

**'F-NM-NL-G': an album that acknowledges the agency of a musicking body in relation to the musical spaces that instruct it.**

At a talk delivered by Barnor Hesse (04/11/2015, UCL London) on the subject of 'unsettling whiteness', in the Q&A I asked about my position as a musicking agent (Small, 1998). I explained that I have participated in a number of musical spaces and have attained knowledge from them, which has benefitted my musical and social consciousness. I was aware that as a white British male, my body and work had potential to be an oppressive force in relation to those spaces. I wanted advice about how to navigate and draw from these musical spaces in my practice in a way that didn't propagate or reinforce hegemonic structures of whiteness and patriarchy. He explained that music offers the possibility to navigate space differently, or as Stokes writes "It is precisely music's extraordinary powers of imaginary evocation of identity and of cross-cultural and intersubjective empathy that render it a primary means of both making and transforming individual and collective identities" (in Born & Hesmondhalgh 2000, p32). Hesse advised the key with music and musicking was to keep the relationships and the spaces dialogic<sup>1</sup>. This moment has ended up shaping much of the basis for my subsequent creative and academic research. I have been reading across the fields of Ethnomusicology, Popular Music Studies, Sociology and Politics, then referring to my previous experience. This has been to piece together an approach to my musical practice that accounts for my agency in relation to the musical spaces that have shaped it. Moreover, I wanted to ensure that the histories, identities and experiences of the other bodies that constitute and define these musical spaces are not disrupted or reduced, but remain in some way visible. This offers potential for my practice to relate dialogically to the spaces that it channels.

Here is a brief outline of the musical spaces I have directly participated in and that have impacted most significantly on my musical consciousness. There was European Art Music, the space in which I began to learn the cello at a state-funded music centre in Milton Keynes. There were the rock bands I joined as a teenager on cello, bass and guitar, which led to writing my own songs, so by proximity the Western pop/'folk' singer-songwriter space. I met and played cello with Kora-playing Griots, Sura Susso and Mamodou Ndiaye Cissoko in my late teens. As an undergraduate I trained in European Art Music Composition at Birmingham Conservatoire. At the same time I met my sitar teacher, Clem Allford and so commenced my training in Hindustani musicking. I met and spent time playing cello with Bobo Boboul, the Gimbiri-playing Gnawa musician. I started participating in the London free improvisation scene, from which I began to think about modifying my cello for textural and timbral effect. Most recently, there was meeting and learning to play with

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<sup>1</sup> He also pointed out that the structure of my question fitted into a problematic framework when navigating conversations around racism: the white man putting the onus on the person of colour to tell them how to be better. Much of the subsequent work I have done has been to use my own research, knowledge and experience to work out how to be better.

Nyanyeru and Hoddu-playing Fulani Griot, Juldeh Camara as part of my Performance as Research Masters module at Goldsmiths. As well as impacting on what I play and how I play musical material, these experiences have shaped what I listen to and how I listen to it.

Gunaratnam writes:

“We ingest and swallow sound through an aural alimentary canal that travels from the ear and head, through the neck and throat, down the labyrinthine gut where the distillation of an outside pushes at us from our insides. In those moments when another’s sound knocks around the body, the artifice of human boundedness and self-possession dissolves. We are forced to feel our interdependence, our inescapable susceptibility to others.” (2013, p88)

This is an apt description of my internal experience as a result of musicking in numerous spaces. However this internal experience doesn’t necessarily translate externally. While my internal experience from musicking may acknowledge and celebrate ‘*our interdependence and inescapable susceptibility to others*’, if I don’t carefully examine how this translates externally, I may very well be perpetuating the “violence that enforces dominant classifications [that] is seldom far away from musical performances in many situations” (Stokes in Born & Hesmondhalgh 2000, p32).

I have set out to problematise my agency as a musicking body and develop a practice that may prove helpful for navigating musical space dialogically. I have centred this research around examining how my musical experiences shape the musical processes that come through my singing voice or fingers, onto my cello and are projected outwards. I have conducted this process with the intention of “acknowledging the enduring effects of a racial imagination that has grown within the contexts of modernity [in order to divest in the] positivism in musical scholarship [that is] commonly grounded in aestheticist assumptions about ‘the music itself’” (Radano & Bohlman 2000, p2). Working in this way presents a challenge to find effective means to present the results of this work in a physical form. Toynbee’s paradigm of the ‘*Social Author*’ (2000) in popular music creation has assisted me in addressing the underpinning questions of my research, while facilitating a framework to turn my practice into a tangible piece of work. He explains “To produce popular music is not at all an intuitive act of expression, but rather something which depends on planning, research and the constant monitoring of the outcome of decisions,” and continues “the musical creator is restricted in how much difference s/he can make at any given moment [and] the *small creative act* is the common denominator in pop” (2000, p35). Acknowledging the *small creative act* divests from the narrative of, intuitively created, autonomous works or aesthetic objects. This is a narrative that has a tendency to “simultaneously fix and dehistoricise” (Dickinson 2012, p3) musical knowledge from other musical spaces that serve these works. Instead, by

recognising a pop record's dependence on already existing knowledge there is potential to present work as the sum of previous experiences, shaped by any number of significant musical interactions prior to and during the record's creation. This is more likely to allow elements of channelled knowledge to come through, via its proximity to the experience of the social author, without disturbing the order of its origin.

As a result, I have decided to compile an album of songs, using my cello, my voice and electronics, as a medium to present what my practice sounds like<sup>2</sup>. Because this work is centred around the idea of agency, lived experience and interaction with spaces, I have decided to title the album *F-NM-NL-G* (phenomenology). By virtue of acknowledging that the unit of creativity in making this album is small, I can interrogate the origins of knowledge that inform it and assess my agency in relation to that knowledge. Moreover, the instability of a medium that tends not to consist of "great works but versions, mixes and shifting genres" (Toynbee 2000, p53) enables it to be heard in relation to the albums of songs that have shaped it. Many of these albums have come from musical spaces from outside of the production of specifically Western pop music. Much of my work on this album has been about creating a space for my practice to exist in dialog with those spaces. I refer extensively to Toynbee's writing on the '*social author*'. This is not to position my narrative specifically within the field of popular music studies. Instead it is because I have found it a useful framework to justify how the process of making my album fits into a wider discourse surrounding agency in relation to the musical spaces that inform my creative practice, which I am aiming to place in the realm of Taylor's interpretation of Bhabha's "third space" (Taylor 2007, p160).

## **MELODIC MOVEMENTS, MODES AND MODAL STRUCTURES**

Explaining the melodic understanding of a student of Hindustani music and the Sargam system, Rahaim (2012, p53) states, '*Melody is motion; melody is notes.*' In other words, melody is, on the one hand a fluid, moving, physical entity, and on the other something made up of "a sequence of 'stopping points'". In the Sargam system these stopping points are not fixed, they "retain their names, even if their sonic referents are slightly raised or lowered". My formal training in Hindustani musicking on the sitar has formed a crucial part of my theoretical understanding of melody. Rooted firmly in my musical consciousness is a feeling for the interdependence between stopping points and the motions, or gestures, that flow over them. This has determined how I listen to, engage with and participate in other musical spaces. I have formed strong affinities with musical spaces where

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<sup>2</sup> I have structured the narrative of this essay to focus mostly on *my* creative practice. This is because one of the main purposes of this essay is to examine my creative practice that has contributed to the making of this album and my agency in a musical space. However, the album itself was a collaborative effort. I worked with DJ, electronic artist and vocalist Anna Bahow on the making of this album. Her input was integral and will be discussed in the collaboration section of the essay.

there is prominent focus on playing specific combinations of modal stopping points with particular related melodic movements, or gestures, over them.

I have been interrogating how my relationship with modal grammar from a number of musical spaces affects and defines my creative practice. To do this I have chosen to avoid focussing the narrative of this essay on the modal material as fixed moments in finished works. Doing so would still sit within a hegemonic discourse around the creation of autonomous musical works and the sacrosanct authorship of the composer. In this model, material is fixed and available for use at the full discretion of the composers' genius – regardless of the origin. Musicking is assumed to be a purely aesthetic practice. Musical spaces only need to be defined by the musical objects they produce. This reinforces a reductive colonial gaze (Radano & Bohlman 2000, Dickinson 2012, Yelding 2016). Instead I claim that the modal material and melodic gestures from my existing musical experience is channelled through my musicking body to form the majority of my musical material. I justify this, using Toynbee's '*Social Author*' as a definitive paradigm.

He explains:

“The social author stands at the centre of the radius of creativity, but the range and scale of voices available to her/him/them will always be strongly determined by the compass and position of the radius on the musical field. Perhaps the biggest advantage treating popular music authorship in such a way is that it enables one to be sceptical about grand claims to creative inspiration without discarding the notion of agency.” (2000, p46)

Every track on *F-NM-NL-G* has been centred explicitly around modes with specific melodic gestures attached to them. Through exploring how I have channeled flows of modal and melodic information and their origins, it should be possible to assess the dialogue between these origins and the musical content of my album. I have notated the modal information that

comprises each song<sup>3</sup>. I have then related the stopping points and melodic gestures of that mode to those of the musical spaces that influenced its construction. By making these visible as active components influencing my current musicking self, I hope to subvert the tendency in the creation of ‘Western’ modernist and post-modernist works to “name, extract and fetishise the ‘Easts’ musical heritage” (Dickinson 2012, p3). In so doing, my agency in relation to how clearly the knowledge from these musical spaces comes through can be examined.



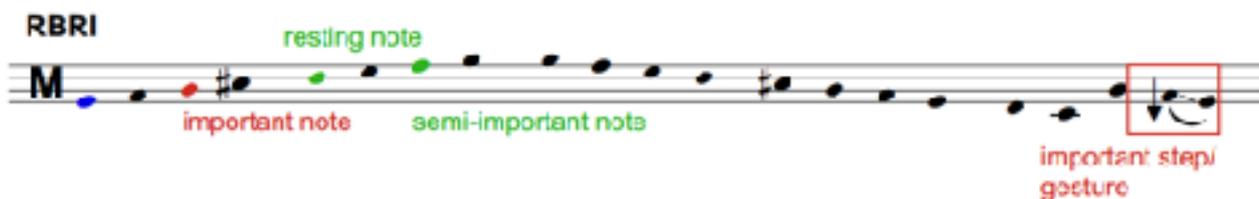
I started playing this mode with a natural second degree and both natural and flat sevenths. The pitches came from Rag Brindabani Sarang. Other melodic gestures over this mode came from listening to Ali Farka Touré’s *Pieter Botha* (1999). Traces of this can still be heard in the vocal line of *Sib*. The melodic movement highlighted as part of the modal descent can be heard in the vocal part too. It follows a similar shape to the repeating material in Touré’s song. As I spent more time playing the material, I found I was only playing the flat seventh (sometimes slightly sharpened). I showed the material to Juldeh Camara in a jam session. He responded to the pattern that became the main cello riff in the song with a flatter second. When it came to writing the song I decided to flatten the second degree and keep the seventh ambiguous. This brought different shades out of

<sup>3</sup> I have used a development of the system I devised to notate songs Juldeh Camara taught me. Instead of a clef, the register of the cello is indicated with an L for lower, M for medium and H for higher. I have used four or three staves depending on the content of the mode. This makes the visual contour of the mode within each octave more explicit than the 5 staff notation which best suits the diatonic/chromatic modes. The dots don’t symbolise definite note values, rather they represent stopping points of the mode in relation to the tonic string. The bottom line of the staff indicates the open cello string from which the mode is based, L (below ledger line) = 4th string, L (bottom staff) = 3rd string, M = 2nd String, H = 1st string. The strings are tuned in two pairs of diatonic fourths in two octaves – or i - iv - i(^8) - iv(^8).

The tonic of the mode is indicated in blue. Important and definitive features of the mode are marked in red; still important, but less so than those in red, features in green. Notes without accidentals are assumed to be natural in relation to the tonic, so second, third, sixth and seventh degrees will always only be marked with a flat, the fourth with a sharp. However, the degree of flatness or sharpness depends on the nature of the material played so accidentals function as indicators rather than as definitive descriptors. Microtonal symbols are used to indicate significant pitches that are clearly between sharp and flat. However, like the flat and sharp symbols, they are not to be read as absolute values. The movements in ascent and descent of each mode are important indicators of how melody is constructed. They are not always stepwise and so represent how the integrated gestures of the mode are as important as the pitches.

the pitch material but it still, through the embodied gestures, relates closely to the two points of origin.

*Sib.* is the first track of the album. From the beginning of the album I wanted to create a space for the listener to comfortably engage with the modal material that I had spent time developing. I looked to structural devices that I had become familiar with in a number of musical spaces I had taken part in. In the Alap, in Hindustani musicking, pitches and related gestures of the Raga are gradually introduced to establish its mood. Then the cyclical composition in that Raga begins. Similarly Juldeh Camara taught me introductory material before the song we were playing would begin. It would be related to the melody that followed. This is a structural feature in many of the recordings I have been listening to from musical spaces with a central position of melody (Dje Dje 2008). I use this structure on most of the tracks: I present some introductory material that introduces the modal content. Then, the song follows. On the cello I play melodic gestures from the modes in cyclical repeating patterns, then sing (most of the time in the same mode) over the top. Some times there is space to improvise. Some times there is more than one theme, for example a chorus or refrain. There is an example of this in *Sib.* The refrain where “Lie” is sung repeatedly is a recurring second theme. By structuring my songs in this way, I intend to give the listener a chance to engage with the modal material of each track.



I handle the mode that comprises *RBRI* almost identically to Rag Yaman, with emphasis on the third and seventh degrees. However the highlighted gesture of the flattened second leading down to the tonic is my addition. This inflection is a result of listening to a number of versions of the Mandinka song, *Allah L'aake* (God wills it). This was the first song I played on cello with Sura Susso. The Kora, in this song, is in Sauta tuning – also a major mode with a sharpened fourth degree. In the song’s refrain, I have heard recordings where the final line “Allah baro, djonte bayi la” descends to the tonic via a slightly flattened third and second degree. The gestures in the vocal solo demonstrate how I channel the modal information from Raga Yaman and the song, *Allah L'aake*. The opening gestures follow the motion of Rag Yaman, emphasising the third and seventh degrees, resting on the tonic fifth. However, in descent, I deliberately squash the third and second degrees as I lead to the tonic like in some versions of *Allah L'aake*. The accompanying Cello pattern in *RBRI* has similar motion to the accompanying Kora material in *Allah L'aake*. It moves between the tonic, the sixth and fifth degrees.



The tracks £^)' and *Lens* are connected. The material for £^)' began as the introductory material for *Lens*, but as it developed £^)' became a song in its own right. It is the shared narrative in the lyrics of the two songs and the same mode that keep them connected. Both songs are in a minor pentatonic mode that shares stopping points with the Ethiopian, Batti Kignit. Additionally, I slightly flatten the third and fifth degrees. The tonic isn't played a great deal, with more emphasis given to the second degree. However the melodic gestures of both tracks still move in relation to the open G as a tonic. Therefore it isn't just actually a major pentatonic with the stopped second degree of this mode really being the tonic. The shape of the melody in £^)' can be attributed to spending a large amount of time listening to the melodic gestures of Begenna players, Alemu Aga and Tafesse Tesfaye playing in Batti Kignit on the album, *The Begenna of Elders* (2009).

It was upon finishing the track and analysing where the material came from that I realised this. This marks the importance of acknowledging the flows of musical information that inform a practice. I had been listening to the *Begenna of Elders* for aesthetic enjoyment. I haven't ever been a participant in the musical space or musical culture of Alemu Aga and Tafesse Tesfaye. Nonetheless what I had been listening to influenced some material that I conceived whilst whistling tunes on my bike. I decided to make this into a song for cello and voice, which would go onto an album reflective of my creative practice. If I were to stop the process at that point, claiming total authorship over the song as a finished autonomous composition, I would be "transforming [the Begenna music] through incorporation into [my] own aesthetic: appropriating and re-presenting it. Crucially, in doing so, [I would] create a distance from it and transcend it" (Born & Hesmondhalgh 2000, p15) through absence. This would not be a dialogic presentation of this material. Toynebee suggests that:

"The transformative mode of performance always includes 'listening backwards' in the direction of Origin. The key point is that Origin will, in almost every case, be a collectivity, a historical moment or geographical place rather than an individual subject [...] Those features which mark it: – versioning, bifurcation, repetition/variation – testify to solidarity and the redemption of human agency, but also to a notion of the past which

teaches change. For these reasons the transformative can (and should) be borrowed by all sorts of music cultures.” (2000, p63-4)

By ‘listening backwards’ and analysing the modal components of this track as I projected it forwards in to the recorded space, I was able to make visible the melodic gestures of the Begenna players that had impacted the movements of my musicking voice and cello. I see this transformative process as a means to more effectively acknowledging the musical spaces that shape my practice in a way “that seeks not to expurgate colonial legacy” (Dickinson 2012, p3).

*Lens* is in the same mode but my approach to the melodic gestures can be attributed to Sahelian performance styles, which, as Dje Dje explains, “like Arab music, [Sahelian] melodies are complex with intricate ornaments and some use of microtonality”. Specific examples that influenced the melodic gestures of *Lens* are Koudede’s *Yala* from the album *Taghlamt*, (2012), Mdou Moctar’s *Tahoultine* on the album *Anar* (2014) and the Ngoni playing of Yehia Mballa Samaké and Douma Maiga on Side B of the album, *Gao* (2013), by Super Onze. The aesthetic difference between the two tracks, even though they are connected through the same stopping points is an indicator of how particular melodic movement over stopping points determines very clearly what ‘voices’ from the radius of creativity are being channelled.

The image contains three musical notation diagrams on a five-line staff:

- Source-1:** A melodic line with various notes. A red note is labeled "Important note". A green note is labeled "semi-important note". A purple note is labeled "note to be used rarely and only in descent". A red box around a descending sequence of notes is labeled "Important gesture".
- Madhuvanti (pitches):** A scale of notes with corresponding solfège syllables below: Ni, Sa, Ga, Ma, Pa, Ni, Sa, Sa, Ni, Dha, Pa, Ma, Ga, Re, Sa.
- Anchihoeye pitches in relation to Madhuvanti:** A scale of notes with an arrow pointing to the first note, labeled "madhuvanti tonic would be here".

The mode of Source-1 came from thinking about Rag Madhuvanti and Anchihoeye Kignit. By removing the descending sixth degree and the descending second degree from Madhuvanti but keeping the same ascending movement from Ni, the notes and embodied movements of the Raga and the Kignit sound similar. However, for the pitches of Anchihoeye and Madhuvanti to *sound* the

same, Madhuvanti would begin from Ni. This is the third degree of Anchihoeye – the tonic would be the fourth degree. The two systems are, unsurprisingly (as they come from two completely different musical spaces), not similar at all. However, I found it interesting that my ear heard Madhuvanti in recordings of pieces in Anchihoeye because I perceived the fourth degree as the tonic. This reminded me of Feld’s comment, that “aesthetics might best be understood as an iconicity of style, rather than a formal homology of sonic (musical/verbal/natural), visual, and choreographic structures” (1994, p77). As I was aware of this whilst writing the song, I wanted to allude to the melodic gestures of both the Raga and the Kignit. The pitches in relation to the tonic and movements, Ni-Sa-Ga-Ma-Pa and Ga-Pa-Ma-Pa-Ma-Ga are undoubtedly Madhuvanti. However, by emphasising Ma, which in Madhuvanti is usually a passing note, and making use of the gesture of Pa to Ni I am alluding to Anchihoeye as Ma becomes its tonic and Ni becomes its third degree. The collision between my embodied knowledge of the Raga and my experience of the Kignit is located at the point of the melodic gestures that inform the components of a song. This means there are colliding elements of several systems of knowledge at once in this instance and it is occurring at a point prior to the formation of the finished aesthetic musical object (Yelding 2016). It is my intention for these collisions then to be dialogic and form no kind of fixing or erasure.



The melodic movements and stopping points of *Puh Pal* also come from combining modal and gestural material of a Raga and a Kignit. However, this time it is Raga Bhupali and Tizita Major Kignit. For the stopping points of the respective modes to sound the same, they begin from the same tonic. Comparatively, this similarity has little to no significance with regards to the two musical spaces (Feld, 1994). The only significance in this instance is that of my own experience: hearing a piece of music in Tizita Major Kignit, such as Mulatu Astatke’s *Tezeta (Nostalgia)* (1998) and The Krar Collective’s *Tizita* on the album *Ethiopia Super Krar* (2012), and processing that melodic material as Raga Bhupali. Much like in Source-1, how I play the melodic gestures is the result of amalgamating specific details from both modal systems.

In *Blanc*, I use the same pitches for the vocal melody but beyond the pentatonic note values of the stopping points, there is no relation to either Bhupali or Tizita Major. *Puh Pal* and *Blanc* are connected thematically, but this will be explained further in the section on lyrics. *Blanc* follows a simple harmonically orientated structure, with a tonic major to relative minor progression throughout. The vocal melody is just a pentatonic mode that is carried by the harmony. Aesthetically speaking, this song channels the melodic gestures common to an Anglo-European singer-songwriter such as Nick Drake and, for example, his *Cello Song* (1969). The melodic

material in the vocal part is mostly static. The accompanying chord progressions are what characterise the modal values and set the mood of the song.



The ascending treatment of the mode that comprises the cello material of *M ba* is similar in shape to the movement ("Packard") of Raga Megh. However, the stopping points are not the same. Once more, they're in a major pentatonic mode. The main cello part is composed with this mode and the material is strongly determined by the zig-zagging trajectory of the mode's ascent. The other central influence for how the handling of this material is the Bass and Hoddu parts of Mansour Seck's *Poolel* (1997), which zig-zag in a similar fashion. Generally speaking, how I structure *riffs* and other accompanying material is a result of my participation in and subsequent listening to recordings from Mandinka and Fulani musical spaces. In the final verse, there is a flourishing cello solo underneath the voice. This is to elevate the repeated vocal material and glue the major mode with a sharp 4th that makes up the vocal line with that of the main riff.

The gestures and rhythmic feel of this soloistic textural detail are similar to what I used to play in the jam sessions with Sura and Mamodou<sup>4</sup>. During and following that time, I made playlists of recordings from specifically Mandinka but also Fulani and Bambara musical spaces. As well as being a form of musical-instruction, these recordings related to a significant social and musical experience. Landau (in Dueck & Toynbee 2011) writes a biographical essay about the experience of a man called Mohamed using youtube to construct a musical identity reflective of his migration from rural Morocco to urban Morocco, to France, to Britain. The essay talks about the relatively recent phenomenon of curating recordings from the internet to create and feed a musical consciousness that responds to and "constructs trajectories rather than boundaries across space" (2011, p45). She cites Baily and Collyer, who write: "music is bound up with identity and memory in a special way, for music is not only a ready means for the identification of different ethnic or social groups, it has potent *emotional* connotations and can be used to assert and negotiate identity in a particularly powerful manner" (in Dueck & Toynbee 2011, p39). It is important to recognise how the musical spaces I have been listening to go deeper than the aesthetic realm. They tap into something that is formative of my musical consciousness. They are perhaps

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<sup>4</sup> The time spent with Sura and Mamodou spanned over about five years from my late teens to early twenties. It tended to be an annual interaction with occasional extra chance meetings.



cello. The voice then follows its trajectory. In the lyrics section I will write about how this relates to my experience of songwriting traditions and Griot traditions. What this track demonstrates most clearly is how I have developed my cello and voice modally, but also texturally. Melodic gesture is inextricably linked with texture and timbre. Baily writes that “a musical instrument is a type of transducer converting patterns of body movement into patterns of sound” (in Stobart 2008, p131). He goes on to state that “one important conceptual model at the musician’s disposal is a spatial model in which movements are planned and experienced in visual, kinaesthetic and tactile terms” (2008, p132). These statements describe the relationship between the modal material I use and its close connection to my body, voice and cello. Firstly, because of the physical movements necessary to voice them. Secondly because of the nature of the resulting sounds these movements produce. Moreover, the physicality of technique, timbre and texture allows me to describe the musical spaces that shape my practice more comparatively.

Let’s look again at the significant musical spaces on my radius of creativity that feed directly into what is recorded on *F-NM-NL-G*. Firstly, the spaces I have directly been a part of: European Art Music; the [Western pop or ‘folk’ singer songwriting space](#); [playing cello with Sura and Mamodou](#); [Hindustani Music](#); [playing cello with Bobo Boboul](#); the London free improvisation scene. Finally there’s [meeting and learning to play with Juldeh Camara](#). Then let’s look at the directly referenced (in the Modes section of this essay) recordings from musical spaces: [Ali Farka Touré’s \*Pieter Botha\* \(1999\)](#); [Alemu Aga and Tafesse Tesfaye playing in Batti Kignit on the album, \*The Begenna of Elders\* \(2009\)](#); [Koudede’s \*Yala\* from the album \*Taghlamt\*](#); the Ngoni playing of [Yehia Mballa Samaké and Douma Maiga on Side B of the album, \*Gao\* \(2013\), by Super Onze](#); [Mulatu Astatke’s \*Tezeta \(Nostalgia\)\* \(1998\)](#); [The Krar Collective’s \*Tizita\* on the album \*Ethiopia Super Krar\* \(2012\)](#); [Mansour Seck’s \*Poolel\* \(1997\)](#); [Nick Drake’s \*Cello Song\* \(1969\)](#).

The examples highlighted in blue indicate a central focus on a stringed instrument and the voice. The examples in red indicate this too, but specifically with a male voice<sup>5</sup>. A very high proportion of the above examples are men singing with plucked or bowed instruments. Timbre has often been a location for embedded exoticism to pervade in the Western musical imagination. Rob Young refers to some of Donovan’s music as “supremely cosmopolitan, eclectic and outward looking [with] a trailer load of unusual ethnic instruments” (Young 2010, p20). Young’s narrative is reductive as he fixes the idea of ‘ethnic’ in relation to his and his subject’s whiteness. He suggests the inclusion of these ‘unusual ethnic instruments’ are colourful textural extras to Donovan’s practice, which by virtue of their presence is ‘supremely cosmopolitan’. In this case Donovan’s “representation of the other constructs an unequal relation between aesthetic subject (composer, and later audience

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<sup>5</sup> That’s not to say these spaces are exclusively male spaces, rather if it is a track, it is a man singing or if it was in a participatory space, there were only men present and singing.

identifying with composer) and object (music or culture being represented)” Born & Hesmondhalgh 2000, p20). Incorporating ‘foreign’ sounds to make a ‘cosmopolitan’ practice, places onus on the materiality of ‘Other’ instruments and the unquestioned creative ability of the neutral author. I am interested in the opposite; I want to allow and make audible the modal, textural and timbral gestures by men from numerous musical and socialised spaces and backgrounds that inform what I project through my male voice and through the movements of my fingers on my stringed instrument<sup>6</sup>. I am using the recorded space of this album to document the projections of my intentionally synchronous movements and gestures, intending for it to exist as a potential ‘third space’ for “forging distant and local affinities” (Taylor 2007, p160).

It may seem obvious to suggest there is potential to form solidarities across musical spaces through the male voice. However, what is less obvious is that the cello owes its lineage to the Rebec in 9th century Spain (Marcuse 1975). The Rebec was related to the rabab, which had moved North into Spain. Dje Dje writes “Sibyl Marcuse indicates that the ancestor to the fiddle [in this context the West African fiddles such as the Nyanyeru or the Goge] is the plucked short lute of ancient Persia, which was adopted by Arabs and became a bowed instrument called the *rabab*” (2011, p22). Knowing the shared history between these instruments as they were adopted by their relative spaces and made their own is helpful for finding commonalities just below the surface between musical spaces. It is also a lesson in how instruments change to suit the needs of the player, musically and socially. I believe it is important to continue playing the cello firstly because I have been playing it a long time and know it inside out. But secondly, I believe it can be emblematic of the hegemony of Eurocentric aesthetics. Therefore modifying it and reframing it through performance may allow it to operate dialogically with the musical spaces that now inform how it is played.

## **Voice**

Although I haven’t been trained in Hindustani vocal, learning the sitar requires an embodiment of Hindustani vocal gestures. This has impacted how I phrase and shape sung melodic sounds. This can be heard most clearly in the improvisatory material in *RBRI*. There is also a great deal of influence from the vocal qualities in some of the previously cited West African and Ethiopian musical spaces. The vocal styles in *Sib.* and *Lens* have much in common with those of the recordings by *Super Onze* (2013) and Koudede (2012). The way I express the vocal melody in *A Note* was directly influenced by the way Mamodou in particular phrased songs like *Miniyamba*

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<sup>6</sup> By connecting the physicality of my practice with the physicality of other male musical gestures, I am not seeking to exclude female or other musical gestures from my radius of creativity. I am exploring a possible connecting factor that moves beyond the boundaries of “the cultural” via my gender. I believe it is possible to do this as a mode towards destabilising rather than reinforcing patriarchy.

and *Diarabi*. In addition, I found the resonance of Alemu Aga (2009) to match that of my own in the lower registers. His recorded vocal timbre informs, for example, my lower vocal gestures in *Puh Pal*. There is also an influence from British pop/folk singers, Nick Drake (1969) and Ivor Cutler (1974). Nick Drake's voice with its middle-England regional accent is similar to that of my own. The frankness and playfulness of Ivor Cutler's delivery of lyrics informs my own. By using the above examples to shape my vocal gestures through the resonances and limitations of my own voice, I am hoping to project their "sound knock[ing] around the body" (Gunaratnam 2013) outwards.

## **Cello**

Much of my work over the past year has been to turn my cello into a modal instrument that is better suited to being played in the musical spaces I have previously participated in and want to participate in again. The C,G,D,A tuning can be an obstacle for this without virtuosic ability. Playing modal material is much easier if I can keep my left hand in the same position. This also makes playing microtonal material much easier. The main playing string of my other instrument, the sitar, is tuned a diatonic fourth from the tonic string. By tuning the bottom cello strings a fourth apart and the upper two, the same 4th an octave higher, I was able to bring my left hand technique on the cello closer to the sitar. However, there were limited options of tonic pitches in relation to the open strings. When I had my lessons with Juldeh, I developed a way to be able to quickly change the pitch of the open strings so I could play easily with the different songs on Nyanyeru and Hoddu. I made a capo out of some rubber and a shortened cam strap. This affects the timbre of the instrument. However, I see this timbral change and the impact it will have on the texture of musical spaces I contribute to as indicative of the reframing of this instrument back to being a chordophone shaped by the changing nature of my perceived locality.

## **Left Hand**

My training on the sitar has altered how my left hand moves around the cello. I do almost all of the work with my first three fingers, the index and middle doing the most. My meend<sup>7</sup> work on the sitar has also translated onto the cello. This means that I often move between notes with weighted slides. This can be heard most clearly in the solo material of *Source-0* and *Source-1*. My time learning with Juldeh consolidated a number of left hand techniques. There is the slight bend into a note and only partially releasing, to make a multiphonic and other slight bends, which can be heard in the solo of *RBRI*. Then, hammering on a note, when moving in sequence to the next. This can be heard in the riff of *Lens*. Finally, stopping dead a plucked note after it has been sounded by slightly depressing the finger. This can be heard in some of the improvisatory material of *Lens*. Therefore, the physical movement of my melodic gesture is working in tandem with the physicality

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<sup>7</sup> The 'meend' is a type of glissando gesture specific to Hindustani musicking.

of how I produce timbre. This adds a further dimension to how the voices I channel through my practice operate in dialogue with one another, and I with them.

### **Right Hand**

There is a specific kind of pizzicato that I employ throughout the album. A notable use of it is the introduction to *RBRI* and most of the cello material in *M-ba*. I began developing this during my jam sessions with Sura and Mamodou. To make my cello gel with their kora playing, I would pluck the string with the side of my index and middle fingers, resting my thumb on the finger board for support and leverage. This made a fleshier sound, meaning notes had less attack and a warmer resonance. It also enabled me to pluck much faster than if I were using the index finger and an elevated right hand technique most commonly associated with playing cello in a European classical musical space. On the album this technique was ideal for playing melodic material that established the mode at the beginning of the track. I could play notes expressively, in quick succession. I could do so in a way that elevated the modal material while not differing greatly from the timbre of the accompanying cyclical material that would follow in the rest of the song. A similar plucking technique is used for much of the static riff material, such as the riff in *Sib*. It uses the thumb and the index finger. The thumb strikes the bass notes and the index finger, the others. It achieves the same fleshy timbre as the index and middle finger technique but allows for more stable rhythmic playing. I developed it by transferring the self-taught fingerpicking technique I have used previously on the guitar, on to the cello.

Material with less melodic scope, at the lower end of the cello needs to have full sound that emphasises the space between each note. An example of this is when I introduce the mode on the cello at the beginning of *ANote*. To achieve the necessary capacious sound I strike the string with my index finger, with the support of my middle finger in a downward motion. I use my first knuckles to lever the motion. The resulting sound gives a strong attack but a warm and lingering resonance. It is a method I first developed when playing cello with Gnawa musician and Gimbiri player, Bobo Boboul. I used it subsequently when learning to play with Juldeh Camera, when he was playing the Ngoni and Hoddu. In addition, my right hand technique on the sitar requires strength and fast movement in my first knuckles. From practising the fast Jhalla strokes on sitar I have built strength to move my fingers from the knuckles quickly. I have recently transferred this onto the cello to play a double speed version of the aforementioned plucking technique, where I strike the string with both the flesh-side and nail-side of my finger tips. This can be heard in some of the melodic decorations in *M-ba* and *ANote*.

## **The Bow**

Harmonics and multiphonics with the bow can be used as deliberate melodic details. This can be heard in *ANote*, where the left hand material remains the same all the way through the track. The harmonics and multiphonics created by the bow in the second verse introduce new pitch material. This varies the cyclical material without altering the pitches that define it. Other variations of this material include the percussive techniques I learnt to play in works of contemporary European Art Music, which I subsequently used and developed in 'free improvisation' performances. The combination of textural techniques on the cello as a device to move a song forward was influenced by Arthur Russel's use of texture and timbre in '*Soon-To-Be Innocent Fun/Let's See* from the album *World of Echo* (1986).

How I shape notes with my bow is also linked to the physicality of delivering melodic gestures in accordance to their relative musical space. The accented, tapered bow strokes that I used to play the solo in *RBRI* were developed when I was learning with Juldeh Camara. They were a way of making the cello blend with his Nyanyeru sound. The melodic gestures in the solo of *RBRI* are similar to what Juldeh and I had played together on the song *Cinquante-Six*. In *Source-0*, the introduction to *Source-1*, I employ a weighted swell of the bow at the beginning of a gesture to mimic the Hindustani Khyal vocal style. This matches the phrasing of Rag Madhuvanti. As the track combines melodic gestures from both Raga Madhuvanti and Anchichoye Kignit, I wanted to combine two textural elements I associated with the two musical spaces. I begin each gesture with a Khyal vocal style swell. I play the end of a gesture with little to no pressure on the bow to make a breathiness similar to that of a saxophone. This is because the first time I heard Anchihoye was in the Saxophone part of Mulatu Astatke's, '*Dèwèl*' (1998).

I have used bowing technique to refer in timbre to the multiple 'voices' in my practice. This is inherent to 'social authorship' and undergirds much of my compositional approach to this album. Toynebee uses Charles Mingus as an example of this kind of channelling. He writes "Mingus not only has to select voices but also has to integrate them, even as they are reverberating one against another" (Toynebee 2000, p52). I am aiming to do something similar. Keeping with the example of *Source-1* (but the same could be applied to any of the tracks), there is the modal material of Rag Madhuvanti with its accompanying melodic and physical (so inherently timbral) gestures. I am integrating this with the modal material of Anchihoye Kignit, which I first heard played on a baritone saxophone with a breathy timbre. Through deliberate decisions about the timbre created by my bow I am able to refer to both experiences simultaneously. The channelling of these modes and textures creates the new material.

## **A REFLEXIVE APPROACH**

There is an issue here of different kinds of channelling occurring. There is my reference to direct participatory experience, such as playing traditional Fulani music with Juldeh and my ongoing training in Hindustani music. However I am also channelling a more superficial musical experience: that of listening to recordings of Ethiopian Jazz artists – referring to the moment I first heard Anchihoeye. The two types of channeling are not clearly separate in the sound of the work and perhaps this shows a limitation of ‘social authorship’ as a paradigm. “Listen[ing] out across a global field of musical works to construct a cosmopolitan network of possibility, and in so doing centr[ing] [the] self” (Toynbee 2000, p50) seems like a good way of forging new musical solidarities and experiences. However this can be problematic if re-presentation of ‘voices’ leads to reductive definitions of the musical spaces being channelled. This leads to problems embedded in Post-Modernist approaches to composition, which “reduce [voices] to sound-spectacle or simulation with no real purchase on the world” (Toynbee 2000, p65). This argument may not be so applicable to transgressive musical production from inside Black culture, or any other musical culture using Post-Modern compositional techniques to challenge lived oppressions. However to navigate out of the hegemony of dominant Western forces, it is important to be skeptical about its embrace of aesthetic hybridity, because it tends to perceive such hybridity as a new kind of “authentic” cultural production in relation to its fixing gaze (Taylor 2007). As Taylor explains “in most uses of the term “hybridity” the two cultures that hybridise are usually white and nonwhite Other, but the complex and multiple nature of the Other or Others is not always accounted for in the discourses of hybridity” (2007, p156). This is why I have tried to look beyond the realm of aesthetic hybridity in the Western musical imagination that considers itself a neutral force (Born & Hesmondhalgh 2000, Radano & Bohlman 2000, Taylor, 2007, Yelding 2016).

Toynbee explains that performance (through creating a record or playing live) by a social author is “never a pure enactment of the subjective intention, it must, as a condition of its possibility, have an awareness of itself as a performed act in social milieu, at a particular time and place” (2000, p58). He calls this reflexive performance, which he suggests “is the continuation of agency in a period when other modes of performance have been exhausted” (2000, p65). The following sections will explore the reflexive approach to making *F-NM-NL-G*. I will examine how channelling voices into a reflexive recorded performance has been a useful way to make clear my agency in acoustic space and explore how this offers potential as a dialogic approach.

### **Lyrical Content**

The approach to putting words with musical material comes directly from my experience of two particular kinds of musical spaces, that of the Western singer-songwriter and that of the West-African Griot. Dje Dje explains that traditionally, Griots were “expected to know details of history and genealogy of patrons, sing praises in their honour, serve as custodians of the repertory, and

act as advisers and confidants. [They also] played a political role” (2008, p20). I have used this as a framework for my approach to the themes of my lyrics, especially with regards to details of history, honouring, advising and playing a political role<sup>8</sup>. Because I do so in a way that channels concerns, issues and narratives that I have found directly relating to my creative research and my musical experience, such an approach is immediately reflexive. This feeds into my dialogic intentions: through my lyrics I am trying to distance myself from the “Metropolitan north-western Europeans [who] love the idea of these migrating sounds. But they are very unsure about those who travel with them” (Stokes in Dueck & Toynbee 2011, p30). Instead I am attempting form solidarity around issues that affect those who arrive at sites of movement from the perspective of a North-Western European engaging with them. In this respect the content of this essay is being sung about in the album allegorically.

It is important then that I sing lyrics in English, not just because it is my first language and demonstrative of my lived locality. It is also because I am using my lyrics as a vehicle to critique a situation that English speaking listeners take some responsibility in. This is while reaching out through translatable musical gestures back to the sites of movement that have shaped my musical consciousness. To handle this reflexively I have drawn from the playful nature of Ivor Cutler and Laurie Anderson’s approach to using words. Both of them unashamedly place themselves at the forefront of the formation of their words. Both of them deliver what are to them, meaningful and poetic truths, with humour, candour and directness. Both of them have subversive reasons for doing so. An example would be Ivor Cutler’s *I Worn My Elbows* on the album *Dandruff* (1974). This song is a succinct critique of capitalism and imbalanced meritocracy through the comical metaphor ‘I worn my elbows down to the bone for you’. A clear translation of this on my album is the track RBRI where I equate the colonial plunder and white saviourism embedded in modern tourism with cutting too much grass because you brought a lawnmower when only clippers were necessary. Laurie Anderson’s *Only An Expert* on the album *Homeland* (2010) delivers social and political

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<sup>8</sup> An example of praising or honouring can be seen in ANote, where I praise a lady who gave me a twenty pound note. I chose to tell this story because it connects with wider ideas of solidarity and new (or at least not current) humanities that subvert the self-interest of the current moment in Western globalised modernity. In *£^)* and *Lens*, I am using the questions that underpin the interrogation of my own practice as the narrative subject of the songs. I talk of using ears to invert a patriarchal and colonial lens. This reflects precisely on the purpose of the entire album, so this is inherently reflexive. With regards to detailing history, in *Puh Pal* I form a narrative talking of an imagined historical moment in the future, where the naturalised hegemony of whiteness has been de-elevated and a new humanity has become more feasible. This leads into *Blanc*, which describes how the new moment began to come about. This narrative across the two songs ties them together as a pair thematically (but as already mentioned, not musically). It also, more subtly speaks of my position as a beneficiary of an oppressive structure, and despite “chipp[ing] at the walls”, a moment where genuine, dialogic, non-hierarchical relationships are not yet possible. Again this reflects on the concerns and questions that have been at the root of my recent creative and theoretical research.

messages in her own voice, repeating sarcastically the phrase ‘only an expert can deal with the problem’. I adopt this playful repetitive approach to using words in *Lens*, where I repeat the word at the end of each line, even if no words proceed it. By playing and making obvious my lyrical devices, I hope to remind the listener that I am an agent in this space and not trying to be a neutral, ‘voice of god’, author.

### **Recording Techniques**

The listener needs to be aware that they are hearing the physicality of the cello being played and the singing voice. They need to be aware that they are listening to musicking bodes with agency. I used multiple microphones on the cello: one on the bridge to pick up the strings, one over the fingerboard to pick up the sounds of the fingers and the middle distance resonance, and a pick up through a pre-amp. This would capture as many of the internal and external sounds the cello made as possible. This would shape much of the acoustic space in the final mix around the resonance of the cello rather than the reverb or resonance of a room or digital space. I used a darker sounding mic, the U87, on my voice when singing and playing the cello so I could more easily separate the sounds in the mixing process, to maximise clarity of both voice and cello. For any double tracking or for vocal takes recorded without cello accompanying live, I used a brighter TB47, to pick up the air of my voice and the clicks of my lips. Anna’s voice (who I will discuss in the collaboration section) was recorded through a U87, this gave it a warmth that would blend with the sound of the cello. Everything had to sound close, so the listener could hear the physical effect of the ‘voices’ channelling through our musicking bodies.

### **Collaboration**

An album as a medium to put forward ideas about dialogue in relation to musical spaces should practice its message in its conception. It would have to have a collaborative element. I asked Anna to get involved because of her skill with MIDI sampling and her singing voice. It also meant that the album wasn’t just a male space. Her voice, as a physical instrument but also the voices she channels through her radius of creativity would shape the outcome of the album. In keeping with ideas around agency and dialogue, I didn’t want the modal rules and melodic gestures of my practice to dictate Anna’s contribution too heavily. There are some instances, such as *Sib.* where Anna doubles a vocal line I had written and in *Source-1*, where I had written the melody of the refrain and decided that it was an important element of the song. However, to balance this in *Source-1* Anna’s words would shape the theme of the track and her verse material melodically and lyrically that explored the theme of her words to the refrain, would provide the form to the track. For *M ba*, all I wrote was the two cello riffs. Anna’s beats, lyrics and vocal lines were what defined the track. We structured it together as we recorded it. In general Anna’s MIDI beats are a subtle but integral part of the album. Her beats take the aesthetic out of the “one man and his

instrument” territory. The combination of the deliberately (though obviously constructed - as will be covered in the mixing section) organic sounding vocal and cello tracks and the very clearly computer generated beats is what defines the album as a new musical space, where channelled possibilities are colliding. There is a transgressive element to Anna’s technological contribution. Toynbee claims “in the world of pop, as music-making has taken a technological turn women have been to a great extent kept out” (2000, p100). This observation was made sixteen years ago and there have been changes in regards to gender balance and technology in more radical musical spaces. Still, it feels necessary to highlight this as an important, reflexive factor in the making of this album especially as it implies a reflexive inversion of common roles. I, the male agent, am only producing physical sounds through my fixed trained body. Anna, the female agent, is bringing these fixed sounds into the digital realm.

Despite the integral contribution of Anna as a collaborator, who also gave advice in the studio on the songs that I had written the material for, to help deliver them with greater clarity. I actually feel that the collaborative element would need the most work if I were to start this project again. I asked Anna to join too late in the process. This means I take up disproportionate space on the album. This plays against what I have set out to achieve in my practice. It is weighted in favour of the voices I channel and my radius of creativity. This has gendered implications for the space that this album creates as my male voice dominates. Despite having the right intentions, in this regard it doesn't quite fulfil them in execution. If I believe reflexive performance through social authorship must be inherently collaborative, then the projects I work on should be so from start to finish. This is a lesson I will take into future work.

## **Mixing**

*F-NM-NL-G* has been mixed to reflexively present our practices and the process that have gone into assembling the album’s parts. In so doing, trying to forge a dialogic relationship with the musical spaces that have informed it. Firstly I set out to achieve this by the resonance of the cello determining much of the acoustic space of each track. I would keep many extra sounds like creaks, soft breaths, knocks, or other elements that would be called ‘imperfections’ from the recording in the mix. I highlighted and brought out thumby plucked sounds and tried to create an acoustic illusion of the cello’s tactility. This was so the listener can hear our musicking bodies as an integral part of the sound space that this album creates. This links with the approach to mixing the voice in recordings of Alemu Aga (2009), where the air of the voice is clearly audible. Similarly with regards to recording Bara Sambarou Sarré (2007) playing the Hoddu, his fingers striking the instrument are heard clearly and the instrument is mixed as a textural whole rather than a single timbre to be polished. This is how I wanted the cello to be mixed in most of the album. This places the overall

sound of the album in a space that sounds similar to the recordings of the voices which have determined the modal, melodic material and textural material that I channel.

In *Lens*, I processed the the pick up through distortion and octave plug-ins. This achieved a similar sound to the Ngoni in *Gao* (2013). I did this to give energy to the cyclical and improvisatory cello material that drives this song. It was the choppy midi beats and bold use of autotune and pitch shift in Mdou Moctar's, *Anar* (2014) that determined how I mixed songs that make use of digital sounds. In some cases, such as £¹), I have processed my double tracked vocal through pitch shifting plug-ins to either create robotic harmonies or go up or down an octave. This allows the voice to mediate the space between the acoustic cello and the digital beats and effects. This is why Anna's voice in *Source-1* is so digitally processed, as most of the other parts are too. Her voice is altered through a pitch shifter so it is robotically tuned to the intended notes. Along with the chorus and delay, this removes the voice from the close and tangible to the realms of the distant digital. The solo plucked cello in this track is treated similarly. This adds to embodied narratives in this album about mediating space across short and long distances. Like in Moctar's *Anar*, Anna's MIDI beats are mixed with no reverb and gated to sound choppy. They need to sound almost acoustic in their digital-ness so they create the illusion of digital space while being as close in the ear as the acoustically recorded parts. In this way they add to the totality of the acoustic space that the album projects<sup>9</sup>. This constructs what Toynbee calls "a new sonic environment: a virtual dimension that never existed 'originally'" (2000, p69). The sonic environment that *F-NM-NL-G* constructs is a combination of Anna's and my channelled voices, which create a space through the illusion of the work existing between the realms of the seemingly acoustic and the seemingly digital. This is the space where dialogic relationships may be possible and solidarities between us as agents and the spaces that we channel can be shown.

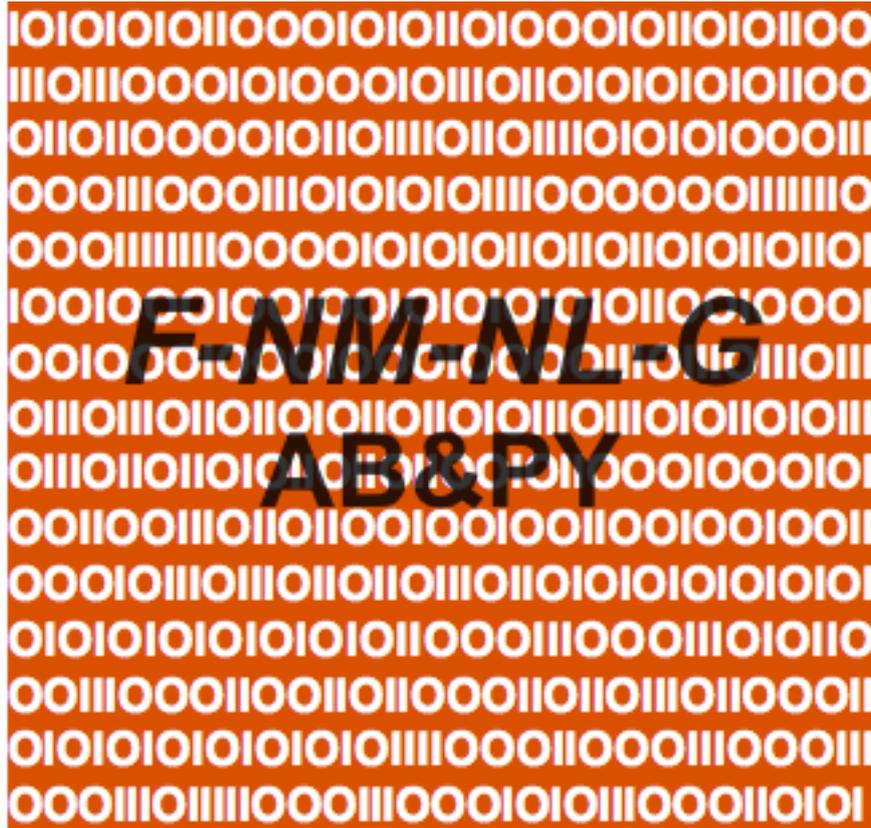
## Projections

The supportive aesthetic features of the album such as the presentation of titles, the art work and methods of dissemination are all integral to helping characterise the album's nature as "new sonic environment". These should also be handled reflexively. As well as being digitally available, I want to press the album on vinyl. Here is what the art work that supports the aesthetic of the album will look like:

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<sup>9</sup> An interesting example of the relationship between digital and acoustic is in *Sib*. which was not recorded to a click track. This allowed the song to breathe and move with my natural changes in tempo. The beats had to be manually placed in time with the track, using a mixture of rhythmic perception and analysis of the transients. It means the two don't fully blend. As a result it creates what I would see as a more exciting rhythmic tension.

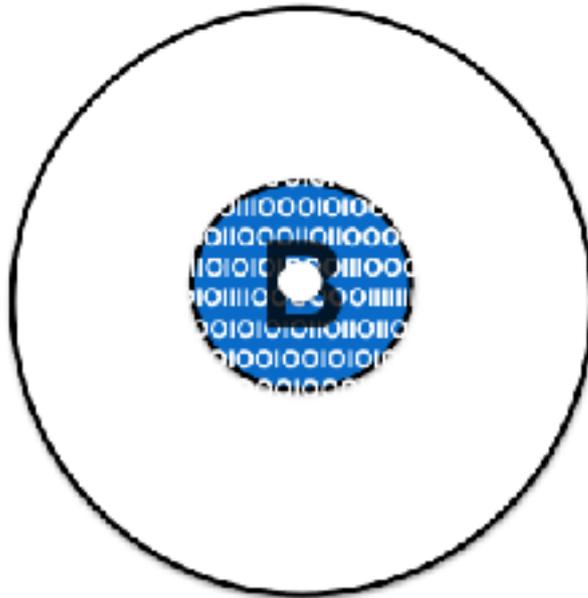
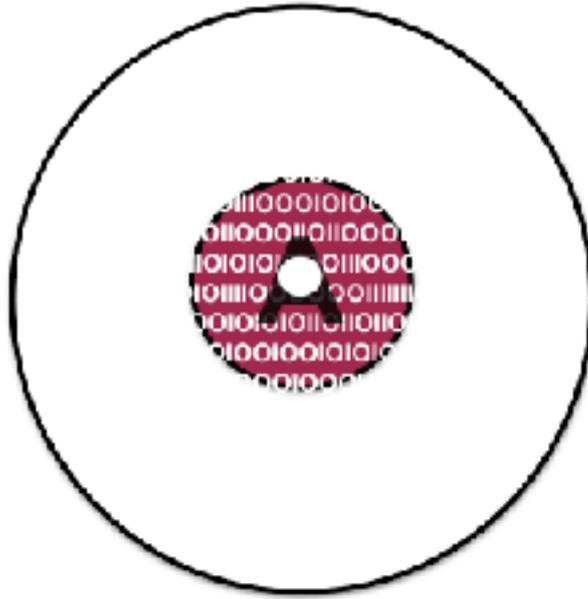
Front Cover:



Back Cover:



Record Sides:



To accompany the theme of reframing instrumental roles and disrupting hegemonic signifiers, I have turned all written text (apart from acknowledgments) into symbols. By doing this I am treating the Latin alphabet and the English language in the same way that Western agents have treated alphabets and symbols of social and cultural spaces fixed in its othering gaze<sup>10</sup>. Laying out information like this ends up localising the meanings of the tracks at the same time as it universalises its function beyond the solely English reader. This is particularly the case with regards to presenting Anna and I, the social authors, as “AB&PY”. Reducing our names to initials intends to serve the dialogic space the album creates. The new singular name “AB&PY” encapsulates our combined agency while speaking for the new sonic environment. I have also used a symbol for binary as a pattern for the album’s artwork. The intention of this, as well as to present the album nicely, is to ironically trope and aestheticise ideas that underpin Western colonial notions of modernity such as supposed technological prowess.

To further remove the narrative of the autonomous author and to redress the balance of my disproportionate prominence of my voice to Anna’s, she will remix some of the tracks from the album. This will generate a wider interest in the material that we have recorded as it translates into a different space. However it will also be with the purpose of inverting the paternalistic tendency in electronic “World Music” to romanticise ethnographic or similar recordings of any potential other as an indicator to “pastoral innocence” as it “creates exotic backing to a song” (Hesmondhalgh in Born&Hesmondhalgh 2000, p283). The songs will be the fixed other. Anna’s remixes will distort its complexities. Inverting a process in this way maintains a reflexive and transformative handle on a project that has been about problematising agency while allowing for genuine influence from experience to speak.

This will further my intention for the central purpose of this work and as such, this essay: to focus on the documented embodiment of experienced gesture in order to “avoid the unfortunate organic roots, and racist history, of hybridity as a concept” (Taylor 2007, p160). As a result I would hope that this album in its finished form will clearly demonstrate dialogic relationships between my musicking self and the musical spaces which I channel as voices (Toynbee 2000) through it. Moreover, that it offers potential methods to divest from other hegemonic traits that permeate in Western musicking. However I am reminded of Stokes’ assertion that “dominant groups interpret musics in ways that suit their interests, to promote these interpretations with the resources available to them, and to exclude those which oppose their interests” (in Born & Hesmondhalgh 2000, p216). This is why it cannot be for me to conclude if this album achieves what I have set out for it to. That is something which can only be determined as it is disseminated and shared with

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<sup>10</sup> The symbols do relate to the tracks, for example £^A) is a song loosely about patriarchy. “£” = pay, “^” = tree and “)” = arc. *M ba* is about treating ideas like embers.

listeners. What I can say at least, in the process of creating this album, is that I have done all in my current conscious ability to “recognise the constant flux of cultural production and people and social formations, while at the same time retaining the potential for redressing imbalances of power relations, for forging distant and local affinities, for giving voice to political stances that oppose racism and other forms of discrimination [...]” I have set out to place this work in (Taylor’s interpretation of) Bhabha’s “Third Space” by “recognis[ing] the transitoriness of all these possibilities, but attempt[ing] never to lose sight of them” (Taylor 2007, p160).

Word Count: 10,353

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