

EXPLORING PERSONAL SPECTRES IN ELECTRONIC MUSIC

— FEATURE ARTICLE —

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ABSTRACT

In keeping with Derrida's concept from *Specters of Marx*, this study reconceptualises hauntological approaches in electronic music composition. Although hauntology has stimulated interest in a variety of artistic disciplines previously, including music (see for example Schofield 2019), this research presents an alternative approach to engage with hauntological themes. It accomplishes this by presenting a portfolio of unique musical compositions that examine how the creative process is influenced by the ghosts of personal connections and influences. The portfolio emphasises how the creative process components serve as auditory signifiers that summon ghosts from the past, generating layers of meaning and exhibiting a positive interaction with nostalgia. These approaches aim to broaden and deepen our understanding of how Derrida's spectres are expressed in electronic music production, highlighting existing practice and offering current and prospective musicians a different creative process methodology that allows them to connect more deeply and profoundly with the music they make.

KEYWORDS: Derrida; hauntology; nostalgia; electronic music composition

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In this study, hauntological approaches in electronic music composition will be given a new interpretation. I will discuss existing hauntological themes in UK electronic music and exhibit a portfolio of my own work to demonstrate how my methodology differs from that of other practitioners throughout the literature. In my inquiry, I am not seeking to invoke cultural memories or historical aesthetics. Instead, I will explore how personal connections and influences impact the creative process, expediting how ghosts are relocated from shared cultural to the personal.

Furthermore, I will demonstrate how the hauntings of relationships and influences pervade the creative process by engaging with different components that sonically reference elements of my past. This method will expose a deeper meaning within the creative process concealed from the listener whilst engaging positively with nostalgia.

JACQUES DERRIDA'S HAUNTOLOGY

The concept of hauntology posited by Jacques Derrida in his 1993 book *Specters of Marx* explores how the past returns in the manner of a ghost to haunt the present. He argues that political, social or cultural historical constituents persistently return as revenants, presenting themselves differently each time (Derrida 2011). Moreover, they cultivate a temporal and ontological severance in which an adjourned non-origin substitutes presence. The book was written after the fall of the Berlin Wall and the cessation of communism in Western Europe. It is primarily a response to the theorist Francis Fukuyama's *The End of History and The Last Man* (2006) which declares that capitalism has conquered communism. However, Derrida disagreed with this assumption and presents the opinion that although communism is in decline, its apparition still haunts and permeates western society. He argues that even though communism's institutions have dissipated, its ideas are prevalent, existing like a ghost without a body (Derrida 2011).

Although Hauntology in the first instance implies ghosts and apparitions, Derrida uses the term hauntology to also infer being, the essence of existence. *Specters of Marx* was written and first published in French, and because the 'h' in hauntology is silent, hauntology and ontology have the same pronunciation, hence, a pun on ontology was employed. According to Derrida, cultural, political or personal ghosts of our past always infiltrate the present (Derrida 2011). Therefore, being and haunting are interlaced; as Coverley posits, "to be is to be haunted" (Coverley 2020: 8).

Davis states that insofar as it inhabits the territory of the "Levinasian Other", hauntology is an entirely unreconcilable intrusion into our reality that is incomprehensible to us according to our existing cognitive constructs but whose otherness we are responsible for maintaining (2005: 373). Similarly, as Gray asserts, Derrida's idea of hauntology is an ethical need to maintain otherness even if we are unable to completely understand it, and it has nothing to do with a belief in actual ghosts (2022: 1). An anguish of the Other appears simultaneously as an absence and a presence that frequently surpasses our comprehension. However, although invisible, this Other nonetheless makes an imprint on us and implores us to act (Gray 2022).

Moreover, Gray (2022) argues that hauntology can be the result of memory (which in and of itself is a spectre of heritage), of legacy ghosts or of specific people who are neither present nor currently living to us, in us or outside of us. Reminiscence has a particular sense of non-contemporaneity since the things that are remembered or celebrated are “neither here nor there” (Gray 2022: 2).

SONIC HAUNTOLOGY AND UK ELECTRONIC MUSIC

Hauntology has been a concept of great interest in a wide range of creative disciplines, especially music (for example, see Schofield 2019). Rather than being an entrenched musical genre with defined boundaries, it is more a feeling evoked by creatively engaging with contrasting societal remnants of a previous epoch. Although hauntology does not pertain to a particular genre of music, Sexton (2012) writes that certain styles, due to their technological persuasions, adopt hauntological themes more easily. Production methods and digital technology permit the re-emergence of the past to create sonic temporal displacement. Electronic music artists have been able to explore hauntological themes with less effort for over 30 years because it has been possible to, quite easily, sample music from different historical periods (Sexton 2012: 562). From the early 1980s, digital sampling allowed practitioners to extract elements of tracks using sophisticated hardware samplers to capture audio from CD, vinyl and cassette. Coupled with audio production software in the late 1990s, this process made sampling even more effortless (Sexton 2012: 562). Hauntings of one era could exist alongside hauntings of another, creating temporal disparity.

Theorist Mark Fisher and his contemporaries coined the term Sonic Hauntology (Fisher 2013: 44) to describe music that has hauntological themes. They propounded that it produces temporal contrasts by montaging previous periods of the twentieth century with modern day production techniques (Fisher 2014: 21). Sonic Hauntology is typically associated with specific electronic music musicians from the United Kingdom who sample British media sound sources and incorporate them into their music, with their objective to create spectral sounds that elicit profound shared cultural memories (Fisher 2014: 21). Many artists have been associated with sonic hauntology because of the methods they use to engage with hauntological themes (see fig. 1).

Artist(s)	Works	Genre	Methods used to engage with hauntological themes
Boards Of Canada	Music Has the Right to Children (Boards Of Canada, 1998)	IDM, electronic, downtempo	They generate fictitious memories by sampling public announcements and sounds from 1970s television shows (Reynolds, 2011).
Position Normal	Stop your nonsense (Position Normal, 1998)	Electronic, leftfield, abstract	Music made by sampling a variety of music with a personal connection (Reynolds, 2011).
Caretaker/ Leyland Kirby	Selected Memories From The Haunted Ballroom (Caretaker, 1999) Theoretically Pure Anterograde Amnesia (Caretaker, 2005) Death Of Rave (Kirby, 2014)	Experimental, ambient	Uses ballroom music from the 1920s and 1930s. Inspired by the phenomena of forgetfulness, Alzheimer's, and dementia – experiments with the brain's challenge to recall instances from the distant and near past (Reynolds, 2011).

William Basinski	The Disintegration Loops (Basinski, 2001)	Experimental, Minimal, Ambient	Historical tape loop recordings that have been digitised. They deteriorated as a result of the method utilised to preserve them. With each pass through the magnetic heads, the tape deteriorated, generating an audible effect and hauntings of the old format on the sound recordings. Reverb was used to enhance the spectrality of the sound (Balfour, 2018).
Focus Group (<i>Ghost Box Records</i>)	Sketches and spells (Focus Group, 2004) Hey let loose your love (Focus Group, 2005)	Electronic	Sources audio from 1960s library music (Sexton, 2012)
Burial	Untrue (Burial, 2007)	Electronic, dubstep; future garage	Vinyl crackling is sampled to showcase an out-of-date technology in combination with modern production techniques, bringing the ghosts of the past into the present. He takes voices from UK Garage and Jungle music from the 1990s and transforms them into something unrecognisable, bringing their ghosts into the present (Fisher, 2014). Uses video games, rainfall and urban recordings to creates empty dystopian city soundscapes.
Advisory Circle (<i>Ghost Box Records</i>)	Mind how you go (Advisory Circle, 2005)	Electronic, experimental, ambient	The audio of UK Public Information Films and Programmes for Schools and Colleges from the 1970s are examined (Sexton, 2012).
Mordant Music	Dead Air (Mordant Music, 2006)	Leftfield, abstract, grime, electro, industrial	Used library music, early 90s UK techno, and early pirate radio electronic music were all inspirations. Used Philip Elsmore's voice. Was a continuity announcer on UK television in the 1970s (Reynolds, 2011).
Pye Corner Audio	Sleep Games (Pye Corner Audio, 2012) Entangled Routes (Pye Corner Audio, 2021)	Electronic, experimental ambient	Music from the BBC Radiophonic Workshop and libraries are used. Attempts to make the audio sound aged and worn. Analogue recording technologies and hardware are used. Explores historical Sci-Fi theme music (Pattison, 2021).

FIGURE 1. A SELECTION OF PRACTITIONERS WHO ENGAGE WITH HAUNTOLOGICAL THEMES.

Fisher (2013) argues that a common thread amongst artists who engage with hauntological themes is cultural recollection. This is demonstrated by Scottish electronic music act Boards of Canada, who are regarded by Reynolds as one of the first artists to experiment with hauntological themes in their work (2011: 330). They integrate sampled British public broadcasting media from the 1960s and 1970s and children's television programmes to induce common nostalgic childhood memories. Another example of a practitioner who explores the cultural past by injecting musical and cultural influences from previous periods into his work

is *The Caretaker*, who takes his name from Jack Nicholson's character in Stanley Kubrick's *The Shining*. His *Haunted Ballroom Trilogy* (1999) dispenses nostalgia through his music by sampling early 20th century UK ballroom music. Fisher demonstrates that he slows the samples down and applies different time domain effects to create a sense of memory play, extracting and transforming them into less recognizable musical presentations (2014: 121).

Ghost Box Records, synonymous with hauntology, are instrumental in disseminating music that explores shared cultural memories, having released artists like Belbury Poly, The Focus Group, The Advisory Circle and others. It uses music and imagery to support the idea that society is now living in an illusory past. The media content that the label's artists use are relics from another world, to create cultural allusions all occurring at the same time to create temporal displacement and conjure nostalgia for a future that never came (Sexton 2012: 564). They have been influenced by UK post-war cultural media such as early library music, public address materials, instructional films, and the 1960's and 1970's Penguin and Pelquin paperback children's book aesthetics as well as the sounds of the BBC Radiophonic Workshop (Fisher 2014: 22).

Radiophonic Workshop contributor, Delia Derbyshire's work can also emphasise how patriarchal perspectives have shaped the perception of hauntology. According to Morgan (2017), women manifest in hauntology as intangible voices, ghostly controllers of archaic technology and idealised depictions of a post-war Britain. Morgan examines this further by setting Delia Derbyshire's music and persona in the context of hauntology's obsession with the past and its sonic traces (2017: 19). Male perspectives have predominated in the hauntological themes investigated, particularly with regard to early life experiences and technology (which has depoliticized hauntology to some extent). As a step toward future research into the gendered and temporal relations at play within a phenomenon that has thus far lacked a "feminist critique", these perspectives need to be challenged (Morgan 2017: 20).

In addition to hauntology being presented through a patriarchal lens, Fisher asserts that sonic hauntology advocates a sense of what Freud would define as melancholia (Fisher 2014: 22). According to the Freudian interpretation, melancholia is the result of losses that are so severe that they are transferred to the subconscious; there they remain imperceptible to the conscious mind. Melancholia is usually associated with feelings of unpleasantness, sadness, depression when reminiscing and yearning for a previous point in time. For Fisher, hauntological melancholia searches for the modern-day ghost as well as for adjustments and unstable components (Kolioulis 2015: 67). Fisher (2013) and Reynold's (2011) hauntological perspectives respond to what they see as a neoliberal by-product. They claim that because we are so fixated on the past, we are haunted by futures that do not materialise. We have arrived at a point in history when culture evolves without profoundly changing, and politics is reduced to the preservation of a pre-existing capitalist system (Fisher 2014: 19). When listening to music from the 21st century, the fundamental idea of a paradigm shift and "futuristic force", in Fisher's opinion, has evaporated (Kolioulis 2015: 68).

Fisher (2014) believes that the work of artist Burial eloquently personifies this notion. He highlights Burial's work, emphasising how his practice can be interpreted as a symbol of political and cultural paralysis. Much of Burial's influence comes from the UK hardcore, garage, and drum 'n' bass genres of the 1990s, as well as their respective rave events. Through his music he is trying to recapture the longing for that period because to him it is nostalgic and has deeper personal meaning. He was too young at the time to attend any of the raves; however, his older brother would frequent some of them, buy the records, and thus expose Burial to the culture (Kolioulis 2015). Much of Burial's music explores temporal detachment because he is trying to recreate experiences and phenomena associated with rave culture and the post rave fallout (Fisher 2014). For example, in his Night Bus track he summons the isolation experienced travelling home from a club during the early hours of the morning, traversing London's outer zones. He was depicting a time, prior to London's 24-hour underground service, where the only option for some clubbers to get home was by the public transport service. Many clubbers would dwell in the city's cheaper outer areas, and as expensive taxis were not an option, the late-night bus was the only mode of transport possible. He creates the afterglow feeling of the club, where everything is warm and bright, combined with the intermittent industrial sounds of the city. Fisher writes that Burial's creative statement is as much about the literal bus journey as it is about the notion that we are collectively all on the metaphorical night bus journey home from the 90s (Reynolds 2011: 394). Burial sonically posits the notion that we have been left a future with no possibilities.

It is crucial to introduce Gilroy's (2006) concept of post-colonial melancholia, which emphasises the systemic disease of post-colonial politics rather than melancholia as a subjective feeling of loss. In addition to the hatred and violence directed towards black people, immigrants and foreigners, melancholic emotions have made it difficult to respect the commonplace, disorderly multiculturalism that has grown up undetected in metropolitan areas (Fisher 2015: 24). A sense of loss and nostalgia for the past empires, particularly the British, exists. In a musical context, this can even happen unintentionally, as is reported in Van Straaten's (2012) analysis of the Amsterdam psytrance party scene. The research finds that attendees wish to return to occasions that provided the cosmopolitan sensory aesthetic. Such sentimental expressions of nostalgia might be interpreted as cultural practises that shape the cultural present and a hope for a future based on an imaginary history. Certain nostalgia appears to provide an environment where people may perceive themselves to be devoid of persistent post-colonial injustices (Van Straaten 2012: 76).

These hauntological and post-colonial issues are further addressed through the historical, scientific and cultural notion of Afrofuturism, which investigates the links between African diaspora culture, science and technology. It investigates themes and issues of the African diaspora through technology culture and futuristic fiction, focusing on a variety of media and artists that share an interest in creating black futures that are shaped by Afro-diasporic experiences (Eshun 2003). According to Fisher, the same type of temporal disjunction that has been a feature of the Afrodiasporic experience confronts white society through postmodernity and hauntology (2013: 46). This has been the case ever since the first

Africans were taken captive by slave traffickers and propelled into the fictional space-time temporal injunction of Capital. Slaves are therefore already a part of the future rather than being remnants of the past (Fisher 2013: 46).

There have been some descendants of Sonic hauntology; hypnagogic pop is regarded as its US equivalent. However, unlike hauntology it does not centre around electronic music or sampling nostalgic cultural media. Instead, Hypnagogic Pop originated in the mid-to-late 2000s when musicians such as Ariel Pink and James Ferraro from the lo-fi and noise genres began to borrow music and its related culture from the 1970s to the early 1990s that they recalled from their childhood (Reynolds 2011: 346). They would hear this music being played by their parents or on radio and TV shows like MTV, so it was not only a personal memory but a collective one. Its primary objective was not to diligently recreate the music of that period, as some revivalist movements do, but to articulate a thread of resemblance that conveys the imprecision of the memory (Maël and Philippe 2014: 77-78). Hypnagogic Pop distinguishes itself from revivalist movements in this way because it reassembles a collective memory that is true to the actual idea of the memory rather than the original work (Maël and Philippe 2014: 77-78). Similarly, common features of the recordings were the usage of obsolete analogue equipment to record the music, effects such as reverb and distortion, a DIY approach to distribution through community or internet blogs and the use of tape cassettes (Reynolds 2011: 345-51).

More recently, the dispensing of nostalgia through music has been further emphasised by vaporwave, which arose online in forums like Turntable.fm. Initially distributed using commercial cloud-based file-hosting platforms it then grew in prominence over time because of websites like Bandcamp and Last.fm (Born and Haworth 2017: 640). As Trainer (2016) concedes, vaporwave can be defined as a sonic and visual exploration of 1980s and 1990's culture, collocating various mediums such as films, TV programmes or video games to create downtempo, ambient music. Born and Haworth (2017) acknowledge that the internet's history record becomes a crucial element for vaporwave aesthetics. It uses paradoxical refactoring of sounds, visuals and cultural media from the internet's heritage to engage with technical notions of the present and recent past. Many vaporwave artists use music from adverts or video games that characterise a moment in time. Much of what vaporwave musicians' sample is mass-produced cultural media, which is then augmented with reverb to musically recreate a distant recollection.

Glitsos (2017) presents the idea that vaporwave plays with the idea of nostalgia, encouraging the listener to yearn for a time and place that never existed. As Ballam-Cross (2021) claims, memories elicited by vaporwave are based on false portrayals of reality and focus on periods and places that may only exist in the mind of the listener. It is based on an odd sort of nostalgia that might include hyper-specific recollections of popular culture associated with a listener's youth, as well as a nebulous, abstract desire for a memory of theirs that was never lived. The assumed past may also intersect with the listener's childhood recollections, blending their own and others' memories (Winston and Saywood 2014). And as Glitsos (2017) proposes, vaporwave is a sense of creating artificial nostalgia by playing on the allusion of recollection.

ENGAGING WITH NOSTALGIA

As has already been discussed, nostalgia is a common thread among artists that work with hauntological themes. This could portray nostalgia in a negative light since it is mostly a yearning for a future that never arrived. Similarly, as Wu (2010) reinforces, the displacement, segmentation and instability that characterise the late modern age have given rise to a particular sort of nostalgia that lacks any concrete or sensory points of reference. Instead, it is based on the lack of and yearning for a cultural foundation that is both absent and desired. This real history, which was admittedly an imagined past, was in stark contrast to their own actual reality (Wu 2010: 66).

However, Janelle Lynn Wilson (2015) proposes that engaging with the past can be positive. Nostalgia can be spatially grounded and become embodied when we recall or remember it. That is, we retain the location and time of a memory, as well as the lived experience associated with it. This sentimental recall is a true remnant of the past's existence, a relic of a lived history and can be an instrument for reconstructing diverse pasts and futures, rather than a passive craving for yesterday (Wilson 2015: 490). In addition, as Hertz (1990) points out, the sensation of nostalgia also brings to the forefront significant people in our lives, allowing for the re-establishment of ties with them. The links may therefore be representational and afford for nostalgic rumination as Wilson infers (2015: 489). Similarly, Holak and Havlena's (1992) study of nostalgic narratives shows that nostalgia is a personal sensation which arouses recollections involving connections with key people throughout critical life events.

In line with Wing-Yee Cheung's (2013) and DeNora's (1999) research, nostalgia can link one's own history, present and future, leading to a feeling of identity and self. Similarly, nostalgia may be a beneficial resource for people who desire to maintain a sense of self-continuity, allowing a person to construct their own identity during the adolescent years of discovery and self-creation in particular, as Mulder et al. (2010) imply. According to Arno Van der Hoeven (2018), positive recollections and nostalgia can be vital in developing sentiments of connection, because it can make significant links between the past, present and future. As a result, nostalgia maintains a sense of self-cohesion which is stressed further by Fine and Davis (1980), who state that consciously recalling one's history enables one to observe oneself progressing through time, permitting the current self to be moulded by the former self. Pickering and Keightley (2006) propose that this decisive memory recall allows individuals to actively create a narrative order for themselves out of the placed past.

It is crucial to also acknowledge how culture engages with nostalgia. To quote Van Der Hoeven, "we have to look at how traces of the past prevail in our culture and how audiences and cultural industries use these to construct cultural narratives" (2014: 320). In keeping with this, Elodie Roy's (2014) study introduces the idea that nostalgia can be productive, allowing musicians to reimagine the history of popular music in ways that are meaningful to them. This opposes to postmodernist analyst Frederic Jameson's (2009) claim that nostalgic media narratives contribute to cliched depictions of the past and historical dementia.

An example of a musical work that has a positive relationship with the cultural past, according to Rees (2021), is Daft Punk's 2013 album *Random Access Memories*. It feeds on nostalgia by enabling Daft Punk to record a disco album that sounds like it belongs in the 1970s and 1980s. Rather than sampling works from the era, they performed all the instruments live while collaborating with a few noteworthy disco performers, most notably Nile Rodgers. It highlights Daft Punk's deeper approach to the creative process, and positively engages with nostalgia.

PORTFOLIO OF WORK

I will now present a portfolio of my original work to show how my approach varies from existing hauntological themes in UK electronic music, offering an alternative interpretation. My portfolio consists of four pieces—*The Brood*, “Nineteen92”, “I Am with You” and “Things Happen”—to exemplify how the creative process may have a hidden depth with layers of meaning that are not always evident to the listener on the surface. Consequently, I will aim to reveal how the individual operation of electronic music craft transcends the product's consumption and how it can be impacted by a person's unique life, musical and interpersonal experiences.

Relationships with different people in my life and my involvement with music have shaped me as an individual and furnished me with meaning. Using a variety of techniques, I invoke historical ghosts that signify these connections.

The work will argue that memory can pervade the present as a hauntological phantom, in line with Gray (2022), where the apparitions invoked by collaboration, interacting with devices, utilising online video content and abstracted recording processes are investigated. When I recall, there is a sense of non-contemporaneity since the things that are remembered or celebrated are neither here nor there. As a result, it will display a complicated interplay of boundaries whilst causing the anguish of the Other to be sensed. My work, like Derrida's hauntology, merges the present with a historical narrative, bringing the past into the present while the present vanishes with the unmet promise of the future.

Both hauntological and simultaneously positive nostalgic themes are explored in my work. Since it examines the past in a positive light rather than lamenting a loss for what was, I will demonstrate how the work is not melancholic. I will examine how spectres vacillate between presence and absence, facilitating replication, fragmenting and undermining its essential capacity to accurately represent something that is no longer there. The ghosts will evolve from being one theme among many to serving as the fragile foundation for all forms of representation and narrative interactions. This exemplifies how the work far surpasses just a nostalgic engagement.

THE BROOD:

MEANINGFUL COLLABORATION WITH RELEVANT PRACTITIONERS AND TECHNOLOGY INTERACTION

The Brood, which investigates hauntological topics through meaningful relationships with relevant practitioners and technological involvement, is the first project I will discuss.

Spanning from 2015 to 2017, it consists of an original (Whitehead 2015a) and a remix album (Whitehead 2017), and it has the primary objective of compiling a narrative of the evolution of house and techno music from its inception to the present day.

The original album consists of collaborations with a variety of electronic music producers who forged the early Detroit, Chicago, New York and UK house and techno scenes in the late 1980s and early 1990s (Whitehead 2015b). In addition, I also collaborate with contemporary artists, some of whom have appeared on my record label, Bulletdodge to create a juxtaposed combination of old and new. Having all these artists contribute to the album references their involvement in the development of these genres and allows their past and current endeavours to haunt the present creative process. For the remix album, I further collaborate with notable pioneers of the 1980’s, 1990’s and 2000’s electronic music genres to reinterpret the tracks from the original album, consequently permitting their hauntings to further pervade the project and to provide adequate new insights on a past period’s musical legacy. This also recalls Van der Hoeven’s (2014) study. Rather than referencing genres through sampling, imitation and production emulation, the project sought to establish a deeper personal hauntological relationship through direct collaboration with relevant artists.

In doing so, I call on the ghosts of these artists’ own endeavours, the effect of house and techno, its growth, my influences and my creative progression through working with them. Consequently, ghosts and personal and cultural traces of the participants infiltrate the creative process. Figure 2 depicts the collaborative process. I employ the term “hauntological relationship” to describe what engaging a given component signifies and the ghosts it summons.

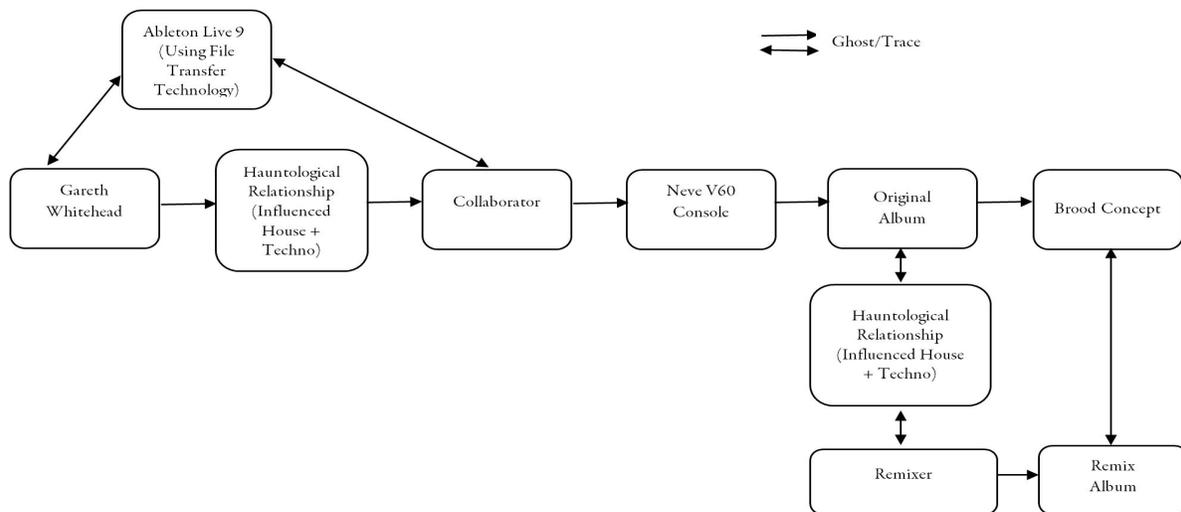


FIGURE 2. *THE BROOD*: THE HAUNTOLOGICAL THEMES EXPLORED THROUGHOUT THE CREATIVE PROCESS AND THE INTERACTION BETWEEN EACH COMPONENT.

Moreover, I expanded the notion of ghosts permeating the creative process by further collaborating with significant artists and producing the *The Brood Remixed*. This album was also released on Bulletdodge and consists of remixes from a variety of other artists who helped shape the evolution of house and techno music and many of its facets from its beginning to the present day.

Fundamentally, remixing itself is spectral in nature and the notions pertaining to hauntology apply. Elements of one musical creation are repurposed, repeated and used to create a new elucidation, with the spectres of the original work present throughout. The remixed work takes its meaning from the original piece and adds new elements to create a different translation. With the Brood remixed album, it is not just the ghosts of the original tracks that appear in the remixed versions with which I am concerned, but also the apparitions of the original producers and consequently, the reference to their involvement in the development of house and techno. The new tracks are thus haunted by the audible material of a previous medium, evoking the context in which it was created.

Until now, I have emphasised the spectral aspect of this project in connection to the practitioners with whom I have collaborated. To push the concept of temporal disjunction and spectral presences even further, I have also incorporated the interplay of historical and current technology. For example, the songs were recorded using the Digital Audio Workstation (DAW) Ableton Live 9, and then mixed on a Neve VR60 mixing console with various vintage effects and audio processors by producer Michael Greig at SSR Studios in London to provide that nostalgic historical analogue feel. The Neve console was chosen to blend the sound since it was known for its warm analogue qualities and was associated with numerous 1980's productions, the period of house and techno's inception. So, a temporal deformity was created by combining current virtual synthesisers and production techniques within Ableton Live 9 and older analogue equipment. This is a similar technique to many hauntological approaches, taking historical audio remnants of the past that convey archaic technologies (vinyl crackle for example; see Schofield 2019) and coupling them with modern day production techniques (virtual synthesisers). Furthermore, owing to the physical distance between myself and many of the contributors, most of the songs were developed remotely, with musical parts sent and returned via digital file sharing services. Parallels can also be drawn between this distant collaborative technique and Born and Haworth's (2017) account of vaporwave since most of it is developed and disseminated through cloud-based commercial file-hosting sites.

My motivation for initiating the project, akin to Van Der Hoeven's (2014) discovery, was to examine how vestiges of house and techno's past could be employed to generate cultural and personal narratives. As a finished product that was commercially distributed, my interest as a musician was to reflect the significance of each collaborator and bring their importance into the creative process. Furthermore, I investigated how historical and contemporary technology might constitute spectral contingents, with their interaction causing temporal bifurcation.

“NINETEEN92”: COLLABORATION WITH SIGNIFICANT PRACTITIONER, PERTINENT DEVICES AND ABSTRACTED RECORDING PROCESSES

Further collaboration with significant practitioners, the use of pertinent equipment and abstracted recording procedures are used to examine hauntological themes in my “Nineteen92” project (Whitehead et al. 2020). Unlike *The Brood*, which concentrated on chronicling the culturally shared evolution of electronic music and its impact on myself and my record label, the various elements with which I will engage during the creative process for “Nineteen92” represent my own wider lifelong relationships. In relation to the past and present, I use nostalgia as a valuable resource to preserve a feeling of self-continuity, as Sedikides et al. (2008) emphasise.

In line with Arno van der Hoeven (2018) and Mulder et al. (2010) accounts, teenage influences and familial relationships, as well as how they have shaped me, are crucial to the “Nineteen 92” project (Whitehead 2021a). During my teenage years, music was not only escapism; it also defined who I was, as it does for many young people. It influenced how I dressed and behaved, and it instilled in me a powerful sense of social justice that I have carried with me throughout my life. In particular, the early 1990’s grunge band, Nirvana, had a notable influence on me, not only captivating my attention musically, but also introducing me to a new set of principles. Therefore, as their influence can still be felt today, I wanted to make a piece of music that acknowledges their legacy through my work. In response to this, I sought out someone who had a direct hand in the recording and production of their songs. Jack Endino produced and engineered much of Nirvana’s music, including their debut album *Bleach*. He agreed to not only work on a piece of music with me, but also to mix the finished output.

Jack’s commitment to the project was a guitar backdrop to the musical work I had provided. His musical contributions were then recorded onto CD and played on a Pioneer hi-fi system I had used to listen to music when I was a teenager. Most importantly, I heard Nirvana for the first time through this hi-fi. In addition, a Shure SM57 microphone was utilised to apprehend the audio while it was playing through the hi-fi speakers, allowing me to record it back into the project using the Digital Audio Workstation, Ableton Live 10. The Shure SM57 microphone had personal significance because it was the first microphone I bought and used to make early recordings, so it referenced my early creative output.

After recording, the audio was then converted onto CD, and the process of playing it through the hi-fi and recording it into Ableton Live 10 using the Shure SM57 was repeated. This procedure was conducted numerous times more. In addition, the last time I conducted this course of action, I introduced a Zoom effects pedal to add reverb to the signal chain. As a youngster, I acquired and used this audio effects processing device as a guitar pedal to attempt to sound like Nirvana. Therefore, its inclusion in this project further reflected my earliest creative effort and was another example of how Nirvana inspired me to compose my own music.

Throughout this process, I adopted an abstract recording approach by inserting these relevant devices into the creative process and utilising them in this manner. In doing so, whenever I played the CD with Jack's guitar part via the hi-fi, I encouraged Nirvana's ghosts, their personal importance and the traces linked with it to surface and recur. Furthermore, as I repeated the recording process, all the components participating in this procedure then started to become ghosts of themselves, conveying how every given point in time cannot be defined in isolation because it is inextricably soiled by the ghosts of all moments that have gone before it. Figure 3 shows the ghosts and traces created by this abstract recording process. Each creative process component for this work and its hauntological relationships is identified.

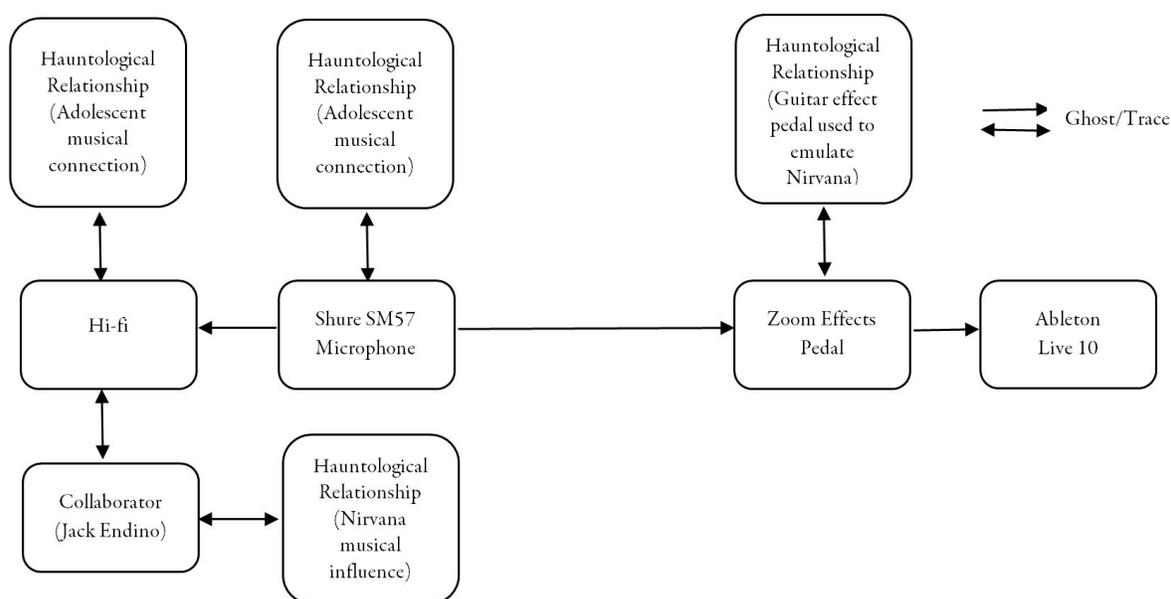


FIGURE 3. "NINETEEN92"/ABSTRACT RECORDING PROCESS: THE HAUNTOLOGICAL THEMES EXPLORED THROUGHOUT THE CREATIVE ABSTRACT RECORDING PROCESS AND THE INTERACTION BETWEEN EACH COMPONENT.

I wanted to reference family relationships throughout this project, so I recorded my first guitar and my father's 1960's Fender Twin Deluxe amplifier into Ableton Live 10 using the Shure SM57 microphone. It was my father who encouraged me to listen to music and learn how to play the guitar, so involving the amplifier in this project references my relationship with him. And I used the Fender amplifier when I was learning guitar, so it also signifies my progress as a musician.

This guitar part was again rendered out of Ableton Live 10 and copied onto a CD to be played through the hi-fi system. This time, I introduced a Boss distortion pedal into the signal chain. The SM57 microphone was also used to record the output from the hi-fi and was connected to the distortion pedal. By including the Boss pedal in the process, I was once more addressing a familial bond; the pedal was a 21st birthday gift from my brother, so integrating the pedal into this process acknowledges our relationship. When I played

my recorded guitar part through the hi-fi, I encouraged the ghosts of my familial ties, their personal importance and the traces linked with them to resurface and recur, thereby repeating the abstract recording process.

Throughout this piece of work, I make a reference to Nirvana, family members and my musical history by collaborating with Jack Endino and incorporating many pertinent devices into the creative process; I structure my past using a narrative order in keeping with Pickering and Keightley's (2006) study. Consequently, the narrative formed by the artistic process, like memory itself and how we recall situations from our past, has no clear beginning or ending. Instead, it is randomly sporadic, occurring in the past, present and future in the same space.

"I AM WITH YOU": UTILISATION OF ABSTRACTED PRODUCTION TECHNIQUES AND SAMPLED ONLINE VIDEO CLIPS OF PERSONAL IMPORTANCE

To further explore hauntological themes in electronic music, the "I Am with You" project (Whitehead 2021b) combines abstract production techniques and samples audio from online video content that has personal significance. The overarching theme is the hauntings of childhood thoughts that still linger, a past friendship and again my musical background.

1984's *Supergirl* was a film that I watched extensively as a child. The nihilistic narrative of the film has always left me feeling very unsettled, yet ever intrigued, compelling me to frequently watch it. Many of the scenes towards the end of the film, the "Phantom Zone" and "The Demon Storm" filled me with fear and dread of the unknown and accentuated my awareness of infinity and my own mortality. Watching this film coincided with my realisation that life is finite, and even though we die, life and the universe eternally perpetuate. I always struggled with this concept, particularly as a child.

These thoughts and fears that *Supergirl* provoked in me have always underpinned my personality, therefore I wanted to create a landscape whereby I could acknowledge these thoughts, memories and phantom presences that continue to pervade my thinking. To achieve this, I decided to incorporate dialogue from the "Phantom Zone" and "The Demon Storm" scenes into my creative process. Audio clips from the film, sampled from YouTube, reference the feelings evoked by the film, portraying my childhood hauntings, ghosts and lived memories.

The notion of past and present is reinforced further by my incorporating a video of a professional drummer who was a childhood friend and the percussionist in the first band I was in. Thus, not only as a reference to our childhood friendship but also to our musical partnership, I wanted to capture his essence in this piece to represent what has become of us both as well as what could have been. To achieve this, I sampled the audio from an online drumming performance of his. In addition to my friend being a professional drummer, he also lectures in music and has a multitude of online drumming tutorial videos and performances. The video I selected resonates with me because he is performing a drum 'n' bass rhythm rather than a rock rhythm (which I always associated with him). He and I had strictly played rock, so it was interesting to hear him play an electronic music genre because that is now synonymous with my own creative output.

I used the same technique to sample the YouTube content for each video discussed above. This consisted of playing YouTube videos on my I-Mac before recording them into Ableton Live 10 using the built-in microphone. This recording process also captures the audio from my physical movements like mouse click and breaths. Therefore, the present is recorded as well as the audio from YouTube. The past and present share the same temporal plane momentarily. The recorded audio is then edited and repurposed in Ableton Live 10 to create most of the musical elements.

To further summon the ghosts for this piece, I used an abstract production method. To accomplish this, I inserted the audio from the drumming tutorial into Ableton Live 10, and then converted the audio to MIDI (using Ableton Live 10's "Convert to MIDI" function), so that I had the actual pattern of him playing in addition to the captured and original sound, which I then split into the various drum parts.

"I Am With You" uses an abstract production technique to explore the concept of presence and existence. The drummer makes a phantom of himself by filming his performance and uploading it onto YouTube. The audio is then extracted from YouTube to create a ghost of a ghost. Finally, I take this a step further by converting the audio to MIDI and generating a new ghost with all its tracings. Not only are the ghosts of the actual recordings present, but so are the ghosts of what they meant to me personally. Edited samples from Supergirl are then used as the individual drum hits for the pattern. The finished audio from this technique sounds more like a rumbling sub bass than a percussion element, but it is infused with the ghosts of my friend drumming. The hauntological relationship for the video clips is detailed in Figure 4, which depicts the ghosts that occur throughout the creative process.

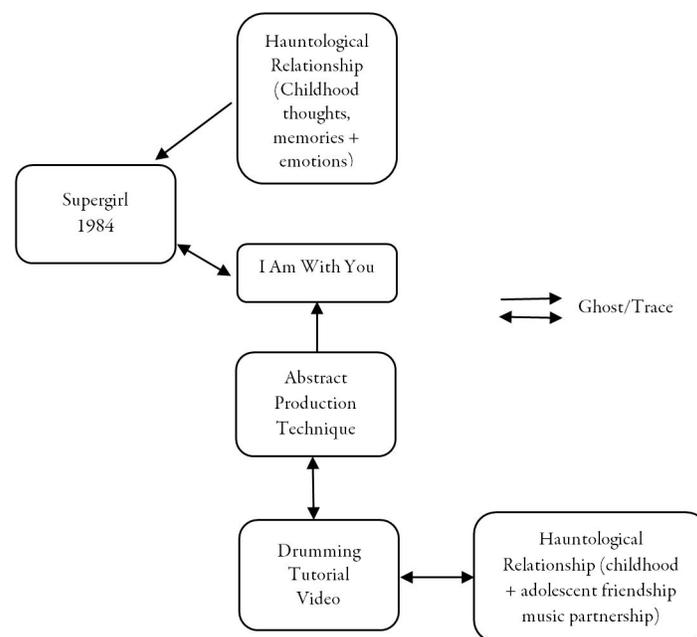


FIGURE 4. "I AM WITH YOU": THE HAUNTOLOGICAL THEMES EXPLORED THROUGHOUT THE CREATIVE PROCESS AND THE INTERACTION BETWEEN EACH COMPONENT.

Through the capturing, reclamation and repurposing of audio footage from YouTube, I explored how spectres from the digital realm can be used as source material and have individual significance. These personal and cultural influences from various periods of my past are extracted from YouTube and transformed into less discernible musical forms. YouTube was then utilised as a space to present the work and as a distribution platform. My aim is to demonstrate that no one point in time can be described in isolation because the metaphysical phantasm of the present is contaminated by the ghosts or remnants of previous moments.

“THINGS HAPPEN”: USE OF TECHNOLOGY DEVICES, SAMPLED ONLINE VIDEO FOOTAGE OF PERSONAL MUSICAL REPRESENTATION AND ABSTRACTED RECORDING PROCEDURES

“Things Happen” (Whitehead 2022) will draw this current research to a conclusion by exhibiting how I use technological devices, sampled audio from online video footage of personal musical representation and abstracted recording processes to further examine hauntological themes. By sampling audio from YouTube once more, the goal of this project is to interact with my previous musical endeavours.

In doing so, I sample a track called “Left Behind”, which was written and presented as the second release on Bulletdodge in 2008. This was the first original track of my own that I released on the label. Furthermore, I chose the track because the piano section that features as the main riff was initially a musical part that was used in a previous techno partnership I was involved in called Edit Select. The piano riff was never used on a released Edit Select track, but it represents that period of my life, thus I wanted to respect its value by incorporating it into “Left Behind”. For “Things Happen”, I purposefully chose to sample a piece of music that I composed previously because I am investigating the ghosts of myself: my creative endeavours before I established my record label.

To sample “Left Behind”, I played it on the YouTube mobile application on my smartphone. I then used the YouTube tempo function to slow down the track. The smartphone was used to capture the audio as a reference to how I consume audio, visual art and media. The smartphone signifies some of my everyday interactions, so I wanted to capture the audio in a similar way. I then connected my smartphone’s headphone output to the Boss distortion pedal and then subsequently routed the pedal into Ableton Live 10. Due to the Boss distortion pedal being employed in “Nineteen92”, this method addressed not just my bond with my brother but also the ghost of the prior project. As a result, using the distortion pedal demonstrates the idea that ghosts come and go throughout our thoughts and experiences. They appear and reappear with no trace of their origins.

It was also crucial to make a connection to the outside world and pair with a mechanical process. Recognising that much of the media we consume is within the device that we use and dwells in the virtual territory, the aim was to transfer this sampled audio from the digital realm into the external world, then back into the virtual environment. Throughout this process, I was inciting ghosts by extracting the audio from its digital domain, performing

a mechanical procedure, and then feeding it back into Ableton Live 10. This is another instance of me deploying an abstract approach to audio recording to summon ghosts. Once in Ableton, I then started to manipulate the audio and created a bank of sounds which were then further modified and used as the musical content for the track. Figure 5 details the hauntological relationship for each creative component discussed above and depicts the creative process and ghosts that occur.

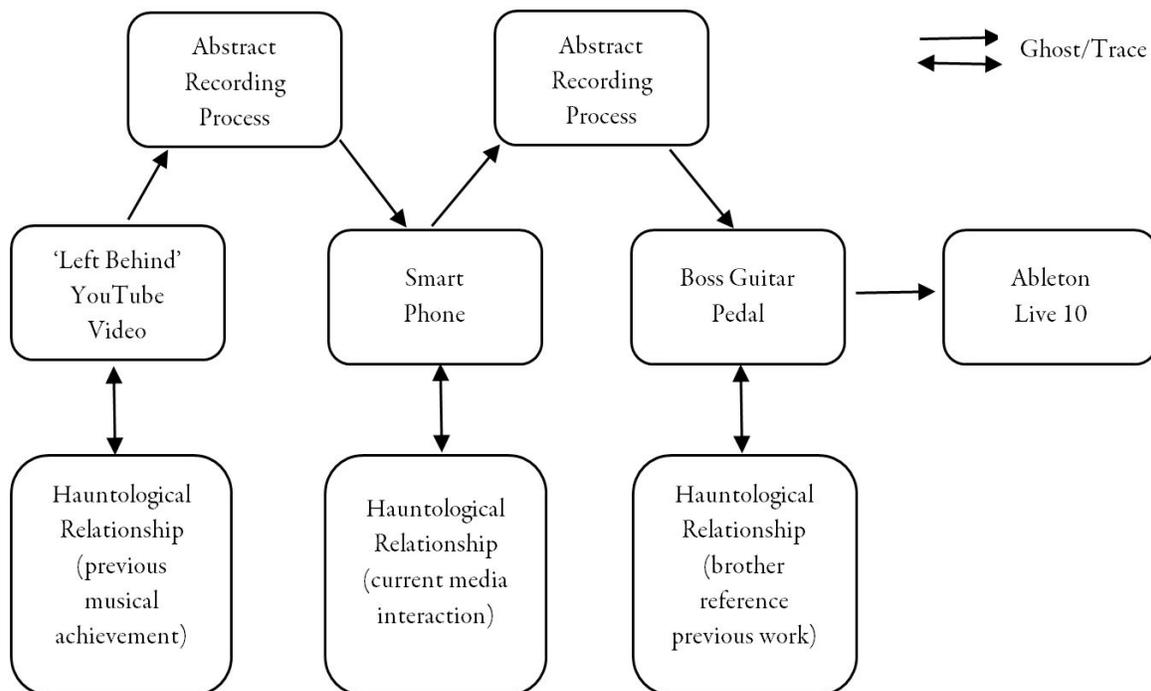


FIGURE 5. "THINGS HAPPEN": THE HAUNTOLOGICAL THEMES EXPLORED THROUGHOUT THE CREATIVE PROCESS AND THE INTERACTION BETWEEN EACH COMPONENT.

In this project, I have repurposed original musical materials, and in doing so I have brought memories to the present, allowing them to exist in space and time, initiating a relationship between separate moments entirely removed from linear temporality. The work demonstrates reclamation and repurposing within the confines of the media in which it originates and still exists.

CONCLUSION

In terms of cultural memory and historical aesthetics, the existing discourse of hauntology in UK electronic music has focused on the works of artists like Boards of Canada, Burial, Caretaker and Ghost Box Records. Whilst taking these approaches into account, my creative practice widens the hauntological scope and provides a nuanced interpretation and alternative method to engage with hauntology. This process reveals a deeper meaning within

the creative process that is concealed from the listener; as a result, it demonstrates that the individual operation of electronic music craft, which is influenced by a person's unique life and musical experiences and relationships, extends beyond the product's homogeneous consumption.

I, like Burial and other hauntological artists, have engaged with personal recollections. However, as discussed in my original works portfolio, I have proposed an alternative strategy in which electronic music artists might engage with a variety of hauntological vehicles. This includes 1) meaningful collaboration with relevant practitioners who serve as phantoms of my past and everything that encompasses; 2) technological devices that are signifiers for familial ties and musical influences; 3) online video footage of personal significance that references childhood emotions, adolescent friendships and personal musical achievements and 4) abstracted recording and production processes that connect disparate periods of my life through disconnected reference points that were not bound by linear time. These methodologies may provide future electronic music practitioners with a more thorough examination and lucid use of hauntology in their work.

Instead of following Fisher in using post-war British media to convey a sense of cultural debilitation, I have shown how engaging with nostalgia can be an effective vessel for re-imagining and reconstructing alternative histories and futures. This is different from a passive pining for the past that Janelle Lynn Wilson (2015) and Davis suggest (1979). In keeping with Elodie Roy's (2014) study, I have shown that engaging with nostalgia may be beneficial, allowing musicians to recreate music's past in ways that are relevant to them.

Furthermore, in line with the findings of Janelle Lynn Wilson's (2015) study, my nostalgic experiences are spatially fixed and embodied when I recall or remember them, as is demonstrated by my portfolio of work. I have remembered locations and times of the memories, as well as the lived experience associated with them. Following Wilson, this sentimental recall is a remnant of my past existence and a true remembrance of my lived history. Additionally, my work is consistent with the findings of Holak and Havlena's (1992) investigation because I have demonstrated that nostalgia can be a personal experience that arouses recollections of important people at critical life events through personalised narratives. Moreover, in accordance with Hertz (1990), I have used my hauntological vehicles to bring people from my past to the forefront to re-establish links with them.

I would like to highlight that our own personal narratives are not without influence. For The Brood project, I unintentionally constructed what might be termed a patriarchal narrative because it documents the evolution of house and techno from that perspective, in keeping with Morgan's (2017) explanation of male driven hauntological narratives. I would like to interrogate this further in future work, uncovering the foundations of my conception of house and techno's origins and challenging them.

In conclusion, this article unveils how my work has summoned historical personal ghosts, established a confluence of opposed layered hauntings and diverse narratives and orchestrated temporal disruption. In addition, I have examined both the conceptualization of the process involved in composing electronic music and the incentive for engaging

with all the spectral mechanisms of the composition. In keeping with Derrida's *Specters of Marx*, I have illustrated how ghosts from my past have resurfaced in the present. I suggest that such approaches widen and enrich our understanding of how Derrida's spectres are communicated in electronic music production, illuminating existing practice and offering fulfilling compositional opportunities for current and future artists, connecting us all more deeply and meaningfully to the music we create.

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