THE GHOSTS OF NOTHING

IN MEMORY OF
JOHNNY B. GOODE



WORLD TOUR

2014 – 2018

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ARE WE A BAND?

Sean Lowry and Ilmar Taimre

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What is a band? The question seems at once overfamiliar and elusive. A short answer might equate a band with the *music* it plays and makes available to an audience through live performances and recordings. Yet this doesn't really seem to encapsulate a fuller sense of that which actually constitutes "bandness". Intriguingly, when non-musical things are intentionally or circumstantially brought into conceptual proximity with a rock band, a strange transformation can take place. The conceptual apparatus of a rock band, as we will demonstrate, is capable of absorbing a rich and diverse array of objects, events and stories into its definitional universe. Historically, it is already apparent that many otherwise non-musical objects, locations and actions have become synonymous with specific rock band mythologies. Take, for example, Liverpool or The Cavern, geographical locations now forever woven into the definitional universe of The Beatles. Consider also the ways in which certain haircuts, fashions, hotels, venues, memorabilia, stories, myths and lifestyle choices have become synonymous with specific band "worlds". Fortunately, as we argue below, this absorptive quality can be discussed by adapting frameworks already established for discussing contemporary post-conceptual art.

Like a band, a post-conceptual artwork is not necessarily exclusively linked to a singular object, image, location or event. Instead, it is most likely accessed by its audience in numerous ways, both directly and mediated, and importantly, as an aggregate of elements. "The Ghosts of Nothing – *In Memory of Johnny B. Goode*" is a radically intermedial project

developed across multiple forms and locations, nationally and internationally. Evolving from an original "rock opera" translated into a "radio play" and then presented as a "world tour" of performances in conjunction with a series of exhibited images and objects, it manifests the continuous and continually-evolving nature of much contemporary post-conceptual art. Yet at its heart, it is *also* the work of a band. On at least one level, this is both its driving force and its *raison d'être.* To deny this would be disavow the latent adolescent pleasure that we derive from the project. But perhaps most importantly, for us The Ghosts of Nothing is a vehicle through which to artistically explore some philosophical questions. In what ways might this artistic exploration of bandness serve as a productive example of the mutually insufficient dimensions of *concept* and *aesthetic* in art more generally? What is the nature of relationships between fact, fiction and materiality in art and music?

With these and other questions in mind, we set out to investigate by forming a "band" in a quixotically expanded aesthetic realm in which our conspicuous physical absence (in terms of conventional mass media or public presence), invites audiences to look into, beyond, or outside our "songs" to experience an intermedial "band-like" package that operates more like a work of art than a conventional music industry product. We maintain that this work exists in both real and imagined spaces, and in various vehicular incarnations somewhere between the antipodean extremities of "band" and "not band". But, as we will argue, this littoral zone is already a natural environment for the existence of rock bands more generally. Or, to put it another way, rock bands, typically, are constantly-changing omnivorous entities with an inherent proclivity towards the absorption of elements from other unrelated systems or cultural categories.

A Band as a Vehicle for Artistic Exploration

Historically, rock bands the world over have long embroidered the fabric of their mythic identity by absorbing hitherto "non-band" elements into their thematic orbit. From an endless array of symbolic accoutrements to well-publicised instances of poor motel etiquette, the wide-ranging diversity of individual case studies demonstrates that the tentatively demarcated borders of "bandness" are dynamic, porous and open to negotiation. Consequently, they invite questioning and testing on a number of fronts, including, in our case, via the stratagem of conceptually-driven intermedial artistic exploration. The Ghosts of Nothing is an artistic collaboration between the authors, Sean Lowry and Ilmar Taimre. This collaboration, which assumes the form of an open-ended artwork consisting of both traditionally perceivable band and non-band elements, is also both subject and author of this text. At the centre of The Ghosts of Nothing's conceptual universe is an album of "expanded cover versions" titled *In Memory of Johnny B. Goode*. This experimental "open work," initially presented in the form of a quasi-"rock opera," is thematically based around a bizarre allegorical repurposing of the pop culture icon of Johnny B. Goode, anachronistically re-cast as the contemporary emblem of the alienated artist/clown historically known as Pierrot.[i] To date, this episodic series of expanded cover versions has been shapeshifted into a "rock opera," a "radio play," and a global "tour of abandoned music venues," both projected in the mind and performed in mime. Through a dedicated website, we present the foundational components of a "story" loosely suggested via a series of mutant reinterpretations of iconic songs, most altered well beyond recognition and then linked to a sequence of found images. Subsequent remediated versions of the original album for a "radio play" broadcast[ii] and "global

tour"[iii] have included textual fragments presented as spoken word elements and a variety of collaborative mime-based performances introduced into the conceptual orbit of this "open work". In what follows, we chronicle the conceptual development of this universe of pseudo-cover versions, translations, remixes and remediations.

Testing the Limits of "Bandness"

A question persistently arising within this collaborative venture is: If we are a band, what determines the outermost limits of its definitional universe? Or, in other words, what kinds of activities, events and artefacts can be meaningfully included within the uncertain borders of this particular instance of "bandness" whilst maintaining an identifiable sense of unity?

As a production method and conceptual orientation, The Ghosts of Nothing deliberately conceal otherwise recognisable pop cultural appropriations and obscure historical quotations as part of a broader exercise in testing the limits of referential relations. We then use these repurposed elements in various ways to build the main edifice of our "story", as well as to suggest new directions for its perpetual unfolding. Consequently, there is a partially hidden structure to the narrative arc of our "rock opera" that is built from references to both well-known songs and relatively obscure historical references introduced from "outside" recent popular musical history. Some of these associations are suggested in titles, while in other cases associations are obscured almost to the point of disappearance, perhaps faintly lingering in one or two partially recognisable words. By the time we arrived at the radio play version, virtually all of the prototypical "cover song" associations had been obliterated. Here, a radically remixed version of the original music was sublimated to spoken

texts, made up of deliberately clichéd narrative fragments and thirteen "rondels" drawn from *Pierrot Lunaire* by Albert Giraud (1860-1929),[iv] presented in their original French and in loose and occasionally unfaithful English (mis)translations. Implicitly, such new fictions can potentially reveal something about the nature of fictions more broadly.

There are numerous examples of visual artists, novelists, musicians and filmmakers working along these lines. One enduring example is found in the work of the late German author W. G. Sebald. Sebald's works are notable for their broadly idiosyncratic mixture of actual and seeming historical fact, recollection and fiction interspersed with indefinite photographs. A relatively comparable analogue for this approach in the visual arts is found in some of the work of British artist Tacita Dean. Other examples of numerous works that exemplify this recent *zeitgeist* include: Ben Rivers's *Slow Action* (2010)—which comprises a pseudo-ethnographic historicisation of imaginary worlds presented in the form of fictional voiceover layered over actual places; Gerard Byrne's *Case Study: Loch Ness (Some possibilities and problems)* (2001-2011)—which combines photography, film, and text, to blur delineations between past, present, fiction and documentary; and perhaps most poignantly, Walid Ra'ad's ground-breaking production of a historically reflective "counter archive" in the form of the fictional collective "The Atlas Group (1989-2004)" (2009).

Like these examples, our fictional repurposing of Pierrot recast as Johnny B. Goode—under close examination—also contains much that is non-fictional, together with uncanny hybrids of repurposed reality and invention. It is here that The Ghosts of Nothing playfully assume a doubled ontological status—insofar as our open

work is both an imaginary mythological projection of the kinds of things that bands do—whilst at the same time being a real-world entity that actually does many of the things that bands do (which of course includes the production of myths). We make and release albums (packaged as physical CDs or available on download and streaming services). We make videos. We tour. Does this mean that we are in fact a band? In what sense does a band exist? Like anything with culturally defined borders, a band exists to the extent that people believe that it does. Notwithstanding its fictional qualities, it can at least be said to exist as a socially recognisable identity. For art historian Richard Shiff, "all beliefs, which instigate aesthetic strategies, amount to myths; if not, they would be facts or laws of nature."[v]

The dynamic, intertextual and intermedial nature of our band can sometimes make it difficult to meaningfully distinguish that which is *inside* and *outside* it as a cultural category. Certainly, the fact that we are rarely in the same physical location makes it particularly difficult to think about delineations of *inside-ness* and *outside-ness* in terms of simple physical proximity. Living over 1800 kilometres apart in different Australian cities (Melbourne and Brisbane respectively), primarily collaborating in a virtual capacity, and self-described as "too old to rock," we have strategically chosen to both omit our physical likenesses from all publicity materials and reject the prospect of performing conventional "gigs" in traditional venues. Instead, we choose to emphasise other elements. Given that many of these elements, unless specifically "pointed to," are easily unnoticed, they invariably require the support of paratextual information.[vi] If considered in isolation, any one of these supplementary elements does not produce anything close to a full picture of the "band". Figure 1, for example, shows a full-page advertisement

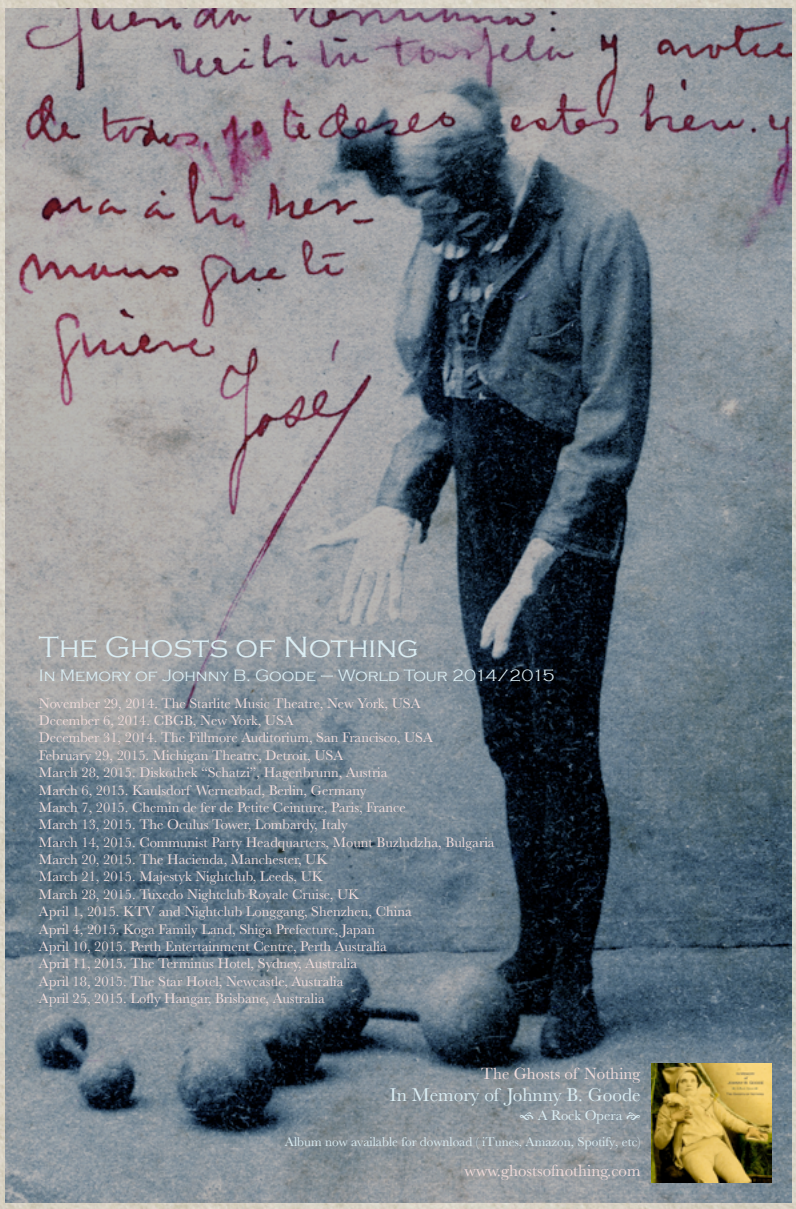


Figure 1. Advertisement for "In Memory of Johnny B. Goode – World Tour of Abandoned Music Venues 2014/2015" as published the Italian art magazine Mousse #45 (October–November 2014).

in *Mousse* magazine #45 (October–November 2014) apparently "promoting" a global tour. However, a closer reading reveals that the listed performances are all announced to occur at historically significant music venues which are either abandoned, no longer exist, or are decommissioned. Although there is very little to go on, this single advertisement, even if considered in hypothetically perfect isolation from any and all other material traces, clues and pointers, manages to achieve a singular creative feat: it asserts, and thereby brings into being, the conceptual "existence" a "band"—perhaps fictional, perhaps not—but a "band" nevertheless, known as The Ghosts of Nothing. We will return to discuss this advertisement in further detail later in this text. But we might already begin to suspect in this one example that there is something theoretically interesting and perhaps elusive about the cultural notion of "bandness".

"Bandness" After the Internet

Initially, The Ghosts of Nothing's *In Memory of Johnny B. Goode – World Tour of Abandoned Music Venues 2014/2015* was conceived as something not necessarily needing to occur in physical space. In time, however, we decided that some of the more feasible locations and dates on the tour could in fact be singled for actual physical performances of some description. From the outset we acknowledged that most of our audience would most likely retrospectively access any physical performances, either online, or on screens in exhibition spaces. Ultimately, it would become our intention to insist that both listed dates on which a physical performance took place *and* the remaining "gigs" to be "built in the mind"—together with the kinds of experiences made available to both physical *and* to mediated audiences—should all

be considered as meaning-making elements within the single open work titled *In Memory of Johnny B. Goode*.

Whilst the overall conceptual architecture and production rests with The Ghosts of Nothing, the work is also conceived as an omnibus vehicle capacious enough to accommodate creative participation from diverse and unanticipated sources. Our "world tour," for example, involved featured contributions from numerous collaborating artists. All the while, we stressed that all individual (physical and mediated) performances presented as part of our tour should be considered as co-authored by The Ghosts of Nothing and each respective collaborator. Significantly, this expanding episodic series now exists simultaneously in both virtual and physical space and both inside and outside our dominion of authorship.

In the visual arts, this is relatively familiar territory. There are now a number of competing terms that attempt to encapsulate conditions of distributed authorship and the relative interchangeability of physical and digital modes of display and transmission. The already unfashionable neologism "post-internet," for example, has been used to describe art produced in a time in which the Internet is no longer a novelty but rather a banality. As New York based artist Artie Vierkant put it in 2010, this is art that is "informed by ubiquitous authorship, the development of attention as currency, the collapse of physical space […] and the infinite reproducibility and mutability of digital materials."[vii] Emerging in a time already declared by art historian Rosalind Krauss as beset by a "post medium condition"[viii] many contemporary artists have inherited an attitude to artistic production in which "anything can now effectively be anything else,"[ix] and something formed in one medium can be readily translated into another.[x] Moreover, with the advent of granularly distributed mass digital audiences,

the process of transmission is often regarded as an extension of the creative process itself. This, however, is something that rock bands have long intuitively recognised. Even in the pre-digital era, physical distribution in the form of vinyl records spawned *album cover art* as a new genre, one which was enthusiastically embraced by bands and visual artists alike.

Today, many disparate cultural activities are effectively flattened into the communal yet discreetly individuated space of the digital screen. Moreover, the screen has become the central portal for accessing other spaces and times. Accordingly, artists routinely customise works to suit different contexts of production and reception. Consequently, distinctions between what was previously understood to constitute primary and secondary experiences are increasingly blurred. Although artistic production may still emphasise particular materialities, a vast variety of methods of presentation and dissemination are available. As is the case with remix/DJ culture, artists often develop multiple iterations and variations of a single work. Austrian artist Oliver Laric's *Versions* (2012), for example, exists as sculptures, images, a talk, text, a song, a dance, a film, and as merchandise.[xi] Similarly, New York-based Israeli artist Seth Price's *Dispersion* exists as an essay, an artists' book, and a sculpture. Approaches such as these have profoundly problematised the historical problem of the "where" and "what" of a work of art. British philosopher Peter Osborne, in particular, has usefully described the capacity of some post-conceptual art works to exist as a singular yet internally multitudinous entity within a complex distribution of materials and multiplicities of forms and practices.[xii] In applying this formulation to some limit cases, it becomes possible to imagine that the "things/events" that avail access to some works of art might (hypothetically at least) be infinitely interchangeable.

With or without the consent of author-producers, creative works are always already mutating. Historically, fixed forms of media levied interest value driven by scarcity and one-to-many systems of distribution. Digitally networked modes of production, dissemination and reception have certainly problematised notions of a "primary experience" or a "definitive version" and promote a regard for cultural output as always provisional, always in progress, and available to be experienced and repurposed by many. With the implications of these pervasive cultural conditions in mind, we now return to teasing out the slippery notion of "bandness".

The Folly of Immateriality

While the ontology of music—including popular and rock music—has, in general terms, been the focus of much scholarly activity in recent decades, the ontology of "bandness" as a specific topic within this expansive field has received surprisingly little attention.[xiii] As John Andrew Fisher observes, there is an ontological complexity to rock music—which he distinguishes from both popular and classical music—that arises from "whole domains of aesthetic interest" that are not as evident in other musical genres.[xiv] Despite, as Fisher, Gracyk,[xv] and others[xvi] have identified, the centrality of recordings to any proper account of the ontology of rock music, we would suggest that the elusive quality of "bandness" also features prominently in this ontological landscape, and is important for both rock and other forms of popular music. Our aim, in what follows, is not to develop a systematic account of all the relevant issues, but rather to offer a preliminary sketch of the implications of pursuing one particular line of thought in what turns out to be an intriguingly multi-faceted problem.

Let us begin with the following proposition: Although a band might produce material artefacts and sensorial affects, its perceived existence is predicated upon a consensually although not uniformly projected *immaterial fiction* somewhere in space and time.

At first glance, immaterial, virtual, or fictional bands are the exceptions that prove the rule. Imaginary creative works are experienced when we imagine their effect in the world. The (impossible) existence of a non-existent band frustrates this as we attempt to imagine effects designed to preclude the imagining of effects. Yet, a nagging doubt persists. Are "immaterial" bands—or, indeed, "immaterial" works of art—ever really as totally and completely "immaterial" as they might claim to be? It is clear that even digital works require physical networks, hardware and electricity to be physically perceivable. Similarly, concepts require physical organic structures to be conceived, borne in mind, and communicated to others. In what kinds of ways, then, do The Ghosts of Nothing exist? Does it matter?

The thesis that all works of art are immaterial was suggested by Benedetto Croce (1866-1952) in his 1912 work *Breviario di estetica (The Essence of Aesthetics)*. Croce claimed that all we know can be reduced to either logical or imaginative knowledge such as art and that all thought is based in part on imaginative knowledge. In other words, for Croce, imaginative thought precedes all other thought. Croce's thesis was given a modernist interpretation by R. G. Collingwood (1889-1943) when he pointed out that not all people could perceive a Cézanne even when looking at it.[xvii] This idea, when extrapolated, highlights the way which interpretation of a physical artefact is highly dependent upon an invisible informational backstory. For Collingwood, the aesthetic procedure involves artist and audience jointly realising certain mental states, and that as a consequence, art is fundamentally

expression. This expression is of course individually decoded in light of an intersubjectively agreed context, i.e. culture.

Within Collingwood's conception, a work of art is not an artefact at all, just as a song doesn't need to be played or written down in order to exist in a mind and nowhere else as an imaginary thing. The actual making of the tune is therefore the physical creation of an imaginary tune. However, as cognitive neuroscience reveals, even an entirely imaginary melody is still associated with neuronal traces in specific areas of the brain, and is therefore irredeemably physical, at least in some small part.[xviii] And herein lies the Achilles heel of any proposition which claims that works of art—or indeed bands—can be absolutely and completely "immaterial".

The idea that art exists in the space of ideas, feelings, values, associations—formed around certain things or events—seems to make sense, and can readily be accepted, up to a point. However, as artist and philosopher Jeffrey Strayer has demonstrated in his landmark study *Subjects and Objects*,[xix] even the most "immaterial" works at the outermost limits of abstraction/conceptualism still initially need something that is irreducibly material—a *public perceptual object* to use Strayer's term—which "points," possibly via a sequential chain of multiple intervening immaterial imaginings, to the intended conceptual endpoint. Such material beginnings may well be very slight indeed, perhaps just a few words or a sketchy image inked on a page, or pixelated on a physical computer screen, but material they stubbornly remain. How the intended conceptual or immaterial endpoint of these material beginnings is interpreted—whether as "artwork," "band" or something else—depends, in turn, on the cultural context(s) in which the material object(s) are considered—by a perceiving audience—to have the potential to be meaningfully interpreted

in certain ways. To radically simplify his meticulous analysis, Strayer shows that, minimally, even the most abstracted and dematerialised work of art depends on:

- at least one public perceptual object;
- at least one perceiving subject;
- the subject's appreciation of an "artworld"[xx] context in which the object is interpreted.

Mindful of Strayer's analysis, in the next section of this text we will demonstrate that a relatively analogous proposition holds for the elusive socio-cultural category of "bandness".

The Minimal Limits of "Bandness"

What are the *minimum* ingredients for a band? What evidence is required in order to accept that a band actually exists? "Live" performances are clearly not mandatory, as evidenced by bands such as The Monkees (initially), The Dukes of Stratosphear (an alter ego of XTC), or even The Beatles, who famously ceased touring altogether but did not cease to exist as a band. A lack of recordings is also no obstacle, as countless garage bands attest. Virtual performances, including those by parodic or fictional bands, are evidently one means of coming into being as a "band" as is evidenced by Spinal Tap, Flight of the Conchords, and The Rutles. So, it might appear that some kind of musical performance is essential, whether filmed, televised, virtual or live. The fact that each of these fictional bands eventually went on to also perform live concerts and release records, just like "real" bands, might be interpreted as *prima facie* evidence that some form of perceivable *music is* indeed essential. However, to show that this is not the case, consider the case of completely fictional bands that have never played a note of music, live or otherwise, and possibly never

will. Such amusical bands can and do nevertheless "exist" as memes in popular culture. There are numerous examples. Take, for example, Bennie and the Jets, the subjects of the song of the same name from Elton John's *Yellow Brick Road* album. Or if not fully-fledged memes, at least as literary references well-enough known in certain quarters, we could point to as Billy Barf and the Vomitones (from Thomas Pynchon's *Vineland* (1990)) or The Blow Goes (from Anthony Burgess' *A Clockwork Orange* (1962)). What about the suggestion that a band is a uniplural descriptor, and should therefore have at least two members, if not more? This criterion is quickly negated through the example of one-member bands such as Nine Inch Nails (really Trent Reznor). Many bands have also meaningfully existed for extended periods with only one member. Dave Grohl, for example, was effectively the only member of the Foo Fighters during the recording of their first studio album. Similarly, Billy Corgan has been the only member of Smashing Pumpkins since 2009.

This cursory review of variations than run close to the minimal limits of "bandness" demonstrates that, if it is a coherent cultural category (as common usage would suggest), then all the usual attributes—music, performance, individually identifiable members, and so on—*may* be present in reality, but it would seem that none are finally absolutely essential. This much is apparent from the examples of the fictional bands cited above, whose "existence" depends merely on being *named*, in a book, song lyric or film, and nothing more. No music has ever been, nor ever needs to be, played by these bands. No photos or interviews exist, or need ever exist. No members need to be identified. All that is required in these cases is (1) at least one—but possibly no more than one—public perceptual object (e.g. a name) able to be experienced (in a book, recording or film) by (2) a single perceiving subject in (3) a cultural context that allows

for the *possibility* of inferring the existence of a "band" from the perceptual experience. In other words, the minimal limits of "bandness" are just as Strayer concluded for art at the outermost minimal limits of abstraction.

It might be argued that fictional bands do not qualify as proper "bands". However, the examples of Gorillaz, Sgt Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band and The Dukes of Stratosphear remind us that the boundaries between fiction and reality can be very blurred indeed. Moreover, any demarcation along these lines is vulnerable to sudden reversal in light of subsequent developments. Take again, for example, the transformation of Spinal Tap from parodic fictional film band to touring live band with "follow-up" albums no longer linked directly with the original film. Or to cite another example, English animated band the Gorillaz have also played "live" in concert as holographic projections alongside actual physical appearances from guest performers such as De La Soul and Mick Jones and Paul Simonon of the Clash.

It would seem that the threads of categorical continuity can be stretched very thin indeed and yet, somehow, not entirely break. Consider the appropriation of the name Heaven 17—another fictional band first presented in Burgess' *A Clockwork Orange*—by a "real" band formed in 1980 by two departing members of The Human League. While disambiguation may be important in certain contexts, it would seem that, at a higher level of abstraction, Heaven 17 can be legitimately used as a bandname which refers to a cultural category that is "large" enough to contain both Burgess' fictional band and the "real" synth-pop band of the same name. More tenuously, consider the list of bands whose names came from book titles with no obvious association with music; think Belle & Sebastian, Soft Machine, Steppenwolf, and The Doors (to name just some). The more we

multiply examples, the more we find that the accrual of newly-sedimented layers of meaning over time is not the exception but rather the rule of "bandness". So, our first observation is that, whatever else a band may be, it is an inherently dynamic category, fundamentally a temporal process, subject to continual changes—even major discontinuities—in any of its constituent parts and ontological dimensions.[xxi]

Perhaps, we might suppose (in desperation), the *only* mandatory constant is the *name*. But once again, we don't have to look very hard for examples that throw even this into doubt. Australian-based New Zealand rock band Shihad, for example, originally named after a term used in David Lynch's 1984 film, *Dune* (based on a Frank Herbert novel), renamed their band as Pacifier following the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks. In an amusing press release on the same day, Australian band Frenzal Rhomb mockingly announced that they would thereafter claim the name Shihad. Later regretting their decision, Pacifier changed their name back to Shihad in 2004. Name changes are certainly not uncommon events in the history of bands. Famously, The Silver Beetles became The Silver Beatles, and then finally The Beatles in mid-1960, but perhaps few would insist that these names don't all (more or less) refer to the band we would accept as the "real" Beatles, albeit in their earliest days. Other complications can also muddy the waters without totally undermining the resilience of a bandname in common use. For example, Ringo Starr, arguably pivotal to any mainstream understanding of what "The Beatles" connotes as a "band," only joined the group in mid-1962. And "The Beatles" performed in Australia with a replacement drummer (Jimmy Nicol), because Ringo was unavailable due to illness. Evidently, individual members can come and go, while a band as a particular socio-cultural entity carries on.

Are we then to conclude that there are no absolutely *essential* characteristics of "bandness" whatsoever? Perhaps we have been too hasty in dismissing any requirement for some minimal association of "bandness" with music? To be sure, the examples already cited demonstrate that a "band" need not ever produce any music, real or imaginary. However, this is not quite the same as saying that "bandness" does not imply the *possibility*, or perhaps even the expectation, that any entity which qualifies as a "band," fictional or otherwise, has the *potential* to produce music, even if that music has never been heard, may never be heard, and indeed may never be made. In principle, all the examples of "bands" that we have presented above could—or even should—be able to make music, even if we can't be sure what that music might sound like, or even if it has not yet been made. Indeed, we are unable to think of any examples of "bands," real or fictional, which are fundamentally and permanently removed from the *possibility* of making music.[xxii] In other words, it seems to us that—at least at this point in history—the possibility of "bandness" in a given context also equates to the *possibility* of music-making.

Based on this brief discussion, and repurposing Strayer's analysis presented above, we might tentatively conclude that the *minimal* requirements of "bandness" are:

- at least one public perceptual object (not necessarily musical);
- at least one perceiving subject;
- the subject's awareness of a socio-cultural context that suggests or allows the possibility of interpreting the public perceptual object in terms of "bandness," which at least includes the possibility that the "band" could make music.

Figure 2 illustrates the interplay of these elements.

***Cultural context* = [allows for the *possibility of* "bandness"]**

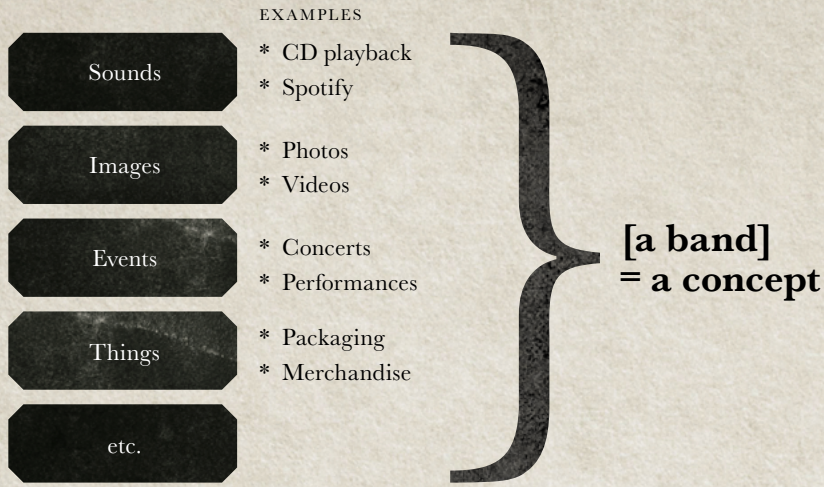


Figure 2. Typical Public Perceptual Objects of "Bandness"

Is There an Upper Limit to "Bandness"?

At this point, we could ask what things look like at the opposite extreme. Is there perhaps an *upper* limit to how much extra-musical "content" can be funnelled into the concept of a given band before the category of "bandness" collapses under the weight of its non-musical overburden? Without labouring the argument, a couple of examples suggest that, if there is indeed any upper limit, it is probably constrained by practical considerations and human limitations rather than any *a priori* theoretical determinations. Certainly, the band category of The Beatles, to return to this example, at the zenith of its popularity, seemed effortlessly able to accommodate an extraordinarily rich array of additional non-musical public perceptual objects—ranging from dolls, to plastic wigs, to fanzines and well-publicised events with Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, Lennon and Yoko Ono, and much more

besides—without depleting their "bandness" and, more to our point, potentially amplifying what "bandness" could mean at a particular point in history. This obvious example suggests that, if there is an upper limit, it is a long way distant. The same could be said of many other "super bands" at the height of their popularity or in their subsequent revivals, such as Kiss or Abba. As another example, consider the French electronic band M83, named after the galaxy Messier 83 (or M83), and thereby effortlessly absorbing a far distant extra-terrestial dimension into its conceptual orbit. Indeed, no connection to any previously unrelated categories seems to be unassailably out of bounds, as the example of *Depressizona exorum*, a snail named after Dutch post-punk band The Ex, demonstrates.[xxiii]

Here, the example of our own explorations with The Ghosts of Nothing is also relevant.

Our band (like any band), operates somewhere between the vehicular function of material artefacts/experiences and immaterial projections of thought. Consequently, we conspicuously exploit the fact that *aesthetic* experience exists both *within* and *beyond* direct sense perception. As discussed, perhaps the most obvious example of this play of sensory and extra-sensory elements is found in our conception of "touring". Our partly imagined and partly realised *In Memory of Johnny B. Goode – World Tour of Abandoned Music Venues 2014/2015* began with nothing but a listing of 18 "dates" at historically famous abandoned or discontinued live music venues at various international locations advertised in the Italian art magazine *Mousse* #45 (October-November 2014). Of these 18 listed dates, only four "feasible" dates were finally realised as performances. Yet even on these four dates, we did not perform as "the band," in the sense that both members of the band were physically

present. Although one of us was in attendance for each physical performance (in a production capacity, and to handle audio playback duties for the performance), no musical instruments or live musicians were present. Instead, we chose to collaborate with "non-musical" performers to present mime-based translations of our original album on each of the "feasible" dates. Each of these translations was conceived as an "expanded cover version" (of an album already comprising expanded cover versions) and then presented live as a fugitive event with only one mime performer accompanied by a pre-recorded soundtrack played through Bluetooth speakers. Also, instead of playing our original songs, we presented radically minimal almost evaporated atmospheric remixes of the already radically remixed "radio play" version of the original album. In this way, an initially imaginary "world tour" was partly shapeshifted into the continuum of reality via a series of mimed street performances which were then captured on video and projected into the digital realm via YouTube and our dedicated website. Subsequently, this process was adapted to produce our *In Memory of Johnny B. Goode – World Tour of Remote Wildernesses 2015/2016* and *In Memory of Johnny B. Goode – World Tour of Abandoned Gaol-Houses 2017*, advertised in *Mousse* (#51 and #55).

Significantly, our "world tour" includes dates that are "nothing" other than their conceptual nomination—by virtue of a line in a printed advertisement—in the minds of our audience. Yet perhaps even more significantly, our "tour" also includes dates on which specific events did actually occur. Clearly, both the "gigs" at which "something" happened and the ones "built in the mind" add something to our "story" and the expanding conceptual architecture of our "artwork". In this sense, neither the actual or fictional performances are finally any more or less legitimately part of the larger work.

It is in part our intention that our fiction might invite speculation upon the nature of other fictions. Before venturing into broader realms of human cultural activity, it can be tempting to ponder which historically significant performances or exhibitions actually took place at the time and place upon which their respective mythologies are built. Yet such contestations do not necessarily diminish their historical impact. Certainly, most of us did not directly experience the infamous performances of many of the seminal rock bands that underpin our understanding of rock 'n' roll mythology. We might have seen some film footage. A single image. A second-hand anecdotal account. These mythologies nonetheless proliferate as memes. We might know something of Iggy Pop cutting himself on stage in The Stooges, Ozzy Osbourne "doing a line" of ants on tour, or Steve Tyler temporarily "dying on stage". We might also consciously or subconsciously consider the impact of such memes whenever we directly experience performances by these or other derivative artists.

It is clear that at least a significant part of our experience of a band is built in the minds of its audience (notwithstanding the aforementioned necessity of a *public perceptual object*). In conceptually marking our world tour of abandoned music venues, for example, we have superimposed new objects over the historical record of each of the listed venues. For our audience, despite the fact that almost all of this tour remains beyond the realm of direct experience, it still provides an aesthetic experience of sorts via the exercise of orienting in thought. Here, it is worth noting that several significant conceptual artists have employed projections of thought as their primary medium. Two examples that push at the outer limits of such an approach are Terry Atkinson and Michael Baldwin's non-specific "column" of air over Oxfordshire in 1967, and the moment of 1:36pm, June 15, 1969 in which Robert Barry nominated: "All The Things I Know But Of Which I Am Not At

The Moment Thinking." In each of these cases, however, a minimal vehicular support was required (i.e. a declaration in words) in order to transmit the work to an audience. As we have shown, any attempt to create art—or a band—which is *entirely* immaterial and conceptual in nature is doomed to fail. Likewise, there can be no such thing as a work of art—or a band—that is completely material, i.e. completely devoid of conceptual content. This, put simply, is an irrefutable consequence of the mutually insufficient dimensions of *concept* and *aesthetic* in art more generally.[xxiv]

It seems apparent that the conceptual complex of any given band is potentially able to accommodate an entire universe of existent objects, real or imagined, without negating its continuing state of "bandness". So, we tentatively conclude that there is no finite maximal *upper* limit awaiting nomination.

Band as Concept, Concept as Process

It is at this point that we begin to suspect that we may have become somewhat ensnared in the impasses of *either/or* thinking, searching for hard and fast limits or permanent definitional dimensions where, in all probability, none exist. While we have sketched out some apparently minimal requirements of "bandness" above, the suspicion lingers that these are, at best, tenuous and transient, subject to revision as the socially-accepted parameters of "bandness" as a conceptual category continue to evolve in time. Even the *potential* for music-making, which we have salvaged as a vestigial minimum criterion of "bandness" as generally understood today, may not be immune to revision at some point in the future, e.g. as the definition of "music" itself escapes into unexpected territories. Perhaps, at this juncture, we could usefully repurpose musicologist Jean-Jacques Nattiez's declaration that "[t]he border between music and noise is always

culturally defined"[xxv] to suggest that the border between music and non/music, and by extension, band and non/band, is always culturally defined. It seems that all that we can safely conclude is that "bandness" is a concept, and concepts are processes, inherently "fuzzy" and subject to change. To be sure, the concept of "bandness" is evidently a generously accommodating one, even omnivorously so, while at the same time highly tolerant of the circumstantial absence—or deliberate avoidance—of virtually all of its available ontological dimensions. This confluence of omnivorous accommodation and tolerance of extreme minimality is what makes the terrain of "bandness" such an appealing field for artistic exploration.

There are countless other cultural objects that can be problematised along similar lines. It is for this reason that artworks can be valued as fictions that reveal something about the nature of fictions more broadly. To cite an obvious example, a multinational corporation can potentially turnover all of its employees, executive board, geographical locations, physical infrastructures, change its name and line of products, or in some cases even its entire line of business, whilst all the while regarded as meaningfully and continuously existing as a single entity with a connected and traceable history. Perhaps the only thing that will deem a corporation as effectively non-existent is a consensually recognised legal determination and subsequent liquidation of its assets. Similarly, perhaps the only thing that will deem a band to be effectively non-existent is a publicly recognised declaration that it has officially "broken up". This status, however, especially given the future prospect of a reformation tour or album, is also potentially indefinite. In some cases, former band-members have formed rival reformation versions of the same band, each competing for perceived authenticity. To cite just two examples, there have at various points in time been more than one Beach

Boys or Dead Kennedys in existence. It is also worth noting that long after some bands have broken-up, new fan-bases might introduce radically divergent interpretations of their conceptual universe. In many cases, sincere appreciation can evolve into ironic appreciation, and vice versa. Here, it is clear that the conceptual universe of "bandness" can continue to mutate long after the demise of the band itself.

Historically, there have been many different ways of attempting to account for the seeming impossibility of definitively pinning a creative work down in a single object, space, or symbolic configuration. In a work of art, as Heidegger put it, "something other is brought together with the thing that is made."[xxvi] As Strayer usefully reminds us, even seemingly "immaterial" works still require something that is irreducibly material, that is, a *public perceptual object* which points, in concert with various "immaterial" imaginings, to the intended creative work. Like any creative work, a band is dynamic shapeshifting network of sensory affects, information, myths, contradictions, traces, and artefacts floating *somewhere* in a network of contextualising intentions, conventions and interpretations extending across time and space. For The Ghosts of Nothing, the artistic potential for multiplying this curious quality across multiple layers and cultural spaces using specific material artefactual devices is evidenced in the novel presentation of a concept that hereafter merges the two formerly independent fictional worlds of Pierrot and Johnny B. Goode.

At its core, *In Memory of Johnny B. Goode* anachronistically fuses an invented rock-star figure—Johnny B. Goode—with the nineteenth century tragic clown known as Pierrot. This juxtaposition of two fictional characters and their worlds is then used to develop a dark and unfolding narrative, elaborated across time and space. The foundational components of the new "story" are suggested

through mutant reinterpretations of iconic songs, most altered well beyond recognition, which are then linked to a sequence of found images drawn from the iconography of the Pierrot/clown cultural constellation.

Amusingly, we are sometimes asked what the connection between Pierrot and Johnny B. Goode actually is. One answer to this question might be offered in terms of parallels between tragic Pierrot figures of times long past and doomed-to-die-young rock stars. However, a more compelling answer is as elegant as it is simple: "The connection is ours. The connection is our work." In other words, we use *our* "work"—a work of *worldmaking*[xxvi]—to establish a relationship between the mythical figure of Johnny B. Goode and the Pierrot tradition. The *connection* comes into being by virtue of a creative intention and action on our part. Once this action has occurred, and provided that it is accepted as culturally meaningful by a qualified audience, it cannot thereafter be unmade. The creative act is the minimal connection, a kind of metonymy if you like, contingent to a greater or lesser degree on chance and circumstance. Of course, the connection is strengthened if there are other resonances and parallels to be perceived—that is, something beyond a seemingly arbitrary juxtaposition or accident of collage. We strengthen this connection by projecting "bandness" as a conceptual overlay binding together an array of disparate elements and presences, both real and virtual. And, in projecting "bandness," we produce *public perceptual objects*. Like any creative work, *In Memory of Johnny B. Goode* consists of literal things and activities in the world that are in this case obliquely but necessarily framed as both a band and a work of art.

[i] The Pierrot tradition, now largely forgotten except by historians of art and culture, traces its origins to the *commedia dell'arte* of the late seventeenth century. It enjoyed huge popularity in the early twentieth century, as witnessed by the mass of references and allusions in the art, literature and music of the time. The standard studies include Martin Green and John Swain (1986), *The Triumph of Pierrot: The Commedia dell'Arte and the Modern Imagination*, New York: Macmillan; Robert F. Storey (1978), *Pierrot: A Critical History of a Mask*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press; Robert F. Storey (1985), *Pierrots on the Stage of Desire: Nineteenth Century French Literary Artists and the Comic Pantomime*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press; Lynne Lawner (1998), *Harlequin on the Moon: Commedia dell'Arte and the Visual Arts*, New York: Abrams.

[ii] *In Memory of Johnny B. Goode: A Radio Play by The Ghosts of Nothing*, broadcast at 10pm, December 6, 2014 on Saturday Night Séance, WGXC 90.7-FM (New York) and live stream at wgxc.org (see https://wavefarm.org/archive/z1ecr4)

[iii] *The Ghosts of Nothing World Tour of Abandoned Music Venues 2014/2015*, presented as a paid full-page advertisement in *Mousse* #45, October–November 2014.

[iv] For the original French texts of all fifty poems and faithful English translations see Gregory C. Richter (2001), *Albert Giraud's Pierrot Lunaire*, Kirksville, MO: Truman State University Press.

[v] Richard Shiff, "Cliché and a lack of feeling: Richard Shiff explains why critics have failed painting," *The Art Newspaper*, 5 June 2015. Archived at http://www.alexandergray.com/attachment/en/594a3c935a4091cd008b4568/News/594a42cb5a4091cd008b8342

[vi] *Paratext*—a term coined by Gerard Genette—is a concept in literary interpretation that refers to supplementary materials that surround the main text, and in particular, the way in which these elements alter reception. See Gerard Genette (1997), *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation*, trans. Jane E. Lewin, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

[vii] Artie Vierkant (2010), "The Image Object Post-Internet," http://jstchillin.org/artie/vierkant.html, p.[3].

[viii] See Rosalind Krauss (2000), *A Voyage on the North Sea: Art in the Age of the Post-Medium Condition*, London: Thames & Hudson.

[ix] Artie Vierkant (2013), "Artie Vierkant: Immaterial vs. Material"
Lecture at the 2013 Post Digital Cultures conference in Lausanne, Switzerland, https://www.artandeducation.net/classroom/video/66308/artie-vierkant-immaterial-vs-material

[x] Ibid.

[xi] Domenico Quaranta (2010), "The Real Thing / Interview with Oliver Laric," *Art Pulse Magazine*, http://artpulsemagazine.com/the-real-thing-interview-with-oliver-laric

[xii] See: Peter Osborne (2013), *Anywhere or Not at All: Philosophy of Contemporary Art*, London: Verso.

[xiii] Various excellent essays in the growing literature on the ontology of rock music do not consider the ontology of "bandness". See, for example, Andrew Kania (2006), "Making Tracks: The Ontology of Rock Music," *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 6: 401-414; Dan Burkett (2015), "One Song, Many Works: A Pluralist Ontology of Rock," *Contemporary Aesthetics*, 13. http://www.contempaesthetics.org/newvolume/pages/article.php?articleID=722

[xiv] John Andrew Fisher (2010), "Rock 'n' Recording," in Philip A. Alperson (ed), *Musical Worlds: New Directions in the Philosophy of Music*, University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 109-123. [quote from p. 109]

[xv] Theodore Gracyk (1996), *Rhythm and Noise: An Aesthetics of Rock*, Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

[xvi] Christopher Bartel (2011), "Music Without Metaphysics?", *British Journal of Aesthetics*, 51, no. 4: 383-98.

[xvii] R. G. Collingwood's key writings on the philosophy of art are *Outlines of a Philosophy of Art* (1925), *The Principles of Art* (1938), and the posthumous collection *Essays in the Philosophy of Art* (1964).

[xviii] See, for example, Robert J. Zatorre and Andrea R. Halpern (2005). "Mental concerts: musical imagery and auditory cortex," *Neuron*, 47, no. 1, 9-12; Sybille C. Herholz, Andrea R. Halpern, and Robert J. Zatorre (2012), "Neuronal correlates of perception, imagery, and memory for familiar tunes," *Journal of Cognitive Neuroscience*, 24, no. 6, 1382-97.

[xix] Jeffrey Strayer (2007), *Subjects and Objects: Art, Essentialism, and Abstraction*, Leiden: Brill.

[xx] In her book *Forgetting the Art World* (2012) (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press), Pamela Lee argues that the idea of an "art world" as historically conceived is in eclipse. While she may well be right, we use the term here not to ignore the changes that Lee identifies, but as a reminder that some form of contextualising sociocultural "information" is required in order for a perceiving subject to understand that something has the potential to be understood as "art".

[xxi] These examples all suggest parallels to a process-oriented ontology of concepts, which draws on a long tradition in Western philosophy, via Hegel back to the pre-Socratics. In essence, this philosophical tradition maintains that all concepts are processes, in a state of perpetual flux yet, paradoxically, somehow stable enough to act as the reliable currency of human discourse. For an excellent discussion of concept as process, see Andy Blunden's *Concepts: A Critical Approach*, Leiden: Brill, 2012. This topic is discussed at length by one of the authors of this text in Ilmar Taimre (2018), "An Interpretive Model for Conceptual Music," PhD thesis, University of Newcastle.

[xxii] Of course, music is itself a socio-cultural category, subject to continual re-definition and evolution over time.

[xxiii] D. L. Geiger (2003), "Phylogenetic assessment of characters proposed for the generic classification of Recent Scissurellidae (Gastropoda: Vetigastropoda) with a description of one new genus and six new species from Easter Island and Australia," *Molluscan Research*, 23, 21–83. See the website www.curioustaxonomy.net for many other examples of biological names linked to bands.

[xxiv] See Osborne, *Anywhere or Not at All.*

[xxv] Jean-Jaques Nattiez (1990), *Music and discourse: toward a semiology of music*, trans. Carolyn Abbate, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 48, 55.

[xxvi] Martin Heidegger (2008), "The Origin of the Work of Art," in *Basic Writings*, ed. David Farrell Krell, London: HarperPerennial, 145-46.

[xxvii] Discussed further in Taimre, "An Interpretive Model," 349-91, 451-53.

A RADIO PLAY

A Radio Play

by

The Ghosts of Nothing

Incorporating thirteen rondels in French

from

PIERROT LUNAIRE

by

Albert Giraud

(and freely altered translations by Ilmar Taimre)

VOICE SCRIPT

FINAL (REVISED TITLE VERSION 08, corrected)

14 October 2014

Titles and Credits (to be read, with clean breaks after each line)

In Memory of Johnny B. Goode

A Radio Play by The Ghosts of Nothing

With rondels from "Pierrot Lunaire" by Albert Giraud

Read by Linda Taimre

Act 1 – Rise & Fall

Act 2 – Remembering & Forgetting

Act 3 – Life & Death




ACT I
RISE & FALL

1

BOHEMIAN CRYSTAL

Part A

This is Johnny. He doesn't read or write too well. He carries his guitar wherever he goes. He has Someone Special in his life. Or at least he believes that he does. But that's enough for now.

Part B (read title)

BOHEMIAN CRYSTAL

A moonbeam locked in
beautiful Bohemian crystal.
Such is the fairy poem I have
rhymed in these verses. I am
Johnny, dressed as a clown,
able to offer anything I like
A rare and precious offering to
the one I love ... a moonbeam
locked in beautiful Bohemian
crystal. My dearest one, this
is the symbol which truly
captures who I am: Johnny the
Clown, in a pale disguise. I
feel, under my made up mask
... A moonbeam locked in.







Part C (read title)

CRISTAL DE BOHÊME

Un rayon de lune enfermé
Dans un beau flacon de Bohême,
Tel est le féerique poème,
Que dans ces rondels j'ai rimé.

Je suis en Pierrot costumé,
Pour offrir à celle que j'aime
Un rayon de lune enfermé
Dans un beau flacon de Bohême.

Par ce symbole est exprimé
O ma très chère, tout moi-même:
Comme Pierrot, dans son chef blême,
Je sens, sous mon masque grimé,
Un rayon de lune enfermé.







2

SUNSET

Part A

The first deathly blow has struck. Without any warning, she has chosen another. There is a wedding … a White Wedding. Lies beget lies. It is—and always will be—the darkest day in Johnny's life … This is how betrayal feels.

Part B (read title)

SUNSET

The Sun opened its veins on a bed of russet-red clouds: Out of a mouth of holes, its blood ejaculates in red fountains. Convulsive branches of oak trees whip the insane horizons: The Sun opened its veins on a bed of russet-red clouds. Like a debauched Roman, stuffed with disgust, vomiting into sewers of filth, bleeding from diseased arteries, the Sun opened its veins!







Part C (read title)

COUCHER DE SOLEIL

Le Soleil s'est ouvert les veines
Sur un lit de nuages roux:
Son sang, par la bouche des trous,
S'éjacule en rouges fontaines.

Les rameaux convulsifs des chênes
Flagellent les horizons fous:
Le Soleil s'est ouvert les veines
Sur un lit de nuages roux.

Comme, après les hontes romaines
Un débauché plein de dégoûts
Laissant jusqu'aux sales égouts
Saigner ses artères malsaines,
Le Soleil s'est ouvert les veines!







3

FOR COLUMBINE

Part A

Johnny proclaims his love one last time. He begs on bended knee and is refused once again.

He soon slides into a desperate place. What is the point of anything? What is the point of staying alive …? A mystical voice proclaims a cryptic message ... is this the answer or another impossible question? Johnny is not ready to think about this right now ...

Part B (read title)

FOR COLUMBINE

The pale flowers of moonlight, like pink shades of clarity, bloom in the summer nights: If I could just gather one of them! To relieve my misfortune, along rivers of oblivion, I seek the pale flowers of moonlight, like pink shades of clarity. And I will alleviate my bitterness, if I can reach to the swirling sky for an elusive pleasure, the play of dappled light on your soft brown hair, the pale flowers of moonlight!







Part C (read title)

A COLOMBINE

Les fleurs pâles du clair de lune,
Comme des roses de clarté,
Fleurissent dans les nuits d'été:
Si je pouvais en cueillir une!

Pour soulager mon infortune,
Je cherche, le long du Léthé,
Les fleurs pâles du clair de lune,
Comme des roses de clarté.

Et j'apaiserai ma rancune,
Si j'obtiens du ciel irrité
La chimérique volupté
D'effeuiller sur ta toison brune
Les fleurs pâles du clair de lune!







4 HYMN TO HYSTERIA

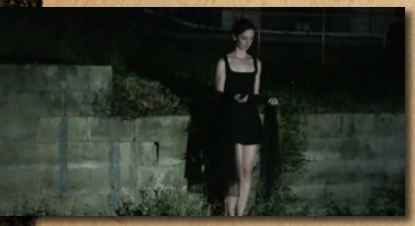
Part A

Perhaps the cure for lost love is not so hard to find ... Johnny goes looking for fun! He finds himself swept along with a strange and lawless crowd, a blank, lost generation, thrill-seeking at any cost … Now in a stolen car, Johnny is out of control. Red-eyed and numb with heartache, Johnny finds himself at the wheel … it is frightening, yet at the same time gloriously… exhilarating.

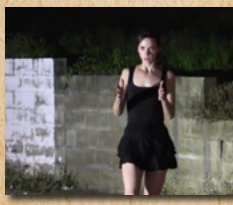
Part B (read title)

HYMN TO HYSTERIA

O Madonna of Hysterias! Climb the altar of my worms, plunge the sword of fury into your shrivelled breasts. Your aching wounds are like red, open eyes: O Madonna of Hysterias! Climb the altar of my worms. With your long bony hands, offer up to an incredulous universe ... Your Son, with gangrenous limbs, with falling and rotted flesh, O Madonna of Hysterias!







Part C (read title)

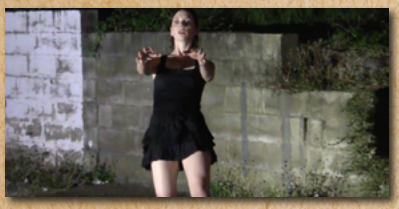
ÉVOCATION

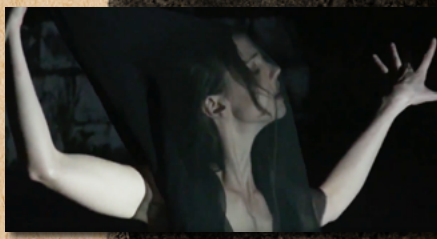
O Madone des Hystéries!
Monte sur l'autel de mes vers,
La fureur du glaive à travers
Tes maigres mamelles taries.

Tes blessures endolories
Semblent de rouges yeux ouverts:
O Madone des Hystéries!
Monte sur l'autel de mes vers.

De tes longues mains appauvries
Tends à l'incrédule univers
Ton Fils aux membres déjà verts,
Aux chairs tombantes et pourries,
O Madone des Hystéries!










ACT II
REMEMBERING
& FORGETTING

5

INTOXICATED BY THE MOON

Part A

The party crowd never sleeps. Johnny tries to lose himself in an excess of everything: sex, drugs and rock and roll … he parties hard, trying to forget.

Part B (read title)

INTOXICATED BY
THE MOON

A wine to be drunk with the eyes flows in green floods across the face of the moon, and submerges like a swell on silent horizons. Soft, pernicious counsels push and shove in the crowded potion: a wine to be drunk with the eyes flows in green floods across the face of the moon. The religious poet gets drunk on absinthe. He breathes heavily—until his head rolls, in an insane gesture, skywards—a wine to be drunk with the eyes!







Part C (read title)

IVRESSE DE LUNE

Le vin que l'on boit par les yeux
A flots verts de la lune coule,
Et submerge comme une houle
Les horizons silencieux.

De doux conseils pernicieux
Dans le philtre nagent en foule:
Le vin que l'on boit par les yeux
A flots verts de la lune coule.

Le poète religieux
De l'étrange absinthe se soûle,
Aspirant—jusqu'à ce qu'il roule,
Le geste fou, la tête aux cieux—
Le vin que l'on boit par les yeux!







6

THE MIRROR

Part A

Try as he might, Johnny cannot forget. The memories are just too strong …

Part B (read title)

THE MIRROR

The moon's smiling crescent cuts an incision into the blue sky of evening. And, by the boudoir's balcony, an errant light enters. Opposite, in the shimmering calm of a clear and deep mirror, the moon's smiling crescent cuts an incision into the blue sky of evening. Johnny the Conqueror studies his reflection. And suddenly, in the blackness, he laughs silently to see himself crowned by his white luminescent parent, the moon's smiling crescent.







Part C (read title)

LE MIROIR

D'un croissant de lune hilarante
S'échancre le ciel bleu du soir,
Et par le balcon du boudoir
Pénètre la lumière errante.

En face, dans la paix vibrante
Du limpide et profond miroir,
D'un croissant de lune hilarante
S'échancre le ciel bleu du soir.

Pierrot de façon conquérante
Se mire—et soudain dans le noir
Rit en silence de se voir
Coiffé par sa blanche parente
D'un croissant de lune hilarante!







7
TO MY CRAZY-ASS COUSIN

Part A

With temptations all around, Johnny abandons all restraint. Spurred on by the madness of his companion, he runs ever faster … wilder ...

Part B (read title)

TO MY CRAZY-ASS COUSIN

We are children of the Moon, my crazy-ass cousin and me, because we feel a pale agitation whenever she shows herself at night. At the foot of the gallows he used to gesture wildly at the king: We are children of the Moon, my crazy-ass cousin and me. I have the light of glowworms to guide my fortunes. I live by drawing, like you, my language in endless blood-feud with the Law, my own words constantly pleading with me: We are children of the Moon.







Part C (read title)

A MON COUSIN DE BERGAME

Nous sommes parents par la Lune,
Le Pierrot Bergamasque et moi,
Car je ressens un pâle émoi,
Quand elle allaite la nuit brune.

Au pied de la rouge tribune,
Il chargeait les gestes du roi:
Nous sommes parents par la Lune,
Le Pierrot Bergamasque et moi.

J'ai les vers luisants pour fortune ;
Je vis en tirant, comme toi,
Ma langue saignante à la Loi,
Et la parole m'importune:
Nous sommes parents par la Lune!







8

JOHNNY ON ICE

Part A

The next morning, Johnny is wasted, more wasted than he has ever been in his life. A dull, thudding realisation pounds its way into the desperate corners of his brain … he still cannot forget.

Part B (read title)

JOHNNY ON ICE

A gleaming polar ice floe of cold sharp light halts an exhausted Johnny, who feels his ship sinking low. With a stolen glance, it masquerades as his impromptu rescuer: A gleaming polar ice floe of cold sharp light. And the sinister mime leads him to believe in a disguised Johnny, and an eternal white beacon in the crystal night: A gleaming polar ice floe of cold sharp light.







Part C (read title)

PIERROT POLAIRE

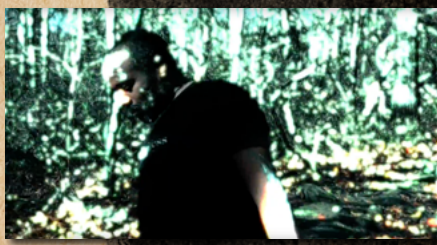
Un miroitant glaçon polaire,
De froide lumière aiguisé,
Arrête Pierrot épuisé
Qui sent couler bas sa galère.

Il toise d'un oeil qui s'éclaire
Son sauveteur improvisé:
Un miroitant glaçon polaire,
De froide lumière aiguisé.

Et le mime patibulaire
Croit voir un Pierrot déguisé,
Et d'un blanc geste éternisé
Interpelle dans la nuit claire
Un miroitant glaçon polaire.









ACT III

LIFE & DEATH

9 JOHNNY ROBBER

Part A

Johnny is in a downward spiral. He now moves only at night, always searching for somewhere wilder, some place or thing more exciting than the last. The night creatures grow faster, the drugs are harder. What is happening to Johnny is becoming less predictable. Things are getting really crazy …

Part B (read title)

JOHNNY ROBBER

Red royal rubies, injected with murder and glory, hide in the secret corners of this cabinet, full of the horrors of endless underground tunnels. Johnny, with a band of thieves, wants to ravish the day, having drunk of red royal rubies, injected with murder and glory. But the hairs on their necks bristle with fear, cloaked with mohair and velvet, just as eyes masked in black eye-shadow set fire to jewel cases full of red royal rubies!







Part C (read title)

PIERROT VOLEUR

Les rouges rubis souverains,
Injectés de meurtre et de gloire,
Sommeillent au creux d'une armoire
Dans l'horreur des longs souterrains.

Pierrot, avec des malandrins,
Veut ravir un jour, après boire,
Les rouges rubis souverains
Injectés de meurtre et de gloire.

Mais la peur hérisse leurs crins:
Parmi le velours et la moire,
Comme des yeux dans l'ombre noire,
S'enflamment du fond des écrins
Les rouges rubis souverains!







10 ABSINTHE

Part A

Dangerously close to the edge, Johnny searches for the Fast Night People and finds them. So begins another dark night of excess and drug-fuelled madness. But relentlessly taking control, over him and over everything around him, dominating every sense and every fragmentary thought, is a siren call—a siren scream—calling up vivid images of Someone Special … who will never leave him alone.

Part B (read title)

ABSINTHE

In an immense sea of absinthe Johnny discovers drunken countries, with capricious and insane skies, like the desires of a newly pregnant woman. Heady waves tinkle in greenish and soft rhythms. In an immense sea of absinthe, Johnny discovers drunken countries. But suddenly his boat is hugged by viscous and soft octopuses. In the middle of a sticky movement he disappears, with no complaint. In an immense sea of absinthe.







Part C (read title)

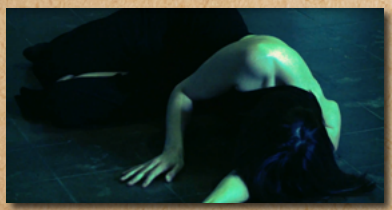
ABSINTHE

Dans une immense mer d'absinthe,
Je découvre des pays soûls,
Aux ciels capricieux et fous
Comme un désir de femme enceinte.

La capiteuse vague tinte
Des rythmes verdâtres et doux:
Dans une immense mer d'absinthe,
Je découvre des pays soûls.

Mais soudain ma barque est étreinte
Par des poulpes visqueux et mous:
Au milieu d'un gluant remous
Je disparais, sans une plainte,
Dans une immense mer d'absinthe.







11 BLACK BUTTERFLIES

Part A

Johnny drives through the night. Is he alone or is he with the Fast Night People? Is this even Johnny's car? He is no longer sure of anything. He just keeps driving. But something is still not right. He has lost Someone Special and there is nothing he can do about it. And Oh God … the flashing lights of police cars are now exploding in the rear view mirror.

Part B (read title)

BLACK BUTTERFLIES

Sinister black butterflies extinguish the Sun's glory. The far horizon turns starless and Bible-black, smeared in the ink of evening. Occult smoke drifts from the censer, a secret perfume concocted to disturb the memory: Sinister black butterflies extinguish the Sun's glory.

Monstrous insects with sticky suckers search angrily for blood to drink. And out of the sky, in a black storm of dust, swooping down on our desperation, are sinister black butterflies.







Part C (read title)

PAPILLONS NOIRS

De sinistres papillons noirs
Du soleil ont éteint la gloire,
Et l'horizon semble un grimoire
Barbouillé d'encre tous les soirs.

Il sort d'occultes encensoirs
Un parfum troublant la mémoire:
De sinistres papillons noirs
Du soleil ont éteint la gloire.

Des monstres aux gluants suçoirs
Recherchent du sang pour le boire,
Et du ciel, en poussière noire,
Descendent sur nos désespoirs
De sinistres papillons noirs.







12 SUICIDE

Part A

This is the bleak and inescapable end that awaits us all … was it all a rock and roll dream, a cruel nightmare in teenage wasteland? Have we all been here before?

Part B (read title)

SUICIDE

In a white moon dress, Johnny laughs his bloody laughter. His drunken gestures become troubling. He decants another glass of the Sunday wine. His sleeves drag in the dust. He hammers a nail into the white wall. In a white moon dress, Johnny laughs his bloody laughter. He wriggles like a worm, as the slipknot forms a collar, pushing back the shaking stool, gagging on his words, and swaying like a glorious dancer in a white moon dress.







Part C (read title)

SUICIDE

En sa robe de lune blanche
Pierrot rit son rire sanglant.
Son geste ivre devient troublant:
Il cuve le vin du dimanche.

Sur le sol traînaille sa manche ;
Il plante un clou dans le mur blanc:
En sa robe de lune blanche
Pierrot rit son rire sanglant.

Il frétille comme une tanche,
Se passe au col un noeud coulant,
Repousse l'escabeau branlant,
Tire la langue, et se déhanche,
En sa robe de lune blanche.







13 JOHNNY'S DEPARTURE

Part A

Just one last song before you go, please dear Johnny B. A grand pathetic gesture to all those that you've left behind ... a parade of lunatic clowns forever struck dumb, your frantic orphaned children with danger in their eyes.

Part B (read title)

JOHNNY'S DEPARTURE

A moonbeam is my steering oar, a white water lily my funeral launch. On a zephyr breeze I return to Memphis, adrift on a pale river of madness. The mourners sing a tearful song of sadness, like a vapour trail cutting across the sky. A moonbeam is my steering oar, a white water lily my funeral launch. The snow-capped king of mime has proudly powdered her face for the final show. And like a lover's punch swirling in a crystal cup, the vague green horizon sets itself on fire—A moonbeam is my steering oar.







Part C (read title)

DÉPART DE PIERROT

Un rayon de lune est la rame,
Un blanc nénuphar, la chaloupe ;
Il regagne, la brise en poupe,
Sur un fleuve pâle, Bergame.

Le flot chante une humide gamme
Sous la nacelle qui le coupe.
Un rayon de lune est la rame,
Un blanc nénuphar, la chaloupe.

Le neigeux roi du mimodrame
Redresse fièrement sa houppe ;
Comme du punch dans une coupe,
Le vague horizon vert s'enflamme.
—Un rayon de lune est la rame.








END

SPECTRAL ONTOLOGIES AND POST-MEDIAL TRANSPOSITIONS: THE GHOSTS OF NOTHING'S IN MEMORY OF JOHNNY B. GOODE

Sophie Knezic

SPECTRAL ONTOLOGIES AND POST-MEDIAL TRANSPOSITIONS: THE GHOSTS OF NOTHING'S IN MEMORY OF JOHNNY B. GOODE

Sophie Knezic

In Memory of Johnny B. Goode by the duo Sean Lowry and Ilmar Taimre, aka The Ghosts of Nothing, is an expansive and mutating collaborative project constituted by intersecting artistic components that work as enigmatic historical, spatial and temporal articulations. The project can be productively understood as a series of post-medial transpositions which emerge as reconfigurations of a range of cultural artefacts that issue through an ontology we might name the spectral. The project is a prodigious interweaving of archaic theatrical figures and démodé performative modes, retro musical genres and antiquated literary styles. It comes to life as a complex summoning; a re-activation of abandoned sites and superannuated sonic, performative and visual forms.

Firstly, *In Memory of Johnny B. Goode* is a rock opera with a Synthwave feel, trance acoustic textures and an '80s retro industrial sound that roughly fits the classification of Alternative music. The rock opera is recorded and pressed as an album of thirteen covers whose similarity lies in their consistent dissimilarity from the original tracks that they interpret. The Ghosts of Nothing's cover of 'White Wedding', for example, scarcely resembles Billy Idol's rhythmic 1982 hit; their adaption of 'Rock Around the Clock' even less akin to the 1952 rock 'n roll classic written by Max C. Freedman and Jimmy de Knight and immortalised by Bill Haley and His Comets in 1955.

Most conspicuously removed from its musical predecessor, however, is 'Johnny B. Goode'—Chuck Berry's landmark 1958 rock 'n roll chart-buster; a popular track that ranks seventh in *Rolling Stone*'s pantheon of the Greatest 500 Songs of All Time. Berry's catchy tune with its partly fictional, partly autobiographical lyrics of an illiterate boy from Louisiana with guitar-strumming dexterity and an aspiration to fame sparked multiple cover versions from the Beatles and Jimi Hendrix, among others. The Ghosts of Nothing's version, by contrast, is a melancholic fusion situated somewhere between the recalcitrant strains of Nine Inch Nails and the synth beats of Depeche Mode.

Secondly, *In Memory of Johnny B. Goode* is also a radio play, crafted in thirteen installments and featuring spoken word by Linda Taimre, an ambient soundtrack and fragments of a symbolist narrative starring 'Johnny'—Berry's semi-fictional character now grafted onto an adaptation of thirteen rondels by the 19th century poet Albert Giraud in his suite of fifty poems titled *Pierrot Lunaire: Rondels Bergamasques (Moonstruck Pierrot: Bergamasque Rondels)*, (1884), written in French but loosely translated into English by Ilmar Taimre.

Thirdly, *In Memory of Johnny B. Goode* is a three-tiered World Tour: of abandoned music venues (2014–2015); remote wildernesses (2015–2016); and abandoned gaol houses (2016–2017). All of these world tour destinations featured live performance, with a single performer—often a mime artist—enacting a particular sequence in Johnny's attenuated narrative journey from despair to suicide. Each was filmed in situ then reworked into short segments with postproduction rendering transposing them into the genre of the music clip. Added to these re-medialisations are various artefacts including an installation, collection of Pierrot-themed imagery and ephemera.

These multiple transpositions, or riffs, on *Johnny B. Goode* may seem arbitrary or implausibly connected, but are in fact linked by a specific rationale. In their co-authored essay in this volume "Are We a Band?" Sean Lowry and Ilmar Taimre frame an enquiry into what constitutes a band (or "bandness" as they refer to it), in order to unpack the artistic motivation of The Ghosts of Nothing and its multi-faceted project *In Memory of Johnny B. Goode*. "Can a discursive artistic exploration of the idea of a band reveal something about the nature of relationships between fact, fiction, materiality and immateriality in aesthetic formations more generally?"[i], they ask. More specifically, they interrogate the minimum requirements of bandness, through enumerating a list of potential criteria (producing albums, performing live, touring, and even having a name), before progressively eliminating each of these potentially defining criteria and conceding that the notion of bandness is indeed a slippery one.

Lowry and Taimre conclude that although such a procedure of invalidation might leave scant elements to certify the existence of a band, even attenuated ones can serve this purpose. This is a tenet they draw from the artist and writer Jeffrey Strayer, who claims that even the most immaterial artistic practices still require an irreducibly material element which Strayer terms "public perceptual objects". All artworks, Strayer argues, depend on a matrix of three elements: at least one public perceptual object; at least one perceiving object; and the subject's appreciation of the art world context in which the work is framed.

Although Lowry and Taimre concur with Strayer's position, in many ways The Ghosts of Nothing's *In Memory of Johnny B. Goode* is a far from immaterial practice, incorporating a gamut of highly sensorial and aesthetic elements, even if fictional or speculative. The artistic collaboration and the project in fact squarely relate to

Conceptualism, defined by its foremost theorist Peter Osborne as an interrogation of art's taxonomies, or more simply, an art of questions.

This aspect of Conceptualism's analytical reflexivity was most famously embodied in Joseph Kosuth's axiom, "Being an artist now means to question the nature of art."[ii] The less-well known Conceptualist, Jaroslaw Kozlowski, however, phrased it in a manner perhaps more pertinent to The Ghosts of Nothing when he wrote:

> I would not make a too clear-cut distinction between object and idea. It seems to me there is instead a constant change of places: a transformation of one into the other… Each such 'transformation', regardless of its direction, introduces momentary chaos, confusion... There opens a kind of 'crack' through which we may gain insight into what is usually hidden, inaccessible, camouflaged…[iii]

Conceptualism's interrogative mode and its emphasis on elemental transpositions is also apparent in the work of Marcel Broodthaers, whose Conceptualist practice systematically employed transformative associations across a plethora of objects and ideas, encapsulated in the emblem of the eagle, to enact precisely what Kozlowski referred to. In his *Musée d'Art Moderne, Département des Aigles (Museum of Modern Art, Department of Eagles),* (1970–1971) Broodthaers created a fictitious entity that deployed museological conventions of display to conjure a new modality of exhibitionary practice that functioned simultaneously as institutional critique, a challenge to the aesthetic autonomy of objects and a poetic absurdity—in a displaced incarnation of Broodthaers' abandoned career as a poet.

In the critic Rosalind Krauss's assessment, Broodthaers' *Musée d'Art Moderne* also inaugurated the post-medium condition—a

mode of art that departed from an investigation of a unitary medium; or as she put it, a practice that was no longer medium-specific. Through his inclusion of more than 300 eagle-themed found articles, Broodthaers subjected this wild miscellany of objects to a principle of equivalence that Krauss termed the 'eagle principle'.[iv] It was a supreme act of leveling. The eagle, she wrote, "will be folded into the hybrid or intermedia condition of the rebus, in which not only language and image but high and low and any other oppositional pairing one can think of will freely mix."[v] For Krauss, this represented an implosion of the singularity of an aesthetic medium, a post-medial commensurability that was something to lament.

For later theorists such as Nicolas Bourriaud, conversely, the post-medium condition was enabling. "The prefix 'post'," he asserted, "does not signal any negation or surpassing; it refers to a zone of activity."[vi] Such cross-platform transformations and reworkings of image and idea—formed out of pre-existing objects that circulated freely in the cultural sphere and subject to various processes of postproduction—were in Bourriaud's opinion indicative of advanced art of the early 21st century. Bourriaud used the trope of the DJ and programmer as emblems of the zeitgeist; personas who select cultural objects to generate a panoply of new meanings by embedding them into new contexts. In later writings, Bourriaud updated these metaphorical figures to include the immigrant, the exile and the wanderer, and referred to the contemporary field of cultural nomadism forged through these productive intersections as the "altermodern".

Introducing the idea of excavation into the cultural diagnosis, the artist and theorist Svetlana Boym more recently coined the term the "Off-Modern" to propose another modality of contemporaneity. The Off-Modern as Boym understands it,

compulsively explores new configurations of under-explored contexts, difficult histories and speculative scenarios. "It requires unconventional archaeology that traces skeletons in closets, nostalgic bones and phantom limbs. Alternatively, we can call it the archaeology of *pentimenti*."[viii] *Pentimenti* is an Italian term describing the visible traces of a painting that exist as an underlayer, altered and semi-concealed in the finished work; retrieved by Boym as a fertile concept to denote the heterogeneous ways in which diverse histories and objects and 'phantom limbs' can be conjoined to produce alternative articulations.

These theoretical framings reveal The Ghosts of Nothing's project to have its antecedents in Conceptualism and the post-medium condition while being simultaneously resonant of the contemporary zeitgeist. Formed of a bricolage of twentieth century popular, alternative and prog rock music, nineteenth century Symbolist poetry, twenty-first century postproduction technologies and the pre-modern performance of mime, *In Memory of Johnny B. Goode* represents an elaborate latter-day exemplar of Conceptual art in the post-medium condition: a set of interlacings and transmediations that both flaunt and conceal their historical references. The project operates as a crack through which demoded practices come into view and re-emerge as reformulated enunciations.

***

A recurring motif across The Ghosts of Nothing's interlinked performances, videos, music tracks, imagery and ephemera is the theatrical figure of Pierrot. The figure originated in seventeenth century France as an offshoot of an earlier character named Pulcinella appearing in the Renaissance theatrical tradition of *commedia dell'arte* that emerged in sixteenth century Italy. Over three centuries Pierrot evolved

and mutated from embodying the role of a fool, a clown, a swain or a naïf, and reached his most complex elaboration in the nineteenth century incarnated by the lauded French mime artist Jean-Gaspard (Baptiste) Deburau, who adapted Pierrot's clownishness into a figure of literary decadence; transposed from an ingénue to a neurasthenic outcast.[ix]

Pierrot was instantly recognisable from his stage-whitened face and flouncy collar atop a blousy shirt in tandem with his expressive gestural language of mime. In the historian Robert F. Storey's estimation, by the early nineteenth century, pantomime characters such as Pierrot were starting "to vibrate slightly beneath their stage masks, to detach themselves subtly from their actor-interpreters and assume imaginative dimensions of which those interpreters themselves were utterly ignorant."[x] By the 1880s, diverse appearances of Pierrot across the stages of Paris were legion: the character was performed by both men and women, including by the actress Sarah Bernhardt, becoming an ensign of androgyny. Pierrot was now not only a symbol of Romanticist alienation but a signifier of the process of transmutation itself.

For the Belle Époque illustrator Jules Chéret, Pierrot was the ultimate figure of universality, declaring "Pierrot is for me a ONE… It is YOU, it is WE, it is THEY."[xi] Conversely, for French Romanticist poets such as Théodore de Banville and Charles Baudelaire, Pierrot symbolised the very personage of the artist him or herself. It was this latter interpretation that endured; by the end of the nineteenth century Pierrot connoted express artistic malaise as well as a certain inscrutability. Even Chéret came to acknowledge the figure's mysteriousness "which disquiets the spectator with its expressionless white face… The make-up that covers him will be the hermetic curtain behind which one will try to see the man."[xii]

The late nineteenth century Belgian poet, Albert Giraud, re-inflected the identity of Pierrot by dedicating a suite of fifty lyrical verses known as rondels to the character: *Pierrot Lunaire: Rondels Bergamasques (Moonstruck Pierrot: Bergamasque Rondels)*, (1884). Giraud's lyric cycle intensified Pierrot's status as a social pariah; now a *poète maudit* existing on the periphery of society, immersed in a demi-monde world of debauchery and *crimes passionnels*, inclined towards self-destruction and untimely death. Giraud's poems are laced with Gothic imagery; of inky skies and black butterflies, books of spells and gleaming rubies. The scenes are highly aesthetic, steeped in iridescent colours and crystalline textures, shot through with the leitmotif of the moon—pale, luminous and trembling. In this decadent narrative Pierrot is cast as an intoxicated, agitated anti-hero.

In his various transpositions over this period, Pierrot was an exemplary protean form. As a figure of shapeshifting, almost-authorless artistic mutations, Pierrot becomes an emblem well suited to The Ghosts of Nothing's own textually, visually and acoustically transmuting project. The album cover of *In Memory of Johnny B. Goode* features the figure of Pierrot with his trademark whitened face and voluminous collar, eyes rolling backwards as he clutches his breast, a golden pin pierced into his heart, while his other hand rests on a letter placed on a green velvet covered desk. The image is an adaptation by Taimre of a found postcard from 1903 and is at once redolent of Byronic Romanticism whilst also being a caricature of such exaggerated heart-torn passion. Other found postcards (from the 1920s) incorporated into The Ghost of Nothing's archive of imagery depict a laughing Pierrot with droopy lids and a flaccid jowl nestling in a crescent of moon—betraying something of the figure's happy/sad dualism—while Art Deco illustrations from the 1930s show a svelte Pierrot in flowing robes and a floaty jade-coloured collar, heightening the figure's louche androgyny.

Giraud's Symbolist-inflected lyricism is (mis) translated by Taimre in the radio play version of *In Memory of Johnny B. Goode* (2014), transposed into verse that retains the nineteenth century poet's signature motifs and fidelity to the original verse, while remodelling Pierrot into the character of Johnny and interpolating an entirely new narrative of Johnny's search for nocturnal hedonist peers named the Fast Night People. Taimre's rhapsodic conclusion sees Johnny murmuring, as he departs from the world, "A moonbeam is my steering oar, a white waterlily my funeral launch. On a zephyr breeze I return to Memphis, adrift on a pale river of madness."[xiii]

The Ghosts of Nothing's transfiguring of Giraud's *Pierrot Lunaire* also operates sonically; the radio play features lilting fragments of song embedded in an atmospheric soundtrack in an industrial prog rock mode, obliquely reminiscent of Pink Floyd's epic rock opera/concept album (written by Roger Waters), *The Wall* (1979). Such an adaptation of Giraud's poetry into musical form has a precedent in the nineteenth century German composer Ferdinand Pfohl's arrangement of the rondels for voice and piano, *Moon-rondels, Fantastic Scenes from "Pierrot Lunaire"* (1891), but more famously, Arnold Schoenberg's striking, atonal composition *Pierrot Lunaire*, Opus 21, more commonly known as *Moonstruck Pierrot* (1912), was also based on Giraud's cycle of poems.

The twelve sequenced performances of *In Memory of Johnny B. Goode*, reconfigured as short 6–8 minute videos, evoke this history of interlinked permutations. The character of Johnny is alternately played by an Afro-American male, a Caucasian male, a blonde woman and a brunette; implying the character's potential universalism yet precluding the shoring up of any fixed identity. The performers are only linked by the fact that they each use a bodily language of mime; expressive gestures that suggest not only

the metamorphosing figure of Pierrot, but scenes from German Expressionist film or a choreographed sequence of contemporary dance, adding further performative elements into the mix.

One might see these layered literary, visual and performative transpositions as a kind of overproduction, but it's worth remembering Bourriaud's observation that "Overproduction is no longer seen as a *problem*, but as a cultural ecosystem."[xiv] The conflation of historical references and contemporary incarnations also enacts Boym's "off-modernism": its detours and disorientations emphasising "the porous nature of historical time." Perhaps the most enigmatic of these transpositions is the very amalgam of Berry's rock 'n roll semi-fictional creation Johnny B. Goode and Giraud's decadent moonlit Pierrot. Why are these two unlikely cultural artefacts ultimately linked? As Lowry and Taimre note, it is a question that they are often asked. Their response is quite simply that, "The connection is ours. The connection is our work."[xvi] This Conceptual ploy is fortified by the framework of their "band" in a manoeuvre that threads the disparate elements into an evocative, post-medial tessellation.

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Another dimension to The Ghosts of Nothing's strategic architecture is the artistic duo's very name. In his interrogation of the significance of the name, the philosopher Jacques Derrida elaborated a theory of negative theology that drew on the Greek concept of *apophasis*: a rhetorical device used in speech or writing to incorporate an element that repudiates. *Apophasis* allows a semantic negation to inflect meaning (the prefix deriving from *apo*, in Greek meaning "off" or "away from"). The phrase "the ghosts of nothing" doubles the kind of negation proposed by *apophasis* by declaring a nullification while implying the opposite, the remainder that is the ghost itself.

Derrida cites the German seventeenth century mystic Angelus Silesius, "Nothing becomes what is before: before if you do not become nothing / Never will you be born of eternal light"[xvii] to argue that "nothing" is in fact generative. Nothing inaugurates formation and transformation. It is a "coming to being starting from nothing and as nothing."[xviii] Becoming-nothing, as Derrida formulates it, is simultaneously a process of self-becoming and an engendering of the other. By using a negative form, it introjects an element of the beyond in order to introduce an ineluctable heterogeneity into the order of signification.

If this observation on "nothing" draws on the principle of negative theology, it does so to reveal that a sense of the possible always exists within any utterance—and by extrapolation, any project—that ostensibly invokes nullity. The Ghosts of Nothing works as a name that conceals within its negative form a dimension of the beyond; this very sense of *potential*.

The other element of the name invokes the spectral. In her account of the cultural history of ghosts, the British historian Terry Castle argued that until the nineteenth century, certitude of the existence of these entities was widespread; linked to the ancient beliefs in spirits and demons. However, the late nineteenth century witnessed an endemic suspicion of such supernatural forms. In this post-Enlightenment era, ghosts were viewed as mental apparitions, products of the imagination. In other words, ghosts were understood to emanate from within, in a relocation of the spectral from the external world to the internal world of the consciousness.

In Castle's analysis, ghosts were psychic forms—creative constructions—which emerged as projections of social anxieties and psychic irresolution. Human subjectivity came to be seen as possessing an innate faculty for self-alienation,

a "crypto-supernatural agency implicit in the very act of thinking."[xix] Rationalist thinkers during this period believed that the mind's susceptibility to be possessed by spectres could be fostered by certain pursuits—poring over books (especially at night), erotic fantasies or unbridled melancholy—all of which could trigger hallucinatory eruptions. One could now be haunted by the phantoms of one's own mind.

This understanding of haunting as internal torment points to the way in which it works by means of subjective displacement. In the cultural historian Julian Wolfreys' account, haunting operates through a disruptive structure. Haunting, he argues, cannot take place without the possibility of its internal eruption effecting a transformation of the familiar. "The spectral is… an intervention and an interruption."[xx] Haunting enshrines a process of transformation, of identity into non-identity, in a manner that pivots on alterity. Through the modality of haunting, spectres shatter any notions of the fixed or singular; they unsettle any univocal order. In Wolfreys' view, this very disruptive potency is expansive. Spectres, he asserts, "exceed any single narrative modality, genre or textual manifestation."[xxi]

More profoundly, in Wolfreys' analysis, the spectral is also "the condition of possibility of any mode of representation."[xxii] In this capacity, the spectre is an incorporeal double of the materially real: a hinge term, occupying a liminal space. The ghost is a phantasmatic projection but also a material trace, however shadowy or immaterial. In the cultural historian Mark Fischer's opinion, haunting produces material traces which also problematise conceptions of chronometric time. Haunting "happens when a place is stained by time, or when a particular place becomes the site for an encounter with broken time."

The positing of the spectral as a temporal modality of rupture is, however, most fulsomely developed by Derrida. Hamlet's cry, 'the time is out of joint', is a repeated refrain in Derrida's spectral ontology. It becomes a principle of traversing multiple temporalities that transform both historical time and the present through a process of temporal dislocation. "'The time is out of joint': time is *disarticulated*, dislocated, dislodged… *deranged*, both out of order and mad. Time is off its hinges, time is off course, beside itself, disadjusted. Says Hamlet." Spectral ontologies consecrate a principle of non-contemporaneity, of encroachments of the past into the present, yet they also bring forth figures who are not fully present. Ghosts are partial figures, mysterious entities that traverse the borderlands of the past and the present; ciphers who are both "no longer" and "not yet".

Alongside its name, The Ghosts of Nothing's World Tours; in particular of abandoned music venues (2014–2015) and abandoned gaol houses (2016–2017) can also be understood as a testament to spectres; implicitly acknowledging the ways in which these different historical sites had a former cultural significance in eras which have passed but whose architectural structures remain. Alternately sites of violence and trauma or blissful abandon, these varied venues persist as material vestiges that are anachronistic; obsolete and out of time, yet with historical resonance that is re-animated by the discrete mime performances that *In Memory of Johnny B. Goode* enacts in their midst. They are touched by an ontology that attests to non-linear time, through a modality of desynchronisation. Yet, in correspondence with Wolfreys' perspective on the generative capacity of spectres, Derrida also attributes them with the potential for a kind of re-activation, as the spectre is always engaged in the attempt to make the vestigial speak. These forsaken sites are recalibrated through a spectral ontology that virtually exhumes old ghosts.

If this is the case, The Ghosts of Nothing's projects and very name both act as an emblem of a modality that exceeds boundaries, in a manner fundamentally correspondent to the post-medium condition as that which transgresses accepted medial classifications. If the spectral is a general modality of historical, spatial and temporal transposition, then an ontology of the spectral would then be an ontology that is never absolute. Rather, it would represent heterogeneous ways of becoming premised on disruptions and eruptions, unstable forms, subjective multiplicities and multi-layered narratives.

In Memory of Johnny B. Goode's various material components—gestures of mime, ambient soundscapes, mistranslations of nineteenth century French poetry and multiplying incarnations of the figure of Pierrot—can thus be seen as an enactment of a spectral ontology, a continually mutating revenant. Against homogeneity, closure and even fulsome comprehensibility, The Ghosts of Nothing's *In Memory of Johnny B. Goode* works as complex haunting, a performative conjuring of re-activations and re-inhabitations. Its post-medial transpositions eventually link with the spectral in that the ghost itself is also a *post*: a *post-mortem*, an after-death that instates the very condition of the possible.

NOTES

[i] Sean Lowry and Ilmar Taimre (aka The Ghosts of Nothing), "Are We a Band?," this volume, 7.

[ii] Joseph Kosuth (1991), "Art After Philosophy" [1969], in *Art After Philosophy and After: Collected Writings, 1966–1990*, Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 18.

[iii] Jaroslaw Kozlowski, quoted in Peter Osborne (ed) (2002), *Conceptual Art*, London: Phaidon, 128.

[iv] Rosalind Krauss (1999), *A Voyage on the North Sea: Art in the Age of the Post-Medium Condition*, New York: Thames & Hudson, 20.

[v] Ibid., 12.

[vi] Nicolas Bourriaud (2002), *Postproduction: Culture as Screenplay: How Art Reprograms the World*, New York: Lukas and Sternberg, 17.

[vii] See Nicolas Bourriaud (2009), *The Radicant*, Berlin: Sternberg Press, Berlin.

[viii] Svetlana Boym (2017), *The Off-Modern*, New York: Bloomsbury, 29.

[ix] Robert F. Storey (1978), *Pierrot: A Critical History of a Mask*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 94.

[x] Ibid., 100.

[xi] Jules Chéret, cited in Hugounet, *Mimes et Pierrots*, quoted in Storey, op cit, 121.

[xii] Storey, *Pierrot*, 121.

[xiii] Ilmar Taimre's translations of Albert Giraud's *Pierrot Lunaire*, in The Ghosts of Nothing (2014), *In Memory of Johnny B. Goode*, Radio Play.

[xiv] Bourriaud, *Postproduction*, 45.

[xv] Boym, *The Off-Modern*, 5.

[xvi] Lowry and Taimre, "Are We a Band?," part 6.

[xvii] Angelus Silesius (1986), *The Cherubic Wanderer*, trans. Maria Shrady, New York: Paulist, quoted in Jacques Derrida (1993), *On the Name*, Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 43.

[xviii] Derrida, *On the Name*, 43.

[xix] Terry Castle (1995), *The Female Thermometer: Eighteenth Century Culture and the Invention of the Uncanny*, New York: Oxford University Press, 174.

[xx] Julian Wolfreys (2002), *Victorian Hauntings: Spectrality, Gothic, the Uncanny and Literature*, Houndmills: Palgrave, 22.

[xxi] Ibid., 1.

[xxii] Ibid., 2.

[xxiii] Mark Fisher (2012), "What is Hauntology?" *Film Quarterly*, 66, no. 1, 19.

[xxiv] Jacques Derrida (1994), *Specters of Marx: The State of Debt, the Work of Mourning and the New International*, trans. Peggy Kamuf, New York: Routledge, 20.

CREDITS

CD ALBUM & SINGLE:

IN MEMORY OF JOHNNY B. GOODE – A ROCK OPERA

The Ghosts of Nothing:
Sean Lowry & Ilmar Taimre

All songs composed & arranged by: Sean Lowry & Ilmar Taimre [except *Johnny B. Goode* (Berry), *White Wedding* (Idol), *Mercedes Benz* (Joplin, McClure, Neuwirth), *Rock Around the Clock* (DeKnight, Freedman), *I'm So Excited* (Lawrence, Pointer, Pointer, Pointer, Bontenbal, Steenhuis)]

Vocals

Lee Devaney, Sean Lowry, Ilmar Taimre, Rachel Scott & Linda Taimre

MAJOR INSTRUMENTATION, PRODUCTION & FX

Sean Lowry & Ilmar Taimre

ORCHESTRAL & CHORAL INSTRUMENTATION, PROGRAMMING & RECORDING

Ilmar Taimre

Metal gamelan, bamboo flutes, marimba, Celtic harp programming & recording: Ilmar Taimre

Harmonica

Ilmar Taimre

GUITARS

Ilmar Taimre, Rob Taylor, Guss Mallmann

KEYBOARDS

Sean Lowry, Ilmar Taimre, Rob Taylor & Duane Morrison

Additional SFX production:

Mark Turner

Basses: Rob Taylor

SYNTH BASSES: Sean Lowry

Drum programming:

Sean Lowry, Rob Taylor & Ilmar Taimre

STEM PRODUCTION, EDITING & ARRANGEMENT

Sean Lowry & Ilmar Taimre

Occasional live drums and percussion:

Steve Allison & Ilmar Taimre

PRODUCED & MIXED BY:

Sean Lowry with Ilmar Taimre

Recording engineers:

Sean Lowry, Rob Taylor & Ilmar Taimre

MASTERING SUPERVISOR

Rob Taylor

Mastered by:

Don Bartley at Benchmark Mastering

COVER DESIGN & ICONOGRAPHY:

Ilmar Taimre (based on old postcard images)

MUSIC PUBLISHING:

Perfect Pitch Publishing

VIDEOS OF MIME PERFORMANCES

The Ghosts of Nothing:
Sean Lowry & Ilmar Taimre

All songs composed & arranged by: Sean Lowry & Ilmar Taimre

STAGE I

IN MEMORY OF JOHNNY B GOODE

WORLD TOUR OF ABANDONED
MUSIC VENUES, 2014–2015

WORLD TOUR OF ABANDONED MUSIC VENUES, 2014-2015



1. THIS IS JOHNNY

The Ghosts of Nothing
(feat. Frank J. Miles)

Copyright © 2014 The Ghosts of Nothing
& Frank J Miles. Used with permission.

Full video available at:
https://youtu.be/mkDG4Ln_ZRE

A street performance outside
315 Bowery (formerly CBGBs),
Manhattan, NY, USA, at 8:00 pm
on 6 December 2014.

Produced by The Ghosts of Nothing
(Sean Lowry & Ilmar Taimre)

Mime: Frank J Miles
Voice: Linda Taimre
Camera 1: Jesse English
Camera 2: Honi Ryan
Camera 3: Christian Lock
Video editing: Ilmar Taimre
Music: Sean Lowry & Ilmar Taimre
Music publishing: Perfect Pitch Publishing



2. BETRAYAL

The Ghosts of Nothing
(feat. Charles Famous)

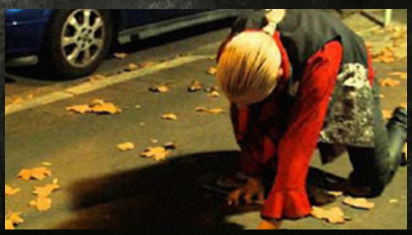
Copyright © 2015 The Ghosts of Nothing
& Charles Famous. Used with permission.

Full video available at:
https://youtu.be/Tw54O-dj9H4

A street performance outside Terminus Hotel,
61 Harris Street, Sydney, NSW, Australia, at
8:00 pm on 11 April 2015.

Produced by The Ghosts of Nothing
(Sean Lowry & Ilmar Taimre)

Mime: Charles Famous
Voice: Linda Taimre
Camera 1: Augusto M. Duarte
Camera 2: Luiza Pradella
Camera 3: Fábio Hamann
Camera 4: Dave Stein
Video editing: Ilmar Taimre
Music: Sean Lowry & Ilmar Taimre
Music publishing: Perfect Pitch Publishing



3. AN IMPOSSIBLE QUESTION

The Ghosts of Nothing
(feat. Lyndall Johnston)

Copyright © 2015 The Ghosts of Nothing
& Lyndall Johnston. Used with permission.

Full video available at:
https://youtu.be/eiA6XVR2VmQ

A street performance outside The Star Hotel,
410 King Street, Newcastle, NSW,
Australia, at 8:00 pm on 18 April 2015.

Produced by The Ghosts of Nothing
(Sean Lowry & Ilmar Taimre)

Tap/mime: Lyndall Johnston
Voice: Linda Taimre
Camera 1: Augusto M. Duarte
Camera 2: Rob Taylor
Video editing: Ilmar Taimre
Music: Sean Lowry & Ilmar Taimre
Music publishing: Perfect Pitch Publishing



4. MADONNA OF HYSTERIAS

The Ghosts of Nothing
(feat. Zoë Tuffin)

Copyright © 2015 The Ghosts of Nothing
& Zoë Tuffin. Used with permission.

Full video available at:
https://youtu.be/MkK2vy5V2Zw

A street performance outside Lofly Hangar,
151 Musgrave Road, Red Hill,
Brisbane, QLD, Australia, at 8:00 pm
on 25 April 2015.

Produced by The Ghosts of Nothing
(Sean Lowry & Ilmar Taimre)

Butoh: Zoë Tuffin
Voice: Linda Taimre
Camera 1: Linda Taimre
Cameras 2 & 3: Tim Roane
Camera 4: Bree Kettley
Camera 5: Aita Taimre
Video editing: Ilmar Taimre
Music: Sean Lowry & Ilmar Taimre
Music publishing: Perfect Pitch Publishing

STAGE II

IN MEMORY OF JOHNNY B GOODE

WORLD TOUR OF
REMOTE WILDERNESSES
2015–2016

WORLD TOUR OF REMOTE WILDERNESSES, 2015–2016



5. INTOXICATED BY THE MOON

The Ghosts of Nothing (feat. Lee Devaney)

Copyright © 2015 The Ghosts of Nothing & Lee Devaney. Used with permission.

Full video available at:
https://youtu.be/GyQnowsb5_A

Performed somewhere between Tromsø & Lofoten, Norway, around midday on 31 August 2015.

Produced by The Ghosts of Nothing (Sean Lowry & Ilmar Taimre)

Mime: Lee Devaney
Spoken voice: Linda Taimre
Camera: Lee Devaney
Video editing: Ilmar Taimre
Music: Sean Lowry & Ilmar Taimre
Vocal styling: Lee Devaney
Music publishing: Perfect Pitch Publishing



6. THE MIRROR

The Ghosts of Nothing (feat. Laura Purcell)

Copyright © 2016 The Ghosts of Nothing & Laura Purcell. Used with permission.

Full video available at:
https://youtu.be/Fa0ZyicelX8

Performed in Tarkine Wilderness, Meunna, Tasmania, Australia, 12:00 noon on 19 March 2016.

Produced by The Ghosts of Nothing (Sean Lowry & Ilmar Taimre)

Performer/puppeteer: Laura Purcell
Voice: Linda Taimre
Main camera: Angus Ashton
Drone video: Angus Ashton
Time lapse video: Laura Purcell
Video editing: Ilmar Taimre
Music: Sean Lowry & Ilmar Taimre
Music publishing: Perfect Pitch Publishing

Produced with support of Contemporary Art Tasmania. Contemporary Art Tasmania is supported by the Australian Government through the Australia Council, its principal funding body, and by the Visual Arts and Craft Strategy, an initiative of the Australian, State and Territory Governments, and is assisted through Arts Tasmania by the Minister for the Arts.



7. CHILDREN OF THE MOON

The Ghosts of Nothing
(feat. Coleman Grehan)

Copyright © 2016 The Ghosts of Nothing &
Coleman Grehan. Used with permission.

Full video available at:
https://youtu.be/wiA8F65UuYw

Performed at Summit, Tabletop Mountain,
Toowoomba, QLD, Australia, around
12:00 noon on 3 September 2016.

Produced by The Ghosts of Nothing
(Sean Lowry & Ilmar Taimre)

Butoh: Coleman Grehan
Voice: Linda Taimre
Cinematographer: Stewart Tyrrell
Drone Pilot: Jason Tann
Additional cameras: Alexandra Lawson,
Ilmar Taimre
Logistics: Alexandra Lawson, Tarn McLean,
The Ghosts of Nothing
Camera Assistant: Boudicca Davies
Video editing: Ilmar Taimre
Music: Sean Lowry & Ilmar Taimre
Music publishing: Perfect Pitch Publishing
Produced with support of Raygun Projects,
Toowoomba.



8. JOHNNY ON ICE

The Ghosts of Nothing
(feat. Frank J Miles)

Copyright © 2016 The Ghosts of Nothing &
Frank J. Miles. Used with permission.

Full video available at:
https://youtu.be/uE99PmlJmM4

Performed at Trail Connector to Appalachian
Trail, Salisbury, Connecticut, USA,
12:00 noon on 12 November 2016.

Produced by The Ghosts of Nothing
(Sean Lowry & Ilmar Taimre)

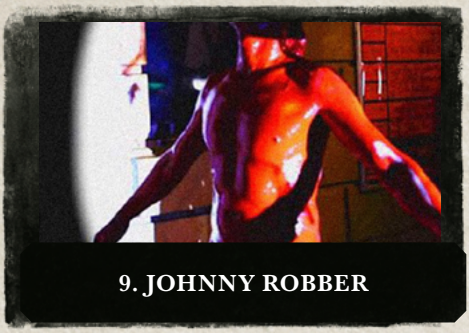
Mime: Frank J. Miles
Voice: Linda Taimre
Cinematographer: Al Prexta
Video post-production &editing: Ilmar Taimre
Logistics: Sean Lowry, Paul Lamarre,
Melissa P. Wolf, Simone Douglas, Joseph Pastor
Music: Sean Lowry & Ilmar Taimre
Music publishing: Perfect Pitch Publishing

STAGE III

IN MEMORY OF JOHNNY B GOODE

WORLD TOUR OF ABANDONED
GAOL-HOUSES, 2016–2018

WORLD TOUR OF ABANDONED GAOLHOUSES, 2016–2018



9. JOHNNY ROBBER

The Ghosts of Nothing (feat. Zackari Watt)

Copyright © 2016 The Ghosts of Nothing & Zackari Watt. Used with permission.

Full video available at:
https://youtu.be/fzhbsFdvB4Y

Performed at The Lock-Up, 90 Hunter Street, Newcastle, NSW, Australia, 6:00 pm on 6 May 2017.

Produced by The Ghosts of Nothing (Sean Lowry & Ilmar Taimre)

Mime: Zackari Watt
Voice: Linda Taimre
Camera 1: Moz Waters
Camera 2: Karen McKenzie
Video post-production &editing: Ilmar Taimre
Pre-production video: Zackari Watt
Live video projection: Zackari Watt
Logistics: Sean Lowry
Music, soundscape & mixing: Sean Lowry & Ilmar Taimre
Music publishing: Perfect Pitch Publishing

Produced with support of The Lock-Up, Newcastle.



10. ABSINTHE

The Ghosts of Nothing (feat. Zoë Tuffin)

Copyright © 2017 The Ghosts of Nothing & Zoë Tuffin. Used with permission.

Full video available at:
https://youtu.be/AlQ3N5rN0lw

Performed at Boggo Road Gaol, Brisbane, QLD, Australia, around 6:00 pm on 22 July 2017.

Produced by The Ghosts of Nothing (Sean Lowry & Ilmar Taimre)

Butoh: Zoë Tuffin
Voice: Linda Taimre
Camera 1: Bree Kettley
Camera 2: Aita Taimre
Camera 3: Ilmar Taimre
SLR Camera/Chief Pilot: Jason Tann
Drone 1: Thomas Schipke
Drone 2: Kenderick George
Ground crew: Phil Heggie
Special thanks: Stewart Tyrrell
Video post-production &editing: Ilmar Taimre
Music, soundscape & mixing: Sean Lowry & Ilmar Taimre
Music publishing: Perfect Pitch Publishing



11. BLACK BUTTERFLIES

The Ghosts of Nothing
(feat. Laura Purcell)

Copyright © 2017 The Ghosts of Nothing
& Laura Purcell. Used with permission.

Full video available at:
https://youtu.be/Tw2RadNyNVA

Performed at Hobart Convict Penitentiary
(The Tench), Hobart, TAS, Australia,
at 6:00 pm on 18 November 2017.

Produced by The Ghosts of Nothing
(Sean Lowry & Ilmar Taimre)

Performer/puppeteer: Laura Purcell
Voice: Linda Taimre
Main camera: Angus Ashton
Drone video: Angus Ashton
Video post-production &editing: Ilmar Taimre
Music, soundscape & mixing: Sean Lowry
& Ilmar Taimre
Special thanks: Hobart Convict Penitentiary
Music publishing: Perfect Pitch Publishing

Produced with support of Contemporary Art Tasmania. Contemporary Art Tasmania is supported by the Australian Government through the Australia Council, its principal funding body, and by the Visual Arts and Craft Strategy, an initiative of the Australian, State and Territory Governments, and is assisted through Arts Tasmania by the Minister for the Arts.



12. SUICIDE

The Ghosts of Nothing
(feat. Laura Purcell)

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& Laura Purcell. Used with permission.

Full video available at:
https://youtu.be/sPZ4lBsdUSA

Performed at Hobart Convict Penitentiary
(The Tench), Hobart, TAS, Australia,
at 6:15 pm on 18 November 2017.

Produced by The Ghosts of Nothing
(Sean Lowry & Ilmar Taimre)
Performer/puppeteer: Laura Purcell
Voice: Linda Taimre
Main camera: Angus Ashton
Video post-production &editing: Ilmar Taimre
Music, soundscape & mixing: Sean Lowry
& Ilmar Taimre
Special thanks: Hobart Convict Penitentiary
Music publishing: Perfect Pitch Publishing

Produced with support of Contemporary Art Tasmania. Contemporary Art Tasmania is supported by the Australian Government through the Australia Council, its principal funding body, and by the Visual Arts and Craft Strategy, an initiative of the Australian, State and Territory Governments, and is assisted through Arts Tasmania by the Minister for the Arts.

EXHIBITIONS

In Memory of Johnny B. Goode,
Act I – PopCAANZ 2015 Conference & Exhibition

PopCAANZ 2015 Exhibition: Virtually Pop
Massey University Campus
Wellington, New Zealand
29 June–1 July 2015.
Curators: Julieanna Preston & Adam Geczy

Johnny On Ice (redux) – Plato's Cave at EIDIA House (2016)

Johnny On Ice (redux)
presented at Plato's Cave at EIDIA House
Brooklyn, NY USA
19 November–10 December 2016
Curators: Paul Lamarre, Melissa Wolf

Three Scenes from "In Memory of Johnny B. Goode:
World Tour (2014–2017)"

Contemporary Art Tasmania/MOFO (2018)
The Ghosts of Nothing featuring Laura Purcell, *Three Scenes from "In Memory of Johnny B. Goode: World Tour (2014–2017)"*
Presented at Contemporary Art Tasmania
17 January–25 February 2018
Curator: Kylie Johnson

The Ghosts of Nothing "In Memory of Johnny B. Goode –
World Tour 2014–2018" Retrospective Exhibition

The Lock-Up, Newcastle, Australia
8 July–19 August 2018
Curators: Jessi England, Courtney Novak

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Over the course of the four years since we first began working on *In Memory of Johnny B. Goode*, we have been fortunate to have received tangible support and creative input from a diverse range of organisations and many extraordinarily talented people.

Detailed collaborative credits for different aspects of the "world" which this project has now become are given in the previous lists.

Here we would like to highlight our particular thanks to the following supporters:

Jessi England and Courtney Novak
THE LOCK-UP (NEWCASTLE)

Kylie Johnson and Michael Edwards
CONTEMPORARY ART TASMANIA (HOBART)

Paul Lamarre and Melissa P. Wolf
EIDIA HOUSE (BROOKLYN, NY)

Alexandra Lawson and Tarn McLean
RAYGUN PROJECTS (TOOWOOMBA)

Victorian College of the Arts, Faculty of Fine Arts and Music
UNIVERSITY OF MELBOURNE

Sean Lowry and Ilmar Taimre
(aka The Ghosts of Nothing)

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Sean Lowry is a Melbourne-based artist. He holds a PhD in Visual Arts from the University of Sydney and is currently Head of Critical and Theoretical Studies in Art at Victorian College of the Arts, University of Melbourne. Lowry has exhibited and performed extensively both nationally and internationally as an artist and musician, and his published writing appears in numerous journals and edited volumes. He is also Founder and Executive Director of *Project Anywhere* (www.projectanywhere.net). For more information, please visit www.seanlowry.com.

Ilmar Taimre is a Brisbane-based artist, musician and composer. He has recently completed a PhD in Music at the University of Newcastle, with a thesis titled "An Interpretive Model for Conceptual Music." Taimre has been a performing musician in Australia and New Zealand. He is a member of the Editorial Board for *Project Anywhere* (see above). Taimre has exhibited a number of intermedial works informed by his concerns with post-conceptual currents in contemporary art. For more information, please visit www.ilmartaimre.com.

Sophie Knezic is a Melbourne-based writer and artist. She holds a PhD from the University of Melbourne. Knezic's writing has been published in many journals and magazines and her work has been widely exhibited across Melbourne. She is currently a Lecturer (Sessional) in Critical and Theoretical Studies in Art at Victorian College of the Arts, University of Melbourne. For more information, please visit https://www.sophieknezic.com.

This book was printed in an edition of 150 copies, of which the first 100 copies (signed and numbered 0 to 99) were for sale, and the remaining 50 unnumbered copies were not for sale.

The main text is set in 11pt Baskerville Regular, with Baskerville Regular font used for headings and display text.

The book was designed by Headjam in Newcastle, Australia.

It was printed on 135gsm and 300gsm Envirocare.