



Mark Fisher, Nicki Minaj and The Interzone.

LA Times saw the horror of Nicki Minaj's 2012 release of 'Freedom', "A shockingly mediocre humble-brag track, the song finds Minaj recounting her ascent, her fame, her talent, her wealth and all that it affords. "It's crazy in here," so quickly after her meteoric rise, Nicki can't seem to move forward without dwelling on her construct, "she's big enough now that she can forget about "old Nicki"

Nicki shoots her video for the 2012 hit in front of the Denge sound mirrors, on the Kent coast. The Sound Mirrors or Listening Disks were built in the late 1920s as amplifiers across the channel for detecting the sound of incoming aircraft.

In contrast to many contemporary detection technologies the listening disks have a simple, out-wardly comprehensible construction, form following function. They declare their mechanics and are in constant operation, continually reverberating and echoing their surroundings.

There are three concrete hemispherical reflectors located on the disused quarry. One a long curved wall 200 feet long, and two circular dishes. An attraction for illegal raves and vandalism, the mirrors were eventually managed within an RSPB nature reserve and access limited.

Technology of recording and reproduction has allowed ghost voices and places to live outside of their own time and space. The voices of a million dead artists can be heard at any time and in any place. The ghost is perhaps not the voices themselves but the power in speech that can declare itself long after the utterance and bring a disconnection into our sense of time. The Denge sound mirrors have never ceased operation. For 100 years they have been listening, collecting and distributing sounds back into the landscape. JG Ballard in *The Sound-Sweep* explored ideas of audio as not dissipating, but collecting and carrying particles of the past: "..overhung by a gloomy miasma of a million compacted sounds, it

it remained remote and haunted..."

The denge marsh is a hauntological landscape, a site for encounter with a broken sense of time. The landscape is littered with visual and audio traces of what is no longer. Fisher postulated that "What is important about the figure of the specter, then, is that it cannot be fully present: it has no being in itself but marks a relation to what is no longer or not yet".. In this landscape, it is important to focus on what is no longer, which has it's hold on the space. The ghost's focus is on compelling repetition and predictability, this way it prevents an unstable future to emerge. Through a predictable outcome the ghost is able to propagate itself and flourish and through the haunted mirrors generate it's outcome through a human host.

The host in this music video is Nicki. Her presence in the video is instantly anachronistic, a confusing medley of disused train lines and machines, Royal garb and the 1920s mirrors themselves surround Nicki. She presents herself as a Queen, a rapper and at one point a Jesus figure. Nicki must sing that she is free, she feels freedom, standing in front of the overbearing, dark and thunderous listening ears. She sings of her freedom as if to deny the inescapable power of the past, but the pop-inspired crystal-clear synthesizers tell a different story. Nicki is bound by the expectations and comforting sameness of pop with a smooth R&B beat. Nicki is continually referencing her first album, the pinkprint or blueprint which she religiously follows and encourages other artists to follow as well. Obediently following the predictable and the derivative. Nicki is quoted in the bridge:

Mirror, mirror, won't you realize? I just have to decide  
What you hiding from? What you hiding from?

She can't decide, can't make her own decisions. Nicki is doomed by the ghost that controls her, the miasma of the past that restricts unpredictable outcomes and moderates the future. Nicki engages with the superficial delight of progress and movement, while battling the technology that gives power to the ghost and its ability to haunt and immobilise us.

What is the ghost hiding from? It's hard to say. Perhaps from the future once designed for it, the future I'm unable to envision, that is beyond my language to describe, so I cannot tell what it is hiding from and neither can Nicki.

