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[A] Shoegaze as the Third Wave: Affective Psychedelic Noise, c. 1965-1991

[B] Benjamin Halligan

[B] Theorising Psychedelia

The idea of noise as aberrant or ‘incorrect’, unwelcome or unpleasant sound, particularly in respect to intrusions into soundscapes typically understood as given over to harmony or melody, offers a way into theorising psychedelia that breaks with the paradigms of previous critical engagements. These paradigms were too often hampered by musicology and associated critical methodologies, privileged analyses of lyrics, were distracted by anecdotal drugs lore, or nostalgically dallied with the gestural politics of the time. This chapter identifies the noise of psychedelia which, in its affective qualities, then allows for the possibility of charting its evolution across two subsequent scenes or ‘waves’: from the counterculture to that of rave and shoegaze. Charting this evolution allows for the possibility of both reconsidering what constituted psychedelic noise in the first place, and how it functioned, and extending this question of functioning, in terms of affect, ideology and even class, into these subsequent two waves.

[B] Wave One: Psychedelia

In the mix, to increase the relative volume of one component of the music typically anticipates or, live, is prompted by, instrumental soloing: as the instrument takes the lead from the vocal, or takes over from another instrument. These are the variables comprehensively understood via Moore’s notion of the ‘sound-box’, where the sound mix would seek to create a ‘virtual textual space’ of, for example, ‘kit central, bass slightly to one side, guitars more extremely to either side’, (Moore, 2001, 121, 124).<sup>1</sup>

Studio and live mixing effectively work in the same ‘virtual textual’ way, and the mix reproduces the hierarchical positioning of instruments and presences associated with live music. And soloing, as such, in rock music, typically becomes the domain of musical prowess or virtuosity, or speed and dexterity, or (and as also applicable to jazz and classical music) a remaking or reimagining of the principal melodic elements, in addition to a notion of personal artistic expression at work in an allotted temporal space. Likewise, in the live circumstance, the musician steps forward, into the spotlight, and so presents him or herself as the centre of the music event, for that duration. Yet as rock lent increasingly towards the ragged and freeform, exhibiting both the influence of jazz improvisation, as Macan notes (1997, 17), and also the insouciant looseness of The Rolling Stones of the mid-1960s, these temporal limits began to change. Could it be said that the idea of popular music as artistic expression comes to the fore at this moment, privileging musical expression in the genre, so that musical expression became ‘urgent’ and in need of early beginnings and substantial temporal spaces, with the instrumental element increasingly then coming to sprawl across the better part of a rock track’s duration?

Discernible trends that conform to this sensibility and tendency are particularly apparent by the late 1960s when the guitar seems to break from its confines. But with this break comes a series of additional changes, all of which can be read as alterations to popular music in terms of noise over melody or harmony. In this is a rebalancing of music in favour of the kind of guitar noise that only a few years previously would have been considered to have been inappropriate or unmusical, incorrectly mixed or evidencing the misuse of the instrument, rather than sonically innovative. It is this influx of noise that constitutes the foundation of psychedelic

music, and these changes can be summarised and reviewed under five general headings.

[C] In respect to increased volume:

The mixing of Eric Clapton's guitar for the opening track of the Blues Breakers LP, 'All Your Love', is jarringly loud – as particularly apparent in the main riff, which repeatedly announces itself as Clapton deliberately applies excessive pressure to the guitar strings as his fingers move towards their position on the fret board (the amusical squeak of 'string talk').<sup>2</sup> The guitar dominates the mix, enveloping the listener (especially so in the original mono release), and suggesting the sonic intimacy of being sat too close to the guitar amplifier in the studio.

[C] In respect of positioning:

Clapton's first solo on 'All Your Love' begins before a minute and a half of the track have elapsed. Mick Taylor's guitar solo for 'Vacation', the opening track of John Mayall's Blues from Laurel Canyon (1968) begins in half that time, so that the album's first solo occurs after barely more than a dozen words have been sung. The thirteen minute 'acid' guitar solos the close The Butterfield Blues Band's 1966 LP East-West, and that effectively run throughout the entirety of the 'Golgotha' movement of Kak's 'Trieulogy' (from the 1969 album Kak), can be taken as a logical extension of this tendency.

What is 'acid' about the playing can be taken to be the way in which there is little or no space between the notes or guitar sounds; as with the effect of an LSD-induced hallucination, solid surfaces melt and meld – a stream or flow of interconnections matched by the stream of guitar soloing. In this way, guitar noise

tends to jostle with and usurp vocals as the principal element of the track (so that ‘song’, with its connotations of vocals, comes to seem to be an inadequate term). So, both in terms of temporal space and in terms of sonic density (the eradication of spaces ‘between the notes’), the guitar elements of the tracks are radically and massively expanded.

[C] In respect of playing:

Clapton’s soloing on ‘All Your Love’ and the next album track, ‘Hideaway’, is defiantly expressionistic. For ‘All Your Love’ he lags behind the beat in order to tarry with the guitar sound as much as playing (an effect that is, again, overwhelming in the mono mix), speeds the track on in its middle section where he often begins some way ahead of the beat, and discreetly incorporates feedback between some of his lines. Such an ascendancy of guitar sound can also be found in the way that Jimi Hendrix would break off from singing and allow the guitar to complete the vocal line, mimicking his voice, particularly live, as if the instrument was free to roam across and intervene in any aspect of a song and can become interchangeable with his voice and so, despite its electrified and fabricated nature. In this way the guitar playing becomes an intrinsic part of Hendrix’s presence but also his self. This dominance of guitar sound is further suggested by the way in which, as Auslander observes, singers during this psychedelic period were typically vocally weak – a weakness that denoted a naïve authenticity of expression (the untrained vocals of a cri de coeur, perhaps drawing inspiration from Bob Dylan) and a straight ‘emphasis on instrumental rather than vocal virtuosity’ (2009, 82). But Clapton, unlike Hendrix, seems to undo or undercut the sentiments of the ‘All Your Love’ (a yearning for erotic intimacy; in Mayall’s slurred, fragmented vocals: ‘all the lovin’ missed lovin’ / all the kissin’ missed

kissin’). His solo does not seem to resonate so much with a sense of emotional need, as would be expected, but seems keener to become a space in which he can experiment with form and guitar noise: the way in which waves of sound are sustained or allowed to diminish, and the inclusion of feedback too – music that speaks to and of its noise rather than mimics and harmonises emotional outpourings.

Whiteley, who gives Summer 1965 as the point of origin of acid rock,<sup>3</sup> discusses Clapton’s playing in ‘SWLABR’ from the 1967 Cream album Disraeli Gears as fully psychedelic, (2004, 9, 13). But there is nothing in ‘SWLABR’ that is not already apparent in ‘All Your Love’ in terms of the playing. If anything, Clapton’s playing for the Cream track – corralled bursts of blue licks between lyrics rich with ambiguous and psychedelic imagery and sentiment (the title is an anagram of ‘she walks like a bearded rainbow’) – is more conventional, albeit for a sound now filtered through effects pedals. Whiteley reads ‘SWLABR’ as a Hendrix-esque guitar/vocal dialogue, where the two elements, then, blend into a whole. In these terms, ‘All Your Love’ could be read as a guitar/vocal dialectic, where ambiguity exists in the form (the playing in relation to the lyrics: a negative correlation) rather than the content (the ambiguous lyrical imagery and sentiment: ‘vocalised’ too by the guitar).

[C] In respect of repetition and drone:

This ascendancy of guitar noise is also unapologetic in term of its positioning or imagining of the listener: what was once proffered as often just ‘pleasant’ (the pop song) now gives way to a challenging aural experience, effectively demanding a form of surrender on behalf of the listener, with a suspension of their preconceived aesthetic norms or standards. And to achieve surrender, often induced via a siege of

repetition and drone, required a song duration longer than the three and a half minutes typical allotted by the industry and radio stations for the pop song.

Repetition and drone in psychedelic music are often credited to The Velvet Underground but can also be found on the Brian Jones recordings of the Master Musicians of Jajouka.<sup>4</sup> Here repetition and drone seem to function as mantra or incantation, lulling or even semi-hypnotising the listener. The quasi-religious live performances of psychedelic drone music often emphasised this consciousness-enveloping aspect: the singer as shaman, the music as ceremony, the concert as collective happening. Liquid lightshows used to accompany the music have an affective aspect in this endeavour: inducing a seeming slowing down of cognitive functioning, and with this a lowering of defences in the face of the engulfing nature of the music – a process that can then take some time from which to recover. This was true of Pink Floyd's live renditions of 'Astronomy Domine' but it is with 'Interstellar Overdrive' (both on The Piper at the Gates of Dawn of 1967) that the music fully gives way to soundscapes of drones and repetitions.

[Call out: Insert images HalliganOne and HalliganTwo. Caption:

Syd Barrett and Pink Floyd, 'Astronomy Domine' live in 1967

[C] In respect of dissonance:

Quicksilver Messenger Service's Happy Trails (1969) culminates in the prolonged acid guitar playing of 'Calvary', which runs in excess of thirteen minutes. Such playing, while arguably not technically arresting, further extends those elements of Clapton's and Hendrix's playing that are given over to effect – the music that speaks to and of its noise rather than mimics and harmonises emotional outpourings. This

requires substantial space in the mix for echo and the diminution of sounds rather than the delivery of a musical line or theme. That is, the ‘atmosphere’ space of the mix, for these atmospheric, becomes foremost in the sonic make-up of the track. In terms of the sound-box model, it is akin to a more extreme use of the mixing variable in favour of the guitar while, at the same time, the size of the box is suddenly expanded in order to resonate not so much with the guitar playing but with the guitar’s sound. And the point of audition is shifted to a position where such sounds become more audible.

In this, the ascendancy of guitar sound is complete, and guitar noise comes to outflank previous conventions of playing. So the seemingly fumbled flurry of notes in Roger McGuinn’s soloing on The Byrd’s ‘Eight Miles High’ (a 1966 single from Fifth Dimension ) suggests not so much an error of musical misjudgement but that some other guiding intelligence is at work, here cutting quite deliberately across the folksiness of the song with the attack and urgency of the playing.

These five tendencies evidence a moving beyond the ways in which pop or rock music was previously accepted and comprehended – that is, here, a movement beyond that former music’s musicality. And these five tendencies fed into, or generated, psychedelic music, and came to represent an aspect of the unfettered, ‘expanded’ nature of psychedelic art forms. An example of the ‘before’ can now usefully be invoked: the mixing of Hank Marvin’s guitar playing on ‘Apache’, a 1960 instrumental track by The Shadows, works to foregrounds the richness of the guitar sound, as sufficient ‘voice’ and drama in itself. And even in the few moments when Marvin embellishes his playing, he remains locked into the group’s tempo, the guitar playing remains clear and ‘clean’ (even with his use of the tremolo arm), in terms of notes and spaces, and respects the shifts in rhythm across each section throughout.



## [B] Psychedelic Noise as Affect

Psychedelic music was generally termed or identified as ‘head music’ (and its proponents ‘heads’), and so taken as akin in some respects to Conceptual Art: the materiality of the artefact itself becomes irrelevant, and any questions of ‘correctness’ or technique prompted by the artefact rendered irrelevant too, once it is understood that the artefact intends to speak directly to ‘the head’. Indeed, those five tendencies listed above, all of which could be described as straight ‘errors’, inscribing noise into music, only work to further denote the invitation extended to bypass lucid cognition (as reasoning and aesthetic judgements) in favour of vague ideas of the self, or soul, or Id: the ‘psyche’. Indeed, this dialogue occurred at the time, in the celebrated 1967 appearance by Pink Floyd on the BBC’s Look of the Week:

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Dr Hans Keller: ‘Why has it got to be so terribly loud? For me I just can’t bear it...’

[Call out: Insert image HalliganFour. Caption:

Syd Barrett: ‘I personally like quiet music just as much as loud music.’

This inscribed noise therefore seeks to affect the psyche. And, although the psyche is therefore the assumed goal of psychedelic music, this understanding has alluded academic writers, whose methodologies remain untroubled by this given.

Whiteley’s approach is allied to that of poststructuralist analyses of cultural artefacts predominant in the early 1990s. Her The Space Between the Notes acknowledges ‘the general trend towards a changed state of musical consciousness’

(2004, 2) in respect of psychedelic releases from The Beatles and The Rolling Stones at the end of the 1960s and assembles a textual reading (centred on the 'musical codes' involved and their interrelationships; 2004, 4) while acknowledging methodological problems arising from the notion of a semiotics of sound. Decoding in this respect remains in constant flux at best and, at worse, still evidences a pitch queered by received interpretative frameworks that would seem to originate from the least disinterested of parties: the hippies themselves (2004, 4-5). Hicks also touches on the problems of interpretive frameworks in this field, noting music from Frank Zappa and the Mothers of Invention, and The Yardbirds, that would seem to be deeply psychedelic but anecdotally originated from musicians not in the least inspired by LSD use (Hicks, 1999, 66). But a corrective isolation of the musical form and social of cultural context still proves unsatisfactory in terms of dealing with question of what could be called a nominally psychedelic ambience and atmosphere, as with 'Coming Back to Me' by Jefferson Airplane. And the problem of the questionable grounds of imposed interpretive frameworks can be extend to texts that pre-date psychedelia and yet came to be perceived as psychedelic touchstones nonetheless: the writing of Tolkien, Lewis Carroll and Kenneth Grahame (whose 'Piper at the Gates of Dawn' chapter of The Wind in the Willows seems to very precisely narrate an LSD trip; the chapter lent the title to the first Pink Floyd album), The Saragossa Manuscript (Wojciech Has, 1965), or the 'straight' folk songs collected on the soundtrack of Zabriskie Point (Michelangelo Antonioni, 1969), for example. But for Cotner such a notion of a meta-definition of psychedelia, freely press-ganging artefacts into a subculture, is a defining characteristic, dividing the psychedelic from Prog Rock: psychedelia is a priori and 'directly mediated by the counterculture', (Cotner, 2002, 86).

These musical codes are presented and read as a ‘correlation’ of ‘drug experiences and stylistic characteristics’ of the music, towards that which could be termed as literary conceit: the suggestion of ‘alternative meanings’, (Whiteley, 2004, 8; Whiteley’s italics). So the coding and music (that is, the music’s subtext) ‘suggests a state of “tripping”’ (2004, 8), or ‘reflects the state of mind on an hallucinogenic trip’ (2004, 33), and creates ‘feelings analogous’ and ‘a homology’ to acid trips (2004, 33). Terms employed to track this are typically therefore at one remove, and centre on how a listener or audience would read the music. Declensions of the verb ‘to evoke’ are repeatedly used in approaching the specifics of Pink Floyd’s music at this time (2004, 30, 34, 94), a music of ‘connotations’ (2004, 31) and techniques designed to ‘reflect’ certain states (2004, 33). And it is along just such metaphorical lines that Whiteley is able to deftly extract, from the unexpected chord progression of ‘Strawberry Fields Forever’, not only a musical dramatisation of an LSD trip (that is, a dramaturgy of musical form, rather than merely looking to the narrative information delivered in the lyrics) but also the implicit message that these seasoned LSD users, The Beatles, here offer themselves as guides for those now seeking to be newly initiated, (see Whiteley, 2004, 65-67). But then Whiteley also notes, albeit in passing and without later development, that psychedelic music could operate in an affective manner in that ‘the sheer volume of noise works towards the drowning of personal consciousness’ (2004, 20).

Likewise, Hicks’s discussion of psychedelia is initially an outline of ‘LSD-inspired music’ (1999, 63), which is elaborated in terms of parallels between experimental music and recording techniques (i.e. the art and engineering of the creators of psychedelic music) and the nature of LSD trips. He delineates the resultant parallels under the headings of dechronicization, depersonalization and dynamization,

(1999, 63-64). The latter facet denotes the ways in which the tangible hardness of material objects is perceived to become unstable, which then finds its parallel with the liberties psychedelic music takes with previously rigid song forms: '[m]ore than anything else, psychedelic music dynamized musical parameters previously stable in rock.' (1999, 66) Or, along the same lines, that the pitch-bending glissandi effect from the use of the guitar whammy bar can be read as equating string bending with 'mind bending', (1999, 67-68). A more clinically-orientated but essentially similar methodological approach to the same subject matter – one of equivalencies, evocations and parallels – is found in Baumeister, (1984, 339-345).

In this way, Hicks's and Baumeister's pioneering readings, like Whiteley's, essentially concern *psychedelia qua psychedelia*: a semiotics of psychedelic noise, a vernacular of metaphors. And Hicks places his work in a line of development from Whiteley's in this respect, (Hicks, 1999, 113). DeRogatis, however, merely unthinkingly reproduces and gilds the cliché, without ever attending to the question of hallucinogenics and musical form; his 2003 study begins in 'prehistoric times' with the use of plants to 'enlarge the scope of the mind', (2003, 1). And Bromell ([2000], 2002) is not much better: psychedelic music as springing from musicians under the influence, and first baffling and then enticing North American teens. Yet despite far-reaching historical and cultural contextualisations for the development of psychedelic music, all mostly unsourced, and autobiographical passages on LSD use, Bromell's study eschews questions of subjectivity in favour of vaguely phenomenological reminiscences. Hegarty and Halliwell's discussion of psychedelic music in 1966-67, however, offers more elaboration, with particularly attention to the increasing duration of performances, so that psychedelic music

[...] emerged as a response to the effects of LSD; it tried not simply to emulate drug-taking or provide a background to consumption but rather to replicate the sensory experience of a trip by creating a total environment. (Hegarty and Halliwell, 2011, 24)

What is not clear here is on whose part this replication is occurring (a shamanistic / didactic method whereby the seer articulates his personal vision, or a credo whereby the likeminded gather to collectively reactivate or relive a moment of altered consciousness), or the ontological nature of the replication itself. But a critical approach which considers psychedelic music in respect of the nervous system rather than questions of cognition suggests a way out of the textual / cultural / anecdotal cul-de-sac.

In this respect, volume and drone, which engender vibration, coupled with repetition, allow for the uncanny materialisation of the unseen: pain in terms of hearing, but also the flapping of loose clothing and movement of hair, and the physical feeling of sound experienced on and even in the body. This then is not so much a matter of psychedelia qua psychedelia, but rather of psychedelics of affective noise.

Music and affect, which centres on ideas of the body as much as (or substantially more than) the mind – experience over interpretation – points directly to the dance floor. And this step, along the lines of music as a certain type of affective noise, producing new subjectivities, also questions a cultural history that positions Prog Rock as the natural successor to psychedelia.<sup>5</sup> But the question of affect then becomes radically problematic. On the one hand, to consider acid musics and affect is to raise questions of cultures of opposition that look to a fuller conception of the

functioning of such music. In this instance, it is to wrench the question of 1968, psychedelic cultures and LSD use away from revisionist readings of the first Summer of Love (of 1967). Hardt and Negri note that

‘Dropping out’ was really a poor conception of what was going on in Haight-Ashbury and across the United States in the 1960s. The two essential components were the refusal of the disciplinary regime and the experimentation with new forms of productivity. The refusal appeared in a wide variety of guises and proliferated in thousands of daily practices. (Hardt, Negri, 2001, 274)

The politics of rave could be understood from just such a post-autonomous perspective of a radical refusal of work: pushing the body’s functioning to an extreme, across hours of activity, and so depleting abilities to engage (mentally or physically) with work subsequently. The spectrum runs from the adjusted opening hours of shops that catered to Acid House enthusiasts in the late 1980s (rarely on Mondays and Tuesdays), to the ‘acid casualty’, as found adrift in the weekday or, as Mark E. Smith observed, the subsequent decades: ‘... the living dead. Some essential trigger ceased functioning back when The Happy Mondays had another night out around 1992.’ (Smith, 2009, 6) And it is in this flight from working norms and social expectations, as the very basis of as a lifestyle, as MacKay (1996) argues with respect to New Age travellers and weekend ravers, that the politics then comes to cultures centred on music.

On the other hand, at the end of the Second Summer of Love (of Acid House: the summer of 1988/89), the provocation that Jeremy Deller articulates in the

installation Open Bedroom, c.1988 – c.1994 becomes difficult to settle.<sup>6</sup> Written beneath a fluorescent picture of the once-ubiquitous Acid House smiley face (found in a wardrobe and illuminated by a naked light bulb, and in the computer print typeface of those years), is the question: ‘Did he change your life?’ The inference is that Deller’s own response is at best equivocal, and indeed Hardt and Negri do not read cultures of refusal as a radical break with capitalist norms (hence the ‘new forms of productivity’). Rather, in such cultures, perversely, the beginnings of the remaking of the tertiary sector via immaterial labour can be seen in operation.

In both these questions, centred on the idea of subcultures engendering a radical refusal of work (1968) and a radical alteration of lifestyle (1988), affect represents the political functioning – for better or for worse – of acid musics.

#### [B] Wave One to Wave Two: The Second Summer of Love

The very term ‘electronic dance music’ articulates the nature of the radical break between this genre (EDM) and former notions of musicality. EDM is music from the circuits, of electricity (rather than, as with electrification, electronics in service to amplification), so that the ‘techno’ subgenre can be taken quite literally: the sounds or noise of technology. Again, the head is now required to think or experience beyond lingering qualitative conceptions of musicality, but now – in contrast to the break represented by psychedelia – also beyond ideas of authenticity and or in performance, and beyond a still popular sonic palette essentially founded on twelfth century instruments of musical expression. Music is now to be found in the inorganic, placing machine over human. But, as with acid rock before it, the psyche is freed to explore, or aided in achieving this paradigm shift in acceptance, via artificial neurological stimulation. Both acid rock and Acid House had their own distinctive smorgasbords

of hallucinogenics. And the uncertainties of the inclusion of Prog Rock in this psychedelic heritage, where Prog seems stripped of the countercultural and ‘refusal’ aspects of psychedelia (to apply Hardt and Negri’s term), perhaps because of Prog’s sobriety, becomes clearer in this light. So ‘[w]hereas Ecstasy was previously used to enhance the sounds and textures of dance music, the situation reversed, [so that] the continuous DJ set was used by Ecstasy consumers to heighten their weekend drug trip.’ (Metcalfé, 1997, 172) But both Metcalfé and acid exponent Nicholas Saunders (1997, 2), whose underground guide books covered and intervened in both Summers of Love, perceive Ecstasy as very different from LSD: essentially, Ecstasy does not provide a psychedelic experience. This understanding is apparent even in the earliest writing about the use of Ecstasy in clubbing; while Nasmyth is happy to discuss MDMA with reference to 1960s gurus Timothy Leary and R. D. Laing, he is at pains to note the distinctly non-1960s nature of the drug, drawing parallels with yuppie ‘designer drugs’ and New Age therapies, (Nasmyth, [1985] 1997, 74-78). For all these authors, E is understood as a method of escapism that remains entirely materially grounded, and a decade later Metcalfé maintains the weekend use for those seeking relief from the ‘stresses and strains of modern life’ (Metcalfé, 1997, 176), and Saunders notes, jarringly, the successful business acumen he accrued through Ecstasy use (Saunders, 1997, 2). Thus when MacKay traces parallels between acid rock and Acid House cultures (and notes the defamatory use of the term ‘rave’ in relation to music events, from 1966), he continually questions the radical import of Acid House: too entrepreneurial (a critique also mounted by Redhead, 1990, 4-5, 27, and Clover, 2009), and with the political limitations of one-issueism (and where the issue was often merely the right to party) and which was, moreover, accidentally and unwittingly politicised by the external forces of the British state coming to it rather



than as an expression flowing from the dissenting aspirations of ravers; (MacKay, 1996, 103, 103-126). Svenonius goes further: the DJ as ‘designator-of-worth and handler-of-commodities’ and so the music equivalent to monetarist policies in its fundamental disconnection from actual production (in addition to the DJ’s ‘display of contempt’– via scratching the product – ‘for the labor of his subjects’); (2006, 218, 245)

Nevertheless, the framing of EDM in relation to psychedelia is founded on the way in which EDM and its variants remain psyche-centric. In this respect Acid House is understood to represent a second wave of psychedelia, but without the psychedelicism. And such a transition can be seen in the notion of ‘state’ over ‘head’: to find oneself in a certain or altered state of mind and body, or in an imagined, technology-enabled place that represents the melding of the mind and body, as with the ambient rave come-down of ‘Pacific State’ (1989) by 808 State. To be ‘in a state’, even with a derogatory vernacular use of the term, suggests a moment of being in a world that is materially grounded rather than spiritually-calibrated: cold, wet, hung-over and penniless, say, rather than ‘out there’ and ‘at one’.

Metcalf, discussing and recalling the ‘new Psychedelic warriors’ (1997, 171) of the Ecstasy period, finds parallels (often via sampling) between the summers of love and proclaims ‘[t]he comparisons were obvious, the second psychedelic wave was upon us.’ (1997, 170) Genesis P-Orridge dates his ‘personal quest for a hyperdelic form of dance music’ to 1987, and notes of his fledgling subgenre of ‘techno acid beat’ that it ‘seemed inevitable that a form of dance music would occur that was contemporary but also psychedelic’ (quoted in Reynolds, 1990, 181). Reynolds frames The KLF and The Orb in a sequence from Pink Floyd (Reynolds, 1997, 158, 161), and the work of Genesis P-Orridge as Jack The Tab, as illustrative of

the wider ways in which ‘... acid house has revived the slang and cosmic imagery of psychedelia (if not the sound)’, which he reports as occurring in Goa, (Reynolds, 1990 [1987-89], 180, 186). Whiteley and DeRogatis also place P-Orridge at this juncture, (Whitley, 1997, 130; DeRogatis, 2003, 447).

The Jack The Tab album Acid Tablets Volume One, although presented as an acid dance compilation, was in fact was the sole work of P-Orridge and Richard Norris, as NON (‘Noise or not’). Fictional band names were provided for each track, and the project can be read as an attempt to pseudo-curate and pro-actively anticipate this new wave before it had fully broken on UK shores.<sup>7</sup> Even tracks that are wide of the mark in respect of the coming sound (and song structure) evidence a psychedelic continuum across the periods under examination here: ‘Rapid Bliss’, in reproducing something akin to the improvisatory jazz-funk fusion work-outs with which Miles Davis was engaging with his lead bass player, Foley, holds points of similarity with the shoegaze group A R Kane of this time, and their album 69 (1988). An earlier attempt to incubate a new wave of psychedelia by P-Orridge is found in his/her Godstar work<sup>8</sup> – the soundtrack to an anticipated (but unrealised) biopic of Brian Jones – which had anticipated elements of trance. But Jack The Tab is locked into more immediate, even if satirical, concerns: ‘Meet Every Situation Head On’, across the distinctive acid hi-hat beat, samples the intoned instruction ‘take drugs: every drug’ (followed by a chorus of ‘hear, hear!’ – the sampled sound of the House of Parliament in session), followed by the advice to ‘make every situation head on’ – both an exhortation and the suggestion of the heightening of perception to follow, one that allows for a greater engagement with (rather than flight from) the world. The alteration of the ‘meet’ of the track’s title with the ‘make’ of the track as delivered is precise in this respect: not only to encounter, but to transform that encounter. It is a

philosophical position later diagnosed by Diederichsen as a post-'68 allocation of controlled periods of 'intensity' (typically at weekends, and via clubbing) for the members of the bourgeoisie not content to dully organise their lives around the successful achievement of 'intentions'; (2011, 9-29). The straighter fusions of dance and psychedelia that would follow shortly after, as with The Happy Mondays, World of Twist and Flowered Up's novella-like single 'Weekender' (1992) can also be appropriately positioned at this juncture.

EDM in some instances predates the first wave of psychedelia (in, for example, the pioneering experiments of Delia Derbyshire) but only came to the fore at the tail end of disco, and then in defiance of those who held that disco itself was an aberration – machine noise, lacking in human expression. Such sentiments could be said to be a re-run of criticisms made earlier a decade earlier, centred on figures such as Bob Dylan and Miles Davis as they went 'electric' – understood as a perverse, counterproductive development: the sacrifice of distinctive and intimate timbres in favour of modish noise for reasons of commercial opportunism. Other electronic musics of the mid-1970s, notably Lou Reed's Metal Machine Music (1975) and David Bowie's collaborations with Brian Eno, could be said to have revisited experimental noise practices of the Modernist period: an avant-garde access to idea of alienating (rather than danceable) noise. In the first instance Giorgio Moroder / Donna Summer collaborations provocatively combined the most biologically organic (the orgasmic groans of Summer, singing 'Love to Love You Baby' and 'I Feel Love', of 1975 and 1977 respectively) with the most electronically inorganic (synthetic sounds, drum machine beats). Synth pop and house, trance and techno musics logically spring from this synthesis. But the eradication of the human altogether, in the second instance, as with the 'mechanical' drumming of motorik, and then elements of Acid

House and jungle, also occurs. And, in these musics, the trip is into the machine rather than into the head. Such a development can be seen as anticipated in the final phases of psychedelia in the electronic remaking of the psychedelic journey for the Silver Apples album Contact (1969). For this the band members are pictured on the album sleeve in the cockpit of an aeroplane: this is a trip to be achieved with advanced technology rather than through a shunning of the technologies that the counterculture, in the bucolic manner of D. H. Lawrence, invariably held as de-humanising and alienating. Elements of the soundtrack of Performance (Nic Roeg, Donald Cammell, [1968] 1970) reproduce psychedelic acid sounds electronically, as with the ‘Harry Flowers’ theme, as well as incorporating ‘world music’ elements denoting altered or non-Western consciousness, exhibiting the influence of Brian Jones, and Pink Floyd’s ‘Heart Beat, Pig Meat’ (from Zabriskie Point soundtrack) curates a sequence of television-sourced found sounds (news broadcasts, advertisements, old films), as indexing the bad trip of contemporary North American media-saturated society.

Despite their sonic differences, EDM retained strong conceptual continuities with the first wave of psychedelia. Rave required duration: the beat uninterrupted for a dozen hours or more, courting the longueurs, lineaments and undulations of emotion in a way that necessitated a built-up over periods far longer than the length of an LP. The notion of the happening aspired to a similarly lengthy duration – all night long if need be, and even clocked for the 14-Hour Technicolor Dream event in Alexandra Palace in 1967. The DJ cultures of disco had already lengthened the song substantially (one mix of ‘Love to Love You Baby’ ran to seventeen minutes), and disco in general also aspired to a conception of the future that represented the full fruition and cultural entrenchment of the Summer of Love.<sup>9</sup> Repetition in EDM, from sampled hooks, or looped beats, offers a sonic compass for the raver as he or she travels ever further into

altered states of waking consciousness. And rave promo videos, drawing on the aesthetics of projections at actual raves, often ignored the musicians in favour of computer-generated psychedelic visuals, now reworked as day-glo graphics (acid tabs, smiley faces, spiralling fractals, pulsing vortices of colour): here the technology visualises the trip. As the Second Wave of Psychedelic, these musics could only occur after the realignment of the happening, away from the shamanistic band-leader figure and towards the DJ figure: selector rather than creator, and mixer rather than maker. In Bez's terms (where this was '... an era in which I was blissfully unaware of my [sic] catalytic qualities as a full-on hedonist.' Bez, 1998, ix), to shift from the happening to the rave required the centrifugal force exerted from the presence of a catalyser rather than song-writer.

Psychedelic EDM noise, in this respect, wrests control of the body, destabilising the mind. The mystical conjoining of gangster and hippie protagonists in Performance occurs with just such a sequence – a bank of electronic mixing gear, improvisatory layering of sounds, the exposed subject losing control at the behest of the burnt-out hippie rock star (played by Mick Jagger), mixing proto-EDM.

[Call out: Insert images HalliganFive, HalliganSix, HalliganSeven, HalliganEight]

These connections however, and the generation of a second wave of underground cultures that flow from them, are only noted here as a staging post between the first and third waves of psychedelia.

[B] Wave Three: Shoegaze

[B] Guitar-ism and revelry

The reintroduction of the guitar to psychedelic music in the mid/late 1980s could only happen as finessed by aspects of EDM: with an anonymity and an a-musicality, and as an agent of affectivity. Acid House is described, above, as psychedelia without psychedelicism. Shoegaze could be described as guitar-ism music rather than guitar music.

The origins of such a use of guitar can be found both in the tendencies apparent in Clapton's playing, as discussed above, but also in uses of the guitar in younger exponents of blues-based rock, including 'noise rock'. As King notes, North American groups such as Sonic Youth and Dinosaur Jr can be said to have exerted musical (if not sartorial) influence on the British indie scene prior to shoegaze (that is, of C-86 and Twee Pop) in that such groups unapologetically heralded the return of the guitar (King, 2012, 298). This influence, in turn, can be traced back the rockier, garage elements of Nuggets, to The Velvet Underground, The MC5 and The Stooges (influences especially apparent on Loop) and, beyond this, Band of Susans and Galaxie 500. British influences are typically noted as The Cure, The Jesus and Mary Chain and The Cocteau Twins. And Azerrad notes that the 1987 Dinosaur Jr tour of Europe, and the critical reception of the band of the UK, was formative to shoegaze bands, (Azerrad, 2001, 365-366).

What exactly was influential in J Mascis's playing was the miasma of a sound where, in Azerrad's words, 'the volume and noise didn't symbolise power; it just created huge mountains of sound around the desolate emotions outlined in the lyrics' (Azerrad, 2001, 361). This sound was better described as coaxed guitar noise – Dinosaur Jr's 'Kracked', for example, features a guitar solo that seems to mimic the sounds of a tortured cat – or a quantitative layering of waves of guitar sound, so that the often non-specific guitar noise tends only to actually stop at the point of the end of

the song, or even after. In this respect, the critical reception of Dinosaur Jr and You're Living All Over Me (1987) could be said to work as a verification and emboldener of embryonic directions already apparent in My Bloody Valentine. Whereas this album is not, in itself, particularly shoegaze-like in terms of the construction of the songs or even in respect of much of its sound,<sup>10</sup> extant bootlegs of the 1987 shows capture a reticence on the part of Mascis to sing in favour of sculpting evermore uncompromising soundscapes. Mascis seems to vanish into them; an inlay photo that showed the band with a concert advert promising 'loud psychedelic rock' only really told the point of departure.

The anonymity of shoegaze can be explained by the preference for sound over physical presence, or sound as allied to phenomenologies of feelings and moods rather than articulations understood to arise from the direct encounters of the seen individual with the world around (and then where such encounters then represent a philosophical take on the world: the anger of punk, the diffidence of Goth, the loucheness of New Romanticism, the jitters of jungle, and so forth). This lack of the personnel of the music, and of personalities in the wave – obscured at gigs, not pictured on releases or, in the case of Kevin Shields of My Bloody Valentine, discussed mostly in terms of his prolonged absences – freed the music to function in a non-individualised way. So the music is understood not to directly emanate from a particular person (sole singer, lead guitarist), or even the musical interactions of the group members (who often stood some way apart when performing live), but to speak more of a shared and collective state. This disarming approach was often and crucially achieved via mixing, where a multi-directional and total sound would be achieved: a sonic anarchy that sought to overwhelm the spatial organisation of the sound-box model.<sup>11</sup> And, while the mixing emphasised the guitar sound, the guitar sound was

often transmogrified into guitar noise; two rhythm guitars were often played without synchronicity, even when playing the same, so blurring the sequence of notes and de-emphasising the musicality of the playing. Meanwhile the lyrics often adhered to a literal ‘nothing to say’ of vocal delivery: words as more interesting in terms of their sounds than carrying and communicating meanings (as Felder finds in the case of Slowdive; 1993, 31), or straight glossolalia (as with the opening of 69), or capitalising disconcertingly on ambiguities of actual speech. ‘Sueisfine’ from My Bloody Valentine’s Isn’t Anything (1988) makes full use of its phonetic similarities to the word ‘suicide’ – the chorus is seemingly simultaneously sung as ‘suicide’ and ‘sue is fine’ (by Shields and Bilinda Butcher) but the vocal lines soon intertwine and confuse the syllables along the lines of ‘...fine/...cide/...sine.’

A side effect of these aesthetic strategies is noted by Wiseman-Trowse in respect to the influence exerted on shoegaze by The Cocteau Twins: the sense of an ‘immersion’ in the music, (2008, 148-149). This would account for the term ‘dream pop’, also used at the time,<sup>12</sup> and which Wiseman-Trowse uses interchangeably with the term shoegaze. Dream pop is not a helpful term, although critics and journalists were clearly picking up on cues found in the music itself. The promo video for Curve’s ‘Clipped’ (1991) explicitly suggests the events seen are a dream, as the singer’s spirit is seen leaving her sleeping body to attend a party before returning to the sofa and rejoining the body – a literal version of My Bloody Valentine’s ‘(When You Wake) You’re Still in a Dream’, and making good on the sensuality and surrealism of A R Kane’s lyrics concerning ‘here in my l s dream’, and of ‘l s dreamin’ l s dream’ (from ‘spermwhale trip over’ of 69). Since dreams, post-Freud, could be said to represent the ‘active’ part of sleeping (see Penzin, 2012, 8) and even, in the wake of new forms of cognitive work allied with virtual reality, the ‘work’ part



of sleeping (see Lucas, 2010, 125-132), it is dreamless sleep that is as usefully placed as comparable: trance, oblivion, a state of losing awareness of the immediate surroundings, of no memory, a moment of the alteration of breathing and heart rate, and when time passing is no longer graspable. The latter, for Wiseman-Trowse, is also an element of the experience of shoegaze music, (2008, 153) but more generally these aspects connect shoegaze to EDM, where memory loss is not atypical.<sup>13</sup> And if dreaming is also understood as a blissful surrender to the body – so that the music requires a comparably defenceless surrender to it – then the term still only tells half the story. Live, shoegazer groups, particularly My Bloody Valentine, The Telescopes and Swervedriver, were anything but somnolent. In this respect, the bipolarity of the music – either dreamy and ambient, or confrontational and extreme – points directly to the quiet/loud dichotomy of post-rock groups such as Earth, Hood and Mogwai.

Dreaming, here, suggests the vantage point of revelry, and there is in this, and in the therefore typical lyrical concerns of shoegaze music – where something past or not-present is recalled, and therefore becomes a matter of nostalgic meditation – a sense of critical reflection. Compared to the very presentness of rave – of a being in the moment, neurologically locked into the beats per minute as they occur – shoegaze would seem to exemplify an assumed middle class trait: fond recollection, surveyed memories, revisiting the past to the ends of critical reflection. Revelry and daydreaming are a luxuriant access to ‘contemplate grandeur’, in Bachelard’s phraseology of phenomenology, from which ‘intimate immensity’ could be aptly applied to the shoegaze sound, (Bachelard, [1958] 1994, 183), as reflected in another journalistic description of the shoegaze sound: the ‘sonic cathedral’.

Such processes are apparent, and in a linear, developmental fashion, in ‘On Tooting Broadway Station’ by Kitchens of Distinction (from 1992’s The Death of

Cool): the description of a breakdown in the dreary public location of the title, where the narrator tries to defy his feelings of loss in order to galvanise his lovelessness, so as to free himself of his lost lover ('I un-stitched the bindweed of love'). Instead, however, he finds himself holding dear the ashes of the bonfires he fancifully imagines, used to burn away his lover's belongings and his own feelings of loss. This fire is both a purging ('Benedictory fire') and a martyrdom ('my Joan of Arc' becomes the refrain, which here could refer to himself or the man he has lost). The final eighty seconds of the five minutes of the track, where the vocals fall silent (vocals that seem wilfully strained so as to avoid breaking) are given over to a reverb-bolstered guitarscape – suggesting the enormity of emotions as in need of (or, here, conjuring) what can be taken as a physically enormous sonic space. And while the echoing sound is enormous – and so seemingly not earthbound but universal, and cosmic – its point of origin, in lost love, is intimate and confessional. In this way, shoegaze noise comes to replace the faltering narrative or lyrical content as a directly phenomenological articulation, and in so doing renders the pastness of the subject (the matter of reflection) into the present. Such flows of feeling therefore oscillate across waking and dreaming states, the present and the past, are partly possible in terms of expression via lyrics and partly not, prompting noise to take over where lyrics fail. The only really materially certain element of the track becomes the location of its departure: Tooting Broadway Station. The lover may have gone, but in this noise these unresolved feelings live on, wresting control of the here and now.

[B] The problem of class in shoegaze aesthetics

Shoegazer music is more generously contextualised in direct relation to the five elements listed above as, after EDM, the third wave of psychedelia. The music itself

conforms to these elements although rarely reproduces the sonic patina of late 1960s psychedelia.

Contextualisation, and critical reactions at the time, seemed keener to make good on the disappointment in the counterculture figures of the late 1960s who, by the late 1980s, had long since made their peace with the establishment. Thus shoegaze groups were perceived as middle class, originating from the relatively wealthy suburbs of the Thames Valley area, and Oxford and Reading among other southern cities,<sup>14</sup> and as providing a white music soundtrack for the lives of students of the late 1980s / early 1990s. As with their 1968 predecessors, there was a sense that, after an extended period of carefree diversions (study and/or chilling out; and extended in the sense of funded by the state), and with the entry into the world of work and professional responsibility, these students would willingly enter that establishment too. And so, as a musical culture of and for a privileged southern enclave, the shoegaze genre could be perceived as in direct opposition to the dangers inherent in the truly dissident lifestyles of ‘northern’ ravers. King writes that the ‘licentious hedonism’ of The Happy Mondays allowed their manager ‘[Tony] Wilson an opportunity to demonstrate the difference between Factory [Records] and the suburban, shoegazing, middle-class, indie-dancing south’, (King, 2012, 358), while Wiseman-Trowse casts the two musical genres as the poles of his chapter ‘Dream Pop and Madchester’ (2008, 146). If the earliest phase of shoegaze music is placed in the mid-1980s, its avant-garde moment in the late 1980s, and its commercial success and elements of a pop phase in the first few year or so of the 1990s, then this divide seems somewhat arbitrary.<sup>15</sup> And, Redhead, writing closer to the time, records the assumption that the raver demographic was (also) white and middle class, and even rural, (Redhead, 1990, 4), while Rapp’s discussion of Berlin clubbers in recent years

centres almost exclusively on professionals hopping from one European capital to another, (Rapp, 2009).

The criticism was fair comment, however, in relation to the aesthetics – if not the sonics – of shoegaze, particularly as it entered its poppier phase in the early 1990s, and presumably sought to consolidate its audience. The promo videos of various singles, dating from the moment that shoegaze began to chart commercially exemplify both a middle class milieu and unabashed romanticism.<sup>16</sup> Walks in autumnal woodlands, songs concerning vague yearnings for unusually-named females, a failure on the part of bands to ‘perform’ as proletarian pop stars, and a calculated artiness all feature heavily. House of Love’s ‘Christine’ (1988) presents introspective band members, obscured by low-lighting, video fuzz, and long fringes across bowed heads; all three sit near motionless as they deliver the song. The promo for ‘Destroy the Heart’ (1988), borrowing the camera technique of Michael Snow’s La Région Centrale of 1971 (a 360° pan, in this case around a recording studio) results in long stretches of blank screen with band members only sporadically, and briefly, veering into view. Ride’s ‘Like a Daydream’ (from the 1990 Play EP) intercuts between a screaming woman (who would fit the description of their later single, ‘Chelsea Girl’, of 1990) with the band playing the song in a rapt and awkward fashion, as if unaware of the presence of a camera. They move and dress in a studiously un-cool way (baggy tops, bed-hair), while Slowdive’s ‘Alison’ (1993) seems to be have been shot at a student house party – a far cry from the ‘temporary autonomous zones’ needed for psychedelic happening, and raves. The mise-en-scène is entirely embryonic middle class: over-large t-shirts and v-neck jumpers, unkempt fringes on the mildly inebriated and smiley guests, women ‘natural’ rather than made-up, a crush in the corridor, bottles of wine and cans of beer, candles and a chess board, and images from Jean-

Luc Godard films on a wall. The band (with its male and female leads) are intercut and they, and the party-goers, are subject to aestheticisation via superimposed, semi-psychedelic images.<sup>17</sup> As with The Boo Radley's 'Finest Kiss' (1991) the female subject would seem to be absent (the chorus begins with 'have you seen her?'), but their return is anticipated. Loss is mitigated by security and certainty – also benefits of the middle classes.

[Call out: Insert images HalliganNine, HalliganTen, HalliganEleven, HalliganTwelve. Caption: from promo video for Ride's 'Like a Daydream']

Abstract, dreamscape-like imagery predominated on record and CD sleeves, underscoring the idea of close attention to minutiae (in the way that an LSD user might spend hours closely examining everyday objects), or day-dreamed fuzzes of colours and shapes, as if images from semi-consciousness states, or coloured by the play of light on half-opened eyelids. Early releases from Catherine Wheel and Swervedriver tended towards objects for contemplation: possibly an eye, possibly circle of pineapple, for Ferment (1992), and light refracted across a lens and psychedelized clouds for Raise (1991), respectively. For Ride, flowers for the Ride and Play EPs of 1990, and an ocean swell for Nowhere (1990) – but all three covers are essentially textured palettes and washes of single colours. This is also true of Curve's Doppelgänger of 1992 and Cuckoo of 1993 (severed parts of dolls rendered in burnt orange, and a murky purple for stones or eggs) and Slowdive's Just for a Day of 1991 (seemingly a blurred photo of a dancing woman, in bloodied orange). Flowers and oceans are also found on Kitchens of Distinction's Strange Free World (1991) and, as cupping a column of flame, Adorable's Against Perfection (1993) respectively. And nondescript psychedelic patterns are used for Lush's Gala (1990)

and Spooky (1992) and, with a cat in the foreground, offsetting the psychedelic baroque, The Pale Saints' The Comforts of Madness (1990). Most of the releases from The Boo Radleys during their shoegaze phase feature just such a baroque, as do Killing Time by Bleach (1992; with a prawn) and ... x, y and z by Moose (1992; with a sunflower). Band members rarely figure or, where they do, are obscured, as looming figures with fluorescent-ised and bleached-out faces, as with My Bloody Valentine's This Is Your Bloody Valentine (1985) and Isn't Anything respectively. It is not entirely clear who the people on Lush EPs are, or the cartoon figures used for Blind Mr Jones's Stereo Musicale (1992) or the Drop Nineteen's Delaware (1992). Or blank-faced figures are lined up or bunched together artlessly, as if for a family photograph, for The Telescopes and proto-shoegaze group Loop.<sup>18</sup>

In addition to the Comforts of Madness cat, a curled, sleeping cat is found on the cover of Chapterhouse's Whirlpool (1990), and the recording of a cat's purring, and a discussion of that cat, ends They Spent Their Wild Youthful Days in the Glittering World of The Salons (1996) by The Swirlies.<sup>19</sup> In the same way that the image of the sheep is common across EDM releases at this time, the cat comes to typify shoegaze. The sheep, presumably exclusively living in the moment, and existing, as part of an undifferentiated mass, in a field, is an appropriate mascot for ravers in both these respects – and recalls William Holman Hunt's The Scapegoat (1854-6), which utilised a colour scheme that anticipated psychedelic art. And the cat – domesticated, spoilt, lethargic, keeping its own company, and prone to suddenly disappear – so embodies a shoegazer's qualities.

[A] The postmodernity of shoegaze sound

After a generation of British pop music that, often even as its most trifling seemed naturally anti-Establishment, and running near-parallel to the concerted police and judicial actions against raves, shoegaze would have seemed to be entirely introspective, failing to engender any alternative thinking or critical distance, despite its 'indie' or alternative status. In its apoliticism, shoegazer music would then seem to be patterned after or represent a sonic equivalent to abstract expressionism,<sup>20</sup> and something of this sense of a complacent, bourgeois avant-gardism was communicated via the terms used to identify the genre. 'Shoegaze' itself was coined in respect to the tendency of shoegaze guitarists to stand immobile on the stage, looking down – as if at their shoes – so as to work the sizeable banks of pedals required to shape and temper guitar noise into shoegaze sound. Such a failure to project outwards, while looking back to the introspection of acid rock (so that, as Auslander notes, musicians, lost in their music, and whose movement often only amounted to swaying, behaved as if unawares of an audience, or even ungraciously turned their back to that audience; 2009, 17), was readily interpreted as passivity and surrender. Such surrender was clearly understood in the sense of 'giving in' to a sense of revelry, but also in the sense of abandoning potentials for political opposition, as well as in terms of failing to present an aggressively heterosexuality or even discernible gender-specific vocal, or code music in terms of aggressive or impassioned expressions of sexual desire. So the gazing could also be said to be of the naval variety: musicians lost in their own particular revelry. Thus the genre ultimately became – in another journalistic slight – 'the scene that celebrates itself': self-contained and auto-referential (so that gigs reputedly drew an audience of other shoegazer group members, who also often shot promo videos for other groups). There was no class-based constituency of the disenfranchised, as with punk or, arguably, Acid House,<sup>21</sup> and shoegaze gig-goers

seemed passive and spaced-out; singing along proved difficult and, for Felder, '[t]he way miasma fans dance – almost nondancing, nodding their heads, seemingly transported, druggily nodding-off – is an autonomic reaction' (Felder, 1993, 27) As with Acid House dancing, which Redhead contrasts starkly to the limber panache of disco dancing (a shift which is equally pronounced in the compendium of found dance footage of Mark Leckey's 1999 film Fiorucci Made Me Hardcore), shoegaze movement is a dance which requires 'no expertise whatsoever' (Redhead, 1990, 6). Perhaps the short-lived nature of shoegaze can also be attributed to this contrarian nature, so that record labels and companies found themselves needing to sell a sound or vague attitude rather than a person or anthem, and then to individuals, for individual consumption, rather than to massed ravers. Shoegaze was also called 'the scene with no name' – also indicative of the lack of character and selling potential. And although politically progressive elements could be found, often unannounced, in the shoegazer scene (bands that were multi-ethnic, with openly gay members, and that fully incorporated female leads) the actual functioning of politics, as understood to occur in the majority of critically favoured popular music bands of that period and prior, was absent too: the bankable commodity of righteous and often personalised, even if non-specific or disorientated, anger. So shoegaze was understood not to have survived onslaughts from the self-proclaimed denizens of proletarian culture: firstly from grunge, followed by a counterpunch from Britpop. So complete was the routing that shoegaze has remained in danger of being written out of the histories of contemporary popular music altogether as little more than a brief interregnum.<sup>22</sup>

Felder (1993) and Thompson (1998) overlap in the periods of their concern, in respect to the popular music scenes of 1991-1993, but assemble very different canons. For Felder (1993), the sounds of 'miasmatic bands' is a defining characteristic, which she



freely extends from shoegaze to grunge: the sonic template of the new decade is clear. Yet for Thompson, writing five years later, a 'year zero' effectively occurs in 1992, annexing and discarding all before: he initially refutes the idea that 'pop was dead' in 1992, but then notes the first tremors of Britpop as shaking the 'moribund domestic chart-scape' of the same year (Thompson, 1998, 20, 244).

And yet, even as a seemingly apolitical phenomenon, shoegaze failed to channel pop into postmodernity, and so eluded popular musicologists too. Postmodern pop with, as Auslander contends (2009), its 1970s glam rock roots, persisted in requiring a presence at the front of the stage, or in the foreground of group shots, in order for this person to engage in playfulness, be a subject to subvert the norms, or enact a knowing repackaging of the tropes of 'northern, working-class lads with vivid personalities' (Bracewell, 1997, 228). Such an inadequate utilisation of postmodernism is the lacuna of Bracewell's survey, which explains why shoegaze is ignored altogether. The actual postmodernity of shoegaze music could be said to be less dogmatic. Firstly, a playing with the after-sound of music (the decay rather than the strum; the echo rather than the hit; the reverberation rather than the chord) – remaking, as it were, the detritus or cast-offs of the music-making process: the noise rather than the harmony. (For this reason, the blurry Fender Jazzmaster seen on the cover of My Bloody Valentine's Loveless of 1991 is an apt image: music that is losing its definition in terms of its point of origin). Secondly, the lack of the artist or avant-garde creator of modernist art, or a general lack of a sense of one guiding or confessional intelligence behind the text, in favour of an auteur-less absence albeit one which, unlike strains of machine-music (Krautrock, instrumental EDMs), nevertheless would seem to seek to express human emotion.

Felder (1993) and Shaviro (1997) both find a political critique in the confusions that arise from the scrambling or undermining of expectations in the music of My Bloody Valentine. For Felder, the challenges of dealing with the music resembles the confusions of a life elsewhere termed 'hyperreal', the '[...] miasma we all go through to make decisions or even just to survive' (Felder, 1993, 18), or the effects of drugs on the perception, and the tensions that arise from a sense of the murderous activities of the military-industrial complex abroad. This is a reading that Wiseman-Trowse finds to be true of swathes of popular music and not particularly specific to My Bloody Valentine or shoegaze, (2008, 150). Shaviro finds the same, and finds a postmodern music in the uncertainties of the mix, but is more specific: this confusion as typifying the condition of modern life, where gender is blurred, and words begin to fail or become unnecessary or reductive, and so recalls experiences of chemically altered consciousness and anonymous homosexual encounters, or body modification (Shaviro, 1997, 30 and 31-32 respectively).

#### [C] My Bloody Valentine, The Telescopes and Third Wave Psychedelic Affect

The garage rock elements apparent in the debut LP from My Bloody Valentine, This Is Your Bloody Valentine (1985) give way to building guitar drones (at time augmented by organ) on 'Tiger in My Tank', 'The Love Gang' and 'Inferno': drones that, once they begin, remain constant throughout. What seems to be missing in this is the ability to stop or fade out elements of the sound: layers can only be added, not taken away. In this way the drumming, and to a lesser extent the vocals, become decorative to the overall sound, and the climax of each track is given over to instrumental rather than vocal passages: a wall of sound, with the guitar saturating the sonic spectrum (although it would take a few more years for production values to

adequately meet and match this conception). Colm O'Coisig's drumming, which can seem eccentric, is better understood as counterintuitive: expressionistic, and with a tendency to punctuate with a flurry rather than firm demarcation – akin, then, to Clapton's guitar in 'SWLABR'.

'Paint a Rainbow', the B-side to the 1987 single 'Sunny Sundae Smile', illustrates the transition from C-86 to this wall of sound: the jangle is distorted into, or collapses into, a constant, modulating guitar pitch of some aggression, counterpointing the feyness of the song. Although closer to the sound that would evolve and come to define the My Bloody Valentine of Isn't Anything, the EP compilation Ecstasy and Wine (1989) would attempt to marry the way in which the guitar is both constant and comes to dominate the audio spectrum of each song. In tracks such as 'Never Say Goodbye' (from the 1987 EP Strawberry Wine) and '(Please) Lose Yourself in Me' (from the 1987 EP Ecstasy) the sound of the guitar comes to structure each song, so that the sense is created that the shoegaze noise drives both vocals and the rhythm section. '(Please) Lose Yourself in Me' jarringly applies such noise to the intimacy of the confessional concerns of the song, so that any narrative, lyric-based sense must be extracted from vocals partially buried beneath the noise and, at any rate, sounding some distance away. In this way the song creates a form for its content: a siren song, of a promise and a threat (to lose oneself), and the 'me' could be the maelstrom of sound, and its disconcerting nature, as much as the suitor-singer. Such disorientation, and paradoxical combinations, would constitute the schizophrenic nature of the first album released by The Telescopes, Taste (1989), which repeatedly juxtaposed the lull with the frenetic.

In respect of this early and avant-garde phase of shoegaze, the next logical step would have been apparent: to begin to override vocals and rhythm section

altogether with shoegaze noise – to further or fully extract that essence and allow the elements of the song to fall away, so shedding everything but noise. This occurred in the track 1988 track ‘You Made Me Realise’ (from the EP of the same name), in which a noise section lasts about forty five seconds of the three minutes and forty four seconds. But the noise was extended for live renditions at the time (albeit only to three minutes, as with the July 1990 gigs at the University of London), and for gigs in support of Loveless, and became the climax (or, for many in the audience, the final straw) of gigs in 2008 and 2009, where the noise typically occurred for between twenty and thirty minutes, and even longer for some European gigs, and at an unprecedented level of volume of around 130db.<sup>23</sup>

To experience ‘You Made Me Realise’ in this manner is to undergo an initial disorientation, and then reorientation, of the senses. The music is felt in and through the body – and in this sense ‘becomes’ flesh – as much as heard (many attendees augmented the earplugs given out by flattening their hands over their ears). And, as in situations of imminent physical danger, perceived reality alters. The sense of time slowing down, as in the feeling of slow motion, mid-car crash (which is understood to arise from the delay in cognitively processing an abundance of data, gathered as the body addresses the unfolding situation in as complete a manner of possible) occurs. In this instance too, a sharpening of sight and of smell occurs, further locking the experience of ‘You Made Me Realise’ into the very presentness of the situation – a presentness that seems existential rather than, as with rave, carefree.

In discussing the loudness of My Bloody Valentine, Shavero turns to Deleuze and Guattari’s concept of ‘microperceptions’, understood as coming into play at such moments, and which allow for a deeper reading of otherwise inaudible nuances and subtleties in the noise, (1997, 25). Wiseman-Trowse theorises the noise of ‘You Made

Me Realise' in respect to semiotics and psychoanalysis, and provides other examples of as much (so that the 'breakdown' is a minor motif of shoegaze music): as a place 'beyond' signification – but in this respect, albeit perhaps in relation to the released rather than live version of the track, as 'sonic introspectiveness... reaches a point of implosion.' (2008, 152) For Felder, the effect of such volume is akin to the gig-goer feeling that they themselves are playing the instruments, (1993, 29). McGonigal begins his book on Loveless by recalling a 1992 rendition of the track and pushing 'through' the noise, as if to the 'other side', where he then experiences an '[...] array of overtones [which] can be heard bouncing about on top of the dirge. Everything goes into slow motion.' (McGonigal, 2007, 7-8) McGonigal seems unable to shake the idea that this was a fanciful projection on his part, despite the evidence he assembles otherwise. Similarly, Shaviro outlines the journey through the volume: '[...] you can no longer make sense of such a gross opposition... You can't stand it, and you can't see beyond it; but for that very reason you get used to it after a while, and you never want it to end.' (Shaviro, 1997, 24-25)

Such a courting of a counterintuitive familiarity also occurs with The Telescopes, whose discography covers avant-garde, pop and contemporary phases of shoegaze. Variable members are often crouched on the floor, in the middle of a small room (unlike the sizeable venues occupied by their one-time Creation stable mates My Bloody Valentine upon their reform), and generate half hour bursts of white noise through a variety of techniques (including drilling through the guitar). When reworking early 1990s hits, singer Stephen Lawrie is known to wander dazed through the audience, bumping into them, and adopting a foetal position on the floor, in their midst, while continuing to sing. It is a surrender of authority that recalls avant-garde theatre performance, and particularly those of the 1960s: inviting the audience in,

refusing to occupy the ground allotted to the performer by the consumer, overturning the hierarchies of performance, as if acknowledging the democratic nature of the noise that engulfs all present equally.

As the noise of the third wave of psychedelia, shoegaze noise sought to materialise phenomenologies rather than create, nurture and sustain the subjectivities available ‘on the other side’ of ‘dropping out’ (of the first Summer of Love) or engender such subjectivities (as with the second Summer of Love). Noise, in this respect, operates affectively: assailing the body sonically, and returning it to states of emotional uncertainty. The charges historically levelled at shoegaze could be said have attached themselves to premature stopping-off points in this process: to return only to the state of dreams, or oblivion, or to that of bourgeois security and indifference, or infantile contentment. The destination state beyond these stages – and in this respect shoegaze represents a rupture with the countercultural if not EDM psychedelic music – is found in waking rather than hallucinated reality.

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<sup>1</sup> For fuller discussion of this utilisation of stereo sound, see (Moore, 2001, 121-126) and (Moore, 2012, xvi, 395).

<sup>2</sup> This is the 1966 album credited to John Mayall with Eric Clapton, typically known as the 'Beano' album. Mike Vernon produced and Gus Douglas engineered the album. The sound seems to have been a result of Clapton's unapologetic boosting of amplifier volume beyond the standard levels used for studio recordings, necessitating a rethinking of the positioning of microphones in relation to amplifiers, coupled with a tendency to try to record music live in the studio – pushing the recording philosophy more towards single takes rather than multiple tries. See 'Mike Vernon: Producing British Blues' at <http://www.soundonsound.com/sos/dec10/articles/vernon.htm> (accessed August 2012)

<sup>3</sup> See (Whiteley, 2004, 119, footnote 8). 1965 is also identified in the culturally significant 1972 compilation Nuggets: Original Artyfacts from the First Psychedelic Era, 1965-1968.

<sup>4</sup> Jones visited the village of Jajouka in 1968 with Brion Gysin and the album Brian Jones Presents The Pipes of Pan was released posthumously in 1971; Jones died in obscure circumstances, in 1969.

<sup>5</sup> Macan is precise in this respect, subdividing the psychedelic period into three wings (1997, 19-20) in order to locate a Prog Rock pre-history in the psychedelic period in the 'three multimovement suites' in 1968 releases from Pink Floyd, The Nice and Procol Harum, (1997, 42).

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<sup>6</sup> The installation was modelled after the artist's first installation – literally an 'open house', where his bedroom in his parent's suburban house was thrown open to the public. The room was reassembled for the London Hayward Gallery Jeremy Deller retrospective of 2012 together with, in part, the artist's curating and reworking of other materials from the Acid House era.

<sup>7</sup> See the interview in Reynolds for more on this intervention; (1990, 180-186).

<sup>8</sup> The Godstar tracks were released in a number of formats, including Godstar: Thee Director's Cut by Psychic TV (2004). Thompson also notes how early British imaginings of the Acid House sounds of Detroit and Chicago, even when 'getting them wrong', fed into and shaped British Acid House nonetheless, (Thompson, 1998, 133).

<sup>9</sup> For a discussion of this conception in respect to late 1970s 'disco' science fiction cinema and television, see 'Disco Galactica: futures past and present'; (Halligan, 2010, 81-109).

<sup>10</sup> Where a line of direct influence is actually apparent from Dinosaur Jr, as with groups such as Catherine Wheel and Swervedriver, such groups were tellingly associated with the shoegaze scene while rarely actually releasing shoegaze music.

<sup>11</sup> For further discussion of Moore's model, as applied to shoegaze, see Sangild (2004).

<sup>12</sup> King notes that the term was coined by Alex Ayuli, half of the shoegazing-associated group A R Kane, and an advertising copy-writer; (King, 2012, 306).

<sup>13</sup> For the track 'Alzheimers' (from American Whip of 2004) the post-shoegaze group Joy Zipper sampled extracts from filmed interviews of elderly patients in the advanced stages of memory loss, and reproduce their characteristic grasping for words

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just beyond reach in the song's lyrics. The film sampled is Complaints of a Dutiful Daughter (Deborah Hoffman, 1994).

<sup>14</sup> Macan notes this demographic as true of Prog Rock too (Anglican, private education- and university-orientated, and of a 'southeastern English youth-based subculture' (1997, 144)) – a genre which was, at his time of his writing and, until Hegarty and Halliwell's recent study (2011), déclassé on the grounds of apoliticism and elitism.

<sup>15</sup> Shoegaze music then discretely persisted into the 1990s and beyond, as apparent in music from The Brian Jonestown Massacre (a band in part modelled on the 1960s counterculture) and Yo La Tengo. A brief phase of 'Nu-Gaze', of 2007/8, was characterised by groups who tended to utilise the sonics of shoegazing but restored the centrality of a singer. Exceptions to this retrograde step include Amusement Parks on Fire, A Place to Bury Strangers and Serena-Maneesh. The late 00s, however, were also a period of activity for shoegaze groups who had remained dormant for some years, including My Bloody Valentine, Chapterhouse and Swervedriver, and with The Telescopes embracing a higher visibility.

<sup>16</sup> Such promos which were made specifically for broadcast, as with the BBC's late 1980s alternative music programme Snub TV, and for release on compilation videos, rather than being entirely aimed at MTV broadcast.

<sup>17</sup> The promo video was made by Mike Mason, of the shoegaze group Swallow.

<sup>18</sup> Wiseman-Trowse discusses the aesthetic of shoegaze covers in respect to the work of Vaughan Oliver and his v23 design studio, see (2008, 153-156), and finds in them '[...] an attempt to replicate the narcotized withdrawal that the music represents' (2008, 155).

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<sup>19</sup> Idiosyncratically, the released live version of ‘Nefi + Girly’ by Nu-Gaze group Asobi Seksu (on Asobi Seksu, 2007) ends by with the explanation that the song is about the singer’s cat and their dysfunctional relationship.

<sup>20</sup> Reynolds and Press draw a parallel between abstract expressionism and the music of My Bloody Valentine in the ways in which ‘the figure is obliterated’ – the figure of the musician, and as discernible originator of sounds within the overall music, (Reynolds, Press, 1995, 220).

<sup>21</sup> Is it as a consequence that there is such a difference, now, between shoegazer CDs (often in good condition, as if well treated and carefully shelved) and Acid House CDs (typically scratched, the faded or foxed inlay reminiscent of cigarette smoke, the jewel case dirtied and cracked)? This suggests the utilitarian role of Acid House CDs (taken to parties, passed around, used as aids for cigarette-making) and the ‘muso’ fetishisation of shoegaze CDs (kept at home as treasured belongings).

<sup>22</sup> An urban legend persists that the transformation of Creation records from the modest home of shoegaze groups occurred with the agreement, at the instigation of Oasis, to drop Slowdive from the label. Creation shoegaze groups included The Telescopes, Ride and My Bloody Valentine and earlier signing included The Jesus and Mary Chain, whose use of feedback has been held to have been influential on shoegazing.

<sup>23</sup> This was clearly more than a matter of confrontation: Shields seems aware of the affective nature of psychedelia in the 1960s: ‘What I do is about consciousness, being conscious of a feeling in my whole body. The trouble with the attitude towards psychedelic music is that it’s about your head only. And to me, and all non-Western people when they get into altered states of mind, it’s the whole body that’s involved.’ (quoted in DeRogatis, 2003, 491).