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**PhD Fine Art (*By Practice*)**

*Title:*

Queer reproduction: Horror, landscape and myth

***Probation Review Report***

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*To access artwork please follow:*

<https://www.queerghosts.com/materialisations>

## Main objective

### Background

Supernatural fiction, in particular, the ghost story and science fiction have been an outlet, coded or otherwise for queer expression. Gothic horror established the notion of the outsider characterised as monstrous same sex attraction, lust and sin. The Victorian and Edwardian ghost story featured the repressed yearnings of the middle class, lone male. Often his fear and desire materialised through spectral manifestations. In E F Benson's story *The Thing in the Hall* (1912), two gentlemen dabble in the fashionable, spiritualist practice of table turning. This results in the production of a large, slug-like 'thing'. The manifestation can be read as phallus and baby. The male spiritual mediums of the era, known for their production of *matter*, were largely homosexual and found new freedoms in gender transgression through their mediumship. The spiritualist medium Leslie Flint (1911-1994) was famed for his 'direct voice mediumship'. He claimed to produce a skin-like, ectoplasmic being, that attached to his person and acted as a voice box for the dead, through his child spirit guide 'Mickey'. Often the spectral visitor was a famous female, such as Marilyn Monroe. Flint and Mickey, through the manifested organ, performed what could be likened to a spirit drag show.

Female impersonation and assuming the role of a bride or expectant mother was commonplace in The Molly Houses of 18th century Britain. They were brothels that provided a community for queer male sex workers, whose work was illegal but largely tolerated. Mock labour and birth rituals were commonplace and were attributed to an expelling of anxiety. Male pregnancy and birth appear in Lucian of Samosata's, in, *A True Story*, a 2nd century work of proto-science fiction. It contains all male races that reproduce through; gestation in the thigh from sodomy and also burying testicles in the ground and harvesting babies from the resulting tree that grows. Octavia Butler in *Bloodchild* (1984) explores male pregnancy and interspecies dependence, in a meditation of the human race's future on another planet. Feminist writer Shulamith Firestone proposed the idea of artificial wombs, regarding women's pregnancy and labour as an oppressive tyranny in *The Dialectic of Sex* (1970). The Tiddy Mun and Tiddy People in Lincolnshire Folklore offer interesting queer readings. They were secretive creatures, often described as little men. They were said to have caused great problems for the engineers draining the Fens to create valuable land in the 17th century. Their identity and resistance to capitalist hegemony is something that I will explore in future work.

### Project Focus

I have evidenced queer alignment with the supernatural and its manifestations. I am proposing an exploration of non-heteronormative reproduction and community. I will ask if queer futurity can question capitalist hegemony, I will elucidate and explore the notion of queer male reproduction as a utopian futurity. I am proposing that: portrayals in literature, folklore and historical records and events provide clear evidence of exploration in this field.

I have used video and web based formats as a carrier to reveal materialisations through: digital drawings, animations and live action. The work will adopt a digital *collage* or *montage* approach, producing non-linear narratives. Working with digital media the editing process becomes an act of science and reproduction, through work and intervention of the artist. I have created a short film: *saturday afternoon seance* (2020) [fig,1]. The work explores gender transgression in spiritualism and the male medium as a reproductive vessel.

fig.1

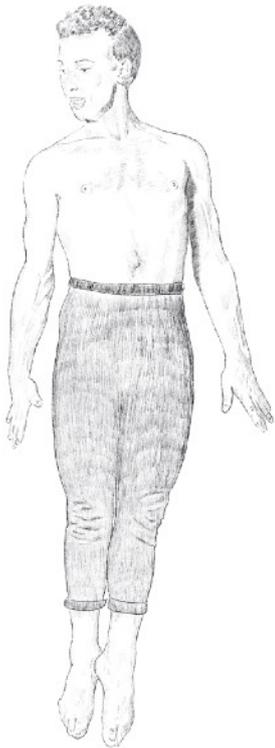
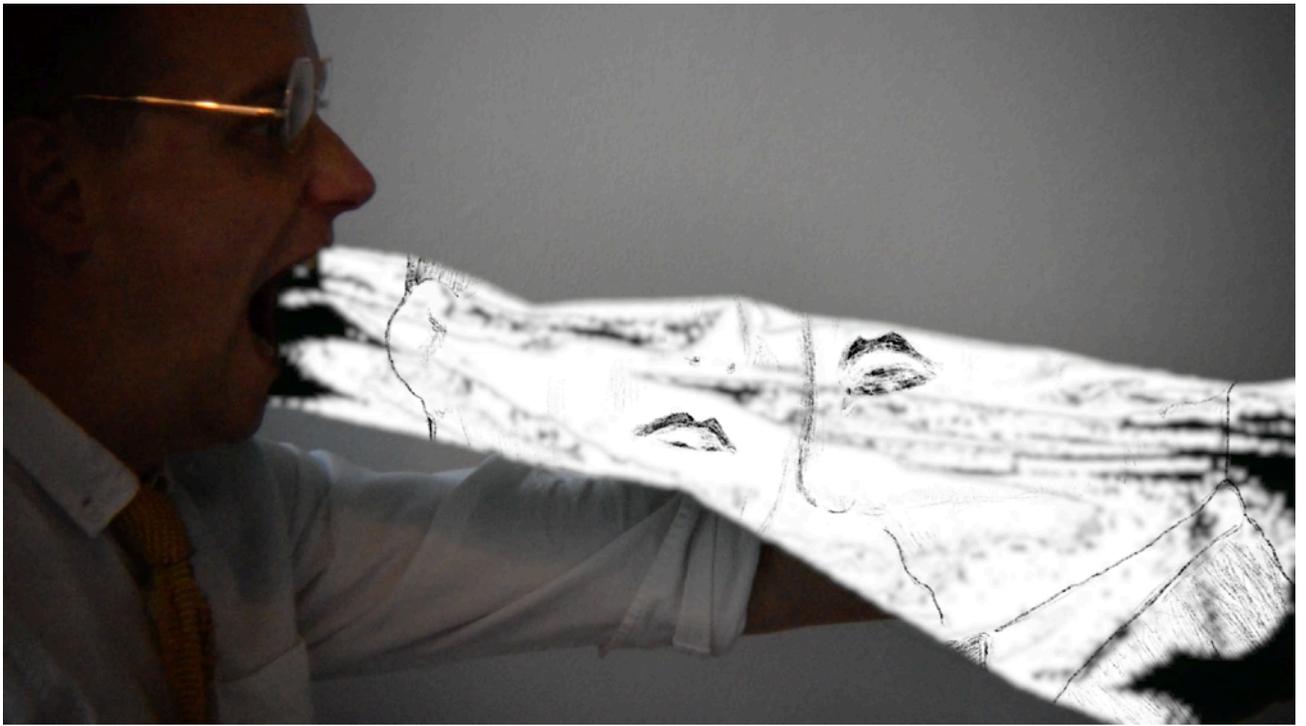


fig.2



fig.3

Producing drawings, particularly of living beings, replicate the embryonic and growth, yet also the spectral action of invocation. Animation, in essence, allows for one to bring life and growth, an illusion that can portray emergence of life and re-emergence from the dead. Incorporating images, including moving images, that are found, and often in the public domain provide interesting vestiges of a queer past. The overtly sexualised and camp Joan Crawford in *Rain* (1932) gives a performance akin to drag. *I Was A Teenage Frankenstein* (1957) a young adult male, reminiscent of models in the physique magazines of the era, is created from parts of cadavers, by an older man. The act of harvesting and using this material in itself becomes comparable to the notion of building a person, or monster. The film uses science fiction and horror devices that explore both queer fantasy and reproduction. This is intrinsic to the visual language that I have adopted. The drawings that I have produced and used in *birthing* scenes in *saturday afternoon seance* were created from low quality digital images found on the internet. Fig. 2 is taken from a collection of photographic negatives discarded by an amateur ballet photographer. Taken in the 1940s the subjects poses and interaction with the camera are highly sexualised. One can surmise that the photographs were intended to be erotic images collected by gay men. Fig. 3 is drawn from the 1930 film *Sunny Skies*. The film is now in the public domain and exists in very low quality formats. It featured an explicitly gay character. This was in the pre Hay's Code era, which banned such representation. The use of alternative forms of image making, such as: still film photography, motion picture film, in conjunction with digital technologies becomes analogous. An antique lens mounted on a digital camera produces haunting and otherworldly images. In my photographic series *queer terrain* (2020) [fig.4] one of the images, taken at a known gay cruising location becomes that of a fairytale backdrop. The camera's perception and manner of receiving light data is reliant on optics of considerable age. The subjects it captured when initially employed are long deceased. Its re-use and attachment to modern image making technologies resemble that of tropes in science fiction and horror, such as seeing the future and the past through image-viewing devices. The 2014 film *Time-Lapse* and 1924 ghost story *A View from A Hill* do this respectively. The very notion of futurity and queer futurity compels one to look to the past in order to consider the future. In the words of José Esteban Muñoz, queerness is something 'not yet here'. My film, *saturday afternoon seance*, is shot using a low quality lens of age, mounted on a professional DLSR. The sound is a digitised magnetic tape recording. The decision to work in this way produces an aesthetic that aligns to my previous point. Low fidelity technology, perhaps considered obsolete by commercial users, is used in conjunction with modern and new technology. The resultant images occupy a space that one questions whether they are in the past, present or future.

fig.4

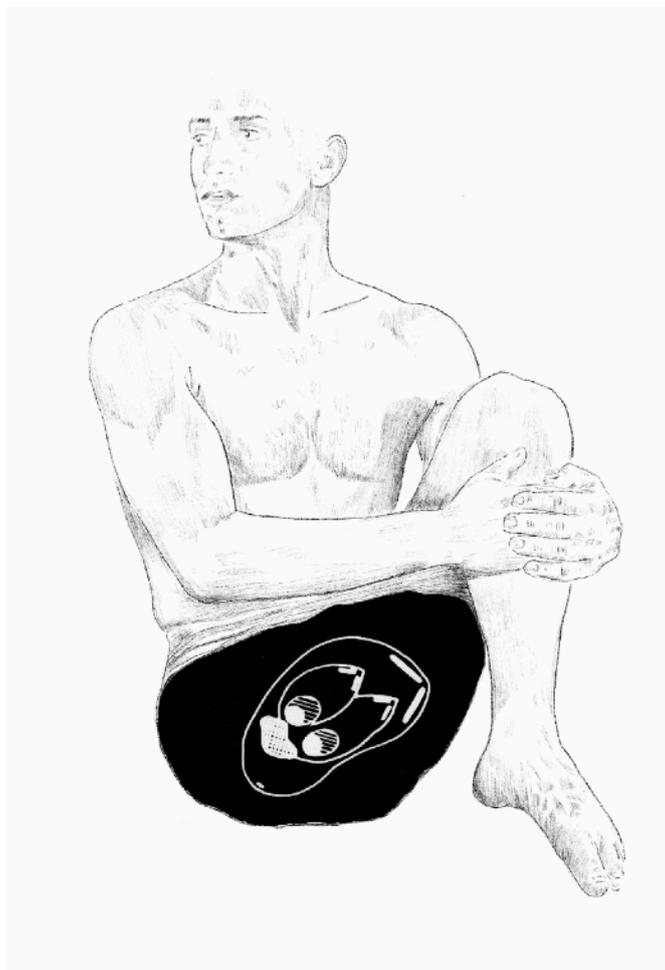


fig.5

Animation holds limitless possibilities to portray fantastical, strange and new worlds. In Rene Laloux's *La Planet Sauvage* (1973) the use of cut-out animation is used in conjunction with a drawn and painted alien world. Humanoid creatures that keep miniature humanoids is a clear allegory, regarding human rights. The subjugation of others, in relation to their identity, and thus the exploitation of their labour, allegorises heteronormative and capitalist practices. In *Little Otik* (2000), Jan Svankmajer uses combined animation and live action in his reimagining of a Czech fairytale in which a tree stump becomes a living baby creature that attempts to devour its childless parents. I have produced a gif animation: *expecting* (2020) [fig.5]. The drawing, again is taken from an anonymous photographic negative. I have reproduced the male figure in a way that suggests he is gestating a living thing within his body, in particular reference to *A True Story*. Through omissions and modifications the figure becomes otherworldly. Animated blinking of the eyes introduces a life-likeness and living quality to the figure. The gestating creature, is actually a series of 1978 drawings of cell division and reproduction. They are found drawings that are available in the public domain from a USA government science archive, on the internet. The organism represented is a parasite known as *Toxoplasma gondii*. It is interesting to note that scientific research suggests that it is capable of changing human behaviour, making one more extrovert and likely to take risks, if you are a well person and possible death to people with compromised health, such as HIV and Aids. The drawings have an interesting aesthetic quality. They resemble a cartoon character, particularly those of early Disney animated films. This work is an exploration of ideas that contrast gay male sex, biological reproduction as a futurity and the abject societal portrayals as discussed in historical literature.

## **Research questions**

### **1) To what extent do queer supernatural themes in literature and media suggest alternative forms of reproduction and community?**

I will explore and propose a timeline of literature, film, television and art that portrays elements that are arguably related to queer reproduction and community. Specific stories will be harvested, particularly those of less established modern modes of sharing, such as folklore. I will propose new links that compare queer people in alternative communities to that of the creatures in folklore.

### **2) What are the political implications of queer futurity and alternative societies?**

I will challenge political and cultural hegemony and heteronormativity. I will identify capitalist modes of living, working, societal expectations and reproduction, in contrast to their queer counterparts. I will explore the use of the distasteful and monstrous, as allegories used to caution those that deviate from capitalist norms. In turn I will reveal and propose queer alignment to the distasteful and monstrous in establishing alternative identities and societies. An exploration of feminist Marxist literature and theories will form the basis of this part of the study.

### **3) Can art, and particular use of media, be a speculative mode of engaging with utopian models of queer reproduction and community?**

I will explore art making as a form of reproduction. Particular media, such as drawing and animation will expound this, as will the act of building a piece through video editing and digital montage/collage. I will make connections with ephemera such as folklore, heritage and found material, in order to propose theories of queer reproductive and societal futurity.

## Methods

I have devised my own mixed method methodology, but I draw on queer methods, and a range of fictive and science fictive methods that work in tandem with the interdisciplinary visual research methods. Through engagement with literature and media, such as stories and film, I will delineate themes that I have interpreted and evidenced as to be within the realms of queer, supernatural, reproduction, community and politics. Some of this will be coded and I will be making interpretations as to given subtexts. There will be examples of these themes that are frank representations and also many that relate to feminist propositions.

I shall explore and make links to this media through relevant scholarly texts. This will, as an outline, consist of:

- Theories relating to gender and sexuality transgression in the 18th and 19th century, particularly on Molly Houses and Mediums.
- Queerness and sexuality as they inform relations to place, landscape, community and politics.
- Alternative forms of queer reproduction and feminist futurist modes of reproduction.

I intend to visit archives, these will include, but not limited to: The Wellcome Trust, East End Women's Museum (Miss Muff's Molly House) and Cambridge University's archives for the Society For Psychical Research, which holds a wide range of material, including objects produced by mediums, such as ectoplasm. It is particularly important for my practice, that I am able to see and hold these objects. They will have been produced from materials such as paper and albumen, then ejected from mediums orifices. It is of great interest, especially in aesthetic terms to view and handle these. Site specific visits will be conducted in order to gather material to produce artwork. During these visits I will produce: drawings, still and moving image, audio, writing and also collect found objects and other ephemera. The locations will include: Fens, and shoreline in Lincolnshire and East Anglia and also the edge lands between city/town and countryside in the East Midlands. I will also collect and research specific folklore, such as the Tiddy Mun and Tiddy People. The supernatural creatures that wreaked havoc on the 17th century contractors and engineers, who were draining the Lincolnshire Fens, to produce valuable agricultural land. They were described as male sprites that lived in secret communities in the fens, that I will visit. I will offer queer interpretations of their mythos. I was born and grew up in the Lincolnshire Fens, its landscape, biology and folklore are significant to my identity, practice and research. I will stay at specific locations in remote bases, such as long forgotten campsites and common land. I will experience the locations as the queer outsider, living on borrowed land. Through studio-based practice I will produce non-linear time-based artworks from the materials produced. They will utilise video and film technologies that are representative of supernatural and reproduction, such as chromakey and animation. Working with digital media the editing process and use of technologies will become an act of science and reproduction, through work and intervention of the artist. The process itself will

be a form of reproduction. The artist: harvesting materials to fertilise his own gametes of creation. His queer labour and spawn, resisting heteronormative homogeneity. I aim to show artwork through online exhibition initially. This will be through web-based platforms that are linked to collective projects. I will exhibit video work in the format of installation at presently confirmed venues: Two Queens in Leicester and Next Art Tainan, in Taiwan. I also have made submissions to two international conferences, to show artwork.

## **Original Contribution to Knowledge**

My project seeks to contribute the identification of a specific link and lineage of queer themes related to reproduction and alternative communities, in the genres of horror and science fiction. Links made to spectral matter in ghost stories and the emissions of mediums have not been linked to queer reproduction. I will be particularly making links to phallic-like creatures that appear in homosocial ghost stories, science fiction stories and their connection to Freud and Kristeva's theories of the baby and abject, are uncharted territory. Visual representations of these themes appear virtually nowhere, save for Aubrey Beardsley's illustration of a man giving birth through his thigh, in his drawings for a publication of Lucian's 'A True story'. This is an innovative means of using material from the past in order to negotiate queer futurity, in terms of reproduction. In feminist writing, artificial wombs had been proposed as a concept in the 1970s. In science fiction literature, male reproduction has been explored, but in terms of queer futurity and what alternative forms of reproduction could be, is a new field. Queering Lincolnshire folklore is a new premise. There are various stories that feature marginalised communities of creatures. They are often of unidentifiable gender and grotesque. The Tiddy Mun and Tiddy People, for example, are inherent to the landscape, waterways and its life giving and reproductive values. Queer readings of how these communities of creatures and liminal lands relates to politics, specifically that of resistance to capitalist heteronormativity, is an original proposition. The practice and research will be interdisciplinary and propose new methodologies in approaches to making art works. In particular, the creation of work, becoming a form of reproduction. Through drawing and animation, particularly, and also editing of time-based media. Harvesting material in the public domain and combining this with original assets will adopt methods of transgression, as cross-fertilisation, in respect of biological production, growth and in terms of alternative community.

## **Action Plan**

### **2020-2021**

Throughout the autumn of 2020 I will continue to engage with scholarly texts and research literature and media. In early winter I will begin to plan and produce a time-based media work. I will begin to gather assets, such as: making original drawings, producing still and moving images, audio and text work. In January I will continue to produce this work; at this point I will record live action. Throughout spring I will screen the work through various online opportunities, conference and at galleries, in installation form in, presently confirmed, Leicester and Taiwan. I have also approached NK Arts, based in the Lincolnshire Fens, and have started a conversation, in terms of showing the work in this locality. I will continue to find new opportunities to screen the work by approaching queer collective art spaces such as Studio Voltaire and Cuntemporary.

### **2021-2022**

I will attempt to requisition a disused building, or part of a building in which to repurpose and function as a queer working space and exhibition space. It will perform as a centre in which to produce work, a location in which to record, exhibit, and exist as a living and changing installation. I will provide opportunities for other artists to come to the site and take part in events, symposia and exhibition. This will be reviewed according to the situation, at the time, arising from the pandemic. I will be compliant to legal guidelines.

### **2022-2023**

Write-Up.

## **Upcoming Events**

### **October 2020**

*Encrypted Sounds of Wellbeing*, a project by artist and curator Leila Houston. I have been selected to show artwork in this online exhibition. (Arts Council England Funded)

*Two Queens Members Show*. I will show *saturday afternoon seance (2020)* in this group exhibition.

### **March 2020**

*Progressive Connections Supernatural Conference*, Lisbon Portugal, *Screening* (proposal sent)

*Futures of Queer Reproduction (NEMLA)* Philadelphia USA (proposal sent)

*Next Art Tainan, Taiwan Exhibition*

### **April 2020**

**May 2020**

Fenland Exhibition (possibly *National Centre for Craft and Design*, through *NK Arts*)

## **Context Review**

In this review I will outline a history of horror and science fiction literature that have clear connections to queer themes. I will discuss the lives of gay men throughout the 18th and 19th century, referencing queer theorists. I will make a case for the reading of, queer reproduction and alternative communities in themes within the fictional stories. I will discuss the emergence of spiritualism and its gender transgressive opportunities for queer people and models of non-heteronormative communities in seances. Queering locations and a sense of place are explored in relation to ecological systems and sexuality, alternative communities and politics. Through feminist writers and queer theorists I will propose the notion of queer reproduction and queer futurity.

Queer themes of supernatural, horror and science fiction can be read or decoded in literature from at least 800 BC. Themes of homosexuality are abundant in mythology and has been a clear source in much modern fiction. Lucian of Samosata, in, *A True Story*, a work of proto-science fiction, contains all male races that reproduce through; gestation in the thigh from sodomy and also burying testicles in the ground and harvesting babies from the resulting tree that grew. This marks an ongoing theme of male reproduction and homosexual bodies in literature and the eruptions of queer supernatural figures, such as spirit mediums. Gothic literature in the late 18th and early 19th century featured homosexual themes and also gender and body transgression. Examples of these are: *The Monk* (1796) and its exploration of temptation and sin; *Dracula* (1897), monstrous same sex attraction and horror induced sex; and *Frankenstein* (1818) has connotation of otherness, male reproduction and queer male bodies. Frankenstein's devising has links to reported personal conversations between bisexual Lord Byron and Shelley.

Twentieth Century queer theorist Eve Sedgwick discusses that homosexual people were kept subjugated and held socially in a particular manner in British society during this period throughout the 18th and 19th centuries. Their eradication was unfeasible, so forms of acceptable, yet hidden subcultures and venues were established (Sedgwick, 1985). Rictor Norton describes these establishments as a household inhabited by gay, bisexual and transgender men. It also served the purpose of a drinking venue and brothel for paying guests. The Molly House was frequented by a cross section of society and appeared to transcend class in an era marked by distinct social divisions. The Molly House usually consisted of a family of homosexual men that would assume female personas. Mock rituals were common, including marriages and mock births. These would be theatrical and elaborate events where the person giving birth would be surrounded by his Mollys, in the grips of ecstasy and pain, the Molly would then usually 'give birth' to a wooden spoon or doll. (Norton, 1992) An example of symbolised, or mock male queer reproduction, this was to be explored later in the body horror of Edwardian ghost stories and spirit medium manifestations. Sedgwick suggests that the gothic novel epitomised homosexual characters in the upper classes as effeminate and well-travelled. Lord Alfred Douglas (1870-1945) student and lover of Oscar Wilde is a real life example of this. I will later in this review discuss how Viscount Adare (1841-1926), clearly exposes his homosexual tendencies in print, regarding his relationship with medium Daniel Dunglas Home (1833-1886), during erotically charged seances. In the middle

classes, Sedgwick attests that men's homosexual experiences at public school did not result in homosexual identity in later life, but homosocial relationships. She claims that schoolboy same sex desire resulted in adult homophobia. There are clear links here to the coded queer sexual connotations of the Edwardian ghost story. (Sedgwick, 1985) The Victorian and Edwardian ghost story largely marked a shift from gothic horror, where the setting was, typically, a great castle populated by aristocratic people, to modern middle, and working-class settings. The ghost story, spook story or weird fiction, was usually a short story and often written to be read aloud. Ghost story writers tended to be single men, often scholars, living in homosocial environments, such as university cloisters.

I will focus primarily on two writers, contemporaneous of each other - M R James and E F Benson - and will also touch on weird fiction writers Algernon Blackwood and E.M Forster. M R James is perhaps the pioneer of this type of ghost story. He was the son of a clergyman, growing up in rural East Anglia. James became a significant Medieval scholar and later vice-chancellor of Cambridge University (1913-1915). He was a conservative Christian, criticised in later life for his outdated Victorian views. (Cox, 1986) James's ghost stories were written initially to be read to fellow academics and students at Cambridge University. It is without doubt that the production and performance of the stories were within a homosocial environment. For James, homosocial activity was the sole quotidian of his personal life. There is an interesting tension between James's Victorian, conservative Christian views and the apparent repressed sexual and homosexual themes in his ghost stories. In *Oh Whistle and I'll Come To You My Lad* (1904), on finding an ancient whistle on a bleak East Anglian beach, the protagonist reads an inscription on the whistle, blows it and releases a malevolent spirit. The inscription reads "who is this that is coming" translated from the Latin. The spirit then, after some eerie encounters on the beach, takes the form of bed linen. The protagonist is then tormented by rustling sheets and nocturnal touch. A subtext can quite clearly be grasped within this narrative, James's namesake of another story; warning the curious about sexual transgression and/or revulsion. The 1968 BBC adaption of *Oh Whistle and I'll Come to You My Lad* is an exceptional rendering of the key themes of the story and I will discuss this later in this review, through the writings of Mark Fisher and how landscape itself is a key element in ghost stories. E. F Benson was a prolific writer throughout the Edwardian period. He was from a family, of which all his siblings became well known writers of fiction. His brother A C Benson was also a published writer of ghost stories. Goldhill reveals the eccentric links within the Benson family, particularly sexuality and religion. His father was Bishop of Lincoln, he grew up within the grounds of Lincoln Cathedral and latterly he was Archbishop of Canterbury. E F Benson was likely homosexual according to Goldhill. There are links to various male relationships and time spent on Capri, then a homosexual holiday destination. His mother was reportedly an active, private lesbian and his brothers of either bisexual or homosexual tendencies. (Goldhill, 2016) His and some of James's stories can be particularly marked by their predilection for describing malevolent spirits as being slimy and hairy. Benson, particularly describes these creatures or elementals as being of slippery skin and often phallic in shape. The manifestations are most often summoned by two men engaging in some kind of risky behaviour, such as a seance or walking in a wood alone at night. *The Thing in the Hall* is written in a diary/account form and relates a story of two male friends. The story is marked by its style that would have expounded a realistic setting, of the time, as would have James's stories. The characters attempt amateur practices of spiritualism, such as table turning. A problematic manifestation ensues, and a young male medium is called. The elemental appears within a seance and the men grasp the slug-like 'thing' in the dark. That the protagonists remark that they are using the new language of spiritualism is interesting in that spiritualism heralded the possibility of change and exploration of identity, in regard of gender and class. This will be explored later, through Molly McGarry's writing on Spiritualism. The notion of the phallus-baby and the abject in relation to Sigmund Freud and Julia Kristeva also. Algernon Blackwood was a prolific writer of weird fiction. An eccentric figure, before writing he had been a barman, model and journalist. He was a single male throughout life and reportedly homosexual. Blackwood was a member of the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn, with links to Aleister Crowley, (1875-1947) occultist and founder of the religion, Thelema. Blackwood's stories appear to explore themes of supernatural and human transformation, power and myth. In Blackwood's seminal weird story *The Willows* (1907) two male travellers, whilst travelling along the River Danube, see in to another dimension, where the natural such as the river become a powerful creature in itself. There is a link to Daisy Johnson's *Fen* (2016) here. In her short story, Starver, a

young female, who it suggests is anorexic, transforms into an eel, and is set free into a fenland river. There are themes of feminist and queer transformation, dysmorphia and body horror.

There are links to mythology, in particular the god Pan in many Victorian ghost stories and weird fiction, such as Blackwood's *A Touch of Pan*. Stomer suggests that it is an unusual choice for the era, of self-control and propriety. The god Pan is linked with sexuality, particularly homosexual and pastoral settings, such as woodland and countryside. (Stomer, 2014). In E M Forster's *The Story of a Panic*, an English young man, in a foreign land, becomes engaged with a beautiful male local, who transforms into the god Pan. In the BBC television play *Penda's Fen* (1974), old gods, landscape and social constructs are used as metaphors to explore the homosexual awakening of the young male protagonist.

Mark Fisher, in *The Weird and the Eerie*, uses James's *Oh Whistle* as an example of how landscape and setting are as important as the human and spectral elements are. This can be applied to most of the examples of ghost stories and weird fiction as mentioned before. This particularly falls into Fisher's category of the eerie. He proposes that the failure of presence or absence, nothing present where there should be something, something present where there should be nothing. Fisher determines that the beach, particularly in Miller's 1968 BBC adaptation becomes a semi-abstract terrain. James describes it as "a bleak stage...no actor was visible". (James, 1910) It could be read that the landscape becomes a signifier for sexuality itself. The East Anglian countryside and beach, such as fenland and a Norfolk beach are subject to desolation, liminal change and power. Fisher discusses the vision of a working container port in Felixstowe, juxtaposed with a fading Victorian seaside resort. He writes of cranes taking the form of robotic beings and the scene being devoid of human presence. There are links made to this eerie scene of the realities of capitalism (Fisher, 2016). In a similar way to when the Fens were drained by order of the British Crown in the 1630's and was completed in the 19th century. This was in order to produce valuable agricultural land and whole communities were displaced. Mechanised means of changing the landscape, and in the case of the Fens, removing marginalised people, appears to be an act of capitalist machismo. The pumping stations, with their phallic totems, draining fluids, in order to reveal fertilised land.

Susanna O'Neill in *Folklore of Lincolnshire* recounts the tale of the Tiddy Mun (Little Men). They were reputed to be a race of small, childlike creatures that wreaked havoc during the draining of the fens by engineers in the 17th century. A tradition of water spirit type beings in the fens was common, and they were often linked to the ghosts of dead babies (O'Neill, 2012). The fen people were historically isolated and lived in a unique society in these wild wetlands. These supernatural beings provide a symbolic resistance to ecological and economic change and, in turn, heteronormative societal changes in respect of people and labour.

I will now discuss the emergence of spiritualism, psychical research and technology in Victorian and Edwardian Society. In 1848, the young Fox sisters of Hydesville, USA became proponents of what would be known as spiritualism. Their reports of knocking and rappings, became the modern Seance and themselves the Medium. Spiritualism, itself became a Christian religion but had clear links to magic and alternative mystical theosophy. Spiritualism came at a time when there was great change and discovery in both science and technology. As the phonograph and telephone were invented, radio waves discovered, there came the belief that another world, of the dead could exist and be transcended through technology. Notable scientist of the era Oliver Lodge and inventor of the telephone Alexander Bell, were believers. There is a link in British culture of spiritualist believers and psychical research throughout the Victorian and Edwardian era and homosexuality. This was notably within a middle-class, scholarly and literary circle of homosocial groups. There is evidence of homosexuality and bisexuality in many of the figures within these groups or connected persons. (Hazelgrove, 2000) Viscount Adare, a British aristocrat, is notable for his relationship with Daniel Dunglas Home, a Scottish-American medium. Home, from a working-class Scottish upbringing, became a celebrity and socialite in upper class England. His seances were conducted, with some light in the room, which was unusual and consisted of extraordinary feats, such as levitation, materialisation and transmutation. He performed seances for nobility and royalty throughout Britain and Europe. (Home, 1872)

Married Viscount Adare's sexual relationship and infatuation with D. D. Home are very much suggested in Adare's publication *Experiences in Spiritualism with D.D. Home* (1870). They catalogue and describe many Seances that Adare was witness to, with Home as Medium. There are sexual connotations to many of the experiences described, such as wandering hands, extending in size of Home, whilst Adare focusses on Home's exposed midriff. There are also descriptions of Adare and Home sharing a bed.

McGarry explores how male mediums, in the advent of Spiritualism were attracted by the divergent belief system and difference to the status quo of gender roles. Victorian boundaries of male/female, masculine/feminine, that in the advent of new scientific research, in order to compound these, was challenged in the spectral plane. McGarry goes as far as suggesting that Spiritualism itself is inherently queer; its deviances in gender, sexuality and opposition to the binary. The act of crossing from one world to another, symbolically is queer. Examples of these transgressions include Blavatsky and associate Jesse Shepard, the latter who gained fame for performing female soprano concerts through spirit. McGarry charts the political optimism and reform through spiritualism, such as social status, marginalised people, queerness and female rights. (McGarry, 2008). The Campbell Brothers, of Victorian era New York State, were mediums, who in fact were not brothers but homosexual men in a cohabiting relationship. They were known for their lavish spirit paintings that often depicted eastern male spirit guides. Frank Leah was a noted medium artist throughout the 1940s through to the 1970s. His drawings of deceased people were popular, and Leah gained a somewhat eccentric and celebrity status. In his publication *Faces of The Living Dead* (1943) there is particular detail and sensualities to those drawings of handsome men. Leah's portraits often featured exaggerated, eyelashes, lips and were framed by lush waved hair. When one reads of his methods of summoning and drawing the dead in *Faces of The Living Dead*, there appears to be a need for Leah to reproduce and have status within a family. A seance, as described by Paul Miller (in *Faces of the Living Dead*), took place with the mother of a deceased airman. In close quarters with the mother, he channeled the deceased son, who spoke through him, and then went to his easel and produced a rating of him. The union with the mother, the deceased working through him, and then the production of a likeness is reminiscent of birth. Leslie Flint was a British medium achieved a celebrity status as a direct voice medium throughout the 1960s. He claimed to produce a skin-like, ectoplasmic being, that attached to his person and acted as a voice box for the dead, through his supposed child spirit guide 'Mickey'. Often the spectral visitor was a famous female, such as Marilyn Monroe. Flint and Mickey, through the manifested organ, performed what could be likened to a spirit drag show. His protestations of heterosexuality are thinly veiled in his book *Voices in the Dark* as he talks about his relationship with 'assistant' Bram, with whom he shared a flat, holidays, and was often pictured in affectionate embraces. The Lesley Flint Archive contains hundreds of digitised, reel to reel tape recordings of the seances. The female voice examples, attest to McGarry's suggestion that mediums could express their queerness through reimagining their gender. Flint described how he produced a skin-like ectoplasmic structure, from which the dead spoke. (Flint, 1971)

The ghost story and the descriptions of medium's ejections propose an interesting correlation to the phallus-baby complex (Freud, 1956). Sigmund Freud proposed that a female produces a baby, and ideally a male baby to satisfy their penis envy. Does the homosexual male medium, or storyteller, produce the phallic creature, in order to become mother, thus satisfying their desire for the phallus and to reproduce? Julia Kristeva debunks the phallus-baby complex and suggests that the female wishes to have a baby, not as a way to assuage her penis envy but as a way to become outside of the phallic order. (Kristeva, 2010) I propose that the homosexual's desire to reproduce, results in the fantasy of becoming mother and father, phallic unearthly objects and creatures, simultaneously entering and exiting the body. This will be explored in current and future projects.

It is interesting that Kristeva suggests in *Powers of Horror*, that what society deems as 'dirty' parts of the human body and their foul emissions, extend beyond the body's boundaries. This is directly related to society itself, that man is inherently xenophobic. People or communities who live outside its boundaries are execrable. (Kristeva, 1980). Lee Edelman, in *No Future* discusses the child in terms of reproductive futurism, and that in order for society to advance and improve the child becomes the linchpin for this. He states that queerness and queer communities are positioned against the child complex and are ultimately ego-driven and futile. Edelman suggests that queer people and communities should exist outside of societal norms. (Edelman, 2004)

Feminist writer Shulamith Firestone asserted that childbirth is barbaric and that it aligns to a misogynistic and capitalist society. She proposed ectogenesis, that babies be gestated in artificial wombs (Firestone, 1970). There is an interesting link, in that, Firestone envisages this as a science fiction, a utopian futurity. Lucian, in *A True Story* describes an alternative form of gestation through same sex male reproduction. The story is told, as though mythology and legend. Octavia Butler in *Bloodchild* (1984) explores male pregnancy and interspecies dependence, in a meditation of the human race's future on another planet. In 2017 an artificial 'plastic bag' womb, supported the gestation of a lamb, and outlined by Partidge et al that an infant child is comparable. (Partridge et al, 2017) If one considers the works of science fiction, horror and mediumship, outlined in this review, alongside their queer inferences, there are clear relationships to alternative forms of reproduction and societal structures and communities. Jose Esteban Munoz, in contrast to Edelman, argues for queer futurity. He defines queerness as 'that lets us feel...this world is not enough'. (Munoz, 2009, p.1) He proposes the rejection of the heteronormative 'here and now' and insists on looking beyond the horizon towards a utopia. (Munoz, 2009) Alternative societal modes are intrinsic to queer futures and should be transgressive.

## Practice Review

The spirit portraits, produced by the Campbell Brothers [fig 6.] incorporate traditional styles of painting and are reminiscent of religious paintings. Their fine detail and epiphanic depiction of the *spirit guide*, no doubt garnered a reaction from the audience members. During seances the blank boards would later be shown to reveal the portraits. This is in contrast to Frank Leah, who would physically draw the portrait [fig. 7], as though possessed by the spirit. He would summon the deceased through his body, in order to produce his characters. This would also involve personal contact with a family member through one-to-one seances. I have produced drawings, particularly through imagery in public domain film and image archives, and have focused on film and photographs that appear to have unknown queer figures from the past. These low quality images, I consider to be an embryonic form, from which I develop highly detailed digital drawings. Like Leah, the creation of these drawings is simultaneously summoning the dead and a (re)birth.

Des Lawrence's *Obituary Portraits* [fig.8] utilise found imagery, from newspaper obituaries and archival material, to produced highly detailed studies. Although highly realistic, their depictions of well known deceased people project something of the uncanny, that places them in a liminality that traverses, found material, memorial and work of art. In discussion, the artist indicates that the internet has had a profound impact on his work:

"*The scatological way word/image logic gets played out in a search engine really appeals to me.*" (Lawrence, 2014)

I have found a symbiosis in image and text research. There are often strange and unpredictable familial links that afford unconventional pathways and narrative. For example the drawings of Elijah Burgher depict his community; a coven of gay male witches [fig.9]. They appear as though in snapshot yet rendered in highly detailed coloured pencil. They elevate an alternate community, on the fringes of society. The naked characters portrayed often do not conform to popular ideals. They are often situated in domestic environments yet appear like pagan deities. In my drawings, it was an intention to create a presence through pose and expression.

Through drag performance, lip-synching and the use of archival recordings, Dickie Beau channels mostly dead female celebrities. Conversational recordings from queer icons, such as Judy Garland, are acted out. The performances become in themselves a summoning and channeling of the dead. Beau becomes the medium, and a new knowing form of mediumship is formed. *Blackouts: Twilight of the idols* (2017) [fig.10] featured archival recordings of Marilyn Monroe's last interview and Judy Garland's private dictaphone recordings of notes for a memoir, which she would never write, before her death. These are haunting and hauntological premises from which to produce performative exchanges between deceased queer icons and the queer artist. In producing film work I have depicted a *Seance*, as imagined from listening to *The Leslie Flint*

*Recordings.* Using footage from public domain films, I have envisaged the medium's gender transgression and relationship to drag. The mouth and voice of Joan Crawford, from the film *Rain* (1932) appear through the medium, as their bandaged mouth becomes a green screen. Leslie Flint was bandaged in tests to prove his mediumship abilities. See fig.11. Sondra Perry's use of blue screen in '*Typhoon Coming On*' (2018) [fig.12] is a response to the blue in video post-production being a signifier of black space, and also representative of historic erasure. She explores the connection between black and blue, 'the blues' in regard to people of colour. I used green screen fabric and post production effects to portray the queer medium's ectoplasmic ejections. Chromakey green, being the opposite of pink, was a comment on the hidden and coded queer people in the public domain imagery.

In my film *saturday afternoon seance*, the setting appears to be domestic and there are signifiers that allude to this, such as: a bungalow, a cup of tea and a clock chiming. This is interrupted by found drawings of folkloric demons and the initiation of the seance. A visitor arrives, that we only hear, they sound like and have the name of a female. We hear from the seance recording that the male medium, the female visitor, and me, the artists are present. All of the recorded voices were produced by me. There was an intention to establish that this is a non-heteronormative household, and from this gender becomes fluid and changeable. In Kenneth Anger's *Fireworks* (1947) [fig.13], a homosexual fantasy is played out within a domestic setting. There are symbolic elements that adeptly juxtapose 'home' and queer otherworldly. Such as: Milk becomes semen, household ornaments reference magick. In a scene, in which the young Anger is carried by a sailor, the image closely resembles that of the Christian Pieta, that portrays the dying Christ and the Virgin Mary. Two male lovers become mother and son. Anger dies and is reborn.

David Cronenberg's *The Brood* (1979) [fig.14] tells the story of a woman whose mental illness produces external womb-like growths that bore childlike creatures. They are parthenogenetically grown from the woman anguish and bare her emotions as they systematically kill the people responsible for their mother's anger. It was of great interest to me that a psychological state of mind, from those that are subjugated and outside of society, could be responsible for the creation and birth of some kind of entity. This is symbolised in the mock births in the Molly Houses and is viscerally depicted by the ectoplasmic emissions of queer mediums. It is interesting that the brood of creatures have no genitalia and discernible traits of a particular gender. They appear to be a family of queer beings, angry and violent to their heteronormative targets.

I have produced photographs in order to portray: place, landscape, settings and buildings. Using a digital camera and incorporating vintage lenses there is an interplay between the past and the present. The reproduction of colour and light, appear to place the subject; a field, a house, a telegraph pole into another realm. They are rendered as though timeless, could be old or perhaps from the future. The scenes are starkly queer in perhaps the manner of Wolfgang Tilman's photographs. His depiction of a factory in *Germany Valley* [fig.15], *West Virginia*, and a Tree in *Sunken Forest* [fig.16] are reminiscent of genitalia and sexual function. His landscape and buildings are starkly bereft of people, but appear charged and secretive environments. My photograph of the bungalow, that appears in the film *saturday afternoon seance* is gaudily rendered in kodachrome-like saturated colours, the bungalow of the heteronormative housing estate becomes the public toilet or *cottage*.

fig.6



fig.7



fig.8



fig.9



fig.10



fig.11

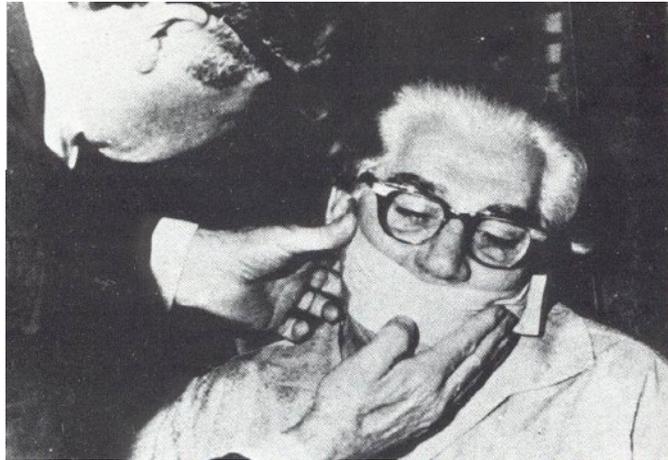


Fig.12



fig.13



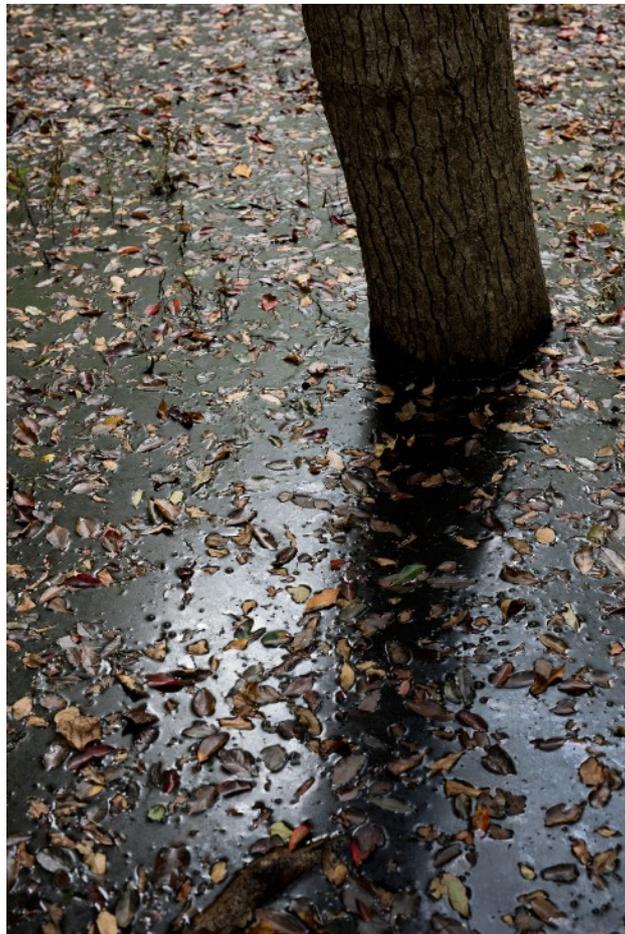
fig.14



fig.15



fig.16



## List of Figures

1. James Chantry, *saturday afternoon seance*, video still, 2020
2. James Chantry, *phantasmagoria: manifestations from found media*, digital drawing, 2020
3. James Chantry, *phantasmagoria: manifestations from found media*, digital drawing, 2020
4. James Chantry, *queer terrain, digital photograph*, 2020
5. James Chantry, *expecting*, gif animation still, 2020
6. Campbell Brothers, *Azur*, Oil Painting, 1898
7. Frank Leah, *Spirit Portrait*, Pencil 1943
8. Des Lawrence, *Fay Wray*, Silverpoint, 2007
9. Elijah Burgher, *Six Organs Ritual*, Coloured Pencil, 2013
10. Dickie Beau, *Blackouts: Twilight of the Idols*, Performance Still 2017
11. Leslie Flint, Photograph, Date Unknown
12. Sondra Perry, *Typhoon Coming On*, Installation View, 2018
13. Kenneth Anger, *Fireworks*, Film Still, 1947
14. David Cronenberg, *The Brood*, Film Still, 1979
15. Wolfgang Tilmans, *Germany Valley, West Virginia*, 2017
16. Wolfgang Tilmans, *Sunken Forest*, 2017

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