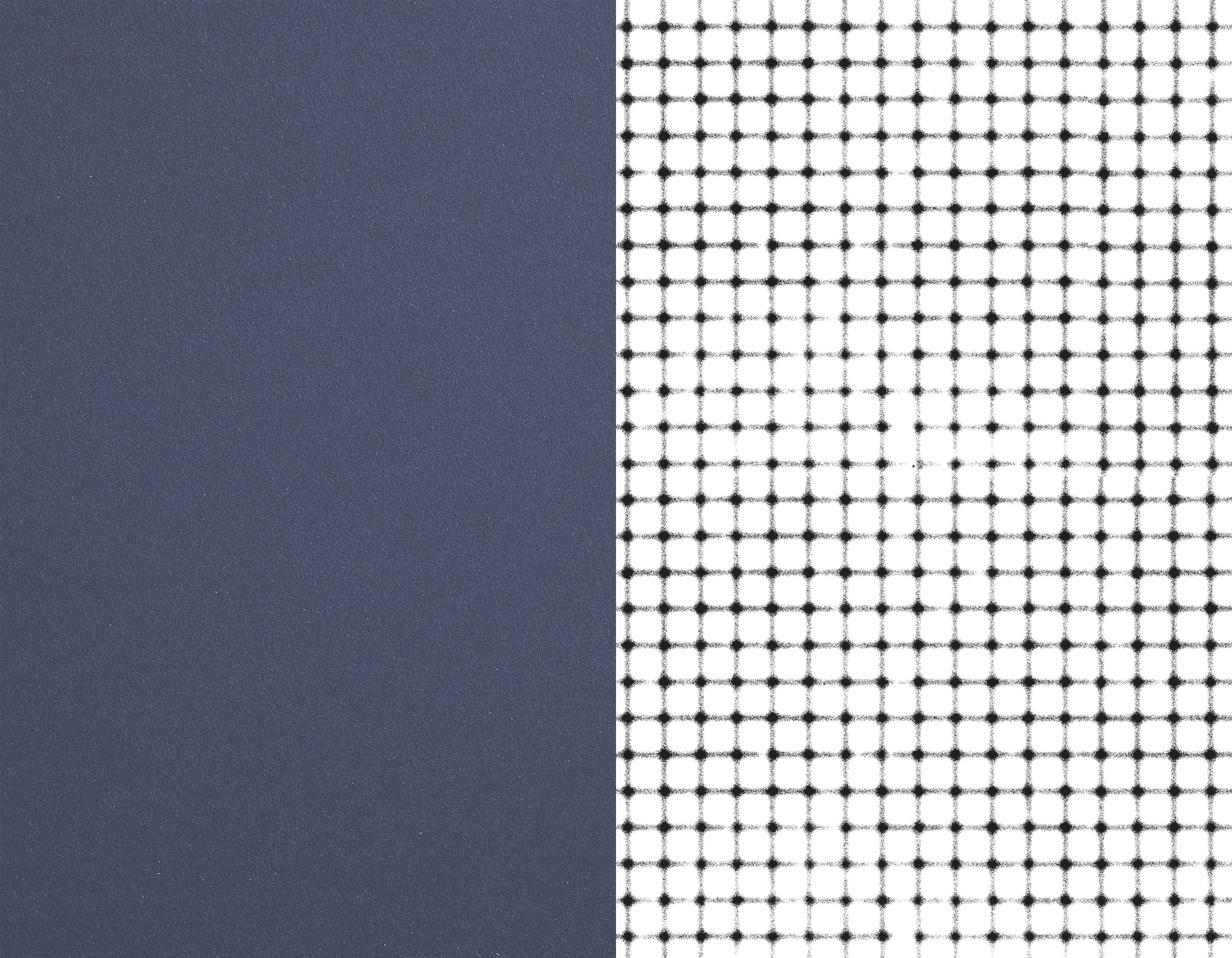


COUNTERFLOWS  
ON PAPER





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## LISTEN AGAIN

*'What are your earliest memories of hearing the radio?'*

My brothers and I slept in one room. My younger brother and I shared the bunk beds. I think it was in the late 1960s when I was given a small plastic transistor radio. I was a massive Beatles fan from the age of about eight. So, under the covers of my lower berth, just after bedtime, I would tune the little red marker along the strip of metal marked with odd and mysterious numbers: 6090 kHz on short wave radio. This was the home of Radio Luxembourg and the place where the sound of the radio crept into my ears. Here amongst the swirls and bleeps of radio static I would hear music: The 13th Floor Elevators, Creedence Clearwater Revival, Jimi Hendrix, Blood Sweat and Tears, Country Joe and the Fish and the rest. I had no idea who these bands were but the sound excited and changed me. *Alasdair*

Radio has always been a funny thing for me. I'm more of a direct listener and if I'm listening to something "ambiently" it's still likely something I've chosen myself or something someone else has put on, unless I'm shopping or something. Sorry radio people, I still think you're great. That said, I always remember 10CC's 'I'm not in Love', REM's 'Losing my Religion' and Lighthouse Family's 'Lifted' blaring in the car as my mum took me to school. Pimped up Ford Fiestas with massive bass bins were all the rage in Motherwell in the 90s, meaning some happy hardcore would sometimes slip into the mix, blaring past at 100mph. I have no idea if this means anything, but it might explain my penchant for all things beautiful, daft and obtrusive. *Fielding*

Half forgotten jingles. Bassline MCs. Nan arguing quietly with the news.

*'BCB RADIO, 106.6FM: TUNED INTO BRADFORD!'* When I dig into my memories of radio it's the voices that come first. Headlines and advertisements, phone-ins and eulogies, all getting caught up in the cracks and folds of ordinary life — adding to its texture. In this sense, radio was never 'ambient' or 'background' for me, certainly not a 'playlist' or 'mood'; more like a familiar wallpaper (woodchip obviously, a friendly mulch) that still gives shape to the spaces I inhabit. Radio is fundamentally communicative and spatial, not about filling silence or collecting 'data'. It is radio that lets me feel good about the way I love music for its sociality and infinite contextuality (rather than feeling bad for sometimes struggling with other ways of engaging: cataloguing, deep listening, theorising, breaking into core parts). It is Dad singing 'no static at all': turning up Sergei Prokofiev with a pedagogic flourish, turning down Britney, despite protestations. It is a strangely vivid memory of an Art Brut live session (I always manage to sneak in one embarrassing-for-Counterflows reference in there) in a car in the rain; them singing, 'Look at us, we formed a band!', me wanting to. It is the first time on the mic, aged 16, at Bradford Community Broadcasting: stepping outside the studio to hear the song playing over the airwaves. It's tuning in again as I write this and hearing my friend's mum doing an exercise show: "lift up your leg, move to the side, then back straight, then back down" — the words becoming the music. *Joel*

Sitting in the car outside my mum's friend's house, the day after Christmas, refusing to go inside. I wanted to be alone with my brand new portable radio. I think I'm nine years old. I'm wearing a t-shirt that says I MAKE THE RULES

and my favourite tracksuit that mean kids like to say is from the boys' section. (It is from the boys' section). Cheap foamy headphones squigged into my ears. Sizzle, sizzle, Crackle, crackle. Turning the dial until the batteries wore out, trying to find the frequency I wanted to be on. My mum bringing me out a paper plate of sausage rolls and crisps, half-embarrassed half-sorry for me. The sound of the static not quite drowning out the adult chatter and the other children playing inside. I was having a much better time. *Helen*

\* \* \*

We began the introduction to last year's edition of *Counterflows on Paper* by asking what it means to listen together. It seems we're always asking the same question. In this year's edition (our fifth!) we have begun by borrowing this opening question from dundee radio club in order to try and remember our earliest memories of a sonic experience that is communal by design: the radio. A medium that, like everything else, digital life has changed: *Listen Again*.

In the pages that follow, we have tried to create a space in which the personal, experimental, sonic and political intermingle, reminding us that there are no hard boundaries between them. (Another way of saying this might be that we are trying to balance the time signature of a material publication with the time signature of a festival. Listen Again). With contributions from dundee radio club and Lewis Cook of the Glasgow Library of Synthesised Sound, we are rooted in physical places of broadcast, DIY infrastructure, invention and collaboration in Scotland, extending tendrils beyond it. What does it mean to build something for yourselves, rather than bend your intentions to existing forms? Connections bloom between other texts: Nisha Ramayya returns to 'Ploughed Fields', a poem born from her performance alongside Amina Claudine Myers at Counterflows 2025, and Lola Olufemi

uses Ramayya as a touchstone in her piece, interpolated as one of a chorus of voices. There's a looping back here, but a looping forward, too, because these can never be separated, like the vim in Eoin Anderson's *Ogre Village*: 'the force-you-need-to-chase-the-force-you-need'. For Masa Nazzal — whose performance at last year's festival was in itself an act of sonic solidarity, connecting across history and geography — the motion is one of a cross-stitch, embroidering forms of life that evade the enclosures of nation and state. Other pieces are more rooted in the festival itself: Fielding talks to Seoul-based writer and improviser Ryu Hankil, we have a poem from one of this year's Music Space bursary recipients, Gem Kinley, and a 'Shortwave Q+A' between musicians based in Scotland and Beijing.

## ILLUSTRATIONS

The images throughout have been created by artists at workshops with Project Ability, as part of our ongoing collaboration with the organisation. Artists and titles are listed at the end of the publication.

An exhibition of the original works, plus lots more can be seen at Mono 12, Kings Court, King St, Glasgow G1 5RB between 02 - 25th April 2025.

The publication is designed by Oliver Pitt. Thanks to everyone who has contributed and helped out this year. And thanks for listening. We hope you like it.





I HESITATE TO GIVE THE  
READER ANY INSTRUCTIONS  
BUT LISTEN TO  
'GOD MOVING OVER THE FACE  
OF THE WATERS' BY MOBY  
WHEN YOU READ THIS

Lola Olufemi

I am preoccupied by the window and the event of its opening, but I won't say, "this window makes me feel," like another poet did. After all, I am not writing in the shadow of a singular catastrophic event, but many. I am not writing to hide from the violence of the everyday, I am writing to commune with it and I need the window open to do so, do you see? When I leave the window by my bedside slightly ajar, I don't worry that my belongings will be stolen by a thief in the night. I am practicing parting with objects easily. I rest assured because I know that new air has filled the room, cycling out the old, banishing what is stale, touching every corner, gently gliding over: bedsheets, pillows, cabinets, trinkets, knickknacks, a makeshift archive, a single piece of chewing gum, photographs, a box of rizla, cupboards, cups, books, books, books, odd socks, shelves, an office chair. This new air pushes a silk scarf to the ground. I imagine a change in state and isn't this the same as when you closed your eyes and your body moved without you? *Recall that time with me:* your chest heaved on its own, eyes shut so tight you saw stars, your mouth opened wide and a stranger saw your missing tooth. If I met the imaginary thief I would ask them: how did my footsteps sound coming up the stairs? Did they creak, did they rattle, did you feel my left and then my right, did the remnants of the day make themselves known in

my gait? Can you see the weights on my ankles formed from decades of swallowing the words that could free me? What did you expect when we came face to face? Our meeting is the existence of two or more independent harmonic melodies who know nothing of each other until suddenly, they do.

How you sound? And what legacy do you belong to, is it the black black of jazz blue or plying the slipping string or bleeding knuckles on a guitar, is it the quiet dignity of the protest song, Tracy's deep voice on a long car ride making you think "man or woman", is it the following of a certain young woman from god's failure to new life, is it the old souls lost to time or drink or drugs or all three, the beat that pushes you to your knees in the middle of the street after a guttural scream, is it - WHEEL IT UP, RUN IT BACK - and sweat dripping from the ceiling, the deep rumble - "ohhhh-hhhhhh," that hum of recognition by more voices than one, the closest you've ever come to feeling black time. Is it the song you don't remember as the funeral processed, is it searching the machine for a rhythm that just won't cohere. The polyphonic escapes you. *How you sound*, Baraka asked, and then he said "There cannot be anything I must fit the poem into. Everything must be made to fit into the poem" / shouting back, Ramayya said



WHILE MY BABY SLEEPS TO  
AMINA CLAUDINE MYERS TRIO,  
*THE CIRCLE OF TIME*

*Nisha Ramayya*



hearing you, hearing you see, see, seeing the ploughed fields  
unevenly spaced and filling with feet  
triangle glinting in air  
pearly sails  
pastorally enveloped airlift

*overgrown fields  
thrum of light  
touch opens*

hearing you, hear, hear, hearing your mother's heed  
your mother's mothers flitting in white  
death-softened hair  
hearing a daughter who listens  
underworld studio substitute

*away, away, away  
mumming underfoot*

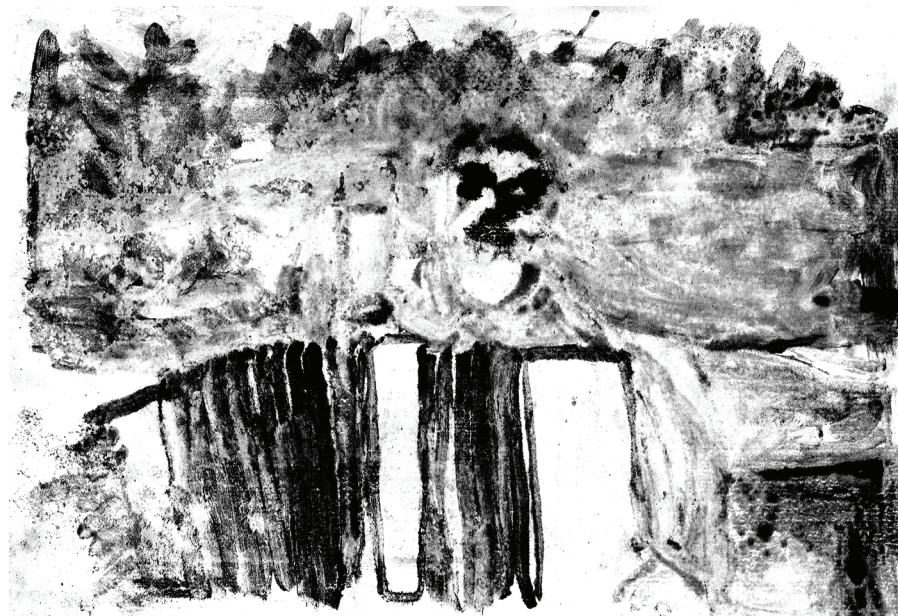
how mothers go down so their children can choose, twizzling souls  
into keep-safe balloons  
*away, away, away*  
poke holes in the story to help balloons through

*flitting, fall backwards  
so children don't  
don't away, no don't, don't*

earthbound from the bottom up, where's your mama gone  
millipede instrumental  
decompositional scrunch

hereafter sight, see, sing ghosts  
hereafter sight  
casts hooks  
harpoons shades  
shades wail, come back gleaming  
where mothers' mothers have been, been seeming

where desire catalyses memory, where death intercepts the now of this wish  
to go where you go, golden comb of your harmony  
to feel what you've tried  
keep trying



in the heliotropic time of your song  
time passes in your voice  
weeds grow

*can this music be duplicated  
by mythic descendent entrenched*

No, you sing, pulling heaven's lips to let melody reach

mouthie leech sunlight  
mouthie blub puddles for souls to steep in  
bubbly glut, overgrown toes, indelibly glee!!

*earthy go musing, ju ju ba ba  
bare feet glistening, ay ay sky mmm*

how you eclipse duplication  
ensoul syncopation

[written then performed at Counterflows, baby in tow, Spring 2025]

## LISTENING WITH YOU

*Nisha Ramayya*

Stirring without having slept, twigs of light brush hair from my face, as your cheeks confirm my fingertips. Piano keys us into the scene: layers of field and molten sky, gold rising from gold, crisscrossed by insects that leave trails in the heat. Double bass burr. Amina's voice pours into the shimmer, a lucidity that streaks the whole. 'Seeing the plowed fields.' A whole from which her voice can't be distinguished, golden streaks in gold. 'Seeing the plowed fields, made me want to go barefooted.'

Hearing Amina, I see Demeter and Persephone, or rather I feel the relentlessness their story transmits, the tug of what's given, what's not. The contraindications of this new-to-me love. Your face flowers, clouds over, mirrors mine or mine yours or the sky, an opening loop.

Sandbagged by pillows, my arms charged with the fact of you. I hear what's wanting in me as a daughter, dartling, and what you've made me into, how you, immovable, make, who I might, yet, if – A sentence that writhes to tie its pursuer in knots, surpassing deserts in contrivance. My lines can't stray far from you. Apricot crack tombstone. Mutuality locked in our gaze and unloosened by listening. 'Until my mother spoke of souls tied to her feet.'

Hearing Amina listen to her mother recalls breathing genealogies, nests lined with mothwings, poems written on the back of receipts. Omitted women. Storytelling as a mode of rescue or reincarnation, catching what falls through History's net. You could go anywhere, this cymbaline music untreads.

Barefoot in the scratch, souls tracked through furrows. Feet to feet to feet; a field seeded with ghosts. What can grow here? Change? The mother's warning is underscored by her absence, by the repetition of matrilineal absence in my sleepless career. But Amina doesn't sound worried, at least, that's not what I hear in her playing, in her voice. 'The weeds have grown, and now unseen crickets sing day and night, in unison and harmony.'

Strips of torn paper and cloth, orange, brown, dark blue – narrative skips in the placement of this next to that. Ploughed fields, overgrown paths. Unseen crickets, a choir harmonising across timespans. The molten sky is both above and inside the underworld; death ordains all life's possibilities. Desperate to be where I am, with you.

Lyrics and music conspire to ask one of poetry's favourite questions, marry to answer for poetry's torments. 'Can these sounds be duplicated by some mere instrument of man.' The gaps between word and world, art and nature, the urge to get closer, to undo our secular conditioning, as if representation might close the gaps, return us to the unseparateness of baby consciousness, our yearning breeding further and further distances, and the promise of the next experiment, for the babyful haze, but pressures of all kinds quench spirit, unless – Amina cuts in: 'No, for I tried on my harmonica.'

Silver bells and cockleshells, a midsummer spray, her melodica, fairy lit, bloodletting, crop defying flood, the love I hear in her play.

Had we ever studied contrast so directly, or heard the nuances of foil and pellet and baa? Whatever filled the spaces opened by your interruptions, before you? How you cleave attention, conduct us out of etiquette's mulch, into the all day music of our shared experiment. Coo is such a little word for your language, all your treatises, critical interventions, and jokes. But the littlest words are the likeliest to suggest magnitude, proving themselves crucial in their self-disclosing unequalness: sun, lap, us. Illuminated tufts. You fall asleep to Amina, this track playing on repeat, and I nestle in the empirical miracles of cliché.

[written during childcare, January 2026]

# COMMUNAL SWAY

dundee radio club

Tuning tuning, one, two three ~ found frequencies + swaying with the sonic

*dundee radio club [ddrc] is a space for sonic exploration; a space for gathering, for listening, for sharing sounds + opening ears. Through an annual marathon listening festival + ad-hoc online broadcasting, ddrc seek auricular connection through amplifying local voices + tuning to global vibrations. A quiet space for sounding out + an invitation for longer listening together. dundee radio club was founded in 2023 and is co-hosted/produced by Becca Clark + Su Shaw.*

~

In writing, remember a first tuning in.

A radio encounter whose frequencies were felt in sleep. A blending of the subconscious swaying with the sonic ~ dreaming and drifting into a day. The gentle signal had wound its way into ears, sound arriving before thought.

My grandmother Betty's radio alarm. Classical music easing me from dreaming into waking. Not yet convinced it was time to rise — unable to tell you how long it had been playing, or what station it was tuned to. That didn't matter. The radio was already there, holding the space, a quiet company for beginning the day.

Betty often left it on, tuned late into the afternoon.

A shared listening, a community to find frequency with.

This may sound a little passive, but is intended more as *a trust in the tuning in.*

This shared experience.

This gathering of ears.

A gentle, continuous invitation to listen — or not — drifting in and out of attention.

Tuning tuning, arriving and leaving ~ all in your own time.

This feels important.

A low pressure leaning of ears.

There are parallels between our festivals; the space making, the sonic medley, the situating — beaming out from the banks of the Tay, or bringing you to the varied and historied structures that host and hold sound across Glasgow, muchly in Maryhill. Neither demanding — no sense of overwhelm, just awash in sound. An embracing of surprise, attunement and the communal sway that can come with it — shifting beyond an isolated point of reception.

That listening is not always about comprehension — methods, languages and musicianship that bring awe and wonder, negating the necessity for explanation or understanding. Something in the inflections, cadence and rhythms of it all.

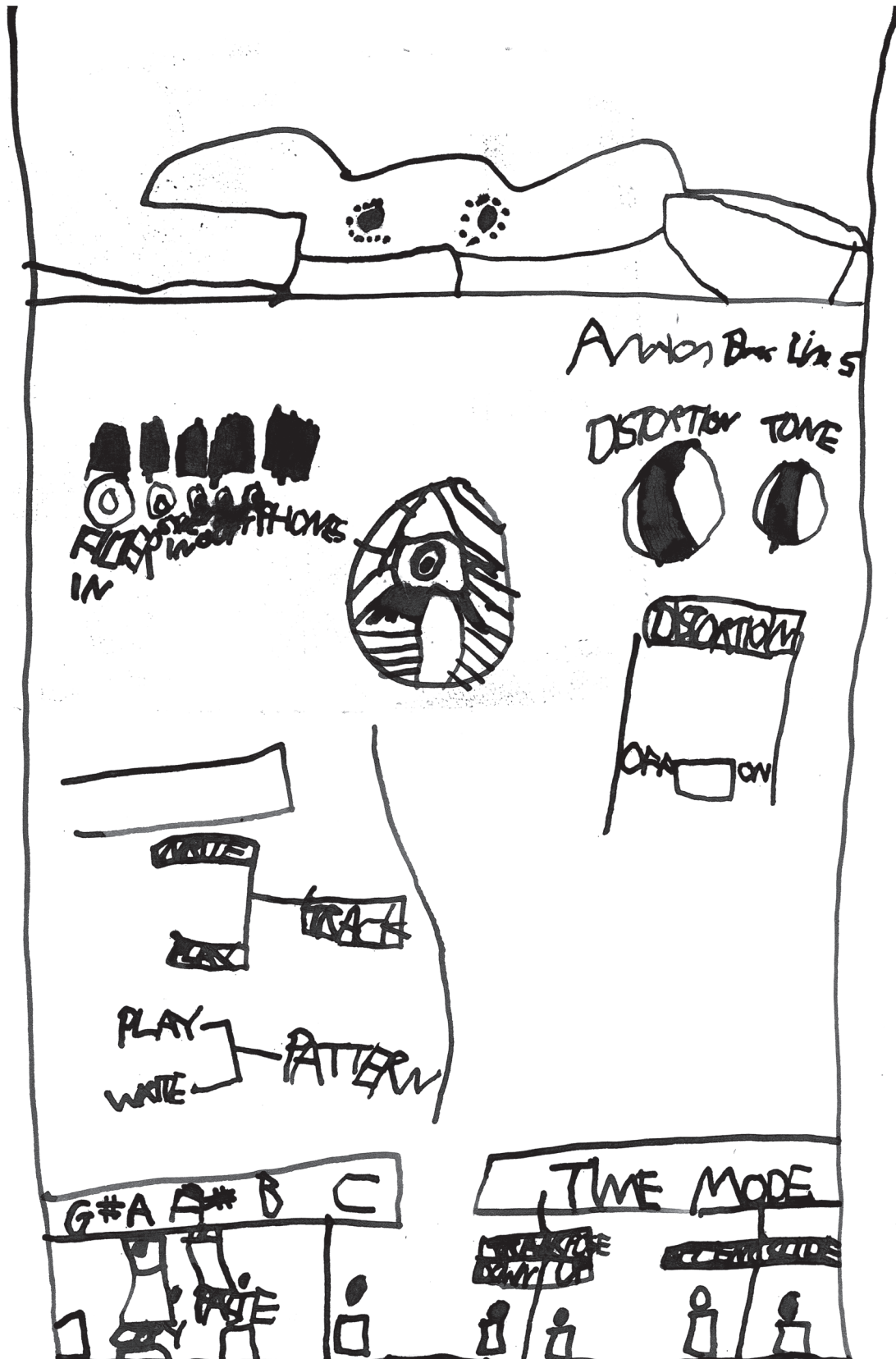
In writing, thinking of the residual.

Together, we think back to other early radio memories.

Both recall ones that sit toward the liminal.

Both remember the car radio emitting a sense of frenzy that we somehow managed to doze to.

Marathon listening, on-air and in-person. That makes it sound more like endurance, but what we really mean is the sense of



*being in the moment.* But, hoping it lasts. A quiet conundrum that we willingly conceded to. Somehow, speaker-systems diffusing toward a need to be quiet — to keep the immediate impression intact for a little longer.

Sound settles elsewhere — beyond the listening; in the bones, in the soft coils of the cochlea, in a sensory archive that doesn't behave like memory is 'supposed' to. You remember how something felt long after the details of a radio schedule or a festival stage dissolve. The flare of the festive, the widening out, the lasting light - a physics of flux.

With a vastness of frequencies, it's impossible to say that we always know the work of who is sounding out as the marathon minutes meld together and the radio links lull into the overnight monitoring. Hypnagogia and hypnopompia heightened, a continuous on-air ~

The open call for dundee radio club's listening festival is broad, and although it brings more than we can host ~ we hear it all. A dedicated listening that in the selecting bears that similar sensation of the hurrying between venues ~ the elation and eagerness to hear without hesitation. Huge delight in the fact of the doing. The bravery and the boldness in making your sounds known, shared. Though, in ears — familiarity of found sounds is often not the primary register of attention or intention. A seeking instead of the lingering of rhythm, texture, pressure, atmosphere — the subtitles of the way a room changes, ears shift and come alive - ignited in sound - calibrated collectively. In writing, remember a first time reading ~ counterflows on paper.

It's April 2021 — and there's a continuation of Covid, so we are gathered around listening devices, cassette tapes, and streaming times — coordinating clocks and ordering Annea Lockwood records as we don't want our ears to stop being in her company.

The page, another listening device. Not a recording, nor a summary, but a continuation of the broadcast and the shared auricular awakening to being reminded of others playlists through words and thoughts. This familiar cadence as we read and re-read — somehow, holding the zine brings us together in a physical space.

The simultaneity to it.

The words don't pin sounds down so much as gesture towards the descriptions of the vibrations that are already slipping, already moving on, keeping a beat or oscillating in their reverberations. Local and global frequencies morph into one another and the marginalia is the most alluring — keeping us listening for longer. There is a softness to this space, as we turn the pages — recalling, remembering, reframing and redirecting our attention to the footnotes and the follow up, continuing the encounter.

In writing, we think about the reciprocity of words and eyes, of ears and noise.

The resonance as we think of dundee radio club as a blurry entity, a collective endeavour. The shared and shifting roles of who listens; the listeners who broadcast; the writers who tune; the readers who receive. The boundaries between who is sounding out and who is absorbing never feel fixed. A parallel in paper, place and radio parts.

There is a generosity in this blurriness. A refusal to over-define. To encourage encounters that come from an open-mind.

Counterflows has always felt like a festival of courageous openness — a welcoming-in of the well-seasoned and those starting out; of the exchanges and inspirations we can feel through the companionship of it all. A space that allows you to show up as you are, to dip in and out, to be held by sound without needing to perform expertise. Experimental music

here is not a badge of difficulty in the extremities, but a posture of invitation and openness: a willingness to stay with the unknown, to listen without giving into fixed genres.

In writing, a perpetual sense of the audio entanglement.

Layered histories and we had hoped, initially, to ask the performing artists about their own first memories of radio. To trace a constellation of consciousness: the first time sound arrived, lingering and linking our ears to others through the shared listening experience — wherever you are. That conversation didn't happen — but perhaps that absence is instructive. Radio memories, like listening itself, are often private, fragmentary, hard to summon on demand. They resist neat collection but relay a continuation of encounter, letting attention gather, keeping you in company.

In writing, we are already feeling the social-spaces that the sound ignites. Ears eager. Wherever curiosity is encouraged, and where the act of listening — together, separately, imperfectly — is the key mode of encounter. Something we, as a species, desperately need more of.

The signal doesn't end when the festival does. It drifts. It hums. It stays with you, like a radio left on in another room.

Some company.  
Audio entanglement.  
Always.

~

BC / ddrc



Following Yan Jun's transcendent performance at last year's festival (we haven't been able to unroll a sheet of tin foil without an existential shiver since), Counterflows has been continuing to make links between the Scottish and Chinese underground music scenes. Yan had the idea of doing a Q&A between people involved in each, where artists could pose questions to each other and respond remotely over email. Here's a loosely edited collation of these questions and responses, with Scotland represented by Rufus Isobel Elliot, Fritz Welch, Mark Maxwell, Han, Ailie Ormston & Ali Robertson (how's that for a world cup squad?), and Beijing represented by Ake, VAVABOND, Zhao Cong, Zhang Cai, Sun Yizhou, Li Jianhong, Zhu Wenbo, Zhao Ziyi. We've called it 'Shortwave Q&A', in the spirit of long distance and often DIY / amateur radio communications, hoping to have some more shortwave Q&As across different scenes in the years to come. Huge thanks to Yan Jun and all the respondents for taking part.

BEIJING → SCOTLAND

**Q: Ake:** *Are there any musicians over there who left Glasgow because they couldn't afford the rent? And how do you feel?*

**Rufus Isobel Elliot:** Some musicians left Glasgow cos they couldn't afford the rent. Some musicians came to Glasgow cos they couldn't afford the rent somewhere else. Forests, fields, and rivers may also have left cos they couldn't afford the rent.

Up where I live in Skye, lots of people have left cos they couldn't afford the rent, across hundreds of years. Why there was rent to pay to begin with I'm not sure. People live out of their cars, move between places, bring music and news. Bards wander the land in greyscale, and shadows herd their cattle. New, secret

villages flourish in new forests. Figures amongst the understory have the dappled glow of new music. Set off with a pinch bar and spade — make us a new path.

**Fritz Welch:** On the contrary, many musicians and artists come to Glasgow from other parts of the UK, Europe, etc because of its affordability. I am a good example of this phenomenon as I moved to Glasgow from Brooklyn, New York almost 18 years ago. This relocation was the perfect solution for improving the quality of life for myself and my family. Being in Glasgow has also made it possible to expand my creative practices and shift into expanding possibilities.

**Q: Zhao Cong:** *How many years has the experimental music scene in Glasgow been around? Over these years, what changes and turns have occurred in terms of musical preferences, performance format, and audience participation?*

**Mark Maxwell (Mother):** Hard to say definitively, but at least since the 70s when groups like Sonics Arts Union would perform here, which I'm sure would have made impressions. In my time, since the very late 90s, we've been very lucky to have festivals like Instal, shops like Volcanic Tongue and obviously Counterflows now in its 15th year, alongside countless DIY events, label endeavours and many exciting artists. We're well serviced! In terms of shifts, there's been a healthy cross-pollination between dance music and forms of more free and experimental music in the past decade, both of which have long histories in Glasgow, so it's great to see those dots being joined!

**Ali Robertson:** I was spawned at the arse end of 1978 and the scene certainly predates my waddling around. Aulder cats might chat about wonderful free jazz

action in the 1970s or trips to the Third Eye Centre to see improvisers and sound poets. My own induction would be in the late '90s via free music nights organised by the likes of Scatter. I got involved in the scene in the early '00s, when I started hosting gigs as Giant Tank alongside oddballs like Consume, Diskono and MRW44, who were all organising nights in the city that operated on the peripheries of electronic music and rock-oriented sound. As that decade rattled on, the Instal and Subcurrents festivals seemed to add some sort of “legitimacy” to the scene and Wire magazine journalists started paying vague attention. Local labels like Kovorox Sound, Sick Head and At War With False Noise were very much interested in lo-fidelity approaches to noise, psychedelia & improv, while Psykick Dancehall helped myself and others whet audiences' appetites for head-scratching performance and text-sound composition. Glasgow Open School made waves at the start of the next decade and I felt a cultural shift towards folks being more serious and political in their music, but at the same time the arrival of Cry Parrot & Golden Teacher had folks abandoning their seats for the dancefloor and swapping chin-stroking for stoating about! DIY “pop-up” venues have always existed, but those seemed to increase at that time as well. Possibly due to folks being more adventurous, but equally due to the continuing capitalist collapse making venues increasingly precarious. Fast forward to today and Baked Beans On The Doorstep, GLARC, and more collectives than I can possibly recall all of the names of, are ensuring that there is always something interesting happening. Cross-pollination of genres is rife and exciting, with bills being wildly varied.

“The No Audience Underground” was a term coined on the Radio Free Midwich website to describe a subsection of underground experimental music shows where almost the entire audience for these kind of shows consisted of people who were also performers. An entirely participating audience! No passive punters! With what feels to be a post-pandemic

uptick in interest in exploratory music, it remains to be seen whether the newbies in the crowds will become another wave of weird fish feeding back into an ever-growing pond of experimental music, but I'm optimistic and confident that this will be the case.

**VAVABOND:** *How do you describe your gender? When and under what circumstances did you begin this kind of music practice? Have you gone through a period when you felt you wanted to step away from it for a while or forever? If you weren't doing this, what do you think you would be doing instead?*

**Han:** a) Reluctantly b) Trying to make dance music without following the conventions of dance music without being a great producer meant I made experimental music. Now I much prefer the “experimental” process. Although one day I hope to have learnt how to make dance music without following the conventions of dance music. c) Not usually but recently I have felt that I need to reconfigure my relationship with it — being freelance has made me feel a little desperate to say yes to everything and to do things without purpose. I want to step back to make it an involved hobby (at least right now!). d) Medical research (my much maligned masters degree was in biomedical engineering)

**Ailie Ormston:** *How do you describe your gender(genre)? When and under what circumstances did you begin this kind of music practice? Have you gone through a period when you felt you want to step away from it for a while or forever? If you weren't doing this, what do you think you would be doing instead?*

I would broadly describe my genre of music as electronic, although my music derives exclusively from acoustic sounds (that are processed electronically), and often includes either/both acoustic and electric/electronic instruments. I began making music aged 20, mostly in collaboration with friends, which involved early iterations of these processes. Before that, from the age of 8, I was mainly playing

music written by other people at home in my room, both for leisure (guitar) and for music exams (trombone). It was during my teenage years that I started writing little riffs and phrases on guitar mainly. I'd like to re-engage with playing music more casually like I did at that time, as it's not something I do much of these days. I have moments of wanting to step away from certain methods of making that I feel I've started to overly rely on. I've learned to treat these moments as opportunities to try to approach an idea a bit differently, or to try out a new tool, in order to break familiar habits. I work part-time as a baker, but if I wasn't doing music at all, I'd love to be a whisky distiller.

## SCOTLAND → BEIJING

**Q: Mark Maxwell (Mother):** *If you could reinterpret or reimagine any piece of music from the 1990s, what would it be and why?*

**Zhao Cong:** I would reinterpret a song by the band Sun City Girls. Sun City Girls has had a real, tangible impact on me and the 1990s were precisely when they were at their most active. I'd choose one of their songs called Rookoobay. I believe I'd end up singing it in an unhinged way too.

**Q: Rufus Isabel Elliot:** *I'm wondering if you can tell us... what's your dreamworld like?*

**VAVABOND:** I'm not quite sure about which meaning of “dreamworld” you referred to. If it is to say the imagined world, I wish for the bright future that all creatures can happily live in together. I have to say that as a Chinese woman over 40 years old, the long-and-not-that-easy-life experience had killed all my unrealistic dreams. But if we are talking about the world in my dream, I have a loot to say.

I've been a vivid dreamer since childhood. When I was younger, around 13 or 14, I frequently had dreams filled with déjà vu — absurd and dramatic scenes that would later manifest in real life. Later, in college, I practiced out-of-

body experiences (OBEs) for a period. During those journeys, I often visited an underground city-like place. It had an enormous train station with numerous parallel tracks, and many tube-like passages with escalators connecting different platforms. From that station, you could also access all kinds of department stores. (If you're familiar with OBEs, you'll notice many people visit such subterranean cities during their experiences; some even claim to have traveled to satellite orbits or outer space, haha.) During a particularly unsettling OBE later on, I sat up in bed and caught sight of myself lying asleep. It terrified me, and I haven't practiced since.

But the world in my dreams continues to expand. The map extends upward to the surface, where the city feels like a blend of Hong Kong and Shanghai — filled with intricate networks of alleys and elevated highways, alongside beautiful Western-style buildings lining the streets. I've also visited the city's outskirts, where strange mountains are often snow-capped, topped with majestic ancient Buddhist temples and colossal statues. Strangely, I'd travel to different parts of this world in my dreams, yet subconsciously grasp the spatial relationships between locations — knowing exactly which path led to places I'd visited in other dreams. I once even drew maps of this world, connecting numerous dreams. But as I grew older and more troubled, when my state was not very well, I'd often find myself trapped in dreams filled with anxiety — endless elevator transfers, missing flights or trains. That city seemed to vanish, yet sometimes it would reappear through familiar places and scenes from my childhood memories, like the area near my late grandfather's home.

Around 2010, I even experimented with something akin to performing in sleep. I gathered musicians — guitarist, hardware noise artist, laptop operator — all exhausted from daytime jobs, to begin free improvisation together after 9 PM, aiming to fall asleep mid-performance. My original intention was for everyone to abandon rational aesthetic judgments

and technical execution. The result was that both the audience and musicians drifted into a drowsy state, feeling utterly blissful. No one cared about the specifics of the music or its quality. (I had a live recording on this project, named “no-brain improvisation”, you can find it on my bandcamp.) I personally quite enjoy this state — falling asleep during live performances or while listening to noise albums. Sound clearly exerts a profound influence on the dream world; sound-infused dreams are often filled with colorful, bubble-like patterns of gibberish.

Your question is very great. It reminded me about the best part of these dreams, which is that you can control your dreams, if you are willing to. Even now, I still believe dreams are an integral part of our waking reality. I envy the Tibetan lamas’ mastery over dreams — foreseeing the future through them, solving problems within them. Though they possess magical arts beyond my reach, I feel that through those strange sounds we create, I too might discover a way to get control in my dreamworld. Perhaps that is also a good method for us to approach the essence of we called the “real world”.

**Q: Ailie Ormston:** *Can you describe a time when you ended up being still in a place for longer than you expected, just observing the surroundings around you? What does this memory feel like, where were you, what could you see, were you inside or outside, what was the weather doing, were you listening to music, what else was happening for you in those moments?*

**Zhang Cai:** Big windy day, late autumn time, dark sky at night, very very cold I recall. I find myself at street with back to a wall, surrounded by bicycles and corners. Observing how wind would swept leaves and dusts to corners, how corners collect things, and ending up thinking about the story of storages, lunch boxes for example.

The state you addressed I am very used to, and cherish. It mostly happens

when I am alone. Almost always happens when I am alone. There are always sounds involved. Even quietness. But always something to hear. Sometimes I feel musical.

I think one unit is more easy to stay with/get lost in the world. Whilst two, two is different, two starts to create a world against other worlds. For this matter, I did have a serious consideration whether to break up with my boyfriend.

**Zhao Ziyi:** I am a person who struggles to observe my surroundings, so it often feels like nothing much is happening. I attribute this to my poor eyesight without wearing glasses, but critically speaking, it is also a reflection of my general indifference to the things around me.

Except for the sky, that is. I truly can’t see it clearly, but what else is there? My favorite colors have become blue, red, white, and black. Before dropping out of school, I would often skip class in the afternoon or near evening to run to the playground and stare blankly at the sky. I feel that people are ugly and one-sided, while the sky and music are complex and funny, though neither of them ever offers a response. Sometimes I listen to music, sometimes I don’t. When I listen to music, I think about myself. When I don’t, I think about the many imagined versions of you.

**Q: Ali Robertson:** *First thing in the morning and I’m logging into a digital hellscape to punt sell myself: “Please come to my show. Please come to my workshop. You wanna see a bit of ankle? I’m available to play at your wedding. I can even make myself available for your funeral!” Then I’m doing it all again on another digital hellscape, before logging into another. Then another. THEN ANOTHER. And the only person guaranteed to be making any money out of this tedious endeavour is some Californian social media technobaron. So, by lunchtime, I’m drained of nbergy, and I’m thinking maybe I’d be happier if I renounced “The Art Life” and got a job at my local supermarket instead. Is this experience familiar to you? How does your average day*

*in “The Art Life” begin? Please do tell!*

**Zhu Wenbo:** No. I’m totally unfamiliar with this kind of “The Art Life”.

I have a regular job, I mean I need to take subway from Monday to Friday, to a big office with a hundred computers. It is common for many people, but not common for my musician friends...

In my hours in the office, mostly I do not have time to think about “art”. In my sleep I do not think that, too. Then I should remove the time of dinner, breakfast... OK, still a few hours. I could try some ideas at home, and the ideas come from cleaning dishes.

15 months ago, when we were preparing our (me, Zhao Cong and Sun Yizhou)’s first UK/EU tour, I use my subway time to reply to emails and instagram, and post something if I need to. Because it is the only time I could save to do that. And that became to my new habit.

I don’t know if other people have the same experience as you mentioned.... Maybe not, because I don’t think it is useful for us.

**Q. Ali Robertson:** *What colour do you encounter most frequently on a day-to-day basis? Why might this be and what effect do you think that this has on you?*

**Ake:** Life is full of colors. Sometimes it’s too chaotic. When I close my eyes, the first thing that comes to mind is white. Maybe it’s because I’ve been wearing a warm white dress frequently recently. Also, recently, I have also been wandering around in three rooms with different white walls. I think I need a room of my own.

**Q: Han (aka boosterhooch)** *Do you take more inspiration from what has come before or what might happen in the future (or neither!)?*

**Li Jianhong:** Seeing this question made me realize I’m someone who lacks concern for future matters. Even when traveling, I’m often in a “let’s see when we get there” mindset. The future always

seems unrelated to me. That is to say, compared to imagining humanity’s future, I’m more interested in where humanity came from.

But the past matters deeply to me. It equals memory. Though it often feels hazy, dim, and tinged with melancholy — like a river flowing through a dream — it holds something I linger over. The past allows me to see myself more clearly than the future ever could. Beyond that, documenting the present is something I care about and actively pursue. It concerns questions like: Who am I? What am I doing here? Why am I doing this? What is my identity right now? I believe that the “I” in this moment is the clearest.

**Q: Fritz Welch:** *What are the relationships, if any, between the experimental music scene and the visual art world in Beijing? Is there any cross fertilisation? Please describe an example. Also does the Big Money of the visual art world ever seep into the experimental music scene?*

**Sun Yizhou:** From a background, maybe close to half of Beijing’s experimental musicians have visual arts education. Some guys totally gave up visual arts, while others became underground independent or fashion gallery-represented artists. Conversely, hardly any music conservatory graduates pursue experimental music. The audience consists of art students rather than music students.

Regarding whether Big Money from the visual arts scene has flowed into experimental music, I’m unsure if anyone has done so. Sometimes, museums or galleries invite us to perform. From my experience, these are mostly opening party or anniversary events—essentially a ritual. The white cubes often have big reverb, and they have computer speakers or bad speakers. To be honest, I very much doubt they truly listen to our work. While I’m grateful for each performance opportunity and the modest fees, I remain perplexed: why do they invite experimental musicians to perform?



## FRAGMENTS OF A FLOWER

Masa Nazzall

١

*Is it true what they say?  
That this small flower never fades?  
That it grows wild along the northern  
mountainside?  
That when picked its buds never fall?  
I heard they call it the immortal flower.  
Where I come from, it goes by the name, Dam  
Al Ghazal.  
The blood of the Gazelle.  
Where it sprouts lies a story of love and loss.  
The gazelle  
Softly roaming transcendence worlds  
Fell where the red flower blooms.  
An everlasting reminder of the fallen lover*

٢

Late last fall, I started an embroidery project that looked into different wild plants of Palestine used for traditional medicine. While searching through botanical records, I came across *Helichrysum sanguineum*. *Dam Al Ghazal* in Arabic. It is a small sage green shrub that grows clusters of bright red buds. This flower thrives on the mountainside of Safad in Northern Palestine, which happens to be my Grandmother's hometown. I had never been there. Her memory of Safad was my only memory of Safad, formed from the moments she shared.

Patiently, I started cross-stitching the flower. The absent memory of this space fed into my weave, leaving voided and fragmented stitches across the fabric.

*What is taken when the land is not known?*

Since the imposition of the Zionist colonial project, *Dam Al Ghazal* has been appropriated by colonial narratives as a symbol of fallen Israeli soldiers and victims of terrorism. But this plant existed before it was taken. It existed before imposed narratives. This project evolved as a form of counter-archival botany. A way to bring justice back to the ecology. A way to reclaim the name, the land, and the belonging that still is Palestine.

*What happens when a plant is forced under a different name?*

٣

This small flower blooms between April to June each year. It bloomed in the time of the Nakba, the catastrophe that expelled 750,000 Palestinians in the springtime of 1948.

In 1950, then Israeli prime minister Ben Gurion established Yom HaZikaron, the commemoration day for the fighters of Israeli "independence". Not long after, that flower that was once cherished for its everlasting quality was reduced to commemorate the very war and the soldiers that caused the Palestinian exodus.

*This small flower. That grew on the mountainside where my Teta used to live.  
This small flower. That was in bloom when she fled.*

Dam Al Ghazal was given its Hebrew name, *dam ha-maccabim*, from Ephraim Hareveni, a Zionist botanist who moved to Palestine in 1924.

Hareveni along with his son, Noga, developed a field survival course using wild Palestinian plants to train Zionist paramilitary militias, Hagna and Palmach, that were operating before and during the Nakba. These militias later disbanded and absorbed into the core division of the Israel Occupation Forces. Noga Hareveni carried on teaching the program to the after 1948.

He later established a 625 acre park of biblical plants, Neot Kedumim, which is situated off of highway 443, a notorious settler-only road that runs between the West Bank and Tel Aviv and is located within the Ben Shemen Jewish National Fund forest on the western edge of the Green Line. They call the forest "Israel's lungs".

But before the names were changed. Before the land was upheaved. Before the first non-native tree was planted in 1908, there were the Palestinian villages: Jimzu, Dayr Abu Salama, al-Haditha, Khirbat al-Duhayriyya and Khirbat Zakariyya. Destroyed during the Nakba, only debris remains in its location now overgrown with the invasive and non-native Aleppo Pine. *Pinus halepensis*.

Their Zionist dream realized. Turning plants into weapons. A colonial botany. The very soil is turned into a battleground for control.

*I wonder what plants once grew there? I wonder if the dormant seeds of what once was still remain under the soil?*

⚡

The name *dam ha-maccabim* translates into "Blood of the Maccabees". Ephraim Hareveni named it after an ancient Jewish population of 2200 years ago, who

supposedly led an uprising rejecting the Hellenistic world, in present-day Palestine.

The story is drawn from historical accounts of the revolt written in 1st century BCE but its chronological timeline is of less importance to Hareveni. By rewriting the landscape, Hareveni is effectively linking the environment to an origin story that Zionists draw upon to justify a sacred presence on the land.

Zionists, devoid of chronological time, must access a cosmological timeline, one that aligns a biblical lineage to justify the existence of the present. Starting with this mythologized origin story, Zionist state makers manufacture its own narrative of history through space, objects, and beings.

*A botanist becomes a state maker. Manufacturing an invented history through plants. Forming myth into narrative into violence.*

Yitzhak Sadeh, a Polish Zionist commander that led Palmach forces, and later established the IOF, wrote in a letter to his soldiers during the 1948 occupation, that the Maccabees' blood runs through the soldier's veins. He urged them to fight to bring life to the land, connecting the soldier's sacrifice with the flower named by the Zionist botanist.

The landscape, erased and renamed, becomes altered to reflect the colonial claim. It is used to place borders of belonging. Creating parameters that claim this land as divinely ordained, pre-determined by God.

In December 2025, war criminal and Israeli prime minister, Benjamin Netanyahu continued this legacy of invoking the Zionist origin myth: "we are fighting the battle that the Maccabees fought". Saying in his speech, "fighting in Gaza... not only to preserve the Jewish nation and the Jewish state, but to preserve civilization against the barbarians". Looking

out into the crowd of soldiers he invoked, "you are the Maccabees of our time, bringing about the same miracles".

*Their miracles, annihilating the land from belonging.  
In the absence of meaning is a fragility that can shatter.  
A hollowed space named sacred.*

Even as the Zionist state attempts to entrap the sacred through violence, it forgets a crucial truth. The sacred can not be contained. It is a prayer that moves across forced borders. It is an unbounded existence. Held beneath the breath, it is the transcendence of the present. It is a belief in the future.

*What happened to the flower that was once named after a gazelle?  
The small immortal flower?  
With the red bud that never fades.*

●

*Sabr. Patience. I go back to the stitches on my cotton fabric.*

In Arabic, *sabr* translates towards a type of steadfastness. It is a word that is oriented towards the future.

Each stitch, criss-crossing along the fabric becomes a silent gesture of return. Re-membering the fragmented ruptures, as it brings me back to the land I belong.

A few months ago I heard a lecture by Palestinian anthropologist, Ruba Salih, who asserted that belonging to the land does not exist in house or land deeds under the names of wealthy Palestinians, it does not exist in a border line decided by international bodies, or in a flag or even in statehood. In her perspective, Palestinianness is not in ownership, but rather in being of and from the land.

*It is the land that generates the people, who in turn belong to it.*

To be native to the land, Salih claims, is to be in relation to it. It is to understand that all that lives, grows, and exists on the land are family. We are kin to them, just as much as they are kin to us.

*Ahal Al Ard. Kinship of Land.*

Belonging is not tied to paper documentation or ownership or military presence. It comes from the knowledge of the land that is established through continuity and presence. That knowledge can not be gained through occupation.

*Deep and rooted, this knowledge is hidden amongst memories.*

The flower was in bloom during the first exodus. It was in bloom during the first and second intifada. It is in bloom now, in the midst of genocide. This immortal flower has seen the scene of Palestinian life. Despite the surrounding violence, it stays hidden in plain sight delicately healing.

Plucked. Dried. Ground into a powder. Formed into a paste.

Dam Al Ghazal is used within traditional medicine to heal scar tissue from wounds, tears, and burns that have been caused on the surface of the body. All whilst healing, bacteria infection, supporting blood circulation, and providing release of stress as it soothes nervous tension.

*The land reminds us that we are kin.*

It is a wild plant that strengthens the people, not the nation. Dam Al Ghazal does not abide by the laws of governance. It belongs where it grows and it belongs to itself.

*This immortal flower.  
Growing beyond containment.  
Expanding and spreading beyond borders.  
Invading settlements, with a gentle reminder of its everlasting fate.*

# METAPHYSICS OF A LIBRARY

Lewis Cook (GLOSS)



I'm in the back seat of a taxi on my way to a gig at St Luke's — I've spent most of today staring at a screen, arguing with a water company who keep sending me automated late fees for a bill I'd paid on time due to a glitch on their system. I'm scrolling instagram mindlessly:

**"IT'S ALL OVER" — new deepfake AI advances are virtually indiscernible from reality.** The video proves this to be true.

*Scroll*

**Councils Opposing Israel Will Face Legal Action, Says Labour Minister**

I close my phone and look out the taxi window. A debt consolidation company presents a billboard listing hypothetical personal debts that you may be in: *Credit card - £12,855, Overdraft - £1500 etc.*

As the billboard blurs past, I feel like my head's submerged underwater, but I'm not kicking and screaming, just calmly sitting in the back of this taxi and hoping that I'll remember where the surface is. I try to remember where it is by thinking about music.

I start thinking about AI again. At the time of writing this, AI music is associated with a kind of ad-friendly detritus suited for the lean-back listener, but what does music mean in a future where you can feed an AI an amalgam of reviews from, for example, *The Quietus* or *The Wire*, and create a fiction and music indiscernible from something real at the click of a button.

More than that, in a world determined by dweeby billionaires and maladjusted tech overlords playing reality like an RPG where you say 'yes' to everything just to see what breaks, what's music, art and culture anyway, beyond tools of bourgeois consumption?

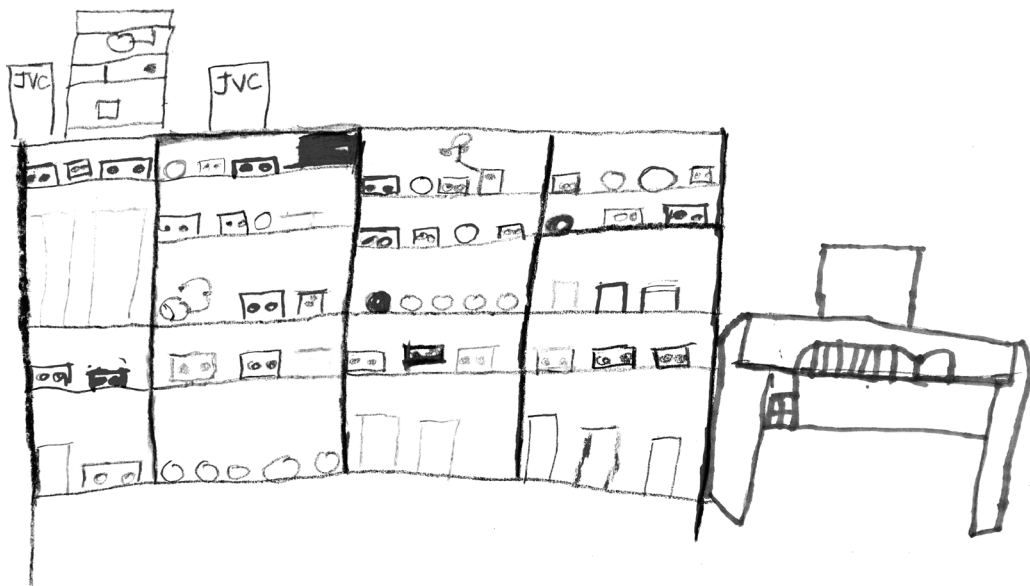
I drag myself, sodden with nihilistic middle-aged-angst, right into the venue.

**'IT'S ALL OVER'**

The words slop around my head as if they've been slevered in my ear by an AI-generated demon on my shoulder.

I bump into my pals in the hallway on their way upstairs from the bar. They're on good form - smiles and cheers as we move into the balcony, over the chain barrier to hover over the band. I'm still swimming in my head. The last time I was here I stood in this exact same spot at the memorial service for one of my friends. Keith's memorial, full of familiar faces from near and far, was a beautiful tribute to a life that entangled music with politics and, through Optimo with Jonnie, became a centre of gravity for a community that formed (and continues to form) around it — around oddity, disenfranchisement, ('You won't like it, sugar'), and, ultimately **music**.

Slowly I'm lifted up. My friends are laughing and dancing and, eventually, I am too. The colour comes back to the room: Johnny from Pictish Trail is off the stage and into the audience with arms full of slime, entangling the audience with it



as he sings whilst the band increases the intensity of their motorik chug.

And in this moment, I'm liberated from oscillating between performing my worldly duties, and the nihilistic lucidity that inevitably follows from being mired in them for too long. I remember that music's not just entertainment or a distraction or a decadence or a luxury — it can also be a force that defies definition — it accesses something essential that sits beyond — a portal to something unspeakable.

This resurfacing of perspective is for me a metaphysical shift rather than a purely psychological one. More than just a mood change, it is a change in my relation to what I take to be the world and what I take myself to be in it. I start to experience the music, the performance, the ritual and energy as more than the sum of its parts. It is an opening to a register of experience that refuses to be exhausted by explanation: a refusal of the metaphysical monopoly of instrumentality.

To take an example that maybe demonstrates this difference in perspective quite explicitly: I think about Qawwali singers, whose devotional singing, within its own tradition, is an ecstatic connection to the divine. It seems clear to me that the devoted singer who projects and hears their words sung to an eternal divine spirit sits in a fundamentally different relation to the act of singing itself, than that of the cynical but respectful ethnomusicologist who knows all the words and sings along.

Although this maybe goes some way to explaining what I mean by a metaphysical shift, I'm reluctant to draw a direct equivalence between that and Johnny running around St Luke's with a big ball of slime as some kind of invocation of divine essence.

But, in a weird way, I kind of do mean something like that — creativity, whether experienced as creator, participant or

audience, can be a conduit for experience as something more than inert material, through a mode of attention that allows the world to appear as charged, relational and alive.

That same reception of experience can be found everywhere around us, right now. I think about Pauline Oliveros, whose work sits with this idea quite literally. Good art and creativity in all its forms can (and should) act like the finger that points toward that which can't be reduced to words.

The problem with trying to describe things that can't be defined in words is that it quite often sounds like the kind of hyperbolic meaningless fluff that accompanies press releases written by chatGPT **but** — to the cynics — to those who roll their eyes at the mention of anything 'spiritual', 'mythical' or 'magical'; to those that believe that existence is no more than the identifiable sum of its parts: I pose to you that you stand at odds with the unfathomable mystery of experience to be found in every existing entity in this world.

To flatten our experience of the world around us to only that which can be measured, defined and articulated, is an increasing tendency in the Western modernity that we're immersed in, where the dogma of metaphysical materialism has largely replaced that of Abrahamic dualism as the dominant cosmology — reducing being to function, mystery to mechanism, and the fullness of lived experience to what can be rendered legible by technocratic reason.

In his book, *Technic and Magic*, Italian philosopher Federico Campagna elaborates on the work of Heidegger, Lacan, Arabi and Shankara amongst others, naming the distinction between what he calls the cosmogony of 'technic', and that of 'magic'. Transcending political left-right divides, the world of technic is, (more often than not) the platform in which these political conversations

take place. It's a metaphysical position that reduces reality to that which can be measured, described, understood and used (usually, specifically by humans). Far from being apolitical, Campagna argues that our metaphysical position not only affects our personal way of being in the world but also what motivates the way we move in it. More than that, what a society understands reality to be determines what kinds of action, governance, and life are considered possible and rational.

Under technic, a *forest* is no longer encountered as a forest, but as a bundle of variables. It becomes a quantified object: so many hectares, so many cubic metres of timber, so many tonnes of carbon sequestered per year, so much projected yield and future profit. It's stabilised into bureaucratic categories — productivity class, land-use designation, biodiversity rating, fire risk, conservation status — and then translated again into instrumental values: market price, net present value, opportunity cost, development potential.

What was once a living place of sound, memory, symbol, shelter, ritual and presence is rendered legible only as data and utility. Anything that can't be standardised into numbers or functions, just drops out of reality altogether. Under technic, the forest doesn't disappear, but it's flattened into a standing-reserve: a resource to be optimised, traded, offset or exploited, rather than a world that *exceeds its usefulness*.

Mikey Shulman, CEO of AI music company Suno recently claimed that making music 'isn't really enjoyable' because it takes a lot of time, practice and effort. As instinctively repulsive the conclusion Shulman comes to is, if our perspective on music creation (or any art creation) can be reduced to its utility, it's perfectly logical to frame creativity and artistry as an obstacle to be overcome in the name of efficiency. Under technic, those who wish to salvage any worth to the act of creativity are left with only

fairly toothless arguments, perhaps around the benefits to mental health or even just distraction, but even then there's very little argument for technic to be able separate the benefits of participating in creativity over any other obsolete ritual — and, since any value these rituals have must be reducible to utility, they always come up short.

The discomfort felt by this reductive understanding of creativity is maybe why, in 2026, I see so many artists turning to the imagery, iconography, sounds and culture of mystic folk traditions. It would, in my opinion, be a mistake to understand this as merely an aesthetic trope, or even a kind of primitivist rejection of modernity in its totality, but a concerted attempt at a meaningful metaphysical shift. There's not a uniformity to what this looks like (and that's the point!) but what remains consistent is a return to an understanding of creativity as ritual, one that exists in the world, but refuses to be defined by its language entirely.

There's nothing new here, but this kind of artistic expression's pertinence is particularly resonant at a time when the demands to capitulate to a flattened experience of being seem to be everywhere. There is a power to be had from thinking about the ways we inhabit the world rather than seeing art as merely a tool to solve it (or an obstacle to be solved in itself). If, accepting that, we are to treat art as a mode of life, then we must also accept contradiction rather than needing a tidy, easily digestible resolve.

These ideas in various forms of coherence have been part of the fabric of my own creative output as a musician and artist.

In 2025, me and Suzi (my wife and bandmate in Free Love) decided to take a temporary break from touring, releasing and writing music to try and nurture the creation of another project which had been growing in utero over the previous few years.

We'd been talking about libraries and how, amidst the politics of dismantling and diluting public services to the point of collapse, the concept almost felt quaint and even fantastical. More than ever, the idea of space, time and resources being created around the intention of public good, unattached to 'enhancing productivity' felt gravely radical. I'd started leading electronic music workshops, initially online and then IRL in the back of La Chunky Studio, under the acronym of ITEM (Introduction To Electronic Music) and, together me and Suzi decided to name the yet-to-manifest **Glasgow Library of Synthesized Sound** as an act of devoted hyperstition.

We conjured **GLOSS** as a kind of ark — to float suspended on the surface of a sea made up of all the demands, logics and pressures of creativity in modernity — metrics, optimisation, instrumental value, content, career, productivity. We're still very much in that sea, subject to its currents and weather systems, still paying rent, filling out funding applications, arguing with automated systems of water companies, trying to keep the lights on etc. But the intention of **GLOSS** is to create a space that's buoyed by the world without being fully submerged in its terms. Taking influence from other electronic music libraries around the world such as Portland Synth Library, Synth Library Prague, MESS, WORM, Fem Synth Lab LA; we wanted a place where making electronic music can be affordable, accessible and be articulated as a practice, a ritual and a lineage shared by artists, enthusiasts, amateurs and experts.

In practical terms, **GLOSS** is the UK's first, non-profit, community-based and artist-led electronic music library: a shared space where people can book time on synthesisers, drum machines and modular systems, attend workshops, experiment collaboratively, or simply sit with unfamiliar instruments and learn through play. It's a place to learn about, create, share and care about music

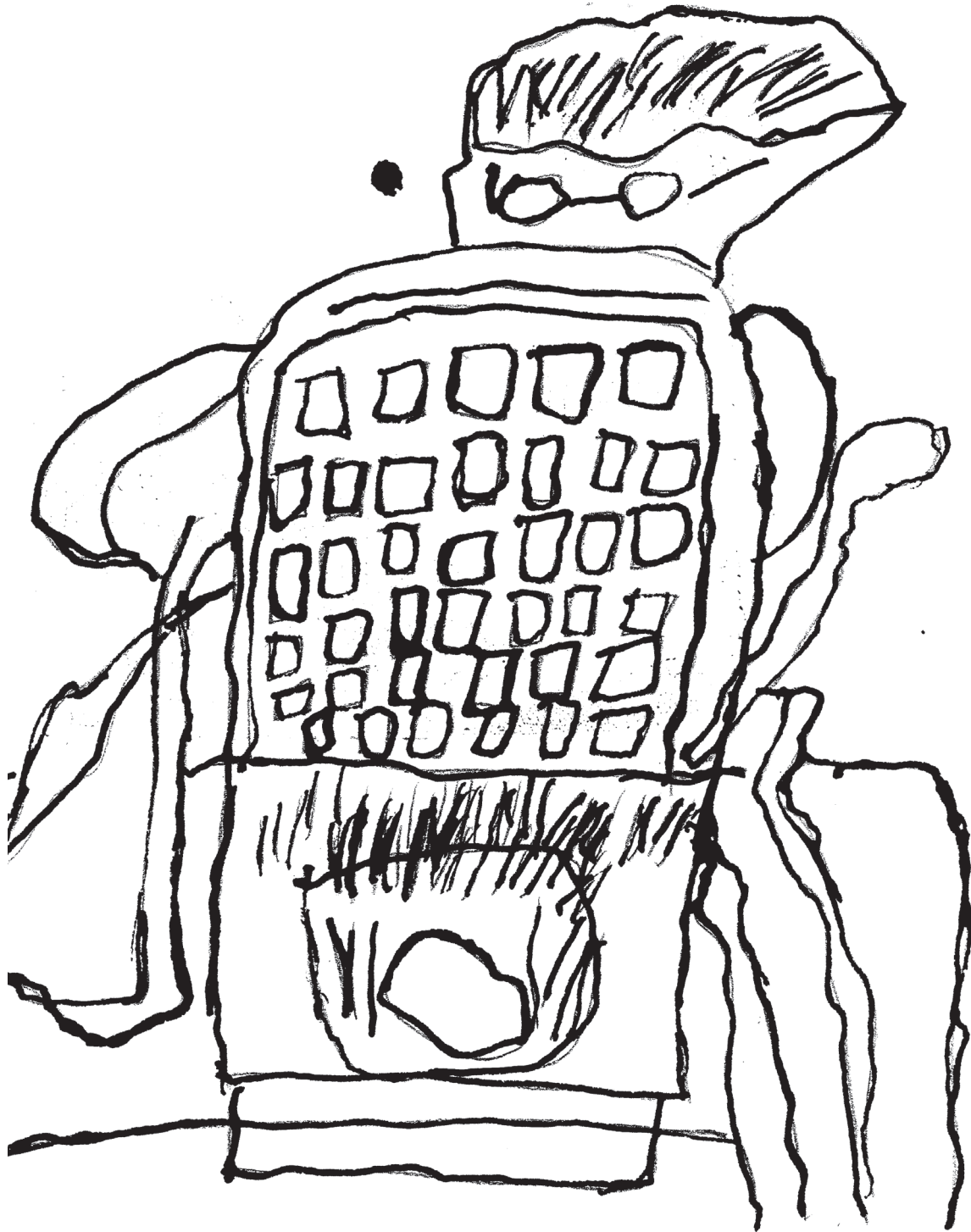
without needing to justify that time or energy in terms of productivity or output.

Admittedly, me and Suzi have personally spent more time this last year manning the oars than dancing on the deck — but now there's a deck to dance on and the community that's raised us up keep us floating and help steer the direction.

In 2025 we moved into our home at 5 Florence Street in the Gorbals — an actualisation beyond our expectations which would have been impossible without the help of those who've been braving these seas long before we set sail — their generosity, advice, and support have made up the foundations of **GLOSS**. Our ark is a relatively tiny flotilla built from the spare parts of those ships around us, and we don't know what lies ahead, but right now, we keep on floating and you're welcome to jump aboard.



# AN INTERVIEW WITH RYU HANKIL



Ryu Hankil is a computer musician, improviser, and writer based in Seoul who will be performing at Counterflows 2026. He has a long history as a solo artist, and has an impressive history as a collaborator, webbing curious paths between improvisation, poetry/text and experimental scenes in Far East Asia and beyond.

His most recent work 'Rhythm Machine' uses a walk in a forest as the foundation for a quizzing sort of sonic fiction, spread between sound and essay form. "A conceptual, abstract, and ontologically iterative questioning machine" to engage in a feedback process between personal experience and rhythms manifested in the physical world. This work was continued on 'Continuum of the Reminders' and its accompanying essay 'Auditory Figure' - an attempt to get to the heart of what lies behind the Rhythm Machine.

In short, Hankil is offering new, extremely weird and imaginative ways to engage with music and words, and while its best understood by grappling with the works themselves, we thought we'd ask a few questions to dive a little deeper:

*There's a very dedicated materiality in your practice, originally with clockworks, typewriters and now with specific computer music systems. I was wondering if there any other particular reasons or events that made you to make that change and dedicate to specific sound/music-making materials?*

I started out as a keyboardist in a synth-pop band, and after discovering that I could create music on my own using the keyboard, I naturally became a techno musician. However, in the late 1990s and early 2000s, I witnessed the rapid de-

struction of Korea's underground techno scene by the commercial world. I loved techno, but the atmosphere surrounding it was incredibly disappointing. I think that disappointment spread to my own disillusionment with the music I was making at the time.

Then, I happened to see the duo "Filament" (Otomo Yoshihide and Sachiko M) and the duo of Taku Unami and Axel Dörner. Both sets were played extremely quietly, with the sound vibrating rather than being melody-driven. I had never experienced such performances or music before. I was in shock that day, and when I returned home, I knew I had to change everything. Perhaps the greatest influence on my acoustic approach was the fact that I had never seen a performance played so quietly, and each of those tiny sounds sounded so clearly, as if possessing a physical quality. That experience sparked my interest in the sounds of objects other than instruments.

*I was in China recently, and in parts of what some people sometimes call the "no-music" scene, several artists describe what they do as an active response to a similar sort of encroaching commercialisation in culture and society. Do you see what you and others you work with do today in the Seoul experimental scene as similarly counter hegemonic?*

First, I want to say that the so-called 'no music scene' in China has always been filled with music that the Western music world couldn't define. I want to support the fact itself that some musicians simply don't easily conform to how their culture system operates. Regarding the Seoul

scene, I feel a bit hesitant to comment on it. Because I don't represent anything beyond my own work.

It's hard to make a straightforward comparison, but compared to China scene, Seoul is obviously an extremely capitalist city. The very fact that we don't make music for commercial purposes is a form of resistance against hegemony. However, Seoul scene also has a peculiar cultural hierarchy. And that hierarchy exerts a negative pressure against thinking differently. So just as not making commercial music naturally becomes a form of resistance against hegemony, I have an interest in "anti-music" against the negative pressure of the musical hierarchy.

***When you mention the musical and cultural hierarchy, I assume you mean the likes of traditional and folk musics, but do you mean that too in regards to improvisation?***

I feel that there is a clear hierarchy the improvisation music from Korean Music Academy and Korean free jazz. Have you heard of the so-called "the master of improvisation"? Some musicians still say that only masters of their instruments are qualified to improvise. In this mood, playing non-instrumental objects as instruments is actually a strategic choice. How can you play a clockwork or typewriter like a traditional music instrument? But non-idiomatic improvisation is possible.

***Speaking of your own practice and specifically the typewriter, I'm curious how literature and music continue to work hand in hand in what you do. As a listener and reader I'd argue that trying to determine what inspires or informs the other can feel like a chicken and egg situation. I was wondering if you could talk a bit about this process?***

Since giving up my previous music, all my interests have been based in the sounds made by objects. The sound of a typewriter, the sound itself, was connected to literature through cultural, historical

processes. The sound of a typewriter operating was a unique case that explained the act of writing.

So, I asked myself, could the act of writing actually generate music? I then explored various possible approaches. While maintaining the writing function of the typewriter, I studied how that function could operate other devices, and I was able to teach myself electrical engineering. Since then, I've been able to perform with writers not musicians, and these experiences provided me to understand more directly the concept that writing is essentially a musical score.

***I was wondering if you could share some works of literature or poetry you found particularly inspiring for your practice?***

I think Francis Ponge's "La Table" was probably the most powerful influence. It was a poem about the object called the table, a curious record of how the table inspired Ponge to write poetry, and at the same time, it was the first book of poems that gave me the impression that the poetry itself was architecture...

Another ominous reflection on the typewriter itself was William Burroughs's "Naked Lunch," a film of the same name directed by David Cronenberg. And I basically love weird fiction..

***In your various publications there's quite a lot of references to weird fiction, like Lovecraft, Edgar Allen Poe... I was wondering what attracts you to that in your Work?***

Weird fiction always discovers and constructs the unimaginable. When that construction begins to feel real, it reveals what we shouldn't think about. What I understand as 'what we shouldn't think about' are the cultural and psychological controls that operate in various ways.

I'm interested in music that stimulates thinking about other possibilities rather than just good music. And because I think about such music, there's always tension with universal music.

For me, Weird Fiction is like a preemptive simulation that constantly

prompts me to consider other musical possibilities. It's a kind of survival manual that allows me to keep making music. I write to build a conceptual foundation through fiction that enables me to continuously produce music. And through that foundation, I want to see a situation where my music and writing create mutual feedback.

***It's interesting you mention foundations and architecture a bit, as although the music you make can be quite chaotic I'd argue can also feel architectural, with particular systems and patterns, and no clear beginning and end. Since moving to laptop based radical computer music I'd argue your work feels more architectural than ever. I suppose using a laptop carries a trace of the technology of the typewriter. Like the typewriter do you see the laptop as an inherently linguistic piece of technology? Or something else?***

There were actually two reasons for switching from typewriters to laptops. The first was that treating typewriters as instruments was no ordinary task. Especially when touring, this heavy and delicate instrument frequently suffered accidents like internal electrical circuits breaking during travel between cities. Second, I began to feel something was off when I realized the typewriter's uniqueness as an instrument drew more attention to the novelty of its physical presence than to the music it produced. I used the typewriter as a machine that mediated writing becoming music, but I hadn't anticipated the visual fascination of the various devices operating alongside it would turn the music into a joke. So, I decided to start over from the basics as a writing tool, and in that process, the laptop was the most economical choice.

However, using a laptop created a separation between the writing and music work. While I did experiment with converting writing directly into synthesized sound, it ultimately led me to begin analysing what exactly those captivating sounds were that I had experienced when using a typewriter as an instrument.

Moving from techno to electro acoustic improvisation music, and going through the process of treating the typewriter as an instrument, I began to realize what sound I truly wanted to hear. It was friction or rupture sounds. I remember being genuinely startled when I first realized this. Because the sound itself was such a common type. It was a sound always mixed into the architecture and common circumstances of the urban environment we inhabit. Recognizing this fact led my music work and writing work to separate, yet they began to unfold in ways that explained each other. So it seems my music work and writing generate mutual feedback. And now I clearly imagine a structural landscape where sound moves and is arranged. The result manifests as text and music, but simultaneously began to appear as sculptural work. However, I strongly feel this is still a musical work where sound functions as material, rather than purely sculptural work.

***When you talk about the frictions and rupture sounds, I liked how there's a particular sort of push, sourness and persistence in them and the music that makes it's hard not to listen and consider the text and music. After reading and listening to Rhythm Machine it made me rethink my daily walks in the park with my dog. I now tend to stray from paths quite a lot and discover something new in the park each day. Do you see a work like Rhythm Machine not just as a piece of sonic fiction, but also instructional, like a user manual, or a set of strategies?***

The decisive catalyst for the Rhythm Machine began with lo wie's composition "htmpn". Without "htmpn", the Rhythm Machine might never have emerged, or it might have taken a completely different form. It brings me great joy that you've introduced spontaneous changes to your daily walks with your dog through the Rhythm Machine. This is because that experience might be similar to what I experienced with htmpn. I believe precisely these small, impulsive activities always possess the power to make us face

a different phase, however slightly. In that sense, the Rhythm Machine can serve as evidence of one attempt and simultaneously as a manual for a method anyone can try. Moreover, on a more personal level, the rhythm machine also served as a conceptual foundation for me to forcefully push upon myself the realization that there is something more, something unknown.

*The new work you are looking to present at Counterflows is a continuation or follow-on of some sort from your Rhythm Machine work. I was wondering if you could talk a bit about it?*

The work I'll be presenting at Counterflow is titled [ Auditory figure: Drunggaeng-i Modulation ]. "Drunggaeng-i" is a specific rhythm used in ritual music composed of percussion instruments passed down from Korea's East Sea region. It's hard to explain briefly, but this work relates to physical and mental issues I experienced both before rhythm machines emerged and after I began focusing on computer music. I began writing about how my mental issues improved after starting to listen to Drunggaeng-i, and I realized this connects to Auditory Figure, a short essay included in [ Continuum of the Remainder ] published by Rhythm Machine and Etat.xyz. I have no intention of recreating Drunggaeng-i —music performed by truly excellent musicians—on a computer. I simply wish to acoustically trace what it was that affected me when I listened to Drunggaeng-i.

*I don't know a lot about it, but there's some Korean Shamanistic Music that has*

*completely blown me away before. Is there a particular recording of Drunggaeng-i you would recommend to check out?*

Fortunately, a 1994 recording of various types of shamanic ritual music from the East Coast of Korea still exists. This is the first Drunggaeng-i I ever heard Shaman Music: Dong Hae Mu Sok Sa Mul (available on Youtube)

*Finally, you will be presenting some workshops at the festival. Can you tell me briefly what to expect at those?*

In fact, the two workshops are both extensions of my own self-learning process, designed to be shared with others.

First, Rubber Balloon Orchestra, a workshop that uses rubber balloons to provide a simple experience of how specific sounds are physically generated and how those sounds can be musically composed. The conducting method used in this workshop is heavily influenced by the methods of Otomo Yoshihide, who developed a conducting method for performing with people without any prior musical training.

The other workshop, Human Field Recorder and Player, was conceived while thinking how to write the sounds we hear, using words rather than a recording device.

Words always lose something when writing the sounds. I believe that recognizing that loss and filling it in with our own way is a truly different experience. This workshop also involves simply writing what we hear and reciting it, allowing us deeper experience of hearing, writing, and vocalization.

## COFFEE

Gem Kinley

Extra large right tae the heid  
Right tae the chest  
Right tae eyeballs drooping in dread  
Right tae the brain cell buzzin on less

Right tae focus and killin it deid  
Right tae dae the opposite ae wit ye need

Right tae the wake up  
Right tae the crash  
Right tae counter wae mare ae ma cash  
Right tae ma bed and stayin up  
Right tae the morra, same shit same cup.

\* \* \*

Gem Kinley is one of the two recipients of the 2025-2026 Music Space bursaries, alongside Adéráyo. Music Space was established in 2022.

*About Music Space:*

*There are many different routes into making music. For some the more traditional forms of music education just don't fit. Having people around us to share ideas and sounds with is crucial and a catalyst to opening up the possibilities in creating music. Music Space begins this possibility.*

*Each year we organise a nine-month bursary programme for two artists selected via nomination. We deliver practice-based creative sessions that encourage those taking part to experiment with sound and music making, as well as practical advice for organising your own shows/making zines/securing funding. As Music Space grows we are beginning to work in collaboration with Counterflows and other partners on different projects and activities.*

*Through our programme and ongoing groundwork behind the scenes, we hope to shift structures, systems and behaviours that enable social justice struggles and prevent young people from accessing music-making opportunities. Since beginning in 2022 we are starting to see the positive ramifications of Music Space, including an expanding community, new interests ignited, and connections made.*



## OGRE VILLAGE

LINER NOTES ON TURBO SONIDERO  
'LOWRIDER KUMBIAS REBAJADA  
POR SONIDO DUEÑEZ'

Eoin Anderson

I went back to the Ogre Village. Course I did. It's where I'm from. And when a heavy glim'ring falls, the moon's a stainless fishhook that drags me under, drags me there. Being real, it's where I am most nights these days. Cause the day steals something I need to nick back under night's sheathe. And the thing it takes is made, perpetually, in the Ogre Village.

In the Ogre Village they call it 'vim'. It's a timeworn Ogre term, would be risky to put in the language of Men. Imagine a word written in a circle, the force-you-need-to-chase-the-force-you-need- and around it loops, light bracelet flung on, framing, the founding vacancy words get dunted off. But in the Ogre Village you can snag that bare peg. Or rather by means of the instruments the Ogres make, and the Ogrey ways they play them, it can snag you, suspend whatever it is you thought you were. Aye, played well, it's as if billows of vim birl out of them, spite the instruments themsels changing as the years roil by. What like, you say?

Well, my granny's mammy told my granny that the making began in ancient times. It's said that even the proto-Ogres, back then we were calt Basajaun, produced decorated pouches: Sooky-Nets. They'd weave these thingies from materials found, or rather that accrete, in Ogre Villages, and these Netsukes could be roped onto whatever you wore, store your wee mindings. The way I was telt the tale, some hill-old geezer guddled a couple of smoking pipes in a pouch that was too small by half, and when the hollow rods jagged through he thought, aye why the fuck not ey, blew a lungful on the one while pure pumping his thumb off

and on the other. And so the Piped Bag was made, or Blirty-Sack as it was kent then, and like all stories of how instruments were invented its likely a crock o' shite which was, after all, what the other Ogres calt what he'd made, at first.

In time it came to be kent as a Geggie Bag, and in time Men came to the Ogre Village to trade for them. 'Oni', The Man with the Biggest Hat said, for that was another of our names, 'Oni' he said, well actually I'll summarise, he went on for fucking ages. The Man with the Stoater-of-a-Hat said that if we gave them enough Geggie Bags, they could lead vast armies with its call, splained that the more wars that Men waged, the more territory they could claim for what they calt 'Nations', and the more time they then had for what they calt 'golf'. One day he said, gesturing at nothing, the entire world will be a perfectly snipped out series of links between Nations, and we Men can sport our polymer baws across it forever unto the furthest lawnmowed horizon, and you Ogres can have a shot on weekends when we're a bit bored of it or fancy a lie-in. Course, the Ogres laughed the Men out the village. For what need have we for the things of men, like wars and golf?

The trouble was, they wereny really asking asking, but asking-before-something-that-ain't-asking asking, so a few bags were ferried over, spared to save more than a few Ogres. Course, the Men couldny gie it the necessary yaldy to get a proper tune going. So they never learnt that it turnt out Geggie Bags could breathe on their own for donkeys if you gave them enough initial puff.

My granny telt my mammy, that in time Ogres forgot how to make Geggie Bags that could breathe without the works of the body, and much of the music that could be exhaled from them too, for Ogres are a forgetful lot. But canny and sly and all that. And soon one Ogre worked out how to hew stoppers and grilles onto a silent bag, and by way of reeds made it bellow into sound again. So though the Ogres no longer minded-well how to bind the piped bag, they had the story and they had this new gewgaw and that was enough.

The Ogres calt this unfamiliar hinged doodad a Haun-Box, though some preferred the more deep-held Ogre cant: Bosca Ceoil. Some calt the hingmy a Squeezebox. The makar hadny been intending to mak' an instrument at first, it's said, but a luggable tool for carrying as she wandered about trading her collection of instruments with other Villages. For there was no system of tuning back then; rather than imposing a unifying harmony above, she sought some accord from underward. And so, to some, it would never shake the name Accordion. You may not know the word, for in the histories of Men it's an instrument they to push off paper's edge, fiddle the books in favour of those more smooth-sounding and stringy. Still, it's all in the playing. Any instrument can offer generous resistance if its player resists their urge to master. Even if you dinny ken the word Accordion you may mind the many names that were forged for the music haun-boxes could hoik out of empty air: jigs, trikitixas, cumbias. These sounds soon drew Men back to the Village.

And this time, the latest Man With The Biggest Hat even did a proper wee show-and-tell of golf, took out his putting-rod and a perfectly round ball and began chipping it around the village. Except whenever it looked like things may get interesting, instead of unscunnering his way out of the long grass he'd whistle and get this other ruler'd lad to cut all the stems to exactly the same size. And when,

at last, he bogied the ball into a void that same lad had gashed into the earth he pullt his socks up then said 'Now, let's see this new beastie of yours' (for he spoke a little Ogre).

His straightened socks wereny exactly knocked off. 'First the Blirty-Sack, now this. Why do you Inhumans' he said, for that was another of our names, 'only make instruments that fight back eh?' It's more fun, the Ogres thought, and one or two of the keelie ones even chuckled, for by then they'd realised from his demo that the 'sport' the Men dangled out to us, Golf, was just an Ogre game we calt Gowf, cept in gowf you feel your way in accord with the turf's folds rather than snick it to standardised sizes. It's a bit mair tricky. And there's an errant swerve that the earth lends you. Aye, it seemed there was no end to the pilfering of Men, but perhaps an enabling impurity is added by all this thievery, some wildness that resists the redundancy of exchange.

Speaking of, my granny blethered often too, even to me as a bairn, of one auld Ogre calt Jimmy Shande. By this time, many Ogres had been tricked into working in mile-wide factories that made the rods and balls for golf, or the machines that eternally recharged the world into fairways for it; was well odd to us Ogres since it's all mere-pseud copies of the Fife coast, where this Ogre calt Jimmy happed to hail from. When he played Haun-Box, Jimmy was possessed by his own left foot, stomped it through countless strikes at The Golf Factories. And he became the first to gig, playing from Village to Village, when before all music was centred in the Core Cities of Men. After all, the Cities of Men and the overlapp'd Villages of Ogres are the exact same places seen in different slants of light. Some say you can see his spectre still on knolls of moony bluebells. Aye, this jock could play any reel just like that, but the word for this, DJ, was yet to be.

My mammy told me that in time the Ogres forgot too how to make the Haun-

Box. But by carving runic-channels and spider-shaped-symbols into silicon they made all sorts of other bitbobs, which they calt Key-Boxes. There were Boxes with hard keys beneath calt Computers, and Boxes with soft keys on top calt Samplers. And with these they could make the sounds of the Squeezers without any valves concertinaing at all: the very voices of Ogres could be recorded, made to wheeze and clank with the rhythms Haun-Boxes had. And with this new resistance of the object came a renewed errancy. So though the Ogres no longer remembered how to make the hand-box, they had the story of the hand-box and of the piped-bag and they had this key-box that could conjure glimmering echoes of hand-boxes and that was enough.

And with that instrument they made more musics than before. And my mammy was well into Cumbia Editada specially, as one wise Ogre calt it. Digital, in the cant of Men. And in time, aye no chance you'll be scrubbing the floor with yer dropped gub bout this, the men came again and asked-without-asking, saying give us this Key-Box now, so we can refine our ways of war, and so we can dance at the weekend and forget our worries without even the need for an actual Ogre, and be ready on Monday again to turn all the world into more wars and golf.

And now, I tell myself, though we have forgotten even how to maintain the motors that keep these Key-Boxes going, more's at play still than mere individual leisure, a gap-between-grindstones.

Example, one night decades back, at a party 'neath the Ogre Pass, the heart-motor inside one box-with-keys-above overheated, slowed, and the half-rekent handbox sounds sagged alongwith sandy guacharaca drifts, but the displacing-vim doubled and the bodies continued to move. Mocking the ways of Men, their putterings, at first this was calt Sonido-Dunas, sound-dunes, but in time these tunes came to be kent as Rebajadas,

Cumbia Obscura.

And so once more the Men started coming to the Ogre Village, and to move to the Rebajadas, but when they did they seemed to no longer be solemn Men but the many genres that make up Ogres, as if some chip had been sliced in the windy bunkers of their hearts, and in that divot driven a whiff of sedition. After all, there are no differences between Ogres and Men, they're the same thing seen by certain skews of light. And so we moved to the weary half-motor's sag, a smeary mirror voice of the forgotten hand box which was a vacant circle around the absent bag-o-pipes and we had the stories and knew the place and that was enough.

We knew the place, cause to one who knows of Ogres, when the crow's flown any corner of this world, or red-curtained hall, can be a mounting for two-way mirrors. All it takes is a three-minute tune, one weekend, a four-day festival. The Glimmering, Grimlins, the Grumagaw. So many ways to cry it. Vespers, Evenfall, Simmerdim. Clapsholas, collapsing glow. Crespúsculo, crack between worlds. Delitesence, Dusk. The Dimming. Twisted Nemastics. Negative Fill. The Dark Made Glimmering: time when the line separating Village and City is slimmest and the ailing light's like liquid crystal.

And to be leal, it felt necessary there were so many names for it: that it couldny be squidged into a single term. For it's only Men that Eagle march in battle formation, that Quest alone towards a fixed horizon-hole they have pre-trimmed and turfed. Aye, even what they call The Rough is one more name for what's bordered and known. Ogres adventure without safety nets, vim-filled, mobile, holding only their instruments, their half-minded stories. In unstated accord with one another, they chase the horizons that shift around each evening's tossing and turning. In the end, it's the same thing, but in diff'ring pitches of light. And that's enough.

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**Edited by:**  
Helen Charman  
Joel White

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Oliver Pitt

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**Illustrations by:**

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