*Baby twins having a bath*]

>>>>Field rec. living room / quiet duck water

>>>>Field rec. rain / park

>>>>Field rec. Twins house

[*Audio treatments of field rec.*]

>>Family archives Cuts  
[*Audio treatments of field rec.*]

>>Several layers with audio treatments  
[*House / door / doorbell*]

>>Several layers of voices

(Field rec. fades in...)

2'08"

2'36"

3'28"

4'19"

>>>>Baby talks [*crying and shouting*]

>>>>Rosie voice:

>>>>Rosie voice:

"*Identical twin herself / and she said*

*Duck / almost sounds so a drink was /*

*I could understand what was going on /*

*Little circle / own language / behind the /*

*Didn't really understand what they were saying ... "*

"*When they were younger /*

*Friction / 2 spaces it's quite*

*Dangerous / never remember the*

*third thing ... / they both said the*

*word DUCK and then...*

**Anseriformes Twins Section II: ANSERIFORMES CIRCUS: DUCKS & BIRDS**

Field recordings carried out by the pond where the twins said their first word

>>>>Field rec. City of Bath / park / different ducks / different birds / children playing in circus / twins' garden / twins jamming /  
 Thomas: percussion / Charles: saxophone / Street near by / children playing and feeding ducks /

Fish tank / garage / bird cage (Twins' garage + pet shop; London) / light rain in park / around the ducks /  
 >>Family archives cuts (short; at beginning)

[Series of overlapping multilayered field rec. with EQ and Panning automations]

4'19"

6'56"

>>>> Rosie voice:

*"I don't think I understood it very much"*

>>>>Thomas voice:

*"and hummm..."*

*"They both said the word 'duck', and then they never learnt another word"*

Anseriformes Twins Section III: THOMAS RICHARDSON

*Thomas first edit*

*Thomas second edit (Manic Layers)*

*Thomas second edit (suite)*

>>>>Int. rec. Thomas<sup>3</sup>

>>>>Int. rec.

>>>>Int. rec.

(7'38")>>Studio rec.

>>>>Field rec. Fish tank / house

[*Alternance of single and multi-layered voices*]

[*Charles and myself playing with a wine glass*]

[*Sound of tank lid / electrical buzz coming from the tank with audio treatments*]  
(Texture fades in and out)

(Section IV fades in...)

6'56"

8'00"

8'33"

9'07"



>>>>Thomas voice

>>>>Thomas voice

>>>>Thomas voice

|   |  |   |
|---|--|---|
| <p><i>"My name is / it's different really / Charlie<br/>isssss... / I was completely superfluous /<br/>Manic episode / said DUCK / and I ended<br/>up in a psychiatric ward / lots of Vallium<br/>to calm me down / 4 nights / 2 days for me wanting to..."</i></p> | <p><i>"3 / and I remember / we didn't really<br/>need, feel the need cause we didn't...<br/>have the need / lack of sleep / medication /<br/>What's ambition? / What's manic? / And<br/>actually / in Charlie as well"</i></p> | <p><i>"Very very similar / my<br/>parents moved to / own<br/>little world / isolated from<br/>me / refused to talk / you've<br/>got to make sure it doesn't<br/>get out of control"</i></p> |
|---|--|---|

<sup>3</sup> Interview recorded in twins' basement (12/2007)

Anseriformes Twins Section IV: DRONE EARLY MORNING

*Twins Drone*

>>>>Field rec. Twins house / back garden drone / objects  
 Fish pond / water pipes / Rosie's suitcase

[*Audio treatments of field rec. + resonant filters on objects*]

>>Int. rec. [2 *short excerpts with audio treatments*]  
 (Change in spectrum and panning obtained by moving the  
 microphone around the source)

9'07"



>>>>Thomas voice

>>>>Charles voice

(No voice)

*Early morning*

>>>>Field rec. Twins house / pet shop

[*Early morning, inside the house / pet shop with audio*

*treatments: FFT Spectral Shifter & EQ*]

10'21"

11'09"

"*Charlie came and so me in ward | "Some people scares me"*  
*And it was for me very hard...and I*  
*Found it very strange that"*

Anseriformes Twins Section V: CHARLES RICHARDSON

*Charles first edit*

>>>>Int. rec. Charles

>>Field rec. Ducks' water (quiet)

>Family archives cuts

[Audio processing of field rec.]

*Charles/Thomas: "Same Diff..."*

>>>>Int. rec. T & C + Rosie

>>>Field rec. Twins house / objects

[Several layers of voices & field rec.]

[Different audio treatment and automations]

(Relates to Thomas' "Manic Layers")

11'09"

12'15"

<<<<Texture fades in...

12'40"

>>>>Charles voice

>>>>Thomas and Charles voice

>>>>Rosie voice

*"An 8<sup>th</sup> of my blood / the occupation of Palestine /*

*Hook nose / never-ending circle / he basically*

*Gets quite obsessive about things / manic episode /*

*Hide and seek and waterslides / parents killed in*

*A blitz but... / they basically abandoned her /*

*We both said DUCK / don't know what happened but it just did!"*

*"Same .../ Different...*

*Most of the time anyway"*

*"Self what? /*

*They looked identical"*

Anseriformes Twins Section V: CHARLES RICHARDSON

*Jazz rain Badabadah!*

*Charles second edit*

*"Nick Griffin makes me sick!"*

>>>>Field rec. Rain / Park in Bath

>>>> Studio rec. Charles

>>>>Studio rec. Charles

>>Studio rec. <sup>4</sup> Charles

[*Singing comes back at the end*]

>>>>Int. rec. Charles

[*Charles making sounds while setting up*]

[*Several layers of field rec. with automations*]

(Texture fades out...)

[*Audio treatments of voices & Int. Rec.*]

12'40"

13'06"

13'56"

14'30"

>>>>Charles voice

>>>>Charles voice

>>>>Charles voice:

(mouth noises + singing)

*"My name is / very premature twins /  
Breathing problem when I was born /  
It's like a very thin line between... /  
White middle class people who are just  
Obsessive about / Baaaaaah!"*

*"Going on about asylum seekers  
makes me sick / B N P makes me  
sick / Nick Griffin / what is being  
Engengenglish going to a pub or? /  
nice to people I don't like / none of  
my close friends were black / against  
It / 2 years ago, no thr..."*

<sup>4</sup> Studio interview with Charles 05/2006

Anseriformes Twins Section V: CHARLES RICHARDSON

*Objects Blitz*

*Shift: Poland Project archives 2005*

|   |  |
|---|--|
| >>>>Field rec. Twins house / objects / kitchen /<br>Fish tank water pipes [2 <sup>nd</sup> take]  | >>>>Field rec. Charles / Gross Rosen camp / Poland 2005<br>[ <i>Excerpt of Charles' interview a few weeks after visiting<br/>KL Gross Rosen / found sounds from<br/>original VHS tape with audio treatment: gate</i> ] |
| >>>>Family archives cuts<br>[ <i>Audio treatments and automations of objects / field<br/>rec. / white noise + wind found in family archives:<br/>resonant filters</i> ] | >>Field rec. Auschwitz / wind (short)<br>[ <i>Panning automation</i> ]   |
| 14:30"<br>(Market field rec. fades out...)  | 15:19"   |
| >>>>No voice  | >>>>Charles voice  |

"Hi, so today we looked around our first concentration  
camp / it was very hummm..."

L N G Section V: CHARLES RICHARDSON

*Charles third edit*

*Coda (Bells) KL Gross Rosen and ducks*

>>>>Studio rec. Charles

>>>>Field rec. Twins jamming / Street Twins house / Duck's water

KL Gross Rosen

>>Field rec. Twins house (short)

[*Heavy Transformation of field rec. / resonant filters*]

[*Charles laying on the floor / close miking*]

>>Several layers

[*Occasional audio processing*]

15'39"

16'53"

17'35"

-----|-----END-----||

>>>>Charles voice

>>>>No voice

*"A couple of month before my mum / family tree /*

*I wasn't sure about know... knowing my full identity /*

*My mother's heartbeat / text books / great grand dad was*

*A Jew from... / Gross Rosen, I remember walking in and /*

*I suppose my mother's heartbeat but there was no one in there /*

*I can't really imitate it / I don't know where I am! / I don't know,*

*I suppose my mother's heartbeat but I have no memory of..."*

### Appendix 3

#### BREGENZ BY CYCLE

(17 min. [8:1] 2010)



*Field Trip* exhibition: 72 Fore Street, London. June 2010



This soundscape study of Bregenz, a small city in Austria, deals with the aural architecture of this popular holiday destination. It conceptually follows the cycles of Lake Constance, the city's rhythm, and the local community in this 'hi-fi' – idealistically bourgeois – and rather sanitised environment. The piece explores the soundscapes of different sites in Bregenz; from running around the urban landscape, sitting by the lake, to a microphone drifting on a plank of wood.

Like many places situated by the water, Bregenz is a city of dual character. Two movements coexist on a single stage. On one side, the lake, slowly evolving throughout the day, seems to be repeating its name over and over with an infinity of subtle variations and reminds us that natural beauty reinvents itself all the time in perpetual cycles, in slow motions and trickling whispers. On the other side, the city, with its radical mixture of agitation and stillness, always in construction, wakes up and goes to sleep in what feels like the twinkling of an eye. Bregenz is also a place where the old and the new coincide, 18<sup>th</sup> century buildings superimposed on state-of-the-art concrete structures.

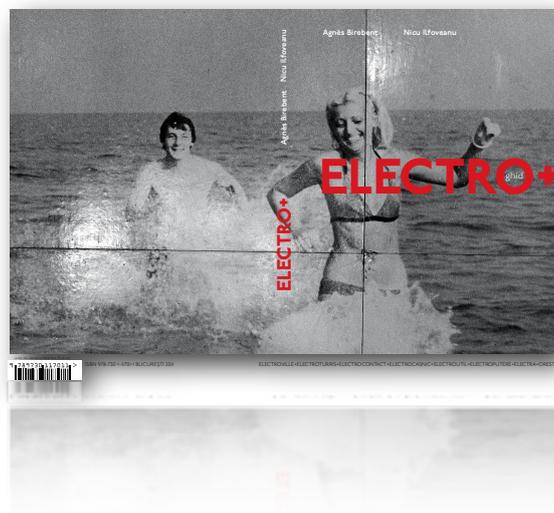
*Bregenz by Cycle* was commissioned by Joseph Kohlmaier and the *Austrian Cultural Forum* for *Field Trip, International Showcase*, London Festival of Architecture, 14 - 16 June 2010; and a residency at *Kunsthaus Bregenz*, Bregenz (Austria).



## Appendix 4

### ELECTRO+ (Orăștie)

(20 min. [8:1] 2012)



Part of the *Lands and Genotypes* project, *Electro+ (Orăștie)* explores the soundscape of south-western Transylvania (Romania). The sound-work was commissioned to accompany the publication of a book of photographs and poems of the same name<sup>663</sup> by artists Nicu Ilfoveanu and Agnès Birebent. The piece deals with the sonic environments of non-touristic places in the Orăștie region; composed from a tourist-driven perspective.

- The field recordings that make up the sound material for *Electro+* were carried out in:
  - **Orăștie.**
  - **Babadag, Macin (Dobrogea):** Football: night training. The bar: seasoned drinkers playing backgammon...
  - **Baltati, Botosani, Vorniceni, Tataraseni, Zece Prajini and Dorohoi (Moldavia):** Derelict train station, derelict factory, Jewish cemetery.

Dorohoi, before WWII, had a fairly large Jewish population. They have practically all disappeared, murdered in the village (some by the local population), or deported to Transnistria. No traces of their habitations remain. A memorial was to be built, instead we find an aquarium, only one thing to do: read the fishes' names. Later, we meet a family of three; one of them just passed away. Her sister and the two undertakers tell us about their 'territory', their life as one of the few remaining Jewish families in the area...

- **Focsani, Resita, Câmpulung, Anina, Caracal, Târgu Jiu: *The Table of Silence (Valachie & Banat)*:** An old train, Roma street-music, wedding, roadworks everywhere, horse carts, stray dogs.
- **Bucharest:** A car passing by announces the arrival of the circus.

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<sup>663</sup> Ilfoveanu and Birebent. *Electro+ Ghid*. Bucharest: Arta Grafica, 2011.

The sound material for *Electro+* was gathered and explored following the same two trajectories explored in the book in question:

- 1) A tourist guide to non-touristic parts of Romania - a visit to the hidden histories of a land that stands at the cusp of Orient and Occident. A visit to these places where practically no ‘outsider’ ever goes. A poet, a scientist, a farmer, a footballer, a postcard might have been born there, no one really knows. This soundscape composition poetically functions as an ‘organised tour’ of derelict factories, stations, hotels, museums, graveyards, bars.
- 2) *For a Romanian Oresteia*. Aeschylus’ tragedy marks the transition from the old system to the new one. Not just politically but also in the shift from the practice of personal vendetta to a system of litigation. Orăștie, a town named after Agamemnon’s son (Orestes’ sister is called Electra), and home of the Dacian fortresses, becomes the starting point of the search for traces; traces of change, of the transition that happened in Romania, from the old system to a new one...

*Electro+* (Orăștie): Dorohoi, 2012.



## Appendix 5

### LANDS AND GENOTYPES: NAIARA AND FIRAT

(11 min. [8:1] 2006 - 2008)

This sound-work focuses on two sound subjects: Naiara, a Basque person whose parents suffered under the repression of Franco's regime; and Firat, a Turkish person whose family history shares a somewhat similar narrative. *Naiara and Firat* constitutes an early experiment, using schizo-narratives and field recordings together. It comprises three sections:

- |                             |                  |
|-----------------------------|------------------|
| ▪ Naiara Aramburu           | 0'00''           |
| ▪ <i>Nitimur in Vetitum</i> | 3'35''           |
| ▪ Melek Firat Altay         | 6'50'' - 11'11'' |

*L & G: Naiara and Firat: 'Schizo-programme Notes' (2008)*

**For it draws on both the notions of identity and territory/not as much inspired by my own experience/the impossibility of talking about oneself?/politics/foreigners living in London/felt a need/their persona/green paper on the wall/big arrow/inventing intimacies/treat them as territories and as individuals/imagined memories/recording sessions in the dark, in absolute silence/talk in different positions/I was constantly/lasted around an hour and a half/on tape/spend most of their time around/extension of their discourse/gaps of what cannot be said/schizo-narratives/their silences/my own perception of their/I do not pretend to know these things/always the relationship between two conceptual personas, nothing else/apply my own system to/call the mental stuttering of the sound subject/utterly impossible knowledge/genotype/specific genetic makeup/sonic environment/Naiara & Firat/the piece lasts 11:11/I cannot go into/Body without Organs/personal soundscapes/It might be an influence, but it was more about... nationalities.**

## Appendix 6

### LANDS AND GENOTYPES: DIARY OF A MALFUNCTIONING LEG

(7 min. [8:1] 2014)

Part of the *Lands and Genotypes* project, *Diary of a Malfunctioning Leg* is a fixed multi-channel text-sound composition that continues the early sound-work *Naiara and Firat*. Contrary to the latter, where two different sound subjects were featured, this piece only features the disembodied voice of Naiara. The schizo-narratives created for this composition were constructed from fragments of another series of studio interviews carried out in 2009 and 2010. This short, ancillary piece focuses on the relationships between Naiara, her physical condition, and her mother.

*Diary of a Malfunctioning Leg* comprises 4 sections:

- |   |                   |
|---|-------------------|
| ▪ Schizo-narrative 1: <i>it's not strong</i>  | 0' 00''           |
| ▪ Basque song                                 | 2' 38''           |
| ▪ Schizo-narrative 2: <i>the biggest fish</i> | 3' 18''           |
| ▪ Breaths                                     | 5' 20'' - 6' 53'' |

The sound subject of *Diary of a Malfunctioning Leg* suffers from a rare muscle and cartilage condition. During the interviews, she also expressed various tensions and childhood memories relating more specifically to her relationship (past and present) with her mother; two elements that were not addressed in the previous composition. These two aspects of Naiara's life are playfully intermingled in the work's schizo-narratives, thus creating new relationships between them, generating unexpected associations, and again exploring the meaningful potential of contradiction.