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Collins, Rebecca; Linsley, Johanna

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Article

Stolen Voices Is a Slowly Unfolding Eavesdrop on the East Coast of the UK

Rebecca Collins ^{1,*}  and Johanna Linsley ^{2,*}

¹ School of Art, University of Edinburgh, Edinburgh EH3 9DF, UK

² School of Humanities, University of Dundee, Dundee DD1 4HN, UK

* Correspondence: rebecca.collins@ed.ac.uk (R.C.); j.linsley001@dundee.ac.uk (J.L.)

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Abstract: Stolen Voices is a research enquiry that uses listening as both methodology and material. Stolen Voices develops techniques for ‘listening in’ and eavesdropping to help articulate an epistemology of place through sonic frameworks. A core motivation for the listening is a semi-fictional story we tell ourselves (and anyone else who is listening): an ‘event’ has taken place along the East Coast of the United Kingdom (UK), and we have been tasked with figuring out what has happened. While the specifics of the event might be difficult to pin down, the urgency of the investigation is fuelled by concrete concerns found in the UK edgelands, at the border/margin of the country: the uncertain future of the UK’s relationship with Europe; the effects of climate change on coastal landscapes; the waning of industries like manufacturing and coal extraction; the oil industry in crisis; the rise of global shipping infrastructures. By using a semi-fictional framework, we move away from mapping techniques like data-sonification towards a methodology that embraces gaps and inventive excesses while insisting on the importance of making an account. Through listening, we foster attention to contingencies and indeterminacies and their relationships to prevailing structures and knowledge hierarchies. Stolen Voices asks: what is the relationship between a listener and what is heard? How can listening attune us to the complexities of contemporary political, economic, ecological and social processes? How did we get to where we are now, and how, through listening, can we seek out levers for change? What do the rhythms and atmospheres of specific geographic locations inform or reveal about history? Evolving over several years, in response to what we hear, the investigation necessarily proceeds slowly. In this article, we unfold our methodological processes for the detection of sound, voices, atmosphere and affect. We use creative-critical writing to evidence the construction of a research investigation focused on the act of listening as a spatial practice and necessarily collective endeavour.

Keywords: listening; eavesdropping; performance; sound; creative-critical writing

1. Introduction

Stolen Voices is a research enquiry motivated by eavesdropping. The enquiry, referred to throughout as ‘the investigation’ or ‘the case’, arises through ‘listening-in’, through aurality as situated practice in time and space. The work irrupts through overhearing, through a listening practice that exceeds the exact semantics of what can be heard via sounds that overflow borders. Stolen Voices returns to the etymological root of the word eavesdropping to build on the work of Humanities scholar Krista Ratcliffe (2000) who excavates previous usage of the word *eaves* in Webster’s New Oxford dictionary to suggest ‘edge’ and ‘margin’ and ‘border’ (p. 90). Ratcliffe combines this with the Middle English definition of, ‘one who stands on the *eavesdrop* [the spot where water drops from the eaves] in order to listen to conversations inside the house’ (ibid.). By reworking archaic definitions, Ratcliffe puts forward a composite definition to describe eavesdropping as: ‘an effective rhetorical tactic: standing

outside, in an uncomfortable spot, on the border of knowing and not knowing, granting others the inside position, listening to learn' (ibid.). *Stolen Voices* seeks forms for occupying and investigating this border or margin located at the edge of understanding. This is the context against which the case takes place.

For *Stolen Voices* this position is made manifest by situating the artist-investigator on unstable acoustic ground and by geographically locating the investigation predominantly on the East Coast of the UK. Our investigation takes place in sites which can be described as 'at edge', to use Ysanne Holt and Angela McClanahan-Simmons' terms (Holt and McClanahan-Simmons 2013, p. 203). Holt and McClanahan-Simmons, speaking specifically about 'northern peripheries', describe such areas as 'variously appropriated as territorial fringe in geo-political conflicts and contested in private and public ownership disputes' (ibid.). Our work covers four key sites on the British coastline: Bournemouth in Dorset on the South Coast, Felixstowe in Suffolk on the East Coast, Seaham in County Durham on the North East Coast of England and Aberdeen in Aberdeenshire on Scotland's East Coast. While not all of these areas are in the North,¹ the emphasis on both 'territorial fringe' and disputed boundaries of the public and private is particularly apt for the locations we have engaged, as the following 'case' makes clear. Furthermore, while the North/South axis may be ambiguously defined², the investigation moves along the side of the country facing Europe, figuring the edgeland of the coast as an ever-shifting border by water. In this article, we include more extensive sections set in the two more Northern sites of the investigation, but we gesture to unstable definitions and interconnectedness of place with two 'case files' from the more Southern reaches.

The enquiry begins by imagining public spaces as semi-fictional constructions to which we, the artist-investigators have been summoned, tasked with a case. The case concerns an as-yet-undefined event, which we probe by attempting to gain access, navigate and decode traces in the aural atmosphere. We have not confirmed what the event is (and the question of what constitutes an event may still be in play), but we sense that the answers might be right on the tip of everyone's tongue. In this way, the locations attended to during the investigation are acknowledged as host to already occurring phenomena. We move away from considering perception as belonging to the individual towards an understanding of dynamic interplay between human and nonhuman actors, atmosphere and environment.

The aim (or possible solution) to *Stolen Voices* lies in the mode of the investigation itself, in asking what can be detected by attending to the circulation of knowledge; information; to accounts of *how* histories have been told so as to be aware of, what continues to circulate. We recognise accounts not as closed circuits, but as leaky vessels. and we attend to how leaks provide leads in distinctly different directions. By embodying this attentive mode, we make our own accounts and foster accountability, not for the then but for the then that is now. We encourage you to do the same.

2. Pre-Briefing

An event has taken place and we have been cast as sonic detectives, tasked with figuring things out. The clues (so we've heard) can be found in the soundscape. Like everything else in the case, what this means and how it operates is not straightforward. We have been investigating on site since 2014 from the South Coast of England to the East Coast of Scotland. Relentlessly and without pause.

The codename for the investigation is *STOLEN VOICES*. You might want to write that down.³

A sonic detective is someone who does not know something, who might linger longer on the edge of understanding but who also determines to make an account. Sonic detectives describe and report

¹ Indeed, Bournemouth is almost as far south as the UK stretches, and the North Coast of Scotland continues way beyond Aberdeen, with the North Coast 500 route starting in Inverness.

² It has been argued as just North of the Watford Gap service station (Alberge 2017).

³ Further details about codename *STOLEN VOICES* are available online. See www.yourstolenvoice.com.

and are concerned about the implications of these terms.⁴ Sonic detectives are not outside the law and sonic detectives are not the police.

We are sonic detectives. 'We' aren't reducible to the present authors of this text, but neither are we universal or royal. The use of 'we' summons an institutional infrastructure, something impersonal, in progress that also has a regulating force. The first-person plural lends legitimacy to our assertions (it suggests a consensus or policy) and also evokes forces beyond our control. At the same time, 'we' are constantly negotiating, experiencing frictions and obstacles. We are dealing with questions of positioning and situating, more than questions of mapping or forensics that 'sonic detection' might evoke. We want to think about knowing subjects without subsuming phenomena, site and other actors and agents into an all-encompassing reflexivity.

However, to begin: a word of welcome. We want to thank you for agreeing to take this on. We have every confidence that your background and ingrained capacities make you ideally suited to joining the team. A solution is close. You should have no problem taking this over the finishing line.

3. Briefing

There has been an event. There is evidence or there might be. We have case notes, there will be an upskill, items to consider, key lines of enquiry.

You will be required to pay attention.

Something has happened. You're in the UK in 2019. Everyone knows there is a crisis.

However, crisis as a sensibility can seem to appear too early or too late or in odd proportion or awkward location. How might you proceed with an investigation without unhinging the feeling of crisis from the materialities and the real instability and anxieties you encounter?

A crisis looks for a guilty party.

A crisis points the finger.

A crisis needs interpretation.

A crisis leaves clues.

You've just arrived and you're keen to make a start but you're not sure where to begin. You decide to do some background reading. Desk research. Subjects ranging from climate emergency to coastal ghost stories. Trying to detect in negative outline the shape of a crisis. You read Carbon Democracy: Political Power in the Age of Oil (2011) by political theorist Timothy Mitchell where he writes, 'The description of a sequence of events as a "crisis" simplifies changes in multiple fields, involving various agents, into a unique event, so that a single moment, with a single agent, appears responsible for a collapse of the old order' (p. 173). Mitchell is responding to the construction of the 1973–4 oil crisis in the USA, which he dubs 'the crisis that never happened' (ibid.). He argues that 'crisis' masks a complex network of factors: the hawkish stance of the US government on a Soviet-endorsed peace deal in Palestinian negotiations in the wake of defeat in Vietnam; the development of the institutions of neoliberalism (such as the Cato Institute) with connections both to the oil industry and the ideological programme of limited government intervention and private market self-regulation; the emergence of 'the environment' as a distinct field of political concern. The public framing of crisis served US state and corporate interests while obscuring the forces responsible for its fabrication and the ways events exceeded it.

Crisis can be wielded as a tool of power.

You read a report by Anthropologist Jane Nadel-Klein about Scottish fishing communities on the North Sea that have faced decline or extinction since the First World War. Nadel-Klein describes

⁴ As English Literature and Black Studies scholar, Christina Sharpe (2016, p. 85), reminds us, being made to 'fit a relevant description' is a tactic of domination in, for instance, racist stop-and-frisk policies.

these communities existing in a state of ‘perpetual crisis’ (Nadel-Klein 2000, p. 363). This extended temporality of crisis shows, she writes, that ‘the feelings of intense insecurity and impending doom that crisis implies do not necessarily occur at a single point in time nor only in the context of a visible “disaster”’ (p. 364). Her study offers a description of crisis as a condition with duration, depth and horizon, which can threaten and also produce identity, individual and collective.

Crisis as it is experienced may differ from how it is constructed or deployed. Agents of crisis may be multiple and interconnected. The causes of crisis may be diffuse, and all of this may be invisible.

Therefore, we suggest that the sonic offers a way into crisis that will allow you to detect feelings and (/as?) facts. As a sonic detective, you will have access to a range of conventions and styles that will help you sneak up on crisis, catch it off its guard.

The case is compelling, the volume immense. There are meeting minutes, contracts of work, policy documents that, over time, will begin to resound in your ears, though not necessarily in a straightforward, audible manner. As you upskill, ideally this will become a kind of voice in your head that, once heard, becomes difficult to unhear. The voice of your client, perhaps, who leads you along the edge of an island. To keep a step ahead of her, you’ll need to listen closely and well. So here we offer our profile notes on the figure of the eavesdropper, a chance to upskill in sonic detection methods, access to some of our case files, and an initiation ritual for you to try and crack.

We’re confident you can do this.

Remember you do not need to do it alone. In our own efforts, a series of partners has offered vital infrastructural support along the way. Before we begin, the core team would like to acknowledge our multiple agents on the ground. It is fair to say, without this help, the case would have never gotten this far. Keeping an ear to the ground has its costs, some personal. We’ve had to rely on the kindness of strangers; a hot meal or clean bed when offered has made a huge difference. There have been several sacrifices, not least our domestic lives.

Once again, thanks for agreeing to take this on.

4. Profile: The Figure of the Eavesdropper

During the investigation, you will not only be listening, but listening-in. Overhearing. So to get up to speed on the case, you need to understand the types of knowledge we trade in. Contingent, illicit, straddling public and private, troubling borders and boundaries, wrapped up with both state surveillance and notions of the minor, domestic or fleeting. Get familiar with the shifting figure(s) of the eavesdropper, their histories and cultural baggage.

You’re on a day-long outing to King Henry VIII’s Hampton Court Palace (Taplin 2013) in Richmond Upon Thames and you happen to notice small, carved, colourfully painted wooden figures hiding in the ceiling beams of the Great Hall. You consider how diners of the Tudor period, on looking up, would see the face and bust of these figures staring back at them. A constant reminder to guests that they were being observed and overheard by the King’s courtiers and domestic servants. You also learn that eavesdropping once was considered a crime. English judge and Tory politician of the eighteenth century, William Blackstone in his Commentaries on the Laws of England (Blackstone 1769) describes us this way: ‘[E]avesdroppers, or such as listen under walls or windows, or the eaves of a house, to hearken after discourse, and thereupon to frame slanderous and mischievous tales are a common nuisance and presentable at the court-leet’ (p. 169).

Eavesdroppers might engage in surveillance and counter-surveillance or in Steve Mann’s terms ‘sousveillance’, indicating observation of the powerful by the less powerful (Mann et al. 2003, p. 333). You read Dark Matters: On the Surveillance of Blackness (Browne 2015) by Black Studies scholar Simone Browne, who shows how the dynamic between sous- and sur-veillance has shaped the world we live in. She argues that the violent surveillance built in to the Transatlantic slave trade in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries connects to contemporary race politics in the USA and beyond

and furthermore, to the formation of the modern state itself. Importantly, though, this dominating violence is attended by the ingenuity in struggle of what she dubs 'dark sousveillance' (p. 21).

Sometimes the eavesdropper is an outlaw. Sometimes they just couldn't help but overhear. However, the hierarchies of listening-in are often built in, designed, implemented.

An inky drawing slides onto your desk. A mid-seventeenth century publication, Musurgia Universalis, by German scholar Athanasius Kircher (2006). The image depicts twisted tubes embedded into interior walls, hidden behind or within statues, to connect otherwise separate spaces. Sound and voices can travel from the public piazza to the surrounding private rooms. An early bugging system. Panauditory architectural effects can also be found in the Temenites hill close to the city of Syracuse in Sicily. A cave, known as the Ear of Dionysius, is shaped like a teardrop or large auricle and has particular acoustic properties which can echo the human voice up to sixteen times. Once used as a prison, allegedly by Dionysius, the S formation of the cave provides ideal conditions for sound to circulate. The acoustic properties are doubly advantageous, enabling not only eavesdropped secrets and plans intimately discussed among captives to be overheard, but also the screams from tortured prisoners to be shared. You read Foucault and The Politics of Hearing (Siisiäinen 2015) to discover connections between the cave design and the work of English Philosopher and Social Theorist, Jeremy Bentham in author Lauri Siisiäinen's 'auditory-sonorous' (p. 4) reading of Foucault's oeuvre. An early version of Bentham's panopticon prison design included tin speaking-tubes to exploit the potential of acoustic surveillance. The pipes ensured sound could travel between each cell and the central tower, providing prison guards with the ability to monitor the condition of the prisoners. This detail was removed from the final plan due to concerns about the conversations of the guards also being transmitted through the construction.

The inside and the outside and the difficulty in keeping them separate. The flow of the listening process goes more than both ways. However, let's consider the all-hearing ear a bit longer.

On Twitter you notice a series of mundane tweets appear in speech marks: "Whatever it is, it is not a sandwich", "I think I'm reverse paranoid".⁵ These are a far cry from the carefully crafted texts you normally see. You do an online search. Conversnitch (House 2013) is a device built by Kyle McDonald and Brian House that takes the form of a lamp that houses a listening device constructed using a Raspberry Pi, microphone and LED. Once captured, the audio is uploaded to Amazon Mechanical Turk (MTurk), an online crowdsourcing marketplace platform that facilitates the outsourcing of discrete tasks. Via MTurk, a remote worker transcribes the audio. These transcripts are broken down into short snippets and tweeted. Developed in 2013, in the wake of Edward Snowden and the US National Security Agency scandal, the project is not just a reminder that our devices are listening to us. The work also gestures to the hidden forms of labour that keep globalised systems running with the appearance of seamlessness.

Watch out for when the paranoia sets in, all this whispering and listening, listening and whispering. The problem with knowledge is not that we cannot know things.

The problem with knowledge is that things change.

The problem with knowledge is that knowing things changes things.

The problem with knowledge is that many things are kept secret.

The problem with knowledge is that it is difficult to find things out and remember them.

The desire to know, to want to point a finger, to find a guilty culprit, to figure out the who, the why, the how? Check the facts. Get all the info down. Bring in the forensics. Will that be enough or too

⁵ Both tweets are taken from the Conversnitch twitter account 2014. See "Whatever it is, it's not a sandwich." May 25, 12.43 am. Tweet. See "I Think I'm Reverse Paranoid." May 25, 1.10 pm. Tweet. Available online: <https://twitter.com/conversnitch> (accessed 14 October 2019).

much? Hierarchies of knowledge, modes of knowing and understanding circle in our heads. We ask: can the details and dates of the event, of any event be enough to know?

A colleague slips you a copy of Performance Studies scholar André Lepecki's Singularities: Dance in the Age of Performance (Lepecki 2016). Sentences, underlined in red pen, express concern for the diminishing emphasis on experience. Lepecki, focussing on experimental choreographic practices, names a difference between audience as witness and audience as spectator. He describes the former as 'a silent accomplice in a crime scene' (p. 175), the fact-checker, the google-information-miner who wants, above all, to be assured of the verifiable data of what is seen. The latter, he notes, favours lived experience, narration, the sharing of a sequence of events. Moments, in all their fleeting ephemerality, are considered valid, and this is where a stake in 'political-aesthetic power' (ibid.) might be up for grabs. A current emphasis on the forensic is noted by Lepecki, citing as example audiences who look away from the live spectacle to check the details of the performance on their phones. This desire for fact, for hard information over the experiential curtails and downplays the importance of what we live through together. Less value is accrued to our sensorial orientation to the world and events as they unfold.

You ask yourself whether Lepecki's schema, with its implied prioritisation of spectatorship over witnessing, is a sufficient account? Are evidence and affect, lived experience and the construction of facts, so clearly separable?

You go to an exhibition: Earwitness Theatre (Hamdan 2018) by Lawrence Abu Hamdan, which is later nominated for the Turner Prize. You consider the possibilities of Hamdan's 'forensic listening' (Hamdan 2014, p. 68) emerging from the work of research group Forensic Architecture. Eyal Weizman, director of Forensic Architecture, in his introduction to Forensics: The Architecture of Public Truth (Weizman et al. 2014), returns to the root of the word forensics. In the original Latin 'Forensis' means 'pertaining to the forum' conjuring the practical and political implications of 'The Roman Forum', the site for the discussion and critical interrogation of 'politics, law, economy' (p. 9). This re-interrogation, for Forensic Architecture, is manifested through the work of a multidisciplinary team whose scrutiny of architectural ruins; witness accounts; visual documentation in the aftermath of violent events, fosters a critical recognition of the shifting grounds upon which conflict takes place (see for example Mare Clausum [2016–ongoing]; Drone Strike in Miranshah [2012]). Crucially, Forensic Architecture highlights both the need for the production of evidence and a critical approach to how and what constitutes that evidence. In this case, the 'forensic' operates within the space of the juridical, which comprises institutions, regulatory frameworks and discursive conventions: Earwitness Theatre, for example, arises from a commission for Amnesty International. The work also operates within the space of the aesthetic, or more precisely, the space of contemporary art production, which exceeds the space of the juridical, at least insofar as it partakes in other institutions, frameworks and conventions. You consider gestures of excess and the production of material that might seem unintelligible or inessential depending on where it appears.

As we've said before, Stolen Voices draws on the etymology of the word 'eavesdrop' to occupy and examine a position on the edge of understanding. This is not to romanticise non-knowledge or mystify the conditions of our own subjectivities. Rather, we aim to make an account of the contingencies that attend a coming to knowledge. A practice aligned with what Hannah Arendt calls 'thinking without a bannister' (Arendt 1979, p. 336), where experience is confronted outside of preconceived notions of understanding. What we mobilise is an au/orientation, one attentive to specific sites of a coastal investigation.

Keep an ear to the ground comrade, and read on.

You dial up several well-known art galleries in London. Following a lead in musician and Audio Culture theorist David Toop's Sinister Resonance: The Mediumship of the Listener (Toop 2010),

you make a series of enquiries about pictorial depictions of sound. You get an invitation to consider The Eavesdropper (Maes 1657), by Dutch painter Nicolaes Maes on loan from the Dordrechts Museum in the Netherlands, one of a six-part series of paintings depicting the poses and gestures of a listening figure (one male, five female) in domestic settings. Often appearing on staircases within complex domestic interiors, these works evidence sound's propensity to travel as well as the precarious/privileged position of the eavesdropper as a certain type of knowledge worker. In The Eavesdropper, a white woman stands on a staircase in the foreground of the painting, her gaze addressed to the viewer of the canvas, index finger extended to rest on her chin as though in a gesture of silence, her lips pursed in a slight smile. Two scenes occur in the background of the painting: above in the reception room, a group of men sits at a table while below, a maidservant is being seduced by a man. The lady of the house is literally caught between the powerful male world of the burgeoning capitalist class represented by the mercantilists in the front room and complex intimacies pursued below the stairs. By placing the figure in the centre of the canvas, Maes foregrounds this advantageous physical position alongside the possibility of getting caught or being seen. At the same time, her gesture toward the viewer—her directed gaze and facial expression—invite complicity in this act in the event of its happening. The image makes visible the circulation of private and intimate exchanges while also evoking the trapping of ephemeral aural events. You take notes on tensions in the work of Maes. A series of scribbles on legitimate and illegitimate information circulation, social positioning and the exchange of knowledge via aural means. You leave the gallery wanting to know more.

The complexity of eavesdropping as knowledge production is wrapped up with the historically specific ways our everyday practice of listening, in the absence of earbuds, puts us in common with the rhythms, sounds, voices, atmosphere and affective potential of the world around us.

The British Museum leave a message on your answerphone about an etching of a cacophonous street scene. If Maes's eavesdroppers depict a gendered domestic interior where listeners hide in corners with intention, driven by desire, English painter and pictorial satirist William Hogarth's engraving The Enraged Musician (Hogarth 1741) considers an unwillingly conscripted listener in a space where the inside and outside are contested. The image shows a frustrated violinist next to an open window unable to undertake musical practice due to noisy interruptions from the street. These include sounds of street sellers, a knife grinder, a young boy urinating, a boy drummer, a baby crying, a dog, a parrot—an urban cacophony represented at a moment in history when the unprecedented expansion of city-dwelling feeds a bourgeois anxiety about the power of the crowd. The musician's inability to close his ears to this din, though enraging to him, provides an opportunity to consider who and what constitutes noise. You consolidate this finding with some further reading. Barry Blesser and Linda-Ruth Salter in Spaces Speak: Are you Listening? (Blesser and Salter 2009) cite the image to indicate the emergence of controlled sound within public and private spheres while tentatively questioning whether street musicians had a stake in the circulation of sound (p. 107). Ultimately, they claim that through sound, the porous potential of architectural space is made evident. But as poet and essayist Lisa Robertson's meditations on noise and the construction of noise as pollutant makes clear, such porosity is politically charged (Robertson 2012). You think about who works to control space, to create private zones free from interruption, and who is cast as the noisy nuisance.

For Stolen Voices, the dual identity of the eavesdropper with intent and the eavesdropper who couldn't help but overhear is at the heart of the investigation. It names a dynamic between the contingent and the self-determining that threads through questions about how and by whom 'site' is constructed and controlled.

Back at your desk, you pick up a copy of Sound Studies theorist Marie Thompson's Beyond Unwanted Sound: Noise, Affect and Aesthetic Moralism (Thompson 2017), which argues for a move away from considering the singular (and universalised or unmarked) 'listener' to thinking, via French philosopher Michel Serres, of the multiple configurations of sounds and listeners conditioned by

and constituting particular contexts or milieus. In Thompson's work, noise is reconfigured not as a personal, subjective event, but as a relational process. It is beginning to dawn on you that you may have taken on more with this investigation than you bargained for. But it is also sinking in that it is probably too late to turn back.

Our investigation is propelled by affectual forces, intensities, sensations. Stolen Voices is a case, a mystery—one we have been too early or too late to solve. Maybe things will be different for you.

Time for an upskill.

5. Upskill: Stolen Voices Sonic Detection Methods

You will need a toolbox. A set of methods, tricks of the trade, go-to moves. You never know when you might find yourself at a loss for words. Improvisation is at the heart of what we do but it is important to have a back-up plan.

Over the years, we have consolidated lessons learnt into three key methods: Tuning, The Extract and The Abstract, and The Red Herring.

5.1. Tuning

Tuning provides a method and metaphor to think about resonances between things, particularly when reference points are mobile, elusive, transient and transforming. We aren't primarily interested in seeking fidelity to pure tones and intervals. The dissonant or irreconcilable hold our attention but we do not let harsh noise off the hook for interrogation. Our temperaments are changeable. No need to be an acoustics specialist to be a sonic detective. We aren't asking you to train your ears to detect perfect ratios between frequencies. Tuning and attunement are, for us, frameworks to make connections between things that may not automatically seem to go together and to ask questions about things that do automatically seem to go together.

We ask: what if eavesdropping is a tuning system?

The British coastline is a crucial framework for the investigation—a dynamic edge that has drawn its fair share of (artist-)investigators. Working along the coast, each site can be considered as singular and also part of a series. This interplay between the singular and the set pushes us to ask how do we feel here? How does this differ to what we feel over there? What makes us feel this way and why do we feel this now?

Anthropologist Kathleen Stewart in *Atmospheric Attunements* (Stewart 2011) makes us question the multiple forces residing in our present lived state as we are living it. Stewart names these forces as 'experiences, conditions, things, dreams, landscapes, imaginaries and lived sensory moments' (p. 445). All of these elements hang in the air as possible scenes ripe for description or narration. The ability to attune, via a variety of methods including conversations and chance encounters, will be key in your sonic detection efforts. As you overhear, each piece might not immediately seem to complete or even advance the puzzle. Notation methods are vital: keep a file, find a container or carrier bag to hold artefacts from the process together as they accumulate, get a system. Though given the increasing complexity of the British coastline in 2019, all of this might still not be enough.

As sonic detectives, it is our priority to attend to the circulation of atmospheres which often unwittingly, when you really listen at length, serve to snitch on the present state of more nameable situations like love, friendship or despair. As we cautiously walk from scene to scene we traffic in affect. We hang out. Ready and waiting, ears alert to a shift in terms, to the sound of a half-baked idea, to the welling or swelling of an emotion, a masterplan, an impromptu gathering. We are guilty of loitering without intent. Value judgements in reserve, we poise to absorb the not-yet and the nearly. This is our labour. We tell the story of what is going on. We attend to the not-quite, tuning in to the rhythms, to the pulse of a place which, depending on what else is going on elsewhere, can slow down or speed up. Remember, at all times, to maintain administrative and emotional control.

A list or inventory might be of assistance.

Take stock before the next wave hits.

When is it coming?

Where from?

Hard to say.

Listen on for a timely reminder of our four locations: Bournemouth in Dorset on the South Coast, Felixstowe in Suffolk on the East Coast, Seaham in County Durham on the North East Coast of England and Aberdeen in Aberdeenshire on Scotland's East Coast. 'Edgelands' in the sense of coastal and in the sense of being sites of negotiation, where boundaries may be contested and enforced, and particularly where infrastructures (global shipping, oil, finance) are concentrated. We came to these sites both deliberately and by chance. We spent long, concentrated amounts of time in these places and also occasionally just passed through. You might return to these sites, follow the threads. Or you might find the trail has gone cold and another configuration must be assembled.

Let's try some exercises based on our own repertoire:

Talk to town councillors; to the CEO of a geotechnical services company specialising in advanced acoustics; to Jean, Jac and Jean from the East Durham Artist Network (edan); to experts on Scottish writer Nan Shepherd, on the Cairngorms National Park, on the Doric dialect. Listen to stories about church bells at night and the absent rhythms of decommissioned coal mines. Read the prospectus for a new MSc in decommissioning oil rigs. Visit tourist boards and Tourist Studies academics. Stay for a week with the Head of Tourism Development at Visit Aberdeenshire. Spend a week at The Old Police House in Gateshead, home of experimental turntablists and collective noise-makers. Become familiar with bartenders and waiters at vegan cafés. Develop an 'Eavesdropbox', a computer terminal that asks visitors to the Seaham Library a series of questions about their experiences of the acoustic environment. Visit local archives and local history societies. Strike up correspondence with local music schools. Stage a performance for a citizen webcam on a residential back road in Felixstowe then order a full English breakfast at the Viewpoint Cafe overlooking the UK's busiest container port. Fail to stare down a seagull on Belmont Street in Aberdeen. Try to arrange a tour of a small factory that manufactures security cameras. Try to make an appointment with a private detective in Bournemouth. Practise outdoor listening exercises with teenage radio makers.

Look at (artist-)investigators of the British coastline; consider the British seaside photography of Tony Ray-Jones (Ray-Jones 1974). Read the ghost stories of English author and medievalist scholar M.R. James (James 1904) and watch theatre director Jonathan Millers' 1968 BBC television adaptation of his 'Oh, Whistle, and I'll Come to You, My Lad' (Miller 1968). Read the early modernist stream-of-consciousness prose of Dorothy Richardson (Richardson 2002) and the experimental fiction of Ann Quin (Quin 1964). The performance poetics of Bhanu Kapil (Kapil 2015) connecting a (brown) (woman's) body and street and riot. The peripatetic tradition in British writing and thinking, from Daniel Defoe's development of the travelogue (Defoe 2005) to John Betjeman's railway dispatches (Betjeman 2006) and the films of Patrick Keiller (Keiller 2014).

Finally, and in many ways most importantly, undertake extended periods of hanging out and eavesdropping, place yourselves in gathering spots and zones of transition. Hotel bars (the Arlington Hotel in Bournemouth, the Orwell Hotel in Felixstowe, Seaham Hall, and the Carmelite and Caledonian Hotels in Aberdeen), train stations and other transport hubs, local pubs, promenades and piers, and local landmarks. Bring to these periods of hanging out modes of heightened attention supported by listening exercises. You can hang out alone or with a partner or in a small group: each has its benefits and challenges. The point is, by undertaking these kinds of activities, to develop an open-ended interestedness that is attuned to both connections and anomalies.

Once you've perfected your tuning methodologies, move on to the next section for what to do with it all.

5.2. Extract and Abstract

Eavesdropping is particularly suited to extracts: one side of a telephone call, half a conversation. When we abstract from these extracts, we tread a fine line between the specific and the general. Leave hopes for universality at home, opt for the partial to inform the next phase. However, if extracts are to circulate, they must be abstracted to the degree they become readable to audiences and readers beyond a single location. Extraction can be understood as a problematic within site-specific practice in which the artist extracts material from a place for their own use. However, we also value the creative potential of the extract in its partiality and connection to a context even as it circulates beyond the specificity of that context.

There are many examples within sonic practices of data-driven techniques such as data sonification or graphic visualisation of sonic events,⁶ a rich tradition of soundwalks (by artists such as Hildegard Westerkamp, Janet Cardiff, Christina Kubisch, Andra McCartney) and a growing number of invaluable sound maps.⁷ Our own methods, though, are not cartographic. Our investigation responds to philosopher Robin Mackay's critique in *When Site Lost the Plot* (Mackay 2015) that the disruptive potential once characterising site-specific work has too often been subsumed into strategies for capitalist regeneration projects and value creation. Mindful of our own situatedness, we lend our sonic attention to the specifics offered by the local to think about both micro and macro dynamics at play. There is vested interest in what Marie Thompson (2017, p. 7) describes as the 'nexus of audible and inaudible processes, relations and inter- and intra- actions.' As *Stolen Voices*, we approach the East Coast of the UK to tune into the various, complex and shifting layers of site so as to detect and extract details of the social, political, cultural forces that circulate in and constitute those places.

The investigation has brought us to two sites that have a material connection to mineral extraction: Seaham, a town in East Durham whose coal-mining past shapes the physical, economic, social and imagined landscape; and Aberdeen, a port city and Scottish headquarters for much of the North Sea oil industry. We think about mineral extraction processes, a sequence of transformations ranging in scale from the molecular to the global political levels. Timothy Mitchell writes:

[C]arbon itself must be transformed, beginning with the work done by those who bring it out of the ground. The transformations involve establishing connections and building alliances—connections and alliances that do not respect any divide between material and ideal, economic and political, natural and social, human and nonhuman, or violence and representation.

(Mitchell 2011, p. 7)

We understand The Extract and The Abstract, then, as a method for understanding relational links that produce the world around us, and that may also help disrupt or sever connections commonly taken as given and forge new or unexpected types of affiliation. Alberto Toscano and Jeff Kinkle write:

What is at stake is the figurability or representability of our present and its shaping effect on political action. In a strong interpretation, the mapping of capitalism is a precondition for identifying any 'levers', nerve-centres or weak links in the political anatomy of contemporary domination.

(Toscano and Kinkle 2015, p. 23)

Toscano and Kinkle are undertaking a response here to Frederic Jameson's (1993) call for a practice of 'cognitive mapping'. This call argues for the necessity of representation of the total mechanism

⁶ See *Climate Symphony*, a project sonifying climate change data by artists Katherine Round and Leah Borromeo of Disobedient Films (Borromeo and Round 2018).

⁷ See British Library project *Sounds of Our Shores* (2015). Available online: <https://www.bl.uk/sounds-of-our-shores> (accessed on 14 October 2019).

of global capitalism in the face of its unrepresentability, its mystifying processes that obscure its own contradictions while naturalising its historical developments. We, too, are concerned with representation and figurability, though as we have said, we do not consider the investigation a mapping project. Rather, it is driven by a need to make an account of certain contemporary dynamics as they occur, from specific if shifting positions, without aggrandising a singular subjectivity. We are live on the scene, as details unfold. We are also on the move, weighted with baggage (emotional and otherwise), dealing with the extracts in different resonating conditions.

We use The Extract and The Abstract to think about the micro, the macro and their relation—the entanglement between everyday life and capitalism. The extract is our economy of value, a weighted scale which may tip the balance on the habitual order of things.

5.3. Red Herring

The final methodological plot twist for articulating our eavesdropping methodology is The Red Herring, an acknowledgement that the process of situating knowledge includes distraction, diversion, dead ends. We also acknowledge the importance of detective fiction as a structuring element of the investigation. It is a truism that site plays a character in detective fiction and we draw on this truism particularly as it relates to British crime fiction, from Ann Cleeves' Shetland Islands to LJ Ross' Northumberland to Ian Rankin's Edinburgh and Ruth Rendell's Sussex. In *Stolen Voices*, from its supporting role in other fictions, site moves into the foreground.

This ties into our central premise for *Stolen Voices*: an event has happened and we (and now you), as sonic detectives, have been summoned to investigate. Our understanding of 'events' is influenced by media theorist Eleni Ikonidou's (2014) thinking in *The Rhythmic Event: Art, Media and the Sonic*. Ikonidou (2014, p. 22) puts forward the event and eventness not as pertaining to the perceptive subject as such, yet as intrinsic and belonging to the event itself. This approach, in the context of *Stolen Voices*, marks a step-change in site-specific performance practices contributing to what performance-maker Mike Pearson has indicated as a 'shift from attitudes regarding site as a vacant space awaiting performance' (Pearson 2010, p. 13), thereby questioning the inter- relation of human and nonhuman actors. In *Sounding the Event: Escapades in Dialogue and Matters of Art, Nature and Time* (2014) visual artist and writer Yve Lomax pursues the question of whether an event is going to happen. In doing so, Lomax considers vibrational qualities and their relations. She puts to use the notion of the twittering-tree to express dissatisfaction towards overemphasised subject positions.

Therefore, this is the lesson I am learning: an event is the act of process of something 'in the making', which can also be the process of something becoming undone. To have said *The tree is twittering* or *The birds in the tree are twittering* and taken it for granted that the twittering belonged to the tree-subject or the birds-subject would have been to overlook and ignore what the verbal noise of the twittering-tree sounded and sung of with respect to predicates and events. What the twittering-tree is teaching me is that there can be *being* without this having to centre upon a subject.

(Lomax 2014, pp. 23, 24)

However, if we use 'event' to name the mystery at the heart of the investigation (circulating around subject and phenomena), The Red Herring articulates a moment when the coordinates for the investigation tilt too much in one direction or another. The detection process is ideally situated in the tension found between the embodied experience of the subject sensing and the site's emission of what is going on without emphasising one or the other, devoid of a hierarchical relationship that might objectify or attempt to hold a master narrative to encompass phenomena. However, as we've learned, the detection process is rarely ideal.

The event is not untethered or other-worldly; it is connected and embroiled in specific contemporary socio-political coordinates. Yet, once named, these coordinates might shift.

There is no sleeping on the job.

Annie Goh's article 'Sounding Situated Knowledges: Echo in Archaeoacoustics' (Goh 2017) provides a timely interrogation of subject-object positions within debates on sound and listening, making use of feminist epistemologies. Goh draws on Donna Haraway's concept of '*situated knowledges*' (Haraway 1988, p. 581, italics in original) described by Haraway along these lines:

Therefore, I think my problem, and 'our' problem, is how to have simultaneously an account of radical historical contingency for all knowledge claims and knowing subjects, a critical practice for recognising our own 'semiotic technologies' for making meanings, and a no-nonsense commitment to faithful accounts of a 'real' world, one that can be partially shared and that is friendly to earthwide projects of finite freedom, adequate material abundance, modest meaning in suffering, and limited happiness.

(p. 579)

Locating our investigation on the ground, outside of a God's eye view, we situate ourselves and detecting methods in sensing out, through the body, real-world connections, at once impartial and anti-universal. This is the back-and-forth between our listening bodies (how many of us are listening?) and a concern for how and where knowledge production occurs.

Refill your coffee, pick up a doughnut, a can of your favourite fizzy drink or a slice of cold pizza. Looks like you are in for the long haul. Try to rest your ears. Maybe close a window? This work can be relentless.

When you're ready, let's look at some case files.

6. Case File: The Aberdeen Conundrum

We set out and we look for people to talk to.

We set out and we look for people to consult.

We look for people to consult, and the first person we find asks us, what if you find nothing?

What if we find nothing?

In the morning, we set out, and because setting out requires a destination, we head to the Belmont Filmhouse, where we've heard a seagull has recently been denied entry for non-payment. We note this as exactly the kind of miscellany our ears listen out for: file that for later.

In the morning we try to set out, but we get sucked into a YouTube hole after someone sends us a link to something called *Telly Savalas Looks at Aberdeen*, a short kitschy film from 1981. The film has its origins in a law called the 1927 Cinematograph Films Act, which required a certain percentage of films shown in British cinemas to be made by British film companies. The director, Harold Baim, made a career of producing 'quota quickies', or short, cheaply produced films that could be shown before a feature film screening so that cinemas could comply with the law (Baim 1981). He made this particular quota quickie with the American TV star Telly Savalas along with two other similar films, in which Telly Savalas looks at Portsmouth and Birmingham. It seems Telly Savalas never actually went to any of those cities, and recorded his voiceover from the comfort of Southern California.

A lull.

Then, during a long afternoon, everything kicks into gear. Meet the CEO of Pangeo Subsea, hear him explain how a Sub-Bottom Imager (SBI) uses sound to make images of the subsea bed in full 3D. Look at diffuse infrared blobs. Consider the shape and dimension of a sea boulder, unexploded World War II ordnance, diamonds, oil pipelines, shipwrecks. Mull on the sentence 'It's all driven by sound'. Hear a drill. Watch the opening credits to *Roughnecks*, a BBC TV series aired in 1994 about the lives and loves of a crew working on a fictional rig named 'The Osprey Explorer' (Prendiville 1994). Hear the tune become an endless earworm. Take in an exhibition at the Maritime Museum and stare at the only surviving artefacts from the Piper Alpha disaster (the most catastrophic offshore oil disaster ever): a leather wallet (McAlister 2013). Read a list on the wall of the Anatomy Rooms, a former morgue and medical dissection unit turned artist studios and rehearsal space: skeleton cases,

mortuary shoe lane, mortuary, museum rail cases, shell rooms, lecture theatre, x-ray room, assistants' room, store, cellar.

Take note of terms that struggle to accommodate each other—the uncanny and the incongruous—'Olives and liquorice, ice cream and wool'. Items available in a local store. Find connections where there cannot be connections or where the crucial piece of context is missing: Crime and Punishment, Local History, Jacobites, Archaeology, Witchcraft. A list on a sign outside the Tolbooth museum. Watch the 1983 film *Local Hero* (Forsyth 1983), set on the Moray coast, and hear Peter Riegert and Peter Capaldi recite a list of commodities that would not exist without oil. Contemplate the 2018 stage adaptation, fail to buy a ticket. Buy a white chocolate and raspberry scone in a vegan superfood restaurant, find one in that same town that same afternoon at the 24-hour bakery. Realise efforts are tinged with the futility of the arbitrary, and that in fact, the problem of the arbitrary is what we are trying to solve.

In the evening, stroll down Union Street and allow a crowd of teenage girls to surround you like a school of red herrings.

What if we find nothing but a school of sustainable red herrings?

7. Case File: The Trimley Estate

Um, ah, yeah so ya know so well it's like yeah
 We've got this land . . . Right, yeah, yeah, yeah
 And well,
 No, of course, right, I mean the potential, yeah it's
 Like WOAAH, WOAAH
 I mean really like
 WOAAH
 But, no, no, not here
 I mean like yeah a bit but,
 We like got this, yeah, we like got this covered
 Like totally covered and well they like well they
 Like totally don't so it's a
 TOTAL TOTAL winner in like lots and lots of ways,
 Ya know it's actually kind of like, kind of GENIUS,
 No wait in fact it's like
 TOTALLY TOTALLY GENIUS
 Yeah, um ah yeah like totally.

NOTE: Trinity College Cambridge is the richest of all the Oxbridge colleges. This position was consolidated in large part by the actions of Senior Bursar Tressilian Nicholas, who in 1933 acquired the Trimley Estate, a portion of land measuring 3800 acres in Suffolk close to Ipswich and the (at the time) defunct Felixstowe Docks. Nicholas' successor, Sir John Bradfield, fought nationalisation plans for the port under the 1970s Labour administration. He successfully influenced the Margaret Thatcher government to introduce legislation which significantly contributed to making the port of Felixstowe, on Trinity-owned land, Britain's largest container port and a major competitor in the European logistics landscape (*The Telegraph* 2014).

8. Case File: The Canford Cliffs HSBC Cash Machine

Um, so ya know that like totally happened ya know
 Mm, yeah
 I mean like pretty wild but um yeah
 Like that's how it went down, HMM
 Well for a bit, yeah,
 Perhaps a couple of years

No, no, I know
 TOTALLY ELITE
 Yeah, sure, well
 Income-based, property ownership
 YEAH, that KINDA THING
 But, no, I mean, of course it didn't
 Couldn't
 No, no, well, no
 I mean in fact it
 Yeah, SHAME, really?
 No, no I mean come on, yeah
 I know like WHO, WHO can well I mean
 No
 I know
 But, like seriously, yeah, um, yeah
 I know.

NOTE: An elite pilot branch of HSBC opened in 2007 in Canford Cliffs, near Poole in Dorset, exclusively for Premier account card holders. To qualify for an account, customers needed at least £50,000 in savings, a £200,000 mortgage, or a minimum salary of £75,000. Customers unable to fulfil these requirements could pay a monthly fee or were denied use of the over-the-counter services. All customers could use the automatic cash withdrawal and paying-in machines. For personal advice or enquiries, customers were requested to use another branch. A spokesperson for HSBC justified this decision by stating 'not everyone is equal'. The branch closed in 2015 (Durkin 2015).

9. Assignment: The Seaham Tangent

Ok comrade, time to kick off the training wheels. How will you handle yourself on your first on-the-ground assignment? Can you keep your head cool and your ears open? Don't be afraid to ask questions—we're here for you right now but after this session, we're not going to check our messages for a long, long time.

Time to see what you're made of.

9.1. First Attempt

You set out on foot to assess one of the scenes of this as-yet-undefined event. You pause. In front of you is a town plan etched in iron installed as a commemorative plaque in the centre of a small town square in Seaham, County Durham. Despite its appearance of permanence, this vision for Seaham Harbour, projected by Lord Londonderry during the coal mining boom, then entrusted to Newcastle Upon Tyne architect John Dobson in 1826, never came to fruition. You later discover this was due to a shortage of funds. Nevertheless, this bold celebration of a failed pipedream serves as a timely reminder for the way things were going at one time. You take a moment to imagine how the proposed inhabitation of space, with generous provision for courtyards, a taproom and underground tunnels, might have afforded distinct modes of living in previous decades. You continue your scene assessment. A feeling circulates, something akin to loss, then a sentence on the wind 'we must not blame the planners, for the future is unforeseeable'. The whispering and listening starts. Slowly, something like a list begins to form:

2015, the year the Costa Coffee outlet opened, blocking the sea view from 4 South Crescent, a former brothel, overflow morgue and now Massimo's Italian restaurant. 1991, the year the last colliery closed. 1854, the year the seamen of Seaham commissioned the publication of a poem to raise funds for the town's first lifeboat. 1962, the year of the George Elmy lifeboat disaster, and 2009, the year the boat was spotted for sale on eBay. Some year, impossible to know exactly, in the 8th century, when the nave of St Mary's church was built.

Hear a tonal pitch shift between geographical sites, timelines, types of reference material. Feel yourself turning towards a series of objects and environments as you develop an awareness for the resonance between things.

9.2. *Second Attempt*

You call for backup. No response. You pool further investigative resources. Picking up a copy of *Listening* by French philosopher Jean-Luc Nancy (2009), you feel keen to learn more about resonance. You note the similarities between your sonic detection skillset and Nancy's concept of 'methexis' (p. 80). Solid identification resonates less than the beat of differentiation found in dynamic states occurring at moments of sharing, contagion, participation, interpenetration (p. 10). You feel it is, therefore, possible that within the participatory, engulfing nature of *methexis*, the listener also becomes embroiled, as a further resonant component, in what is going on. In Nancy's words, 'to be listening is to be at the same time inside and outside [...]the sharing of an inside/outside, division and participation, disconnection and contagion' (p. 14). The subject, or self, forms a key component in this resonant relation of listening. You note this self is at once both embodied and situated, located with an ear to the ground, attention tuned to the ongoing contemporaneity of our current condition. Emphasis is on the relational and processual, a frame for you to understand a range of methods, to orientate ourselves in relation to each other, to the sites we work with. Are you with us?

9.3. *Third Attempt*

Seaham Hall is now a serenity spa and luxury hotel. Hundreds of years of local power were concentrated here, first by feudal lords, then industrial bosses, then private business interests. For a relatively brief interlude (1928–1977), the estate was a tuberculosis hospital. You wonder if that is blood you smell as you wander the halls. Lord Byron and Anna Isabella Milbanke were married here, with Byron complaining in an 1815 letter that 'Upon this dreary coast we have nothing but county meetings and shipwrecks' (Byron and Moore 1830, p. 258).

You add Seaham Hall to the list of stately homes you've visited on the investigation, many of which (unlike this one) are operated by the National Trust. The National Heritage Acts of 1980 and 1983 passed under Thatcher acted as a response to concerns for the absorption of English identity into a wider European project as the early inklings of the European Union emerged. A kind of mourning for the loss of Empire. The National Trust, first formed in 1865, is the second-largest private landowner in the UK, with 640,000 acres, 770 miles of coastline and 350 properties. The Trust, with its status as 'an association not-for-profit', has enjoyed a 'national position' ratified through a series of National Trust Acts making it a private body with a very public function which benefits from a special relationship with the Treasury whereby properties and objects can be handed over in lieu of tax (Trimm 2005, p. 3). You pause for a moment to reflect on how there must be real magick at work when privately owned country houses and private coastal lands, once pillaged for profit, can become areas of public concern and questions of community pride.

9.4. *Fourth Attempt*

You are at something of a loss and your impulse at times like these is to turn to text. A series of ghost stories by the poet and pamphleteer Bill Griffiths. Griffiths was a figure of the British Poetry Revival in the 1970s in London, and moved to Seaham in the '90s to escape what had become, for him, a hostile city. In his late forties and fifties, he entered a phase of huge productivity as a local historian and scholar of North East dialects, Old English, Old Welsh, Anglo-Norman, Medieval Latin and Old Icelandic, until his death at 59 in 2007. His *Ghost Tales of Seaville* (Griffiths 2006), published online in instalments, feature thinly disguised characters from Seaham—often local councillors or police who face eerie, grisly or melancholy ends. His story about the Londonderry offices 'regeneration' involves a young journalist who has allowed herself to become a mouthpiece. One day, while writing a story in support of the transfer of the Londonderry offices from police to property developers, an old councillor

tells her that it is bad luck to write prose on a Friday morning. She ignores him, and is haunted for the rest of the morning by a song with no discernible singer. Later that afternoon, the councillor is felled by a heart attack, just before he is meant to be singing sea songs at a charity benefit.

10. Processing the Scene

Map out connections or disconnections in the box below. Label the evidence observed. Try not to tamper with anything.

Who are the victims? Is naming useful here or do you need another classification strategy? Do you have evidence to support any findings? Who are the key suspects? Will you point the finger or outline a structure? What were the sequence of events? What systems or shapes emerge? Can you deduce a target? Are there any misnomers or red herrings?

Use your training.

You got this, comrade.

11. Postcards from the Ongoing Investigation

We heard complex harmonies connecting the industries and infrastructures running from North to South.

She studied contemporary and academic and classical art

Before 1759, there was no way to calculate longitude at sea

She brought bad luck to boats

Right now, there are 100,000 lobster pots on the seabed between Spurn Point and North Shields

Her positioning has always been precisely controlled

Inhabitants of Holderness on the coastline of York face eviction as the sea erodes the sea cliff beneath their homes

She was anything but passive

In Seaham, County Durham, plans for a major film studio seemed like a real possibility in 2007 and like a strange dream in 2009

She was retracing steps, moving back and forth, looking for something misplaced

A social media site that alerts fishermen to the whereabouts of the Minna, the Jura and the Hirta (Scottish Marine Protection Vehicles) has been taken down

She said the Arctic seagulls were the barbarians of the city

Britons holidaying on the coast of France and Spain eat lobster caught in Bridlington, East Riding on the East Coast of the UK

She claimed the sound of the church bells at night always reminded her of horror stories

Thirty Sperm whales were stranded on the southern coasts of the North Sea; six washed up on the beach in Lincolnshire

She was both elegant and unyielding

In 1962 a lifeboat, the George Elmy, got caught in a storm off the coast of County Durham. In 2009 the boat was spotted for sale on eBay

She was attentive to shifts in the order of things

Hartlepool surfers swim in water well below the regulated standards. They prioritise the protection of a secluded spot

She was instrumental in boundary-making

We discover the sound of the sea is made by tiny bubbles simultaneously vibrating and bursting along the shore

She used her imagination to fill in the blanks

She turned to face the North Sea

She turned towards Europe

She opened her throat, plugging her ears for just a moment

And

She sang.

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