



Saint Ignatius' College
RIVERVIEW

The Kircher Collection

MAJOR WORKS FROM THE CLASS OF 2021

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The Kircher Collection
Vol. 8, 2021

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Saint Ignatius' College Riverview

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DR PAUL A HINE, PRINCIPAL

Foreword

John O'Malley SJ, one of the foremost authorities on Jesuit history, asserts that “Ignatius and his companions from the very beginning advocated and exemplified a learned ministry”¹. Because of this, the Society of Jesus grew from its foundational days to embrace reason and scholarship of all forms with a reflective and constructively critical impulse to learn. Indeed, the earliest Jesuits such as Matteo Ricci, who travelled to the Far East in the mid 16th century, were among the finest scholars of their day, schooled in cartography, astronomy, mathematics and linguistics. A brief glance at Jesuit history across the centuries will reveal that it is enamoured with those who have made great discoveries and explored contemporary fields of research, from telescoping and physics, to art, philosophy and literature.

The tradition of scholarship and the desire to learn remain deeply embedded in Jesuit education. Four hundred years after Ricci, at a major international conference that foregrounded the 21st century, the Congregation asserted that “In all of its endeavours, Jesuit education is distinguished by intellectual excellence and academic rigour”², and because of this, “the schools set demanding standards for both students and faculty”³. It is this ethic that drives the education program at Saint Ignatius' College Riverview and generates the quality of work contained in this publication.

Named after Athanasius Kircher SJ, a man of prodigious intellect in the 17th century, *The Kircher Collection* is testament to the aspirational scholarship that is alive and well at the College. It profiles key fields of academic pursuit and endeavour—Literature, Visual Arts, History, Drama, Music and Science. More than just a compendium of student work, it is a manifestation of the desire to enquire, to experience, to comprehend, to analyse, to interpret, to explore—all corollaries of creative cognition in the quotient of learning.

As you read this publication, it is my hope that you will enjoy the sophistication of the work, remembering that these young men are still of a tender age with so much potential in their chosen fields. Who knows, they may reach some of the lofty heights of illustrious alumni such as Robert Hughes, Alex Seton and the seven Rhodes scholars who have given so much to academic pursuit and artistic expression in their personal and professional lives. These are early days in disciplines still seminal to the contributors, but a discerning appreciation of their work augurs well for all that lies ahead.

Special thanks are extended to the many staff who contribute with great generosity and professionalism to this publication.

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- 1 John O'Malley S.J. (1993). *The First Jesuits*. In Traub, George, W. (Ed). *A Jesuit Education Reader*. p 7
 - 2 *Communal Reflection on the Jesuit Mission. A Way of Proceeding. From the Jesuit Conference, 2002*. In Traub, George, W. (Ed) opp. Cit. p 179
 - 3 Mitchell, Robert, A. (1988). *Five Traits of Jesuit Education*. In Traub, George, W. (Ed) opp. cit. p 11

FR TOM RENSHAW SJ, RECTOR

Introduction

In the middle of 2021, the second global colloquium on Jesuit education was held virtually. In responding to Father General's question of "**How do we accompany young people in the creation of a hope-filled future in our education apostolic ministry?**", the response was the following,

**We ought to educate for a hope-filled future
by educating for depth and global citizenship
in faith and in reconciliation
in the context of our Education integrated (Holistic) Perspective.**

Jesuit education seeks to do this through four interrelated strands:

1. Educating for faith;
2. Educating for depth;
3. Educating for reconciliation; and
4. Educating for global citizenship.

The goal of Jesuit education today "is to educate for human excellence that leads to a hope-filled future: persons who are compassionate, competent, conscious of God in themselves and in the world around them, and committed to seeing all things new in Christ".

This collection is named after a 17th century Jesuit, Fr Athanasius Kircher SJ, who is the embodiment of depth and the *magis*. I congratulate the students whose works appear in this collection and for the differing ways in which they have used their God-given talents to respond creatively in producing outstanding works of scholarship as part of their Higher School Certificate. Each work is an inspiring expression of human excellence. In the next section, one of my predecessors, Fr Ross Jones SJ (College Rector 2011-2017), outlines most eloquently the life of Fr Athanasius and his extraordinary contribution, as a polymath, to many different fields of learning.

1 Vision Statement, Second Colloquium JESEDU-Global 2021, <https://www.educatemagis.org/jesedu-global2021/colloquium-hub/>, accessed 27 November 2021.

FR ROSS JONES SJ

Athanasius Kircher SJ

“The last man who knew everything”

“

It was because of Kircher’s work that scientists knew what to look for when interpreting the Rosetta Stone.

”

Left Athanasius Kircher;
The Kircher Museum in Rome

Athanasius Kircher, born in 1601, was the complete Renaissance man, the *uomo universale*, a polymath—widely regarded as the physical embodiment of all the learning of his age. D deservedly known as “the Master of One Hundred Arts”, he taught in the Colleges of Würzburg and Avignon, before being posted to Rome (where he died in 1680). In bridging the sciences and the humanities, Kircher has been compared to da Vinci. Stanford professor, Paula Findlen, entitled her recent biography of Kircher *The Last Man Who Knew Everything*. But as a young man Kircher was, according to his own account, an accident-prone dimwit.

Kircher wrote over thirty separate works dealing with the widest range of subjects. He invented a universal language scheme, attacked the possibility of alchemical transmutation and devised a host of remarkable pneumatic, hydraulic, optic and



magnetic machines, which he displayed to visitors to his famous public museum (the first such institution), housed in the Jesuit Collegio Romano. His books, lavishly illustrated volumes, were destined for Baroque princes with a love of the curious and exotic explorations of their time.

Kircher invented the lantern slide (the forerunner of projectors). He accurately estimated the speed of a swallow at 100 feet per second (without a stopwatch). He was a volcanologist (even climbed into the volcano Vesuvius) and wrote the first book on volcanology. Kircher and others like him taught in the Colleges and encouraged the appropriation of the sciences into the school curriculum.

Kircher invented calculators, wrote on symbolic logic, and devised mathematical tables. He understood the evolutionary process and hinted at the germ theory of disease—he attributed the plague to tiny animals which he had observed under a microscope.

His first publication concerned magnetism. Then he wrote of sundials, next on the Egyptian language, then on calendars. He proposed a map of the city of Atlantis. He knew twenty ancient and modern languages. He studied hieroglyphics and it was because of Kircher's work that scientists knew what to look for when interpreting the Rosetta stone. He has been called the real founder of Egyptology.

Kircher always wanted to be a missionary in China, but the importance of his teaching saw this dream never realised. However, that did not prevent him writing a huge treatise on China, *China Illustrata*, which included mythology, accurate cartography and Chinese characters.

While traveling through Italy writing his book on magnetism, he came to the town of Taranto, which gives its name to the poisonous tarantula spider. The region of Taranto was known for the prevalence of a disease called 'tarantism', which induced an hysterical condition in the sufferer, with one characteristic feature being the sudden desire to dance, in a wild and rapid whirling motion. It was commonly supposed that the illness was a result of the bite of a tarantula. Accordingly, it was believed that the cure for the bite of the tarantula was to perform the dance, to work out the toxin. In his book on magnetism, Kircher helpfully depicts the region populated by the spider, and gives drawings of the animal and of its victims being bitten. Finally, should one be unfortunate enough to get bitten, Kircher, composed a piece of music—*Antidotum Tarantulæ*—for the victim to dance to, to cure the bite!

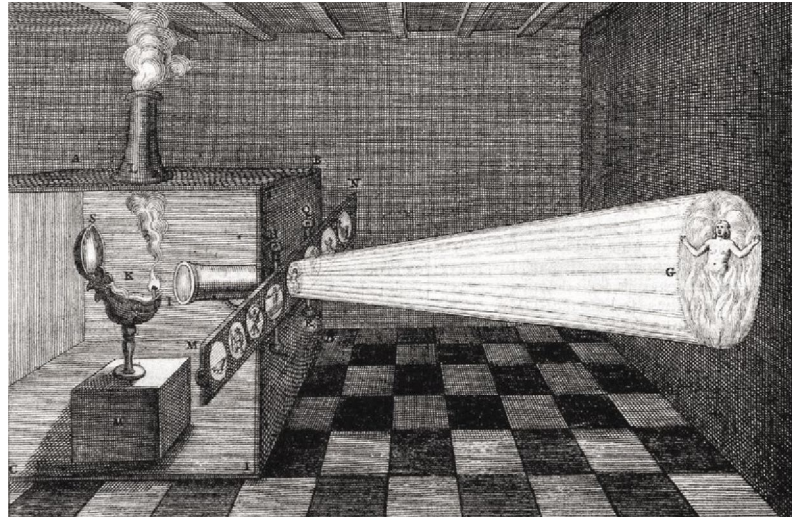
Kircher practised a unique brand of science before the lines had been drawn between it and art and religion. He covered herbs, astrology, mining, dragons, demons, weather, eclipses, fossils, gravity, bioluminescence, the sun and moon, and other topics. For example, spanning scriptures and science, he calculated that the height required for the Tower of Babel merely to reach the moon would catapult the earth out of its orbit.

“

He understood the evolutionary process and hinted at the germ theory of disease.

”

Left The precursor of the slide, overhead and digital projector



Visitors to Kircher's impressive museum heard his disembodied voice, fed to them through a hidden metal tube he spoke through from his bedroom. He engineered megaphones with which one of his friends used to bray at wolves and set them to howling. He launched dragon-shaped hot-air balloons with "Flee the wrath of God" painted on their underbellies.

In the Jesuit Archives in Rome there are more than 2,000 items of his correspondence with the most eminent scientists of his time, including Leibniz, Torricelli and Gassendi. In addition, Kircher harnessed the network of Jesuit missionaries in far-flung places to carry out natural observations and experiments on a global scale.

Towards the end of his life, Kircher's stocks fell as the rationalist era emerged. Descartes (himself a Jesuit alumnus) described Kircher as "more quacksalver than savant". Because of his stature and high regard he was also the victim of a number of hoaxes where his enemies attempted to set him up, and occasionally did so.

However, in this postmodern era, many are being drawn again to his eclecticism, transcendence of academic boundaries, taste for trivia and technomania. In recent years his life and works have interested many biographers and authors revealing his myriad areas of interest. There is an Athanasius Kircher Society in Manhattan. Stanford University hosts an Athanasius Kircher Correspondence Project.

Perhaps Athanasius Kircher was not really "the last man who knew everything". But he might have come closer than most.

FR ROSS JONES SJ
COLLEGE RECTOR 2011-2017

VISUAL ARTS

Alexander Saadie

The Autopsy of Quinity

REFLECTION STATEMENT

My Visual Arts Body of Work is an artistic exploration and representation of the psychological complexities and paradoxes of my personality and mentality of my observable thirteen to fifteen year old self.

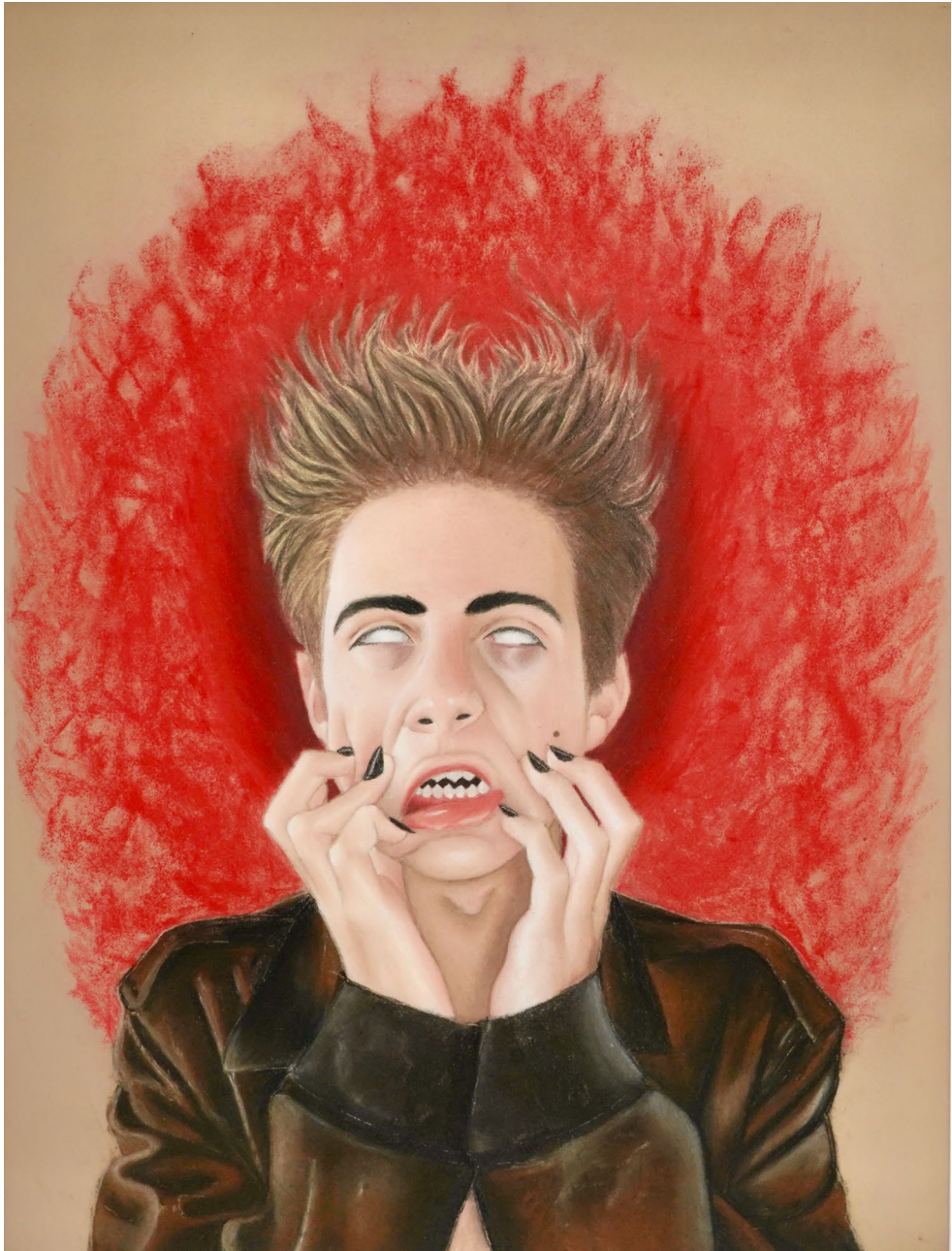
My artwork reflects Generation Z's glorification of mental health, obsessive celebration of difference and divisive social labelling. The layers and complexities of the human mind are demonstrated in the psychological dissection and hyperbolic representation of myself. The visual segregation of my paradoxical personality resulted in the depiction of five "alters".

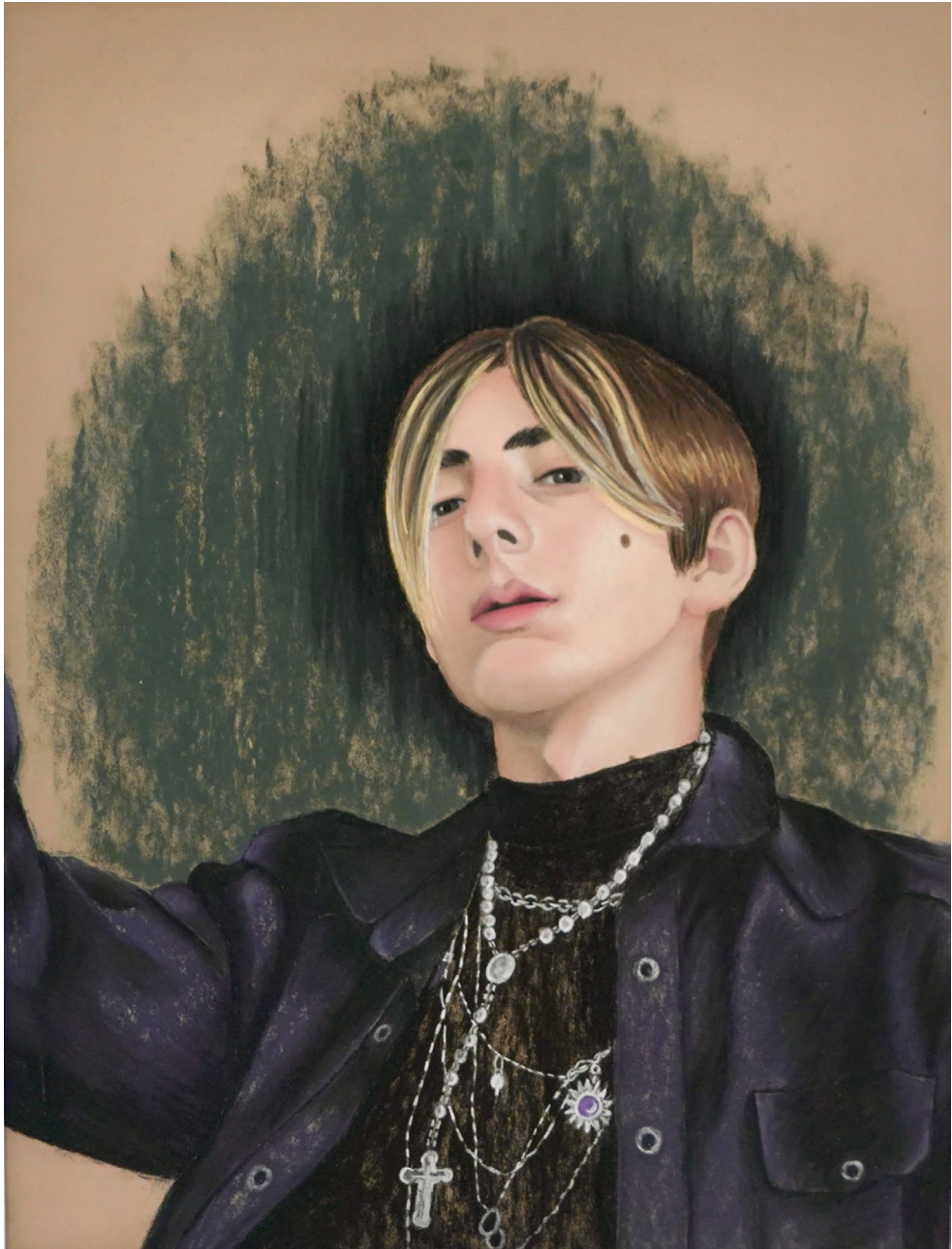
Aquares the Pure is my original form of innocence, infanthility and affection. *Alexis the Narcissist* is the embodiment of my feminine side, flamboyance, vanity and Superiority Complex. *Theox the Demon* is the personification of my anger issues, vengefulness and macabre aspects of my personality. *Sareign the Goth* represents a mental state of judgment, apathy, glumness and moralism. *Xandaris the Apollonian* is the centre of my intellectuality, creativity, maturity and order.

I depicted these alters using high realism and the use of pastel-pencils media helped dramatise and characterise minute details within each of the self-portraits. The aura of each alter is different in colour, form and texture, highlighting their individuality. I was inspired by Yasumasa Morimura as his art practice challenges the boundaries of identity, as well as the style of Ross Watson in his visual fusion of Photorealism and Renaissance Figuration.











ENGLISH

Nicholas Long

Oh Danny Boy

REFLECTION STATEMENT

'*Oh Danny Boy*' was, in a large part, a story of self-examination. Based loosely on the journey of my mother's family in emigrating from Northern Ireland, the story was heavily influenced by an ever-changing understanding of the reality of migration as well as the nuances of Northern Irish behaviour. What started out as curiosity about a rarely-spoken family history became a deep dive into metaphysical destruction of displacement and the importance of acknowledging history but not being defined by it. This excerpt is probably the best way I've found to put it into words:

"Our very ability to live is grounded on the laughter, tears, songs, and stories of our forefathers. Through their lives, we can live. And through our living, they, too, survive. But it only means so much. To remain steadfast in one's past, or, more accurately, steadfast in one's identity, is to put this history to the sword. Our identity requires changing and adaptation in order for us to survive trials and tribulations such as migration. Just as our body must bend to conquer hurdles, so too must our identities bend to conquer our lives, so that we, too, can continue singing."

I'd like to express truly sincere thanks to Mrs Lobsey, Mrs Williams, and everyone else who acted as a golden sounding board to shape this. Especially though, I'd like to thank Mrs Comastri. Her devotion, attention, and especially criticism were truly the greatest gifts, and for that I'll be forever thankful.

NARRATIVE

Sydney, 1976

A soft breeze carries the sounds and smells of a suburban summer morning. Children's cries to their father through peculiar, hybrid accents and roses – well past blooming – fragrant and bucolic. Neighbours line their verandahs merely to observe the chaos of early morning orange, watching as a quiet old Italian man puts a hand around the young Irish lad, somehow still smiling, grateful for the gift of a new day.

“De singing won’ stop soon, ah, boy?” Nonno smiles.

You know as well as I do, only when those roses die.

Roses Sing at Night-time

Danny

In the heat of Sydney summer, the concrete streets of Five Dock made Da’s roses sweat and sulk, collard petals still battling in day’s dying light. They were jewels of white on bushes of green which stood out the front of the two bay windows of a red brick house, stoic; struggling floral bodyguards watching carefully over a usually well-manicured lawn that had succumbed to a patchwork of paspalum.

They looked flat, Da would say, but he’d rebirth them, guiding them for hours on a Saturday, shears in hand, snipping and tying and straightening their helmets and rifles with a touch so delicate for such coarse hands. It is nature’s fault that makes us first full, he’d remark.

But today they just looked sad. Fair enough. It got hot today. 37 degrees. I collapsed on the lawn just staring at them, struggling to tug off each black leather rugby boot before slowly feeling around my neck and shoulders for the sunburn left red-raw and throbbing. The curse of the emerald-isle skin. In the book we looked at in history today, it had all the settlers in full-length shirts and trousers. Worn white cotton stained with red dirt from the day’s work and riding boots worn through on the toe. These were the first white-man to suffer the great southern sun. What do you think was more dangerous, overheating from the clothes or heat stroke from the sun? I pick heat

stroke. At least there's a remedy for that, an ice-cold Sunny Boy waiting impatiently in the fridge.

I manage to haul myself up and go over to the doormat, lifting it up to find the spare key. Chris has a football game at Ryde tonight so Ma has taken all the other kids to watch straight from school. Perhaps another Friday night alone. Almost definitely a songless night. The Fridays when the Irish family sing are the good nights. They're usually so looked forward to. Fordham Street line their cast-iron laced verandahs and lawns with deck chairs and tables on which sits a drink of choice, all to hear the pluck of the mandolin and a host of songs in the native Irish Gaeilge. Of course, none of them can understand the language, but it's the music they appreciate. With an arboretum of wattles, orchids, lotus, and, now, roses, living door to door, the street has learnt to appreciate a tap on the canvas or a snap of the fingers or a hand-picked melody much more than the words and their meaning.

Óró, sé do bheatha bhaile anois ar theacht an tsamhraidh, then *Too-ra-Loo-Ra*, then *Rosc Catha na Mumhan* which would meld into *Come out ye Black and Tans* later in the night and Ma would head inside.

The door jammed up again. Shake the key, up, down, in, and twist, and the latch pops open. Every time Da's back, Ma tells him he needs to fix it.

"Shouldn't be any trouble at all now will it, Sean? For a talented carpenter like yourself no less."

He'd respond with something like:

"Oh no trouble love, I'll get to it."

But it hasn't been got to in the last four years and I wouldn't say it will be got to in the next four either.

Ma must've fully closed up the house when she left this morning because the inside is dark and cool. Through the door the red house opens into a corridor, room on the left – number 3 and 4, Cathy and Rachel – room on the right – the three youngers, Hannah, Brid, and Clare – then room on the left again – the two boys.

Chris' wall is bare and his dresser top spotless. A dogeared Eagles poster was stuck above my bed and the top of my dresser is littered with golden trophies draped in "lost" homework and various bowls and glasses. Chris gaffa-taped down a line through the centre of the room to mark the boundary, but even without it, you can see where the

mess of clothes stops and the spotless floor begins. I like to annoy him so I kick my boots off onto his bed. He'll find them later tonight and complain to Ma. Worth it.

After the corridor, the house opens out to a kitchen. Most of the room is taken up by a large flat mahogany table, tonight's homework sprawled across, and two wooden church pews. Ma's first job when we moved in was to find a church. St. Marks at Drummoyne was happy to welcome us in. Fr. Devlin brought us up after Mass one Sunday and all nine of us stood there shaking hands and tentative smiles and nods gave way to an army of dads coming back to the unfurnished house and bringing with them beds, sofas, chairs, bed-side tables, and two wooden church pews from the nun's chapel that had just been recently renovated. Ma volunteered every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday at the parish's after-school-care for the next few months for that. Put it up to Irish guilt. A smart man, Fr. Devlin – a countryman, says Da, but he's not really Irish, his parents are I think. He was born out west somewhere and speaks with a tough Australian accent like Mr Haynes at school. Da says anyone whose family hails from the island of Ireland is Irish and therefore kin to him an' me, but Ian Paisley was born just down the road from Ma and his Orangemen are just British tyrants according to Da.

Anyway, Ma says he's a true blue Aussie, Ah-zee is how she says it, kind of like Mr Pham down the street from Saigon.

"He's an ah-zee like yer an ah-zee, Danny."

"But I'm Irish Ma."

I'd retort.

"Yeh live in Sydney, don't-ya-now. That means yer an ah-zee."

The word was taxing to her mouth.

She tried to get us to sing Waltzing Matilda one Friday night. She printed out the sheet music on the Gestetner at work and Da spent the afternoon practising it. He's really good on the mandolin and so it didn't take him too long. It took us a while. The street enjoyed it nonetheless. A thick Northern accent raving about swags and billabongs and the troopers one, two, and three, it's a hell of a story, no doubt, but it wasn't like Da's songs. They were words which meant nothing to us. Soon he resorted back to my siblings and I's de facto Irish lessons. I love the songs. Mainly for the melodies as my Irish isn't really good enough to understand. Da learnt all of the songs from his summers spent in the Gaeltacht out in Dhun Na nGall so he's a good teacher. But, anyway, I don't need words to know what they mean to me.

At the end of the night, when Ma has taken all the rest to bed, Da slows into more and more English-slandering English-tunes, the Troubles types. As the neighbours head in and what is now Johnnie Walker Red but what used to be Powers Gold takes hold, the songs quieten and slow and move from ballads of love and adventure to those of bombs and bullets and heartbreak. *Eirim go Brach. The Ballad of Joe McDonnell. Only our Rivers Run Free.* These aren't the songs I like.

I was only young but I still remember the nights the then-five of us huddled in Ma and Da's room as shots rang out around Lurgan.

I still remember Sunday mornings when we'd walk down the street to St. Paul's and Da would walk on the gutter side of the path because on the other side the people were walking the other way wearing scarves of orange.

I still remember the phone ringing and Da clutching me in his arms, running down to Market St to find our Fish shop as a burning pile, squeezing me close, leaving me to choke on his tears.

"They're important songs, Danny, 'cause you got t'know where yeh come from. Yer a man from a family who stands against what is wrong wit the world."

Da told me.

"The past shapes who yeh are, Danny."

He'd say.

My favourite song is the song that puts the street to sleep. When the mandolin grows too heavy to hold, and Da's glass replaces it, it's time the night ends. Da sings my song to jewels of white, and tells me to head in while he sits a bit longer. You can never be sure what he is thinking about but his eyes seem to say that it's at that point he becomes tired of trying to drown out the racket in his head with the melody in his heart and he sinks back into a world he tried so hard to escape.

The Books you Read at Home

Danny

A ring had formed around the glass of Mr Carey's iced tea, seeping into the grain of my white wooden seat on the verandah. It always reminded me of a travelling salesman's tonic like in a John Wayne western. A few years back I thought I was sneaky by grabbing one of Da's tumblers and pretending I was making a cocktail. Two ice cubes, juice a lemon, and add the tea. Ma nearly had a heart attack when she saw me parked up in the backyard with the tumbler in hand. Da nearly had a heart attack when he saw the ice cubes in it.

"Gah, Danny yeh not s'pposed to drink it wit ice, have I taught yeh nothin' boy?"

It's still warm at 8:30pm and I'm still waiting for Ma. The hard green cover of *Dubliners* was made in the cool Dublin air and has started to curl in this humidity, seams of cloth peeling away from the spine. Dog-eared pages feel heavy under sweating palms. Ma says she wants to put a big ceiling fan on the front verandah – it's part of the lottery list, the ever-growing list of things to do and buy when Da's scratchies finally pay off – so on Friday nights we can sit out comfortably.

"But comfort doesn't make for good songs,"

Da says,

"the heat hits a nerve so the music does too."

Ma calls him names like Yeats and O'Flaherty and others that line the spines of our bookcase.

"Stories are written with pain and only pain can breed stories that are written well. The Gaels of Ireland are the men that God made man. All their songs are sad."

D'you think so, Chesterton?

Ma bred my love of the old greats and the work they birthed. She and I have always read together.

Books are pretty much all she packed of her own when we came over. We had a huge library in Lurgan. An entire wall covered in books that Uncle Paddy brought back from

Queens during the term breaks. When we packed up the house, she packed the trunk that Da had made for her full of the best of the bookshelf. She and I spent the six weeks aboard the *S.S. Australis* with the likes of Wilde and O'Flaherty. Ma's favourite was W.F. Marshall – 'The Bard of Tyrone' she called him. He was only born down the road from her and he wrote poems that she knew, about people that she thought she knew. She probably did know them to be fair, it's a pretty tight-knit county. A community and family that is a rarity in this new land; a love and care so warm. Despite this, it's one of those places where a great amount more people are born there than die there and it wouldn't surprise me if Tyrone initiated the journey of the Irish Emigrant.

James Joyce was always my favourite. He wrote a story called *Eveline* and it was the last one Ma read to me the night before we left for Southampton. Our library in Lurgan was a truly soft room. The rectangular bi-fold doors would open up into a thick beige carpet, often a mattress to me when Ma would read at night. The room wasn't big, probably ten feet in any direction, but it fit the lot of us. On the left-hand wall sat a large golden lounge and opposite it two large golden tub-chairs placed in the corners, the entire set built by Da. He would have his intricate wooden side table – Celtic knots winding all the way up the legs – sitting next to him, with two tumblers – only ever Waterford crystal – sitting on the top next to a bottle of some sort. The entire far wall was a wooden bookcase, split in the middle by a fireplace that looked like it had rudely interrupted the brickwork of leather-bound tiles. He'd sit on the door side of the wall and Ma, near the books. This particular night, I was sat in his chair, opposite Ma. She told me to sit there – I was grown enough then and Da was down at Clann Eireann with Richie McCavanaugh and the boys. We sat there and she read to me. She burnt through collections and memoirs and stories. Verses upon verses of men and women from the north and the south, chapters of Catholics and paragraphs of Prods, Williams and Seamuses and Shankill and Falls and she finished the night then with *Eveline*.

"Tomorrow we go to a new world, Danny. It's-a place a long way away an' a place that you're going to know how t'love."

She told me.

"Eveline was scared here, Danny. But I'm not scared and neither should you be. It's a world of adventure out there. Much bigger than Lurgan. Much bigger than Belfast or even Dublin or London or Venice. Ireland will always be here,"

Ma said,

"and she'll be ready whenever you want to come back. But for now, she needs yeh to go. Go explore."

“She’ll be waiting.”

It always seemed to me that I never had much choice whether to explore or not. The five months that followed that night were a journey I never asked to go on but one I don’t think I regret. The land of the Lagan was a place which carried a hurt, but for me, it was a hurt easily squashed by my sunburnt land, unlike others. Éirinn Go Brách.

The pages are comfortable in my hand, and the air is thick around me. A northern tune floats through my head as it did through Fordham Street not too long ago. The pluck of a mandolin, a siren’s song, lands heavy upon my legs and my arms drop to my lap. Tonight perhaps I’ll dream of him again. And I’ll wake in this chair in the middle of the night to my father’s voice. And in the morning he’ll be in his bed.

And in the morning he’ll rise.

Blinding light penetrates deep into my mind, reaching to the back of my brain and waking me with a shock to see Ma waving from the driver’s seat of the yellow Ford Falcon station wagon.

“Danny, come give me a hand with Clare would you?”

She turned the car off and started to unwrap the two-year-old from her seatbelt which had snaked its way around her as she slept. I was cold now.

Chris, Cathy, and Hannah all rubbed tired eyes and stumbled out of the car and up into the front door which I must have left wide open. I grabbed Clare and Mum followed us in with Brid in a similar position.

“Did ye get the Cannelloni from Ms Fotea for Dinner?”

She whispered, careful not to wake Brid and subsequently the whole neighbourhood with her screams.

“Yeah no I got it. She dropped it off pretty much as I got home.”

Hannah had already climbed into bed and we laid Brid and Clare down next to her and Ma kissed them goodnight. We could already hear Chris snoring from across the hall and Rachel and Cathy were talking about something or other from behind their door next-door.

Ma and I managed to stay wordless. It was the sixteenth night and both of us knew that walls are thin in this house and walls are thin around our hearts and tears need not be shed for him yet.

“Goodnight Danny.”

She whispered.

“I love you, Ma.”

I breathed.

It was a dark night. And roses start to falter on nights like these.

Cyprus Brig

Da

A dark street on a dark night is a welcome intermission from the labours of my one-man theatre. Traipsing across these cold asphalt roads, no costume or make-up, laid bare to this cold asphalt world. I'm the drunkard. The man who will walk down Formosa Street, then Day Street, down to the bay to laugh at the loonies across the water at Callan Park.

*Then sound your golden trumpets, play on your tuneful notes
The “Cyprus Brig” is sailing, how proudly now she floats.
May fortune help the noble lad, and keep him ever free
From Gags, and Cats, and Chains and traps, and Cruel Tyranny.*

How proudly now I float. A dead man singing MacNamara for a dismal audience of none. Sometimes one desires an audience so bleak. It's why bands play at 11pm on a Tuesday at *P.J. Gallagher's* in Drummoyne. Those cats chasing magpies and lazy fat kookaburras are other drunks stooped over a pint of mild at the bar, head in hands. These possums listen and they do not talk. I perform for the kookaburras who laugh in gleeful mockery. I talk to the cockatoos as a patient talks to a surgeon during a leucotomy at Belfast's *Mater*.

For sixteen days now I've followed the wandering Kookaburra, my Láeg. He's toured me around the streets as Richie McCavanagh used to after a night in the black stuff that came out of Dublin's eight. On those nights he'd be there to walk and wander and talk and glass the walls which were wet with Union Jacks and red hands and that'd be our night until the boat departed on Lough Neagh and the sun cut through the fog beaming off the water.

*...Like a dull blade with its edge
honed bright, Lough Beg half shines under the haze.*

These are the memories that fortify under this land's melancholy sun. The years I spent enjoying the life I had, not regretting the life I wanted. Day after day from fifteen years of age until that day a month after my forty-first birthday.

She gave me a choice and I made my decision. Love is such a mighty drop, a mightier disease and it attacked my brain and made me believe that this godforsaken country was to be the land where I would raise my clan. It is terminal. I cannot regret the love I have for that woman and I cannot regret the love I have for the kids. On the day I decided, I couldn't have properly fathomed how my heart and how my mind would take that journey. I couldn't have imagined what it is to not see my mother's face. And I still can't imagine how her heart survived seeing her final boy leave the Lough.

The first one to leave was my father in '39. I was eight then. He fled south from the Brits after some anti-conscription plan went wrong and, after that, I only saw him when I was old enough to catch the train down to Wicklow.

My oldest brother found the power of books for a while there. He got a scholarship to a boarding school down south before getting another one to Queens. I still remember his bug-eyed face, his swaying corpse that I saw hanging from the rafters in an attic on the wrong side of Derry at sixteen years old.

My little sister found a man instead. A school teacher. He taught her mathematics in sixth form and the next year was sailing away with her back to his home in Southampton. The next time I saw her, that darling rose had wilted. Her school teacher was nowhere to be found, he'd given her a kid to look after and split, probably to the next country village in the Isles to find another young life to purge.

I found love and stayed. And it was love, well and truly.

I met Anne at a ball. Something or other for someone or other in the hall at Clann Eireann. She was young then, a year older than me, and had travelled from a little town

in Tyrone known mainly for the view from the graveyard. We would spend days and nights together, fantasising about the lands far away from Ireland and lying about how I longed for exploration so that I could see the twinkle in her eye when she thought she'd found her Shackleton. We were wed no more than six months later.

And she was now the most important person in my life.

And then she was the second.

Danny came into the world and kept me sane. Armagh was a firestorm and I was made to fuel it. It was either play my part in the provos or die in a ditch but instability was the way I was born and it is the way I was born to live. Funerals every Wednesday and retribution every Thursday. That is how I lived in Armagh in the 50's and 60's. That is how I lived when I was allowed to be a man. Before this country took what fight I had to give my son.

My children would've been brought up to sagas of souls leaching life, day by day. The percussion of rubber bullets pounding skulls would have gifted them their rhythm. The rhythm with which they, too, could sing the songs those legends wrote about Killeshandra and Derry and Fermanagh, the rhythm that I never chose to have but I was given nonetheless. That country embraced me wholeheartedly, dragging me down into the warm depths of deceit, where I too was compelled to plan like my father did and execute all the better or else it'd be my fish shop bombed early one Saturday morning, or else it'd be me they found with six bullets in the skull outside Castleblayney like J.F. Green.

Danny was what brought me back.

Danny was what brought me here.

Despite this, I can never not love him. This is why I haven't left yet. Sixteen days have come and gone and I had the grandest of plans to take my own Cyprus Brig. I'd take a yacht and head out past the heads. I'd aim for Japan with no faith that I'd make it because it was not a journey that I wanted to commence but it was the journey the world said I must embark on. But now I know that truly dead men can't sail. True death is the breaking of the soul. It is the corruption of feeling so deep that even your heartbeat itself is resigned to a numb melancholy like thunder rumbling on the horizon. The very tenets of human life, violated under a southern sun, become heavy and sunken. As heartbeat dies, so too does wit, and so too does rhythm, until the soul is dead and a shell of a body still potters through a life.

Six months after I landed on these shores, the world told me it'd be the place I go to die.

Cast a cold eye,
It said,
On Life,
On death, but the horseman won't pass by,
Instead,
His sharpened blade comes for my head.

Oh my dear Láeg, I wish you could take me home. I know you know the way. Follow the bay and head up First Avenue and into Fordham Street and into my Anne's bed. I can lay beside her and she will turn and kiss me and in the morning we can take the kids across to Bronte and Danny would never know how he helped me survive and Danny will never know how he killed me.

Wilde's sort of Love.

Ma

Danny

Surely love is a wonderful thing. It is more precious than emeralds and dearer than fine opals. Pearls and pomegranates cannot buy it, nor is it set forth in the marketplace. It may not be purchased of the merchants, nor can it be weighed out in the balance for gold.

Our love is Wilde's sort of love. A heavy love. A love that warms your heart enough to send bile scorching up your throat. A love like Sundays in your twenties, when tired eyes would stumble carelessly into a holy costume and you'd spend every hour on those pews praying purely for a soft bed to sleep away the thrills of the night before. A love describable, not by earthly matter, but by memories that only the greatest of those to wield a pen might gather.

Nights spent in a bed in a house in rural Co. Down which Sean's parents had owned since he was a child, lying still in the night, together. No words protruding and no sleep purveying itself to two bodies wrapped around each other.

*My pensive Sara! thy soft cheek reclined
Thus on mine arm, most soothing sweet it is
To sit beside our cot...*

He met the family around a fire in a drawing-room in Tyrone with a glass of Powers in hand. He had them laughing and smiling and crying for him and they knew, *they just knew now, Anne*, that he was a good man.

He was a good man.

Frank was very kind, manly, open-hearted. She was to go away with him by the night-boat to be his wife and to live with him...

Friday nights in '72 when kids would dot the lawn and Sean's voice thrummed across the asphalt and neighbours would sway in their seats between laughter and between tears. He'd put on voices and roar with Cu Chulainn and whisper and cry when rivers run dry or when he thought of the town he loved so well.

I think memory is the true fortress of Wilde's love. But now I can't remember him. My memory is filled with now. Now in a tub chair in the corner of our bedroom with a light over a radio reading 4:27 AM in brazen red, now staring at the window and now past it onto the street and now past that into the soul of the very woman staring back at me. She's an odd woman. Her eyelids are forced wide by something, screaming into the air of a summer's night with a mouth cursed in stoic smiling terror. Now when the wild woman buries herself in blankets and shakes her head and raises her glasses to continue on with *A Woman Young and Old*.

He. *Dear I must be gone.
While night shuts the eyes
Of the household spies;
That song announces dawn.*

Yes, He. He left sixteen nights ago and so far has yet to find his way back with the dawning sun, night in and night out. After a week is when concern unpicks the scar and sleep opens it wide and memory seeps to the floor. Is he a handsome man? With a full head of hair and a strong jaw? Is he a man like Kavanagh? Has he a beard and glasses and a frame skinny or large? Well, he was a fisherman, I know that. And Danny is starting to grow to look like him, that I remember. I must think of him as I knew him in days gone by now, for Wilde's love is the only sort of love I can have for Sean O'Flaherty.

Sleep is intimidating after ten or so days. The terrors grow and the thought of spending hours alone with my mind further whittles against my skull. When I steal the odd half an hour here or there, I wake up sticky, sweat sliding down my neck and gathering at my collar. It prompts nightmares. Dreams of creatures scaling down my spine. Or water pulling me under as it did in Third Form at St. Joseph's Convent in Donaghmore. Or sometimes blood, because rubber bullets crack skulls. Whatever way it happens, I wake up a mess, remembering why I don't sleep.

- Derevaun Seraun! Derevaun Seraun!

Leather soles break and bounce nearby.

A flock of currawongs currawong in an pre-dawning eucalypt across the road. They whistle like sailors keeping rhythm on a boat across the Indian Ocean, nearing Fremantle in May '72.

"Curra-wong! Curra-wong!"

"GahahahahaHAHAHAHAHAH"

Replies the cackling kookaburra, laughing at the poor kid he's woken up in the red brick house opposite.

Chris remains slobbering across the room, timing his whistles and snores with the crests and falls of his aviary accompaniment. Life finds its rhythm with the ticking of the clock in the middle of the room, its malformed hands crucified between a four and a five and a six. 4:32, he told me.

An orchestra of common life fills my tired ears as darkness fills my eyes or sticky air fills my nose or life slowly trickles into my brain for the day, drop after drop after drop in time with the tap-tip-tap on the footpath.

Did Sean wear leather soles? Did he have a limp? When he and I walked back down an aisle at St Paul's in Lurgan, was it the uneven flooring that made him bob up and down, or was that only at the end of a long reception? Please, let me see!

But my arms and my legs are fixed in place and not a muscle in my body will rise. This curse has grown and seeped from a stoic smile to a debilitating lock and Yeats sits on my lap with the weight of the man himself and yet her eyes remain the same. Now when I long to look out the window into the street and into his eyes and now when all I can see is the horrible woman's wretched face, contorted and twisted in her ever-glowing grin.

Whether pride or fear, it is debilitating. But what is it I am proud of? What is it I could need to fear?

It is a limp familiar to me. A tip-tap-tip. With a sway. An Irishman's waltz usually reserved for weddings or wakes or early Saturday mornings.

The tap-tip-tap that'd call this lad from the other end of a long hallway to tell him to sing because *you've got your father's voice, boy*.

A tip-tap-tip that'd catch Ma's hip and dip her down below her waist when the radio would play a song that needed to be danced to.

The tap-tip-tap that'd bring him back to tend to the roses and fix a door lock and sing the street the lullabies that it has so dearly missed.

The songman's limp that would finally put Ma to sleep and right this house to how it should be and leave the bottle at the door like we do for the milkman, never to be seen again.

That tip-tap-tip keeps time with Chris and the clock and the currawongs and the kookaburras and the drops of life that are slowly but surely rebirthing my brain.

The leather soles have stopped. No longer breaking and bouncing but crunching across a lawn succumbed to a patchwork of paspalum. Feeling returns to my body as a tingle in my hand. A rock in my throat. Shaking legs. Empty stomach. Lungs scratching. Bile scorching. Walls breaking. Eyes fogging. Blood curdling.

Tears breaking. Hands throwing. Legs running.

Heart pumping. Rose growing. Currawongs currawonging. Life building and building to crescendo. Linear time getting faster and faster. Seconds flying. Seconds dragging. And footsteps thumping out a door nearby in between violent sobs. Chris is awake. He looks at me. I jump. Footsteps thump out a door and Ma throws open the screen and stops.

Knees collapsing. Body falling. Voice breaking.

Lawn patchy. Lawn empty.

Air sticky. Air thick.

Jewels of white hit brown as dirt falls back to cold, brown dirt.

Thessalonians

Danny

The sun on the water is blinding. Sheets of early-morning orange bounce around Sydney harbour and from this dead-man's seat on this dead-man's bridge I can see three million lives begin to rise with the sun's touch, like roses to the first springtime sun after a cold, cold winter. They found his body overnight. And on the seventeenth day I was called to see a swollen shell wrapped in plastic and assure them of who it was. Ma had gone back to bed and was yet to rise, so when the call came, it was I who ventured down to meet them while Chris took care of the rest. A note was placed under an empty bottle of Johnnie, a single Fordham Street rose inside. Tears were spread but sparse, and the paper shrivelled through certain handwritten lyrics of a certain well sung song.

And it helped me to answer them. The how's. The when's.

The why's.

The dead-man's soul is home.

The pipes.

The pipes are calling.

A soft breeze carries the sounds and smells of a suburban summer morning. Children's cries to their father through peculiar, hybrid accents and roses – well past blooming – fragrant and bucolic. Neighbours line their verandahs merely to observe the chaos of early morning orange, watching as a quiet old Italian man puts a hand around the young Irish lad, somehow still smiling, grateful for the gift of a new day.

“De singing won’ stop soon, ah, boy?” Nonno smiles.

You know as well as I do, only when those roses die.

MUSIC 1

Will Austin

Performance: Voice/Piano

Core Performance: 'When I Was Your Man' by Bruno Mars

Elective 1: 'Soul' by Will Austin

Elective 2: 'Gethsemane' by Andrew Lloyd Webber

Elective 3: 'Lately' by Stevie Wonder

REFLECTION STATEMENT

My major work consisted of four vocal performances, with two of them involving self-accompaniment on the piano. My performances ranged from sombre piano ballads, starting slowly and ending with a big final chorus, to emotional musical rock pieces. My choice of repertoire was inspired by the work of artists such as Bruno Mars, Stevie Wonder and John Farnham.

'Soul' is an original piece of music written and composed by myself and performed on piano and vocals. I was able to encapsulate and showcase a wide range of music styles, concepts, techniques and genres through my varying elective performances, catering to different emotions and genres.





WILL AUSTIN

CORE PERFORMANCE - WHEN I WAS YOUR MAN, BRUNO MARS
ELECTIVE 1 - SOUL, WILL AUSTIN
ELECTIVE 2 - GETHSEMANE, ANDREW LLOYD WEBBER
ELECTIVE 3 - LATELY, STEVIE WONDER

Soul

Words and lyrics by Will Austin

I'll always remember that day the way you looked at me
You probably didn't mean it but it hit me like those movie scenes
The ones where they all, they all fall in love
Had that chance for you and I
This ain't no joke the state that I'm in tonight

But with every story we know there always comes a twist
There's gotta be a reason for everything to not exist
Cause you'll never know the way that I feel
Cause for you it's just not real
This ain't no joke the state that I'm in tonight
I'll never be alright

Chorus

So I can't let you go
Like a fire that you cease to blow
And I've never felt so low
Now I'm left picking up my soul

I remember searching for a reason, a way to make you stay
Searching for your promise I wasted so many nights and days
Cause you'll never know, you'll never see just how it's killing me
This ain't no joke the state that I'm in tonight

Chorus

I want you to stay now baby, please don't ever go
I want you to lay here baby, cause now I need you the most
I want you to lay with me forever
Cause you'll never know the truth
Cause the hardest bit is letting go of you

So I can't let you go
You'll forever be in my soul
I've never felt so low
But I have to pick up my soul

DRAMA

Luca McDonald

Bloodwood

REFLECTION STATEMENT

In my Video Drama, 'Bloodwood', I aimed to create a dramatic short film that explores a sub-set of possible challenges and misinterpretations in the neurodiverse community and highlights the value of neurodiverse individuals who are misunderstood if viewed only through a neurotypical lens.

By having a non-verbal main character, I also hoped to raise awareness for people with non-verbal autism spectrum disorder (ASD), who are under-represented in film and media. I explored some of the attributes and challenges that accompany living with ASD, in particular the difficulties in social interactions and communication and common traits such as sound sensitivity. In creating a non-verbal protagonist who is sensitive to noise, the utilisation of sound was central in helping me develop the story and achieve tension, climax and engagement.

My creative process as a whole was extensive, taking many hours of planning, writing, storyboarding, filming and editing. Informing and inspiring this process was extensive online research and films, such as Louis Theroux's insightful documentary *Extreme Love - Autism* and Leonardo DiCaprio's performance in *What's Eating Gilbert Grape*. Importantly, significant inspiration came from my personal relationships with people from the neurodiverse community and their families.

In regards to my filmmaking process, I was influenced by several short and feature films and the abundance of free tutorials and lessons on YouTube (hopefully proving to my parents that all the time spent watching videos and films wasn't a waste of time).

The hours spent on this film have caused me to learn more than I had imagined. They have given me a greater understanding and appreciation of filmmaking as an art form. Although COVID restrictions meant that I wasn't able to complete the film as I wished, overall I'm very happy with 'Bloodwood' and excited for the film-making experiences that lie ahead.

SCRIPT

1. Intro scene – Location: Clarke’s Point Dock

Opens with a black screen.

The sinister instrumental, *When Everyone Else Is Gone* by Christian Andersen plays quietly.

Subtle inaudible muttering, quiet birds chirping and rustling leaves are heard. We hear feet walking.

[Fade On]

The first shot opens on a wooden walkway with the camera slowly transitioning left. The sound of walking feet and muttering becomes more prominent. Bare feet enter the frame moving left and pass. As feet enter we hear a subtle rise in music. Feet are dirty and bare.

The second shot conveys an extreme close up of Jake’s mouth - muttering what seems like indistinct gibberish. Head is faced down looking only half a metre in front of him. His identity is hidden.

The third shot displays a wide shot, looking up at Jake from in front of him as he holds a metal implement in his hand which is unclear to the viewer. Black headphones sit on his neck. Symmetry is important.

Tracking shot of Jake walking. Muttering and heavy footsteps are more prominent. Jake is **menacing**.

A wide-angled drone shot provides visual contrast. The drone slowly moves backwards. This is the first time we get a good look at the surroundings. Jake is placed right of the frame and we view a woman (Rachel) who is exercising and power-walks into the frame from the bottom left. The music rises and becomes more intense.

Close up of Rachel as she notices Jake ahead of her. Rachel slows down, frowns and looks both surprised and concerned. The camera is angled down on Rachel.

Close up of Jake, still muttering. Camera looking up at Jake to convey power and dominance. Jake’s eyes flick up to see Rachel and very quickly flick back down.

Closer drone shot as subjects become closer in distance to one another.

Over the shoulder shot on Jake with Rachel in the background. Both characters walk slowly. Heartbeat, muttering and breath are subtly heard. The camera pans around Jake's head to his face to view muttering. Jake stops walking and muttering and we pan back around his shoulder to see Rachel turn and walk quickly back in the direction from which she came. (Heavy breath)

Wide angled drone shot, Rachel is still moving quickly away in the bottom left of the frame and exits. Jake is stopped in the middle of the frame. The drone moves out and we see the title "BLOODWOOD" above which is 3D tracked into the scene on After Effects.

Back to Jake who returns to muttering. The camera pans around Jake's head while he puts on his headphones. The camera movement finishes as a close up with a side-profile view of Jake's head centre frame. Jake turns the power button on for his headphones.

HEADPHONE'S VOICE

**BEEP* Power on. Noise-cancelling activated.*

All sound becomes blocked off including wind, chattering, birds and non-diegetic music. Jake's muttering ceases. As sound becomes muted, a dolly zoom moves away from Jake as his frown/preoccupied look disintegrates into a neutral expression. The previously dark, cold and monochromatic colour scheme fades into a brighter, warmer and more pleasant colour scheme. Jake is in a calmer, more comfortable state. Jake double touches the side of headphones to play music.

Another Night by Cody High begins to play.

2. IN BUSHLAND - Location: Clarke's Point Bushland

The same song continues as Jake walks through the bush holding his metal implement listening to music. Panning shots through trees and creating an eerie vibe. Masking transitions with trees as well. B-roll of surroundings.

As Jake walks through the bush he also plays with his necklace, a common mannerism of people who are neurodiverse.

Suddenly changes to Rachel's point of view, looking at Jake from behind trees. Jake moves up a ledge into a hidden clearing.

Cut back to Jake as we see his arm rise and fall as we hear the metal object striking and scraping the earth.

Changes back to Rachel's P.O.V. as she sees a peek of Jake's hunched back and hear the sound of metal hitting the earth.

No longer in Rachel's point of view, we view Rachel pull out her phone as an animated holographic of a texting conversation appears next to her. Rachel seems nervous and upset as she begins to text an unknown character. The texting conversation is as follows:

TEXT: H

R: *I'm in Wallum's Bush. There's a strange guy here. I think he has a knife*

H: *You ok? What's he doing?!*

R: *I don't want to get too close.*

R: *I think he's digging.*

H: *Do you think you should call the police?*

With the last message, we view a close up of Rachel who looks up, unsure of what to do.

Changes to shot of Jake scraping out soil and hammering ground with his tool. Still in his zone with noise-cancelling headphones. Music nears climax.

HEADPHONE VOICE

BEEP* Low Battery. Please recharge headset. *BEEP

Sounds of his surroundings return. Frontwards moving dolly zoom shot as Jake lifts his head, conveying how Jake is being pulled away from the focus of his task. Correspondingly, the light and warm colour scheme becomes dark and cold once more.

Close up shot of Jake as he realises what has happened. He is in shock and anxious. He slowly takes off his headphones and places them around his neck while looking around his surrounding space with rapid eye movement and little head movement.

Noises around Jake become clearer, evident using panning in sound and showing clips. e.g. People walking past and talking, leaves rustling, a dog barking, water smashing into rocks, birds squawking, helicopter flying past, kids playing... etc. We also faintly hear the sounds of sirens in the distance, however it is unclear if they are for another purpose. A frenzy of these sound-associated clips quickly alternates, creating tension.

With the introduction of sounds, Jake grabs his belongings and begins to leave, still stressed and hearing passing noises. Sounds stay together and volume climaxes with riser, creating a large amount of tension.

Once out on path and with a climax of noises, Jake stops, screws his eyes, puts his chin to his chest and shuts his ears tight with his hands making desperate humming noises. Before putting his hands to his ears, we view a slo-mo shot of Jake releasing his trowel and plastic stakes. Jake sways back and forth in an attempt to calm himself down. He is breathing heavily and starts softly hitting his head with the palm of his hand. We view a wide shot of Jake as he is forced out of his own safe and comfortable world and into a world he perceives as chaotic.

Drone shot of bushland from above pulls back over the environment. As the drone pulls away, the amalgamation of sounds gradually fade out.

We see a blurred shot of Jake's belongings lying on the ground where he dropped them. The scene is silent, contrasting the previous loud combination of noise.

Changes to a wide shot of the belongings from further away. Rachel walks into frame, in between the camera and belongings.

The blurred close up of Jake's items comes into focus and we are able to see that there is a trowel and plastic stake used for identifying flora on the ground.

On the plastic stake there are printed labels with the words:

'Red Bloodwood' and the botanical name, 'Corymbia Gummifera'.

Rachel's hand comes into frame and picks up the items.

We view a close up of Rachel as she observes the items. She expresses realisation and then disappointment in herself.

The shot fades into a timelapse of a sunset, conveying the passing of time.

3. BUSH RESOLUTION - Kelly's Bush

At a later date, the morning sun shines on the scenery and Rachel is out walking.

She walks by and spots a group of people, including Jake, doing native regeneration work. Jake is facing away from Rachel organising plant labels. Jake looks content and his headphones rest on his neck.

We view Rachel move cautiously towards him.

RACHEL

Ex... Excuse me? (Jake looks up)
(Jake is initially confused but neutral)

I think this is yours.
(Holds out Jake's trowel)

Jake looks at his trowel and then up towards Rachel. Jake reaches out to take the trowel, smiles slightly, then nods once towards Rachel in appreciation. Close up stays on Jake's face after he nods at Rachel, as he looks down at his trowel, finally relaxed.

Close up of the trowel digging into the ground, and followed by a close up of a group of people placing a tree sapling into the hole.

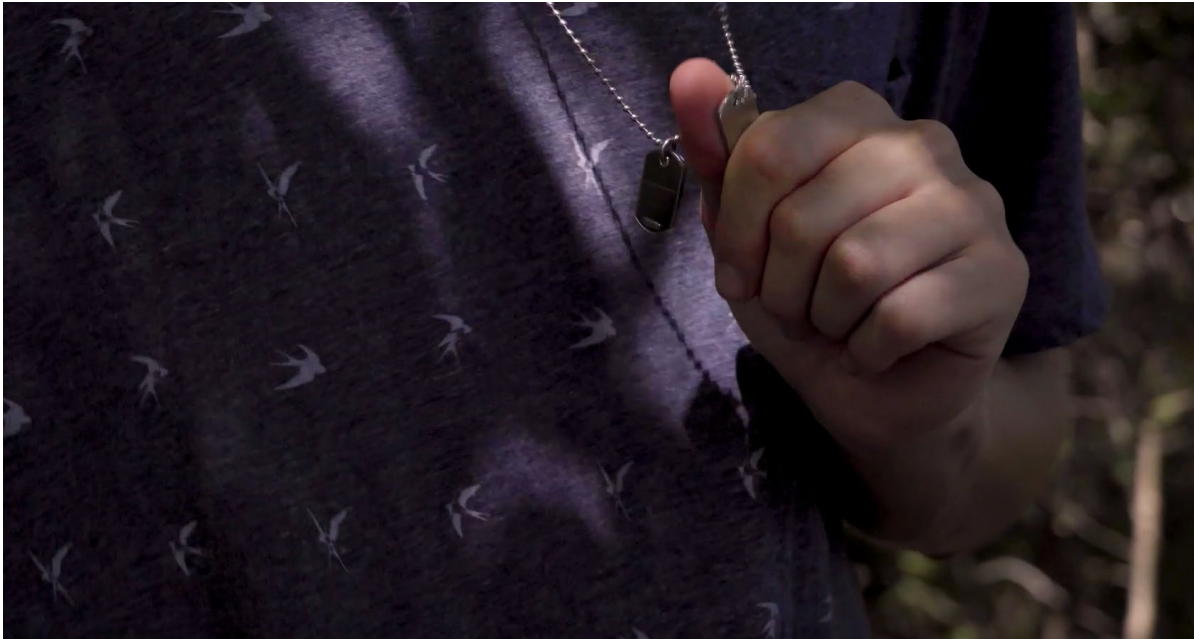
Wide shot of Jake placing in stake in front as others move out of frame. Zoom slowly pulls back and once others move out, we just see Jake and the stake which says "Red Bloodwood".

Fades to black.

Credits roll.

End.









VISUAL ARTS

Mackenzie Thompson

Heavy Industries: A Monochrome Tribute

REFLECTION STATEMENT

My Visual Arts Body of Work is an ode to heavy industries and the workers on the frontline of our civilization; the individuals who are often invisible in the shadows of company names. The six portraits are depictions of miners, fishermen, welders, construction workers and firefighters. They are all professions that I regard as responsible for enabling our society's economic growth and development. The series aims to depict strong, resilient workers who day in and day out go about their everyday work, which is often very physically demanding and unglamorous. I have used the humble, messy charcoal media to render each of the portraits with a degree of realism, and this was coupled with an expressive and dynamic background which suggests the physical nature of their work.

Much like the professions themselves, the charcoal media has provided me with an opportunity and a connection to the grit and grind of everyday work that is evident in the process of creating my body of work and within each of these professions. The precision of mark making parallels the precision required within the work of heavy industry labourers. The dynamic work environment so often found in these trades is encapsulated through the expressive movement and varied applications of smeared, splattered and drips of charcoal in the backgrounds. I have great appreciation for these workers because it's people like themselves, who aren't afraid to get dirty, who ultimately enable society's evolution.











ENGLISH

Jack Thompson

Transcend

REFLECTION STATEMENT

“We become what we behold. We shape our tools, and thereafter, our tools shape us”
- Marshall McLuhan

Representation shapes perception: our television and cinema screens reflect culturally constructed images that contain the power to validate, choke, liberate, subjugate and transform its subject matter. This is not merely abstract conceptualising for “*when you see images that are reflective of your own life, it is a reminder that your life matters.*”

My ficto-critical essay, *Transcend*, uses Clark’s Model of the evolutionary stages of minorities in mass media to criticise the misrepresentation of transgender (trans) women through the dehumanising ‘monster’ trope that has pervaded Western television and cinema screens. Ultimately, *Transcend* exists to advocate for authentic, self-determining representations for “as trans women are given agency, and autonomy, their hands are able to shift the lens of the camera, move the pen on the script, and redefine the future of representation.”

NARRATIVE

I was, besides, endued with a figure hideously deformed and loathsome; I was not even of the same nature as man. When I looked around, I saw and heard of none like me.

Mary Shelley¹

The transsexual body is an unnatural body ... It is flesh torn apart and sewn together again in a shape other than that in which it was born. Like the monster [in Mary Shelley's Frankenstein], I am too often perceived as less than fully human due to the means of my embodiment.

Susan Stryker²

Representations reflect conceptions of contemporary culture which have been shaped by theoretical constructs that determine “one” from “the other”³. The growing emancipation of transgender voices in Western Film and Television is, in part, reflective of evolving transgender theory. Moving towards autonomous celebrations, the trope of ‘monstrosity’ has lingered. This archetype of ‘the monster’; a disturbance to humanity; wretchedly divisive, destructive, and demonised, has been inextricably linked to female transgender characters over the past decade, thereby, maintaining depictions of deviance.

Professor Susan Stryker, a leading transgender theorist accredited with articulating and popularising *Transgender Theory*⁴ extends upon Judith Butler’s *Queer Theory*⁵ by examining the association of transgender identities with notions of monstrosity. Stryker includes transgender individuals in the conceptualisation of ‘gender performativity’⁶, which Butler overlooked. As Stryker argues, “transsexuality challenges the conventions of legitimate gender and performance”⁷, suggesting that their construction confronts society in such a manner which destabilises the

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 - 5 Butler, Judith. *Notes Toward a Performative Theory of Assembly*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2015.
 - 6 Ibid
 - 7 Stryker. S, *My Words to Victor Frankenstein*

perception of heteronormative normality, and therefore results in depictions which associate transness and monstrosity. However, when transgender women are given the opportunity to articulate their experiences, both inside and outside the realm of gender narratives, the complexity and nuance of the transgender experience can be fully realised.

Cedric C. Clark's '*Observations on the Portrayals of Ethnic Minorities*'⁸ articulates a model of the evolution of representation that minority groups experience over time. When applying this model to transgender women on screen within the last decade, different stages of representation; *ridicule*, *regulation* and finally, *respect*, are evident. Namely, the 'ridicule'⁹ inherent within the female trans characterisation of Rayon, in filmic drama, *Dallas Buyers Club*¹⁰ (2013), directed by Jean-Marc Vallée, embodies the perceived inferiority of transgender women, painting their existence as deviant and malformed. The 'regulation'¹¹ of the character of Sophia, in Jenji Kohan's television series *Orange is The New Black*¹² (2013-2019) highlights significant issues which exist within the intersectional experience of transgender women, yet also affirms psychological deficiency and subhumanity through the plot. Finally, '*respect*'¹³ is evident in *Pose*¹⁴ (2018-2021), directed by transgender, executive director, Janet Mock. Respectful representations of the transgender community are apparent in the direction, scriptwriting and performance as the series celebrates transgender women. As such, their identity on screen is no longer "hideously deformed"¹⁵, but intricate, complex, and valued. Such evolution must cause us to ask, speculatively, what is possible when the perceived 'monster' reclaims their monstrosity to control their own creations?

A brief word on etymology

From now on, the term 'trans' and 'transness' are used in accordance with Stryker's¹⁶ terminology. Historically the term 'transvestite' and 'transsexual' have been used to describe drag performers, cross-dressers, or people who have had sex re-assignment

8 Clark, C., *Television and Social Controls: Some Observations on the Portrayals Ethnic Minorities*, Television Quarterly, 1969

9 Ibid

10 Vallee, J., *Dallas Buyers Club*, Voltage Pictures, 2013

11 Clark, C., *Television and Social Controls*

12 Kohan, J., *Orange is The New Black*, Netflix, 2013-2019

13 Clark, C., *Television and Social Controls*

14 Murphy, R., *Pose*, Fox Studios, 2018-2021

15 Stryker, S., *My Words to Victor Frankenstein*

16 Ibid

surgery. Therefore, the umbrella term ‘trans’ encompasses a wide variety of gender identities and expressions.

(Trans)Formation

monster | ‘mɛnstə |

noun

a congenitally malformed or mutant animal or plant.¹⁷

June 4th, 1943

April¹⁸ finds the medical tape. In a swift and almost effortless manoeuvre, she lifts her dangling genital and meticulously wraps it in a bandage, taping it under her groin, and cutting the tape off at her lower back, and then sliding some pink lace underpants up her legs to mask the sculpted art. She walks to the opposite end of her small room and into a museum of collected dresses, skirts, blouses, and high heeled shoes. Unfortunately, the collection is only on loan from her mother, not that she knows yet, of course. She selects a teal blue dress that flows down to the knees, pairing it with a silver bracelet, a pair of white shoes and a black purse. She turns to the mirror and stuffs some socks down the dress, creating the beautiful bust of ‘real’ women, the cleavage of ‘normal’ women.

“George! Come down please! Your grandmother has arrived!”

In a matter of moments, the shoes are flung under the bed, the socks replaced in the drawer, the dress covered with a button-down shirt and some trousers. Hidden.

“Oh, look how handsome you are! My grandson is becoming a young man!”

Within the last century, screen depictions have been preoccupied with physical monstrosity, using trans women to uphold a binary of normal and abnormal. For example, *The Danish Girl*¹⁹, *Ace Ventura: Pet Detective*²⁰ and *Dressed to Kill*²¹, all emphasise the physicality of their female trans character, limit their psychological complexity within their identity as trans individuals and use trans women as a comedic device.

17 Oxford Dictionary, 2018. As sourced at <https://www.lexico.com/definition/monster>. (Accessed 12/06/2021).

18 All vignettes loosely based off the life of trans activist April Ashley, one of the first scrutinised trans women in the media.

19 Hooper. T, *The Danish Girl*, Working Title Films, 2015

20 Shadyac. T, *Ace Ventura: Pet Detective*, Morgan Creek Productions, 1994

21 De Palma. B, *Dressed to Kill*, Cinema 77: Film Group, 1980

Within the realm of transgender theory, Professor Stryker articulates, “[l]ike the monster, I am too often perceived as less than fully human due to the means of my embodiment.”²² One revealing aspect of Stryker’s commentary surrounds the notion of ‘embodiment’; namely, a preoccupation with biological features of trans individuals which negates the complex, lived experiences of trans women in their characterisation. This is evident in the filmic drama, *Dallas Buyers Club* (2013), as Jean Marc Vallée, the director, reveals the relationship between the representation of trans women and their inherent possession of physical ‘deformity’, as well as the role of trans women on screen, who are used as tools to uphold heteronormative ideologies. This film emphasises the notion that trans women are symbolic of a conflict between the binaries of external and internal and normal and abnormal. Further, through the characterisation of Rayon, the association with her transness as a means of ‘ridicule’²³ of the feminine form, as trivialised by the inclusion of a cis male, Jared Leto, affirms Cedric C. Clarks theory on representation of minorities.

“I beheld the wretch – the miserable monster whom I had created”²⁴

The character of trans woman, Rayon, is portrayed as mentally, emotionally, and physically unstable as she battles a drug addiction and AIDS. This only dramatises the nature of the trans experience, positing the idea that Rayon’s transness is the root of her mutation. This is highlighted in the intrusive ‘Exposure Scene’²⁵, which encapsulates the concept of transgender disgust and deformity, using the trans literary trope of a mirror²⁶ to reflect Rayon’s sense of self-hatred and inferiority.

Right ‘Exposure Scene’ as Rayon reflects on her physicality in the mirror in *Dallas Buyers Club* (2013), directed by Jean-Marc Vallée



Captured using an over-the-shoulder panning shot and key lighting, Rayon’s skeletal frame is shown in segmented close-ups to reveal her ‘wretchedness’. Cael Keegan, Associate Professor of Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies, in his article, *Moving Bodies*, articulates, “trans characters endlessly stand in front of mirrors, nude and in

22 Stryker. S, *My Words to Victor Frankenstein*

23 Clark. C, *Television and Social Controls*

24 Shelley. M, *Frankenstein*

25 McLaren. J, *Recognize Me: An Analysis of Transgender Media Representation*, University of Windsor, 2018

26 Ibid

various stages of undress, examining themselves with a range of negative emotions running from dismay to wistful melancholy to pure disgust.”²⁷ Here, the purpose of the mirror trope is seen in its capacity to convey the concept that trans women are powerless vehicles of deviation and monstrosity, disempowering their identity to the limits of their transness, and therefore violating their humanity.



Left ‘Exposure Scene’ as Rayon applies makeup to her face in the mirror in *Dallas Buyers Club* (2013), directed by Jean-Marc Vallée

Moving into a close-up, Rayon examines her emaciated body in a costumed wig cap, and pair of underpants, showing her bare chest to portray her as a man which invalidates her femininity to focus on her distress with her trans figure. This emphasises her character’s torment, not merely with AIDS, but with her “dehumanising”²⁸ position as a trans female. Overlaid diegetic sound of Rayon’s breathing, with the soft voiceover of her private internal conversation with God, “God, when I meet you, *I want to be pretty* if it’s the last thing I do.”²⁹ The bathetic significance of Rayon’s life being reduced to a preoccupation with “being pretty”, the acceptance that beauty and physicality brings, summarises the characters struggle with ‘physical monstrosity’. Subsequently, the ‘mirror scene’³⁰ objectifies Rayon, exploring her dysphoria as the focalisation of identity, developing a narrative of physiological and psychological deterioration. Rayon’s character is thus ‘ridiculed’³¹ by her constructed embodiment of deformity as a result.

27 Keegan. C, *Moving Bodies: Sympathetic Migrations in Transgender Narrativity*, University of Colorado, 2013

28 Kagan. D, “AIDS Retrovisions: *Dallas Buyers Club* and *The Normal Heart*.” *Positive Images: Gay Men & Hiv Aids in the Culture of ‘Post-Crisis’*. Bloomsbury Collections, New York, 2018, pg 201-221.

29 Vallee. J, *Dallas Buyers Club*

30 Keegan. C, *Moving Bodies*

31 Clark. C, *Television and Social Controls*

“Fairer than a garden rose among dark-leaved brambles”³²

Transgender characters increasingly function as the site in which to contain all ‘gender trouble’³³, thereby helping to “secure heterosexuality as stable and normative”³⁴. As Stryker notes, “[t]ranssexuality more than any other transgender practice or identity represents the prospect of destabilizing the foundational presupposition of fixed genders.”³⁵ Thus, screen portrayals reflect narratives whereby trans female characters are an unnatural digression of ‘natural’ humanity.

Rayon’s relationship with Ron, a ‘cisgender’³⁶ male character, is indicative of the hegemonic transphobia which underpins Western culture. Ron’s introductory conversation with Rayon includes the expressions; “Get the f*** out of here, *whatever you are*, before I kick you in the f***ing face”³⁷ where the connotations associated with the determiner “whatever” with the pronoun “you” implies that Rayon has an indistinguishable, sub-human form. In reply, Rayon normalises the conversation by suggesting, “(beat) You wanna play cards?”³⁸. Despite Ron’s rejection of Rayon which established her subjugation, her character continues to exaggerate femininity to the point of exhaustion, highlighting a reliance on white male affirmation.

Preconceptions of inferiority associated with the transness of Rayon’s character, in relation to Ron, are further represented through the ‘Trans mammy’³⁹ trope. The mammy trope stems from racist depictions of a “black nursemaid in charge of white children”⁴⁰, allowing dominant culture to assert power and affirm racist ideologies.

Right The trans ‘Mammy’ trope in *Dallas Buyers Club* (2013)



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- 32 Shelley. M, *Frankenstein*
 - 33 Butler. J, *Gender Trouble*, Routledge, 1990
 - 34 Stryker. S, *Transgender Studies; Queer Theory's Evil Twin*, GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies, 2004.
 - 35 Ibid
 - 36 To identify with the gender assigned at birth
 - 37 Vallee. J, *Dallas Buyers Club*
 - 38 Ibid
 - 39 Steinbook, E., *On not really being there: trans* presence/absence in Dallas Buyers Club*, Feminist Media Studies, 2017
 - 40 Oxford Dictionary, 2018

Dr E. A Steinbock, Assistant Professor of Film and Literary Studies, in her critique, *On not really being there: trans* presence/absence in Dallas Buyers Club*, draws a connection between the two depictions, suggesting that comparative ‘care-giver’ and ‘prop’ are the most present storylines of trans women characters. Namely, inferior, dramatised plotlines which emphasise sub-human trans female characters. Further, as a cis male representing trans women, the casting decision to employ Jared Leto, affirmed the idea that Rayon’s characterisation is a form of ‘ridicule’⁴¹. As Steinbock notes:

*“Leto’s achievement of a starved feminine body performing non-threatening acts of seduction and care work shows the spectator once again damaging myths... that trans feminine bodies bear the brunt of sexism.”*⁴²

Leto’s degenerative and diminished depiction of the trans woman form highlights her as a weak and futile character, unable to exist outside the realm of Ron, demonstrating the dichotomy between the object of suffering and “white male heroism”⁴³. Vallée presents Rayon as an extension of heteronormative identity, used as a “dramatic instrument for the straight white male hero’s evolution from aggressively heterosexual homophobe to compassionate advocate for PLWHA”^{44,45}. This is indicative of the abuse to which trans women are subject to, chewed up and spat out by the mouth of the true monster.

In (Trans)it

monster | ‘mɛnstə |
noun

an inhumanely cruel or wicked person⁴⁶

June 4th, 1963

“Tonight, we cover the story of fashion model ‘April Ashley’ who, this morning has been outed as a transexual. Despite modelling for fashion houses, advertisements and the acclaimed ‘Vogue’ magazine, April confesses that five years ago she was a man. It has been confirmed tha-”

41 Clark. C, *Television and Social Controls*

42 Steinbock. E, *On not really being there*”

43 Kagan. D, “*AIDS Retrovisions: Dallas Buyers Club and The Normal Heart.*” *Positive Images: Gay Men & Hiv Aids in the Culture of ‘Post-Crisis’*. Bloomsbury Collections, New York, 2018, pg 201-221.

44 People Living With HIV/AIDS

45 Kagan. D, *AIDS Retrovisions*

46 Oxford Dictionary, 2018. As sourced at <https://www.lexico.com/definition/monster>. (Accessed 12/06/2021).

The television in April's room is muffled by shuttering cameras outside. The report resumes... "I for one think it is a disgrace. Women have been fighting for our rights, and for a man to swoop in and take all the attention away from real issues is disgusting. He should be ashamed of himself."

A gentle wave of bile churns April's body into unimaginable contortions, forcing her to rely on gravity for the supple safety it provides.

"April, you 'ome love!?! There're some people 'ere for ya"

Rising from the crumpled sheets, April places a woollen, knitted cardigan over her shoulders.

"Mrs, or Mr, Ashley, I am here from the Sunday People, I have a few questions."

Her voice finally emerges through the doorway, "I have one statement for you all. I am not a monster. I am flesh and blood, and a human being with all the human feminine feelings of a woman."⁴⁷

She spoke but she wasn't sure if anyone had heard.

Within the trope of 'monstrosity' lies its association with criminality and deviance. Ralph J. Poole articulates, "[t]his ultimate comingling of criminal[ity] and gender transgression is represented as perverse or hysterical symptoms of a psychotic condition"⁴⁸. This notion is best revealed through Jenji Kohan's television series (2013-2019) *Orange is The New Black* as it unintentionally undermines the psychological validity of trans women. In accordance with the 'regulatory'⁴⁹ ideas of a heteronormative dominant culture, this series affirms societal perceptions which associate trans women with images of psychopathy, criminality, and 'monstrosity'⁵⁰. Historically, films, such as *Silence of the lambs*⁵¹ and *Psycho*⁵², have used trans antagonists as a means of embodying violence and insanity, thus enforcing social beliefs which categorise trans women as inherently deviant.

Orange is The New Black demonstrates a progression of representation as the series does explore the intricacies of intersectionality by examining race and class issues aligned with transsexuality. The casting director, Jen Euston's, choice to cast transgender

47 Ashley. A, *Goodby M'Sieu, Hello Mamselle, The Doctor Said, The Sunday People*, 1961

48 Poole. R, *Towards a Queer Futurity: New Trans Television*, *European Journal of American Studies*, 2017

49 Clark. C, *Television and Social Controls*

50 Stryker. S, *My Words to Victor Frankenstein*

51 Demme. J, *Silence of the Lambs*, Strong Heart Productions, 1991

52 Hitchcock. A, *Pyscho*, Hamley Productions, 1960

actress, Laverne Cox, as Sophia, is a positive reinforcement for the validity of trans women. However, Euston's storyline centres around the "archetypal criminal/deviant"⁵³ through Sophia's characterisation as a fraudulent criminal within the setting of Litchfield Prison. Thus, Sophia's characterisation as a criminal reinforces associations between transsexuality and criminality. Nikki Reitz analyses the characterisation of Sophia succinctly as "falling into the two most common tropes trans characters [experience]", namely, "both a criminal and a victim"⁵⁴.

"I was like a wild beast that had broken the toils"⁵⁵

How can wider audiences reflect on the beautiful complexity of the trans experience, if we are constantly shown images of rage and distress? The preoccupation with trans monstrosity is revealed and exacerbated in Season 3, Episode 12 (2015) when Sophia is subject to a hate crime. While the depiction does elicit empathy, when an inmate states, "Spanish been saying how you still got your dick"⁵⁶, the dialogue perpetuates notions of castration and the disembodiment of trans women as a focal and monstrous aspect of their identity.

Further, questions surrounding Sophia's physicality reflect the stratifications imposed on the trans identity as "negatively coded, associated directly with castration, madness, murder and monstrosity."⁵⁷ Sophia's attempt at self-defence leads only to another inmate commenting on Sophia's testosterone; "See, I told you she still had her *man strength!*"⁵⁸ This derogatory comment characterises Sophia as an imposter within her own identity, and therefore an 'inhumane creature' who is perceived as violent, rage driven and frightening. Director of this episode, Uta Briesewitz, incorporates jump cuts and a multicamera setup to depict a crazed *mis en scene* of Sophia's fury, emphasised through the non-diegetic ominous music.

Although the accuracy of such rage depicted in this scene is reflective of how transphobic notions manifest themselves in our contemporary Western zeitgeist, when this becomes the only image we see, trans women, in the mind of the viewer, are associated with a perpetual antagonism. Thus, by portraying the perceived inherent mental instability, and criminality of trans women, this depiction of Sophia is heavily 'regulated'⁵⁹ by the transphobic and harmful ideas of dominant culture.

53 Reitz, N, *The Representation of Trans Women in Film and Television*, *Cinesthesia*: Vol. 7: Issue 1, Article 2, Scholar Works, 2017

54 Ibid

55 Shelley, M, *Frankenstein*

56 Kohan, J, *Orange is The New Black*, Netflix, 2013-2019

57 Phillips, J, *Transgender on Screen*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2006.

58 Kohan, J, *Orange is The New Black*,

59 Clark, C, *Television and Social Controls*

Right Sophia screaming at the other characters in retaliation



“Shall each man” cried he, “find a wife for his bosom, and each beast have his mate, and I be alone?”⁶⁰

Placed inside the Security Housing Unit (SHU), unable to access daylight, fresh air, and human connection, director, Briesewitz, uses the ‘SHU’ as a metaphor to explore the subjugation of trans women from dominant culture, using lighting and framing to posit Sophia as silenced and ‘imprisoned’ by her own monstrosity.

Further, Season 1, Episode 3 articulates the struggle of trans women with hormonal treatment. Jodie Foster, the director of this episode, explores the mistreatment of Sophia through the lens of others. The narrative focuses on the result of budgetary cuts in the prison which subsequently leave Sophia ineligible for oestrogen hormones. The misgendering and offensive dialogue of the prison warden emphasises the cultural hegemonic feelings towards trans women:

Natalie: “He can suck it up. She... Jesus.... This is a federal system...Why would anyone ever want to give up being a man. It’s like winning the lottery and giving the ticket back.”⁶¹

This dialogic commentary, while highlighting the misconceptions surrounding transgender individuals, equates Sophia’s transgenderism with the analogy of “giving the ticket back” from a “lottery” of manhood. Such comparative, figurative imagery, further perpetuates the notion of sub-humanity within the monstrous trope of trans representation. Sequentially, Season 1, Episode 3 continues to establish an antagonist

60 Shelley. M, *Frankenstein*

61 Kohan. J, *Orange is The New Black*



Left Sophia looks out of a cell at the prison warden in distress

within the character of heterosexual, Natalie, and thus creates a narrative of victimisation, evoking pity for Sophia. Trans director, Sam Feder, describes the appeal of this type of media where an “[e]motional response gets the audience’s attention and despair is the easiest emotion to evoke”⁶². The categorisation of trans identities within the victim narrative perpetuates a false perception of monstrosity. *Orange is The New Black*, whilst developing the agenda of queer representation by including a black, trans character, still does not evolve characterisation far enough away from monstrous tropes. More nuanced and complex characterisations that emphasise the multi-faceted experiences of trans women are necessary. Such representation is consequently ‘regulated’⁶³ by the constraints of dominant culture, as the experience of trans women, through screen, is minimised and disingenuous to the totality of trans narratives.

62 Feder, S, *Does Visibility Equal Progress? A Conversation on Trans Activist Media*, Jump Cut, 2016

63 Clark, C, *Television and Social Controls*

(Trans)pose

monster

/ˈmɛnstə/

verb [with object]

British informal criticize or reprimand severely: my mum used to monster me for coming home so late.⁶⁴

September 12th, 1982

Pairs of busy hands scuttle around my painted face, pressing brushes into my skin, softening it, sculpting it. Gentle fingers brush and style my hair, pull creases out of my dress, draw on sooty black eyeliner and meticulously arrange each detail of my figure for an artwork that will be displayed for the world.

“Beautiful April. Now, look into the camera. And.... pose.”

The director clears his throat, as if he is asking for permission to speak.

“Ms Ashley, are you ready?”

I sit on a stool, above the ground, above the world. My shoulder-length hair sits on the cusp of my shoulder; sharp and purposeful. I sit, adorned in the satin of an oversized suit that seems to caress my curves in an effortless way. No one else sees, but my pink lingerie panties sit under the walls of my trousers.

“Perfect Ms Ashley. We have all the photos we need. We think this one will be the front cover – what do you think?”

As a contemporary television series, executive produced by, Janet Mock, *Pose* (2018-2021), uplifts queer directors, producers, writers, and actors, embodying the importance of agency in controlling screen portrayals. *Pose* is retrospectively set during the 1990s, amidst the tumultuous context of the HIV-AIDS epidemic. This television drama reclaims the harmful narratives of transsexuality, narrating a story that shines a much-needed light on the nuances of the intersectional trans experience. Stryker identifies “the need to break the silence of [trans identities] and transform the textual

⁶⁴ Oxford Dictionary, 2018. As sourced at <https://www.lexico.com/definition/monster>. (Accessed 12/06/2021).

violence inscribed in the transexual body into a critical reconstructive force⁶⁵. By redefining monstrosity and acknowledging the ‘abnormality’ of the trans experience, difference can be depicted on screen as variety, rather than inferiority; complexity, rather than caricature; and celebratory, rather than deviant. Thus, in alignment with Clark’s theory on the representation of minorities, *Pose* embodies the final stage of representation: respect.⁶⁶

“It is true, we shall be monsters, cut off from all the world; but on that account we shall be more attached to one another.”⁶⁷

Unlike the limited characterisation of Rayon in *Dallas Buyers Club*, a subversion of the ‘Exposure Scene’⁶⁸ is used as a celebratory motif throughout *Pose*. Rather than the mirror typifying abnormality and dissatisfaction, it serves as an introspective tool, reminding the leading character, Blanca, of her worth. There is a rejection of monstrosity through heteronormative reflections. Instead, Blanca can celebrate her unique beauty, and the intricacies of her identity, both inside and outside the realm of gender.



Left Blanca tries on a regal dress and looks pleasingly into a tri-fold mirror in Janet Mock’s television series, *Pose* (2018-2021)

The director, Mock, positions Blanca standing, in a regal sapphire gown, watching herself in a full-length tri-fold mirror. Unlike Rayon’s seated, decrepit nakedness, Blanca’s composure as a driver of action redefines the traditional inertia and

65 Stryker, S, *Introduction to Transgender Studies Quarterly*, *Transgender Studies Quarterly*, 2014

66 Clark, C, *Television and Social Controls*

67 Shelley, M, *Frankenstein*

68 Keegan, C, *Moving Bodies*

helplessness of trans characters in *Dallas Buyers Club* and *Orange is The New Black*. *Pose* refutes the bodily conflict which trans women typically present in screen portrayals, ultimately criticising the harmful and divisive tropes of the past. This is emphasised in the dialogue within this scene:

*Blanca: "I'm about to go see my child, perform for all of those civilised folks, wearing this magnificent creation."*⁶⁹

The language of "my child" and "magnificent" shifts the rhetoric of trans women, constructing a storyline around Blanca's contentment with her life, outside of the realm of gender narratives. Further, the autonomy within highly modal action, "I am going", represents agency, adding to the television series' authentic depiction of Blanca as normative and capable of self-determining direction, thus redefining the traditional perceived inferior monstrosity of trans women on screen. Mock directs such 'Exposure Scenes' using a long take to ground the scene in realism, highlighting the diegetic sound of dialogue, rather than macabre non-diegetic sounds. This scene demonstrates the idea that the representation of trans women belong outside the fictitious, melodramatic and exaggerated storylines of Rayon and Sophia, in order to portray authentic experience. Thus, the use of a low camera angle, and close-up shots, establishes a renewed hierarchy of power placed within the hand of its trans characters. Overall, such a scene moves away from the sole physicality of Blanca being dependant on her transness, and diverges from ideas of mutation and deformity, into the realm of acceptance and emphasis on a uniquely nuance selfhood.

"Everywhere I see bliss"⁷⁰

The decision, by Mock, to subvert ideas of displacement, positively reinforce the idea that trans women can exist outside of their perceived 'monstrosity'. Instead, trans female characters can redefine their identity as human. Consequently, *Pose*, rejects the notion of the 'Trans Mammy' which Rayon presents, portraying the character of Blanca as caregiver through her role as mother, yet refuting the idea that trans women are props, used to develop the narrative of other characters. Blanca is a driver of action and attempts to improve her personal wellbeing but also the lives of others, jokingly being referred to as "Mother Teresa"⁷¹, and "Ma"⁷² throughout the series. This disputes the exaggerated and trivialised depictions which cannot be formulated by a cis-male actor.

69 Murphy. R, *Pose*, Fox Studios, 2018-2021

70 Shelley. M, *Frankenstein*

71 Murphy. R, *Pose*,

72 Season 2, Episode 2 *Pose*



Left Blanca in Janet Mock's television series, *Pose*, Season 2, Episode 2 (2018-2021).

Pose grapples with the idea of community and family, redefining and celebrating trans characters to emphasise their humanity, distinct from their transness, as being worthy of nurturing. The motif of the 'House', is symbolic of a queer subversion of traditional familial structures, centred around patriarchal notions. The language used to describe such families include 'Mother', 'Daughter', 'Son'⁷³ and suggest a rejection of the belief that family is formed by blood and emphasises queer love and acceptance. The casting choice and crew choice by Janet Mock boasts the 'largest transgender crew ever'⁷⁴, illustrating the power that autonomy has in reshaping and reconstructing narratives. This representation is not concerned with the struggle of heteronormativity accepting Blanca, but rather her strength in its adversity. She articulates her own existence by becoming a 'House Mother'⁷⁵, seated symbolically at the head of the table, and refuses to minimise her own experience or identity for the comfort of harmful binaries. Thus, such representation falls under the premise of 'respect'⁷⁶, by exploring the nuance of trans women.

"The world was to me a secret which I desired to divine."⁷⁷

Autonomy on screen is established through the agency of writers, directors, and producers, who can control screenplay, airtime, character development and the level of intersectionality, thus contributing to more positive images. The final episode of Season 2 'In My Heels' was written and directed by Janet Mock, who is both transgender and African American, which is indicative of the destabilisation of previous 'regulations', ultimately allowing trans voices to be heard. *Pose* embodies the idea that "trans women have a complex emotional landscape like everyone else"⁷⁸, unlike *Dallas Buyers Club* and *Orange is The New Black* which perpetuate monstrosity, resulting in

73 Murphy, R, *Pose*

74 Mock, J, *How 'Pose' Will Make History for Trans Storytelling*, *Variety*, 2018

75 Murphy, R, *Pose*

76 Clark, C, *Television and Social Controls*

77 Shelley, M, *Frankenstein*

78 Mock, J, *On 'Pose,' Janet Mock Tells the Stories She Craved as a Young Trans Person.*, NPR, 2019

this “complexity [being] ignored or minimized by cardboard representations.”⁷⁹ Such portrayals disregard the realism of trans women’s multi-faceted identities.

When trans women have autonomy over their representation, beautiful and accurate portrayals are constructed that reflect their experience. Mock uses the Season 2 Finale as an opportunity to develop the protagonist, Blanca’s, storyline beyond monstrosity into the realm of queer celebration, redefining the way in which plot can be used to illuminate nuance rather than focus on the narrow lens of stereotypical gender narratives. This is illustrated in a scene between Blanca and her sister, where she is refused into the family house because of her identity, shown in the dialogue:

Carmen: “I don’t know what you are. What am I supposed to tell my ten-year-old? That his uncle is gay and runs around in women’s clothes?!”

*Blanca: “Tell her the truth. Tell her I am a woman.”*⁸⁰

Unlike “cardboard representations”⁸¹ of trans women, Mock decides to use the shame associated with transness in a positive way, using it as an opportunity to layer the character of Blanca and portray her refusal to be defined and formulated by aesthetics, or the perceptions of others. This redefines the perception that monstrosity and trans identities are interrelated, instead using queerness as the basis for Blanca’s strength and self-worth. Rather than allowing her transness to be dominated by inferiority, she recognises the ‘abnormality’ of her sister’s reaction, embracing her identity as beautiful rather than monstrous.

“At first I started back, unable to believe that it was indeed I who was reflected in the mirror.”⁸²

Pose functions, in part, as a political statement against Trump-era media, exploring how the art of drag culture amalgamates with trans identities to show an embracing of queerness. This is best demonstrated in the Season 2 Finale with a solo vocal performance. Blanca lip-syncs Whitney Houston’s 1991 version of *Star-Spangled Banner*, the American national anthem. This performance is a metaphor for the reclaiming of citizenship, equality, and individual authority, using symbolic music to reveal a symbiosis between mainstream culture and the acceptance of queer culture. Mock uses wide shots of the audience to pan an entire community of intersectional and

79 Ryan, J. *Reel gender: Examining the Politics of Trans Images in Film and Media*, Scholar Works, 2009

80 Murphy, R. *Pose*

81 Ryan, J. *Reel gender*

82 Shelley, M. *Frankenstein*

unique individuals, revealing the complexity of the trans community. This shot coincides with the prolonged musical crescendo and the lyric “land of the free”⁸³, as diegetic sounds of the music become interwoven with audible cheers. Symbolically, a wide shot, bird’s eye view camera angle constructs an image of a ‘free’ community for the viewer, unsilenced and a driver of action, rather than a receiver of abusive power. This encapsulates the importance of enabling trans voices to dictate the direction of trans representation.



As Bell Hooks, renowned film critic, announces, “men dressing as women’... has always been regarded by the dominant heterosexist cultural gaze as a sign that one is symbolically crossing over from a realm of power into a realm of powerlessness”⁸⁴. *Pose* subverts the perceived inadequacy of trans women by creating “these [trans] women as the heroines”⁸⁵ within “the centre of their own stories”⁸⁶. Mock uses this scene to show the celebration of trans bodies and has explicitly expressed her intentions within her representations of the trans community since “[t]his is our country as well. We deserve to take up space”.⁸⁷ Thus, the power of representation and the importance of celebratory depictions that explore the complex nature of the trans experience is illustrated within this series. Mock refuses to romanticise the trans experience but also does not neglect the complexity and struggle of the trans embodiment, something that only a trans director could do. The importance of the series is summarised by Laura Stamm, identifying:

83 Houston. W, *Star Spangled Banner*, 1991

84 Hooks. B, *Black Looks: Chapter 9 - Is Paris Burning?* Routledge, 1992

85 Mock. J, *How ‘Pose’ Will Make History for Trans Storytelling*

86 Ibid

87 Ibid

“The series has made trans women visible in new ways, including love scenes, a romance narrative, and ballroom scenes that show trans women celebrating themselves and each other.”⁸⁸

Therefore, through the representation made visible in *Pose*, the intricacies and complexity of the trans experience is revealed, detaching from constructs that associate trans women with inferior or monstrous beings. Thus, rejecting notions of ‘ridicule’ and ‘regulation’, *Pose* uplifts queer agency, highlighting the importance of authenticity and ‘respect’⁸⁹ in portrayals of trans women.

(Trans)dimensional: an inconclusive conclusion

Whilst trans representation has significantly evolved within the last decade, *Pose*, is not the epitome of trans representation, but rather a peek into the possibility of future portrayals, a new dimension perhaps. As heteronormative gender theory is replaced by progressive transgender theory, so too will misrepresentative notions of monstrosity. We have moved from the ‘ridicule’⁹⁰ in *Dallas Buyers Club* and past the ‘regulation’⁹¹ of *Orange Is the New Black*, into a new era of respectful trans screen portrayals. The significance of such an era cannot be understated, as “screen depictions, and their ability to reach across class, education and language”⁹² offer insight to the masses, and it is this, that will “shape us”.⁹³ As trans women are given agency, and autonomy, their hands are able to shift the lens of the camera, move the pen on the script, and redefine the future of representation.

88 Stamm. L, *Pose and HIV/AIDS: The Creation of Trans-of-Colour Past*, *Transgender Studies Quarterly*, 2020

89 Clark. C, *Television and Social Controls*

90 Ibid

91 Ibid

92 McLuhan. M, *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*, Mc-graw Hill, 1964

93 Ibid

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Edward Wright

A Cure for Insomnia

REFLECTION STATEMENT

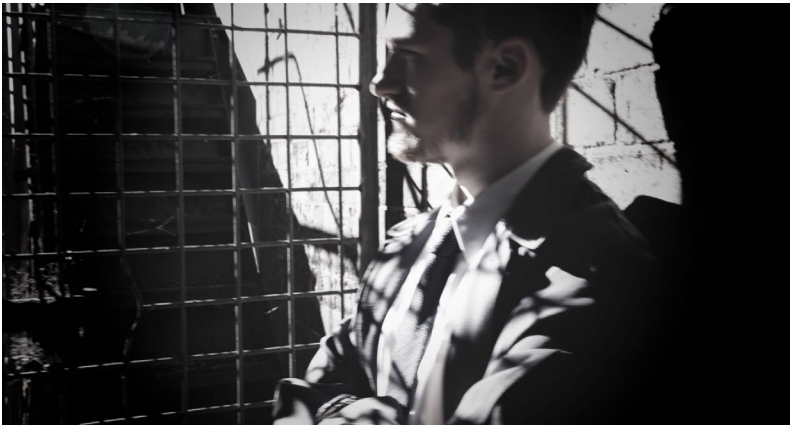
My short film “A Cure for Insomnia” dives deeply into the minds of audiences, building suspense with uneasy shots, creating a sense of anxiety and anticipation with the ominous ticking of a clock.

I initially wanted the film to be a homage to Hitchcock, building on his filmic practices that create a sense of gradually increasing suspense, which impacts on audiences’ emotional and psychological states. However, a very different type of film evolved.

As my work developed, it became a filmic consideration of the struggle to go to sleep - hence the name, “A Cure for Insomnia”. The ticking of the clock symbolises time, whilst the rapid change of shots represents overthinking. The title “A Cure for Insomnia” is a reference to the introduction of the “Hitchcock Presents” session entitled, “A Bullet for Baldwin (1956)”. In my film I reference this session, noting where Hitchcock says, *“I hope you’ll excuse me if I appear a trifle excited, but I’ve just come into possession of a cure for insomnia. It comes in capsule form”*. Here, Hitchcock identifies the bullet for a revolver as a “capsule”, hinting at his insane idea of a method to cure insomnia.

The process of creating suspense in my film came very easily to me as I learned about key strategies and techniques for building suspense from previous projects. These strategies include using sound, cuts, framing, and using McGuffins to play with the audience. The use of these strategies prompts audiences to experience unease and anxiety during their viewing experience.

My intentions regarding incorporating suspense in viewing experiences for my audiences relates to the creative intentions of Hitchcock. Hitchcock said, “I enjoy playing the audience like a piano”. Similarly, in my filmmaking, I intend to influence how audiences understand the conceptual focuses of my films.







VISUAL ARTS

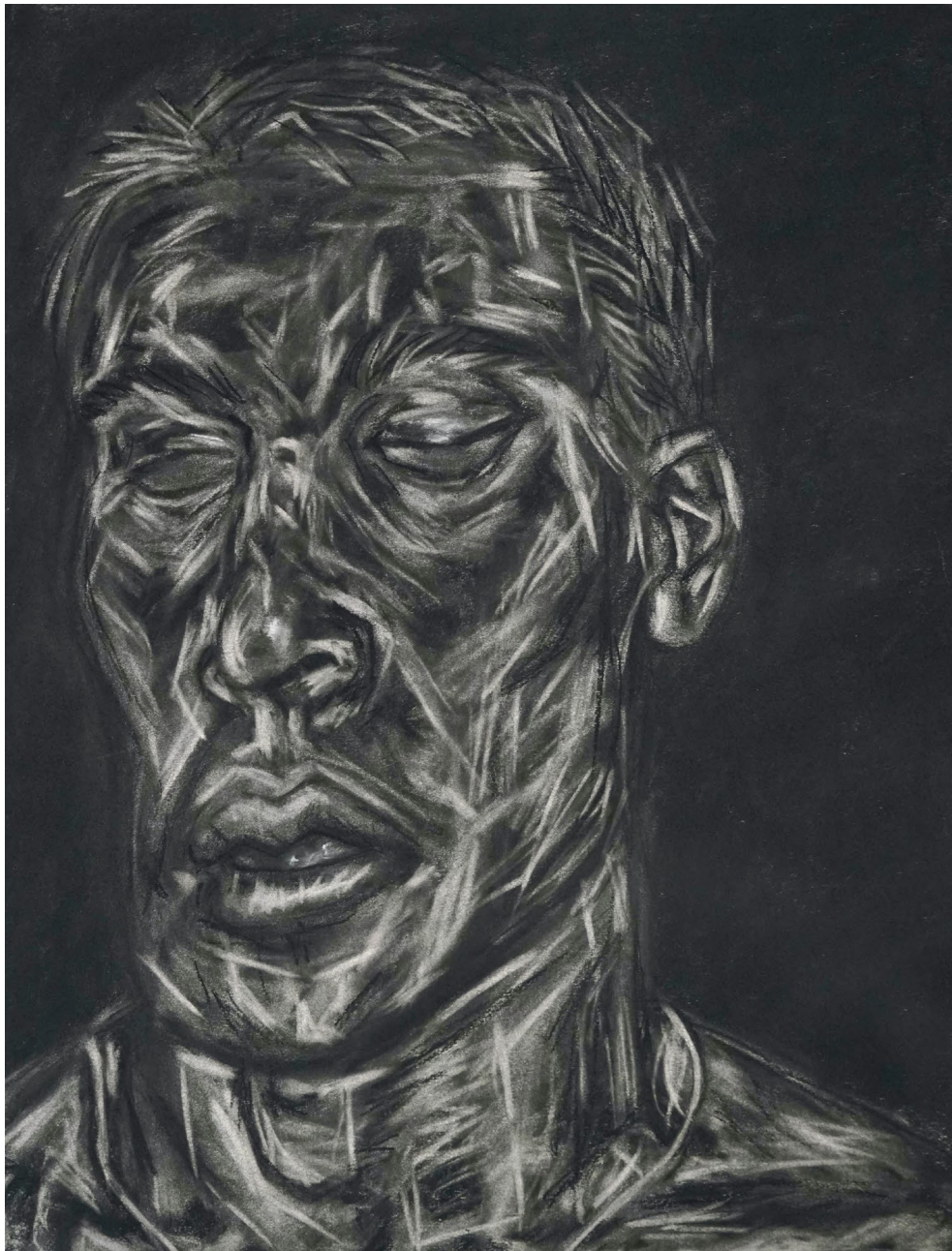
Samuel Watson

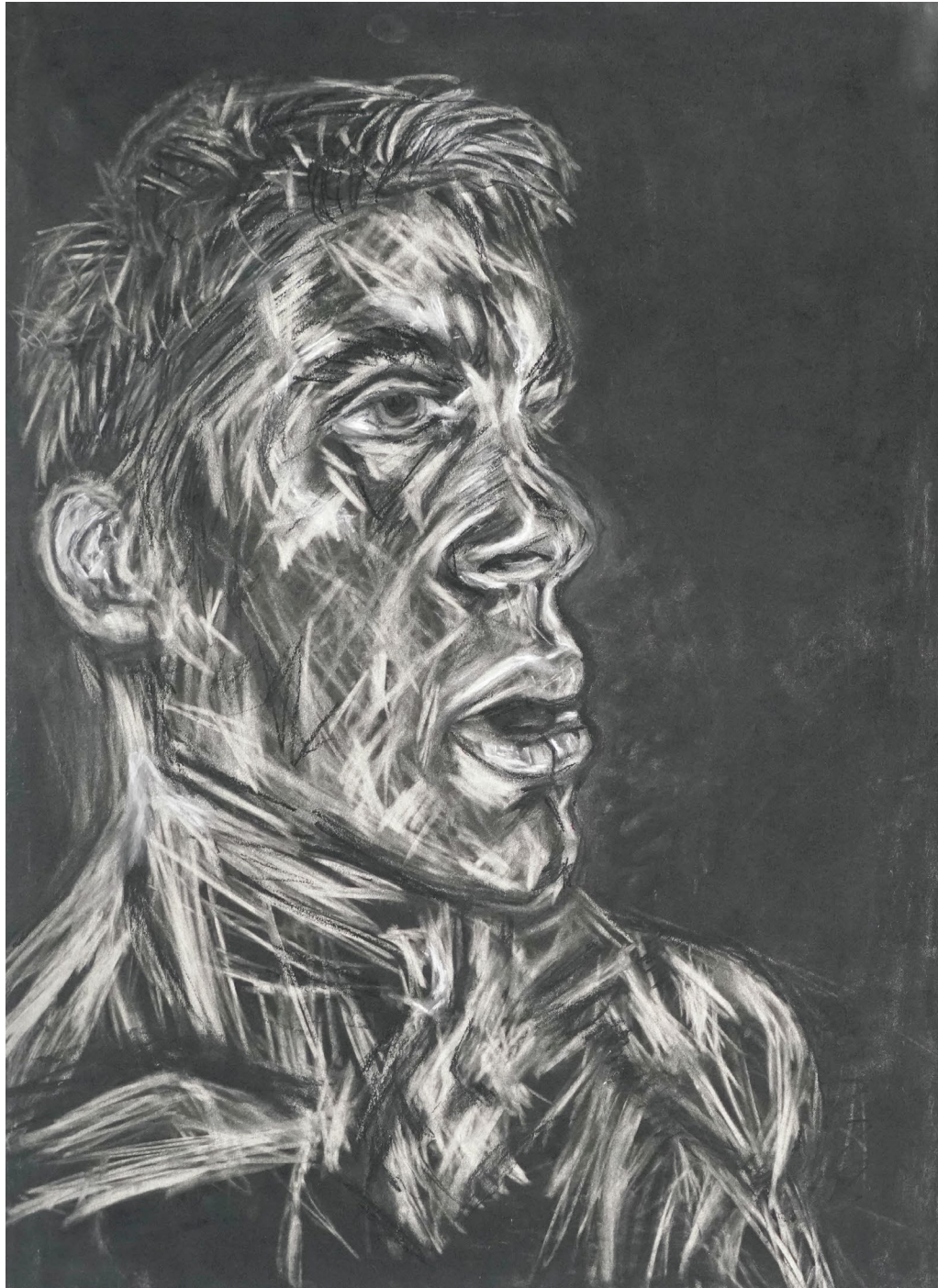
Are You OK? Meaningful Conversations

REFLECTION STATEMENT

I embarked on a specific journey, exploring the initiative “R U OK?”, which encourages engagement in meaningful dialogue with people, friends in particular. The R U OK? organisation has the byline and quote “a conversation can change a life”. I developed my drawings from a series of still photographs of my closest friends and myself. We are all depicted with our mouths open, to suggest active engagement in conversation.

My Visual Arts Body of Work primarily focuses on the concerns surrounding mental health, in particular issues that affect young men. It seeks to convey the power of conversation in relieving mental anguish, in that all subjects in the drawings appear to be engaging in meaningful dialogue. Using significant males and myself as subjects, I captured strong emotions through the expressiveness of mark making and erasure using the charcoal and print media. My figurative representation is intentionally oversized and distorted, with the mouths being the most prominent and enlarged feature. I drew inspiration from German Expressionist artists, Oskar Kokoschka, Egon Schiele and Käthe Kollwitz. These artists used potent body language that challenged the viewer and that sought to penetrate the human psyche. I have chosen to focus on the gestural and agitated quality of description that both drawing, primarily, and printmaking offer.



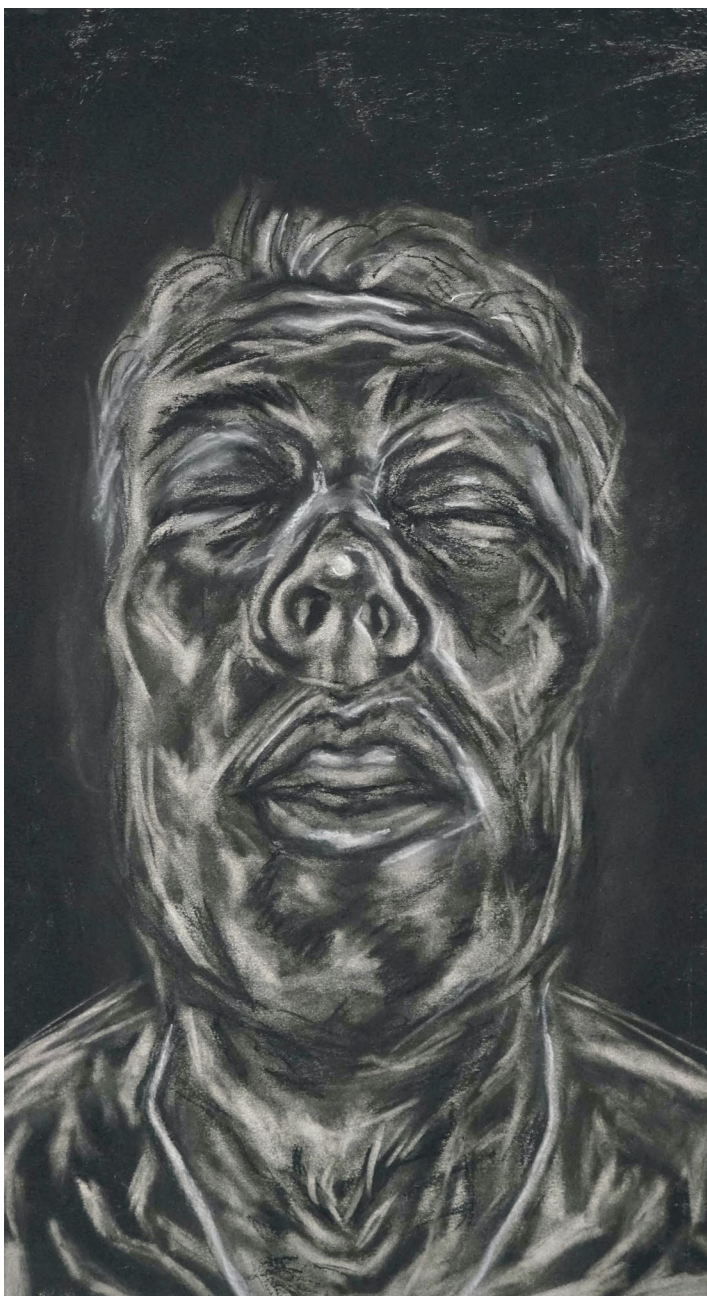




THE KIRCHER COLLECTION
HSC BODIES OF WORK FROM
THE CLASS OF 2021

VISUAL ARTS
CHARCOAL AND INTAGLIO
PRINTS ON PAPER

79





MUSIC 1

George Coates

Performance Guitar

(ENCORE nomination 2021)

Core Performance: 'Fusion' by Jason Wooley

Elective 1: 'Cause We've Ended as Lovers' by Jeff Beck

Elective 2: 'Natchez Trace' by J. Satriani

Elective 3: 'Sweet Georgia Brown' by Django Reinhardt

REFLECTION STATEMENT

When deciding my HSC performance pieces, I wanted to explore a diverse range of sounds and genres. As a result, my major work collection includes fast picking, twanging country blues, a jazz fusion piece, an expressive rock ballad and a Gypsy Jazz acoustic piece. When preparing these pieces with Mr Cichocki, I went in with the idea that I wanted to play with a lot of passion and flair but most importantly I wanted to make each piece my own. Luckily the pieces that I chose had great room for improvisational opportunities, allowing me to fully express my own interpretation of each piece.

Mr Cichocki and I spent weeks developing my improvised sections from each piece and broke down each song to the very fine details. "Cause We've Ended as Lovers", Jeff Beck's iconic rock ballad, was a very special song to me. In the lead up to the final performances I was made aware of the risks of this song given its very expressive and experimental nature, but nonetheless I found this sound intriguing and endlessly enjoyable to learn and play with its quirky melodic embellishments and explosive runs.

My inspiration for my Major Work collection was to express myself through the pieces and for each song to have my own personal touch and specific style.







DRAMA - GROUP PERFORMANCE

Alex El'Hazouri, Edward Ryan, Joseph Meagher, Kabir Rajpal and Luca McDonald

The Rise and Fall of the Union

(OnSTAGE nomination 2021)

REFLECTION STATEMENT

“The Rise and Fall of the Union” is a play that we based on the death of the historic Georgian revolutionary and Soviet political leader, Joseph Stalin, who governed the Soviet Union from 1924 until 1953. We knew the history behind this era and saw great potential to create a comedic showcase whilst incorporating a strong yet simple storyline. We decided to explore what happened after the death of this ‘great’ leader.

Our main theme for this piece revolves around corruption – specifically, that when power is awarded, corruption follows. This allowed us to showcase the outrage shared between five out of the six men in the inner circle, as the sixth was about to gain power in place of Stalin. Within our showcase we had to incorporate one common prop that would be used throughout the entire performance. We stumbled upon an old ladder within the school storage which served many purposes in the play. It was leant against our bodies, climbed on, used as a table, a dead body and we even used it as a bomb!

Our group performance allowed us to improve as actors as we learned to understand each other's perspectives. This was primarily through giving each other constructive feedback about our props, characters, costumes, facial expressions, and voice modulations. We gained valuable feedback of our wonderful Drama teacher, Ms Arnott, which allowed us to gain a more experienced perspective of what we were doing right and the areas where we could improve.

The COVID-19 pandemic saw our group maintaining a high motivation through Zoom rehearsals and in-person rehearsals with restrictions at school. This inspired us to achieve more as we saw our teachers and the school staff taking extra initiative and making efforts to ensure we achieved what we started before the June holidays.

Overall "The Rise and Fall of the Union" was a great piece which we were all very proud of. Rather than becoming a burden every time we ran through and performed the play, we wanted to do it again! It is just a shame that within these circumstances we could not perform the piece for the community to enjoy.

SCRIPT

CHARACTER DESCRIPTIONS

'Georgy' Malenkov - Luca McDonald

Stalin's right-hand man, aged in his early 80s, member of the inner circle. Powerful, authoritative, stubborn and vain.

The Florist - Joseph Meagher

Stalin's florist, aged in his late 20s. Flamboyant, doesn't fit in with the inner circle. A bit slow, can't keep up with the others.

'Vasily' Stalin - Alex El Hazouri

Stalin's son, aged in his early 20s, member of the inner circle. Stupid, spoilt, ignorant - a wild character who lacks intelligence.

'Nikita' Kruschkev - Edward Ryan

Politician/Scientist, aged in his late 40s, member of the inner circle. Intelligent and cunning.

“
Our group performance allowed us to improve as actors as we learned to understand each other's perspectives.
”

Georgy 'Zhukov' - Kabir Rajpal

Head of the Soviet Army, aged in his early 40s, member of the inner circle. Aggressive nature/personality and voice, threatening build and physicality.

'Beria' - Joseph Meagher

Appointed by Stalin as the leader, member of Inner circle. Seen as the 'villain' within the plot. Authoritative in voice and action, wants to change Soviet Russia into a democracy.

Beria's Goons - Luca McDonald, Alex El Hazouri, Edward Ryan and Kabir Rajpal

Hunchbacks with sinister characterisation; one-dimensional side characters who are supportive and cult-like worshippers of Beria.

KEY:

L - Luca

A - Alex

E - Edward

K - Kabir

J - Joseph

START

(The Soviet Anthem begins to play as the ensemble begins marching on stage from all sides. L marches while hitting ladder on the ground in beat in character as Stalin. K+E grab and hold the ladder in the middle. Stalin begins to step up the ladder and on "Soyuz" Stalin dies and falls back.)

ALL: Soyuz (*red lights snap on and fill the stage*) Nerushimy Respublik svobodnik

Splotila naveki Velikaya **Rus**

Da zdravstuyet sozdanny voley narodov

Yediny, moguchiy Sovetskiy...

L: Soyuz...

ALL: Long Live Stalin!

L: (Falls back and is caught)

(Red lights snap off. Ladder falls down and the cast spread out across the stage in a slight semi-circle. White-light fills the stage fade on.)

J: OH STALIN MY HEART ACHES FOR YOUR SWEET SOUL!

E: He killed Nine million!?

K: (Enthusiastic) He was a great leader!

A: He caused the great famine!?

L: It doesn't matter.

All: I, WANT, HIS, JOB!

L: (*Luca in old man stance*) Privyet, I am Georgy, Stalin's right-hand man and this is the...

All: INNER CIRCLE!

K: (*Kabir tough-guy stance*) Hello, I'm Zhukov, Head of the Soviet Army and I'm the biggest and the baddest threat there is. Watch out (*points hand at audience and cut throat action*).

E: (*Ed intellectual stance*) Hello, I'm Kruschkev and I'm the brains of the inner circle.

A: (*Alex dumbass stance*) Hello... Hello, I'm Vasily and I'm... Stalin's son.

All: And soon I'll be leader of the soviet union.

J: (*Joe flamboyant stance*) And heyyy I'm Freddy and I'm the Soviet florist! I mean I wouldn't mind leading the soviet union...

All: FLORIST?

J: Uuhhh, any of you read that letter lying in his pile of piss?

K: Letter?

L: Letter?

A: Letter?

E: Letter?

Together: LETTER!

A: You pick it up.

L: No, you pick it up.

E: No, you pick it up.

J: It would be my pleasure.

E: No I'll pick it up!

A: No I want to pick it up!

L: No I'll pick it up!

(Everyone begins pushing each other to pick up letter while kicking the ladder horizontally. Zhukov, who has been standing back, barges into the front and picks up the letter.)

K: Oi morons! Give it here.

(Zhukov begins walking across the front stage reading the letter and the rest of the cast forms in a line behind him, leaning forward and changing direction to face Zhukov.)

K: Oooooo...

All: Oooooo...

K: Ahhhh...

All: Ahhhh...

K: Hahahaha!

All: Hahahaha!

K: Yours Sincerely, Stalin. *(Pauses)* Nah it's nothing. It's bullshit.

(Everyone sighs in dissatisfaction, bend down and J+A pick up the ladder.)

K: Oh it just said that prick Beria would be next in charge.

(Cast sigh in relief then swoop their heads towards K in realisation.)

ALL: BERIA!

(Ladder gets dropped. J jumps in front as Beria and the rest of the cast hunch their backs as his goons and stand in a line behind him.)

J: The old man is finally gone. It is the era of ME. BERIA! MUAHAHA!

All: MUAHAHA! MUAHAHAHAA! *(While laughing, Kabir and Ed move backwards, creating a semi-circle shape)*

J: Hit it!

(Alex and Luca pick up the ladder in time with the music while Beria and the other goons begin dancing. Beria does squatting Russian dance.)

All: There lived a certain man in Russia long ago.

All: He was big and strong. In his eyes a flaming glow. *(Lifting ladder as a weight while singing. Then placing rungs in front of faces for "eyes" line.)*

Goons: Most people look at him with terror and with fear.

(L+A lift back up the ladder and Joe begins walking backwards, still grooving. As Joe passes the ladder L+A turn sideways and at end of the line bring the ladder down to chest level.)

All: But to Moscow chicks, he was such a lovely dear.

(J places elbows on ladder and places hands on chin, while K+E go either side of him, pretending to be girls and flirtatiously place a hand on either side of his shoulders. Following this, A+L bring the ladder down, J jumps over it and they turn it vertically clockwise. The goons form in a straight line, standing in the rungs of the ladder behind J.)

J: That's enough! It's time to begin my grand plan and rebuild the Soviet Union!

Goons: *(Sticking their heads out, with surprised look.)* Ooohh!

J: We need a name for this new union.

(With each line, the character steps out to create a triangle with J at the front.)

E: Something Catchy

A: Something Fresh

K: Something Sexy

L: Something Spicy

All: THE BERIA UNION!

J: It will be evil!

(As the cast say their next line they step forward next to J to form a straight horizontal line.)

E: Horrifying!

A: Disgusting!

K: Naughty!

L: Wicked!

J: The Beria Union will be a

All: DEMOCRACY! *(Quiet chanting, gradually getting faster and louder)* Democracy, democracy, democracy, democracy, democracy, democracy, democracy...

(While chanting Joe and Kabir pick up the ladder and centre horizontally. After chanting everyone breaths in, changes to their main characters and the ladder is lifted to make a table.)

ALL: Democra-what?! *(Everyone turns their head to face Alex who stands in the middle)*

A: Beria plans to transform the Soviet Union into a democracy!

K: But Russia has not been a democracy since... *(thinking pose)* never.

E: Beria will not want us Soviets around!

L: We're going to lose our jobs!

K: I've killed thousands of democrats. They're going to take away my family. What will I do?

A: If we go away from stalinist Russia, what will be the point of me? Stalin's son?

E: If I become a democrat, I will lose my dignity.

L: After 40 years in service, I never thought I would see Russia divided by democracy.

J: The soviet union always supported my floristry business. A democracy will give me too much competition.

A: Wait why is there a florist here?

J: Stalin was my biggest customer!

L: But Stalin never bought flowers?

J: Well, he was still my biggest customer!

(Everyone pauses and stares at Joe)

E: Anywayyyyyy! We must act now to get rid of Beria. To maintain communism.

J: I've got an idea we could...

All: Shut up florist!

K: I've got it.

(L takes the ladder and places it upright on the ground. K+L stand next to either side of the ladder with their hands on their chest's as guards. A+E+J move back and slowly creep up on K+L)

K: We sneak into his office tomorrow night. Vasily flanks left, I'll flank right and Krushchev down the middle. We creep up onto the guards, weapons drawn to kill, and we...

L: But wait!! We can't do that. Vladimir is on guard tomorrow. We can't kill Vladimir, he's a great guy.

All: *(Murmuring in agreement)*

J: I've got it comr...

All: Shut up florist!

A: I've got it, we take Beria to the bar.

(L grabs the ladder and places it horizontally on the ground. Everyone moves to stand in the rungs.)

A: We drink some vodka *(Everyone drinks a shot in unison)*. And we make Beria so drunk that he dies.

All: Oooooo...

E: No that won't work. Beria doesn't drink vodka, he only drinks whiskey.

All: Whiskey!?

(Everyone in unison moves their heads forward to put their fingers down their throats to imitate trying to vomit)

J: Comrades, actually Beri...

All: Shut up florist.

E: I've got an idea. *(L picks up the ladder)* We start bushfires across Russia causing so many problems for Beria that he will hop in a plane.

(Standing in a straight line with Ed at the front and the ladder being held across horizontally as wings. Cast follows Ed as he moves from side to side - imitating a plane.)

E: And escape away to Hawaii with his democratic brother Scomo.

All: Ahh Scomo! *(Nodding in agreement)*

K: You idiots! It's impossible for bushfires to happen in Russia, it's too cold. Think about it.

All: *(Murmur in agreement)*

J: I've got it, all we have...

All: Shut up florist!

L: Okay I've actually got it. I'm taking out my nuclear warhead device and currently entering in my secret codes. *(Quietly)* 1, 2, 3, 4. And now with just a press of a button, I can evaporate the town of Vyborg where Beria resides. 3... 2... 1. Lift off.

(While speaking, J+A pick up the ladder to form a missile and K+E turn backwards to create buildings. With "Lift off" J+A lift the ladder over to blow up K+E causing them to fall while screaming)

A: But Beria has already moved to a secret location and is actually nowhere near Vyborg.

L: Ahh 3rd time this week. Well, what can we do?

(Cast begins transitioning back to the boardroom table positions, pondering on ideas)

K: Well we can't kill his guards.

A: We can't give him vodka poisoning.

E: We can't start bushfires in Russia.

L: And we can't nuke another city...

J: I've got it! I've got it!

All: Shut... Fine. (*Swoop heads and all look at Joe*)

J: Well Beria is actually deathly allergic to sunflowers. One sniff and he's dead.

All: Oooohhhhh...

E: Well, why didn't you say that earlier?

L: You really gotta speak up more.

A: Wait, don't sunflowers need sun?

K: There is no sun in Russia. Idiots.

E: If only we knew someone with flowers...

All: Hmmmmm... (*Everyone looks up and to the right*)

(*J+A drop the ladder to initiate a transition into Beria and his goons*)

J: The plan is in motion. Tomorrow is the inauguration. Nothing can stop me now. Muhahaha!

A: Muha... ha...

(Everyone stares at Alex who is embarrassed)

J: (To Alex) Down. (J sits down on A who goes down in a table shape) COMRADES!
I need to be looking fab tomorrow...

All: MAKEUP TIME!

(*Joe getting pampered, toes, hair, feet*)

J: Make sure my curls look fluffy... yet smooth

L: Comrade, we have to organise the details of tomorrow's inauguration.

J: Of course.

A: Drapes? Red?

J: RED!? Red is the colour of the past my friend, the Beria Union will be joining our democratic brothers in Blue.

K: Flowers? I've got daisies and sunflowers ready?

(Pause, everyone looks at Kabir)

L: SUNFLOWERS?

E: Don't you know the number 1 rule?

All: No sunflowers!

K: I'm sorry my leader.

J: So remind me, what do I need to say to finally put the Beria Union in place?

A: Of course, well after you put your hand on Tolstoy's War and ... I mean put your hand on the Bible, repeat these words: "I, Beria, do sincerely swear"

J: I, Beria, do insincerely swear....

E: That I will corruptly execute my role as Leader of the Beria union.

L: Along with anyone who gets in my way!

J: Yes execution, blah blah blah, let's skip to the end.

K: And will to the best of my ability

J: And will to the best of my ability, Preserve

All: Preserve!

J: Protect

All: Protect!

J: And Defend

All: Defend!

J: The democracy of Beria

All: For the people!

(Transition to main characters)

E: If only we knew someone with flowers...

All: Hmmmm *(Everyone looks up-left)*

J: Uhh well since I'm a florist, I do have a few at the shop.

K: Wait, you're actually a florist? I thought you must be a spy.

E: I thought he was KGB.

A: I thought he was a...

J: No, no, no. Just a florist.

L: Alright enough, tomorrow Beria has his inauguration. We must commence operation: DEATH BY SUNFLOWER

E: We only have a small window of opportunity, to kill him.

A: Wait, so the bedroom window or the courtyard window?

K: You imbecile. It's not an actual window, it's the time frame we have to kill him.

A: So we're not going through the Bedroom window?

E: UGH don't worry, so he's being inaugurated at the Red Square.

(When disagreeing, the cast pull the ladder to each side in a tug-of-war motion.)

L: No no no, I'm pretty sure it's at the Kremlin.

E: No, it's at the Red Square.

A: I'm positive it's at the Kremlin.

K: No, It's definitely at the Red Square.

L: Fine let's put it to vote. Majority wins.

E: All in favour that the inauguration is at the Red square?

(Ed and Kabir put their hand up, Joe puts his hand up since others have their hand up.)

E: Ha! The Red Square it is.

K: Due to the Red Square's unique surrounding buildings, we'll have to cover all exits -

A: AND Windows!

(All look at Alex and pause)

K: So. Beria will be positioned in the square's centre, meaning we have to sneak past all guards.

(Luca and Ed stand as guards on either side of the stage. Alex and Joe tap their inside shoulders, prompting them to turn towards the stage and point guns at one another. Meanwhile, Alex and Joe sneak around their outside.)

K: And sneak onto the stage, *(pause)* each with a sunflower.

All: *(Slow and Sharp)* Locked and Loaded. *(With the accented words everyone grabs a sunflower from their back and pulls it out in front of them)*

(At first, everyone is menacing, ready for action. However, gradually they begin to look around more, confused and relaxing their tense pose, realising that there is nobody there.)

A: So why is there nobody here at the Red Square?

L: *(Mockingly)* Because Krushkev isn't as smart as he thinks he is.

E: *(Angrily)* You watch yourself old man!

A: Wait, so it's at the Kremlin? *(Tapping Georgy on the arm)* So we were right?

E: *(Quietly)* First time for everything.

K: Enough we need to get to the Kremlin before he says his final line.

All: CUT, TO THE KREMLIN!

(Move to backstage. J stands in the middle at the back turned away. Everyone else forms a small semi-circle in front of him.)

L: Looks like we've made it here just in time.

E: Does everyone know the plan?

(All look towards Alex)

A: Yes I do. Wait, which window am I going to again?

K: You moro...

L: Shut up! Here comes Beria now.

(Split to either side of Beria)

J: I, Beria, do sincerely swear.

(J begins walking forward. Cast go one at a time towards him in slow-mo and get pushed off each time.)

J: That I will preserve (*push K*). Protect (*push E*). And Defend (*push A*). (*Push L*) The democracy of Beria.

(Picks up the ladder from the ground and places it vertically as K+E grab the front, allowing J to climb up.)

J: For... The... P...

A: WAIT! Comrade, smell this daisy.

J: Ooo a daisy (*Sniffs*)

(J chokes, parallel to Stalin's death at opening and then steps off the ladder, and comes to the front falling over)

J: Not... a daisy. (*Dies*)

A: (*Cunningly*) Sunflower.

K: He was a great man.

E: And an even better Russian.

A: Oh Beria, my heart aches for your sweet soul.

L: It doesn't matter!

All: I, WANT, HIS, JOB!

(Lights snap off)

THE END.





Patrick Johnston

Study Desk

REFLECTION STATEMENT

For my 2021 HSC major work, I wanted to build an item that I would be able to hold onto and cherish post-school, whilst challenging myself along the way building on my skills from Year 11. This is why I decided to build a study desk. My goal was to encapsulate a wide range of design features and joinery techniques into an item I am proud of, whilst displaying a high level of craftsmanship to the marker.

The design process started in October of 2020, where many ideas and concepts were brainstormed, sketched, and prototyped. I then came to my final design which was inspired by Sydney woodworker Darren Oates who uses elegant, curved oak legs for his hallway tables. This led me to my final design of the large American Oak curved leg supporting my tabletop, compared to a conventional design style. The curved leg was no doubt the most difficult aspect of my desk, taking up almost an entire term, but also was the most rewarding part. The thin American Oak strips allowed me to showcase the natural colour and grain of the timber, creating a harmonious and appealing design. This was coupled with American Walnut for the desktop and drawer fronts, which created a contrast of timber species, and the two woods completed each other well.

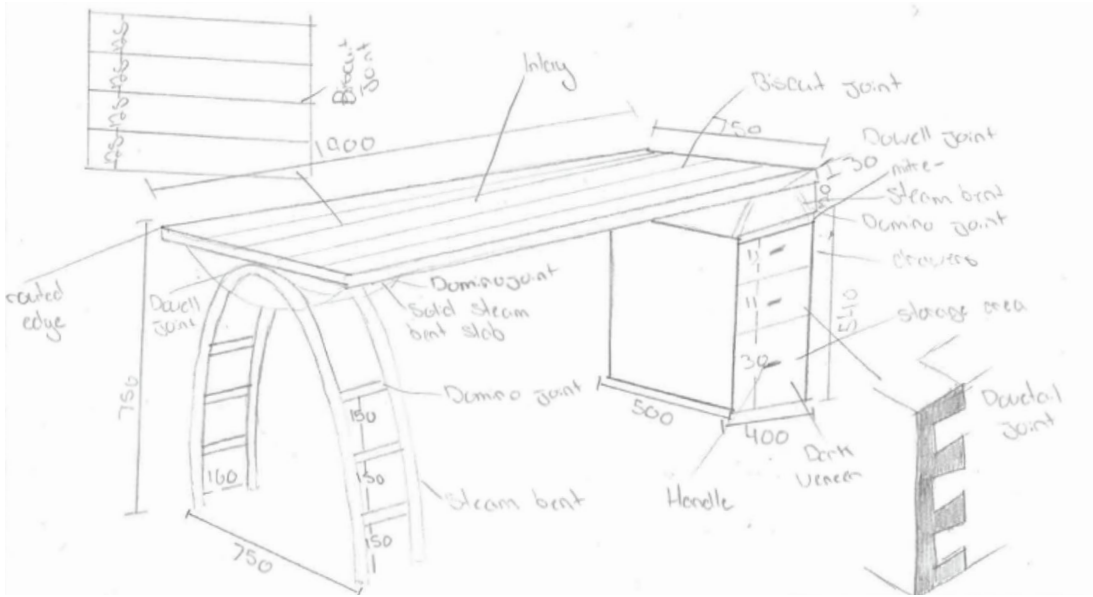
Unfortunately, due to COVID I had to make some design modifications, but this allowed me to spend more time producing my desk to the highest possible quality. This saw my shelving unit removed but I was able to place my drawers on an angle, displaying a greater timber ability and skill set compared to a traditional rectangular drawer. I was then able to include an inlay with the American Oak to contrast with the Walnut drawer fronts; this allowed me to incorporate additional design features which made for an attractive finish across the drawer fronts.

Through the entire construction process I aimed to uphold a high level of craftsmanship and diligence in all aspects. This saw me in the workshop for over 10 hours a week including study periods, as well as before and after school. Although my HSC major

work was a time-consuming process, I knew it was critical to utilise all time available to complete it to the highest possible standard.

Overall, I couldn't be happier with my desk. It has exceeded all the expectations set out last October and is most definitely an item that will be held onto post-school. My desk allowed me to apply my timber knowledge and skills that I will be able to reflect on from my time at Riverview.







VISUAL ARTS

James Wilson

Glory be to God for Dappled Things: Series of My Grandmother

(ARTEXPRESS nomination 2021)

REFLECTION STATEMENT

I drew the title of my work from the gratitude poem of Gerard Manly Hopkins, “Pied Beauty”, which describes the beauty of how God painted nature with different colours and textures. I adopted this approach in my series of my Grandmother to depict my Grandmother’s beauty, the pied colours of her world as a result of memory loss from dementia. To represent this loss, I have dappled colour in the background, around and within the figure of my Grandmother. I was influenced by the expressive figurative works of Judy Cassab, Christian Hook and Kevin Connor in creating my backgrounds; representing my Grandmother’s fragmenting, dissolving memories through a wash-like application of paint. The painterly quality of artist Ben Quilty’s work Margaret Olley (2011) with a focus on her face also shaped my attention on the face in my figurative work to reveal the colour of her character.

The colour palette of magenta, mauves, blues and greens represents my Grandmother’s favourite colours. I have mostly rendered her ageing skin with softness reflective of her nature and through swift brush strokes and jabs of colour captured her exuberance and energy.

Each painting in the series represents different aspects of my Grandmother; times when her personality is larger than the dementia, times when the dementia leaves her bewildered or glum. The larger canvases attest to the power of her personality to outshine the dementia. I have reinforced this through mixed media of charcoal and pastel over paint to portray her will to defy dementia in the larger face image and employed this in the smaller painting of her hands on her face, to depict solemnity and contemplation. Similarly, the varied compositions reveal insights into my Grandmother’s character and disposition.

This series is a celebration of my Grandmother who gives much joy and love to those around her; providing a glimpse of her abundance of warmth that continues despite her struggles with dementia. My broader intent is to invite audiences to revisit their own views on dementia and to invest always in uncovering the person within and to be forever grateful for those we hold dear to our heart.



“

This series is a celebration of my Grandmother who gives much joy and love to those around her; providing a glimpse of her abundance of warmth that continues despite her struggles with dementia.

”









ENGLISH

Hamish Evans

Is it Dead?

REFLECTION STATEMENT

If I take death into my life, acknowledge it, and face it squarely, I will free myself from the anxiety of death and the pettiness of life - and only then will I be free to become myself.

- Martin Heidegger

Propelled into an existence we didn't pre-determine, humanity is forced to grapple with its mortality, leaving us to interpret this world with literature as our guide. By simultaneously exploring, satirising, and inciting reflection, 'Is It Dead?', quite literally asks its listeners to re-evaluate Western thanatophobia — *the fear of death* — by presenting the reader with an anachronistic melting pot of literary perspectives on mortality. Using an unreliable guide figure as a vehicle for introspection, my Major Work presents a collage of prose fiction, verse poetry and song through a phantasmagorical podcast. By utilising the literary perspectives of the Beat Generation, Post-Modernity, and Anti-Romanticism, 'Is it Dead?' presents literary depictions of mortality to the listener. The audience is therefore expected to academically engage with questions surrounding "what can we learn from engaging with these [literary] works today?", as well as the experimental nature of literary forms in contemporary podcast drama, where "anything you can imagine" can happen.

Crafting this piece has been incredibly reflective in reconciling with a stage of life that many of us choose not to think about. It has opened my eyes to the power death has over us, as death shapes how we choose to spend our very existence. Though I am still only young, I feel my piece has shaped my worldview, caused me to reflect on how I want to live my life. I hope my piece does something similar for you.

NARRATOR

'Freudian Slippers' by Chilly Gonzales¹

Welcome to an exploration of conceptualisations of death in literature.

In a collaboration between *The History of Literature Podcast* and the *Theatre of Tomorrow*, today, we take you on an allegorical narrative through literary explorations of death. Tunnelling through Ginsberg's 1950s defiance of a compliant response to physical, social and intellectual death, into *Baudrillard* and *Bo Burnham's* postmodern satirical critique of nothingness, 'round the corner and back again into *Baudelaire's* anti-Romantic idealism of mortality. I'm Albert Heidegger, with you today as you journey through the metaphoric Bayou.

Prologue

Bayou sounds of moving water, crickets and frogs

NARRATOR

It is a surreal, moonlit night.

Stitched to the sky sits a collection of withering mangroves covered in leaves that droop like emerald rags. Creme de Cassis dahlias emerge around the bayou.

You approach a pool of swamp water that connects to an intricate river system, a place where verdant ideas sleep furiously.

Creaking hull noise

A handcrafted vessel drifts over, its bowels knotted with twisted timber. A sack of coins, tied to a steel nail that had been hammered into its frame, thumps methodically against the ageing hull.

Sound of someone slowly paddling towards the listener. The boat creaks

1 *'Freudian Slippers' by Chilly Gonzales*

LEGBA

You need a ride cher?

NARRATOR

The figure wears a stovepipe hat and underneath its dark brim, their face is painted powdery white, resembling a sort of skull. It wears a tailored Western funeral suit with silk dress gloves.

LEGBA

Hold up dere drifta, a ride'll cost ya, but I'll throw in a Lagniappe².

(beat)

You ain't from around d'ese parts are you?

NARRATOR

You ask its name.

LEGBA

Been through many names Son, but Legba was a favourite, always.

NARRATOR

Legba reaches out its hand and you choose to grab its gaunt fingers.

LEGBA

I've seen your kind pass d'rough men'ey a time. He pauses as he begins to turn the boat around. Learn'in your name.

Sound of inhaling a large cigar

(beat)

doesn't ma'dder to me.

Sound of the bayou

2 Lagniappe (a small free gift)

NARRATOR

The sun is at its last light as if it was about to slip into unconsciousness and, like clockwork, a congregation of fireflies parade into the languid air like parishioners.

Each stroke Legba takes with her oar creates a whooshing sound that fills the silence.

The trees cover the stars in a way that makes the leaves shine.

LEGBA

Right now, we be at a crossroads. Your choice to stop ere' and find your way.

NARRATOR

Legba points to a long straight river branch then turns and points towards a dark cave.

LEGBA

Or we can go this way.

Legba relights their cigar.

When a cher like you is faced with nothingness he has a choice to face it or pretend it ain't real. If you let me, I can show you round de abyss. Be a guide to you.

NARRATOR

You answer with an impulsive yes.

A walloping whoosh to propel the boat down the stream. The sound of a dark and damp cave

Scene I: The Cave

NARRATOR:

You enter a cave; the fireflies hang back at its mouth reluctant to venture further, but the light shining from their tears shows no such fear. Its light, like dayless eternity, creates dancing shadows that bounce off the water and onto the veiny columns that grow down from the roof.

Sound of some sort of uncanny slime

The cave smells of late-night fish markets where the produce has gone rancid, a smell that makes you grimace.

A wind whistles along the cave walls like a cursed banshee.

LEGBA

Welcome cher to d'ee world of dem bottom feeder. Be wary when you talk to d'ese folk."

NARRATOR:

In the corner you witness a mass of catfish, each squatting in crescent pools shaped like a yoni, writhing against each other.

The sound of a slimy splashing. Gore sound effects implying cannibalism

Each pool has a single blushed orchid that sways on its fallopian stem, drooping towards the catfish writhing in the pools, like some horrible Lovecraftian creation... truly disgusting.

On a sharp rock, a single catfish inhales, and exhales with a heavy breath. His scales are patterned with black and white pinstripes, and he wears a pair of circular tinted black glasses which are barely big enough to hide his eyes.

LEGBA

Dis ere cher is Ghede. Remember, words have meaning 'cause you give it cher. Nothen is real without anod'er perceiving it. This aint for me cher, it's for you, we be goin now anyways, dem Loa ain't waiting for long.

GHEDE

In a fight against the peculiar night³, you witness my prophecies:
imposed hopefulness and manufactured
optimism,
manifest into the inspired Cowboy Cassady⁴ and the sun-splashed hipster⁵,
whose wizard eyes radiated
through malls.

Billboards, Billboards, classic, deluxe, complementary, prestige, pain-easing, flavour
enhancing gelatine⁶. Do want to learn more?

Eat this, drink that, true taste, new edition, FDA approved, ethically sourced,
clinically tested blind folds⁷.

Perception shields placed over the eyes of a billion star-dusted eggs⁸, scrambled in
their perpetual ignorance
I rarely have eggs for breakfast though my indulgences feed on the new life of our
generation as we, angel headed hipsters, burn for the ancient heavenly connection to
the starry dynamo. Eggs really should be given to their mothers⁹,
While newsmen laugh so much their face is wet with Kool-Aid¹⁰ I am an atom bomb,
mine Führer I can walk,
I see nothing but darkness and war, Are you my angel¹¹?
There is nerve-gas over the radio¹², it's descending from Mars!¹³ But history will make
this poem prophetic in its predictions;

3 Reference to Dylan Thomas

4 Neil Cassady, Jack Kerouac's best friend - member of beat generation

5 Ginsberg

6 Rejection of materialism, middle-class capitalism

7 Reference to 1950s conservative culture 'regulation' and rise
of television and advertising 'American Dream'

8 Reference to a Ginsberg poem 'Death to Van Gogh's Ear' - egg
motif which represents human life as "eggs"

9 Ibid

10 This line references Ginsberg's Moloch as a metaphor for society within the poem, 'Howl'.
Kool-Aid, Reference to accepting ideologies ignorantly (historical reference to 19X event)

11 Reference to Allen Ginsberg's "Supermarket in California"

12 Beat Generation poetry (article - beat and politics) reflected a political concern
for the Cold War and the needless pursuit of death-making weaponry

13 Reference to H.G. Wells' *War of the Worlds*

All true stories end with death¹⁴
Walt Whitman was right¹⁵, we contain multitudes, No one owns life,
The Allan Watts' steam engine transports enlightenment¹⁶ No one owns life, and I
can pick up a frying pan¹⁷.
Rage! Thomas!¹⁸ Rage! And I'll break Moloch's¹⁹ ventriloquist jaw And scream
"Catfish of the world, Unite,
You have nothing to lose but your brains"²⁰!

NARRATOR:

The gudgeon begins to gargle, spewing various bile across his domain. Until
a tiny lung, shelled in black tar, flies out his mouth.

Sound of vomit, gore sound, paddle sound as you leave the cave

Reflecting on these sights you ask Legba if the creature is still alive.

LEGBA

Does it ma'dder?

Silence with heartbeat

NARRATOR

You ask yourself if pleasure is worth it. If being an individual lifts you from
suffering? If life should be a wild ride fighting against death?

-
- 14 Reference to Ernest Hemingway's *Death in the Afternoon*
 - 15 "Throughout these interviews [in *Spontaneous Mind*] Ginsberg returns to his high praise of William Blake and Walt Whitman. Ginsberg obviously loves Blake the visionary and Whitman the democratic sensualist, and indeed Ginsberg's own literary personality can be construed as a union of these forces." Edmund White, *Arts and letters* (2004), p. 104.
 - 16 Alan Watts' - a play on words referring to the countercultural leader Alan Watts who popularised Buddhism, Taoism and Hinduism for western audiences and the Watt steam engine.
 - 17 Reference to an article which quoted William S. Burroughs, an important figure in the beat movement, saying "No one owns life, but anyone who can pick up a frying pan owns death."
 - 18 Reference to Dylan Thomas 'Rage against the Dying of the Light'
 - 19 Reference from Ginsberg's usage in 'Howl', a metaphor for capitalism
 - 20 Satirising the final line of the Communist Manifesto, "workers of the world unite! You have nothing to lose but your chains"

Scene II: The Stage

NARRATOR:

The boat exits the cave. The moon hangs above the bayou in utter defiance. The air smells of corporate fragrance. A row of plastic chairs overlooks a stage on the river's edge. Each chair seat is made for something inhuman: made to be filled by protrusion fitted with a handmade nail sharpener.

Sound of faint improvised jazz — Infant Eyes by Wayne Shorter²¹. Continued sound of an oar paddling

Scores of alligators shatter the glass of the water and stand to their hind legs.

Over the stage stands a jumbotron which plays an idealistic advertisement that reads “Welcome your hatchlings to Swampyland, the happiest place on earth, so enjoy the magic for just \$67 dollars per person per day with a three-day one park per day ticket.”

A hatchling gawks at the sign while wearing a ‘Song of the catfish’ T-SHIRT

One alligator walks out from around the side of the stage. He wears a black turtleneck and leather jacket with buttons placed in the most random of places. He looks eerily similar to Michael Foucault. The alligator walks around the stage with his hands placed firmly in his coat's pockets with his head down, staring at his feet. He rambles out towards a guitar that sits idly in the centre of the stage where the sound begins.

LEGBA

You be one lucky one cher, dey be putin on a show just for you!

21 *Infant Eyes* by Wayne Shorter

LOKO

In Baudrillard's simulacra you barely exist²²
So let's watch the opera and Tweet that you resist²³
For the political unconscious²⁴, Pastiche movies are harmless fun,
A sequel
to a prequel to the film that's just begun.

Over my grave, again,
The soil is falling,
The soil's falling
Over my grave, again,
The soil is falling.
The soil is falling.

Reading apple's terms of service, you feel justified
When your phone was built by someone barely over five.²⁵
A full thanatophobic,
Losing focus, cover blown
I ordered 1984,
Hand-delivered delivered by a drone

Death's dissociation,
I'm fully out-my mind.
Googling derealisation,
Hating what you find.

That uncanny anxious spine in early fall.
That quite comprehending
of the ending, of it all.²⁶

Over my grave, again,
The soil is falling,
The soil's falling.

22 Reference to *Simulacra and Simulation*

23 Ironic: Participating in the culture while also portraying yourself to disagree

24 Reference to Fredric Jameson

25 Reference to the inability seeing the base-structures of things

26 Reference to the Waning of affect

NARRATOR

Faint rustling sound

From the side of the stage, a frog crawls from the midst of tall grass. He bears a red beret and a single bandolier ranging across his shoulder.

Sound of someone cocking a rifle

FROG

Liberté, égalité, fraternité! Vive la révolution!

NARRATOR

**Gunshot stops the song* *Sound of complete chaos: intense flowing water, alligators making loud noises.* *Frog is eaten* *Explosion* *Frogs croak victoriously* *A sound of water flowing softly in a fountain*

Silence and heartbeat

What is the point of worshipping all this manufactured noise? Do you want to retreat into a simulated reality in order to fulfil others' desires? Should we adopt some schizoanalytic nightmare in order to distract ourselves from our own mortality?

NARRATOR

Your eyes open slower than usual to see Legba standing above you. You ask about the alligator.

LEGBA

He sure ain't singing no more.

Scene III: The Maze

NARRATOR

You begin to approach a small island.

Clair de lune plays

The sun's rays refract and reflect through the dawn. A hedge maze rises from the island's centre, perfectly trimmed and symmetrical. It sits low enough in the water that waves have exposed the roots of the hedges – the place is on the brink of collapse.

You and Legba make your way to the maze's heart, where stands a statue of the water nymph Daphne. Her expression is one of contentment, despite the ferns that choke her plinth and the water that has flooded its base. Circling this figure, a single swan treads the water. Its life seems faded, as if it had lived rather than merely existing.

LEGBA

Dis ere is our final destination cher, your last stop. I want you to listen to dis' 'ere Ezili.

EZILI

With the downswing of a scythe
, Silent like the space between breaths,
You cut the crop of my heart —
Soil, turned with tendon and sinew
In which pomegranate
Trees lay their roots.

Gnarled wood
And gnashed constitution.

Hewn. And with
The toppling of the timber
Your bony hands compose a bed
For me to lay.
Silk sheets, trimmed with lace,
rise up walls stuffed with down,
Plucked from the underside
Of a goose.

Fool! I am,
For laying so still
While the maple wall encloses me in
While a rhythmic beat splinters into teeth
That cuts to silence as
Into the ground you lower,
Once again,
The seed of my heart.

NARRATOR

The swan takes its final flight. She thrusts her wings forward, flying up, up as close as she could to the Bright Stars. Ezili falters in midair, wings beating in vain as she falls back to earth and crashes into the statue. She hits it with a thud, rolls to the side and collapses into the flooded clearing, coming to rest just under the water's surface so you can see her outline, but nothing more.

You hope that death will somehow be like art. That meaning can be found through the appreciation and creation of beauty. Maybe you will live eternally in your own creation, or maybe, you will just be food for the earth.

You walk with Legba out of the labyrinth and sit down on the island's stumpy shore. After some time, Legba stands. You rise to meet its gaze, and it hands you the oar from its twisted boat before turning sharply and disappearing into the trees.

Epilogue

'Freudian Slippers' by Chilly Gonzales

NARRATOR

For our literary listeners, we hope you enjoyed the intertextual narrative made from the work of Ginsberg, Baudelaire, Bo Burnham and Baudrillard amongst others found in full on our podcast website.

MUSIC 2

Carlos Gundelach

Performance: Piano

Core Performance: 'Suburban Rag' by Elena Kats-Chernin

Elective 1: 'Prelude and Fugue No.6 in D minor BWV851'

by J.S Bach

Elective 2: 'Italian Concerto in F Major BWV 971: III –

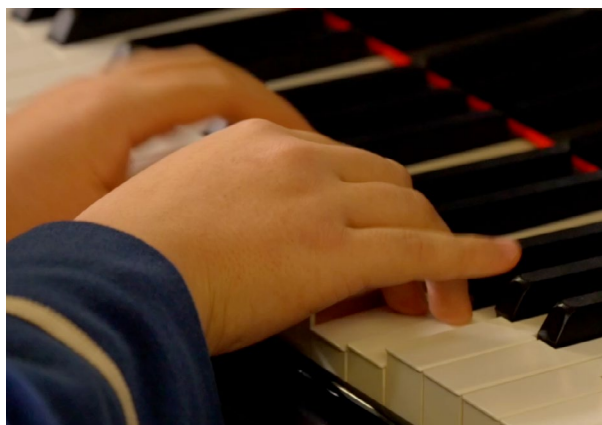
Presto' (No Video)

REFLECTION STATEMENT

I must admit that the process of learning these pieces was not an easy one. It was very gruelling and time consuming yet in the end it paid off. The piece I struggled with the most would have to be, without a doubt, 'Suburban Rag' by Elena Kats Churnin as the jumping chords in the left hand along with complex runs on the right was a recipe for disaster. However, I stuck with the piece for the same reason I choose it in the first place – it sounded unique and due to most of my prior repertoire being Classical or Baroque, to learn and play a modern piece was a new and exciting experience.

All in all, although some days were tougher than others, I believe every second, minute and hour put into these pieces was worth it and I hope the result at the end reflected this.





CARLOS GUNDELACH

CORE PERFORMANCE- SUBURBAN RAG, ELENA KATS-CHERNIN

ELECTIVE 1 - PRELUDE AND FUGUE NO.6 IN D MINOR BWV851, J.S BACH

ELECTIVE 2 - ITALIAN CONCERTO IN F MAJOR BWV 971: III - PRESTO (NO VIDEO)



VISUAL ARTS

Edward Wright

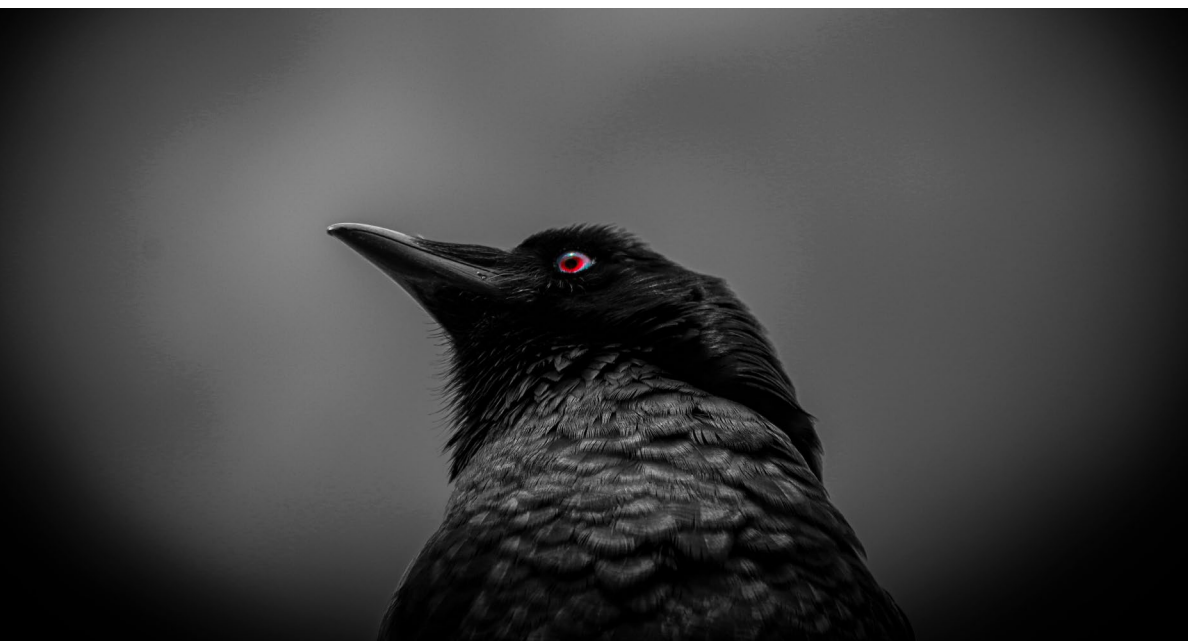
Persistence of Memory

REFLECTION STATEMENT

My photographs depict places and experiences. I have manipulated the images to change the way that I initially remember these locations. My photographs act as records of experiences and through my Body of Work, I have enhanced the images to emphasise the narrative. With three of my images, I created a diorama or film strip-like works, stitched together to form a panorama. This compositional device references filmmaking and creates a narrative.

My photographs are like stills of a film, consequently, they are more powerful than a memory, increasing the dramatic nature of the images. My photographs also serve to create a sense of suspense that symbolises and reflects my own filmic interest. Intentionally, my work sits on the edge of photography and film as the photographs display strong filmic qualities such as dramatic chiaroscuro.











SCIENCE

Charlie Henry

“

The hope is that my research could help scientists address the various problems inhibiting modern quantum computers and make them more reliable, so that they may achieve things never previously thought possible in a computer

”

An analysis of Bell State Fidelity and its decay overtime

REFLECTION STATEMENT

Throughout studying Physics, I found learning about quantum theory and its future impacts on society very interesting. In particular, I have become very hopeful and excited about the development of quantum computers, which will be able to break otherwise undecipherable codes, model global economies and improve weather forecasting in the near future. Given this, I took part in the UNSW SciX program to learn about the basic principles of quantum theory which apply to quantum computing. There, I focused on how the Bell State, the most simple and important algorithm, becomes more unreliable over time and affects all quantum computations.

In conducting an investigation, I initially reviewed the current literature on quantum computing and identified specific areas in which the current understanding of quantum computers can be improved. Then, I gathered my own data from a quantum computer in the US through writing code into the IBM Quantum Experience Platform and could analyse the data using Python code.

In essence, my work 'An analysis of Bell State Fidelity and its decay overtime' aims to estimate and provide reasons for unreliability in the base computations of a quantum computer which are key to its function. The hope is that my research could help scientists address the various problems inhibiting modern quantum computers and make them more reliable, so that they may achieve things never previously thought possible in a computer.

REPORT

The Abstract

In this investigation, a Bell State was constructed and conducted on the ‘ibmq_manila’ quantum computer and calculated using quantum state tomography to have fidelity 0.909 ± 0.0132 and a statistically significant difference in the number of $|01\rangle$, $|10\rangle$ and $|11\rangle$ results when compared to the ideal Bell State. The Bell State lifetimes were then increased by a varying number of identity gates and their fidelities were calculated on the same system. A Pearson’s r^2 value of 0.481 was obtained over very small increases of time, providing inconclusive results which were not statistically significant. However, over longer intervals of time, Pearson’s r^2 value of 0.959 was obtained suggesting a strong, negative linear correlation between the Bell State lifetime and its fidelity which was attributed to an increase in the relative phase of entangled qubits overtime and identity gate error.

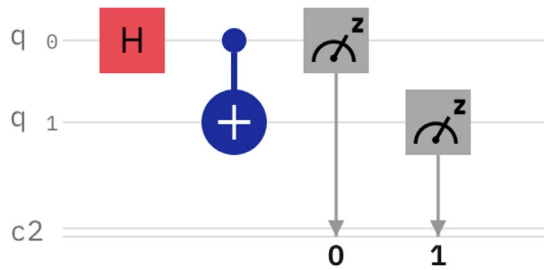
Literature Review

Quantum Computing and Bell States

Quantum computers can solve many problems which take too much time or memory on a regular computer. Fundamental to these different computers are qubits which have quantum mechanical properties (Gyongyosi & Imre, 2018). The two major principles, superposition and entanglement, have large applications in quantum error correction (Preskill, 1998), Shor’s integer factorisation and Grover’s search algorithms (Coles *et. al.*, 2018). However, quantum computers are error prone. For example, Grover’s algorithm was calculated to have a “65% success rate” on the IBM 5-qubit quantum computer which “is much lower” than classical computers operating at 100% (Coles *et. al.*, 2018 p. 10)

To conduct basic investigations on these root causes of algorithms, the lifetime of qubits in a basic Bell State can be analysed (Roos *et. al.*, 2004) by applying a Hadamard gate on qubit 0 before placing a CNOT gate on control qubit 0 and target qubit 1 and measuring both qubits as seen below in Figure 1.

Right Figure 1: Circuit Diagram of a Bell State



The aim of this literature review is to find the causes underpinning quantum computer infidelity reported in the literature, particularly relating to Bell States over time. It has found three major sources of error: measurement and quantum preparation error, decoherence and dephasing of entangled qubits and qubit energy-relaxation.

State Preparation and Measurement Error

Using a Rydberg C_z gate to create a CNOT gate, a Bell-State was formed and was calculated to have fidelity $F_{\text{BELL}}=0.86$. (Graham *et. al.*, 2019) by considering the parity oscillations and results of the data, which is accurate but not as reliable as quantum state tomography. State Preparation and Measurement Error was found to occur due to atomic collisions occurring in finite vacuums and slight infidelity in the propagation of microwave pulses. However, this error was calculated as significantly smaller than qubit decoherence. The measurements taken to quantify sources of infidelity have no standard error reported and thus it is difficult to conclude how accurate these infidelity estimates are. Similar gate processes and error of this magnitude can be found in different silicon and superconducting quantum computers.

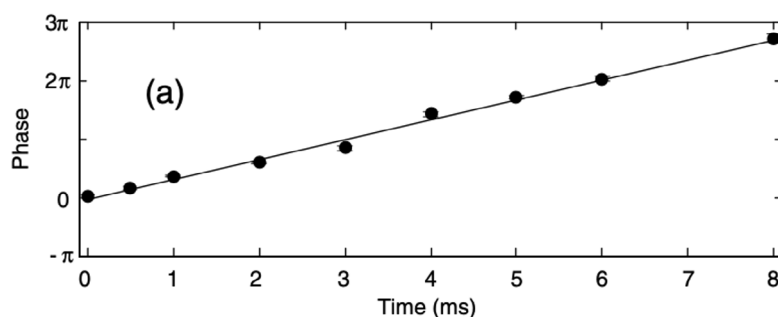
Decoherence and Dephasing

Decoherence is the deterioration of a quantum state in which it loses its quantum properties (Cywinski *et. al.*, 2013). It is measured by, T_2 , the time taken for a qubit to lose its superposition and T_2^* , the time take for multiple qubits to lose their superposition and is compared to T_1 , the energy-relaxation time of a qubit (Wang, Zheng, Yin, 2008). It has been found that $T_2^* < T_2$, as T_2^* considers potential space inhomogeneities that occurs between qubits. Generally, it was also found that the $T_2 < T_1$, the pure energy-relaxation of qubits, as the T_2 time accounts for both energy-relaxation and quantum dephasing (Wang, Zheng, Yin, 2008). These arguments are contested by Burnett's experimental data (Burnett *et. al.*, 2019), but, in any case, fails to take account for the "continuous decay" (Cywinski *et. al.*, 2013, p. 1) of qubit decoherence by measuring it

as an interval of time. A qubit's progressive decohering over time, as well as differing quantum computers overtime, could be a potential reason for varying results in the field of these measures, with some ranging from nanoseconds to hundreds of milliseconds.

The causes of decoherence are found to be due to noise that occurs in the finite vacuum of a quantum computer. Superconducting qubits are affected by both Gaussian $1/f$ noise and Random Telegraph Noise, but mainly decohere due from the Gaussian $1/f$ noise which occurs due to the electric and magnetic dipoles fluctuating (Cywinski *et al.*, 2013). In a different computer, however, it was found that superconducting qubits are limited by Lorentzian noise due to the two-level system nature of the qubit's spin (Burnett *et al.*, 2019).

As seen in Figure 2, it has been found that decoherence leads to a difference in the phase between entangled qubits linearly, which was accurately measured using quantum state tomography. This creates inconsistency with the entanglement between the qubits and a source of infidelity in the quantum computer (Roos *et al.*, 2004).



Left Figure 2: Linear relationship between time and the relative phase of two qubits entangled in a Bell State (Roos *et al.*, 2004).

Whilst the different lengths of decoherence and dephasing times are disputed, it is clear and accepted that decoherence occurs where qubits lose quantum properties overtime and is due to noise found within the quantum computer.

Energy-Relaxation

In quantum computing, energy-relaxation is the phenomenon where the qubit has a tendency to return to a lower energy-state. In reliable and valid experimental data, it was found that relaxation occurs due to inconsistencies in the two-level system of a qubit, which fluctuates between energy states of spin up and spin down (Klimov *et al.*, 2018). More specifically, in ion-trap computers, it was found that when the control

atom of a two-qubit gate is in a high-energy state, there is an excess loss of energy in the target qubits. A delay was also discovered between the change in energy of a control and target qubit when using Rydberg pulses, which resulted in further energy loss (Maller *et. al.*, 2015).

Energy-relaxation is relevant because the energy transitions have been found to change the wave function of a qubit arrangement (Wang, Zheng, Yin, 2008), potentially leading to an incorrect result. Therefore, there is a valid argument that the best way to increase fidelity is to understand the inconsistencies in the two-level system of a quantum computer (Klimov *et. al.*, 2018). This is because these defects create energy-relaxation issues but, however, this argument overlooks concerns around the decoherence of qubits.

Summary

Through surveying the literature, two major sources of quantum computing infidelity have been identified, energy-relaxation and decoherence of qubits, whilst there are other minor sources such as state preparation and measurement error. However, the magnitude of these effects is largely disputed and unclear for that of a simple Bell State and other circuits. Thus, further research is required into seeking how these errors effect the fidelity of quantum computers over longer time intervals.

Scientific Research Question

How does an increase in lifetime of a constructed Bell State affect its fidelity?

Scientific Hypothesis

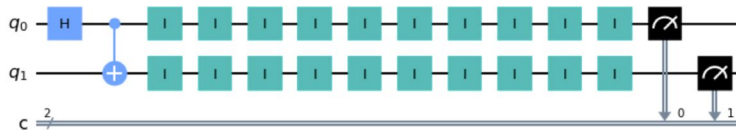
It is hypothesised that the fidelity of the Bell State decreases linearly with respect to time, and thus a strong negative correlation coefficient would be demonstrated between time and fidelity. This is due to the linear increase in relative phase between two entangled qubits overtime discovered through surveying the literature.

Methodology

In this experiment, the independent variable was the lifetime of the Bell State, modified by the use of identity gates to extend the lifetime of the circuit, and the dependent variable was the circuit fidelity. As this was conducted remotely using the IBM Qiskit Lab, there were no ethical or safety issues in this investigation.

As seen in Figure 3, Bell Circuits were first prepared with CNOT and Hadamard gates before identity gates were placed on the circuit in order to increase the lifetime of the Bell State. This gate pattern ensured that there was no variable, such as the time

or circuit creating the Bell State, which could potentially affect the final fidelity of the circuit.



Left Figure 3: Circuit diagram of a Bell State with 10 identity gates placed on each qubit.

After the circuits were created, further Qiskit Code was written to conduct the certain circuits on the quantum computer. There were two datasets collected, firstly of circuits with 0, 1, 2, 3 and 4 identity gates placed on each qubit and secondly with identity gates of 0, 10, 20, 30 and 40 to assess the impact of both shorter and longer intervals of time. For each respective dataset, 10 repetitions of the circuits were conducted all on the 'ibmq_manila' computer with 8192 shots. As seen in Figure 4, transpiling circuits for the quantum computer was minimised in order to ensure that no circuits were changed except where absolutely necessary.



Left Figure 4: Circuit diagram of a Bell State with 0 identity gates conducted after being transpiled onto the 'ibmq_manila' system.

Quantum state tomography was used in order to ensure that phase rotations were considered in creating an accurate and reliable measure of fidelity. The jobs were saved so that the time and results of the circuit could be found and to confirm the correct circuits were run on the quantum system. The time, results and fidelity were then averaged for each set of 10 repetitions to eliminate the effect of outliers in the data and increase precision.

Results

After the above method was conducted, the following measurements for time and fidelity were found for the respective circuits over the shorter and longer intervals.

Right Table 1: Time and fidelity measurements for circuits over shorter intervals of time.

<i>Identity Gates</i>	<i>Avg. Fidelity</i>	<i>SD. Fidelity</i>	<i>Avg. Time in system (s)</i>	<i>SD. Time in system (s)</i>
0	0.91539	0.01038	28.69	0.1792
1	0.90992	0.01688	28.60	0.1333
2	0.91497	0.00780	28.63	0.1418
3	0.91251	0.01417	29.72	3.2744
4	0.90306	0.01922	31.77	9.9548

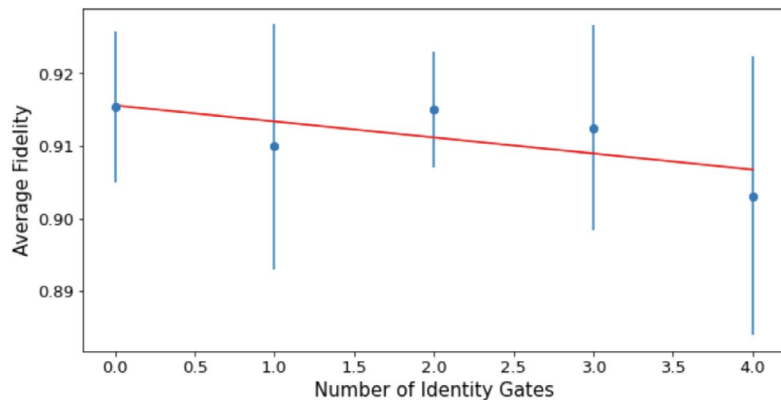
Right Table 2: Time and fidelity measurements for circuits over longer intervals of time.

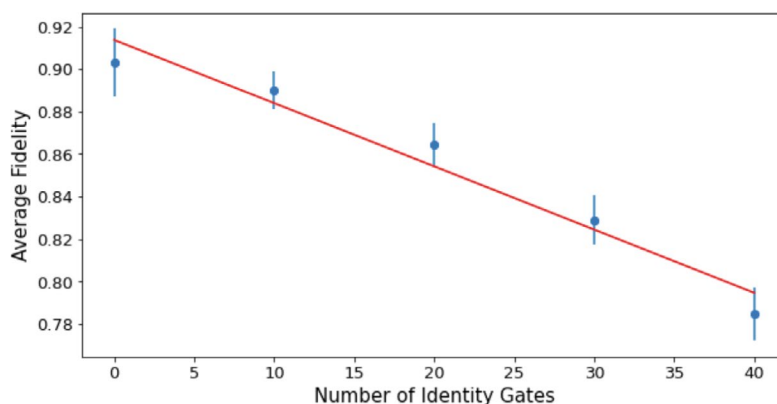
<i>Identity Gates</i>	<i>Avg. Fidelity</i>	<i>SD. Fidelity</i>	<i>Avg. Time in System (s)</i>	<i>SD. Time in System (s)</i>
0	0.90297	0.01597	29.80	3.4855
10	0.89001	0.00888	28.74	0.1430
20	0.86431	0.01022	32.52	11.557
30	0.82905	0.01145	28.84	0.1955
40	0.78471	0.01267	32.63	9.5655

In each dataset, it was found that the difference in the average time taken between the circuits was less than one standard deviation. Thus, it could be concluded that the average time in the quantum system was a measurement independent of the length of the circuits. Given this, lifetime of the Bell State was measured in identity gates.

The number of identity gates was graphed on the x-axis against the average fidelity of the circuit on the y-axis, with the standard deviation of measurements used as the standard error for the fidelity measurements as seen in Figures 5 and 6. Both the Pearson’s correlation coefficient and the line of best fit $y=mx+b$ were constructed for each dataset and are presented in Table 3. As r , the Pearson’s correlation coefficient, only determines the strength of linear correlation between the variables, the coefficient was squared in order to attain a more accurate and reliable measure of the variance in fidelity which can be attributed to the change in identity gates.

Right Figure 5: Line of best fit $y=mx+b$ between average fidelity and number of identity gates in the circuits over shorter time intervals.





Left Figure 6: Line of best fit $y=mx+b$ between average fidelity and number of identity gates in the circuits used over longer time intervals

	<i>Shorter Time Intervals</i>	<i>Longer Time Intervals</i>
<i>r</i>	-0.693	-0.979
<i>r</i>²	0.481	0.959
<i>m</i>	-2.208×10^{-3}	-2.975×10^{-3}
<i>m error</i>	1.325×10^{-3}	3.536×10^{-4}
<i>m error (%)</i>	60.0	11.9
<i>b value</i>	0.916	0.914
<i>b error</i>	3.245×10^{-3}	8.660×10^{-3}
<i>b error (%)</i>	0.354	0.948

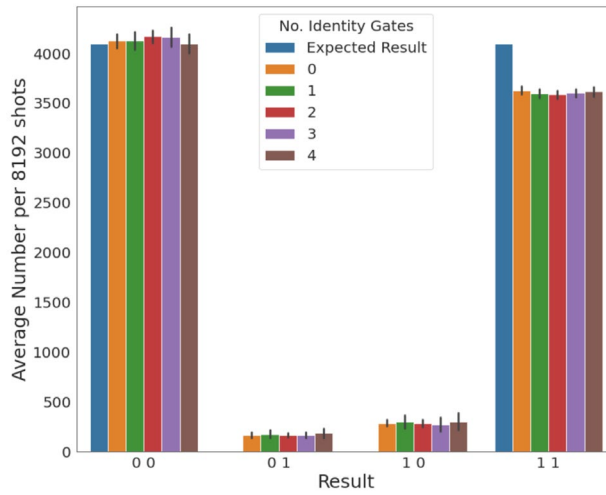
Left Table 3: Linear correlation and line of best fit parameters for each dataset

From this data, it is unclear whether there is a clear, causal relationship between the fidelity of the quantum computer and the identity gates over very small intervals, or whether variations are due to chance. However, there is a much clearer relationship and causation between the lifetime of the Bell State and its decreasing fidelity over larger intervals of time. This is due to a decrease of $2.975 \times 10^{-3} \pm 3.536 \times 10^{-4}$ in fidelity per identity gate.

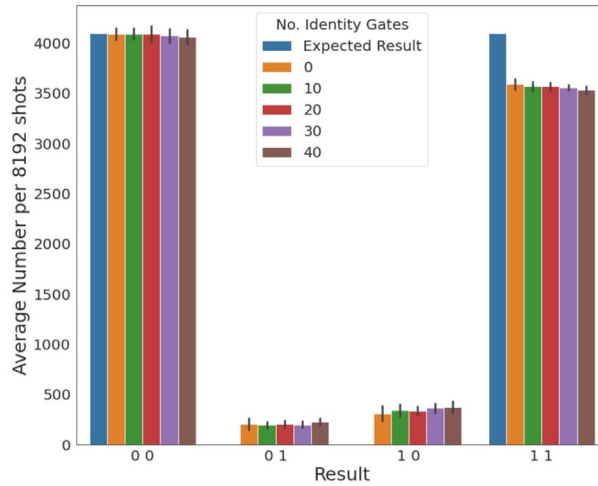
Through conducting the circuits, the difference in the average population distribution of the 8192 shots were measured for each dataset and compared to the expected values of 4096 $|00\rangle$ and 4096 $|11\rangle$ for a standard Bell State as seen in Figures 7 and 8.

In each dataset, it was found that, for all results, the difference in the average number of shots was less than one standard deviation between average for the constructed circuits. Therefore, there is no statistical confidence that any difference between the distribution of results in the circuits is due to the lifetime of the Bell State.

Right Figure 7: Average population of the Bell State results for shorter time intervals. The standard error is the standard deviation in the results.



Right Figure 8: Average population of the Bell State results for longer time intervals. The standard error is one standard deviation in the results for each circuit.



<i>Dataset</i>	<i>P-Value for result 00⟩</i>	<i>P-Value for result 01⟩</i>	<i>P-Value for result 10⟩</i>	<i>P-Value for result 11⟩</i>
<i>Shorter time intervals</i>	0.298	5.62×10^{-8}	7.64×10^{-10}	5.33×10^{-11}
<i>Longer time intervals</i>	0.787	1.52×10^{-6}	7.87×10^{-7}	4.64×10^{-10}

Left Table 4: T-test results for population distributions between original Bell States with zero identity gates and expected results

Given the small amount of data used to determine the averages and standard error for each measurement, a two-sided t-test was conducted to analyse whether there were any statistically significant differences between result distributions for the original Bell State constructed with zero identity gates and the expected results in both datasets. The P-Value on the Student's curve with 9 degrees of freedom are shown in Table 4.

Taking a standard critical P-value of 0.05, it has been found that there is no statistical difference between the Bell States and the expected number of $|00\rangle$ results, but a statistically significant difference between the Bell State at the expected number of $|01\rangle$, $|10\rangle$ and $|11\rangle$ results.

Discussion

This experiment had procedural validity as it had one independent variable, the lifetime of the Bell State, and one dependent variable, the fidelity of the Bell State. All other variables were controlled, such as the computer used for each dataset and the time taken to create the Bell State before it underwent a series of identity gates. Each dataset was also collected in groups as measurements were taken in the shortest time possible, minimising any potential change in the quantum computing system overtime whether due to maintenance, recalibration, or deterioration. However, the measurements sometimes were taken over multiple hours due to waiting queues and the job limit held on the IBMQ platform and the 'ibmq_manila' system.

Overall, this investigation was fairly reliable. The lifetime of the Bell State was measured by the identity gates in the circuit rather than the time of qubits in the system in order to obtain a reliable measure. The times, which were approximately around half a minute, would have taken into account the running of 9 programs per circuit for quantum state tomography, all of which were different lengths, measurement and state preparation time and thus could not be chosen as an accurate measure for the lifetime of the Bell State circuit. Given that the identity gate is an arbitrary wait gate, the average gate time as posted by IBM for the 'ibmq_manila' system, 368ns per gate (IBM, 2021), could not be applied as an estimate of time as that considers the time for microwave pulses to occur on any conventional gate. To enhance reliability and

precision of results, 10 repetitions of each circuit were conducted and averaged to reduce the effect that outliers have on the data. However, upon evaluating the data, it became clear that the precision and reliability could be enhanced by taking in a much larger dataset. Due to the statistical phenomenon of regression to the mean (Galton, 1886), this would have likely resulted in a smaller standard deviation and error in the fidelity which diminished the statistical confidence of the findings, particularly for the analysis of fidelity results for shorter intervals of time and population distribution trends. A larger range of circuit lengths and identity gates could have also been used in order to provide more data points and obtain a more accurate line of best fit and correlation value. Therefore, whilst the results are fairly reliable in this investigation, a larger amount of data and range of circuits for each dataset would have enhanced the accuracy and statistical confidence in the trends found in the investigation.

Right Table 5: Gate Errors as reported by IBM and their total effect (IBM, 2021)

<i>Gate</i>	<i>Amount of Error</i>	<i>Times used in the transpiled circuit</i>	<i>Total error</i>
<i>CNOT</i>	6.840×10^{-3}	1	6.840×10^{-3}
\sqrt{x} <i>SX</i>	2.474×10^{-4}	5	1.237×10^{-3}
<i>Measurements</i>	2.665×10^{-2}	2	5.330×10^{-2}

From the data in this experiment, it was found that Bell State has a source of error that produces a fidelity of approximately 0.909 ± 0.0132 after averaging the fidelity results from both datasets for the plain Bell State with no identity gates. One source of infidelity for the computer is in the gate error for the 'ibmq_manila' system as seen in Table 5.

The RZ gate error could not be found for the computer on the IBM computer details but is likely to be similar in magnitude to \sqrt{x} SX as both gates are single qubit gates. Taking total error for the RZ gate to be that of the \sqrt{x} SX gate, 1.237×10^{-3} , the total gate and readout error is 0.0604, approximately 66.35% of the infidelity in the Bell State. Some of this gate infidelity is likely also due to qubit energy-relaxation effects when the rotations in the gates are applied through microwave pulses (Klimov *et. al.*, 2018)

Further infidelity in the data can be explained through considering the differences in the population distributions of the expected results and the Bell State. It was found that there was a significant difference between the $|01\rangle$ and $|10\rangle$ results in the Bell State when compared to the ideal Bell State, which indicates a loss of entanglement in the qubits. This is a problem consistent for other superconducting qubit systems (Garcia-Martin & Sierra, 2018), and occurs since qubit decoherence creates inconsistency in the entanglement of qubits in the quantum system (Cywinski *et. al.*, 2013). Since the $|00\rangle$ results remained similar to that of the predicted values, energy-relaxation

phenomena in the qubits may have changed some $|11\rangle$ results into $|01\rangle$ or $|10\rangle$ results, also creating a significant loss of $|11\rangle$ results as seen in the data. This also explains why there is a larger proportion of $|10\rangle$ results than $|01\rangle$ results, as it is more likely for the target qubit of the CNOT gate to switch from a high to low energy state when the control qubit is initially in an excited state (Maller *et al.*, 2015).

Thus, any infidelity in the initial construction of the Bell State can be explained by sources of measurement or readout and gate error, which accounts for slightly under two-thirds of the error, as well as qubit decoherence and energy-relaxation when implementing the CNOT gate on the computer.

Any subsequent decay in smaller intervals of time were found to have been statistically insignificant due to limited repetition and a lack of precision in the data obtained from the experiment. Therefore, from the results in the investigation, it is unclear whether smaller changes in the lifetime of the Bell State cause a decrease in fidelity.

However, there was a decrease in fidelity over larger intervals of times for the Bell State, which was found to have a very strong linear correlation and r^2 value of 0.959. It was found that there was a decrease in fidelity of magnitude $2.975 \times 10^{-3} \pm 3.536 \times 10^{-4}$ per identity gate placed on both qubits. One source of infidelity is found in the average identity gate error of the 'ibmq_manila' system. There is an error of 4.75×10^{-4} per identity gate placed on both qubits (IBM, 2021), which accounts for approximately 16% of the overall decrease in the fidelity per identity gate and decreases linearly overtime. Since there was no significant difference in the distribution of results in the constructed circuits, the decrease in fidelity overtime time occurs due to a significant deterioration in the phase of the data (Graham *et al.*, 2019). This relative dephasing between the two qubits has been found to increase linearly over time and cause a decrease in fidelity in the literature (Roos *et al.*, 2004), which explains the high value for linear correlation in the investigation. Therefore, the statistically significant decrease in fidelity at a linear rate occurred as a result of the identity gate error in the quantum system and the relative dephasing between the entangled qubits.

Potential further research could involve taking greater datasets and increased precision to confirm that the patterns found in the longer time intervals are similar to those of smaller time intervals, or methods to minimise quantum infidelity in the Bell State. Future research could also be conducted into fidelity decay overtime with more useful and conventional gates in the quantum computer such as the X, Hadamard and Toffoli gates found in quantum computing algorithms.

Conclusion

From the data, it was found that there was a strong negative correlation with $r^2=0.959$ between fidelity and Bell State lifetime over longer time intervals. Since it was found that there was no statistically significant difference in the population distribution over time in the circuits, the decrease in fidelity was explained by identity gate error and qubit dephasing overtime. However, due to imprecision and small datasets, there was uncertainty over whether the slight differences in fidelity and the population distribution over smaller time intervals was due to the changes in time or random error.

In the investigation, the fidelity in the computer's construction of the Bell State was calculated at 0.909 ± 0.0132 . After considering the differences in the results of the population distribution, it was found that gate and measurement error, qubit energy-relaxation and inconsistent entanglement were the major sources of infidelity in the Bell State.

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